



Election Monitoring of TV Channels

Main Evening News Releases

April 15–May 2, 2014

In connection to the local elections of 2014, CRRC Georgia carried out the media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU and UNDP. The monitoring was performed for the main evening news releases and political talk shows broadcasted during the prime time on Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia, TV3 (news releases only) and Tabula (talk shows only).

This report describes the media monitoring results of main news programs from April 15, until May 2, inclusive.

Following key findings were identified as the result of monitoring of main evening news releases on televisions during this monitoring period:

- Number of analytical stories has increased in most part of the monitored channels. Actualities and significant topics were mostly covered exhaustively and in details.
- It is possible to say that any clearly expressed polarization was not observed in most of the channels. Often the positive or negative coverage of a certain subject depended on the contents of the particular event that was being covered.
- In this respect it is possible to say that the negative and critical attitude towards the government was more observed in main news programs on Rustavi 2.
- During the period from April 15 until May 2, there was quite little time allocated to the mayoral candidates in the news programs. Only the Tbilisi mayoral candidates were covered on all the channels (except the Adjara TV). Mayoral candidates of other cities were hardly ever covered on any of the monitored channels.
- Adjara TV allocated the most time to the Batumi mayoral candidates.
- The biggest share of time was allocated to Davit Narmania among mayoral candidates on all the channels (except the Public Broadcaster), which was basically caused by the presentation of mayoral candidates by the Coalition

Georgian Dream at the Sports Palace during this monitoring period. Asmat Tkabladze (Tbilisi mayoral candidate of the Labor Party) ranks number one on the Public Broadcaster because of being invited to the studio.

The monitored TV channels covered many topics of current significance about the ongoing events in the country in their main news programs during this monitoring period. These topics were: discussion of the anti-discrimination bill, abduction of the reporters of TV3, situation developed at the occupation line, Sakdrisi, Easter Holiday, Board of the Public Broadcaster, publicized menu of the ministry of Finance, visits of James Appathurai, Steinmeier and Fabius to Georgia, meeting event of the Georgian Dream and launching their election campaign, confrontation between Irakli Gharibashvili and NGOs, Irakli Okruashvili's candidacy, opening the Mikheil Saakashvili Library, detention of Data Akhalaia in Greece, initiating the case of Valeri Gelbakhiani, etc.

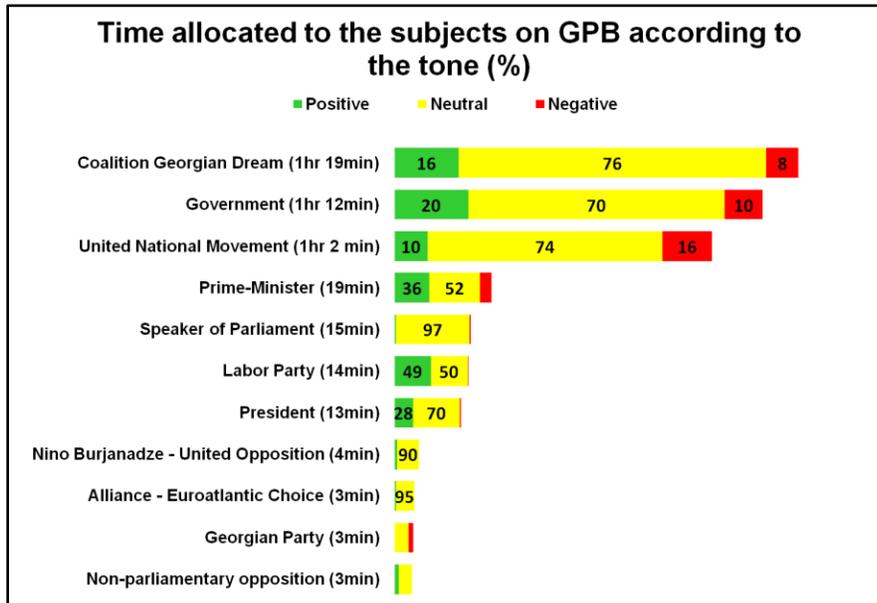
Channel One of the Public Broadcaster

During the first monitoring period, from April 15 until May 2, the news stories broadcasted in the main evening news programs of the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster were mostly balanced and diverse positions were provided about the discussed issues. If any story lacked an opinion of any side, the journalists would clarify why the comment of that particular side was not provided.

There were some topics during this period, which were covered with special intensity, for example: the antidiscrimination law and the board of trustees of the Public Broadcaster. Besides, the events in Ukraine and the Association Agreement were also broadly covered. These issues were extensively and analytically covered in the news and the views were provided with exhaustive information about them.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, there are three subjects to which the most time was allocated during this period: the Coalition Georgian Dream (27%), the government (25%) and the United National Movement (21%). Other subjects got 6 percent and less. With respect to time, the highest rate of positive tone among the first three subjects was observed for the government - 20%. Relatively higher negative tone was observed for the United National Movement (16%). It should be pointed out as well that the Labor Party also had quite high rate of positive tone (49%), which is explained by the visit of

their Mayoral candidate for Tbilisi in the studio, where she had a chance to personally present her candidacy.



As for the coverage of mayoral candidates, the most time was allocated to the candidates for Tbilisi. From April 15 until May 2, inclusive, the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster allocated 23 minutes to them in the main news programs. 49% of this time was dedicated to the candidate of the Labor Party, 25% - to the candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream. Other candidates got 2 minutes or less. The main evening news releases of the Channel One allocate live airtime to the mayoral candidates every Sunday. As it was mentioned above, Asmat Tkabladze, Tbilisi mayoral candidate from the Labor Party visited the studio during this monitoring period.

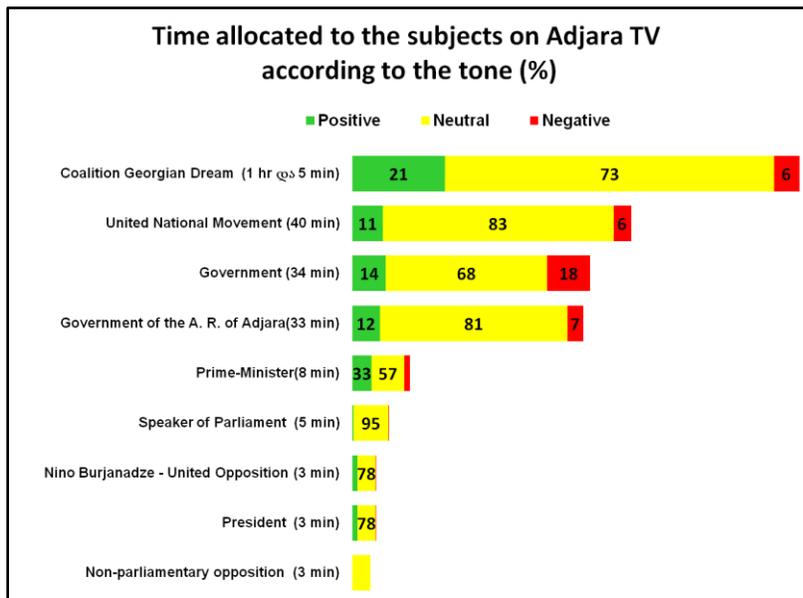
Adjara TV

News reports in the main evening news releases on Adjara TV were mostly balanced during the first monitoring period from April 15 until May 2. The represented sides were relevant to the topic and also equal time portions were allocated to them. Main news releases on Adjara TV were characterized with brief news stories, which informed

about the events in a neutral way. Correspondingly, the lack of analytical stories was observed.

Among the other monitored TV channels, Adjara TV stands out from the viewpoint of the covered topics. Due to regional specifics, the television allocated more time to local issues and events, such as infrastructure projects, social issues, regional problems. It should be pointed out that Adjara TV also dedicates significant portion of time to the coverage of problems of the local population. Common national issues and topics are less highlighted. It is also noteworthy that like other Georgian TV channels, Adjara TV also actively covered the events taking place in Ukraine.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, there were four key subjects to which the most time was dedicated in the news programs. Other than the Coalition Georgian Dream (33%), the United National Movement (20%) and the government (17%), which have been covered with similar intensity on other channels as well, we need to point out the time - 17% dedicated to the government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. Out of the first four subjects that got the largest portions of time, the highest rate of positive tone was observed for the Coalition Georgian Dream - 21 percent, and higher negative tone - for the government - 18 percent. In general, there is an overall trend that all the monitoring subjects are covered with more or less positive and negative tones.



As for the coverage of mayoral candidates, the most time was dedicated to the candidates in Batumi - from April 15 until May 2 the Adjara TV dedicated in total 9

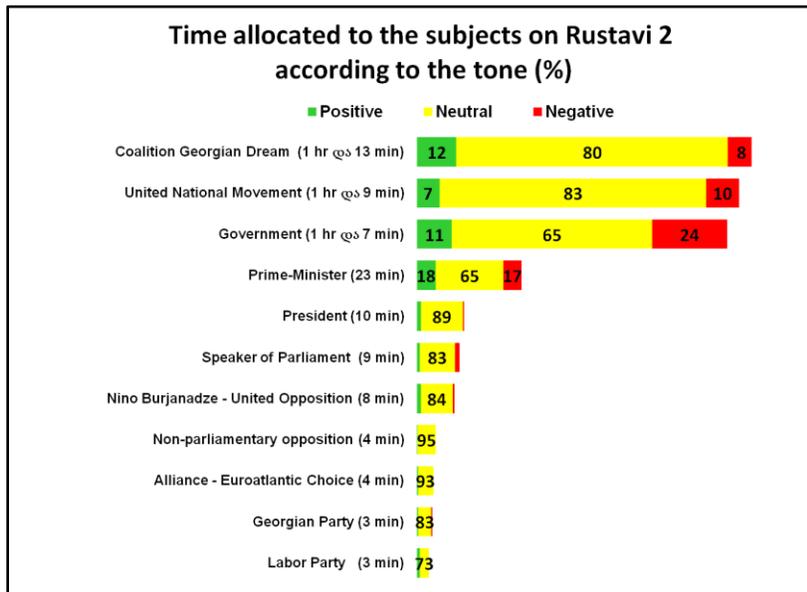
minutes to the Batumi mayoral candidates in its main news programs. Almost all of this time (8 minutes) was dedicated to the candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream. The United National Movement came second with 45 seconds.

Rustavi 2

As for the main evening news programs on Rustavi 2, based on the results of the first monitoring reporting period it is possible to say that the journalists were trying to provide detailed discussion of the information highlighted in the stories, to observe balance among the respondents and to represent not only the comments of members of various parties and political unions, but also the opinions of experts and NGOs. There was quite active and detailed coverage provided for the situation developed around the Sakdrisi gold deposit, the situation in Ukraine and the antidiscrimination law. The stories were analytical and comprehensive, and opinions of all the sides were represented.

Despite there was pretty equal time allocated to the Coalition Georgian Dream, the United National Movement and the government, still, it was eye-catching that there were different attitudes towards the ruling team and the opposition parties. Often the sequence of stories and accents made in the stories represented the government and the members of majority in a negative light. For example, the story of April 26 “Election Campaign of the Dream” covered the meeting event of the Georgian Dream at the Sports Palace where they nominated 12 mayoral candidates and this way they officially launched their election campaign. The meeting was attended by the full composition of the Coalition, government members, supporters and famous members of the society. In general, the story positively represented the Coalition, members of the government and their candidates as well. However, the story highlighted exactly that moment from Kaladze’s speech, where he is making a mistake and the journalist does not comment on this mistake.

This attitude was reflected on the tone distribution chart, where the government has a 24 percent of negative tone, which is the highest rate of negative tone among all the channels during this period. It is noteworthy that the Prime Minister had an equal share of positive and negative tone: positive – 18% and negative – 17%. However, it should be pointed out that compared to other channels, the Prime Minister had the lowest share of positive tone on Rustavi 2 (except Maestro, where the share of positive tone for the Prime Minister is 18 percent).



In regards to the mayoral candidates, like other channels, Rustavi 2 dedicated the most time to the Tbilisi mayoral candidates, 9 minutes in total. 54% of this time was allocated to Davit Narmania, which was due to his speech made at the event of the Coalition Georgian Dream at the Sports Palace on April 26.

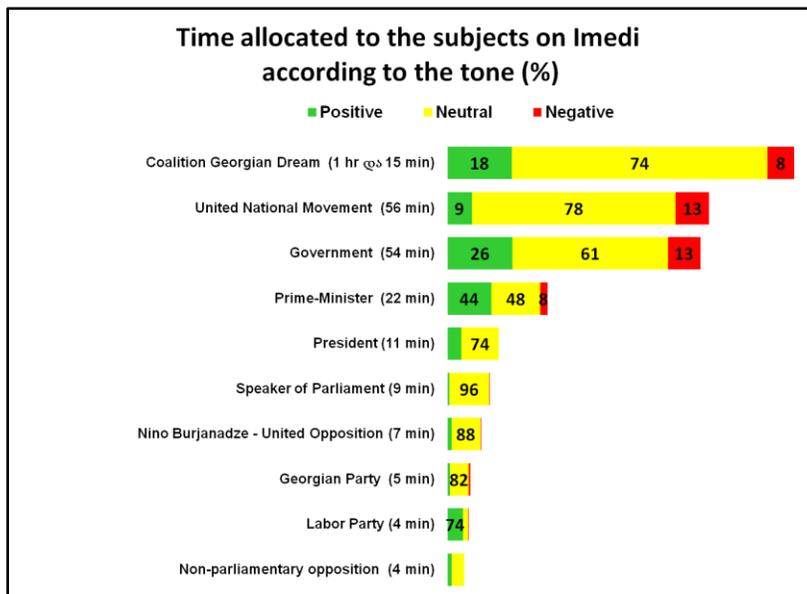
Imedi

During the period of April 15 – May 2, inclusive, there were both types of news stories broadcasted via the main news programs on Imedi: brief and dry news that were only focused on fact reporting, also extensive and analytical stories. There was much time dedicated to the issues about Russia and Ukraine. Information about the antidiscrimination law was covered exhaustively and extensively right at the very beginning of the monitoring. Opinions of the position and opposition were represented, and implications of this law were clarified. However, at the end of the month, when the story was being prepared about the same issue, the journalists did no longer explain the contents of the law or preceding events, either. They just showed the pictures of dispute and confrontation, which might have been unclear for the audience.

It is noteworthy that there were negative and critical stories prepared on Imedi about the government and the ruling team, also about the United National Movement during this period. For example, there was a critical story prepared about missing the sessions

by the parliamentary opposition (April 15). Besides, there was quite a critical and negative story about the menu published by the Ministry of Finance (April 22).

As for the time allocated to the subjects, almost equal portions of time were allocated to the United National Movement and the government. As it has been mentioned already, they have equal share of negative tone. However, there is a difference observed between these two subjects in regards to the rates of positive tone – the United National Movement has 9%, and the government – 26%.



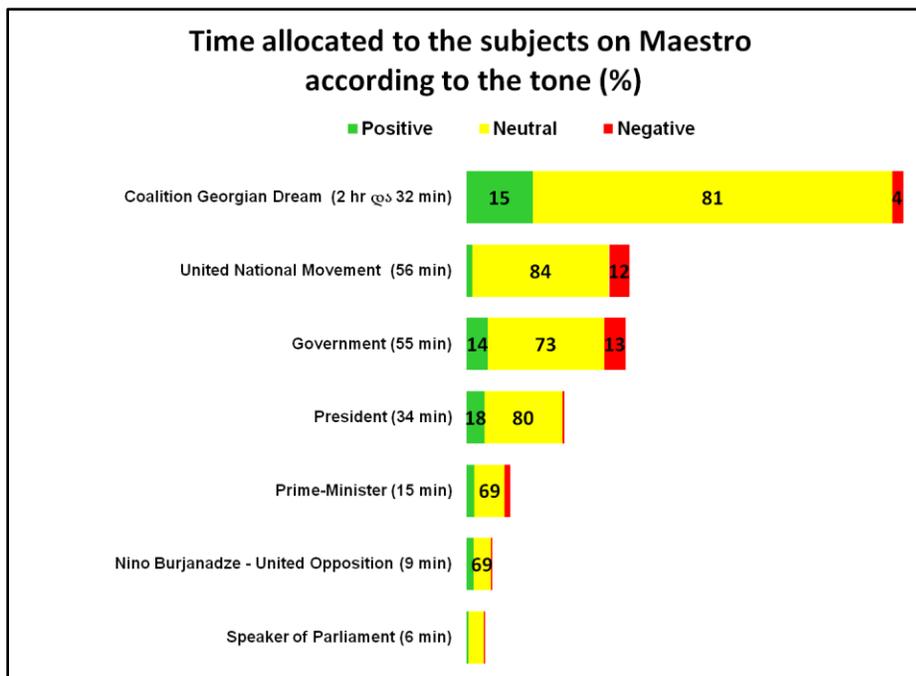
Like other channels, mostly the Tbilisi mayoral candidates were covered on Imedi. There were in total 11 minutes allocated to them from April 15 until May 2, inclusive. Out of this time, 62 percent was dedicated to the candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream.

Maestro

Maestro's main news program was quite diverse. All the issues of topics were discussed during the program, whichever was significant for that moment. The audience was able to get exhaustive information, and opinions of various sides were provided as well. There were extensive and analytical stories, where the highlighted issues were discussed in details. Besides, different attitudes were not observed towards the government and opposition parties. Sports and culture news was intensively covered too.

Few days after the beginning of the election monitoring in 2014 (April 21), Maestro changed the format of main news releases. There are guests invited to the program every day, and the news presenters have a live discussion about the important topics of the day together with these guests. The program hosted following guests from April 21 until May 2, inclusive: the President of Georgia, government members, representatives of opposition parties, etc. Moreover, Davit Narmania, Tbilisi mayoral candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream also visited the program during this period.

As for the time allocated to the subjects and their coverage tones, unlike other subjects, there was quite a large portion of time allocated to the Coalition Georgian Dream – 46%. This is at a certain extent due to the peculiar format of the program, where the members of the majority, also their mayoral candidates were invited several times. The United National Movement and the government had equal portions of time – 17-17 percent. It is noteworthy that mostly the neutral tone prevails towards all the subjects. The shares of positive and negative tone are almost equally distributed in case of the government and the United National Movement (12 and 13 percent).



As for the mayoral candidates, like other subjects, here as well the most time was allocated to the candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream; which is also explained by

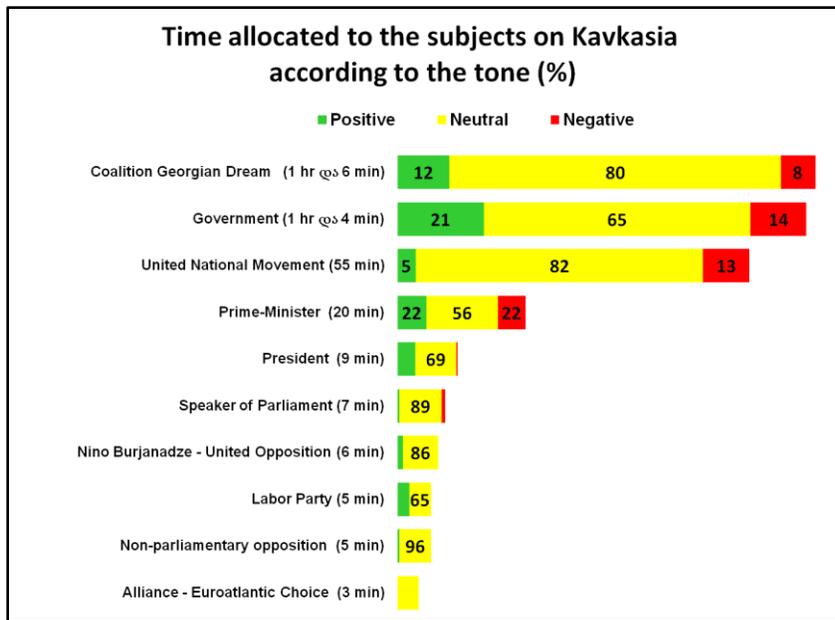
his visit to the studio. In regards to the allocated time, the candidate of “Nino Burjanadze - United Opposition” comes second – with 17 percent.

Kavkasia

During the first part of the monitoring, from April 15 until May 2, inclusive, the main news releases of the TV Company Kavkasia can be characterized as being neutral, informative and balanced. The journalists tried to deliver the positions of all the sides without their evaluations. Despite the majority of stories were diverse in regards to the provided information and number of coverage sources, still there is a lack of analytical stories. There were a few technical problems observed in the stories, and some cutting mistakes as well, when the comment made by the same source was repeated twice¹. In addition, there were also cases when the author of the comment was not identified in the subtitles, or when the journalist gave wrong names of respondents.

The time allocated to the monitoring subject on Kavkasia is similar to the results of other TV channels. In regards to the allocated time, the top three subjects are the Coalition Georgian Dream (27%), the government (26%) and the United National Movement (23%). From the viewpoint of the allocated time, the government has the highest rate of positive tone among the top four subjects – 21 percent. Out of these three subjects, the government has the highest rate of negative tone – 14%. However, in general, the Prime Minister ranks the first in regards to this indicator, as 22% of the time allocated to him contains negative tone. However, it is noteworthy that in case of the Prime Minister the positive and negative tones are equally distributed.

¹ Paata Zakareishvili’s comment in the news story broadcasted on April 17.



Like the majority of the monitored TV companies, Kavkasia allocated the biggest share of time to the mayoral candidates running for Tbilisi. They were covered for 8 minutes in total from April 15 until May 2, inclusive. Out of the total time allocated to the candidates, 53% was dedicated to the candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream. As for other candidates, they had less coverage than the representative of the Coalition Georgian Dream.

TV3

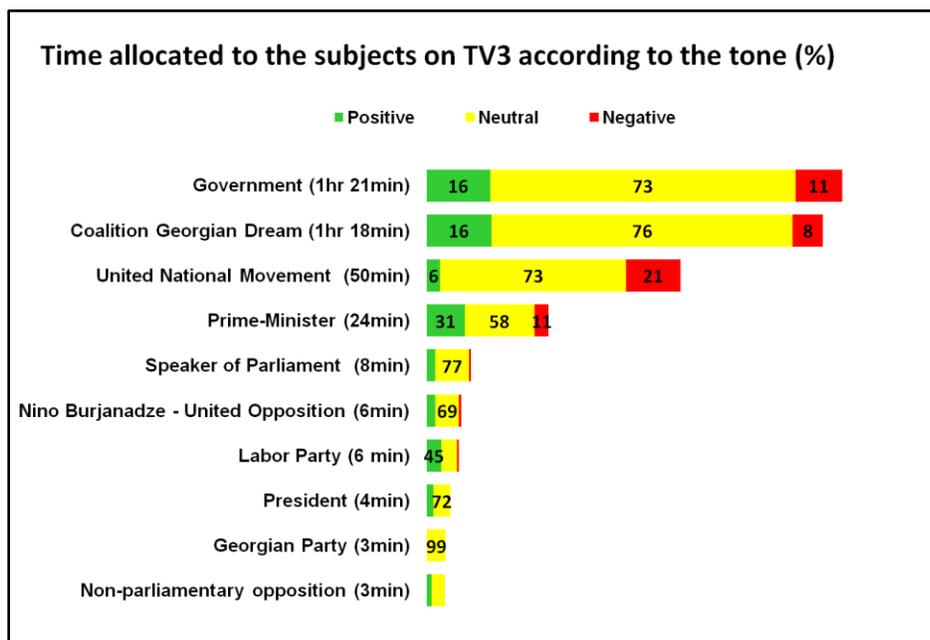
During the period of April 15-May 2, inclusive, the stories in the evening news programs of TV3 were mostly limited to information reporting, and there was less emphasis laid on analytics. There were critical stories prepared about the authorities and opposition representatives as well. The evening news presenter made evaluations and expressed critical comments himself, but this was directed to various sides represented in the stories².

The information presented in the news programs of TV3 provides more or less coverage of issues of current significance during the monitoring period. There was no case of

² E.g.: There is criticism and negative mentioning of Gigi Ugulava (the National Movement), also Irakli Shashiashvili (the Georgian Dream) in the tenth news of the news program on April 24 "Pre-election bluff, or a real project". Besides, there is also the second news story about the board of trustees on April 29.

leaving any topic of the day unreported on this channel. Despite this, we should point out the attitude of TV3 towards Mikheil Saakashvili. There were several critical and sometimes negative stories about the ex-president during the first part of the monitoring³.

In regards to the time allocation in the stories, the top three subjects are the government (30%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (29%) and the United National Movement (19%). After these three subjects, then the time dedicated to the Prime Minister stands out – 9%. As for other subjects, there was 13% of the remaining time allocated to them. Out of the top four subjects, who got the most time, the highest rate of positive tone is observed for the Prime Minister – 31 percent. The highest rate of negative tone was observed for the United National Movement – 21%.



As for the time allocated to mayoral candidates, the most coverage was provided for the Tbilisi mayoral candidates in the news programs. In total, 15 minutes were dedicated to them, and 61 percent of this time was allocated to the candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream. The remaining time was almost equally distributed among the candidates of other parties and unions.

³ For example, the third news on April 16, the sixth news on April 21, and the seventh news on April 23.

Conclusion

Compared to the monitoring of 2013, the number of analytical stories has increased in the majority of channels subjected to the election monitoring of 2014. Almost all the channels provided detailed and exhaustive coverage of topical and important issues of the day. The balance of respondents was observed and the audience was provided with comprehensive information. Besides, it is possible to say that in total, on majority of channels there was no clearly identified polarization to any political side. Often the positive or negative coverage of a certain subject depended on the contents of a highlighted particular event.

As for the mayoral candidates, so far quite little time has been allocated to the mayoral candidates in news programs from April 15 until May 2, inclusive. Besides, only the Tbilisi mayoral candidates were covered on all the channels (except the Adjara TV). Mayoral candidates from other cities were hardly ever covered anywhere. Adjara TV dedicated the most time to the Batumi mayoral candidate.

All the channels, with the exception of the Public Broadcaster, allocated the biggest share of time to Davit Narmania out of mayoral candidates. As for the Public Broadcaster, here the most time was dedicated to Asmat Tkabladze, Tbilisi mayoral candidate from the Labor Party, which is explained by her visit to the Moambe studio.