



## **Election Monitoring of TV Channels**

May 15 - June 15, 2013

In connection to the 2013 Presidential elections, CRRC renewed its media monitoring within the framework of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by EU and UNDP. The monitoring will continue from May 15 until November 15, 2013 and will cover the main evening news programs on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV and the following private channels: Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia and Channel 9. This report contains the media monitoring results from May 15 until June 15, 2013.

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

- Majority of the events taking place in the country during the period of May 15 – June 15 were covered in the news releases on all the channels. However, in some cases, some of the channels did not cover quite important news in their evening newscasts. For example, Channel 9 did not broadcast a report about poisoning the soldiers and neither did it cover the President’s statement about the killing of Georgian military personnel in Afghanistan. Such selection speaks about the general policy and a certain bias of the channel.
- The Public Broadcaster mostly provided an unbiased coverage of events and more or less covered all the topics of current significance. Despite this, the news items were more often based on dry facts and journalists rarely asked a question ‘why’ therein.

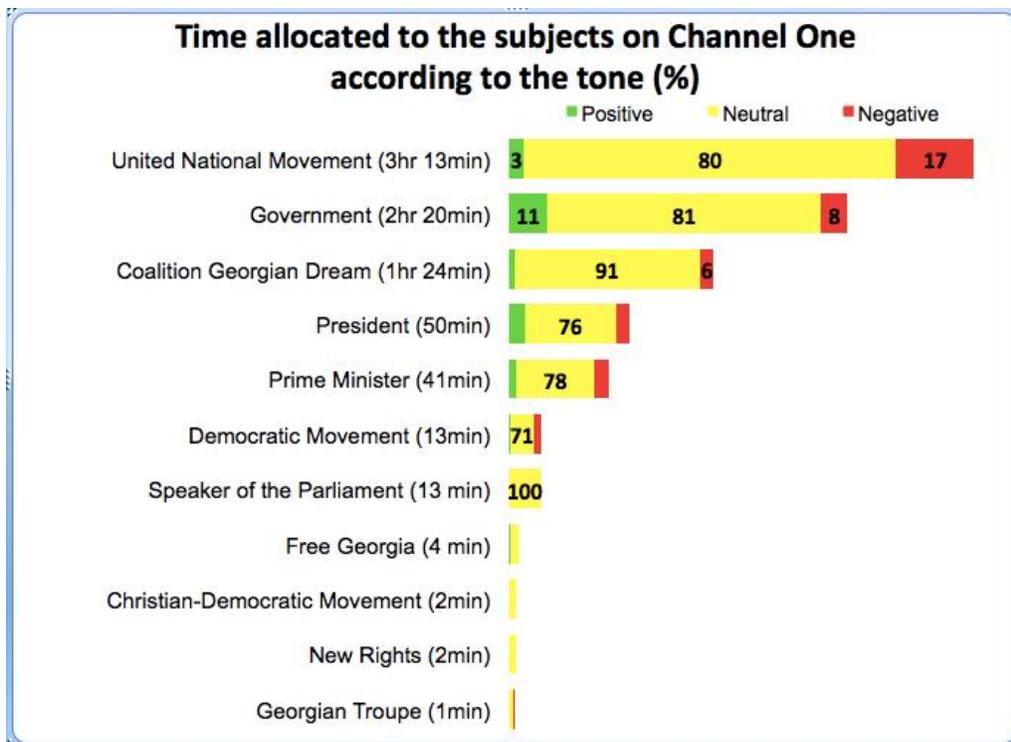
- Out of the private channels, negative coverage of the United National Movement and that of the President were observed on Channel 9, Imedi and - at a relatively less extent - on Kavkasia. However, Rustavi 2 showed the representatives of the previous government and the United National Movement positively by cutting and creating a general context of stories. This channel was also distinguished with negative coverage of the Prime Minister.
- Among the private channels, Maestro was the one where any special attitude to any of the sides was least observed. However, unlike previous authorities, less criticism was expressed towards the new authorities.
- News releases on Adjara TV were mostly focused on the local events in the region. However, while covering the problems of the region, the local authorities were mostly presented positively and less criticism was heard against them.
- During this period, one of the most important occasions was the events of May 17, which were covered on all the channels. Main emphasis was laid in the news reports on “Counter Rally” and its participants. Participants of the rally against homophobia and transphobia were less represented, neither were the terms well defined or properly used. You can find the analysis of coverage of the events of May 17 in the last part of this report.

Several very important events coincided with the first month of the monitoring, which were greatly followed up by the broadcasters and resulted in promoting the topics that were interesting ones for the monitoring. For example: demonstrations of May 17, detention of Vano Merabishvili and Zurab Chiaberashvili, killing of Georgian soldiers in Afghanistan, session of the Security Council and video on Jihad, relocation of the occupation line by Russian border guards, amendments to the Labor Code and changes in the education system.

Five main subjects were identified on all the channels while discussing these topics: the United National Movement, the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream, the President and the Prime Minister, to whom the largest portion of time was allocated (with the exception of Adjara TV, where the biggest attention was paid to the local authorities of Adjara). As for other political parties, they were quite seldom covered in the main evening news programs – less than 10 minutes were dedicated to these parties during the month on each channel.

### **Channel One of the Public Broadcaster**

During the monitoring period, Channel One of the Public Broadcaster responded to almost all the significant events taking place in the country in its 8 o'clock Moambe, and covered social themes together with political ones. For example, Channel One was the only one to cover a story about the demand on teaching the Chechen language at schools in Pankisi. There was less bias observed in the news releases of the Channel One towards any political force, which was also reflected in the quantitative data as well in a way that the neutral tone prevailed towards main subjects, and there were no high rates of positive or negative coverage observed there. The most negative coverage was revealed against the United National Movement, which at some extent can be linked to the detention of Vano Merabishvili and Zurab Chiaberashvili.



There was an attempt of equal presentation of several sides observed in the news items on Channel One. Despite this, while providing information, the stories constructed on dry facts were more frequent and the lack of analysis was felt.

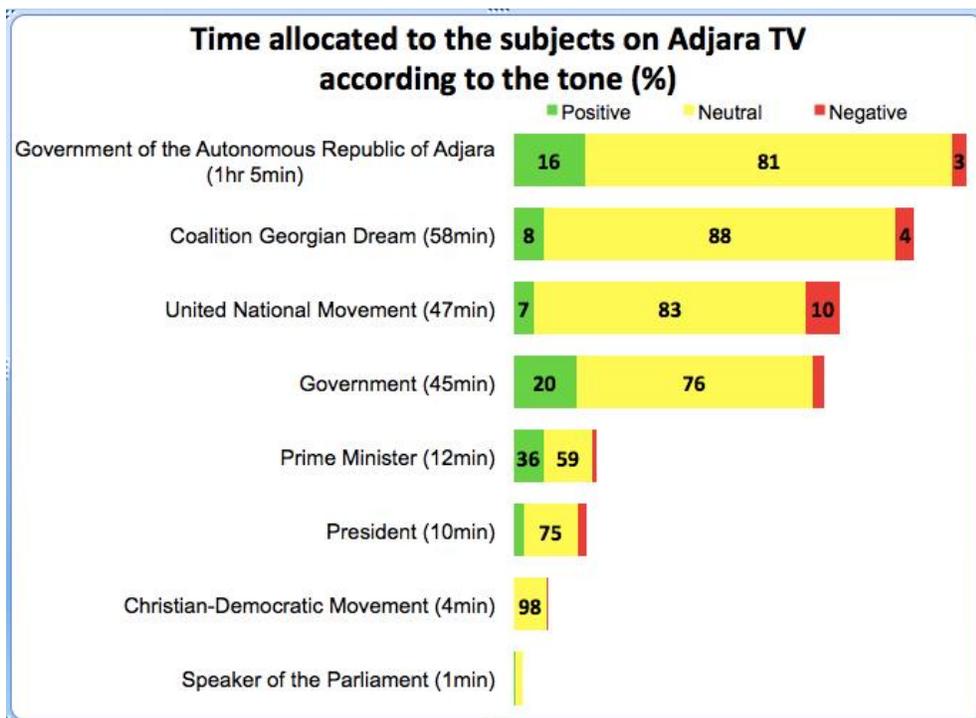
The news report broadcasted on June 13 about the funeral of Georgian soldiers killed in Afghanistan should be pointed out. This topic was covered by all the channels. However, very heavy pictures, which were selected for the story, were eye-catching on the Channel One, and this made the story contents even heavier but did not actually provide any additional information.

### **Adjara TV**

News releases on Adjara TV were mostly focused on the events taking place in the Adjara region, and on the activities of the Adjarian Government and local self-government. Important events happening throughout the country, which were among the top-three news on other channels, were rarely represented in the beginning of the

program. Out of the monitoring subjects, four ones were covered most of all: Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, the Coalition Georgian Dream, the United National Movement and the [central] government.

It is interesting that unlike other channels, positive coverage of subjects was more observed in the news releases on Adjara TV. For example, news items on local problems laid emphasis on problem solution and on the involvement of local government in these issues. Often there were stories about the meeting of representatives of the Adjarian and central governments with the population, which mostly showed the satisfaction and hopeful disposition of the population. Correspondingly, 16 and 20 percent of the time allocated to the government of Adjara and to the central government were covered with positive tone, and in case of the Prime Minister, the share of positive coverage was 36 percent. At the same time, there was less criticism heard in regards to the representatives of the authorities and the local government. The highest indicator of negative coverage (10 percent only) was observed in regards to the United National Movement.



## **Private TV Companies**

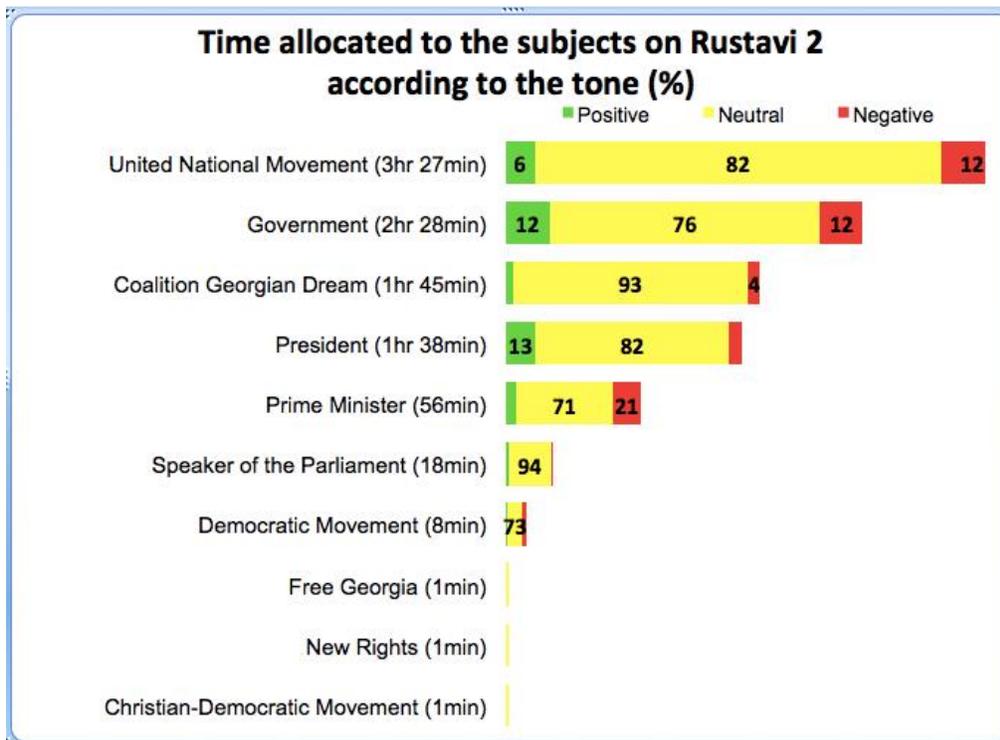
Based on the results of the first month of the monitoring of 2013 (May 15 - June 15) there was no pre-election tension observed in the news releases. However, there was a bias identified at some of the private channels in regards to one of the two main political forces.

### **Rustavi 2**

The news program on **Rustavi 2** has improved compared to the election monitoring of 2012. It has become more informative and analytical than it was during the parliamentary elections and there was less bias felt in the journalist's texts or pictures. However, despite all the above mentioned, the channel's bias for the favor of the former authorities and the United National Movement was still clearly expressed, especially when selecting the topics and cutting the news items.

For example, the news report broadcasted on May 26 "Military Award", which was about awarding the military personnel by the President Saakashvili and his visit to Afghanistan, left positive impression about the President. The President's lengthy speech was fully broadcasted and in total, the whole story looked like a President's PR campaign rather than a news report. It is interesting that the pictures of the President, who was talking to a military officer during lunch, was cut and did not contain the part, which other channels used for presenting the President ironically.

As for the quantitative data, big share of positive tone was not revealed on Rustavi 2 towards any of the subjects. However, quite high indicator of the Prime Minister's negative coverage should be pointed out - 21 percent.

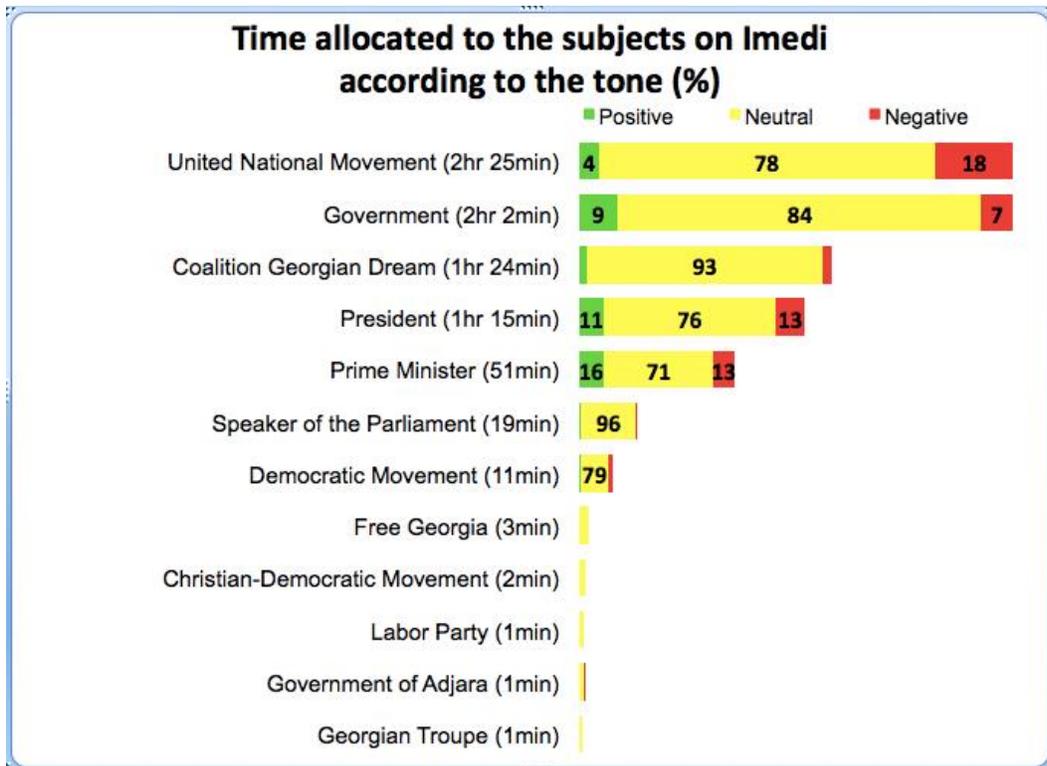


## Imedi TV

**Imedi's** news program responded to all the main events taking place in the country. However, often there were reports, which did not represent interesting news for the public for that moment. It is noteworthy that most part of the stories broadcasted on Imedi about the monitoring subjects emphasized the problems in the country, and linked these problems to the former authorities. Besides, there was a special emphasis laid on the changes carried out by the new authorities, and the contrast was underlined as well, which supported the negative presentation for the former authorities and positive presentation of the new one. For example, in the news item of June 9 "Soldiers killed in Afghanistan: ceremony of transferring the bodies to the homeland" the journalist said: "This time the authorities do not keep the names and number of killed soldiers secret. Tradition of burying secretly the soldiers killed in Afghanistan has

changed. Commander-in-chief and the opposition too are participating in the mourning ceremony which is open to everyone.”

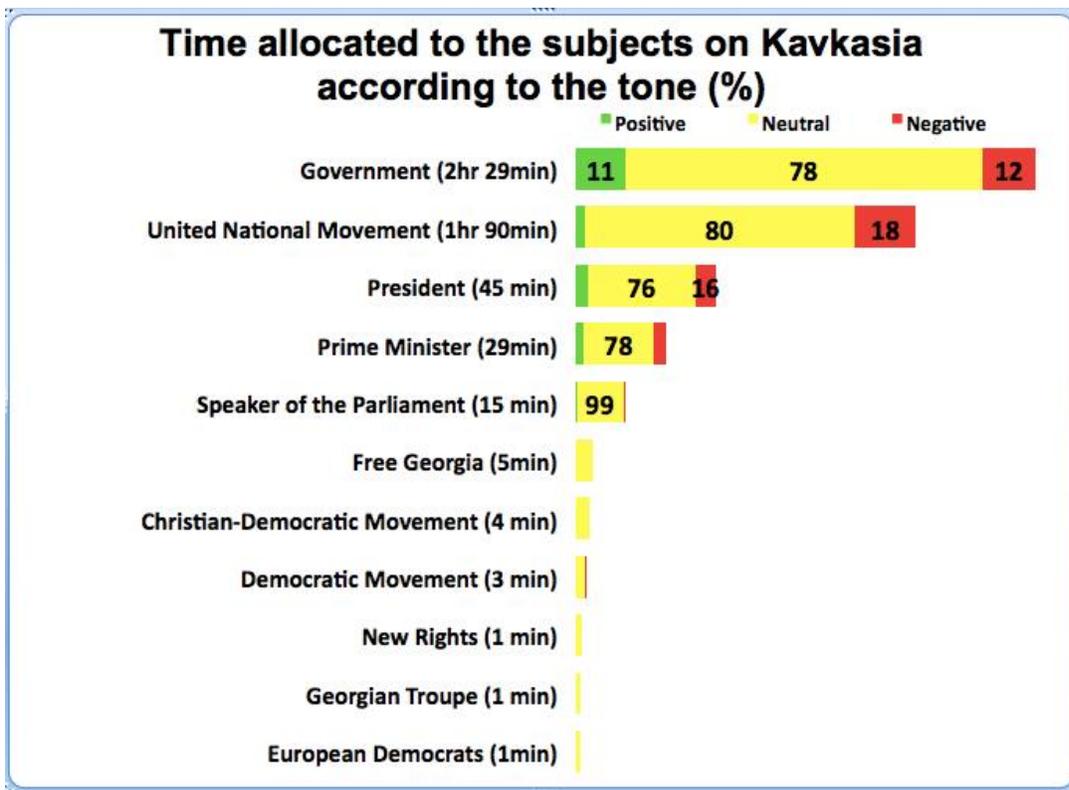
The trend of reviling at former authorities was at some extent reflected in the quantitative data as well. The United National Movement was the subject to which the most time was allocated in the evening “Kronika” on Imedi, and 18 percent of this time (highest indicator of negative tone) was covered with negative tone. At the same time, the criticism of present authorities was least observed on Imedi.



## Kavkasia

As for the news releases on **Kavkasia**, the quantitative data collected during the monitoring period suggested that negative tone was observed towards all the subjects to which more than 29 minutes were allocated (the government, the United National

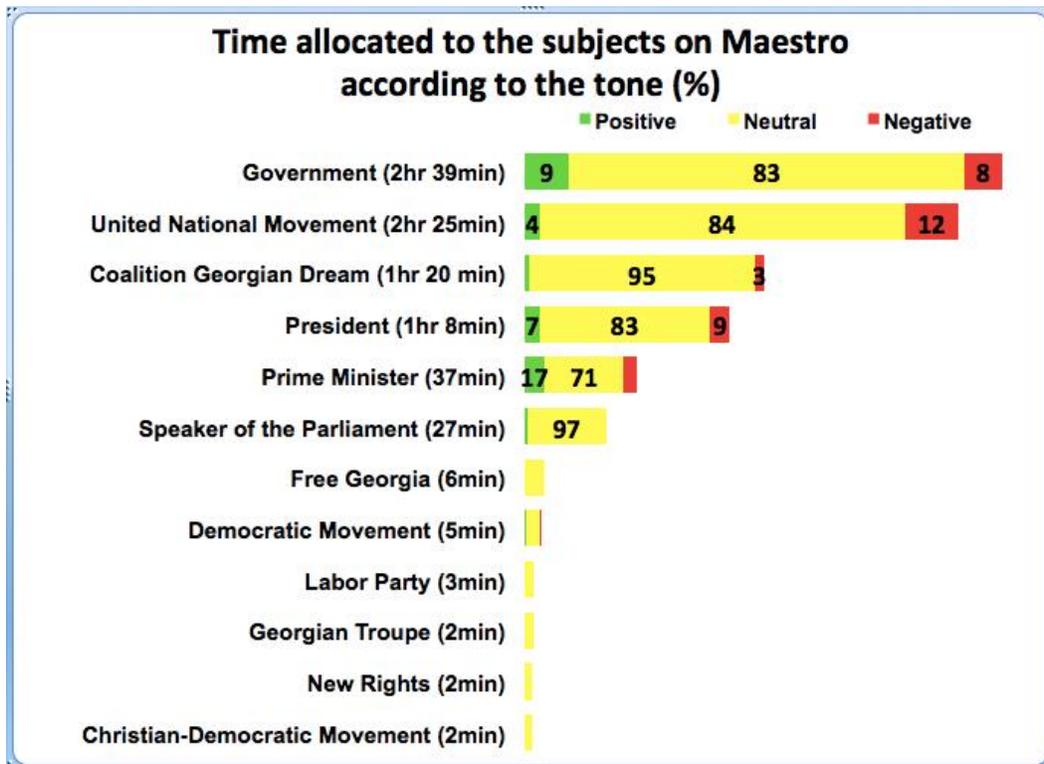
Movement, the President and the Prime Minister). Besides, it is noteworthy that the government was the subject that was covered with positive tone most of all. Despite the overall impression of the reports was mostly neutral, quite a negative coverage of the President, the United National Movement and the members of the former government was eye-catching. Besides, their direct speech was relatively rare in the reports. In some cases a journalist expressed his/her reference concerning a certain subject, and in a negative context by the way, which was delivered to the audience as a fact. These facts point on a bias at some extent. Moreover, the lack of analytical reports was observed on Kavkasia as well. The news was only limited to delivering dry facts and lacked analysis.



News release of June 5 is to be pointed out, where swearing of a man was heard live from the studio, but outside the frame, right from the beginning of the first news.

## Maestro

On **Maestro**, the news items were mostly balanced during the period from May 15 to June 15, and it was possible to hear various sides and opinions around the topic of the discussion. The reports were often analytical and were not limited only to the provision of dry facts. It is possible to point out based on the quantitative and qualitative data that the news covered on **Maestro** were less biased. However, we also encounter cases when the reports were heavily loaded with pictures of negative contents, or when the journalist's tone was cynical and biased. The United National Movement had the biggest share of negative tone – 12 percent, whereas the Prime Minister had the most share of positive tone – 17 percent.



During the parliamentary elections of 2012, **Maestro** had a critical attitude towards the activities of the authorities, and managed to express such criticism, which sometimes presented the government negatively, without violating the journalism standards. During the period of May 15 to June 15, **Maestro** managed to maintain critical attitude

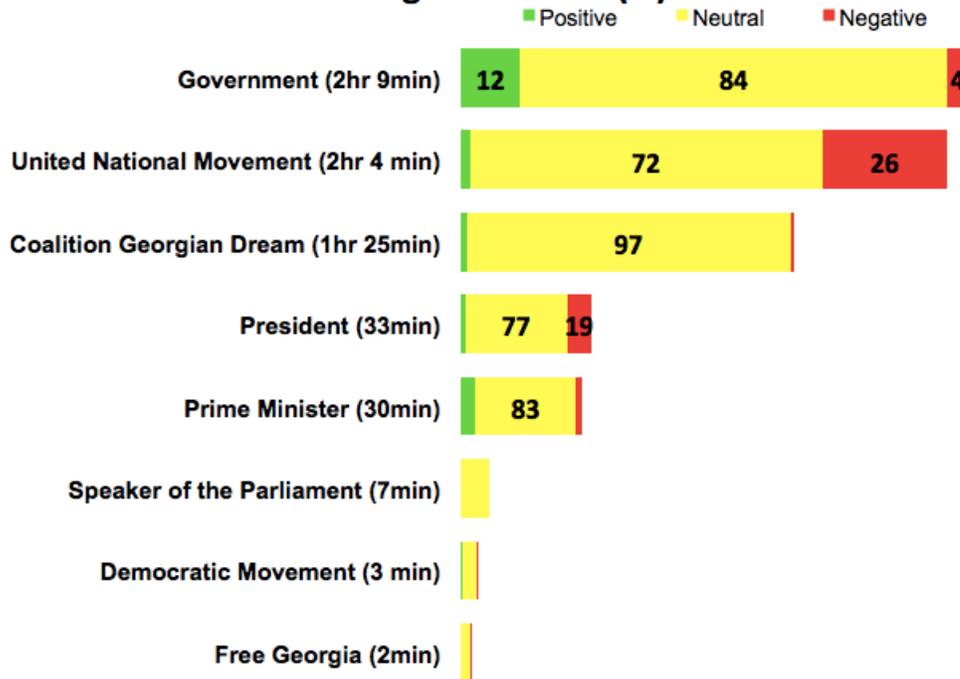
to the present authorities. However, from the quantitative point of view, the number of critical news has decreased significantly after the new government came into power.

### **Channel 9**

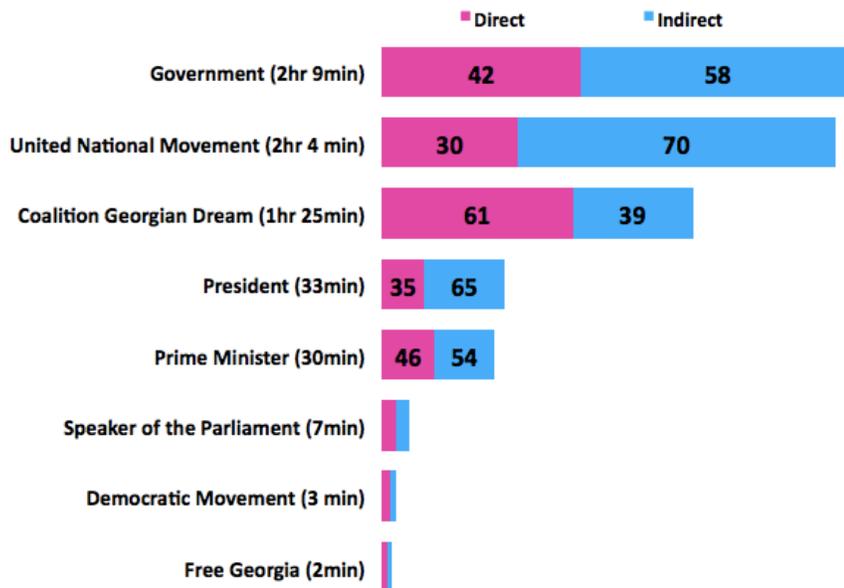
Based on the quantitative and qualitative data it is possible to say that the **Channel 9** was quite biased while covering various political sides. Often the stories were not balanced in regards to presenting the information from different angles. According to the quantitative data, the United National Movement had the highest indicator of coverage with negative tone - 26 percent. When speaking about the representatives of the former authorities, the journalists often used negative and humiliating phrases. Besides, the least time was dedicated to this subject for direct speech. It is noteworthy that the Channel 9 is the only one among the monitored 7 channels, where such a big percentage of negative tone was observed in regards to any subject.

On the other hand, compared to other subjects, the government and the Prime Minister had a high rate of positive coverage. As for the subject Coalition Georgian Dream, it was distinguished with the high percentage of direct speech.

### Time allocated to the subjects on Channel 9 according to the tone (%)



### Time allocated to the subjects on Channel 9 Direct-Indirect Speech (%)



During the monitoring period, several important events were left uncovered in main evening news on Channel 9. There was no coverage about poisoning of soldiers. Neither was there broadcasted the President's statement about the killing of Georgian soldiers in Afghanistan, which was covered by other channels.

Several errors were observed during the monitoring period. One of such errors was found in the report broadcasted on June 6. For the reception arranged for celebrating the Queen Elisabeth's 60<sup>th</sup> coronation anniversary, translations of interviews of the ambassadors of the United States and Great Britain were messed up: the British Ambassador's speech was accompanied with the translation of the US Ambassador's speech and vice versa.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the first month of the election monitoring of 2013, it is possible to say that the TV companies have not started operating in the elections mode yet. There is less emphasis laid on presidential candidates. The period from May 15 until June 15 was loaded with political or civil events, during which the monitoring subjects were actively covered. The monitored TV Channels covered basically all the important events in their main news programs, but sometimes some of the channels would leave this or that event uncovered in accordance with their news policy.

Despite there was no clear bias revealed to any political force, in regards to allocation of time from the quantitative point of view, or providing especially positive or negative coverage, also cutting the stories, selection of topics, balance of opinions represented in the news items, etc., the political bias of channels was still notable. The Channel 9, Imedi and Kavkasia, though with relatively less extent, were distinguished with negative presentation of the United National Movement, representatives of the former authorities and the President. Rustavi 2 covered these subjects in a more positive light. Bias to any of the side was the least observed on Maestro and Public Broadcaster.

Criticism was less heard on Adjara TV and it mostly provided a positive coverage of local authorities.

## **Demonstration of May 17 against Homophobia and Transphobia**

### **(Coverage in main news releases on May 16, 17 and 18)**

One of the important events taken place during the monitoring period (May 15 – June 15) was the events developed on May 17: the demonstration planned on the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, and counter-demonstration arranged against it. On May 16, 17 and 18, main news releases of all the seven monitored TV channels dedicated whole series of reports about the demonstrations of May 17.

There is a common trend observed on all the channels: main emphasis was laid on ‘counter-rally’ and its participants in the news. Participants of the demonstration against homophobia and transphobia were less represented, and the terms were not clarified well. There were cases in the programs, when the journalists used the following phrases: “rally of sexual minorities” (news item “Rally of May 17” in the evening news on the Public Broadcaster on May 16), “pride parade planned by sexual minorities” (evening news on Adjara TV on May 16).

### **Channel One of the Public Broadcaster**

The news item “Rally of May 17” broadcasted on May 16 in the evening news of the Public Broadcaster provided rallies planned for the next day and opinions about it. In this report the journalist used the term “Rally of Sexual Minorities” in the very beginning. However, various opinions and sides were presented there, and the goals of both rallies were explained. In the same news item the representative of an NGO

Identity clarified that this was not a “gay pride”, but rather a protest rally conducted in regards to human rights.

The Channel One dedicated almost all the program to the arranged demonstrations in the evening news on May 17. The program covered the events taken place during the day, they showed victims and provided comments about the happenings from the side of politicians, non-government organizations, Patriarch’s Office, the President, the Prime Minister and others.

### **Adjara TV**

On May 16, Adjara TV dedicated two news items to the rallies planned for May 17. None of these reports were balanced and neither did it show all the sides. It is interesting that the journalist used the phrase – “pride planned by sexual minorities”, which did not reflect the reality and misled the audience. In the second news item the main emphasis was laid on the statement of the Patriarch’s Office. Besides, nobody was represented from the organizers or supporters of the demonstration against homophobia. Correspondingly, the audience was not provided with the information about what rallies were planned on May 17, who conducted these rallies and about what they were arranged.

Main evening news release of May 17 was relatively more informative. The very first report provided the events developed on Rustaveli Avenue in a chronological order. However, the news item was not balanced in regards to different opinions, and did not represent two sides. On May 18, Adjara TV prepared two reports on this topic: evaluation of the events of May 17, rallies arranged at the Chancellery on May 18 and response of the international media. Positions and evaluations of both sides participating in the rallies on May 17 were covered together with the comments by the NGOs. Still, the stories were not completely balanced because they did not contain the positions of the government and those of the politicians.

## **Private Channels**

On May 16, all the monitored private channels dedicated at least one news item to the rallies planned on May 17. The news items also clarified what these rallies were about; they presented not only the sides participating in the rallies, but also the NGOs, human right activists and politicians almost everywhere.

On May 17, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia and Channel 9 dedicated almost the whole evening news program to the events developed during the day. The broadcasted reports contained various opinions and showed the participants of both rallies. Besides, they showed the rallies against homophobia arranged in Kutaisi, response and evaluations of politicians, the government, the Prime Minister, the President, the NGOs, the Patriarch's Office and other religious confessions and the international media.

In the evening news release on May 17, Rustavi 2 dedicated 13 news items to the events developed during the day. These reports provided a full description of the happenings and informed the audience about the evaluations and opinions expressed about the rallies. In regards to presenting different sides, the program of Rustavi 2 was balanced. However, single cases can be singled out: obscene words expressed by a priest were not covered in the very first news item "Confrontation on Rustaveli".

Besides, the news item "Noisy Rallies", which was broadcasted on May 17 on Rustavi, is also interesting. This report was about those rallies held in the past, in which the priests participated and which turned into a confrontation. There were only two such rallies shown in the report: the rally held at the Ilia State University, and the incident taken place in the air of the TV Company Kavkasia. However, ultimately it was not completely clear to the audience how they could have been linked to the events of May 17. Such linkage was not clearly seen in this report. Inasmuch as the report did not provide anybody's comment, and it was completely based on the archive pictures.

In its evening news on May 17, Imedi touched upon almost all the topics taken place during the day, and dedicated 13 reports to the happenings in general. The news items were quite balanced, provided different opinions and positions.

There were no special cases observed in the evening news about the events of May 17 on Maestro and Kavkasia. The programs covered important events of the day, and provided the opinions of representatives of various sides.

Channel 9 dedicated 7 news items to the events of May 17, out of which one was a live broadcast with Eka Beselia (Coalition Georgian Dream) and Helen Khoshtaria (Head of the Georgia's Reforms Associates). It is noteworthy that the very first news of the Channel 9 "Rally vs. Rally" showed the rally against homophobia and its participants, their gathering and their comments as well. Unlike other monitored channels, this was the only case when we could have a closer look at the rally against homophobia in the evening news release. In general, the Channel 9 fully covered the events taken place during the day. Various sides and different evaluations were discussed.

Private channels again allocated time to the events of the previous day in the evening news releases on May 18. They also covered the rallies arranged at the Chancellery on May 18, one of which was against the violence of May 17, and the other - the rally against homophobia and transphobia.