



## **Election Monitoring of TV Channels**

### **News Releases**

May 3-23, 2014

In connection to the local elections of 2014, CRRC Georgia continues the media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU and UNDP. The monitoring started on April 15 and will last until June 30, inclusive. The monitoring is performed for the main evening news releases on Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia and TV3. This report describes the media monitoring results from May 3 through May 23 2014.

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

- The number of analytical stories has increased in most part of the monitored channels. Actualities and significant topics were mostly covered exhaustively and in details.
- The majority of channels prepared critical stories about the government and government members.
- Negative and critical attitudes towards the government were more observed in main news programs on Rustavi 2. However, TV3 broadcasted the news releases with stories prepared in negative contexts towards the United National Movement. We did not observe similar trends that would be that evident on other channels.
- Coverage of all the subjects with positive tone increased significantly on all the channels (except Maestro). This was mostly due to the increased coverage of election campaigns. Besides, various political figures visited Georgia during this

period, which was actively reported by all the channels and where various Georgian politicians were often shown in a positive context.

- During May 3 through May 23, there was more time dedicated to the mayoral candidates as compared to the previous period. However, all the channels (except Adjara TV) covered only the Tbilisi mayoral candidates. Mayoral candidates in other cities were hardly ever highlighted by any of the monitored channels.
- Adjara TV allocated more time to the Batumi mayoral candidates.

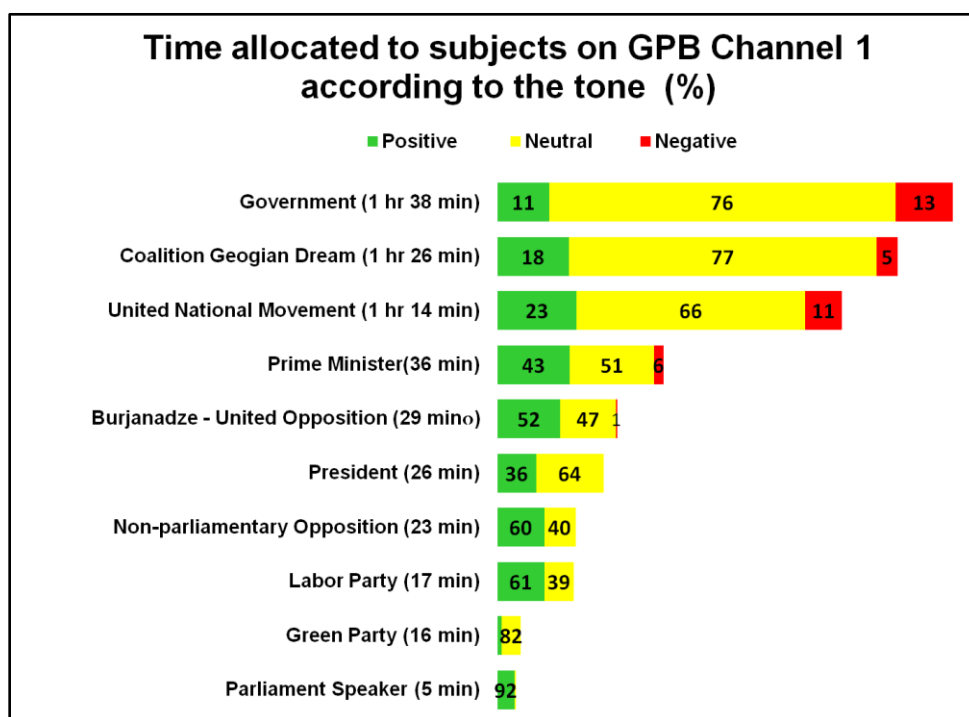
The monitored TV channels covered many topical and important issues related to the currently ongoing events in the country in their main news releases during this monitoring period. These were: NDI's pre-election research, Tbilisi Summit 2014, constitutional amendments, wiretappings, convention of the United National Movement and their election number, details about the May 26 celebration, bonuses paid to the government officials, visits of Herman van Rompuy and François Hollande, events developed in Dariali gorge, discussion about the person to sign the Association Agreement, election topics and campaigns of candidates.

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

During May 3-23, inclusive, the main evening news releases on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster mostly broadcasted extensive and analytical stories. The reporters clearly tried to provide neutral coverage of the reported stories, despite its negative or positive contents. The stories were mostly balanced and presented different positions around the highlighted issue.

This period was especially marked with the broad and detailed coverage of the draft law on defense and the law on public service. The stories presented exhaustive information and provided clarifications about the content of these laws: what they envisaged, why the law on public service entered into force now, relevance of the draft law on defense with the Constitution, etc. Likewise, there were pretty extensive and informative stories about the Tbilisi Summit, and about the visits of Herman Van Rompuy and François Hollande to Georgia.

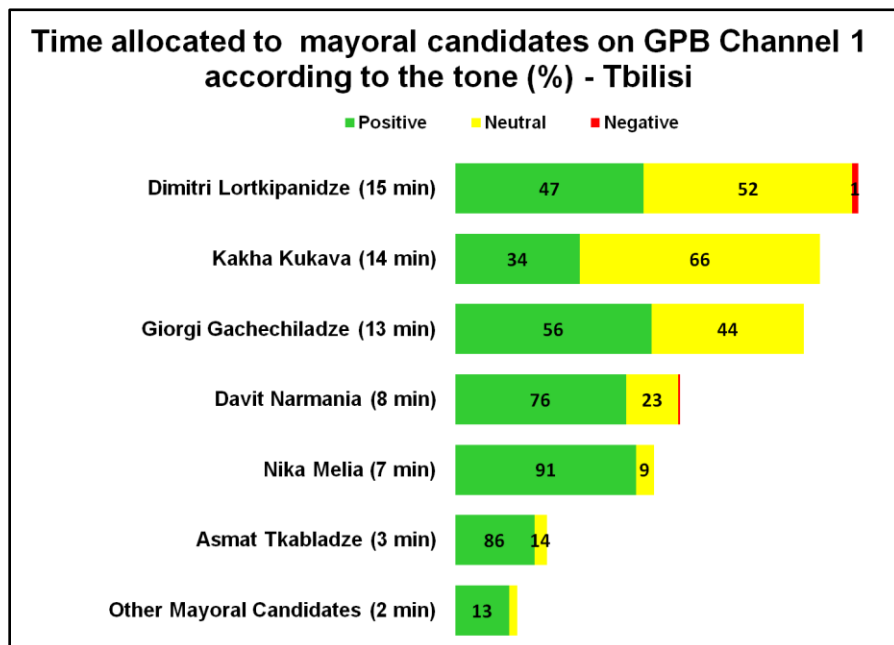
As for the time allocated to the subjects, the most time was allocated to the following three subjects: the government (23%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (20%) and the United National Movement<sup>1</sup> (18%). Other subjects got 8% or less. It is noteworthy that on almost all the channels, including the Channel One too, the share of positive tone increased in case of all the subjects during the period of May 3-23, inclusive. This is at some extent the result of active coverage of the election themes. Besides, visits of several political figures to Georgia coincided with this monitoring period. These events were actively covered by all the channels, with participation of the Prime Minister, government members and other politicians.



As for mayoral candidates, every main news release contained coverage of mayoral candidates and their election activities on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster. Besides, a mayoral candidate of various parties would be invited to the studio every Saturday. In total, 1 hour and 7 minutes were allocated to the candidates running in Tbilisi during this period; and the top three subjects are given below with the almost equally distributed time: Dimitri Lortkipanidze (24%), Kakha Kukava (21%) and Gia Gachechiladze (20%). As it is the case of main subjects, here as well the positive tone

<sup>1</sup>The parties shown in this Chart also includes the time dedicated to their mayoral candidates as well.

prevailed in case of the candidates, which is explained by their appearances and activities during their election campaigns.



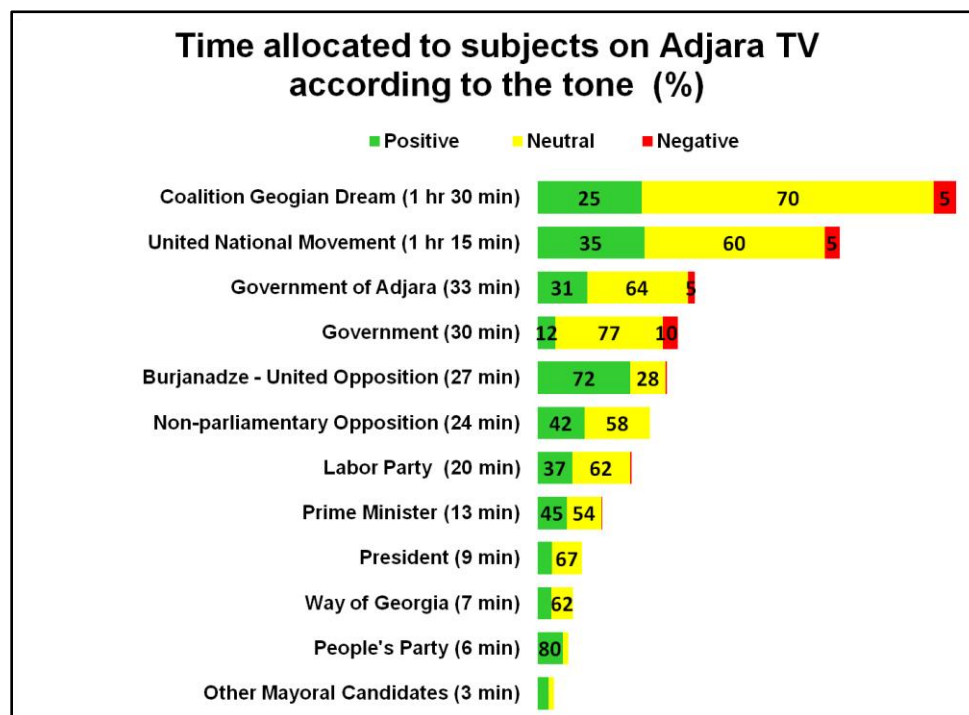
## Adjara TV

In regards to the main evening news releases on Adjara TV, the results of this monitoring period let us say that the majority of stories kept the balance, reported the actualities objectively and presented diverse respondents. The journalists tried not to use judgmental vocabulary and were focused on fact reporting.

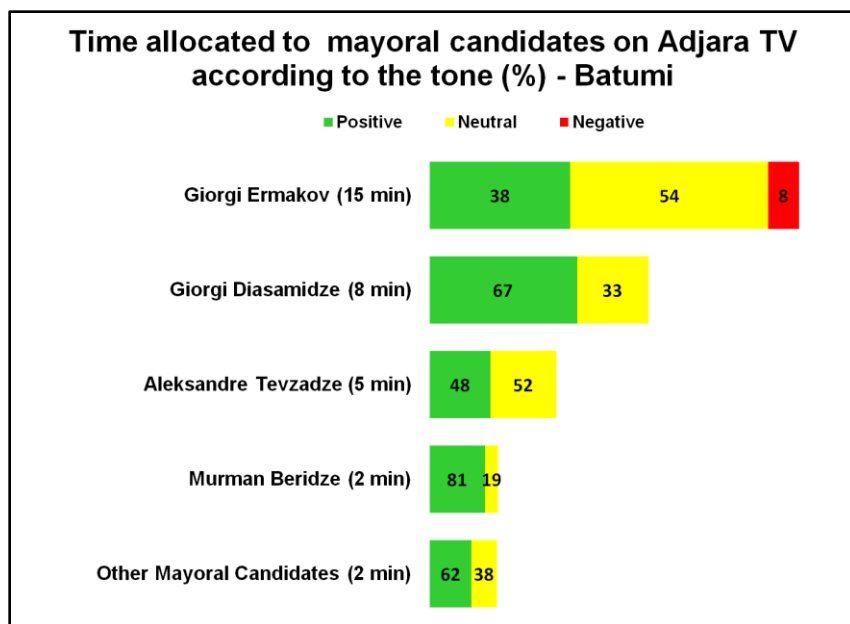
Like the previous monitoring period, news releases of Adjara TV allocated much time to the discussion of local issues and to the discussion of social infrastructure and environmental problems during May 3-23, inclusive.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, there were two political subjects identified, to whom the most time was allocated – the Coalition Georgian Dream (27%) and the United National Movement (19%). Significant time was also dedicated to the government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara (10%). It is noteworthy that other than the Parliamentary political parties, the Adjara TV also allocated significant airtime to other political subjects as well. During this monitoring period, the news program hosted the representatives of “Burjanadze – United Opposition“, the non-parliamentary

opposition and the Labor Party. Positive coverage of subjects increased due to the active reporting about the elections.



Like the local issues, while covering the mayoral candidates, Adjara TV allocated more time to the mayoral candidates running for Batumi. Compared to the first monitoring period, the coverage of election campaigns of political parties increased during May 3-23. Stories about election promises and objectives of particular candidates were often prepared. The balance among political subjects was observed while covering the election topics. The most time was allocated to the candidates running in Batumi – 36 minutes in total. Out of them, the largest portion of time was dedicated to the candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream - Giorgi Ermakov (42%). Other candidates got almost equal portions of time. Tone-wise, it is possible to say that the positive tone prevailed in regards to the coverage of all the candidates, which is explained by the active coverage of their election campaigns and meetings with public.



## Rustavi 2

Main evening news programs of Rustavi 2 provided the balanced and analytical coverage of topical issues in its stories during May 3-23, inclusive. The journalists were trying to report information in details and present the respondents having different opinions in their stories. Much time was dedicated during this period to the surveillance cameras hidden in the building of Rustavi 2 and in general, to the topic of wiretapping and covert recordings. Besides, the results of NDI research were covered in details, together with the visits of foreign delegations to Georgia. There was an increased coverage of stories on elections and also about the election campaigns of subjects.

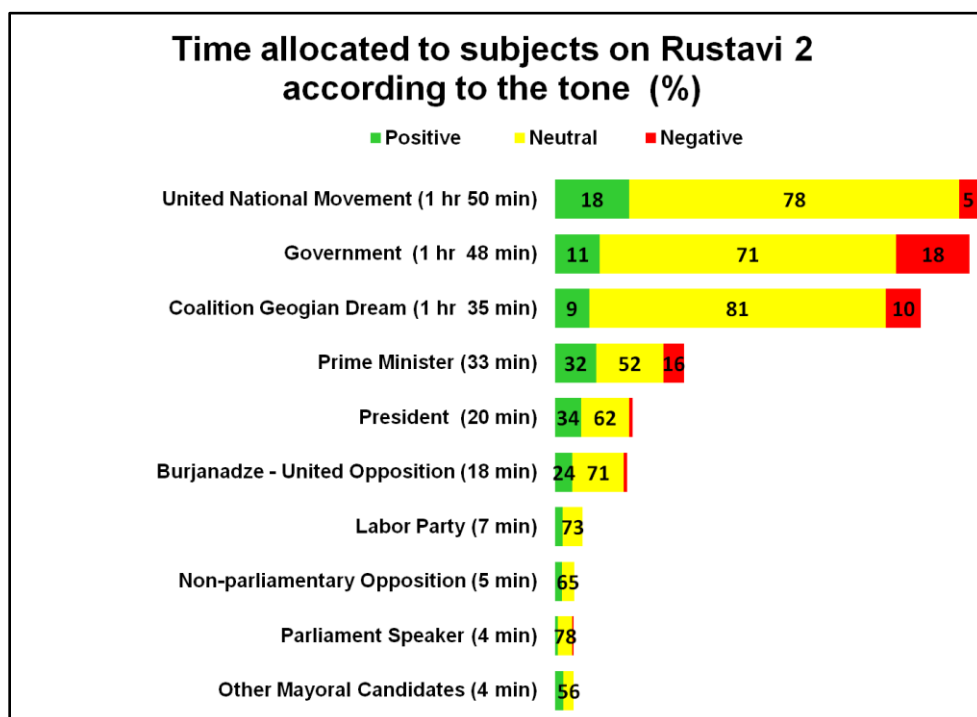
We should, however, point out the attitude towards the government in the stories of Rustavi 2. Despite the government members in some stories were presented in the positive light<sup>2</sup>, there was a general trend of increasing the number of critical stories about the government, where the negative context was often visible. Besides, we should point out the attitude of the channel towards the United National Movement, which was demonstrated by broad coverage of activities of members of this party. Some issues, which were related to the United National Movement and its members, would often be covered by Rustavi 2 only: for example, Mikheil Saakashvili's visits to Ukraine

<sup>2</sup>For example, the fifth news on May 6 about the Tbilisi Summit, and the third story on May 13 about the participation of the Georgian army in the EU Mission.

and Giorgi Vashadze, who was invited on May 19, when he spoke about a possibility to introduce the model of Public Service Halls in Ukraine. The overall observation is that the members of the United National Movement were covered in a positive context.

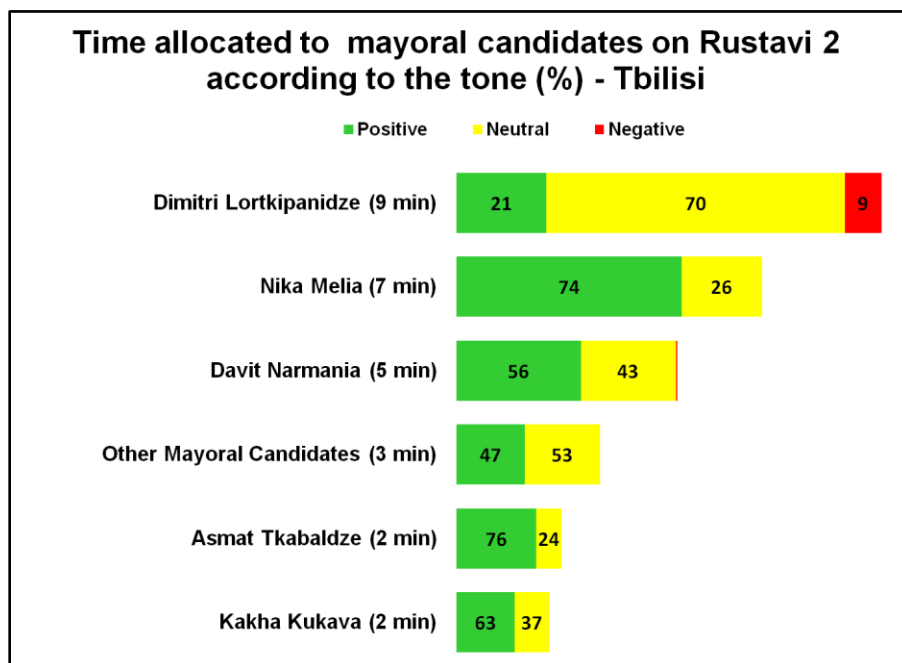
We should also point out the talk show broadcasted in the last segment of the news program on Fridays, hosted by Paata Iakobashvili. Although there have been only two programs broadcasted so far and it is difficult to speak about any trend, it was observed that the host often expressed his own opinion<sup>3</sup> and acted in opposition to the guests. The host was critical to the government and the Coalition Georgian Dream.

This attitude found its reflection on the tone distribution chart, where 18% of the time allocated to the United National Movement had positive coverage, and 5% - negative. As for the government, here the positive tone indicator is 11%, and the negative – 18%. The Prime Minister has 32% of positive tone, which is basically the result of his frequent appearances during the visits of foreign delegations in Tbilisi, and 16% of negative tone.



<sup>3</sup>May 23, on signing the Association Agreement – “Probably, Shalakho would be the best match for the things going on now about the signature;” on the election promises – “We are not stating that the ministers, deputies and MPs don’t need money. They should get their salaries and they should feel comfortable when they are on business trips. We just want to advise you not to believe their promises ever again when they say that the politicians will spend less when they come to power.”

As for mayoral candidates, Rustavi 2 allocated the most time – 30 minutes in total - to Tbilisi mayoral candidates, like other channels. According to the allocated time, all the key mayoral candidates had almost equal coverage. Besides, positive coverage of candidates has increased as well. The most time was allocated to Dimitri Lortkipanidze and he was covered with positive tone for 21% of this time. It is noteworthy that he also had the highest rate of negative tone – 9%. We should also point out the positive tone observed for Nika Melia – 74%.



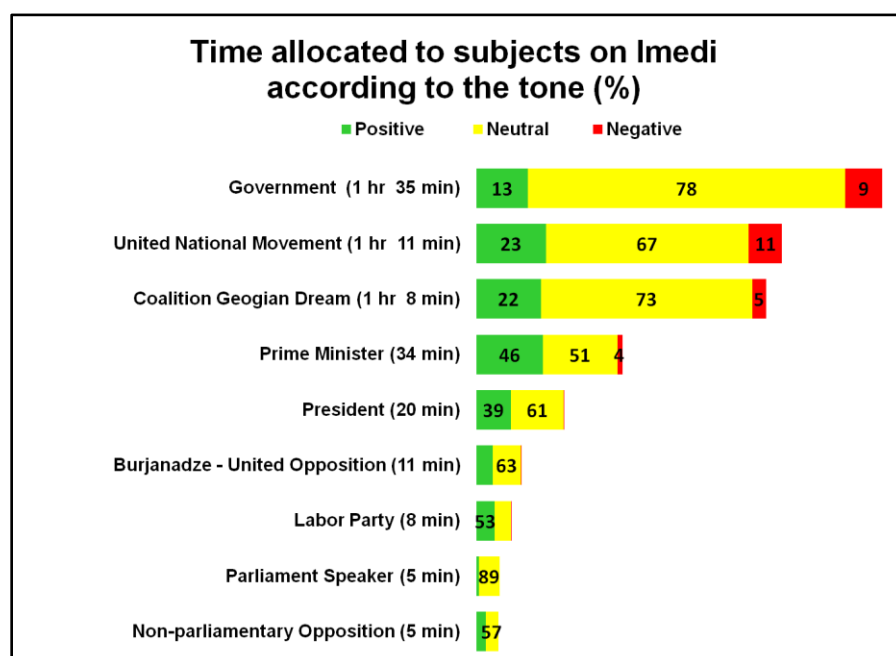
## Imedi

Imedi broadcasted the balanced, neutral and unbiased stories in its main news programs during May 3 through May 23. Analytical stories were found more frequently in the beginning of the news releases, but the second part of these programs mostly presented the brief news stories. The news contained diverse opinions expressed by various sides regarding the discussed issue. However, there were some cases when the stories did not present the position of a certain side.

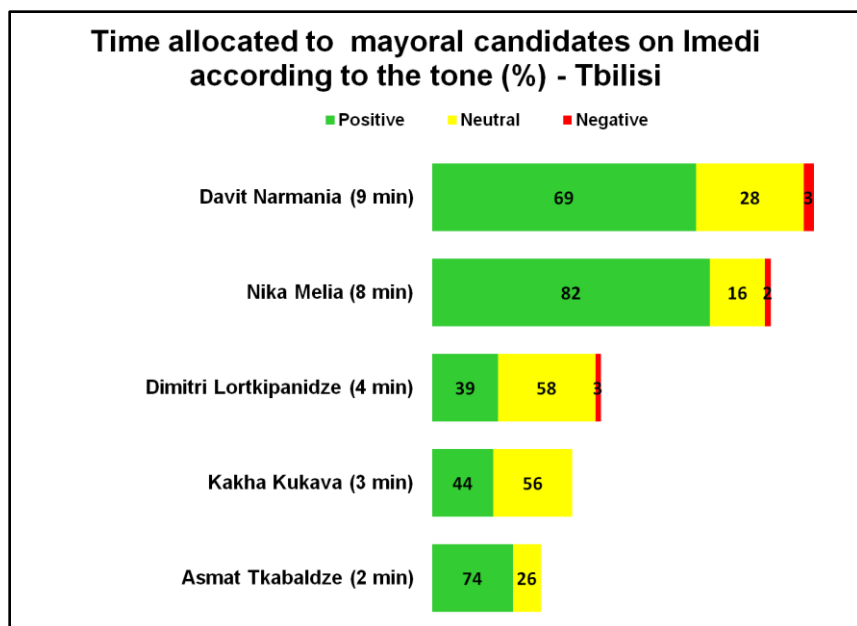
It is noteworthy that like the previous period, there were critical stories prepared during May 3-23 about the government and the ruling team and the United National Movement as well. Like other TV channels, coverage of election topics increased, where the electoral subjects were covered almost equally.



There were three main subjects that stood out based on the time allocated to them in the stories – the government (29%), the United National Movement (22%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (21%). As it was the case on other channels, here as well there are high rates of positive tone observed towards all the subjects on Imedi during this monitoring period. Similar rate of positive tone was greatly caused by the increased number of stories on elections. We should also point out the high rates of positive tone in case of the Prime Minister and the President. We may assume that this was largely caused by the visits of presidents of various states and foreign delegations to Georgia, as the leaders of the state were positively presented in the related stories.



As for the coverage of mayoral candidates, Imedi provided the most active coverage for the Tbilisi mayoral candidates during this monitoring period. In total, there were 30 minutes allocated to them, and most part of this time was dedicated to two candidates – Davit Narmania (the Coalition Georgian Dream) and Nika Melia (the United National Movement). The time was equally distributed among other candidates. As for the tone-based coverage of candidates, all of them have high rate of positive tone. Such indicators of positive tone were caused by the coverage of the candidates' election campaign and meetings by Imedi, when the candidates were trying to present themselves in the positive light.



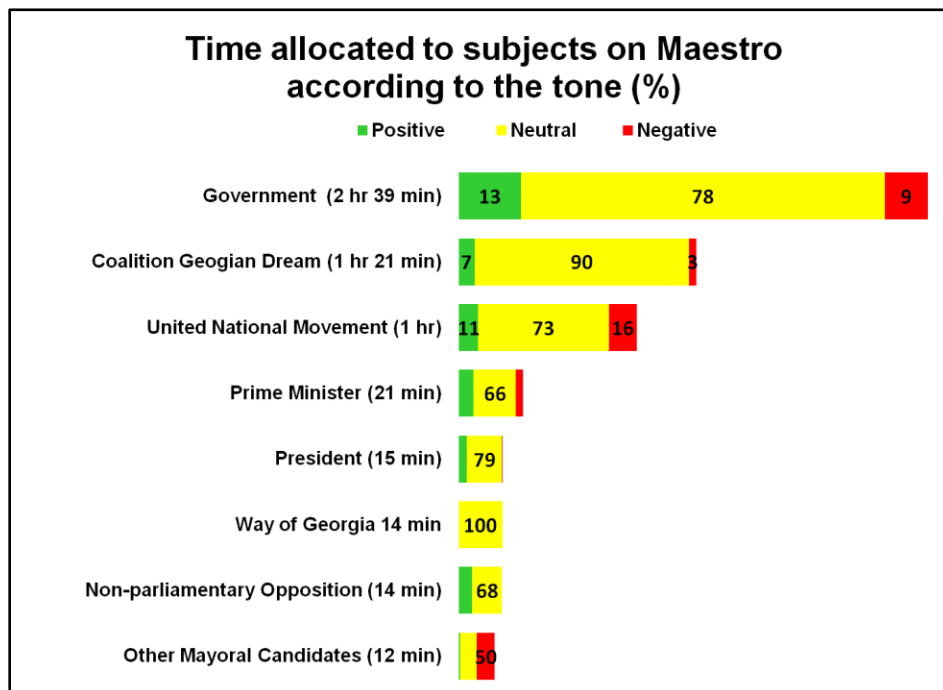
## Maestro

Maestro broadcasted extensive, exhaustive and balanced stories in its main news programs during May 3 until May 23, inclusive. There were many critical and analytical stories prepared about the members of the government members and other officials regarding various issues. Extensive and detailed coverage was dedicated to the topic of bonuses issued for the government members, and diplomas of the Parliament members. However, these stories often emphasized the alleged confrontation within the authorities and the government, which added negative shades to the contents of the stories. There were also critical stories prepared about the United National Movement as well.

The government followed up on Vakho Sanaia's program on May 20, criticized it and called him biased. Maestro broadcasted the story in response to this, which clarified that this program did not contain any intentional evaluation regarding the government and was not biased. We should point out that Maestro's follow-up story was quite neutral, and it was not prepared from the position of a responding party.

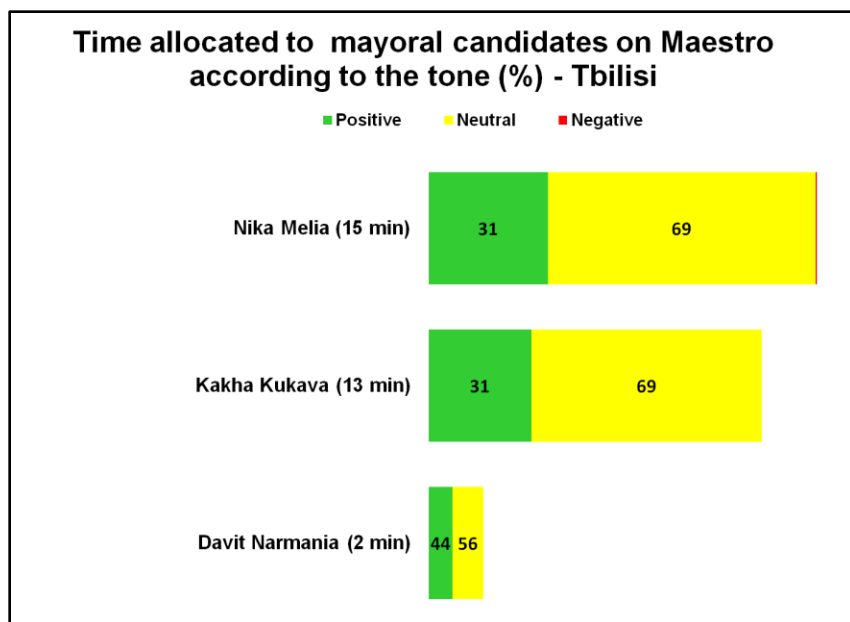
As for the time allocated to the monitoring subjects, the government has quite a big share of the time – 41% from May 3 until May 23, inclusive. The next subject is the Coalition Georgian Dream with 21% and the United National Movement with - 16%. There was an eye-catching high rate of positive tone on all the channels in regards to all the subject during this monitoring period. However, neutral tone prevails on Maestro

despite the fact that various politicians were invited to the studio every day, who were able to speak live.



Out of the guests invited to the studio from May 3 through 23, we may emphasize the visits of Nika Melia (May 8) and Erosi Kitsmarishvili (May 14). During Nika Melia's visit, the journalist dedicated too much time to the ex-President and his team. Eventually, the guest had to listen to the criticism of the former authorities and to answer to the respective questions rather than to speak about his own election program. As for Erosi Kitsmarishvili's visit, the journalist's attitude towards the guest was evident right from the very beginning. The journalist did not let the guest speak and there was an impression left that he intentionally tried to present him negatively, presumably, because of the events developed around the TV company Maestro in 2012.

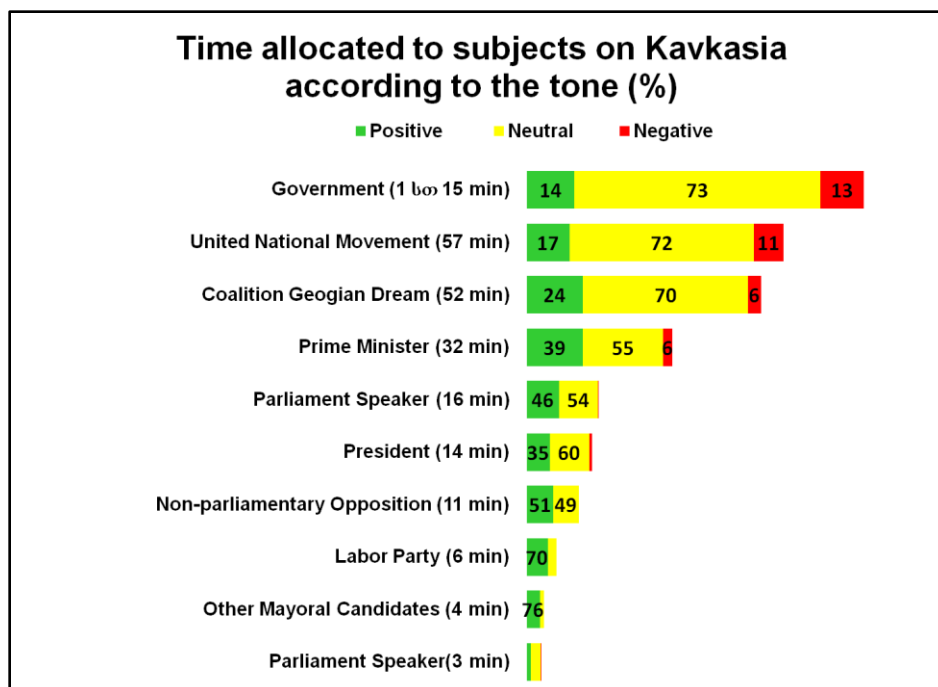
In other respects, the election stories were balanced and impartial. There was no special attitude observed towards any candidate. The election issues were less frequently covered from May 18 through 23, neither was there any candidate invited to the studio. Tbilisi mayoral candidates got only 34 minutes during this monitoring period, and the largest portions of this time was dedicated to Nika Melia (15 minutes) and Kakha Kukava (13 minutes). Other candidates got only 2 minutes or less. The tone distribution is quite similar among the subjects.



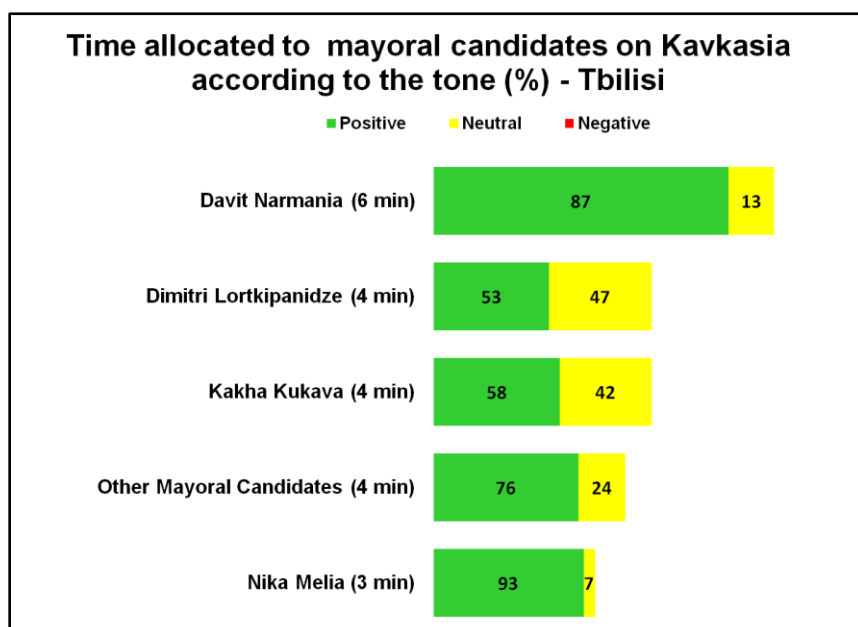
## Kavkasia

During May 3 through 23, the stories broadcasted via the main news programs of the TV company Kavkasia were neutral, informative and balanced. The journalists were reporting the facts impartially and presented the positions of all the parties. There was a trend of covering social issues more than before. The journalists of the news programs were trying to prepare analytical stories regarding such issues, where the diverse opinions were presented. Instances of technical inaccuracies remained to be a problem, namely, using one and the same pictures in various stories.

Like the first part of the monitoring, the most time was allocated to the government (27%), the United National Movement (21%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (19%), and then the Prime Minister follows (12%). Like other TV channels, increased rates of positive tone are observed during this period. Based on the allocated time, the highest rate of positive tone is observed for the Coalition Georgian Dream – 24% among the first three subjects, and the negative tone rate – to the government – 13%. It is noteworthy that 39% of the time allocated to the Prime Minister was evaluated with positive tone and only 6% - with the negative tone. The observation also reveals that the Prime Minister and the President have high rates of positive tone, which is explained by the visits of the heads and representatives of other state to Georgia during the monitoring period, also by the positive presentation of the high officials of Georgia within the frameworks of the visit.



As for the time allocated to the mayoral candidates, the most coverage was provided for the Tbilisi Mayoral candidates. In total, 25 minutes were allocated to all the candidates, which was almost equally distributed among the subjects. Tone distribution is also noteworthy, namely, there was no increased positive or negative tone. This was caused by the increased direct reporting of the live speeches of candidates and their election campaigns.



### TV3

During this monitoring period, TV3 broadcasted analytical stories on various issues in its news programs. There were comparisons made between the new and former authorities regarding the elections and the main topics of the day. The broadcasted news was mostly critical towards the government representatives, officials and opposition, namely – towards the United National Movement.

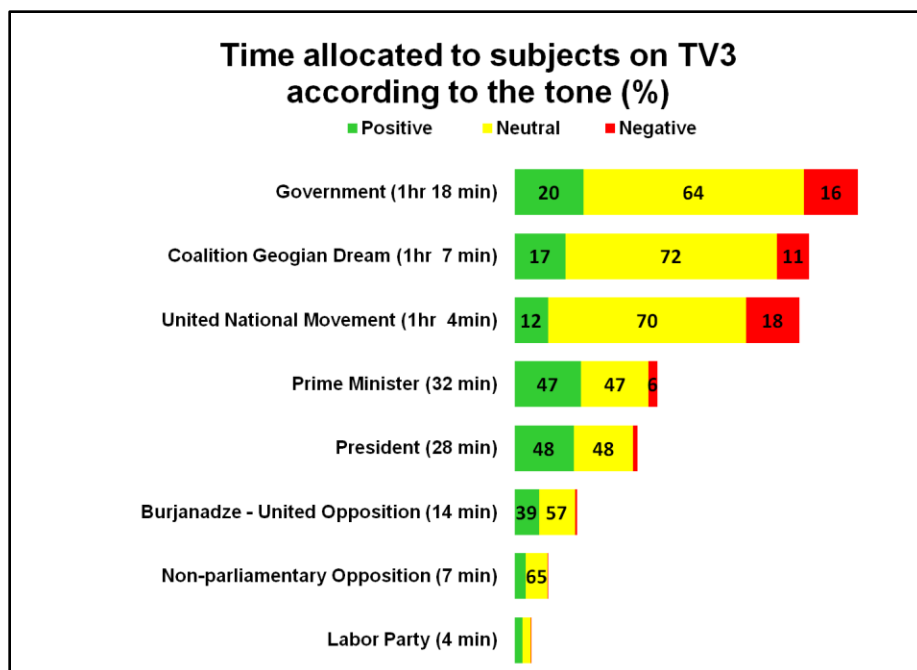
However, we should point out that the critical stories had negative contents about the United National Movement and the former officials. In this respect we can distinguish the host Nana Lezhava, whose texts often had negative and ironic contents. There were cases that the stories were reporting about some neutral events, but the whole context would turn negative due to the host's introduction<sup>4</sup>. Besides, the negative headlines are often used for the stories.

There were interesting and analytical stories prepared during May 3 through 23, which were not covered by other channels: "The Most Open and Closed Agencies" (May 23), "Expensive Restrooms without a Function" (May 22).

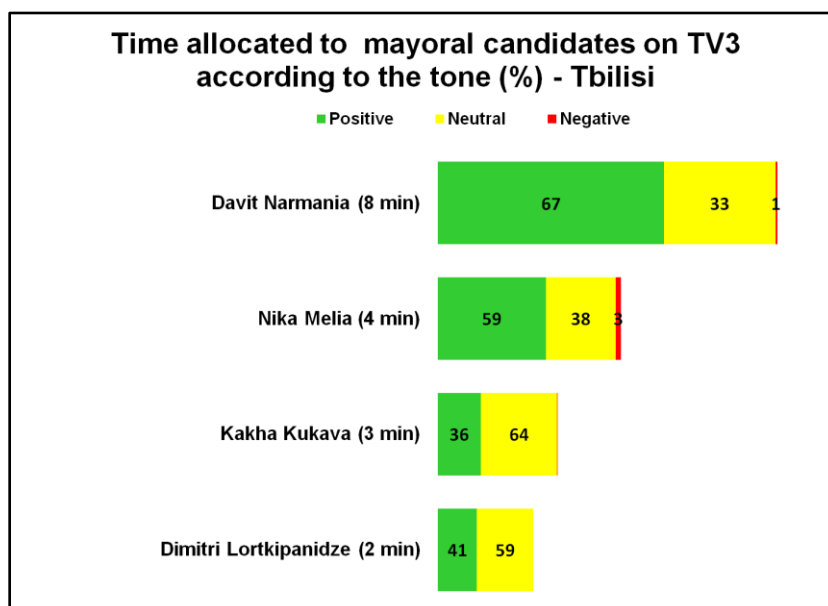
As for the time allocated to the subjects, there was quite equal distribution among the government (26%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (22%) and the United National Movement (21%). The Prime Minister and the President also have similar rates – 11 and 9 percent. The share of positive tone also increased on all the channels, and we have a similar picture in the news programs of TV3 as well. All the monitoring subjects had higher rate of positive tone than in the previous period.

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<sup>4</sup> May 23, the story "President or the Prime Minister"; "Giorgi Margvelashvili is left offside, and he does not seem to keep on being stubborn. Now the President's Administration has to wait for the decision about whether Margvelashvili will be among the delegation at least."



As for the topic of elections, Tbilisi mayoral candidates got total of 22 minutes. The most time was dedicated to Davit Narmania, candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream – 8 minutes. The positive tone prevails in case of almost all the candidates.



## Conclusion

Compared to the previous report, which covered the period from April 15 until May 2, inclusive, the number of analytical stories increased during this monitoring period, which lasted from May 3 through 23. The significant topics of the day were covered in details and exhaustively on almost all the channels. The balance among respondents was observed and comprehensive information was delivered to the audience. There was increased criticism against the government and the authorities regarding various topics.

Positive coverage of subjects increased significantly during this period, which is at a certain degree explained by more frequent coverage of election campaigns. Besides, there were various political figures visiting Georgia during this period, which was actively covered on all the channels and where various Georgian politicians were often represented in the positive context as well.

As for the mayoral candidates, compared to the previous monitoring period, the coverage of mayoral candidates became more frequent in the news programs. However, all the channels (except the Adjara TV) again covered only the Tbilisi mayoral candidates. Mayoral candidates of other cities were hardly ever covered. Adjara TV allocated more time to the Batumi mayoral candidate. Besides, it is also noteworthy that all the candidates had quite a high rate of positive tone, which is explained by the stories made about their campaigns and promises.