



## TV Talk-Show Monitoring Report

April 15 - May 2, 2014

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

**Channel One of the Public Broadcaster:** “First Studio” - Eka Mishveladze;

**Rustavi 2:** “Choice” - Giorgi Gabunia, “Position” - Nino Shubladze;

**Imedi:** “Politics Time” - Tea Sichinava, “Reaction” - Inga Grigolia;

**Maestro:** “Subjective Opinion” - Diana Trapaidze and Teona Gegelia;

**Kavkasia:** “Spectrum Studio” - Davit Akubardia, “Barrier” - Nino Jangirashvili and Alexander Elisashvili;

**Tabula:** “Focus” - the program is alternatively hosted by Salome Ugulava and Nino Macharashvili, “Theorem” - Tamar Chergoleishvili.

### Methodology and Analysis

Election media monitoring of talk shows consists of only a qualitative part. Journalists, hosts, topics and the invited guests are monitored, and it is evaluated how much equal conditions the journalist is creating for the guests: whether the journalist’s questions are equally demanding/lenient to all the guests; or whether the host of the talk show let the guests express their opinions and if s/he interrupts them. Besides, the monitoring

evaluates how much the host is trying to receive exhaustive information from the guests and to provide comprehensive information to the audience regarding the discussed issue; or if the journalist identifies the source of information when asking questions or making a comment, and what kind of non-verbal language s/he is using. The monitoring also observes the usage of hate speech in talk shows (abusive or humiliating phrases/statements) by the hosts, and their reaction in case if their guests are using the hate speech. Besides, the journalists' role and involvement in the program is evaluated as well.

The report provides the media monitoring results of talk shows for the period from April 15 – May 2, inclusive.

## **Key Findings**

During this period the political talk shows actively followed up on the topics about the currently ongoing events in the country, and quite interesting and informative programs were made. Due to the high public interest, the most heated discussions took place about the antidiscrimination law and the related events or opinions, by representing the positions of legislators, also the NGO sector and clergy. This topic was analyzed in all the programs, and more than once.

As observed, the mayoral and majoritarian candidates for the local elections were more frequently presented in the political talk shows in the second part of the monitoring period. However, the discussion about the local elections has always been going on. There were representatives of government authorities and main opposition forces among the guests invited to the majority of the 10 monitored political talk shows. Descriptions of individual channels and programs are provided below.

## **Channel one**

### ***The First Studio***

Political talk show the First Studio is broadcasted twice a week via the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, hosted by Eka Mishveladze, analyzing major events of the week. There were five programs broadcasted from April 15 until May 2, which hosted pretty diverse guests: members of the parliamentary majority and minority, representatives of

the non-parliamentary opposition and the NGO sector, the President of Georgia. The topical issues of the week were discussed at the talk show, among them:

- Election environment;
- Antidiscrimination draft law;
- Political messages of the authorities and the opposition;
- Discussion of domestic and foreign policy issues with the President of Georgia
- Events developed regarding the Board of Trustees of the Public Broadcaster (discussed twice during this monitoring period)

In regards to the guests, the talk show was quite balanced. All the interested sides were invited to every program and each of them had an opportunity to state their opinions. Correspondingly, the audience was able to get diverse information about a particular issue.

The host was actively involved in the program in most cases, which was demonstrated by asking quite topical and demanding questions to all the guests. The host did not state her position and was trying to play the role of a moderator. There were equal attitudes towards the guests and none of them enjoyed any privileged setting.

As observed, the host was not biased; neither did she try to present any side positively or negatively. However, there was a case when the host did not get involved in the program and let the guests argue. Sometimes, for example in the program of April 23, the opponents got engaged in such a heated dispute with one another that she hardly managed the situation.

When the President of Georgia visited the talk show on April 30, there was an impression as if the journalist's questions were less demanding to him. She asked more general questions about an issue, which gave a broad opportunity to the President of Georgia to lead the program to his direction. The host did not act in an active opposition to him, either.

There was no diversion from the topic observed in the talk show during this monitoring period. If the guest tried to divert from the main topic of the program, the journalist always interrupted and asked them to get back to the primary issue of the discussion. There was no case of using the hate speech during the program by the host or the program guests either.

## **Rustavi 2**

### *Choice*

“Choice” is a weekly public-political talk show, which is broadcasted via Rustavi 2 on Tuesdays and is hosted by Giorgi Gabunia. There were 3 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period, where the following issues were discussed:

- Antidiscrimination law;
- Pre-election moratorium;
- Topical issues developed regarding the Ministry of Culture (Sakdrisi gold deposit, dismissal of the deputy minister of culture);
- Threat from the Russian side.

“Choice” was distinguished with its diversity of guests. They represented various sides, such as: the parliamentary majority and minority, the non-parliamentary opposition, NGOs and the government. There was also a priest and philosopher invited to one of the programs. The audience in the studio also had an opportunity to express their opinions. The guests, who were invited to the program, were relevant to topic, as far as the program hosted those representatives of various political forces and the members of the society, who were able to argue about a particular topic from different standpoints.

Giorgi Gabunia, host of the “Choice” basically did not express any bias to any political force and asked topical questions. Sometimes there were shades of irony in the host’s remarks, but we did not observe any respondent to experience any advantage or vice versa because of this during the monitoring period. The guests had an opportunity to express their opinions during the program and the host was trying to act as a moderator, to distribute time among them and in case of diverting from the subject, to get the guests back to the topic.

The host’s questions were quite demanding. He often acted in opposition to the guests by providing a different opinion or contrary arguments. He also probed for validating the information shared by the guests. When asking the questions, the host often used quotations from the statements of officials as a source of his information. He identified the source of information in most cases.

The host of “Choice” did not use hate speech or any politically incorrect vocabulary. Neither was there any expressions observed by the guests.

## ***Position***

Rustavi 2 broadcasts the political talk show “Position” on Fridays, hosted by Nino Shubladze. There were only 2 programs broadcasted during this monitoring period. However, it was still diverse from the viewpoint of the guests. The program was visited by the members of parliamentary majority and minority, clergy representatives and Irakli Okruashvili, leader of the Georgian Party. Among the topics discussed at the talk show were:

- Antidiscrimination law;
- Session of the political council of the Georgian Dream;
- Incident in Kvareli District;
- Irakli Okruashvili’s plan.

It should be pointed out that the guests invited to the program on May 2 regarding the antidiscrimination law expressed diverse positions and practically represented all the sides. Positions of both sides of clergy were presented at the same time in the program (Father Davit Lasurashvili, who was against and Father Ilia Vashakidze, who saw nothing alarming in this draft law), also the members of parliamentary majority and minority. In total, the viewers had an opportunity to get comprehensive information about this issue.

The program’s host was actively involved in the talk show, listened to the respondents attentively and often got involved with comments. Her questions were severe and exhaustive for any guest with all kinds of different positions; she opposed to the guests and provided contrary arguments for them. She also acted as a moderator and tried to let all the guests express themselves.

There was no case of hate speech by the host or guests. However, there was one case, when the guest Father Davit mentioned the television of a journalist Tamar Chergoleishvili in a bad context, the journalist reacted to this and interrupted him.

## **Imedi**

### ***Reaction***

“Reaction” is a weekly talk show, which is broadcasted via Imedi every Friday. It is hosted by Inga Grigolia. The program consists of several parts. Usually, there are several guests invited to the program and the audience is present as well. There were

only 2 programs of “Reaction” broadcasted from April 15 until May 2. The guests, who participated in the talk show, represented the government authorities, also the opposition and the NGO sector. Inga Grigolia declared the pre-election rubric, so called Election Air open and invited the coalition Nino Burjanadze – United Opposition to the program, with its members and their mayoral candidate. One block of the program was dedicated to the pre-election presentation of this political force and to the Tbilisi mayoral candidate. The Majoritarians and party leaders had an opportunity to talk about their political plans.

In addition to this, the following topics were discussed during the talk show:

- Case of the Valeri Gelashvili, member of the Parliament;
- Confrontation between the majority and minority about being summoned to the Prosecutor’s Office;
- Antidiscrimination law.

The talk show “Reaction” is quite informative and in frequent cases – emotional as well. In general, Inga Grigolia is characterized with severe and dramatic reporting of facts, which is especially felt while announcing the topics. She responds to the events taking place in the country. The program mostly presents several sides and different political forces.

Inga Grigolia is mostly distinguished with her quite severe and demanding questions. If the answer is not given, she repeats the question and goes deeper in order to get additional information from the guests, and she even may interrupt them as well. Her questions are sometimes very direct and at times even attacking. For example, she asked Nino Burjanadze in the program of May 2: “Russia or Europe, I am asking you”; also as a follow up to one of the majoritarian candidates in the program on May 2, when he said that he would be everybody’s majoritarian MP irrespective of political opinions, nationality and religion, Inga Grigolia is saying – “you should have also said sexual orientation... why is this topic so hard for your team...” Despite this, the guests are in equal situation in her program, as far as the host has the same attitude and behavior towards all of them. The journalist is inactively involved in the program and tries to be a moderator and to equally distribute time among the program participants. However, once the opposing parties among the audience did not let the host lead the program and she had to announce the break for commercials.

It is noteworthy that Inga Grigolia did not play the material (a CD) brought by Jondi Baghaturia in the live air on May 2. This CD, according to Baghaturia, showed the

disadvantageous situation faced by the majority of people in the country after passing the antidiscrimination law. Inga Grigolia's response was that without prior watching this CD in advance she would not be able to broadcast this material and that she would not take such responsibility.

Inga Grigolia did not use hate speech or politically incorrect expressions. Whenever some unethical expressions were heard from program participants, she always encouraged them to be politically correct.

### *Politics Time*

"Politics Time" is a weekly talk show, which is broadcasted via Imedi on Tuesdays. The program is hosted by Thea Sichinava. The talk show provides an overview of major events of the week and invites representatives of different sides. There were 3 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period. Among the invited guests were the representatives of the authorities, also those of the United National Movement, Sakrebulo members, experts and other members of the society. Following topics were discussed in the program:

- Election environment;
- Events in Ukraine and the European choice;
- Passport policy of the Russian Federation;
- Restoration of Justice;
- Antidiscrimination draft law;
- Events developed around the Sakrebulo and Shikhiashvili's possible impeachment.

In general, "Politics Time" is quite balanced. The journalist tries to present a different opinion and acts in opposition with the guests by presenting contrary arguments. The host tries to get additional information from guests by probing. Her questions are quite demanding, and besides, they are equally demanding towards the ruling team and the opposition as well. Thea Sichinava mostly acts as a moderator as she seldom expresses her own opinion and is limited to asking questions. She also tries to enable all the guests to express their opinions and interrupts only for the sake of verifying the information or asking for examples.

There were 3 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period and we did not observe any fact of diverting from the topic. The guests were selected relevant to the

topic. There was no case of using hate speech or unethical expressions by the journalist or from the side of the invited guests, either.

## **Maestro**

### *Subjective Opinion*

The talk show “Subjective Opinion” is broadcasted via Maestro every business day, hosted by Teona Gegelia and Diana Trapaidze, overviewing the major events of the day. During the first part of the program the hosts “subjectively” discuss the major news of the day, and then the discussion continues with the guests in the second part. There were 12 programs of “Subjective Opinion” broadcasted from April 15 until May 2. There were representatives of the parliamentary majority and minority among the guests, government members, also the representatives of NGOs and civic groups among the invited guests. The following topics were discussed:

- Law and church;
- Antidiscrimination law;
- Draft law on wiretapping;
- Draft law on mailing service;
- Election lists of the Georgian Dream and the National Movement;
- Minister and gastronomy;
- Distribution of power among the majority of the coalition parliament and the government;
- The Dream is getting ready for the local elections;
- May 1 in Tbilisi (celebration of solidarity / event);
- Problems of Ukraine;
- Election environment;
- Election strategy of the parties;
- Detention of journalists of TV3 by the de-facto authorities of Tskhinvali;
- Rumors spread about Ivanishvili and Kartu Bank.

The talk show “Subjective Opinion” is distinguished with its diversity of topics, also with the layout of the program, as far as Diana Trapaidze and Teona Gegelia touch upon one, two or more topics during the program, especially during the overview part of the program, where the guests are not invited. In this part, when the “subjective” discussion is taking place, the hosts often express irony not only verbally, but also non-verbally. In regards to “subjectivism”, there was an interesting part of the program on April 25, when the guest (Goga Kakhidze) was late to the program, and consequently



the hosts decided to impersonate the guest themselves, and they asked questions to each other, which had been intended for the guest, and answered themselves.

The hosts are very actively involved in the program, they often ask demanding questions. As observed, the journalists did not really create advantageous situation for any political side. They are critical and direct towards the authorities and towards the opposition, and often interrupt the guests by asking additional questions and expressing other comments. However, sometimes their criticism is overwhelmingly attacking, especially towards the members of the National Movement (e.g. Khatuna Gogorishvili in the program of April 23, Goga Kakhidze in the program of April 25), to whom they always remind of the period they were in the government.

While asking questions to the guests or making comments, the hosts often referred to information from social networks and less reliable sources. They often mentioned source information in general, without specifying it, and they also rely upon the so-called “disseminated information” or their own references.

## **Kavkasia**

### ***Barrier***

“Barrier” is a political talk show, which is broadcasted four times a week via Kavkasia, hosted by Nino Jangirashvili and Alexander Elisashvili (Alexander Elisashvili stated on May 1 that he was going to leave the program). “Barrier” is distinguished with a big number of its guests. There were 11 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period, hosted by the members of the majority and minority from the parliamentary and from the Sakrebulo, also majoritarian candidates of the Coalition Georgian Dream, the United National Movement and other political unions, representatives of non-parliamentary opposition, the NGO sector, the public representatives and experts. The talk show was also distinguished with its diverse topics, among them:

- Conclusion on the War of August;
- Detention of Georgian journalists by Russian military personnel;
- Anticipated threats from Russia;
- Antidiscrimination law;
- Expenses of the government authorities;
- What is going on at Tbilisi Sakrebulo before the local elections;

- Gharibashvili's opinion about the campaign "This Affects You" and a response from the NGOs;
- A European Union Association Agreement: benefit, weaknesses and threats;
- Who will fight for which place in the elections - what opportunities and prospects the political parties have in the local elections.

The program had two hosts during this monitoring period, who were hosting the talk show in turn and they had a very different working style.

Alexander Elisashvili was mostly limited to asking general questions. He did not ask deeper questions for obtaining detailed information and seldom got involved in the program. He would calmly observe heated debates. He did not ask the guests to be politically correct whenever they were using improper vocabulary. During the program of April 30, where the heated debates emerged between the supporters and opponents of the antidiscrimination law, Soso Manjavadze, secretary general of the Patriots Alliance insulted Irakli Vacharadze, head of the organization "Identoba" many times: "where do the people like you hatch out from", "you are an absolute scoundrel". Eventually, Irakli Vacharadze left the program as a protest. The host did not react on this fact or on politically incorrect vocabulary used by the guests.

On the background of his passive involvement, Alexander Elisashvili had similar attitude towards the guests. For example, when the electoral candidates were visiting the program, he gave equal opportunities to all of them to talk about their program. However, in the program of April 23 he quite was actively opposing to one of the guests - Shota Utiashvili. He even expressed a cynical comment when talking to him: "In fact we won, Mr Shota, and you have invaded Java", which was followed up by the guest's protest. Elisashvili used the word "son of the bitch" in the same program towards Davit Kezerashvili.

Nino Jangirashvili asked general or detailed questions that were related to the issue. She tried to present an opinion that was different from the guest's position and to use the opinions expressed in the studio while asking questions. For example, she stated in the program of April 29 that as far as they did not have any representative of the Ministry of Finance or the government authorities, she would be presenting their positions.

In some cases, when the discussion turned into heated debates, Nino Jangirashvili could not control the opposing parties, though she tried to do so. Sometimes she would also support one of the sides of the debates.

Nino Jangirashvili reacted to the politically incorrect speech only sometimes. For example, in the program of April 22, Jondi Baghaturia addressed the civil sector saying that they were “screaming out” for protecting the rights of sexual minorities only for the sake of money. The second guest in the program directly told Baghaturia that he was insulting him, but the host did not react on this. However, in the same program, when one of the guests said about Nodar Khaduri: “Nodar Khaduri did not need to publicize that stupidity. He should find some measures in himself, for example, start a diet”, Nino Jangirashvili commended on the guest to refrain from personal insult.

### *Spectrum Studio*

“Spectrum Studio” is Davit Akubardia’s talk show, which is broadcasted via Kavkasia every evening. There were 14 programs aired during the monitoring period (April 15 – May2). There were two mayoral candidates running for Tbilisi among the guests: Nika Melia (United National Movement) and Gia Gachechiladze (the Greens Party); besides, the program was visited by the representatives of the parliamentary and Sakrebulo majority; those of the non-parliamentary opposition, also, and quite often, the experts and representatives of the NGO sector.

There were diverse topics discussed. In general, the host does not often follow the announced topic and diverts from it together with the guest. Following topics were discussed during the talk show:

- Antidiscrimination law;
- Georgian Railway landscape;
- Much Ado at Sakrebulo;
- Commission formed for investigating the War of August in 2008;
- Foreign policy relations of Georgia;
- Problems within the banking sector;
- Unlawful constructions;
- Judiciary reform;
- The look of Tbilisi and vagabonds;
- Local elections;
- Business development in Georgia;
- The Patriarch’s Easter Epistle;
- Genocide of Armenians;
- Crisis in Ukraine and geopolitical situation in the region;

- Institute of a mayor and the 'urban' policy;
- Agriculture and problems in the agrarian field;
- The campaign "This Affects You".

Davit Akubardia hosts the program in a quite unofficial, a more 'homey' style. He often has one and the same guests in the program. In most cases the guests are not properly introduced to the viewers. The journalist sometimes introduces the guest only with the name and surname and does not specify his/her position. Akubardia often addresses the guests unceremoniously and does not refrain from praising them: "you are a clever man, you have just said something brilliant...", "You are a unique man, you possess plenty of information", "My dear Davit", "My dear Kakha," "I have sympathies for you, I mean it", "Come on, Ninachka, we can start from you", etc.

The guests almost always find themselves in equal conditions. Akubardia's attitude towards them differs based on whether the host agrees with their position or not. He mostly agrees with the hosts' opinions, because he mostly shares their positions. However, in the program of April 29, where he was hosting Guliko Zumbadze, she was not able to finish what she was saying. Other than interrupting the guests frequently, the host also often made skeptical assessments and negatively evaluated the opinions expressed by the guest.

In most cases the host acted as a guest as well, because he was expressing his opinions as usual, which took quite a significant time of the program. Majority of Akubardia's opinions is ironical. He often uses abusive and humiliating phrases towards the representatives of various structures and organizations, such as: "a dirty person", "an idiot", "a schemer", "a liar", "a bandit", "rascals", "creeps", "cretin", "absurd idiocy", "ceiling of hustlers", "crooks", etc. According to Davit Akubardia's evaluation, the National Movement is "Nazi", and the current government - "castrated". The host did not react to the politically incorrect vocabulary used by the guests invited to the program, moreover, he even laughed or disagreed with them.

In most cases it was difficult to determine accuracy of information presented in the program, because the host often mentioned the source of information. Most part of Akubardia's information starts with the introduction: "I don't remember exactly", "I remember well", "I learned it today there", "As far as I know", "It is a known fact". He rarely asked the guests to verify the source of information, either.

The journalist often expressed emotions in a non-verbal way: when excited, he would drop his pen on the table, ironically laughed when the guest was speaking, or exclaim

“on my God”, “oh no, no” as a surprise. There were cases when Akubardia even started singing a little.

## **Tabula**

### *Theorem*

There is Tamar Chergoleishvili’s program “Theorem” broadcasted via Tabula twice a week (the co-author: Salome Barker), which highlights political, economic, social and cultural topics. This report captures four programs of “Theorem”. The talk show discusses topical issues. The following topics were discussed during the period from April 15 until May 2:

- Conflict between the President and the government;
- Differences within the ruling coalition regarding the foreign orientation, economic arrangement of the country, and fundamental values of people;
- Racism in Georgia;
- Antidiscrimination law;
- Ivanishvili’s charity;
- Relations between the West and Russia, and Georgia;
- Political culture and level of democracy;
- Internet censorship;
- Relationship between the media and the authorities.

The invited guests were competent and they were selected relevant to the topic. However, the representatives or supporters of the current government were less represented in the program. As the host explained, the balance was not kept in this respect because the officials refused to participate in the program. On this background, then the discussion deals with the political topic in the program, or especially in its first part, or if the issue is discussed in the political light, we often hear the criticism of the current government, Prime Minister and Bidzina Ivanishvili; however, this is not balanced by any alternative position of the guests or the host, either. Sometimes the host is presented during the discussion or arguments as a party, which protects the position of the National Movement.

The host is saying the phrases: “Gharibashvili is talking to us with the vocabulary of the Asaval-Dasavali, his Guru’s favorite pro-Putin newspaper”; “What difference does it make, Bidzinology, Chorvilology”; “The antidiscrimination law is a cause for

strengthening the Russian propaganda, adoption of which was opposed by the Putinists in the Priest's Robe" (program of May 1). The host's attitude is expressed both with verbal and non-verbal language. We often hear her laughing and making ironical gestures or interjections. In some cases, when the host is asking a question, she is also providing some information without specifying a source. Sometimes she answers to the question herself.

It is noteworthy that the host demonstrates different behavior in the second part of the program, when the topic is not discussed in the political light. She acts as a moderator who does not interrupt her guests, neither does she state her own position and is limited only to asking questions for receiving information. There is a section "Vox Populi" in the second part of the program, where the unknown people express their opinions regarding the discussed topic. The expressed opinions are diverse and more than one position is presented.

### *Focus*

"Focus" is a daily talk show hosted by three people: Salome Ugulava, Nino Macharashvili and Irakli Kiknavelidze. They host the program in turn. Salome Ugulava and Nino Macharashvili are more actively involved in the talk show, which is demonstrated by asking more additional questions to the guests, probing and acting in opposition to them. This report covers 12 programs broadcasted from April 15 until May 2.

The topics discussed in the talk show are topical and they echo the current events taking place in the country. During this monitoring period (April 15 – May 2) much time was dedicated to the topic about the antidiscrimination law, as it was discussed in many programs. Besides, the program also touched upon the following issues:

- Election environment;
- Draft law on unlawful wiretapping;
- Summarizing the performance of the Parliament;
- Sakdrisi Problem;
- Evaluation of the performance of the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- Challenges of the foreign policy of Georgia;
- Events developed around Ukraine.

During this period, the program was hosted by the members of parliamentary majority and minority as well, representatives of the NGOs and experts as well. However, the members and supporters of the National Movement prevailed. At the beginning of the program the journalists were pointing out that the members of the ruling coalition were invited, but they either could not make it or refused to participate in the program. Consequently, more time was allocated to the representatives of the parliamentary minority, and the criticism of the authorities was often heard; however, the hosts did not really oppose to that with contrary arguments. Other than the Coalition Georgian Dream and the National Movement, there was no other political force represented in the program.

The guests basically are provided with equal conditions. The hosts always let the guests express themselves. Their questions are in fact equally demanding towards the respondents. However, in some cases, for example in the program of April 15, Nino Macharashvili was less demanding towards Gigi Ugulava. The respondent was speaking about the party plans and criticized the authorities, and the host actually made this opportunity to him by asking less demanding questions.

Hosts of the “Focus” do not use hate speech or unethical vocabulary. Neither were there any expressions like this observed from the side of the guests.