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Media Coverage for 2017 Local Self-Government Elections

TV News Media Monitoring

Interim Report

19 June - 8 October



საქართველოს
ჟურნალისტური
ეთიკის ქარტია

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The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics is implementing the monitoring of TV news programs for coverage of the 2017 Local Government Elections within the framework of the project Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2017 Local Government Elections in Georgia supported by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The monitors had been observing the news releases of the 14 TV channels in prime time. The monitoring had been carried out on the following TV channels: The Public Broadcaster, Rustavi 2, Imedi, the First Channel, Obieqtivi, Ajara TV, Channel 25, Rioni, Gurjaani, Guria, Kvemo Kartli, Trialeti, Odishi and Ninth Channel. Five of these TV channels are national and nine are regional.

This report reflects quantitative and qualitative analyses of the major news programs during the period of June 19 through October 8.

Key Findings:

- Local and central governments were covered the most.
- The local government was covered most positively by Guria TV with 19% of positive tone indicator. Rustavi 2 was the most critical of the local government with 49% negative coverage of the allocated time.
- The central government was most positively covered by Gurjaani TV (29%) and most negatively by Rustavi 2 (46%).
- Most of the time among the political parties was allocated to the Georgian Dream, with the National Movement and the European Georgia following.
- The Georgian Dream was most positively covered by Gurjaani TV (24%) and most negatively by Rustavi 2 (40%).
- The National Movement was most positively covered by Gurjaani TV (30%) and most negatively by Obieqtivi TV (66%).
- All TV channels allocated the most time to central and local governments and the two major political parties (Georgian Dream and the National Movement). However, TV Obiektivi was an exception. It devoted almost the same amount of time to the political party Alliance of Patriots and the Georgian Dream; the party also had the most positive coverage on this TV channel (9%).
- Rustavi 2 was the most critical of the local and the central governments. This was also revealed in qualitative analysis. Critical stories were most frequently broadcasted on Rustavi 2.
- However, apparent sympathy towards the National Movement and its mayoral candidate was demonstrated on Rustavi 2.
- The Public Broadcaster and the TV Company Imedi were characterized by soft approach towards the government with no strong watchdog function demonstrated.

- The Ajara Public Broadcaster was outstanding in terms of observing ethical principles and impartiality.
- TV Company Obieqtivi was distinguished by the biased coverage in favor of the Alliance of Patriots.
- Hate speech and inappropriate language was much less frequently used in the news programs compared to the previous years. Obieqtivi was the only TV channel where the xenophobic content was detected.
- As in the previous years, in-depth coverage on issues related to elections, that would help voters in making informed choice, was lacking on almost all the channels.
- Compared to the previous year, reporting was more balanced and fewer violations were detected in this regard; however, the so called short footages with sound bites were not always balanced.
- The news programs were not always regularly broadcast on regional channels. In cases, the schedule of programs was unstable and sometimes there was no news program for several days.
- The regional channels often used video materials prepared by the government press offices without any clear reference to their origin.
- The advertising content was detected in news programs of several regional TV channels, which is inadmissible.
- The regional channels have technical problems, including the low quality of voice and footages; absence of titles also remains a problem.

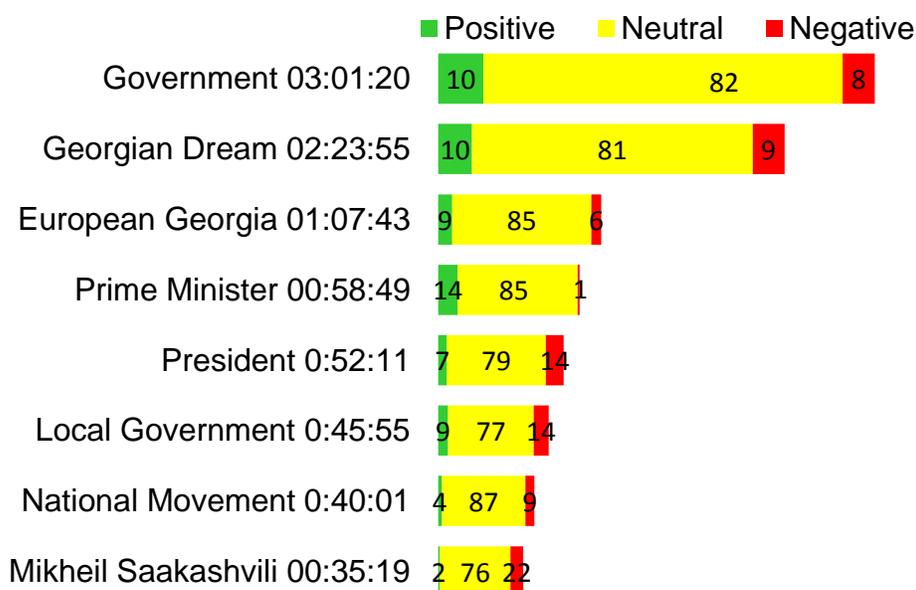
Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB)

Quantitative Analysis Results

During the monitoring period, the monitors observed Moambe, the main news program of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) at 08:00 pm. Throughout the period Moambe allocated most of the time to the government. The Prime Minister was covered most positively with 14% of the positive tone indicators. Mikheil Saakashvili was covered most negatively, because 35 minutes allocated to him had 22% of the negative tone indicator.

Among the Tbilisi mayoral candidates, most of the time was dedicated to the candidate of the Georgian Dream; the positive coverage period for Kakha Kaladze was at least three times more than the coverage time for his competitors. The negative coverage of the mayoral candidates was not observed with the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB).

GPB
Time Allocated to the Subjects according to the Tone (%)
 19 -June - 8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

More or less, all major events were covered in Moambe news program. But sometimes, the topics that had been covered by other channels, remained out of focus in Moambe news programme. The program can not be distinguished by the preparation of the especially critical stories about the government; it can not be called a watchdog news program. There were rare cases when the critical exclusive story would happen to be covered by Moambe. It almost ignored the facts of corruption, rarely covered the exclusive cases of violation of human rights, though it covered almost everything and the coverage was largely balanced. In Moambe news programme you would often encounter the interesting issues for the public, for example, in a few weeks after gas explosion in Ajara, Moambe devoted an interesting story to the violations revealed during the state inspection of the gas stations. It reported on the labor rights, tourism development problems, etc.

Overall, the quantitative monitoring revealed that Moambe was positively portraying the government. (The government, the Prime Minister, the Georgian Dream, Kakha Kaladze).

The loyal editorial policy towards the government was also observed in the concrete news stories. For example, the news program of 6 July was a three-minute story dedicated to Kakha Kaladze's last working day in his position of the Energy Minister; he was positively presented in the coverage, while the journalist listed all his achievements. Kaladze was praised by the Prime Minister. The pathos of the story was that Kaladze had carried out and had managed to implement all the projects

except the construction of the Khudoni HPP station, though that failure was justified by the report of an energy expert, who stated that he was also supporting the Khudoni HPP station construction, though just a big controversy around the project had become the problem for its implementation.

It was unclear whether the opinion on Kaladze was devoted to the assessment of Kaladze's ministerial period or was his *image making video footage as of the mayoral candidate*. The journalist could easily find several respondents (field experts) who had concrete complaints related to the specific projects implemented by Kaladze during the period of being the minister. The audience would have had more realistic impression based on Kaladze's activities. But the journalist was largely limited to positive coverage of Kaladze as of the future mayoral candidate, which is not what a media should do, more so the public broadcaster.

Another example of the mild tone allotted towards Kaladze was the information released in Moambe on 29 September, regarding the charitable football game. In this game, the world football stars participated with the aim of the rehabilitation of the Borjomi forest. On the same day, the representative of the NGO Fair Elections stated that the Georgian Football Federation could have organized that charity football game to benefit Kakha Kaladze, as a possible donation to his campaign. With his personal participation, the game had acquired the political character and could be observed as a pre-election campaign event with a charitable action. According to the NGO, the law prohibits foreign nationals (in this case the football world stars) to participate in the election campaign of the candidates; Participation of a charitable organization in the election campaign is also prohibited.

While covering the football game or earlier in the main news program, the anchor and the journalists did not provide the information that one of the most experienced NGOs had observed in the football game the signs of illegal promotion of the electoral candidate during the election campaign.

It is noteworthy that in the report published on that day by the Fair Elections, besides the possible illegal campaign of Kaladze, there were tens of other violations, including the use of administrative resources, violence and threats on the political grounds, possible alleged bribing of voters, etc. Providing such information, verifying facts and finding details would have been important for Moambe audience. The information about that report was covered only in the afternoon news program instead of the main news program.

In contrast to Kaladze's case, the story about Aleksandre Elisashvili, another mayoral candidate was prepared on 3 October, with evident violation of ethical principles and norms. In the story the audience had a chance to get information on Elisashvili's opinions and views, but at one point the journalist said the following sentence: *He speaks everywhere about the things that he wants to accomplish, and most of all at the meetings with the potential voters, though being the experienced journalist and being already the politician he should know that the the pre-election meetings have two sides of the same coin, one when other candidates are more trusted and another, when on the contrary, they trust you more*. In the background of this text, two active men were seen in the video

and according to the journalist's text, there was an impression that they had been dissatisfied with Elisashvili, they had some complaints with him and accused him of lying. The basis for this conclusion was that the audience watched and heard the so-called noise and some fragments of the conversation of those people.

Later, Aleko Elisashvili's election campaign head office released the 8-minute video recording where two ordinary people expressing their dissatisfaction as voters who were covered in the news of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) in reality were the government officials, one was the first deputy governor of the Didube district and the other, a member of the Georgian Dream and representative of the Didube district election head office. The video recording showed some clashes and disturbances between the Elisashvili supporters and the government supporters, giving evidence that the above-mentioned persons were not the ordinary voters.

The same video recording evidenced that the journalist and the cameraman of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), who prepared the story about Elisashvili, had been observing the clashes. Normally, they should have known that the persons who were dissatisfied with Elisashvili were not the ordinary voters and were the supporters of the government. However, those facts were not observed in the story and presenting the inaccurate information to the audience was a problem. The nuance altered in the story completely changed its principal idea that Elisashvili was not encountered by the unsatisfied voters at the meeting (as seen from the story) but by the supporters of the government whose activities may have contained evidence of interference in the election campaign and that fact was left behind the attention of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) journalist.

One more example of loyalty towards the government was the attempt to cover the confrontation in the Tbilisi Municipality around the Panorama Tbilisi issue. On 29 September, on the Freedom Square, where the Panorama Tbilisi hotel would be constructed, the status of the functional zone was given to the plot of land and the recreation status was changed to the 4 700 m² land on the Tabori mountain in favor of the Tabori Resorts. The Co-Investment Fund, which is implementing the Panorama Tbilisi project and the Tabori Resorts, is connected to the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili and there are many public sources of evidence to prove this fact. (The fact that Panorama Tbilisi is Ivanishvili's project was personally confirmed by him in the interview given to the Guria news)

The journalist presented the story broadcasted on 29 September in the following way: *The subject of the discussions at today's session was to change the landscape-recreational status to two land locations. The most noisy and political statements around this topic were made instead of the substantial debates, even though the deputies have not discussed the issue of conveying the specific territories to the specific companies.*

Another quote from the story: *The opposition believes that the amendments refer to the Co-Investment Fund project and the company related to Bidzina Ivanishvili.*

With the above-mentioned phrases, the journalist showed that only the opposition associated those facts with Bidzina Ivanishvili. That storyline accompanied the entire story. Even the Georgian Dream did not deny the fact that the decision of the Municipality was directly connected with Ivanishvili.

There was no information in the report that the Ivanishvili-related company requested the transfer of the land in Pushkin Square for 1 Gel. The story did not cover (only for a few seconds in the promo) any information regarding the fact that Elene Khoshtaria, Member of the Parliament of Georgia and the Tbilisi mayoral candidate, as well as the head of the civic group Partisan Gardeners were forcibly escorted from the Municipality hall by the police.

Upon the end of the story, the author of the news material was involved in the broadcast and told the audience about the planned works. The reporter noted that the area on the Tabori Mountain would be used for arranging and construction of the irrigation system, whether the area in the Pushkin Square was intended for a parking space; the summary of the story was that the opposition was against the construction of the irrigation system and arrangement of the parking space.

Furthermore, that story was followed by the issue of solving the parking space problem in Tbilisi, when Moambe news anchor presented the position of the Municipality regarding the change of the status to the land in the Freedom Square in a positive context: *The project that is now the cause of the protests, is solving one of the main challenges in Tbilisi – the problem of parking space.*

This text of the anchor was subjective and was not based on the facts (according to diverse sources of information): the company related to Ivanishvili planned to arrange a parking space in the Pushkini Square for 30-120 cars (a part of which would serve the hotel related to Ivanishvili). This is a drop in the sea for Tbilisi which faces severe parking space problem.

It is unacceptable when the journalist and the anchor subjectively wrap the problematic issue and present it to the society in such form. It would be better for the journalist to find more information, to research and make analysis of the story and not just to create it relaying only on the political accusations of the opposition and the government and the personal assessments.

It should also be noted that the main newscast of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) did not cover the information that the Ajara Municipality had also decided on the same day (29 September), to benefit the Ivanishvili company. According to the Ajara Public Broadcaster, the Municipality and the Ajara government had been implementing procedures aimed at handling the property rights to the company of Ivanishvili on ownership of the land with the botanical garden and the beach for 49 years period on the Mtsvane Kontskhi.

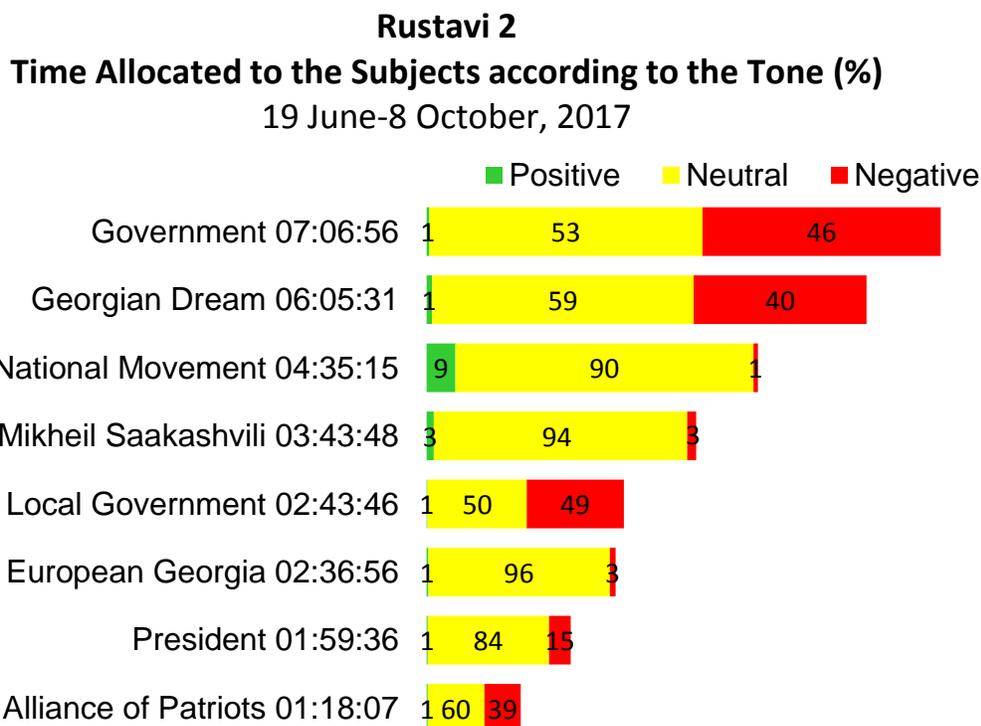
It is important that the procedures for these issues are forcefully and simultaneously carried out in favor of Ivanishvili by the Municipalities both in Batumi and in Tbilisi and they have only several

weeks before the upcoming elections and the end of their terms. Moambe news program did not pay any attention to those factors.

Rustavi 2

Quantitative Analysis Results

The monitors observed the newscast on Rustavi 2 –Kurieri at 09:00 pm, Shabatis Kurieri and the PS. The government was most frequently covered on the channel. National Movement had the most positive tone indicators of 9% of the allotted time. The local government had the most negative coverage with 49% of the allotted time. Zaal Udumashvili, a Tbilisi mayoral candidate had been covered most positively and Kakha Kaladze, most negatively by Rustavi 2.



Qualitative Analysis Results

Rustavi 2 had been more frequently and most critically covering the government amongst the monitoring TV channels. There were frequent exclusive items on air that observed the facts of the governmental corruption and of violation of human rights in the country. It is most suitable to i.e. the opposition channel criteria. The quantitative as well as the content analysis results had revealed

that Rustavi 2 had been especially sympathetic towards the National Movement and Zaal Udumashvili, a Tbilisi mayoral candidate. The intensity and positive tone indicators evidenced in the coverage of the candidate were far from the impartial, balanced and ethical journalism.

The first problem was to present Udumashvili as a mayoral candidate from the Kurieri news studio. A few minutes before the end of the program on 19 June, Zaal Udumashvili, one of the anchors of the newscast, said farewell to the audience and declared that he would be a Tbilisi mayoral candidate for 2017 elections.

Now I think that the time has come when I have to become an active participant in the political process and make my contribution to the struggle which will end in the total disarray and one man's rule in the country. I really have the experience of struggle, I've spent very interesting years as a journalist, and at the same time, I've gained a huge experience of how to combat injustice. Together with Rustavi 2 team and you I have already won a completely unequal struggle with this government. However, the country has a major battle ahead and I am going together with you and under your name to join into this battle and win once again and this time to defeat [Bidzina] Ivanishvilis corrupt and anti-democratic regime in the Tbilisi mayoral elections - said Udumashvili.

Apart from Udumashvili, his co-anchor, Diana Jojua also voiced political statements from the Kurieri news studio. She made the positive references in the address of her colleague and invited the audience to support Zaal Udumashvili. The above-mentioned example is contradictory to the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, and namely: according to the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters a broadcaster is obliged to observe the principle of impartiality while reporting news (Article 15) and no position of any political party, public, religious community or other interest group shall be allowed to be expressed (Article 16). In addition, broadcaster employees who represent a broadcaster shall not publicly support any political candidate or a political party (Article 29).

The prising of Udumashvili had been continuing in the Kurieri news the next day and the following days: *He has been outstanding at all stages in the TV space. He has an unusual charisma. At every stage, he has played a very important role in Georgian journalism, We were together in war and in the happy times, he is a brave person [Zaal Udumashvili]* - said Diana Jojua, who anchored newscast where the story was covered. Live, she wished him all the successes after the end of the story.

The prising of Udumashvili continued in other circumstances as well.

Until now, Zaliko Udumashvili has been greeting the audience from the screen. Tbilisi is his home and the love of this home has taken him from the TV box into the streets of the city - said the journalist about his former colleague and presently, a Tbilisi mayoral candidate; and after that, Udumashvili appeared again addressing the people and playing with children.

It seems not so difficult to go into politics from journalism. He knows all about the key and principal issues of Tbilisi. He has the experience of a manager and the necessary qualities to head the city.

The similar praising words had been repeatedly mentioned and addressed to Udumashvili in those and other covered stories, and as it was already mentioned above, they were far from the impartial journalism.

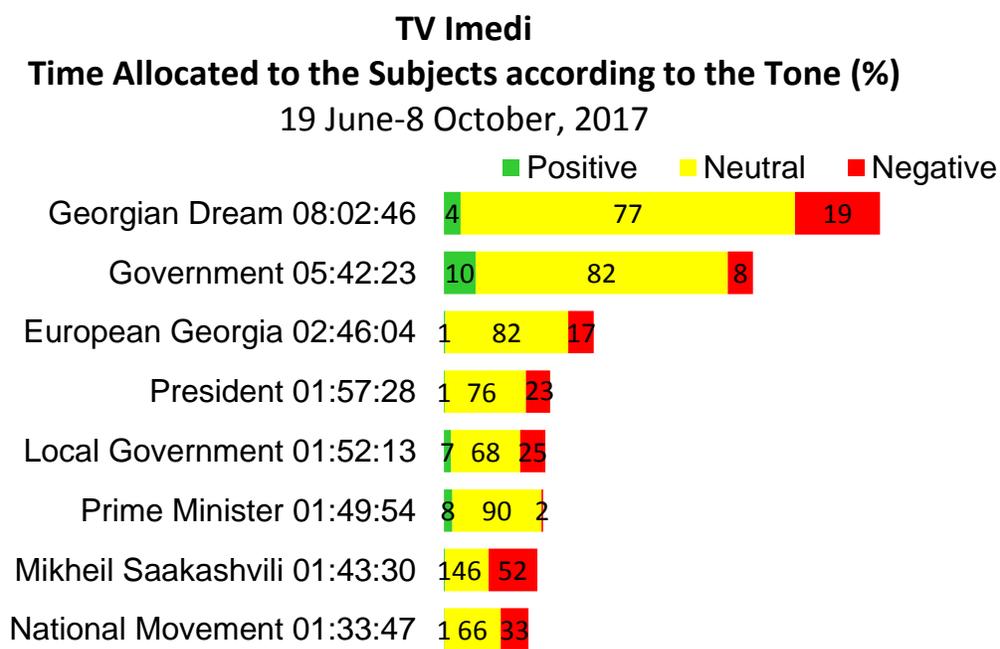
The negative attitude towards Bidzina Ivanishvili was clearly observed in Rustavi 2 air. Several items were dedicated to Ivanishvili’s Bank Cartu (19-24 September). The rallies of the National Movement in front of the bank had been covered; the serious allegations (money laundering, financial machinations, robbery, misappropriation of money for Georgian population etc.) had been heard at the rallies, however, the proofs of which had not been offered to the audience by the authors of the stories. Consequently, the serious allegations relying only one source of the National Movement had been revealed.

Imedi

Quantitative Analysis Results

The monitors observed the 08:00 pm Kronika, the main newscast on Imedi TV.

Most of the time on Imedi TV air was allotted to the Georgian Dream political party; the government was covered most positively with 10% of the allocated time. Mikheil Saakashvili was covered most negatively with 52% of the allocated time. Kakha Kaladze was allotted most of the time among the mayoral candidates. Elene Khoshtaria was leading with the positive tone indicators and Kakha Kukava with the negative.



Qualitative Analysis Results

During the monitoring period, Imedi has been less critical of the ruling party, less merciful to the President, and especially critical to Mikheil Saakashvili and the National Movement.

The concrete cases were observed when anchors and journalists from Imedi TV repeatedly violated the ethical norms against the President and the ex-President. Kronika aired the story on 2 August, covering the information on the law vetoed by the President. The texts of the anchor and the journalist created the negative context to the decision of the President to veto the law and the decision to deprive the self-governing status to several cities was almost assigned to the President.

*Margvelashvili signed the laws that he vetoed. These laws would have been enforced even without Margvelashvili's signature. The vetoed draft of the law, in any case, will be signed by the Speaker of the Parliament and it will come into force, though it has not happened. The war with vetoes is over and Margvelashvili **declared the capitulation with his signature**. The status of 7 from the 12 self-governing cities will be suspended with the consent of the President* - said the anchor covering the story.

This single storyline was presented through the entire story that the President changed his position, the veto war was over, the capitulation was signed. It is noteworthy that neither the comments of the President nor the comments of any of his representatives were heard in the released material.

Like the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), Imedi TV covered the confrontation of 29 September in the Tbilisi Municipality around the Panorama Tbilisi project. The story was released in a way as if the opposition was indiscriminately fighting and opposing the noble aim of the government that serves unloading the city from the traffic jams.

In addition, the journalist said about the Co-Investment Fund that it is related to Bidzina Ivanishvili according to the opposition claims. However, Ivanishvili did not deny his relation to the fund and the Prime Minister Kvirikashvili said in his address that Ivanishvili was building a car parking in the Pushkin Square without the business interest.

It is noteworthy that the style of Imedi and of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) regarding the story about the Panorama Tbilisi was the same, the identical main messages, the form of relating that project to Ivanishvili, etc. The journalists were only confronted with the accusations of the opposition and were limited to respond to those accusations, not researching further information, not studying the issue, which was absolutely damaging to the audience who had difficulties of finding out the truth, who was lying, whether the Municipality's decision was good or bad, would it bring any benefits to the society or bring the damage, etc.

On 22 September Imedi covered the rally - One Day without Cars and the journalist said that the politicians also joined the opening of the bicycle lane in the renovated Pekini Avenue; though only the Georgian Dream mayoral candidate, Kakha Kaladze offered his comments to the audience. Kaladze was positively presented in the story. It was unclear whether Kaladze was the only politician from all the politicians who participated in the rally and that's why only he was covered in the story, or other politicians were there and Imedi news program covered only Kaladze.

As it was already mentioned, Imedi TV was observed with the criticism towards the National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili, which was frequently expressed in the biased phrases of the journalists. Udumashvili, for example, was presented in the following way: *Zaal Udumashvili, a very angry candidate of the angry Tbilisi residents was the first one to show up in the session hall.*

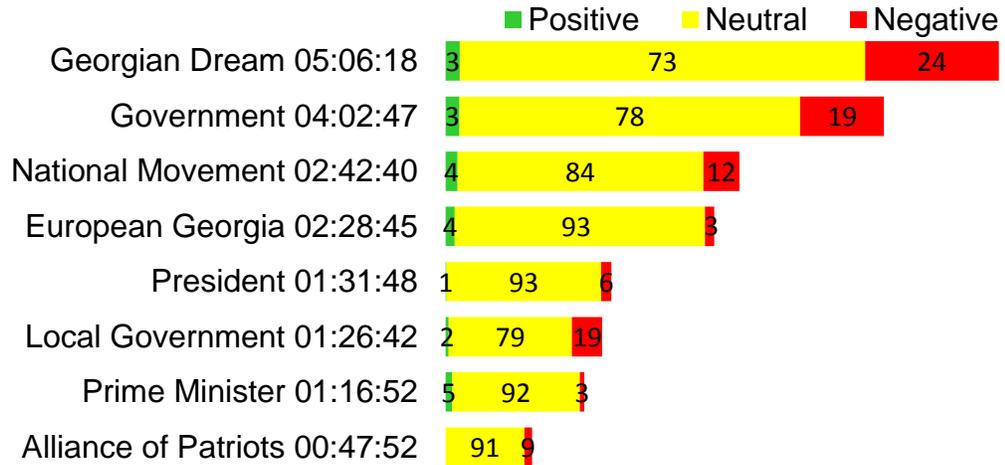
And the following phrases had been addressed to Saakashvili - *Five-star hotel resident, Jogging showman, ex-President with an undefined address, etc.*

TV Pirveli

Quantitative Analysis Results

The monitors had been observing Dghis Ambebi, the daily newscast on TV Pirveli channel. Most of the time on TV Pirveli channel was allotted to the Georgian Dream though 24% of the allocated time to the subject had negative tone indicators. The Prime Minister was leading (5%) with positive tone indicators. The government was covered most positively with 10% of the allocated time. Among the mayoral candidates, most of the time was allotted to the candidate of the Georgian Dream who had the most negative coverage. Zaal Udumashvili was most positively presented.

TV Pirveli
Time Allocated to the Subjects according to the Tone (%)
 19 June-8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

TV Pirveli channel covered almost every important event in the main newscast, though did not have its own in-depth items. No positive or negative attitude was observed towards any political power.

The unbiased coverage of politicians' briefings could be considered as the main problem. While covering a briefing or a statement of a political party, there were no attempts to clarify the nature of the allegations, to verify the facts and give a chance to another party to respond to those allegations. The journalists were satisfied only with a statement of a concrete politician. No biased attitude towards any political power was observed as a tendency and there was almost the same attitude towards everyone. For example, the unilateral coverage of the allegations was the footage released on 23 September where the members of the European Georgia blamed the Georgian Dream for attacking and threatening their majoritarian candidate and his father. Only one side was presented, even though there were serious allegations towards the government authorities; however, there was no comment of their representative and no attempt as well to obtain it.

Several similar examples were observed during the monitoring period that were incompatible with the principles and norms of the ethical journalism. Short footage is the journalistic product, the same as a story or any other form of material, so the broadcaster should be able to give the possibility to the subject of allegations to answer these allegations.

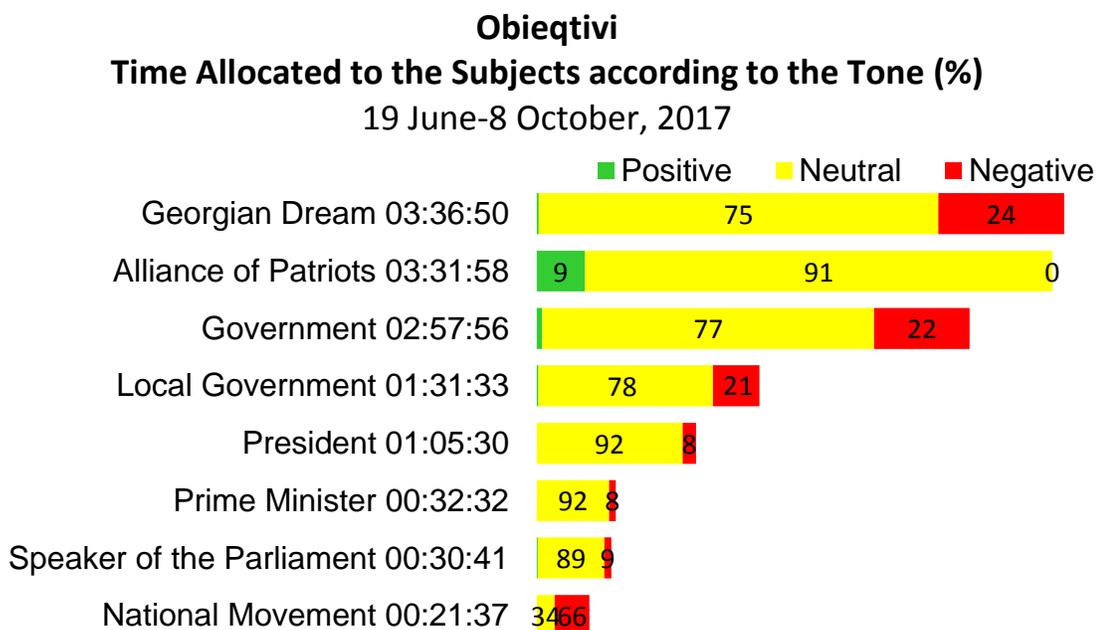
Obieqtivi

Quantitative Analysis Results

24% of the allocated time to the subject had negative tone indicators. The Prime Minister was leading (5%) with positive tone indicators. The government was covered most positively with 10% of the allocated time. Among the mayoral candidates, most of the time was allotted to the candidate of the Georgian Dream who had the most negative coverage.

The monitors observed Akhali Ambebi, the daily newscast on Obieqtivi TV channel, on air daily, except Saturdays and Sundays.

Most of the time on Obieqtivi TV channel was allotted to the Georgian Dream; Alliance of Patriots was covered the most positively, with 9% positive tone indicators of the allocated time. The National Movement was covered most negatively with 66%. Irma Inashvili, the Tbilisi mayoral candidate of the Alliance of Patriots had the most positive coverage and Kakha Kaladze, the most negative.



Qualitative Analysis Results

Obieqtivi TV channel has a different editorial policy that is unlike of all other TV channels; the channel is obviously biased towards the Alliance of Patriots, which probably is because one of the leaders of the Alliance of Patriots is a co-founder of the Media Union Obieqtivi. During the whole

period of the monitoring it had been evident that the Alliance of Patriots had been referred to as the main opposition party. Obieqtivi had been conducting interviews on all critical issues with members of that party, the agenda of the news program was often relevant to the agenda of the Alliance of Patriots. Obieqtivi violated the balance in favor of the Alliance of Patriots and often abstained from the ethical principles again in favor of the Alliance of Patriots.

Over the last few weeks of the monitoring, permanent mainstreaming was the hunger strike of the members of the Alliance of Patriots, Georgian March and their visits to Moscow. The latter was announced almost as a diplomatic breakthrough. The coverage of the last visit was also biased. For example, according to the first story of 5 October, the Alliance of Patriots had returned from Russia. No other opinion besides the general comments of the Alliance members were heard. The members of the Alliance of Patriots were met with rallies at the airport, protesting their visit to Russia. The journalist did not mention anything about the protests, even though the protest banners and slogans were quite visible and audible during the story coverage.

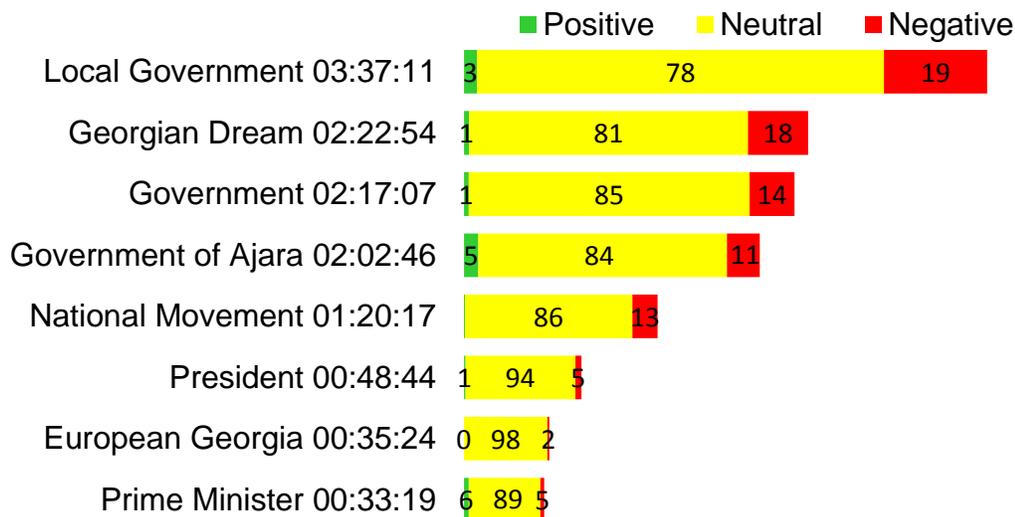
During the monitoring period, Obieqtivi was the only channel that covered the story prepared with comments containing xenophobic content. On 10 July newscast, the story on Marjanishvili Street and Aghmashenebeli Avenue Georgian Restaurants Replaced by Turks was released. The comments of the people participating in the item contained Turkophobic words, like Tartars, Arabs, using these terms in the context of the hate speech, saying that Georgian language could not be heard on the Aghmashenebeli Avenue any more, people could not eat Georgian dishes, etc. The story was like an artificially raised problem and only the opinion of one group of people had been heard.

Ajara

Quantitative Analysis Results

Most of the time was allotted to the local government in the Ajara newscast Mtavari. The Prime Minister was most positively represented with 6% of the allocated time to him. The local government was most negatively covered with 19% of the allocated time.

Ajara
Time Allocated to the Subjects according to the Tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

Ajara TV channel is distinguished by the diversity of topics amongst other monitoring channels, promoting the social issues and with in-depth reporting on the existing local problems. Most of the TV channel stories were balanced, including critical materials about the local self-government and the Ajara government. There was no biased attitude observed towards any political power.

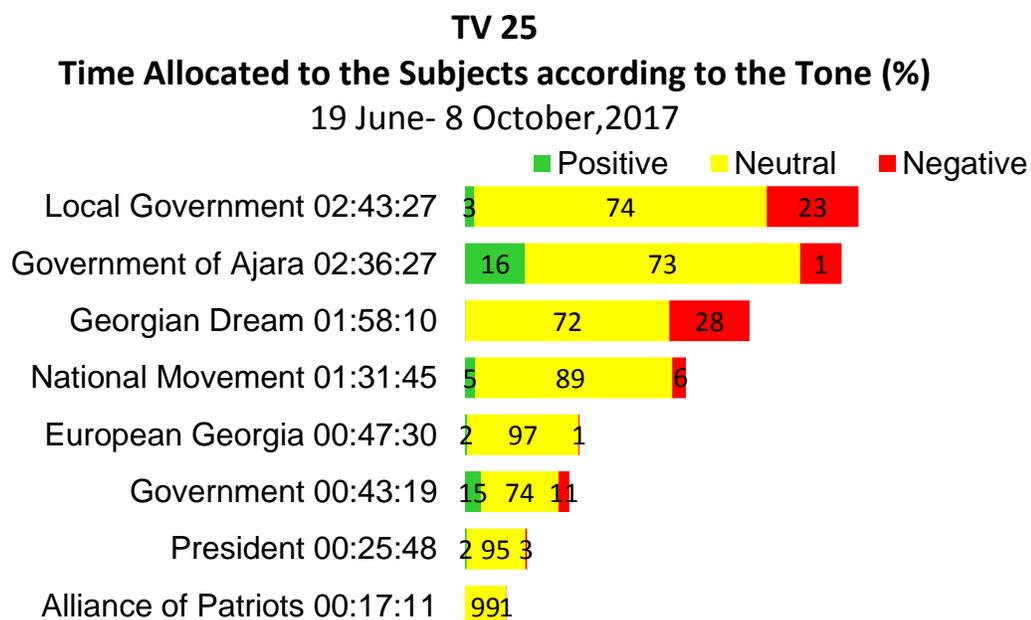
Among the cases of violating the balance was the news report about Batumi on 29 August, according to which the Mayors Office hired the company and paid approximately GEL 180 thousand for organizing festive events in Batumi. In accordance with the report, the company was on the black list due to non-fulfillment of its obligations. The company also actively cooperated with the Georgian Dream and organized several events for the ruling party. It was necessary to get the answers of the government representatives on several questions and reflect that in the story, like, how and why the company that was on the black list was selected, why the ruling party signed a contract with the company, etc. There were no such questions or comments in the news item and there was no evidence of any attempt to obtain the answers. The answer to those questions would make the material more complete and the audience would have more information about the issue.

On 17 July, the members of the Armwrestling Federation were largely discussing the problems of recent violations in the federation and had been accusing Soso Jachvliani, as well as the Ministry of Sports for misappropriation of funds and other illegal acts. They mentioned the name of the specific employee at the Ministry, who admitted his personal participation in the illegal activities. Nevertheless, there was no comment of a representative of the Ministry of Sports on these grave allegations and no evidence of any attempt to obtain it. Only Soso Jachvliani's comment was quoted.

TV Channel 25

Quantitative Analysis Results

Most of the time was devoted to the local government in the main news program Matsne of the TV-25. Most favorably the Ajara government had been covered with 16% of the allocated time of the positive tone indicators. The Georgian Dream had the most negative coverage on TV-25 with 28% of the allotted time.



Qualitative Analysis Results

TV-25 covered a wide range of the problematic issues, and the news program was focused on the local problems. It devoted much time to cover the infrastructural problems existing in different municipalities. The lack of exclusive materials had been observed and the stories were too superficially presented.

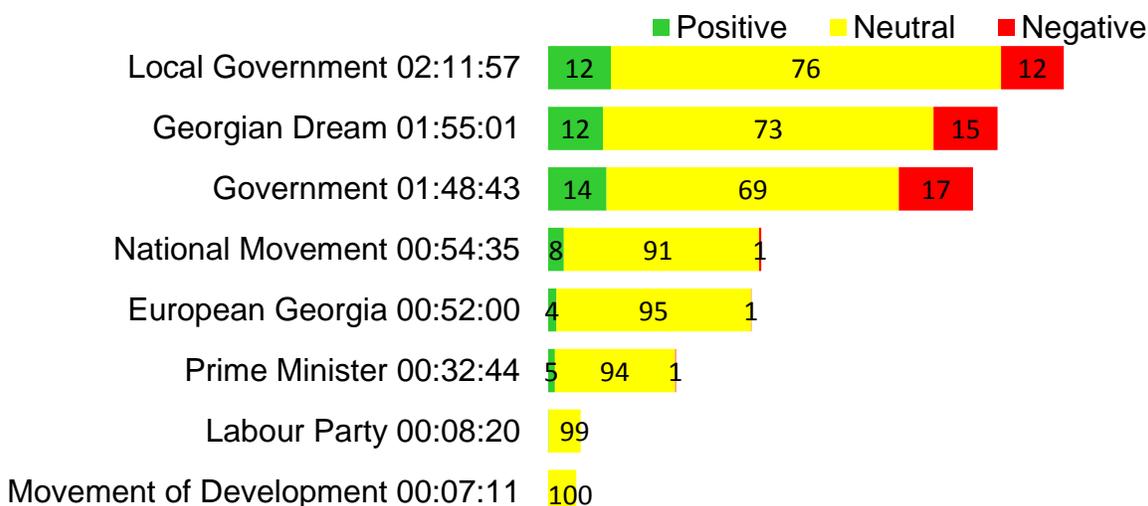
The channel was more critical towards the government authorities and the ruling party and the facts of violating the balance were evidenced several times. For example: the story about the members of the election commission was released on 4 September. There were allegations made by several respondents in the 5-minute story addressed to the Georgian Dream, that the party was

planning to rig the elections, although none of the representatives of the party commented on the fact.

Rioni

Most of the time in the news program of Rioni TV was allotted to the local government with most positive tone indicators for the central government (14%); the government had also the highest rate of the negative coverage with 17% of the allocated time.

Rioni
Time Allocated to the Subjects according to the Tone (%)
 19 June-8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

While watching Rioni TV channel news program, there was an impression that the channel had been covering only the current news and was not interested in finding any other issue or making any research. The in-depth materials were rarely observed in the news program. There was little criticism of the government and in several cases when there was some, the source was always the opposition and especially, Gogi Tsulaia, a representative of the Free Georgia party.

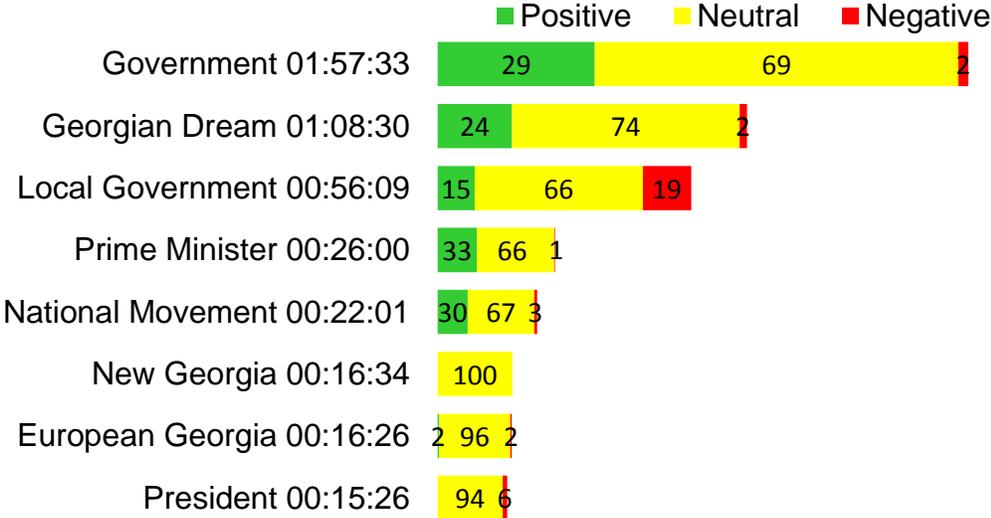
No bias attitude towards any political power had been observed within Rioni news program; the news program was basically balanced but there was the biased coverage of the information related to the Georgian Dream: On 18 September, Rioni news program covered the story about the member of the Kutaisi Municipality from the Georgian Dream - Nikoloz Lataria. According to the journalist, the Municipality responded to the questions related to Lataria's asset declaration evidencing his incomes and property. Only one party participated in the story - the representatives of the Georgian

Dream, the chairman and a deputy of the Municipality, who talked about the charitable activities of Lataria but not about the mentioned allegations against him. The journalist also did not provide the public with information on what basis the allegations were made against Nikoloz Lataria or what was meant in the spreaded information that was mentioned. The balance was violated in the story and the biased positive attitude towards the ruling party was quite evident.

Gurjaani

The monitors observed the information released on Dghes news program of Gurjaani TV channel. Most of the time was devoted to the central government and the Prime Minister was most positively covered. The total time allotted to him was 33% of the positive tone indicators. The local government had 19% of the time with the negative tone indicators.

TV Gurjaani
Time Allocated to the Subjects according to the Tone(%)
 19 June-8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

Gurjaani TV news program Dghes was covering the current events and the events in the region, more or less. The stories often lacked facts, statistics and expert evaluations. There were no in-depth assessments of problems and events. The timing of the stories often exceeded 3-4 minutes and they were stretched out.

The news program had the section News from Outside the Region. The materials presented under the section were often taken from the news section of the official websites of various ministries (videos and texts). The materials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defense had been more frequently observed. The anchor of the news program never indicated that the information had been available from the materials released by the Ministry. Even though the video footage was showing the official source (www.mod.gov.ge or www.police.ge), the audience could have the impression that the material was prepared by the news program journalists. Therefore, it is important that the channel should clearly express that it is not the editorial material. A separate issue is - why is it necessary and how important it is to use such materials.

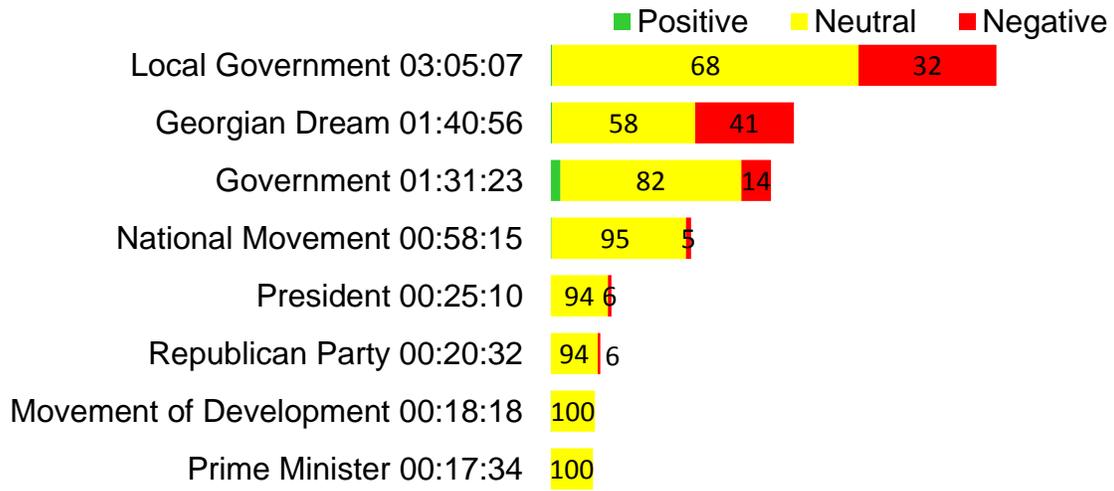
Several facts of violation of ethical norms had been observed during the monitoring period, including the news program of 29 September; under the heading News from Outside the Region the very superficial information about the Noise in Tbilisi Municipality was reported. It was said that there was much noise because of the transfer of two land plots in Tbilisi - the Botanical Garden and the Pushkin Square to a private person. The journalist refrained from commenting on the personal identity of Bidzina Ivanishvili and commented on the case in the negative tone, which was evidently the biased positive attitude towards Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Trialeti

Quantitative Analysis Results

The local government was most frequently covered by the main news program of Trialeti TV channel. The central Government was leading with the positive tone indicators (4%) The most negative coverage was attributed to the local government (32%).

Trialeti
Time Allocated to the Subjects according to the Tone (%)
 19 June - 8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

Trialeti TV channel is distinguished by a lot of critical stories about the government authorities, although the stories sometimes lacked evidence or the facts (documents, statistics, etc.) The positions of the local population who spoke about their own problems had been frequently observed on air. It was a positive sign that the journalists did try and fulfilled the task of having control over the local government while selecting and covering the topic. The positive tendency was that once the problem was covered the journalists returned to it again, checking whether the problems had been solved or not.

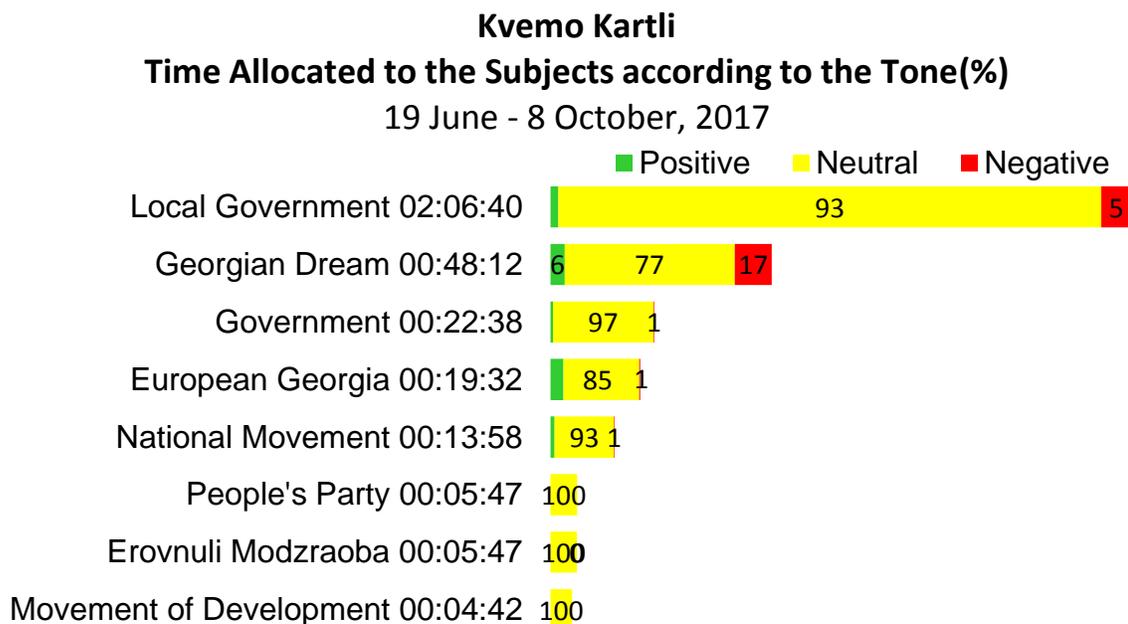
The facts of disbalance towards the government authorities constituted a problem, which was observed for several times. For example, in the story of 13 September about the self-governing cities, the Georgian Dream was shown in a negative context in the material. Several opposition parties claimed that many people would lose their jobs due to the activities of the Georgian Dream. There was no comment from the Georgian Dream or a local government representative and there was no evident attempt to obtain it.

Kvemo Kartli

Quantitative Analysis Results

TV Company Kvemo Kartli allotted most of the time of its news program Kronika to the local government. The most positive tone indicators were received by the European Georgia with 14%

of the allocated time. The Georgian Dream had the most negative tone indicators with 17% of the allocated time.



Qualitative Analysis Results

Kvemo Kartli news program mainly covered the local communities and was much less concerned about the central news. There were often some technical problems. The stories were mostly balanced, but there were several cases of the balance violation. Gocha Jamarauli, Governor of Gardabani, was covered with a positive bias. A rally was held in Gardabani on 22 August against Ramaz Budaghashvili, a mayoral candidate of the Georgian Dream. However, the entire story was only about the rally participants praising Gocha Jamarauli. There were several comments, and in one of them it was said that Jamarauli was sent to them by God. There was no comment of Budaghashvili who was the subject of criticism and no attempt was evident to get it. It was unclear, what the Jamarauli's praising served for and why was it on air.

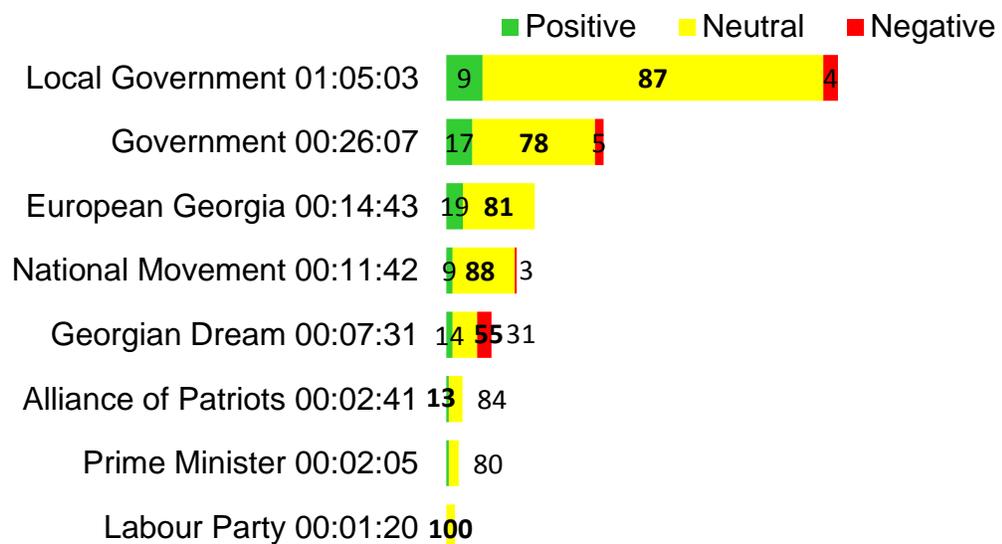
It is noteworthy that, a story containing commercial content was aired on 22 September, where the electronic goods of one retailer were openly advertised. Neither the anchor, nor the journalist provided any information that the story was a commercial ad. During the entire story, the logo of the retailer and the goods were advertised, which was unacceptable. The Law on Broadcasting prohibits commercial material in the news program.

9th Channel

Quantitative Analysis Results

Echo, the main news program of the 9th Channel devoted most of the time to the local government. The European Georgia led with the positive tone indicators of 19%. The Georgian Dream had the highest rate of negative tone indicators coverage.

9th channel Time Allocated to the Subjects according to the Tone (%) 19 June - 8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

The news program Echo did not substantially cover the events and developments in the region. The program covered only three or four local stories. One of them was often prepared by the TV Company Borjomi. The 9th Channel often used stories prepared within the framework of the Media Development Fund project - Myths Detector.

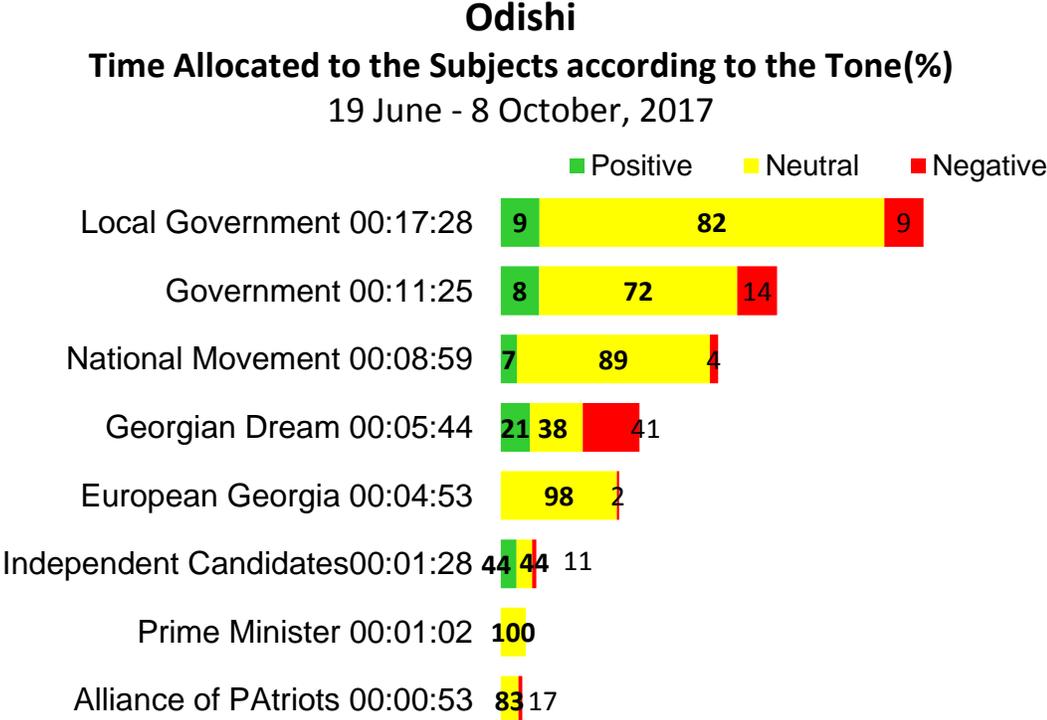
The Echo was mainly engaged in describing the agenda of the political parties. No important topics of the public interest, or their in-depth coverage were observed in the news program. Less time was spent on the local self-government elections. In some cases, the respondents did not have any written titles, nor were they presented, that made it impossible to identify a person.

In most cases the news programs were balanced but there were problems too. On 6 September, the first news item of the Akhaltsikhe 9th Channel was dedicated to the election promises that had not been fulfilled. The material was about the promises made during the local self-government elections and the current local government was represented in negative context. They had promised but never fulfilled the promises - such was the main storyline. Despite the claims that were heard towards the local authorities, their opinion was not presented and there was no attempt to contact them. No position of any candidate taking part in the elections was heard in the news item, and all the candidates were negatively covered as if they were giving false promises.

Odishi

Quantitative Analysis Results

Odishi TV channel news program Dro was most often covering the local authorities, most positively the independent candidates (although they were allocated a minute and a half in total) were covered and most negatively the Georgian Dream with 41% of the allocated time.



Qualitative Analysis Results

Dro news program was mainly occupied with the daily activities of the political parties and meetings conducted by various NGOs. The important topics for the public were not covered in-depth. Less time was dedicated to the in-depth coverage of the local self-government elections. The news program was released sometimes every day, sometimes every four days. Its duration was for average three or four minutes. Often, there was only one story covered in the news program. Air was mostly full of small footages. The news program often reflected the social problems of the population, but the problems were referred to very superficially. There were also cases of misbalance in sources of information when the respondents were criticizing the government and there was no response from the government authorities.

During the monitoring period, the commercial content was detected twice in the news program, namely: On 27 August, the main news program of Odishi TV channel reported that one of the reproductive profile medical clinics in Zugdidi conducted the free medical checkings. The journalist's text was mostly dedicated to praising the clinic; the journalist said that the clinic was equipped with the ultra modern equipment treating the patients with the American quality. The doctors advertised the clinic in their comments. During the nearly four-minute report, the name of the clinic was shown many times, and the name of the clinic and the contact phone number were placed in the lower right corner of the frame, leaving the impression that the story was a commercial.

However, the journalist and the editorial board did not provide any information to the audience. The story was repeated in the main news programme of the Odishi TV channel on 29 August. The Law on Broadcasting prohibits launching commercial material in the news program.

TV Guria

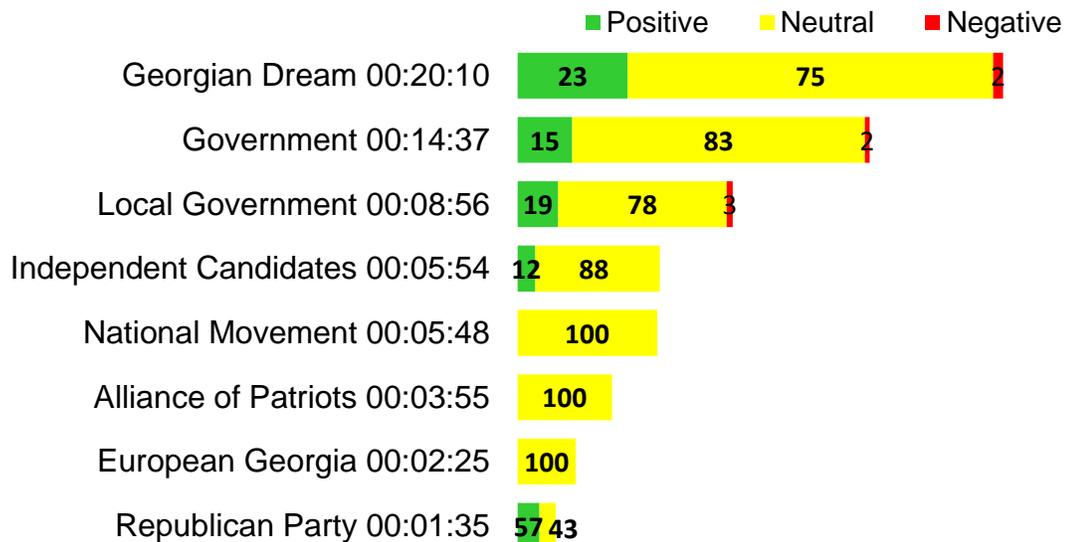
Quantitative Analysis Results

Most of the time was dedicated to the Georgian Dream on air of the TV Company Guria with the most positive tone indicators of the Republican Party, 57% of the allocated time. (Although this party had very little time of 1 minute and 35 seconds total), the local government had 3% of the allotted time.

TV Guria

Time Allocated to the Subjects According to the Tone (%)

19 June - 8 October, 2017



Qualitative Analysis Results

During the monitoring period, TV Guria broadcasted the limited news program, mainly the local news and the visits of central government authorities. There were frequent technical problems.

The news program was mostly impartial. During the monitoring period, TV Guria's main newscast did not actually release any in-depth material that would provide the audience with the detailed information on a number of issues.

The channel had been mainly covering the government officials or the ruling party candidates, confirmed by the high positive tone indicators of these subjects in the quantitative results. An example of a positive coverage of the government was the story of 25 September dedicated to the rugby game of Ozurgeti Artsivebi (Eagles) and the Bolnisi Kakachoebi (Popies). The Ozurgeti mayoral candidate of the Georgian Dream - Begalar Sioridze, who spoke about his plans in case he would be elected the mayor, was shown in the story. He was positively presented. It was unclear why it was necessary to include his comment in the story on rugby when the representatives of other political parties were not given any time to comment on the same subject.