



ევროკავშირი  
საქართველოსთვის



Empowered lives  
Resilient nations.

# MEDIA MONITORING FOR 2018 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS INTERIM REPORT





ევროკავშირი  
საქართველოსთვის  
The European Union for Georgia



## Media Monitoring for 2018 Presidential Elections in Georgia

### Interim Report on Election Monitoring of TV News

18 June - 15 October



საქართველოს  
ჟურნალისტური  
ეთიკის ქარტია

Prepared with the assistance of the European Union (EU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Contents of the report are the sole responsibility of the Georgian Charter for Journalistic Ethics and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union (EU) and UNDP.

Tbilisi 2018

## **Introduction**

The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics is monitoring the primetime news releases and talk shows on 8 TV channels, within the frameworks of the UNDP project Media Monitoring for the 2018 Presidential Elections, with the support from the European Union. The following channels are monitored: Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Rustavi 2, Imedi, TV Pirveli, Maestro, Obiektivi, Iberia, Ajara TV.

The present report provides analyses of the programmes for the period of 18 June-15 October.

## **Methodology**

Monitoring consists of quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative components are: the time allocated to subjects, direct and indirect speech and the coverage tone. The elements of the qualitative monitoring are: balance, accuracy, fact-based reporting, and manipulation with images and music.

The coverage tone was evaluated when someone spoke about the monitoring subject, when the subject talked about itself, and when the subject talked about other subjects or general issues. Three categories of the tone are presented on the charts: positive (green), neutral (yellow) and negative (red). When the time allocated to the subject is counted, the tone is also assessed. The attention is paid to the texts of journalists and respondents as well as the context of the story.

In the course of qualitative monitoring attention is paid to balance. This refers to the extent at which different opinions regarding the issues presented in the story are covered. Accuracy is also assessed, as the monitor observes the compliance of the journalist's conclusions with materials used in the story (images, respondent's comments).

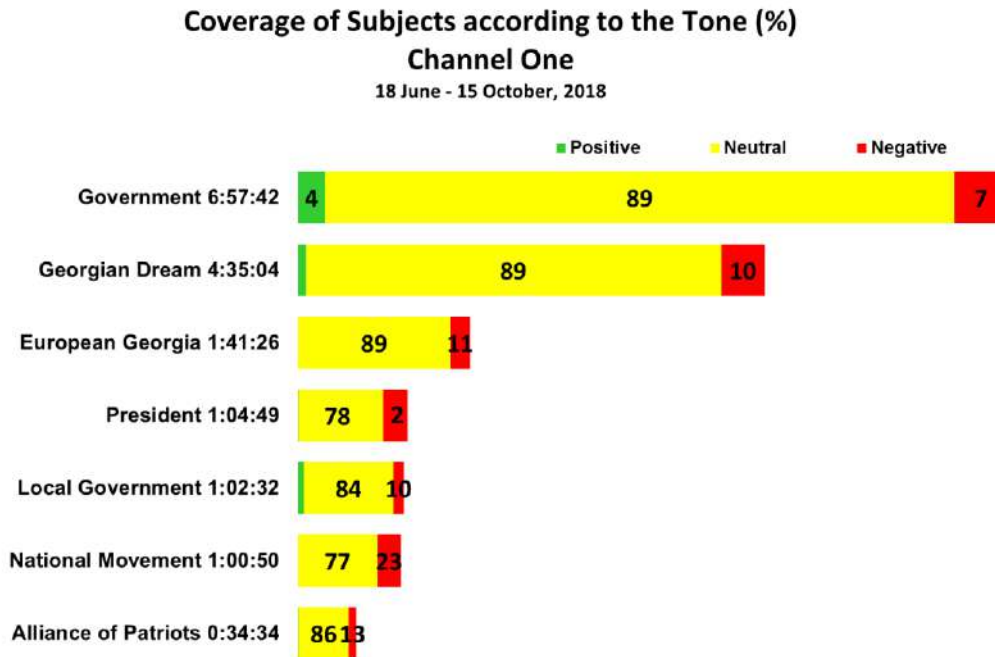
## Key Tendencies

- Among the presidential candidates, most time was allocated to Salome Zurbashvili. On some channels, the time allocated to her significantly exceeded the time given to her competitors.
- Salome Zurbashvili was covered most positively by Obiektivi (9%), and most negatively by Rustavi 2 (56%).
- Rustavi 2 carried out a negative campaign against Salome Zurbashvili, while Imedi TV demonstrated the same attitude towards Grigol Vashadze.
- According to the data of all channels, most of the time was allocated to the government of Georgia. The government was presented most positively by Ajara TV, 14% of the time allocated to the government was in positive tone. Rustavi 2 covered the Government most negatively. 41% of its time was in negative tone.
- Among political parties, most of the time was allocated to Georgian Dream, followed by National Movement and European Georgia.
- Georgian Dream was covered most positively by Ajara TV (9%), and most negatively by Rustavi 2 (46%).
- Positive coverage of National Movement on Rustavi 2 comprised a bit more than 1% of the allocated time. The party did not have more positive coverage on any other channels. Most negatively it was covered on Obiektivi (77%).
- The coverage of European Georgia is increased, and in terms of allocated time the party is ahead of National Movement on some channels. This might be caused by extensive coverage of the Parliamentary Commission established for the case of Khorava street murder. The head and majority of members of this Commission were representatives of European Georgia. News releases paid significant attention to this topic.
- Like in previous years, Obiektivi is the only channel, which primarily focuses on the coverage of the Alliance of Patriots.
- Rustavi 2 had most critical tone towards the government. Critical coverage of the government activities is most frequently provided by this channel.
- Rustavi 2 is openly sympathetic to National Movement and its presidential candidate.
- Like in previous years, Public Broadcaster and Imedi TV are soft towards the government. They developed similar narratives when reporting on the government.
- Compared with 2017, hate speech and inappropriate language were much less used in news releases.
- Only Obiektivi and Maestro aired material containing xenophobic remarks. In both cases the source of such remarks were politicians.
- Like in 2017, lack of in-depth reporting on elections, that would support voters in making informed choice, remains a problem on almost all the channels.
- Compared with previous year, the instances of violation of reasonable balance are decreased, however in some cases balance remains a problem.
- Several sexist statements were detected during the monitoring period on the air. The source in all cases were politicians.

## Channel One

### Quantitative results

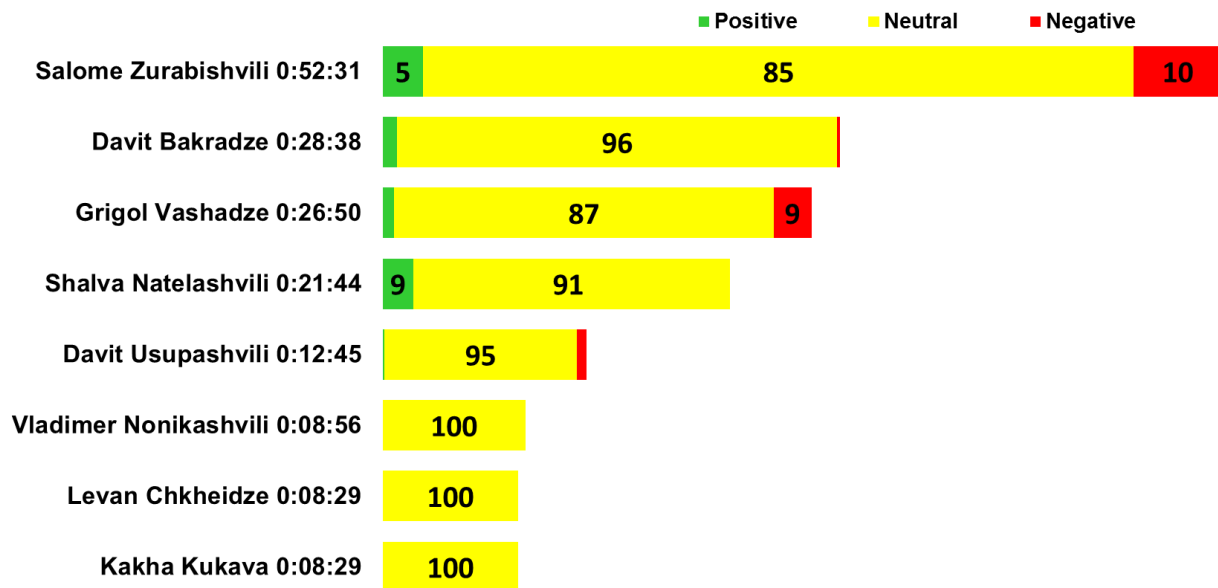
Throughout the monitoring period, the monitors observed primetime news release of Moambe at 21.00 and the programme Akhali Kvira. During the whole period, most of the time in Moambe at 21.00 was allocated to the government. The government was covered most positively (6%), while National Movement was portrayed most negatively (23%).



Most of the time among presidential candidates was allocated to Salome Zurabishvili. Time given to her, almost twice exceeds the time allocated to Davit Bakradze, the second by the frequency of coverage. Shalva Natelashvili was covered most positively (9%). Salome Zurabishvili had the highest negative coverage (10%), followed by Grigol Vashadze (9%). Channel One allocated almost identical time to non-qualified election subjects (about 8 minutes to each). Tone of their coverage is 100% neutral. This indicates that the channel intended to meet the formal obligation of covering all the candidates, rather than meaningfully report on their activities. However, such coverage could be caused by little activity of the candidates.

## Coverage of Presidential Candidates according to the Tone (%) Channel One

18 June - 15 October, 2018



### Qualitative results

Channel One mostly complies with the ethical standards. Majority of the stories is balanced; however in-depth and exclusive materials are scarce. Critical outlook on the government activities does not seem to be an editorial priority. Almost all noteworthy events are covered in Moambe, however lack of critical attitude to the government is obvious. Negative tone of the government in quantitative figures almost fully results from the comments of parliamentary opposition. In fact, Moambe has not developed any exclusive stories on problematic issues that would involve criticism of the government.

The stories containing criticism of individual governmental agencies were prepared in Akhali Kvira, however editorial policy of the program is rather loyal to the government than critical. It could be concluded that the channel fails in carrying out a watchdog role of media, revealing faults of the government and providing the audience with comprehensive information.

Channel One was particularly sympathetic to the prime minister Mamuka Bakhtadze. Bakhtadze was positively presented in many stories. This included his nomination as a prime minister, his first working day in the new position, his farewell to the employees of the Ministry of Finance and travel to the regions of Georgia. On 14 July, first and second stories (about 9 minutes) described the process of approval of the new government. Mamuka Bakhtadze was presented extremely positively in the journalist's texts and comments of MPs.

On 21 June, Moambe allocated 4-minute report to prime minister's visit to Samegrelo. According to the story, in Samegrelo the prime minister discussed all important problems, from education to combatting stink bug. The story included Mamuka Bakhtadze's meeting with young people and IDPs. Thanks to the texts of the journalist of Moambe, impressive images from air cameras, and soft questions of the citizens on the

scene, the overall portrait of the prime minister was extremely positive. Nobody voiced a critical opinion or a question, and no citizen dissatisfied by the government was shown.

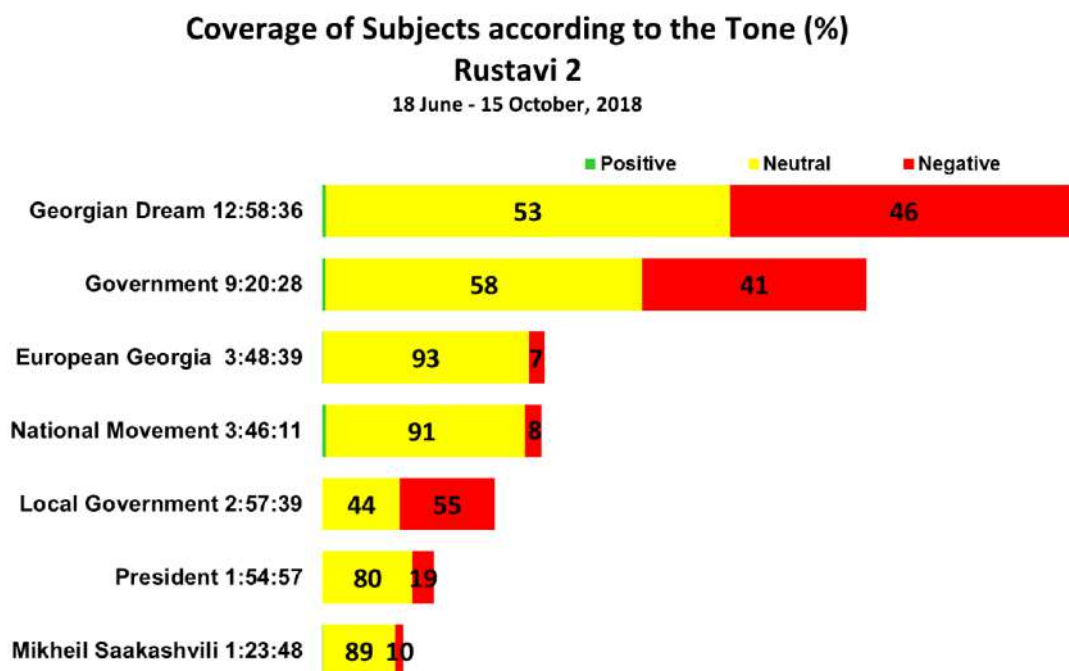
As for coverage of the activities of presidential candidates, until September this was done mechanically and superficially, providing formal balance among the candidates. For example, the activities of all candidates would be covered in the program with identical timing. This was often done within 30 seconds; in cases, unverified accusations towards this or that person were heard in these short reports, which were left unanswered. Such superficial coverage of pre-election campaign did not provide the audience with the comprehensive information regarding the candidates, i.e. their values, action plans or opinions.

Starting for 26 September presidential candidates were invited and offered 10 minutes of airtime. This again left the impression of a formality and provided less comprehensive information about the candidates.

## Rustavi 2

### Quantitative results

On Rustavi 2, the monitors observed Kurieri at 21.00, Kurieri on Saturday and P.S. The government was covered on this channel most frequently. National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili were covered most positively; however, their positive coverage did not exceed 1%. Local government was presented most negatively, with 55% of allocated time. In total, negative coverage of the government and its endorsed candidate Salome Zurbashvili was obvious.



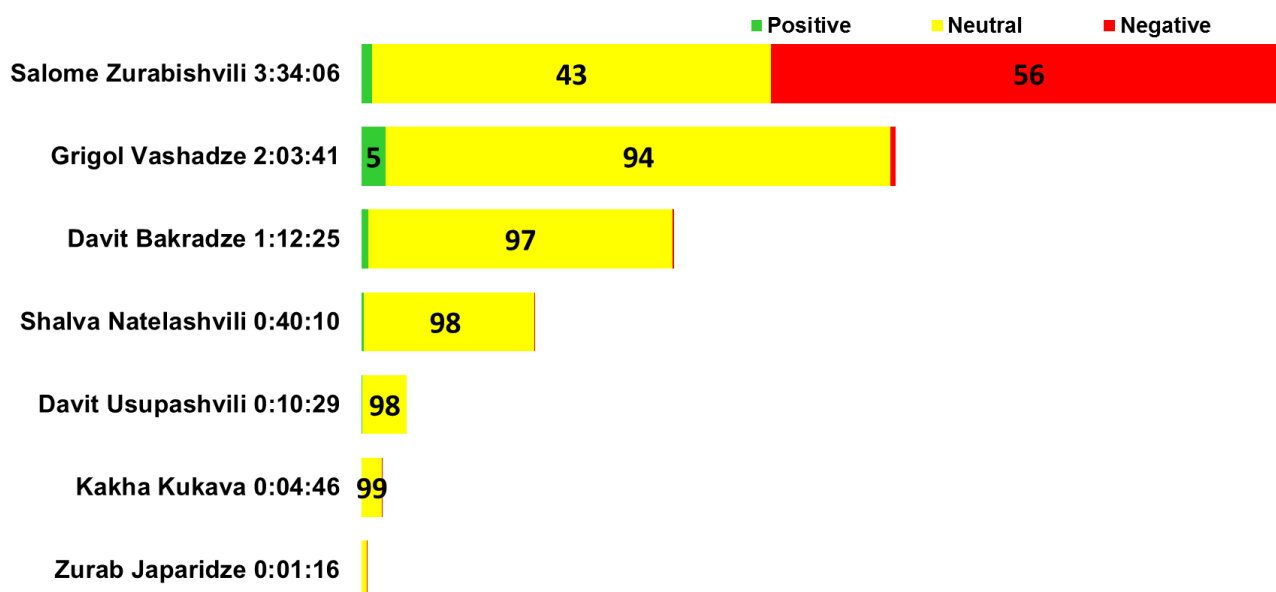
Among the presidential candidates most of the time was allocated to Salome Zurbashvili, however more than half of this time (56%) was spent on criticizing her. Grigol Vashadze was covered most positively, only 1% of the time allocated to him was negative.



## Coverage of Presidential Candidates according to the Tone (%)

### Rustavi 2

18 June - 15 October, 2018



### Qualitative results

News release of Rustavi 2 was distinguished by in-depth reporting. This channel is most critical towards the government. Nevertheless, its loyal attitude towards United National Movement, Mikheil Saakashvili and presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze is obvious. For example, Kurieri gave 46 minutes of airtime to Grigol Vashadze's nomination. Four days later his competitor Davit Bakradze got less than two minutes for his. All appearances of Salome Zurabishvili are in negative tone.

Most of ethical violations were identified in the stories prepared about Salome Zurabishvili. The journalists of Rustavi 2 criticize Salome Zurabishvili even in their opening speeches, not refraining from cynicism and irony in her regard: *for the leader of European Georgia Salome Zurabishvili is kind of a political second hand, who at first time missed the chance to use family or personal background for becoming a non-partisan politician* – said a journalist of Rustavi 2 in an opening line to the news report. According to the reports of Rustavi 2, Salome Zurabishvili has offended almost everybody. She is portrayed as a traitor and the enemy of the church.

On 23 September, P.S. aired a fully negative story on Salome Zurabishvili. The anchor opened the story with the following text: *the so called independent candidate Salome Zurabishvili appeared to be totally non-diplomatic, despite her long-term diplomatic career. As if the topic of the War of 2008 was not enough, she stated that she plans to lead the campaign on cultivation of cannabis. The clergy was alarmed by two issues – her statements regarding the war and her plans to become the queen of cannabis; but Salome Zurabishvili instead of trying to solve the problem in a diplomatic manner, attacked the church as if already the president in power and threatened to prevent interference of religious leaders in issues which are not their business. Many bishops and clerics are however convinced that you, Ms Zurabishvili, will never become a president. They do not plan to vote for you, and there is high probability that their congregation will also not support*



*you. It is not surprising that Salome Zurabishvili is failed as a diplomat, since the best diplomat for her is Sergei Lavrov. She says this herself and what else is there to add.*

Sometimes the stories were not verified by facts on Rustavi 2 and due evidence for the accusations that were heard was not provided. One of such stories was presented on 4 August, insinuating that in addition to salaries, the ministers get illegal funds from the so called “black fund.” The story did not provide any reliable source or evidence proving that this was realistic. Nevertheless, the text of a journalist, comments of National Movement representatives, music and images, video reconstruction of how ministers actually take the money, all led to building up the impression that the money was indeed taken. In some parts of the report this was declared as a fact.

On the other hand, Rustavi 2 is biased in favour of National Movement. Several stories were prepared about distribution of “guarantee certificates” to the citizens by National Movement. The story that ran on June 21, was basically a political advertisement; in it National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili promised the population to reimburse the damages caused by the loss of jobs and bank credits, at the expense of property stolen by officials. The story is not balanced; it is not verified how this promise can be fulfilled. No question is asked in the story regarding the extent at what this is realistic or economically justified. It is noteworthy that several stories were prepared on this topic on Rustavi 2.

## **Imedi**

### **Quantitative results**

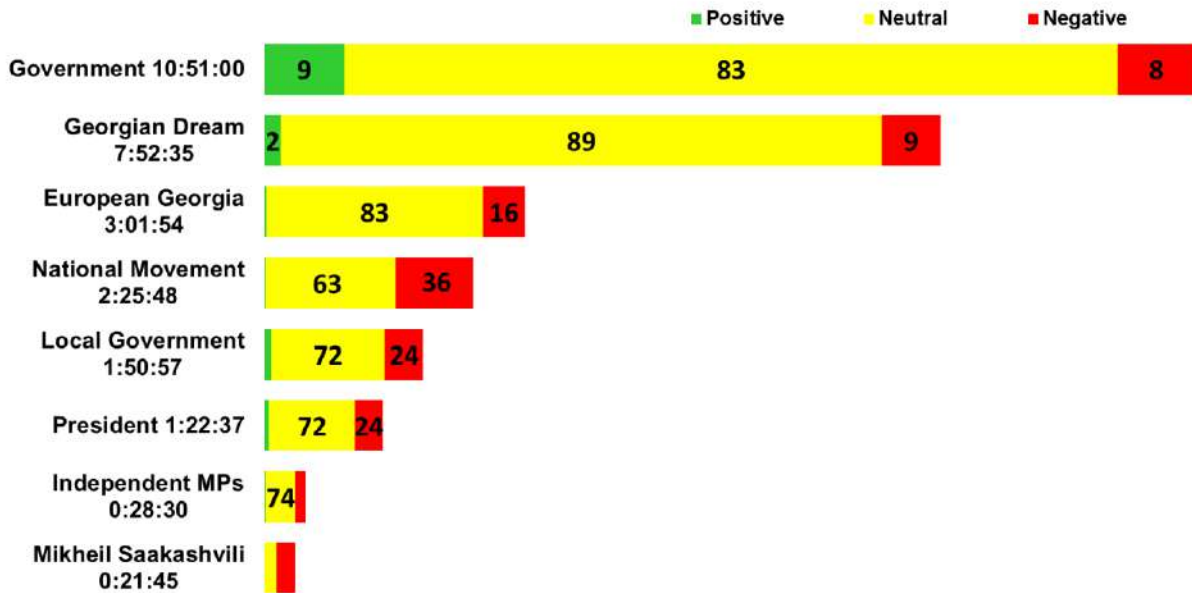
The monitors observed main news release Qronika at 20.00 and Imedi's Kvira. On Imedi most of the time was allocated to the government. Government was covered most positively with 9% of the allocated time. Mikheil Saakashvili (60%) and National Movement (36%) were covered most negatively.

Among the presidential candidates, most of the time was allocated to Salome Zurabishvili. Davit Bakradze was covered most positively (26%), however total time allocated to him was twice less than the time given to Salome Zurabishvili. Grigol Vashadze was covered most negatively. More than half of the time allocated to Grigol Vashadze was negative (52%).

## Coverage of Subjects according to the Tone (%)

Imedi

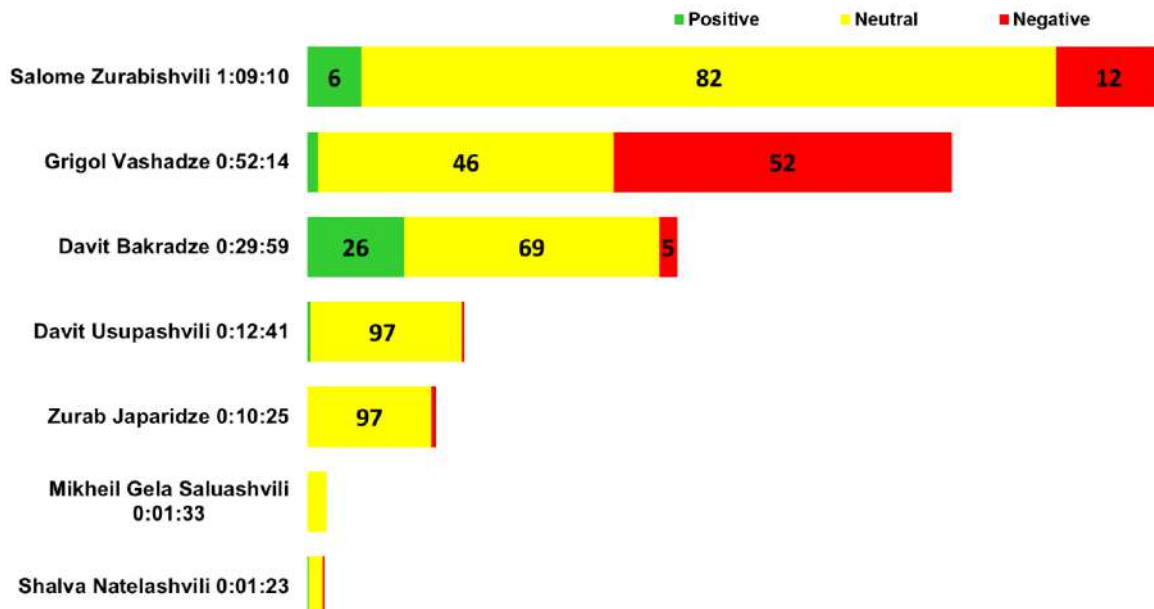
18 June - 15 October, 2018



## Coverage of Presidential Candidates according to the Tone (%)

Imedi

18 June - 15 October, 2018



## Qualitative results

Imedi almost never criticised the ruling team. In contrast, the channel was obviously critical to the president Giorgi Margvelashvili, and foremost to Mikheil Saakashvili, National Movement and Grigol Vashadze. The standards of ethics were violated mostly against the above-mentioned subjects.

Like the elections of previous year, key messages of Imedi news programs, in terms of loyal coverage of the government are similar to those of Channel One. Like Moambe, Qronika provides broad and distinguishably positive coverage of Mamuka Bakhtadze's appointment as a prime minister and his activities. On 2 July, Imedi allocated almost 7 minutes to the briefing of the prime minister Mamuka Bakhtadze, which was covered by Rustavi 2 only for 79 seconds.

Imedi is explicitly critical towards the presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze. The stories prepared about him are often manipulated and inaccurate. For example: on 7 October, Imedis Kvira aired a story titled *How Okuashvili's hidden records relate to election campaign of Grigol Vashadze?* The story is about Grigol Vashadze's election campaign; it is imbalanced and not based on facts.

The story links the case of company Omega, Grigol Vashadze's election campaign and Kremlin policy and its influences without providing any proof for these linkages. The storyline is that Grigol Vashadze is Putin's project in Georgia. The facts are manipulated, and it is unclear how Omega Group is connected to all this. The journalist relies on the respondents with negative attitude towards National Movement, who make unverified accusations against Vashadze. Omega's case and criticism towards Vashadze are somehow mixed up in the story. In response to all the above, the story provides just 5-second comment of the member of National Movement Zaal Udumashvili, which is inadequate providing the degree of accusations against the political group. The story does not show Vashadze's position, no attempt to obtain his comment is demonstrated.

By the end of August, Imedi launched a negative campaign against Vashadze; several stories were prepared about the statement made by Grigol Vashadze on 3 August 2008, where he speaks about Russia's participation in the events developed in Tskhinvali region.

*Provocation, attempted by Kokoity's regimen in Tskhinvali region, was absolute self-creativity and Russian Federation also was not ready for this. It is clear that such self-creativity could lead to very dangerous results, thus Russian party contacted me and asked me to travel to Moscow* – Imedi presented this comment of Vashadze as if made after the events of 7-8 August.<sup>1</sup> The journalists of Imedi knew quite well that this statement was made on 3-4 August (the date could have been concluded from the video material) and hid this fact during the whole story. Therefore, the whole story was manipulated and aimed at negative presentation of Vashadze.

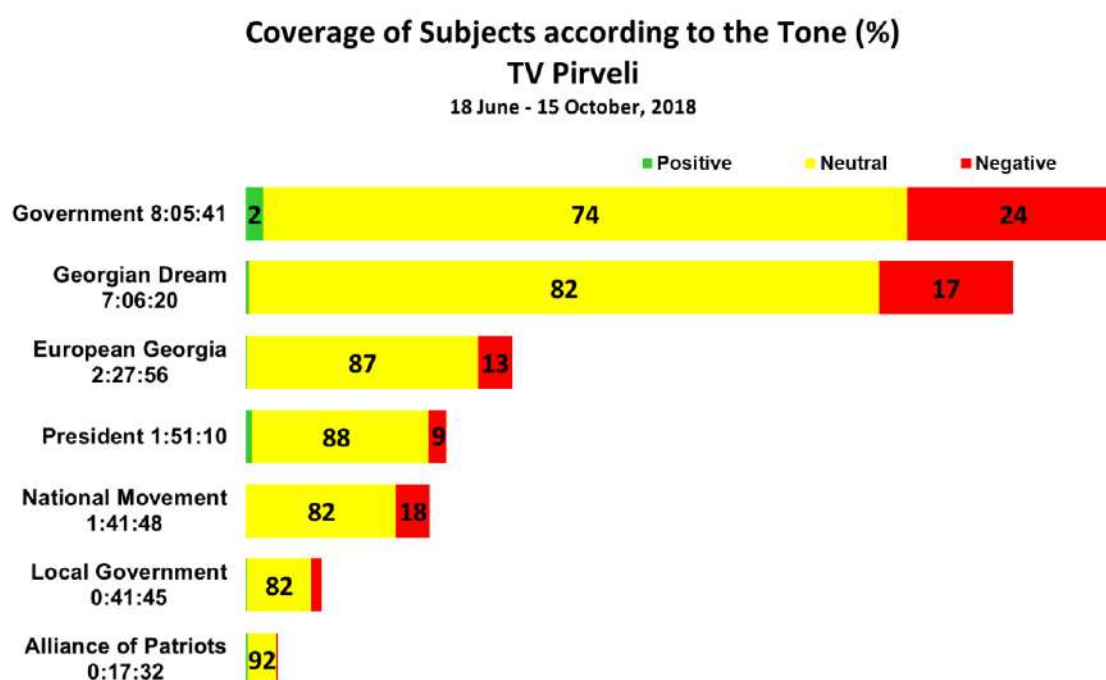
---

<sup>1</sup> Giorgi Vashadze, the head of the election headquarters of Grigol Vashadze applied to the Charter regarding this story. The charter found violation of the principles. See the decision <http://qartia.ge/ka/gadatsyvetilebebis-dzebna/article/59596-gadatsyvetileba-saqmeze-giorgi-vashadze-levan-javakhishvilis-da-natalia-qajaias-tsinaghmddeg>

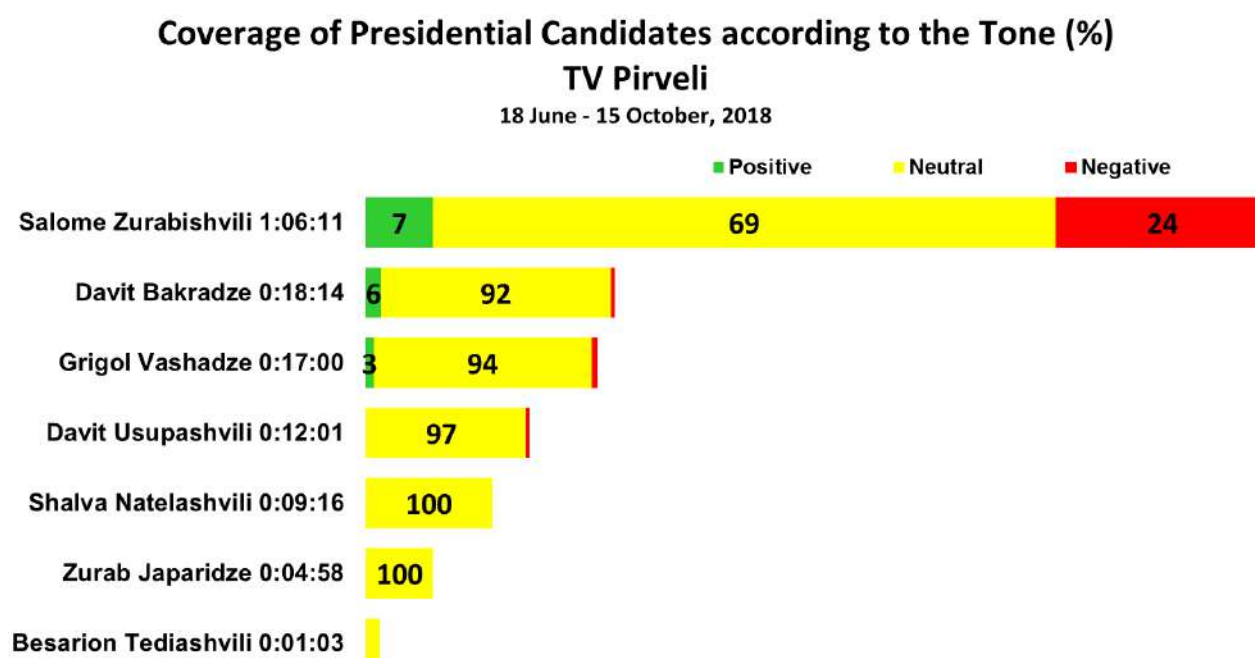
## TV Pirveli

### Quantitative results

On TV Pirveli, the monitors observed main daily news release Dghis Ambebi. Government received most of the coverage on this channel, and it had most negative coverage as well (24%). The President was covered most positively, 3% of the time allocated to him was positive.



Among the presidential candidates most of the time was allocated to Salome Zurabishvili. On TV Pirveli she was covered 4 times more often than her competitors. She had most positive and most negative coverage.



## **Qualitative results**

TV Pirveli covered almost all noteworthy news. The balance was maintained in most cases, but the channel does not have its own in-depth stories. Superficial coverage is a challenge for the channel; the journalists might present all relevant parties, but the storyline remains unclear. The stories are lacking depth and details, which does not benefit the audience.

On TV Pirveli Georgian Dream and government together had more than 40% of negative coverage. Some cases of imbalanced reporting were identified, for example: on 12 September the story about the conference organized by the Orthodox Church was presented. The conference was about the possible cultivation and export of cannabis in Georgia. It presented the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Parliamentary majority and Bidzina Ivanishvili negatively. Their comments were not included, while it was visible in the footage that the conference was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Georgian Dream.

## **Obiektivi**

### **Quantitative results**

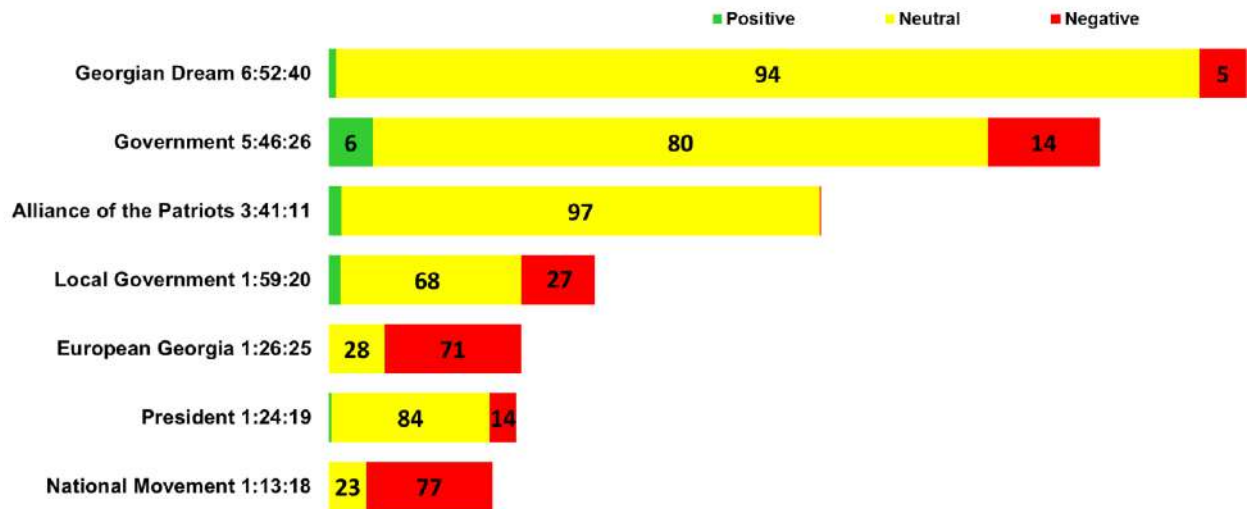
On Obiektivi the programme Akhali Ambebi was monitored.

In this news programme, most of the time was allocated to Georgian Dream. Georgian Dream was covered most positively, 6% of the time allocated to it was positive. National Movement was covered most negatively (77%). Obiektivi allocated much time to the Alliance of Patriots. The party comes third by duration of coverage on Obiektivi, which has never been the case on any other channel. In the monitoring of previous years, we also mentioned for several times that the founders of Obiektivi are the leaders of Alliance of Patriots and this likely preconditions special attention to the party.

### Coverage of Subjects according to the Tone (%)

#### Obiektivi

18 June - 15 October, 2018

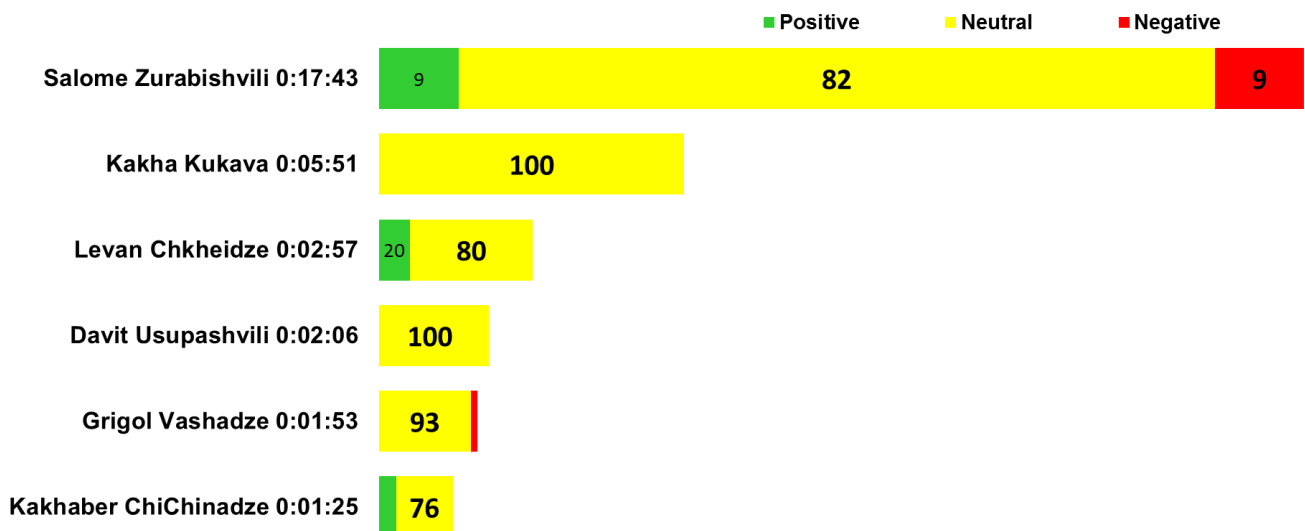


Among the presidential candidates, most of the time was allocated to Salome Zurbashvili. Time allocated to her exceeded time given to Grigol Vashadze 15 times. Salome Zurbashvili is leading in negative coverage as well (9%). Most positive coverage was given to a non-qualified candidate Kakhaber Chichinadze (24%), however total time allocated to him in a 4-month period of monitoring is only 85 seconds.

### Coverage of Presidential Candidates according to the Tone (%)

#### Obiektivi

18 June - 15 October, 2018



### Qualitative results

Obiektivi's editorial policy is different from all other channels. It is obvious that this channel is biased in favour of Alliance of Patriots. During the whole period, it was clear that Obiektivi considered Alliance of

Patriots as the leading opposition party and interviewed representatives of this party regarding all important issues.

Obiektivi covered National Movement and European Georgia negatively. Ethical principles were constantly violated in the stories prepared about them. Such stories were always presented in imbalanced manner. Obiektivi did not cover official introduction of Davit Bakradze as the presidential candidate, which took place on 21 July and was covered by all channels. Obiektivi constantly covered the initiative of The Alliance of Patriots regarding announcing the period of governance of National Movement as the “regimen of Bokeria-Saakashvili.” Many stories were prepared about this topic in main news release of Obiektivi. As a result of monitoring it could be stated that Obiektivi is rather a media platform of the Alliance of Patriots than an independent TV company.

Like in previous rounds of monitoring, xenophobic statements were heard on air. On 3 July, the journalist and respondent (the leader of the Alliance of Patriots) both spread Turkophobic statements in the first story that ran in primetime news. *The founders of the Organization of Muslim and Christian Brothers as well as its members and supporters signed the declaration for supporting integrity of Georgia. Main goal of the declaration is overcoming hidden expansion of the neighbouring country [Turkey] to Ajara – this was the text of the journalist. Comments of the respondent were even more xenophobic. Davit Tarkhan – Mouravi: today public movement of Muslim and Christian brothers signed a declaration, in which Turkey is blamed openly for the policy on expansion to Georgia. In this declaration it is declared that in our country, foremost in Ajara Turkish organizations are operating with the purpose of persuading Georgian people that they had the best life in Ottoman Empire. In fact, they are promoting the Ottoman Empire. Besides, Turkey openly claims Batumi, as well as Ozurgeti and Akhaltsikhe. This is nothing new.*

Media shall not disseminate such statements. If the statement is made by a public official, it could be presented but the editorial staff should distance themselves from such statements, declare that this is xenophobic and therefore unacceptable. Obiektivi never did this, which is violation of ethical standards.

## **Maestro**

### **Quantitative results**

Main news release of maestro Kontakti was monitored. The programme ran from 20.00 to 22.00. The programme included business and international sections which did not contain monitoring subjects.

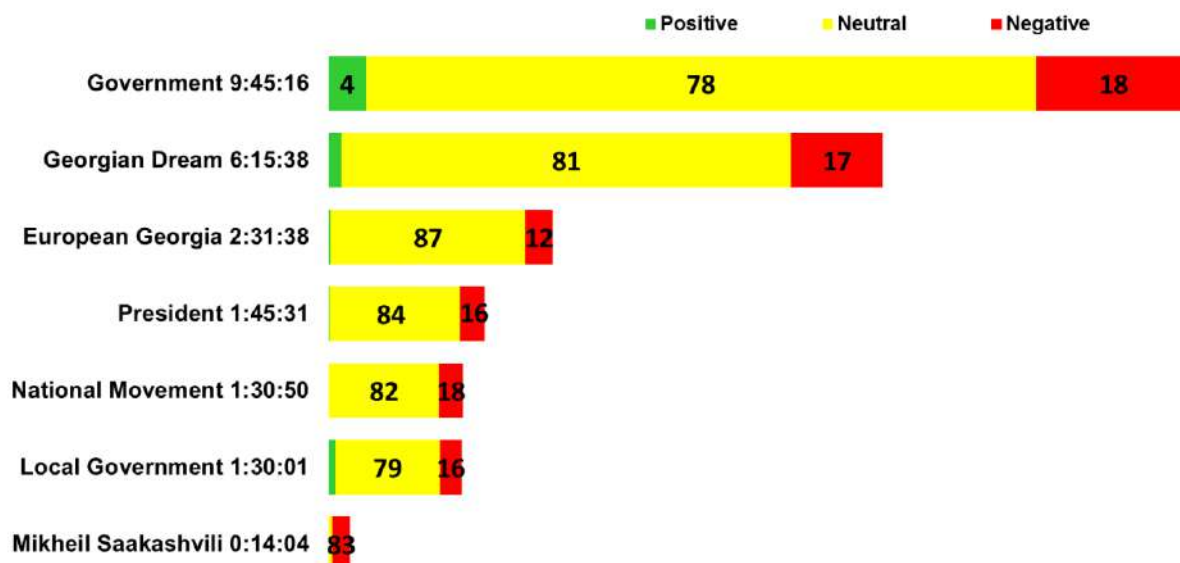
On Maestro most of the time was allocated to the government. Local government was presented most positively, 5% of the time allocated to it was positive. Mikheil Saakashvili was covered most negatively, 83% of the time allocated to him was negative.



## Coverage of Subjects according to the Tone (%)

### Maestro

18 June - 15 October, 2018

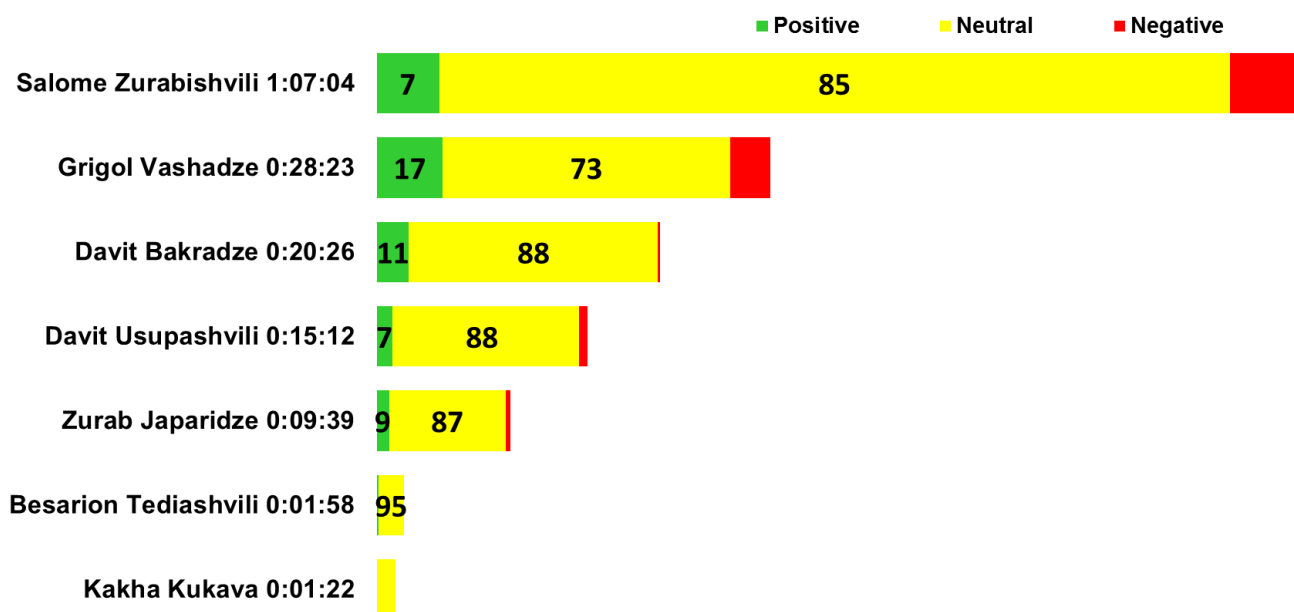


Among the presidential candidates most of the time was allocated to Salome Zurbashvili. She was covered twice more frequently than her competitors. Grigol Vashadze was covered most positively. 17% of the time allocated to him was positive. Vashadze leads in negative coverage as well (10%).

## Coverage of Presidential Candidates according to the Tone (%)

### Maestro

18 June - 15 October, 2018



## Qualitative results

Maestro covers ongoing events and has almost no stories of its own, no exclusive, in-depth materials, where a particular issue would be discussed comprehensively. In news releases of Maestro, direct speeches of the representatives of the government are quite frequent, and they continue for about 8-10 minutes. Like Channel One and Imedi, Maestro favours the prime minister Mamuka Bakhtadze. Much time was allocated to Bakhtadze's introduction and appointment, and in positive tone. Loyal attitude of Maestro towards the government was demonstrated in the release of 30 August. The story was about the EU report regarding fulfilment of the Association Agreement by Georgia and it ran almost at the end of the programme. Maestro informed the audience about the report of the member of European Parliament – Andrejs Mamikins, which assessed operation of the government of Georgia positively. There was just one critical comment in the story – from an international expert. In fact, two reports were publicized on that day in European Parliament. European Parliament commissioned the second report to an independent international expert and it was considerably critical. The report covered the concerns such as Ivanishvili's informal influences, the problem of independence of judiciary, restrictions of critical media, disappearance of Azeri journalist from the centre of Tbilisi and so on. This report was not covered on Maestro at that day, and its audience did not receive the information about this criticism towards the government. Maestro did not mention at all that two reports were published on that day in European Parliament, and that the second one was critical. This is the case of ignoring the facts in favour of the government. Rustavi 2 covered both reports and gave priority to the second one.

Interesting trend of coverage of presidential candidates was identified on the channel. Maestro largely ignores activities of presidential candidate Shalva Natelashvili, while he was one of the first to be nominated as a candidate. Natelashvili was covered intensively on most of the channels, while on Maestro he was not even among the seven mostly covered candidates. In one report, the candidates Davit Bakradze and Shalva Natelashvili met with the representatives of ethnic minorities. Maestro aired comments from Bakradze only, and Natelashvili was just seen in the video. It is unacceptable when media singles out active candidates and ignores his/her activities.

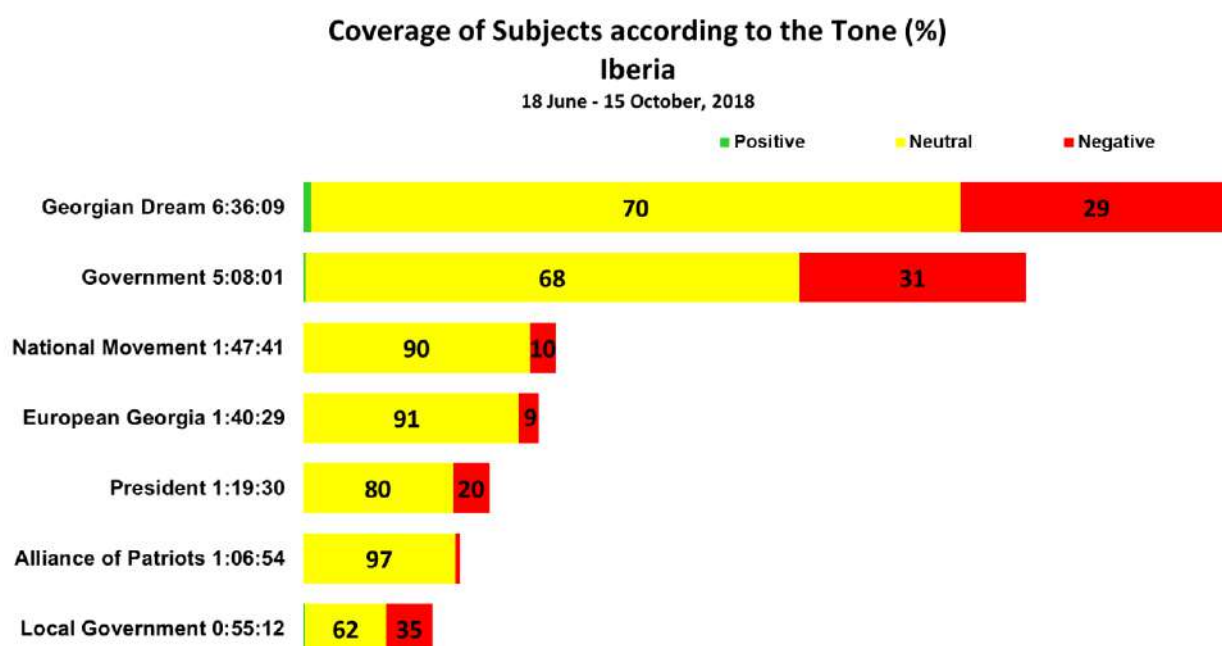
Maestro also disseminated xenophobic statements. The material presented on August 20 was about Kakha Kukava's nomination as a presidential candidate. Kukava made a xenophobic statement: *Our priority will be termination of admission of Arabs, Turks, Iranians and other migrants into the country and issuance of residence permits to them, also an end to the disaster called privatization of land.*

The anchor of news releases did not distance himself from this statement and did not provide any clarifications. In accordance with the standards of ethics, in case of presenting such material, the journalist shall be distanced from the content of such statement and explain to the audience that this is xenophobic and therefore unacceptable, and is put on air only to demonstrate the attitude of a particular presidential candidate towards this issue.

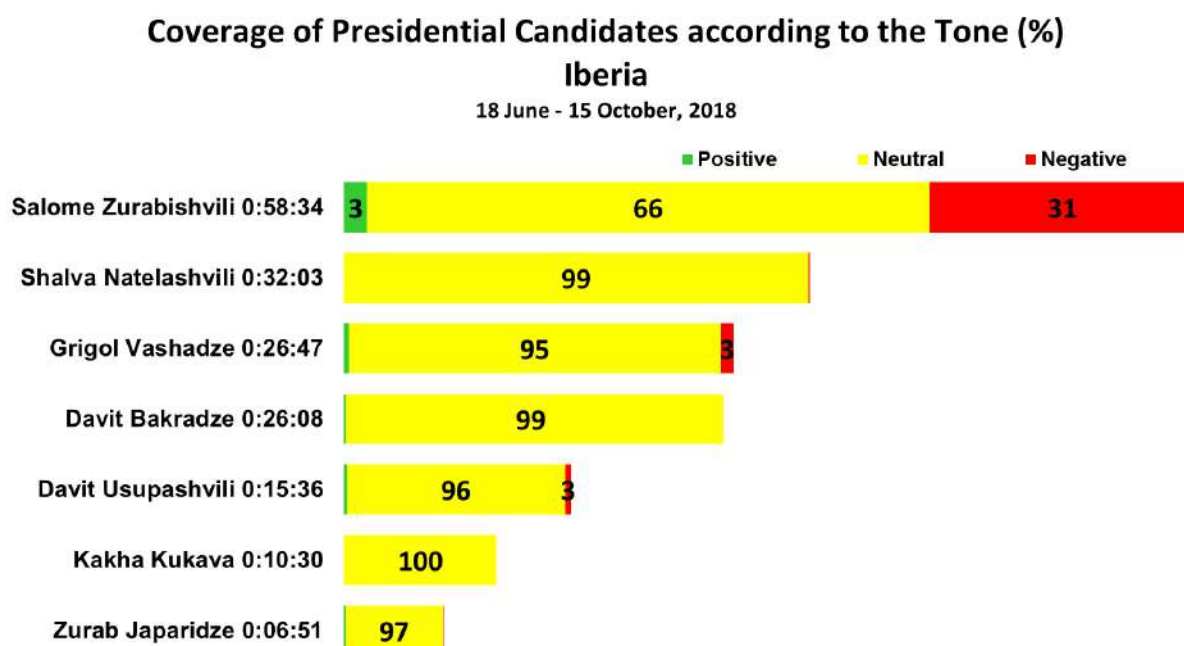
## Iberia

### Quantitative results

On Iberia the monitors observed news release at 19.00. most of the time was allocated to the coverage of Georgian Dream. Local government was covered most positively, 3% of the time allocated to it was positive. It also received most negative coverage (35%).



Among the presidential candidates, Salome Zurbishvili was covered most frequently. Compared with competitors she got twice more time. She had most positive (3%) and most negative (31%) coverage.



## Qualitative results

Evaluation of Iberia in monitoring period shall be divided into two parts: before and after the emergence of Omega case. In the first period, Iberia actively covered almost all noteworthy issues. Most of the stories were ethically balanced. In the second period Iberia got fully engaged in the conflict between the family of the owner of the channel and the state. In this period Iberia represented a party of the conflict and reported on the dispute between its founders and the state in a biased manner. Iberia allocated less time to other issues ongoing in the country. The channel focused on covering the founders of Omega Group, its directors and so on. Cases of distribution of unethical, imbalanced information were identified.

On 5 September Iberia ran a story titled *nothing is done in the country for elimination of corruption*. In the story, the statement of MP Nato Chkheidze, who also is the founder of Iberia continues for almost 3 minutes. She speaks about corruption and calls on the government to take measures. This statement is unverified and does not contain actual data. Even though this statement is made in the plenary hearing hall of the Parliament, no comment from any other MP is included in the story.

Escalation of the conflict between Omega Group and the government affected the news releases of Iberia. From the beginning of September, the narrative was that the government creates financial problems for the channel and it might be even closed. The criticism towards the government mounted both from journalists and from respondents. On 3 October, the channel ran the story titled *Challenge with combination of 4 fingers*. While presenting the story, the anchor showed combination of four fingers and stated that it was most popular gesture in social network, and that this gesture was shown by all who protested intimidation of business by the government. This referred to the 4 million that were mentioned in released hidden recordings (according to the founder of Omega, Bidzina Ivanishvili requested 4 million from him and showed four fingers to demonstrate this). The journalist presented the gesture of four fingers as if the whole story was a confirmed fact, and then a social campaign was built on it. This is unethical and inaccurate. The story is also inappropriate, since after four fingers a middle finger was shown on air.

Another report that was irrelevant for the news format, featured the writer Rostom Chkheidze, a brother of the founder of Iberia Nato Chkheidze. In his appearance, Rostom Chkheidze read out a piece of creative writing in which he criticized Bidzina Ivanishvili and the government. The report did not contain any news or facts. On 1 and 4 October, Ivanishvili was called Arkipo (a sharply negative fictional character in Georgian literature) on air and the statement concluded with the phrase: Polychronion, Polychronion, Polychronion (the phrase was used to glorify the above-mentioned fictional character).

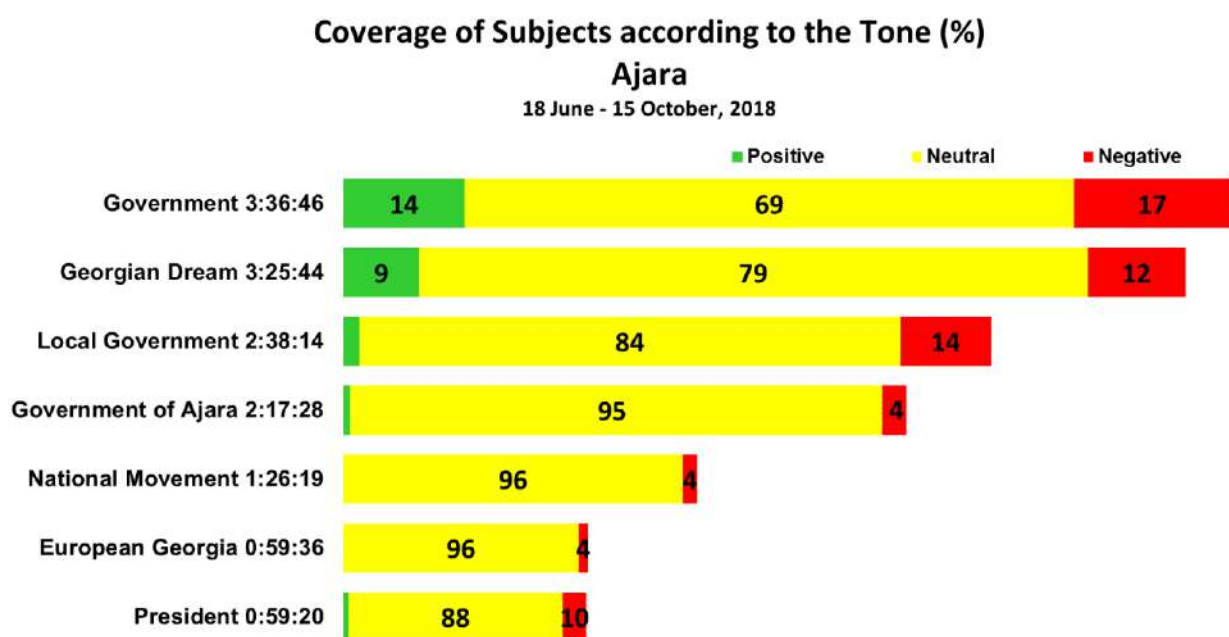
On August 17, Labour Party presidential candidate Shalva Natelashvili made sexist statement in address of the candidate Salome Zurabishvili: *"Zurabishvili is obedient, but who would understand a woman? She might wake up may in the morning in a bad mood and turn against Bidzina [Ivanishvili]."*

Journalist presented Natelashvili's sexist statement without clarifying that this is sexism, discrimination against a female candidate and therefore unacceptable.

## Ajara TV of Public Broadcaster

### Quantitative results

In news release Mtavari on Ajara TV most of the time was allocated to central government. The government was covered most positively as well, 14% of the time allocated to it was positive. The government was leading in terms of negative coverage as well (17%).

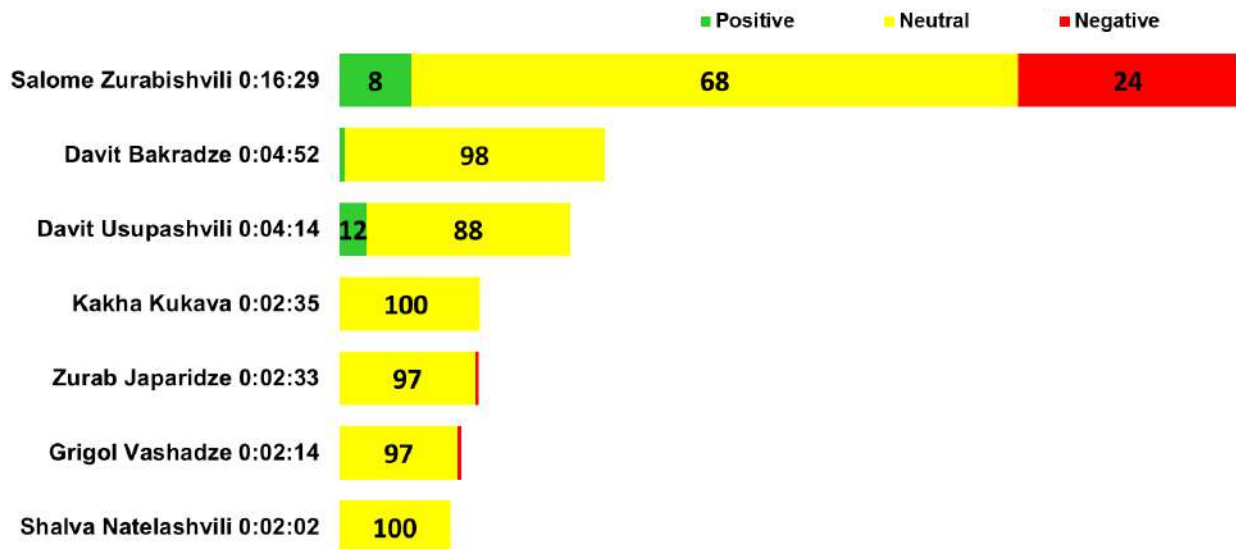


Compared with other channels, Ajara TV allocated less time to presidential candidates. Among them most frequently covered was Salome Zurabishvili. Time, allocated to her four times exceeded the time given to her competitors. Davit Usupashvili had most positive coverage. 12% of the time allocated to him was in positive tone. Salome Zurabishvili was portrayed most negatively, with 24% of total time in negative tone.

## Coverage of Presidential Candidates according to the Tone (%)

### Ajara

18 June - 15 October, 2018



### Qualitative results

Topics are diverse on Ajara TV. The channel is focused on social issues and local problems, but stories from Tbilisi are still dominating.

Ajara TV is an exception among TV stations, as it is not biased in favor of any political force. Ajara TV follows journalistic standards. Ethical problems were identified only in very few stories. Main challenge of Ajara TV, like of many other channels, is in-depth coverage. The stories often are based on the mutual accusations and respective attempt of journalists to provide public with the comprehensive information is not demonstrated. Often, a representative of opposition makes accusations against the government, and the topic is important for the public, but journalists often do not go deeper to provide comprehensive information to the audience.

It is noteworthy that the representatives of local government often participate in the programmes of Ajara TV, which enables the journalists to present the opinions of responsible persons.

Several instances of violation of reasonable balance were identified on Ajara TV. The balance was violated against the government. For example: on 26 September, almost 7 minutes were allocated to the study of the organization Transparency International – Georgia, Corruption Perceptions Index. The representative of the organization – Erekle Urushadze was live. The journalist's texts, questions and responses of the guest negatively presented the Government of Georgia, Parliamentary majority, Competition Agency. Particular members of the government were also mentioned in negative context. Despite this, TV company did not show any comment made in response to this criticism. In case of such serious accusations it is important to give opportunity to the accused to present arguments in response. It would be desirable if a representative of majority participated in the program.