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The European Union for Georgia.



## **Media Coverage of 2017 Local Self-Government Elections of Georgia**

### **Key Findings**

October 9-November 19

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Tbilisi, 2017

## Monitoring of TV Stations



- Similar to the previous round of monitoring, majority of coverage time was allocated to local and central governments.
- During this period, there was lack of analytical and in-depth reporting. This was especially apparent on many regional TV stations.
- Almost all channels paid major attention to coverage of voting process. Tbilisi-based TV channels were especially active. Some channels had special news programs and live broadcasts.
- Less interest was shown in second round of voting. Regional channels paid minor attention to the voting process (except for the regions where second round voting was held).
- As in previous periods, majority of channels had balanced reporting, however some channels demonstrated certain bias in favor of this or that political party.
- There were almost no cases of hate speech.
- Some channels failed to broadcast news programs with a consistent schedule.
- Some regional channels still have technical problems.

## TV Talk Show Monitoring



- Broadcasters mainly paid attention to the first round of elections and assessment of the first round results. Second round of elections and participating candidates were not given attention in talk shows.
- Discussions between the candidates participating in the second round were not held at any regional channel, including those, where competition between the candidates of the second round was fierce, such as in the case of Ozurgeti. In between the first and second rounds of the elections, Guria TV's talk show was broadcasted only once, with representatives of Sakrebulo as guests.
- The only channel, which has allocated time to second round of elections in talk shows, was Obiektivi, which is the platform of Alliance of Patriots. Representative of this party made it to the second round in Borjomi and accordingly attracted Obiektivi's interest. 44 Alliance of Patriots representatives were present at the talk show, while only 8 representatives of other parties participated. Out of 8 representatives of other parties, 3 joined the show via phone. Also, the program was used to mobilize people for the demonstration organized by the Alliance of Patriots.
- The broadcasting company Rustavi 2 has not invited Tbilisi mayoral candidate from Movement of Development.
- The broadcasting company Imedi has not invited Tbilisi mayoral candidates from the Movement of Development and Labour Party. The journalist stated that Labour Party candidate was not invited due to offensive statement made regarding the station. However, journalists are often subject to criticism from politicians and this shall not influence selection of respondents, especially during the pre-election period.
- At three national TV channels - Rustavi 2, Imedi and the Public Broadcaster, Tbilisi mayoral candidates had to make similar statements, as the hosts did not ask critical, evidence-based questions deriving from the election programs. Instead the candidates were asked to share their vision regarding the same topics, had been discussed previously in TV programs as well as mentioned in elections commercials.
- Pre-election campaign has finished without any thematic discussion; audience has not heard candidates' program analysis during the talk shows. Accordingly, it stayed unclear which election promises were relevant and how they would resolve existing problems.
- Superficial questions and unprepared hosts were even more visible when knowledgeable and/or experienced politicians were invited.

- Broadcasting companies Gurjaani and Odishi are exceptions, as they did not offer talk shows to audience with consistent periodicity. Gurjaani aired talk show with candidates only once and Odishi - twice. However, even in this case, host acted as a moderator and tribune was given to the candidates.
- In some cases, political party candidates were invited to the program as members of public - musicians, journalists, etc. however, the audience was not informed about their status. Girchi representatives were invited to the programs especially frequently and expressed their opinions as experts, while other political parties were not present.
- Hate speech is still commonly used on Obiektivi, where homophobic, xenophobic statements and gender stereotypes are observed. Cases of use of offensive terminology by respondents, as well as hosts have been observed regarding three political parties. Georgian Dream was referred to as “Mutants”, European Georgi” was referred to as “Bokerias”, and National Movement was referred to as “Rattlesnakes”.
- Number of regional channels has stopped airing programs they started in the pre-election period upon completion of the first round of elections. Some were aired without a consistent schedule.
- During this monitoring period, regional broadcasters still had significant technical issues related to voice, visual side and program packing. All these issues, along with content related problems made programs less attractive to the audience.

## Radio Monitoring



- Most air time was allocated to the Government and Local Government; among political parties, Georgian Dream, United National Movement and European Georgia were covered most intensively.
- Only several radio broadcasters have prepared comprehensive and analytic reports on the Election Day.
- Reporting on ongoing events by majority of the radio broadcasters was as superficial as during the pre-election campaign.
- Majority of radio broadcasters have allocated little air time to second round of the elections; radios have paid major attention to Ozurgeti, where the ruling party was confronted by independent candidate;
- No major changes in radio broadcasting has been observed after completion of elections and tendencies similar to pre-election period have been detected;

## Online Media Monitoring

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- Large majority of online publications have actively reported on election process, as well as vote counting and announcement of results.
- On the Election day, no positive or negative attitude towards subjects has been observed in online publications;
- Regional publications paid major attention to ongoing processes of the respective region;
- Between Tbilisi mayoral candidates, the ruling party candidate, Kakha Kaladze was portrayed positively on the following websites: ipn.ge, medianews.ge and for.ge;
- High percentage of positive or negative coverage regarding other mayoral candidates of Tbilisi have not been identified;
- During election reporting process, no journalistic standards and ethic norms violation has been observed;
- One of the main challenges of the Georgian online media is inadequate separation of articles prepared in the scope of commercial contracts from editorial materials.

## Press Monitoring



- In majority of cases, regional publications paid major attention to ongoing processes in the relevant region;
- Most of regional publications has covered the election process objectively and impartially;
- Negative attitude towards the ruling party candidate has been observed in newspaper Guriis Moambe;
- Unambiguously positive attitude was observed toward government candidate in newspaper Borjomi; during the second round of elections, the similar trend was demonstrated toward block Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava- Democratic Movement- Free Georgia;
- Asaval-Dasavali showed negative attitude towards all candidates of Tbilisi mayoral elections, except for Kakha Kaladze, Kakha Kukava and Irma Inashvili;
- Except for Asaval-Dasavali, none of the publications selected for the monitoring demonstrated gross violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms.