



## Election Monitoring of TV Channels

October 27 – November 15, 2013

In connection to the presidential elections of 2013, CRRC Georgia finished the media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program. The monitoring started on May 15 and ended on November 15. The monitoring covered the main evening news programs on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV and the following private channels: Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro and Kavkasia.

This report contains the media monitoring results on the Election Day, October 27 and the following period until November 15, inclusive.<sup>1</sup>

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

- On October 27, all the main evening news programs of all the channels, dedicated almost the whole prime time to the elections. The conduct of elections and activities of candidates and politicians were shown in details and in an informative way on all the channels. Exit-poll results were actively reported. All the news releases were neutral and there was no bias observed to any of the sides.
- During the whole monitoring period, and for the first time according to the allocated time, the Prime Minister has not appeared among the top five subjects on any of the channels (except Maestro). He was replaced by Giorgi Margvelashvili.
- Active and detailed coverage of the issues related to this topic continued during subsequent days after the elections. There were analytical stories prepared on all

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<sup>1</sup> The charts with quantitative data do not contain the data of October 27 in this report, because there were quite long news releases broadcasted on the Election Day, which distorts the overall trend for this monitoring period.

the channels about the elections, acting and newly elected presidents and the inauguration as well.

- There was Mikheil Saakashvili's address broadcasted live in the news programs of Rustavi 2 and Imedi on October 28, which lasted for 40 minutes. Consequently, the President had quite a big share of positive tone on these two channels (81% on Rustavi 2 and 64% on Imedi).

During the period of October 27 until November 15, inclusive, the news releases were mostly dedicated to the presidential elections of 2013 and to its results. On October 27, evening news releases of all the channels discussed only the conduct of the Election Day and results of exit polls. However, in subsequent days, the elected president, his biography, the new Constitution, 9 years of Mikheil Saakashvili's presidency, new composition of the President's administration, inauguration details and other related issues were promoted. During this monitoring period the most actively discussed issues were also the future Prime Minister, composition of the government, the state budget, the self-government reform, transfer of the Parliament to Tbilisi, inmates pardoned by Mikheil Saakashvili, granting the Georgian citizenship to foreigners by the President, Sochi Olympics, Vilnius Summit, etc.

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

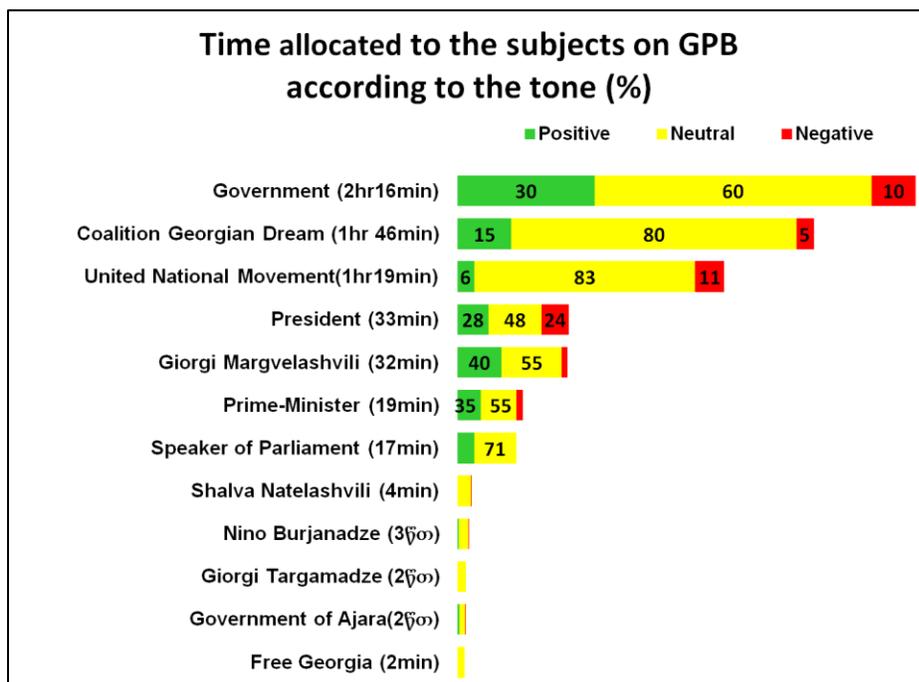
Channel One broadcasted a 4-hour non-stop release in the evening of October 27, which was fully dedicated to the presidential elections. Events of the day were discussed in details: how the candidates, the Prime Minister, the ministers and others cast their votes. There was Bidzina Ivanishvili's interview discussed as well, where he is saying who he voted for. There were also pictures of Mikheil Saakashvili voting and the rally of political prisoners meeting him at the precinct. Besides, the exit-poll results were announced after every two or three stories. There were also reports in this release about the topics such as: constitutional amendments, rights of the new President, how the political PR has been made since the 90s, etc. In a nutshell, the news program was quite informative and comprehensive.

During the period October 28 – November 15, inclusive, the stories broadcasted in main news programs on the Channel One were mostly balanced, impartial, informative and often analytical too. The topic of elections was covered quite extensively and provided much information, also evaluations of Georgian experts and politicians, and opinions of foreign experts and organizations. The positive and negative tone was observed in the

facts and texts of respondents, and not in the journalist’s text. Analytical coverage was provided for constitutional amendments on the rights and obligations of the president (November 5), economic situation and fluctuating exchange rate of Lari (November 8), also the status and privileges of the ex-president after the expiration of his office (November 13).

However, it is also noteworthy that there were several stories broadcasted during this period, which lacked the balance between different sides and did not provide comprehensive information. For example, the story about the Russian journalists’ interview with Giorgi Margvelashvili aired on November 11. The story showed a fragment from the interview and it was evaluated by the majority and the minority as well. However, the story lacked the opinion of the third party – the experts.

It should be pointed out that during this period the Prime Minister is no longer among the top five subjects according to the allocated time on several channels, among them on the Channel One as well, because more time was allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili. As for the tone-based coverage of subjects, the most share of positive tone was observed for Giorgi Margvelashvili (40%), then to the Prime Minister (25%) and the government (30%). The biggest share of negative tone was observed for the President (24%), but it is noteworthy that in his case the positive and negative shares were almost equally distributed.



## Adjara TV

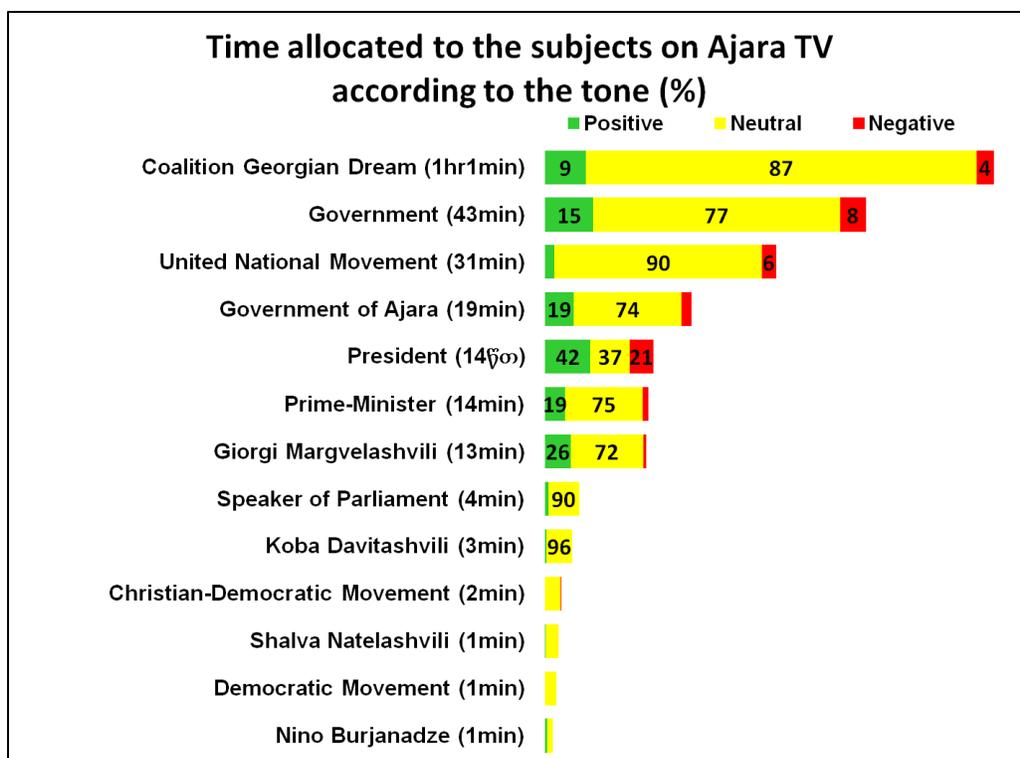
Adjara TV provided an active and complete coverage of the Election Day, and provided live broadcasts from precincts, showing the representatives of different political forces. However, the information was mostly about the Adjarian region and the exit polls were only announced for Adjara.

The issue of staffing the Advisory Board of the Adjara TV was very actively discussed during the monitoring period, and although this issue referred directly to the television, there was no subjectivity during the coverage, and there were stories, which were about the gaps observed while staffing the Board and also about the remarks of the NGOs.

The share of central news increased during the monitoring period. Mostly, the analytical and comprehensive stories were about the events of Adjara. However, for example, the story broadcasted on November 1 about the European Union Association Agreement was quite analytical and the issue was fully discussed.

In general, the analytics also started to prevail in the stories. The balance of respondents is observed in extensive stories. However, still we often come across with short and dry stories, which describe only one particular fact.

Out of the monitoring subjects, the most time was allocated to the Coalition Georgian Dream, which was mostly covered with neutral tone. In general, the share of negative coverage of subjects was small. The highest indicator of negative tone, but at the same time the highest indicator of positive tone was observed for the President. Among the presidential candidates, the most time was dedicated to the winning candidate – Margvelashvili, and he was presented positively during one third of this time. Other candidates got only a few minutes (3 minutes or less) during the monitoring period, and the candidate of the National Movement – Davit Bakradze got only 48 seconds.



## Rustavi 2

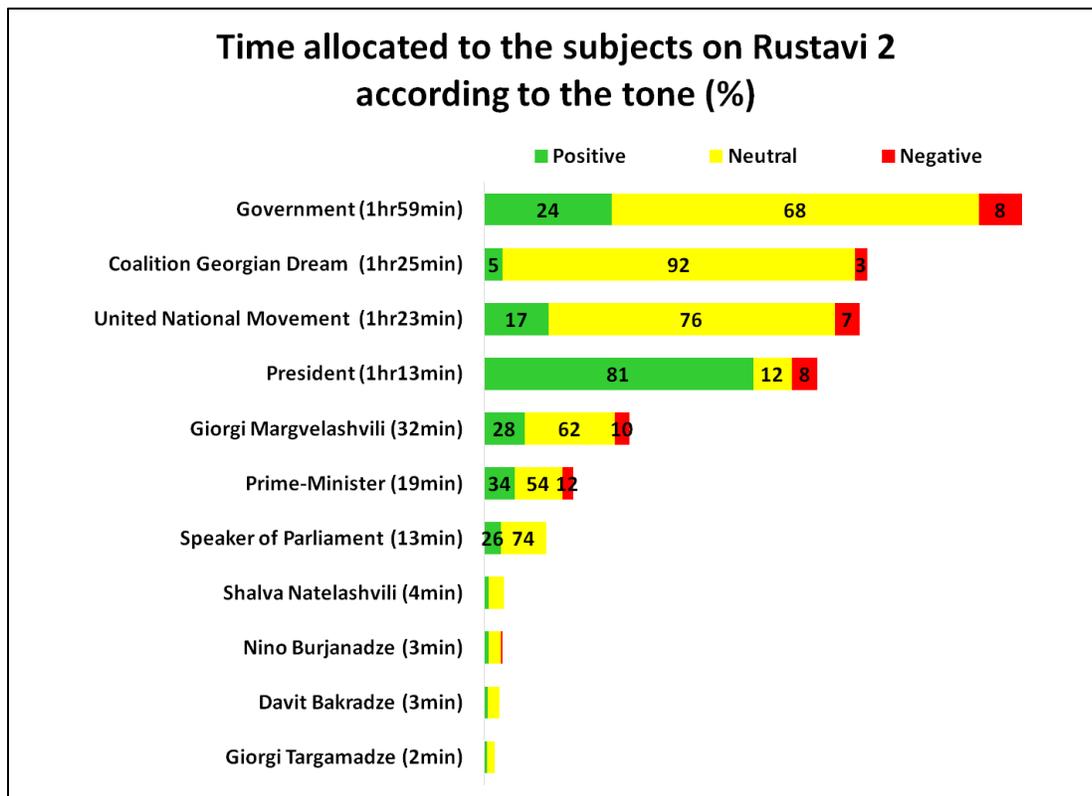
Rustavi 2 had a 4-hour non-stop news release on the Election Day, which was quite informative and diverse. There were live broadcasts from the offices of various political parties, polling stations and regions. The politicians, activists and voters were approached for comments. Results of exit polls, which Rustavi 2 had commissioned to the organization GFK, were often announced. The news release on the Election Day was not biased and equally covered the election process taking place in the country.

However, after the elections, the Courier releases at 2 o'clock and at 9 o'clock on Rustavi 2 expressed a relatively more and significantly positive attitude towards the President Saakashvili and former authorities. In contrast to that, there was a critical and negative attitude towards the Coalition Georgian Dream. In this respect, the interesting example is the story broadcasted on November 7 about the evaluation of performance of the Chief Prosecutor Archil Kbilashvili and about November 7, 2007. However, it is notable that these attitudes were not equitable. More emphasis was laid on the positive coverage of the President and former authorities, than to the criticism or negative presentation of the Coalition. It is also interesting that the biased attitude was felt while

covering the issues taking place in the country. The stories on the topics such as foreign relations and official visits were always neutral or positive towards the Georgian side.

It should also be noted herein that the 9 o'clock Courier provided a very active coverage of Vano Merabishvili's trial, his statements or related Facebook posts. In most cases he was presented positively in such stories, like the story of November 6, which was about the hearing of Vano Merabishvili's case regarding the events of May 26.

Special attitude towards the President Saakashvili was also reflected well in the quantitative data. However, at some extent it was due to his 40-minute speech after the Election Day, which was fully broadcasted live on Rustavi 2. President Saakashvili's direct speech during this address contributed to a significantly big positive share of his coverage – 81 percent. Besides, he was also presented positively in some stories in other releases, for example, Saakashvili's visit to Brussels, his meeting with students in Kvareli.



**Imedi**

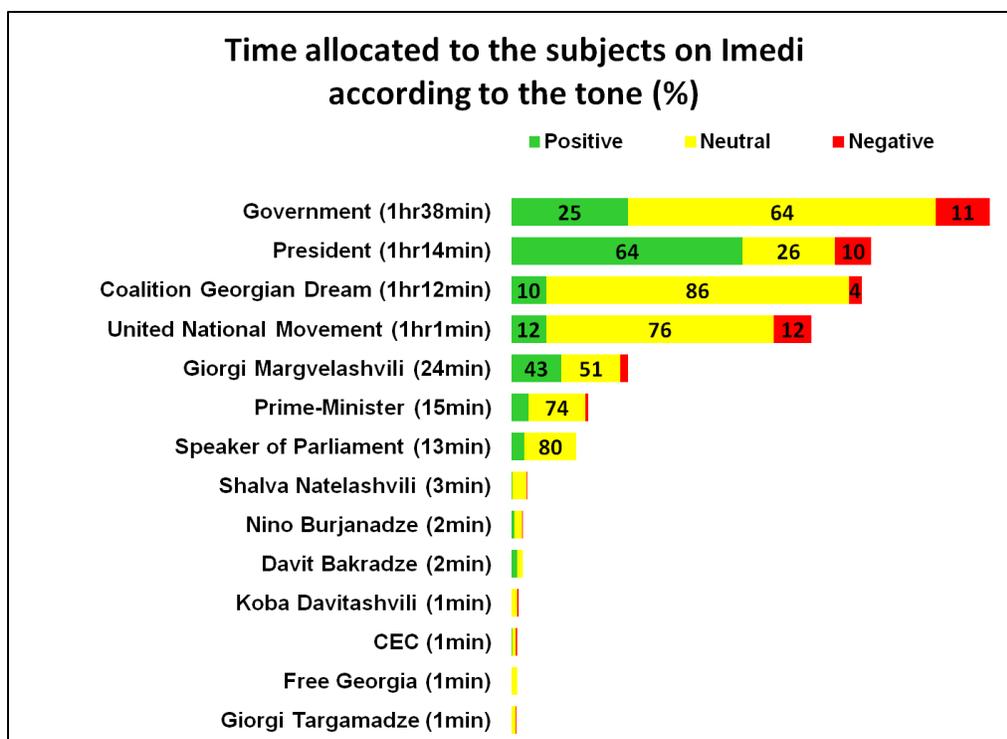
Imedi broadcasted a 2-hour evening release on the Election Day on October 27, discussing the conduct of the elections, and showing how the candidates and other politicians cast their votes. There was coverage of the rally arranged by the political prisoners for Mikheil Saakashvili at his polling station. There were live broadcasts from the offices of the Georgian Dream from Tbilisi and from the regions as well during the news release. There was also a report about the statement of the Mayor of Tbilisi about elections, where he congratulated Giorgi Margvelashvili with his winning; there was also Davit Bakradze's statement, he thanked the public and evaluated the process of elections. The story about Bidzina Ivanishvili's speech at the office of the Georgian Dream was repeated twice, there were also Davit Usupashvili's and Giorgi Margvelashvili's appearances. Exit poll results were regularly announced during the whole program.

The post-election period continued to have quite active coverage during the next week after the elections. The topics related to this issue were discussed analytically and in details. There was an analytical report on October 29, where the sociologists were evaluating the rankings of politicians during the last year and argued about underlying causes. Besides, there was another report broadcasted on October 30, where three presidents of Georgia and 5 ceremonies of their inauguration were discussed.

From October 27 until November 15, inclusive, the number of analytical and broad stories decreased, correspondingly, the number of short and dry news started to rise, as it was the case observed at the beginning of the monitoring in 2013. Sometimes the stories lacked the position of a party or there was no respondent represented at all, and the reporter just provided information to the audience. This is what happened, for example, in the story broadcasted on November 5 about the President's meeting with students in Kvareli, the audience could learn what the President was speaking about only based on the reporter's story. The President's speech was not shown.

Despite there were several stories with negative contents about the President during this monitoring period (for example, the story of November 5 about pardoning the inmates), quite a big share of positive tone was observed for Mikheil Saakashvili - 64 percent. This was caused by the Presidents 40-minute address to the population aired on October 28, which was fully broadcasted live during the news program. The text of the President's speech was quite positive.

We should also point out as well that like other channels, the Prime Minister was no longer among the top five subjects on Imedi after the elections according to the allocated time, being replaced by Giorgi Margvelashvili.

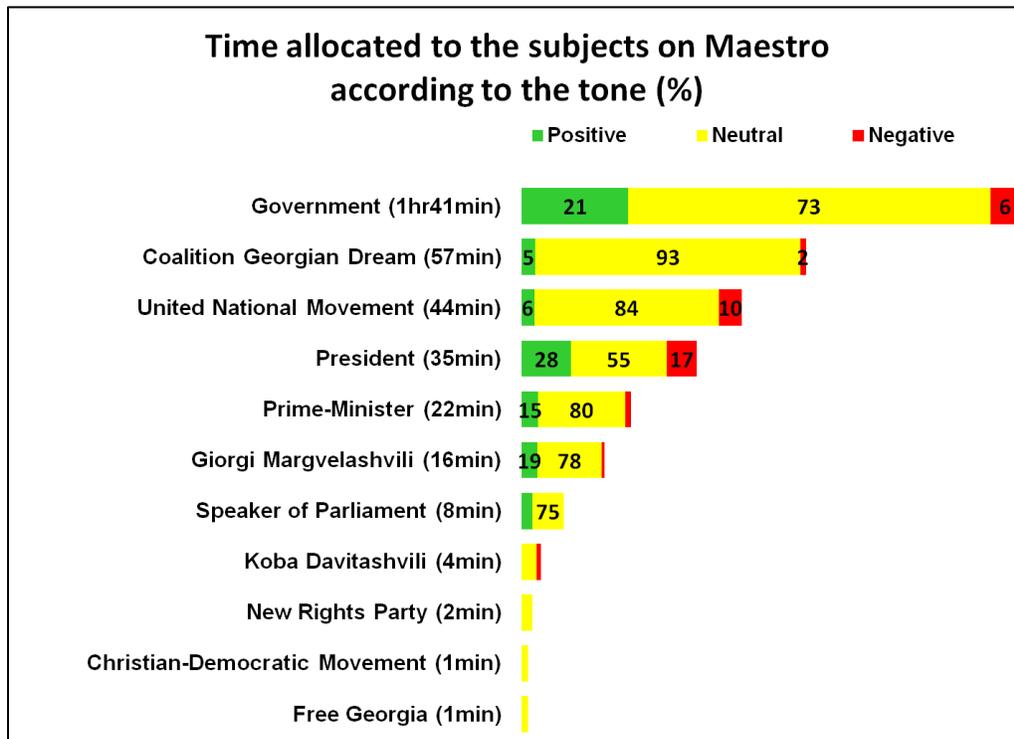


## Maestro

There was no especially long main evening news release on Maestro on the Election Day. However, all the important facts were covered in connection to the polling day: exit poll results, procedure of voting by presidential candidates and politicians, voting by the President and the rally arranged at his precinct, voting by representatives of law enforcement structures and prisoners. There were live broadcasts from the offices of the Georgian Dream. It was discussed whether it was a violation when Bidzina Ivanishvili said who he had voted for on leaving the polling station. In total, the program was quite informative and provided an overview of all pieces of information available for that day and for that moment.

Main news releases are getting shorter on Maestro and are acquiring a function of reporting the main events of the day. Often they announce the stories to be broadcasted on the channel M24. This is what happened when broadcasting Mikheil Saakashvili's speech live on October 28. However, several longer reports were prepared next week after the Election Day, for example, about the new prime minister (November 2) and Mikheil Saakashvili's future plans (November 1).

According to the allocated time, the first five subjects are again the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream, the United National movement, the President and the Prime Minister. As for the coverage tone, neutral tone prevails in case of all the subjects. The biggest share of positive (28%) and at the same time neutral tone (17%) was reported for Mikheil Saakashvili. Besides, relatively bigger share of positive tone was reported for the government (21%), Giorgi Margvelashvili (19%) and the Prime Minister (15%).



## Kavkasia

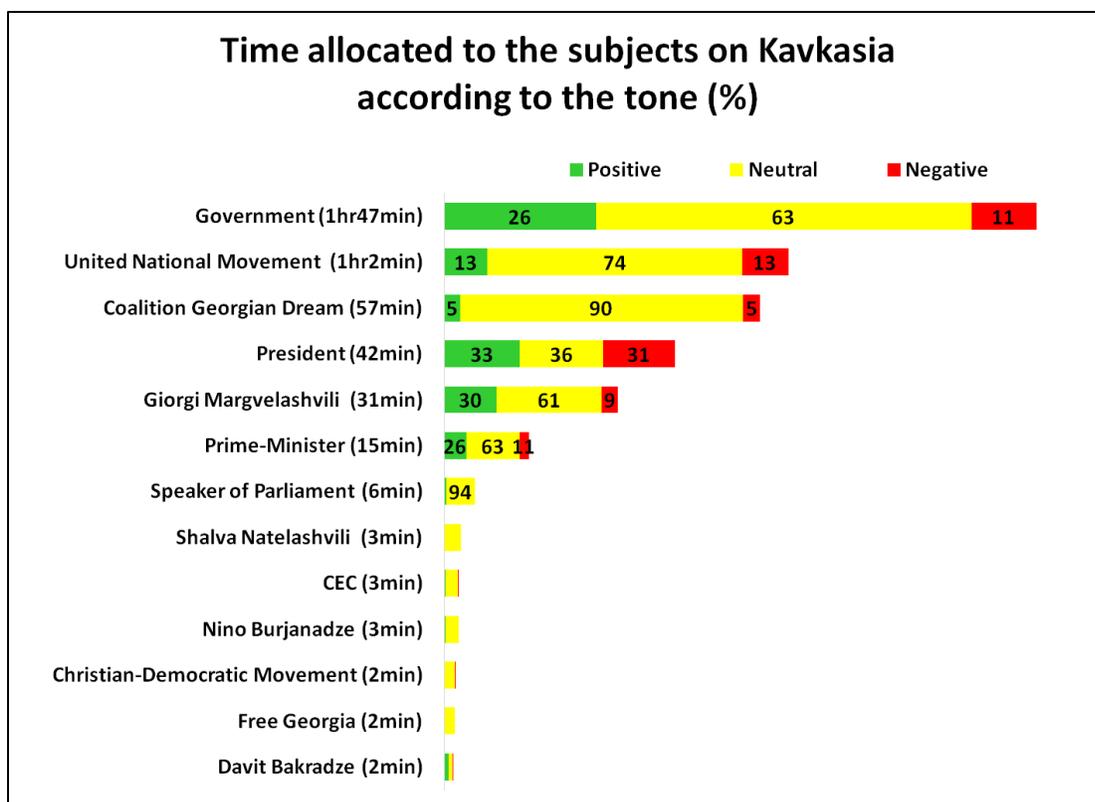
There were 2 news releases during the prime time on Kavkasia on the polling day on October 27, which were completely dedicated to the presidential elections in the country, and provided a neutral and impartial coverage of ongoing electoral processes. The news program showed the CEC representatives, presidential candidates, government members and voters. Several exit poll results were announced, and statements of the President and the Prime Minister were broadcasted live. There were also live transmissions from press conferences where the representatives of various political parties talked about the gaps of the electoral process.

In general, stories aired in main evening news releases on Kavkasia from October 27 until November 15 were often short and dry; there was little analytics and less sources in the stories. There were also some stories, which were constructed based on one respondent, or statements of one particular expert. However, balanced and analytical stories were also broadcasted. For example, the report on self-governance reform on November 1, or the report on falling exchange rate of Lari and its causes on November 8.

Whole series of issues were not covered in the main evening news releases on Kavkasia during the monitoring period, which were covered by other channels. For example, visit of Davit Usupashvili, Speaker of the Parliament to Baltic countries, visit of Maia Panjikidze, Minister of Foreign Affairs to France, a fact of burning the Russian flag in Poti.

As for the bias, the stories are mostly neutral on this channel and do not leave an impression of being biased to any of the sides. For example, after nominating a new candidate prime minister, there was a story about Irakli Gharibashvili, where his biography and activity was discussed from the positive and critical viewpoints. We can say the same about the report, which summarized the 9-year rule of President Saakashvili and discussed the achievements and failures of Saakashvili's rule.

The analysis of quantitative data is also interesting regarding the coverage tone of Mikheil Saakashvili. The President has the biggest share of negative coverage – 31 percent. However, at the same time, he is the only subject, whose shares of positive, neutral and negative coverage are most equally distributed.



## Conclusion

Evening news releases of all the monitored channels were dedicated to the presidential elections. All the channels provided quite detailed coverage and description of the events during the whole day at various polling stations in Tbilisi and in the regions as well. Activities of presidential candidates, the Prime Minister, the President, the Speaker of the Parliament and other politicians were discussed, and their comments, evaluations and opinions were shown. Results of exit polls were intensively announced. Although the evening news releases were of different lengths on all the channels, it is possible to say that these releases were quite informative and exhaustive on all the channels. Besides, there was no bias observed to any side on any of the channels.

Since October 28, the elections, the elected President, inauguration details and future plans of the acting President have been the main topics of news releases. There were analytical and also informative stories on these issues. It was for the first time during the whole monitoring period that the Prime Minister was not among the top five subjects, as far as more time was dedicated to Giorgi Margvelashvili than to him.