



TV Talk-Show Monitoring Report

June 15-30, 2014

CRRC Georgia carried out the media monitoring in connection to the 2014 local elections within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program. The monitoring was performed for the main evening news programs and political talk shows broadcasted during the prime time on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia, TV3, and Tabula (only the talk shows). This report presents the monitoring results for TV talk shows during June 15-30, inclusive. The following talk shows fell under the monitoring:

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

Rustavi 2: “Choice” – Giorgi Gabunia;

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

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

Kavkasia: “Spectrum Studio” – Davit Akubardia, “Barrier” – Nino Jangirashvili;

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

Methodology and Analysis

Election media monitoring of talk shows consists of only a qualitative part. Journalists, hosts, topics and the invited guests are monitored. It was evaluated how much equal conditions a journalist was creating for the guests: whether the journalist’s questions were equally demanding/lenient to all the guests; or whether the host of the talk show

let the guests express their opinions and if s/he interrupted them. Besides, the monitoring evaluates how much the host was trying to get in-depth information from the guests and to provide comprehensive information to the audience regarding the discussed issue; or if the journalist identified the source of information when asking questions or making a comment, and what kind of non-verbal language s/he was using. The monitoring also observed the usage of hate speech in talk shows (abusive or humiliating phrases/statement) by the hosts, and their reaction in case if their guests were using the hate speech. Besides, the journalists' role and involvement in the program was evaluated as well.

The report provides the media monitoring results of talk shows for the period from June 15-30, inclusive.

Key Findings

During the period of June 15 through 30, the monitored political talk shows mostly discussed the process of conducting the local government elections on June 15, its results, violations and likelihood of the second round. Besides, quite much attention was allocated to the issue of EU integration and signing of the Association Agreement.

Mayoral candidates of various parties, also the party leaders and other members not only from the ruling party, but also from the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition frequently visited the political talk shows before and after the elections.

In most cases, the hosts were actively involved in the programs, asked important questions about the discussed issue, tried to get different positions and comprehensive information from the guests. There were very rare cases of using hate speech or politically incorrect vocabulary by the hosts.

Channel One

First Studio

First Studio is a political talk show, which is broadcasted on Wednesdays and Fridays via the Public Broadcaster. There were four programs broadcasted during the monitoring period from June 15 through June 30, where the program host Eka

Mishveladze discussed major political events of the week together with the invited guests. The discussed topics included:

- Euro-integration process of Georgia;
- Association Agreement;
- Incident of the members of the United National Movement at Baku Airport;
- Evaluation of the election results;
- Electoral violations.

The hosts invited to the program represented the National Movement and the Georgian Dream, the “non-parliamentary opposition”, EU representatives in Georgia, the President’s advisor for foreign relations, experts, State Minister of the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration; also there was live broadcast with the Georgian Ambassador in Azerbaijan.

Eka Mishveladze was characterized with asking the demanding questions, where she was trying to present an opposition opinion. The journalist would ask a question from the standpoint of the other side and worded the question this way. The program host asked specific questions, which were profound and informative. It is noteworthy that the journalist was less opposing to the experts and actually did not state any contradicting position with them. She was limited to general question when talking to the experts and mostly asked them to make evaluations. It is noteworthy that the host did not interrupt the respondents and controlled equal distribution of time. The host did not actually state her position and she was always politically correct while speaking about a particular topic. The journalist and the program guests did not use hate speech during the monitoring period.

Rustavi 2

Choice

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

- Second round of the elections and pre-election mode of political parties;
- Money and elections;
- From elections to elections.

Members of the parliamentary majority and minority, also the members of the parliamentary opposition and government representatives were invited to the program during this period.

Giorgi Gabunia, host of the talk show, hosted the program in a quite active and positive manner. The program on June 17 was aired with a different format. There were live broadcasts with various party leaders in the first half of the program, and the second part was dedicated to the debates among the guests invited to the hall (representatives of the Georgian Dream, the United National Movement, Nino Burjanadze – United Opposition, the non-parliamentary opposition and the Labor Party). The journalist often referred to the contradictory opinions and acted in opposition to the guests. Gabunia was characterized by asking additional questions for getting or verifying the information. His questions were more demanding than lenient. The journalist always managed to get in-depth information from the respondents. The journalist never stated his position. The host never used any hate speech or offensive phrases.

Imedi

Reaction

“Reaction” is broadcasted via Imedi every Friday. There were two programs of “Reaction” aired during June 15-30. The topics discussed in the program were of current significance for the Georgian society. Namely: there was Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of Georgia invited to the program on June 20, who talked about the foreign and domestic events taking place in the country. Second part of the program was dedicated to the debates between the members of the Coalition Georgian Dream (Irakli Chikovani, Irakli Sesiasvili) and the United National Movement (Pavle Kublashvili, Zurab Anjaparidze).

The program was very informative. The journalist was actively involved and asked important questions. Inga Grigolia attentively listened to each of the guests, did not interrupt them and let all the respondents fully express themselves. If the discussion

took place between the respondents, where one party would actively start opposing to the other, Inga Grigolia asked them to keep calm and took the lead. The journalist did not express personal attitude towards any of them. She was equally demanding and critical to all of them and requested exact answers to the questions asked. Overall, the program turned out to be quite informative and they discussed all the important questions.

Topic of the discussion was the Association Agreement in the program on June 27, hosting the former ministers of foreign affairs – Salome Zurabishvili and Grigol Vashadze, and Manana Kobakhidze, representing the authorities. The following persons stated their opinions from the civil sector: Lasha Bakradze, Sergi Gvarjaladze, Ketato Charkviani, Giorgi Kekelidze and other people in the audience. Opposition representatives: Nino Burjanadze and Giorgi Baramidze were also involved in the program.

The guests spoke about the advantages and threats that the Association Agreement could bring to the people. Answers were given to all the important questions asked about these issues in the programs. Actually main goal of the programs was to inform the people about the significance of the Association Agreement and to let them understand the essence of the country's foreign policy in general.

Politics Time

“Politics Time” is a weekly talk show, which is broadcasted via Imedi on Tuesdays, hosted by Thea Sichinava. There were 2 programs broadcasted during the period of June 15 through 30, hosting the following people: Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, former head of administration of the President, members of several parties (both parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties except the United National Movement), representatives of NGOs and experts. Following issues were discussed in the program during the monitoring period:

- 2014 local government elections and revealed violations;
- Incident related to the members of the United National Movement in Baku;
- Signing the Association Agreement, foreign and domestic challenges of the country.

During this monitoring period, like the previous ones, the journalist was quite actively involved in the program. Her questions were quite demanding to the guests and neutral to all the sides. The journalist did not demonstrate any biased or subjective attitude toward any side when discussing a certain issue. During the program the journalist played a role of a moderator and never stated her own position. The host never interrupted the guests except the cases when she was asking questions.

All the guests were provided with leveled field in the program and all of them had an opportunity to talk about the subject of the discussion. It is noteworthy that when the representative of the United National Movement did not participate in the talk show, the journalist clarified: “and the fourth chair that you may see now in the screen, is empty. We had an agreement with the National Movement today that Sevdia Ugrekhelidze would participate in the program during the whole day, but 1 hour before the program Ms Sevdia refused to participate in the program, saying she had health problems...”

The journalist’s question to the politicians was quite demanding and severe, though less harsh to the NGO representatives. We did not observe any case of using hate speech during this period by the host or the program’s guests. While discussing a certain subject or asking a question, the journalist did not use unreliable or unverified information.

Maestro

Subjective Opinion

The program “Subjective Opinion” is aired via the TV company Maestro five times a week, Monday through Friday. The program is hosted by Diana Trapaidze and Teona Gegelia, who inform the public about the news in the first half of the program and make analysis, and then continue talking about the topical issues together with the invited guests in the second part. The monitoring period covered 11 programs from June 15 until June 30, with the following guests invited to the program: members of the government and the parliamentary majority, Salome Zurabishvili - leader of the Way of Georgia, Alexander Elisashvili – independent member of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo, also the experts and politologists. The hosts and the guests discussed the following main topics:

- Evaluation of the election results and preparation for the second round;

- Detention of Irma Nadirashvili and Zurab Japaridze in Baku;
- Regulation on bonuses at public institutions;
- Judgment of the Constitution Court regarding the purchase of land by foreigners in Georgia;
- Signing the European Union Association Agreement.

Hosts of the program were actively involved in the program, especially in its first block, where the personal opinions were often stated. However, this was less observed during the talk show, when the respondents were in the studio. Their questions were more demanding towards the politicians, but they were mostly limited only to informative questions to other guests. We need to point out the interview with Alexander Elisashvili on June 17, when the hosts talked to the guest as a politician and not as a journalist. Their questions became quite demanding to Alexander Elisashvili, independent member of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo after he won the elections. This fact was also pointed out by the hosts themselves – *“I have a question now and give me a short answer: did you feel any difference between this interview and those interviews that you had with us when you were here as our colleague? You are now on the other side, did you feel any difference or not?”*

There was no subjective attitude to any guest observed in the journalists’ questions or attitudes. Diana Trapaidze and Teona Gegelia asked relevant questions about all the important aspects around the topic during the program. There was no case of not letting the respondents finish their ideas by the journalists.

Majority of the aired programs was informative and let the audience learn main topics of the day. The program hosts and guests did not use any hate speech or unethical vocabulary.

Debates on Maestro

Maestro’s political talk show “Debates on Maestro”, hosted by Natia Gamtsemlidze, was broadcasted twice after the elections. Both of the programs gave the floor to the debates between the members of the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement (members of the United National Movement: Davit Darchiashvili, Akaki Bobokhidze, Gigi Tsereteli, Mikheil Machavariani; members of the Coalition

Georgian Dream: Zurab Abashidze, Zviad Dzidziguri, Manana Kobakhidze, Tamar Kordzaia).

The program discussed the election results and the election campaign for the second round. The talk show was conducted in the mode of the debates between the parliamentary opposition and the representatives of the authorities. The discussion would often grow into an exacerbated dispute; though the host of the discussion would have a more neutral position and let the talk show participants express their opinions as much as possible. This is why at some moments it was hard to understand what the respondents were saying, because they were speaking at the same time and disturbed one another to fully express themselves.

In total, the talk show host Natia Gamtsemlidze hosted the program with adherence to the journalistic standard. She was always a moderator and did not try to state her positions. She provided equal conditions to the guests and asked equally demanding and critical questions to all the respondents. Besides, she also tried to get additional information from the guests by asking probing questions. Natia Gamtsemlidze did not use hate speech or any unreliable source of information.

Kavkasia

Barrier

“Barrier” is broadcasted via Kavkasia four times a week. The talk show had a different format. In one case the guests with different positions would be invited to the studio, and the program would be hosted alternatively by Irakli Kordzaia and Nino Jangirashvili, and in other cases, on Mondays, the invited journalists were co-hosts of the program together with Irakli Kordzaia. There were 8 programs aired via the TV company Kavkasia during the period of June 15 until June 30, inclusive.

Diverse spectrum of guests was invited to the program: members of the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement, also the representatives of the Patriots Alliance of Georgia and those of the Labor Party, also the politologists, journalists, experts, members of the NGOs and the civil society. There were also other people invited to the program: Nika Melia – Tbilisi mayoral candidate from the National Movement and Alexander Elisashvili – winning majoritarian candidate from Saburtalo.

The talk show programs were basically dedicated to the topic of elections, discussing the following issues:

- Evaluation and analysis of the 2014 local government elections;
- Expectations regarding the second round;
- Relations among the branches of the power;
- Reduced authorities for the President;
- Threats of Georgia and anticipated referendum;
- Decision of the Constitutional Court about the land reform.

Hosts of the program Nino Jangirashvili and Irakli Kordzaia were actively involved in the debates in most cases. People with various positions and ideology were represented in the Barrier, and the journalists asked additional questions to all of them in order to make their positions more specific and clearer. If there was only one guest in the studio, the journalists would represent the other side themselves and always stated a different position.

We should also point out Nino Jangirashvili's and Irakli Kordzaia's neutral attitude towards all the respondents. We did not observe any case during the monitoring of having them expressed any personal attitude toward any particular subject or political power. However, there were some cases during the discussion and opposition when they expressed their own opinions regarding the topics of the discussion in general.

Involvement in the conversation with a respondent differed between the journalists: Nino Jangirashvili often interfered and argued with the respondent, asked him/her additional questions. Consequently, the guest was unable to finish what s/he was saying, stopped talking or continued talking together with the journalist, which resulted in noise in the program and often it was impossible to understand who was saying what. However, Irakli Kordzaia did not interrupt the guests except the cases when he was asking a question or tried to allocate time to another guests too.

There was a case of using hate speech by a respondent, but Nino Jangirashvili had a due reaction and asked the guest to be more politically correct. There was no such case observed with Irakli Kordzaia.

Spectrum Studio

Spectrum Studio is a talk show on Kavkasia, hosted by Davit Akubardia. There were 11 programs of Spectrum Studio broadcasted via Kavkasia during the monitoring period (June 15-30), hosted by the representatives of various political parties, mayoral candidates participating in the local government elections and experts. The program was also visited by Davit Sergeenko, Minister of Labor Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The following topics were discussed:

- Suspension of a status of a historical site for Sakdrisi Deposit;
- Election results and observed violations;
- Errors of the authorities;
- Alienation of agricultural land to the foreigners;
- Georgia's aspiration towards Europe;
- The need of the educational reforms;
- Putin's decision on not sending the Russian troops to Ukraine;
- Political situation in Georgia;
- Reforms carried out in the field of healthcare.

The host of the talk show was involved in the program very actively and despite he asked little number of questions, he often expressed his own opinions. There were cases in the program when Davit Akubardia directly asked the competent persons to focus on a certain issue and also often provided ways of solving a particular problem. The programs were mostly conducted in the format of a dialogue. His attitude to the guests remained unchanged, and he mostly provided equal conditions to them and also openly stated his own sympathies. For example, he addressed Zaza Khatiashvili, visiting the program on June 24, as: *"You are a lion, you are a tiger, wish you live a successful life!"*

The hosts and the guests were engaged in a friendly conversation, also argued, challenged each other, exchanged information, though a big part of this information was a hearsay, and at the end of the program it was hard to summarize the received information and to draw conclusions. The host often stated his own critical attitude

towards the present and also the former government and talked about creating a new force.

Davit Akubardia often used hate speech and unethical vocabulary. The host not only responded to the unethical conversation, but also at a certain moment he encouraged the guest to be even harsher. For example, Akubardia encouraged Oleg Iadze in the program of June 19: *“Man, why are you saying that this is incorrect? I said it is foolishness, right? You can make it even harsher. You can say it is complete bullshit.”*

Tabula

Theorem

There is Tamar Chergoleishvili’s program “Theorem” broadcasted via Tabula every Monday and Tuesday. The program is co-authored by Salome Barker. The program mostly provides an overview of political, economic, social and cultural events taking place in the country and abroad. There were 5 programs broadcasted from June 14 until June 30, inclusive, where the following main topics were discussed:

- Why the support to the ruling party goes down;
- Relationship between the President and the government;
- What lesson the Georgian Dream should learn from the local government elections;
- How to cope with intolerance without criminalizing the expression;
- Energy security of Europe;
- Orthodox Church and the criminal world;
- Confrontation in the Middle East between the Shia and the Sunni.

During this monitoring period the talk show was distinguished by a big number of guests engaged in various fields, which made the program more informative and dynamic. There were representatives of NGOs and various organizations invited to the program, including the political scholars, journalists, philosophers, representatives of the former government, historians, economists, a sociologist, theologians, a diplomat, a former adviser to the President, a constitutionalist, a screenplay writer, an opera singer

and a human rights activist. There was a live broadcast of Zura Japaridze, member of the National Movement. Tabula also broadcasted the recorded interview with Carl Bildt, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, and with Hans Rolling, member of the Swedish Academy of Sciences.

It is noteworthy that the host was well aware of the issues, which was demonstrated by asking informative questions. Usually, Chergoleishvili would not interrupt the guests and provided equal conditions to them.

The host was characterized with making promos of the program in a critical and ironical way. For example Chergoleishvili mentioned Irma Inashvili's party quite ironically in the promo for the June 16 program, and linked her entry into politics with Bidzina Ivanishvili's desire: "On the other hand, according to Bidzina Ivanishvili's will, new stars were added to the political scene of Georgia in the form of Irma Inashvili and Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi."

Basically, the host's questions to the guests were not demanding. However, when stating her own opinion, asking question and showing videos in the program, there was some irony felt for the Georgian Dream and Bidzina Ivanishvili. For example, the host used some shots from the movie "The Toy" in the program of June 23, in order to draw parallels between the movie characters and the ruling power. They broadcasted the section of the movie where one of the characters of the movie, the President is saying after his subordinate fulfills his order without uttering a word and takes off his clothes: "Who is a worse monster, you or me? Me, who ordered you to get naked, or you, who agreed to undress". Tamar Chergoleishvili asked after this video: "Who is a bigger monster in this case, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who can dismiss the President like this, by swiping his hand once, with applauses by the majority, or those people, who are ready to follow Bidzina Ivanishvili's words without thinking how the national interests, or their dignity will be affected by all this."

On the other hand, when the program hosts were criticizing the period of the United National Movement, the host would start to act in opposition to them.

Focus

"Focus" is a political talk show, which provides an overview of main topics of the day. The program is broadcasted every business day, hosted by three journalists

alternatively: Salome Ugulava, Irakli Kiknavelidze and Nino Macharashvili. There were 10 programs broadcasted during June 15 until June 30, inclusive, covering the local government elections of 2014, the Association Agreement and foreign policy challenges. In addition, the following topics were discussed in the program:

- NATO summit in Wales;
- Current challenges of the domestic policy from elections to elections;
- Occupied territories;
- The fact of arresting the members of the National Movement in Azerbaijan;
- Other political processes taking place in the country.

The invited guests often represented the United National Movement. However, Aleks Petriashvili, State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, also the members of parliamentary majority and representatives of other political parties of the opposition often visited the talk show, including the representatives of various research centers and NGOs, and experts as well.

The journalists were involved in the program and asked the questions from different positions. However, in some cases the hosts were less opposing to the representatives of the United National Movement than to the members of the Georgian Dream. We did not observe usage of hate speech and politically incorrect speech by the journalists.