

Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics

Study of the Media Coverage of the 2016 Parliamentary Elections

TV News Monitoring Report

20 May – 10 July, 2016

The present report provides the findings of the first cycle of monitoring of news broadcasts from eleven TV channels, including 1st Channel of the public broadcaster, Rustavi 2, Maestro, GDS, Tabula, Kavkasia, TV Pirveli, Obieqtivi, Ajara TV, and TV 25.

The report covers the period from 20 May through 10 July 2016.

The aim of the monitoring is to check whether the coverage of the election subjects is based on the principles of impartiality, integrity, reasonable balance, correctness, and non-discrimination.

The normative acts, such as the Constitution of Georgia, the law on broadcasters, the broadcasters code of practice, and the principles of journalistic ethics, provide the ground for the monitoring.

The monitoring of the radio channels revealed the following **key findings**:

- The government of Georgia (GoG) was the subject most actively covered by all TV channels.
- The positive tone indicators were prevalent in 40% of the GDS' coverage of government activities. Rustavi 2 was the most critical to the GoG with 71% of negative coverage and Imedi – the most neutral, with 75% of neutral tone.
- Channel 1 of the public broadcaster revealed high indicators (20%) of positive tone in connection with the President of Georgia. Rustavi 2 was the most critical to the President with 14% of negative tone and TV Pirveli - the most neutral with 95% of neutral tone indicator.
- Activities of the Georgian Dream party was covered most favorably on Ajara TV (28% of positive tone indicators), and most negatively on Rustavi 2 (14% of negative tone indicators). Maestro and Kavkasia were the most neutral with 82% of neutral tone indicators each.

- The United National Movement had most positive coverage on Rustavi2 with 10% of positive tone indicators. Obieqtivi was the most critical to the UNM with 75% of negative tone indicators, and Tabula and Rustavi 2 revealed high indicators (75% each) of neutral tone.
- Bidzina Ivanishvili was covered most favorably on Ajara TV (45% of positive tone indicators), and most negatively on Rustavi 2 (45% of negative tone indicators). Tabula and Imedi were the most neutral to Mr Ivanishvili with 75% of neutral tone indicators each.
- Free Democrats lead with the highest rate (95% or more) of neutral coverage on all TV channels.
- The content analysis of the TV broadcasts indicates that the channels cover election subjects more or less according to ethical standards. However, some sub-standard media products have also been identified.
- In majority of cases TV channels use short footages with soundbites. In many cases news stories are based on only one source of information.
- Journalists often use phrases “the telephone was turned off”, “could not meet at the workplace”, “was not in the office”, “refrained from commenting”, etc., which fall short of securing reasonable balance of a news coverage.

Outcomes by TV channels

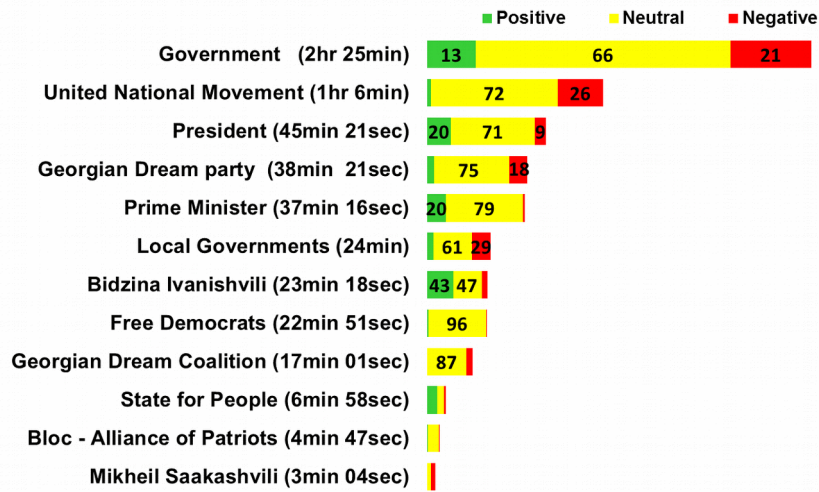
Graphical data of the quantitative analysis are given below, representing 12 entities by their dedicated time and tone of reports at 11 channels. These 12 entities are selected by the combined criteria of frequency of coverage and recognizability. For illustrative purposes, these 12 entities are the same in case of all channels, excluding Ajara TV and TV 25 for their Tables include an additional entity of the Government of Ajara , since both these channels mostly cover autonomous events and their audience consists primarily of the residents of the autonomous republic of Ajara .

Channel 1 (GPB)

During the monitoring period, the monitors focused on the “Channel 1” key daily news program “Moambe” at 20 o’clock and “Sunday Moambe”.

Quantitative Analysis

**Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Channel 1" (GPB)
according to the tone (%)**
(20 May - 10 July, 2016)



According to the quantitative analysis, out of the selected 12 entities, “Channel 1” allocated most of its airtime to the Government, (2 h. 25 min.) and the least time to the ex-president Saakashvili. (3 min. 4 sec.) By the allocated time, the highest rate of positive coverage (43%) was observed with regard to Bidzina Ivanishvili, and the highest rate of negative coverage (29% of the allocated airtime) with regard to the local government. Free Democrats rated the highest (96% of the allocated airtime) by neutral coverage.

Contextual analysis

Majority of the reports aired by “Channel 1” were properly balanced and unbiased. Yet, several facts of incompliance with ethical principles could be observed. Here we offer some of the most remarkable of them.

On May 24, the news program aired a report titled “LGBT-Rights”. It discussed the rights of the LGBT community and the growing incidence of violence towards them. The journalist’s text:” According to lawyer Nino Bolkvadze, the law-enforcement officers work ineffectively and they often themselves use the language of hatred with regard to the LGBT community”. This is followed by the interview with Bolkvadze: “The authorities aggravate position of the community, refusing to protect it and themselves artificially creating problems.” Although the text of this journalist and fragments of the interview with the respondent represented the authorities in a negative way and the respondent directly blamed the authorities, the report did not show either the position of legislative or executive authorities, or that of the law-enforcement bodies, as well as an attempt to obtain their comments.

A principle of reasonable balance was violated, when it is one of the obligations of a journalist to broadcast news in an impartial manner, basing on multiple sources and keeping a balance. It is stated by the Code of Conduct for Public Broadcaster itself that equity and adequacy need to be observed in

reflecting differing opinions. When broadcasting the news, a journalist should try his best to possibly represent positions of all the parties concerned.

[On June 15](#), the statements made in court by the former Minister of Defense Irakli Alasania were aired in which he accused Mikheil Saakashvili and Vano Merabishvili of beating Gelashvili, underlining that Saakashvili ordered Merabishvili to make assault at Gelashvili because of private frustration. The report contained neither comments of the opposite party nor any attempt to obtain such comments, while both Merabishvili and Saakashvili have one lawyer Otar Kakhidze and it was not problematic to obtain comments from him.

Notably, any person provides evidence in court under oath that gives such evidence legal force and since the allegations against Saakashvili-Merabishvili were serious, I think it was necessary to bring comments of the representatives of the accused parties or the journalist should have demonstrated efforts to obtain such comments.

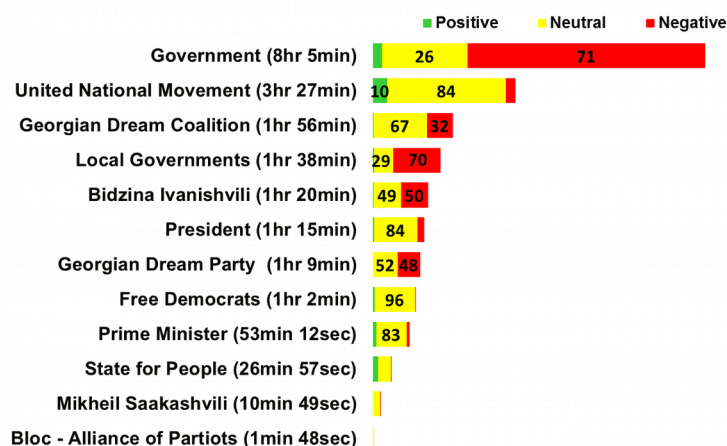
On June 19, in the [frame synchro](#), the Municipality and the authorities were accused of breaking the laws, regulations of Sakrebulo and the Parliament by the text of the host of the program and the interview of one of the activists of the protest action, pertaining to the sale of the tennis court adjoining the area of the racecourse and commencement of dismantling works. No interviews were recorded other than with population, including representatives from the Major's Office or any other governmental body. The news was reported relying on a single source – people, who were gathered there. This makes a problem as to providing the audience with accurate and reliable information. A media product, when based on the viewpoints of one party, group alone, leaves an impression of being partial, whether intentionally or not. However, the Code of Conduct for Public Broadcaster refers to the inadmissibility of bias and appeals to journalists to take due care when highlighting any topic.

Ristavi 2

During the monitoring period, the monitors focused on Rustavi 2 key daily news program Courier (frequency – every working day at 21:00 o'clock); Saturday Courier (on Saturday, at 21:00 o'clock) program-P.S. (every Sunday, at 21:00 o'clock).

Quantitative Analysis

**Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Rustavi 2"
according to the tone (%)**
(20 May - 10 July, 2016)



Rustavi 2 also allocated most of its airtime (8 h. 5 min) to the government, and the least of it (out of the selected 12 entities) to the bloc “David Tarkhan Mouravi – Irma Inashvili”. The highest rate of negative coverage on Rustavi 2 (71% of the allocated time) was observed with regard to the Government and the highest rate of positive coverage (10% of the allocated time) with regard to the United National Movement. Here too, Free Democrats are leading by neutral coverage (96% of the allocated time).

Contextual Analysis

Coverage of stories by the Rustavi 2 was mainly in conformity with the established media standards, but there were also some exceptions the most important of which have been incorporated into this Report.

The “Courier P.S.” of [June 5](#) aired a story of Khudadov woods drying, seizure of lands and illegal construction in that area. The story was represented by the host by the following text: "The first man-made woodland park laid out by Khudadov on the Nadzaladevi mountain slope may now be destroyed by the government of Narmania". This is followed by the Journalist’s text: “It seems we have misunderstood Narmania’s promise of million trees. He must have meant cutting, not planting”. „Hundreds of trees are marked red and ready for cutting, all of them have burnt roots and are artificially caused to dry out. The reason is to clear the area under construction. “

The respondent says: “I applied to the Mayor, it is an impregnable stronghold”. In almost 10-minute subject, the host of the program, the journalist and the respondent kept accusing the Municipality of Tbilisi city and its Mayor David Narmania of negligence and corruption. The opposite party was represented by majority member of Sakrebulo and majority deputy of Chugurety Rima Beridze, who was recorded. Her synchronic was also incorporated within the context of criticism against the municipality. I think it was necessary to include an answer of Tbilisi Mayor to the acute issues. The journalist did not mention that he had at least tried to contact the Mayor. The report was not balanced.

The story aired in [May 31](#) covered a protest of part of the Maestro staff against dismissal of Giorgi Isakadze, manager of „Sakmiani Dila“ and „Busines Kontakti“ from Maestro.

Host of the Courier: „It seems that pre-election cleanout has started at Maestro”. In the aired story Georgian Dream was mentioned in a negative context, the Government was accused of an attempt to get hold of Maestro and Rustavi 2. Part of the founders of Maestro, two media experts argued in one voice that the authorities were fighting against free media and intended to get pre-election control of the channels newsrooms. The materials did not contain response comments from any representative of the Government.

In [July 9](#), host of the Saturday Courier, Giorgi Gabunia discussed preliminary disclosure in violation of the diplomatic rules by Archil Gegeshidze, Ambassador of Georgia in USA of the information about the visit of John Kerry to Georgia. Together with this information, the host familiarized the audience with a fragment from the interview of our ambassador: “It is a fact that we exist and if it were not for this Treaty [of Georgievsk], we would have had black eyebrows and hair like Persians. The fact that we are called Georgian, have Georgian mentality and are distinguished as a nation is the achievement of our ancestors.”

Following this fragment, the host offered processed and edited photographs to the audience, where Georgian politicians had black thick eyebrows added and noted that if it were not for the Treaty of Georgievsk, we would have such politicians. The host then accompanied these photographs by satirical-humorous text. I think that there was a problem with ethics in the above-referred media product and that similar satirical-humorous embeddings in the news issue of socio-political content is unacceptable. This is a subject of discussion in Section 10, Article 14 of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, where it is noted that “In order to prevent misleading of the audience, when highlighting the news, a broadcaster should refrain from using humour, irony or satire or clearly explain their meaning”. In the referred case, in his monologue the host has presented such a mix of satire, humour, news that could hardly meet the requirements of the referred Article.

At the webpage of Rustavi 2, this media product is referred to as Giorgi Gabunia’s monologue. The problem can not be addressed by issue of the Courier as a copyright program on Saturdays. Notably, The Code of Conduct for Broadcasters includes a note regarding copyright programs imposing certain limits on the copyright programs:

Article 17. When copyright programs are aired, claims towards a broadcaster are:

1. In case of a copyright program, immediately before starting the program, the audience should be notified that it is a copyright.

In the copyright programs, it is necessary to provide the audience with a wide range of viewpoints, prevent distortion of facts and misinterpretation of a distinguished opinion.

2. **The host of a copyright program shall not benefit from its position of a host to disseminate its own viewpoint in the form that may affect the impartiality of the program.**

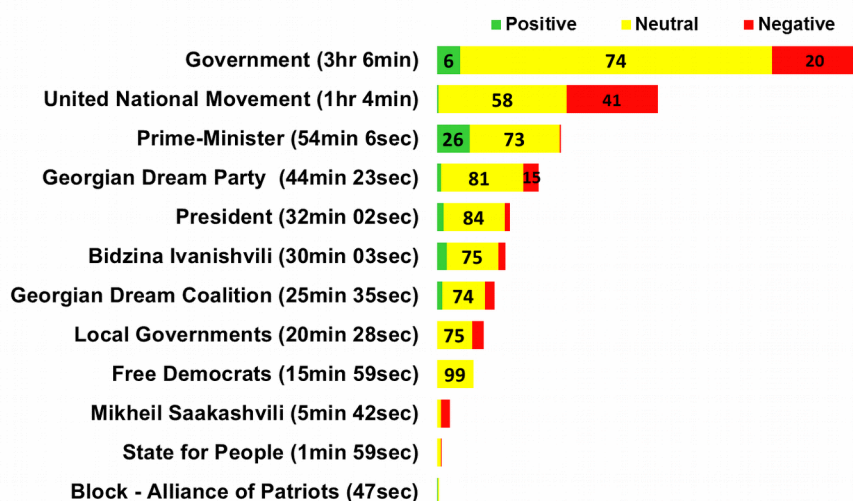
Given all said above, I think the monologue offered to the audience by the host of the Courier goes beyond the limits of an unbiased, balanced media product and resembles a monologue of a host of a satirical-humorous entertainment program, arising doubts about impartiality of the host.

Imedi

During the period of monitoring, the monitors focused on key news programs of Imedi TV: “Qronika” (Chronicles) (frequency – every working day at 20:00 o’clock), “Qronikis Studia” (Saturday, at 20:00 o’clock), “Imedis Dro” (every Sunday, at 20:00 o’clock).

Quantitative Analysis

Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Imedi"
according to the tone (%)
 (20 May - 10 July, 2016)



Imedi TV also allocated most of its airtime (3 h 6 min) to the Government. The highest rate of positive coverage (26% of the allocated time) was observed with regard to the Prime Minister and the highest rate of negative coverage (41% of the allocated time) with regard to the United National Movement. On Imedi too, Free Democrats were rating the highest by neutral coverage (99% of the allocated time).

Contextual Analysis

Coverage of stories by the TV channel was mainly in conformity with standards, but there were some minor exceptions though:

In June 29, a story aired by Qronika (<http://www.myvideo.ge/tv/imedi&seekTime=29-06-2016%2020:34>) described the tragic death of an 11 years old child in Ponichala due to the high voltage electricity cables. In its comments, one of the community members blames it on the municipality. The respondent says that they had submitted an application regarding these electricity cables to the municipality, but it was left without response. The journalist asks where exactly they had submitted the letter and the respondent answers that to the mayor house. Neither any comment from the municipality, nor an attempt to obtain such

comments was presented in the aired story. Although it could be seen that the electricity cables were owned by a private company, it was necessary to present comments of the municipality representative as well, since it was blamed for negligence and all the more so that this fact was emphasized by the journalist.

In [May 27](#), in its news issue Imedi highlighted an issue of whether it should be written in the constitution that “Matrimony shall be a voluntary unity of a man and woman”. The aired story presented in detail fragments of the speech made in the Parliament by majority member Nukri Kantaria in which he made homophobic declarations against sexual minorities: „It is unnatural, a deviation, imitation, sometimes disease, it is not organic” and so on.

Generally, media should disseminate homophobic declarations exclusively in order to demonstrate what language a high rank politician uses, to represent him in a negative context and clearly show that media dissociate itself from homophobia and the use of such language is unacceptable to it.

In this case Imedi disseminated this homophobic declaration without any explanation and dissociation, which is a problem.

It is an obligation of a journalist observing ethical standards to dissociate from any form of discrimination, to respond to the insulting expressions made with regard to the minorities, moreover when it done by public figures, politicians.

The news program of [July 7](#) aired a story, where a woman said that she and her 12 years old daughter were victims of regular violence on part of her husband. The respondent said that the police was unwilling to respond and what's more, made a mock of her. Another respondent, possibly an NGO representative argued that „violators are not properly punished, the authorities should develop some mechanisms. “ The story presented negatively both the police and the government since these facts are left without proper response.

The coverage was one-sided, the story did not present any comments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs or demonstrated an attempt to obtain them. Moreover, that the Ministry has a special program to fight against domestic violence, a special unit working on this problem. Had the journalist contacted the referred unit, he would be able to obtain specific information or at least statistics and present the problem in more detail to the audience. There is also a special asylum for such beneficiaries of which the journalist did not mention in his report. The report was deficient and did not comply with the established standards.

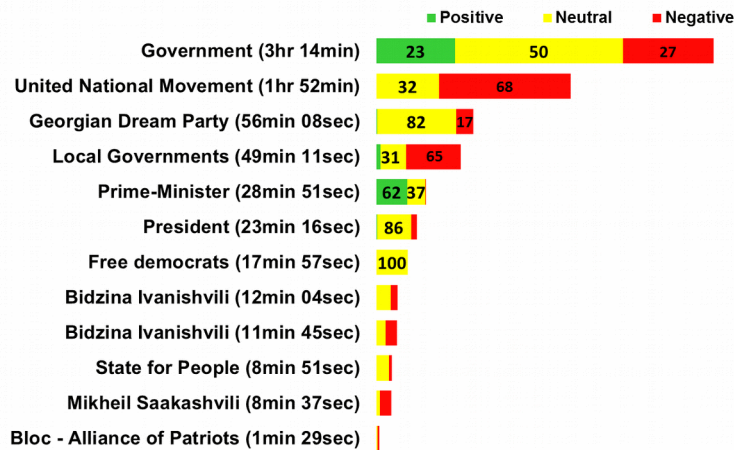
Maestro

During the period of monitoring, the monitors focused on key news program of Maestro “Kontaqti Rvaze” (frequency – every working day at 20:00 o'clock).

Quantitative Analysis

Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Maestro" according to the tone (%)

(20 May - 10 July, 2016)



Maestro also allocated most of its airtime to the Government, and the highest rate of positive coverage (62% of the allocated time) was observed with regard to the Prime Minister and the highest rate of negative coverage (68% of the allocated time) with regard to the United National Movement. On Maestro TV, Free Democrats had the highest rate of neutral coverage (100%).

Contextual Analysis

In [June 6](#), the human rights protection committee of the parliament held a presentation of the report on the facts of torture. Respondents discussed the issue of systemic tortures of people during the previous government. The journalist even mentioned concrete names of those, who according to this report were charged for torture: Akhalaia, Charbadze, Mukhadze, Patsatsia. The aired story contained criticism with regard of the National Movement from the Chairman of the Parliament, Prime Minister, parliament member, IDPs Minister, Public Defender, a representative of one of the NGOs, who with one voice talked of the systemic crimes committed against individuals during the previous government. At the background of such serious accusations, there was not a single comment presented in response by members of the previous government or even a representative of the National Movement. The report was one-sided and not balanced.

In [June 15](#) testimony given by Irakli Okruashvili in court was aired in which Okruashvili identified Mikheil Saakashvili as a person, who ordered beating of Valeri Gelashvili in 2007 and Vano Merabishvili as an executor. The audience was offered only the comments made by Okruashvili, without comments from Saakashvili and Merabishvili defendants, who could be seen participating in the proceedings. It is unclear, why their responses were not aired. The coverage was one-sided, relying on a single source alone and so the balance was distorted.

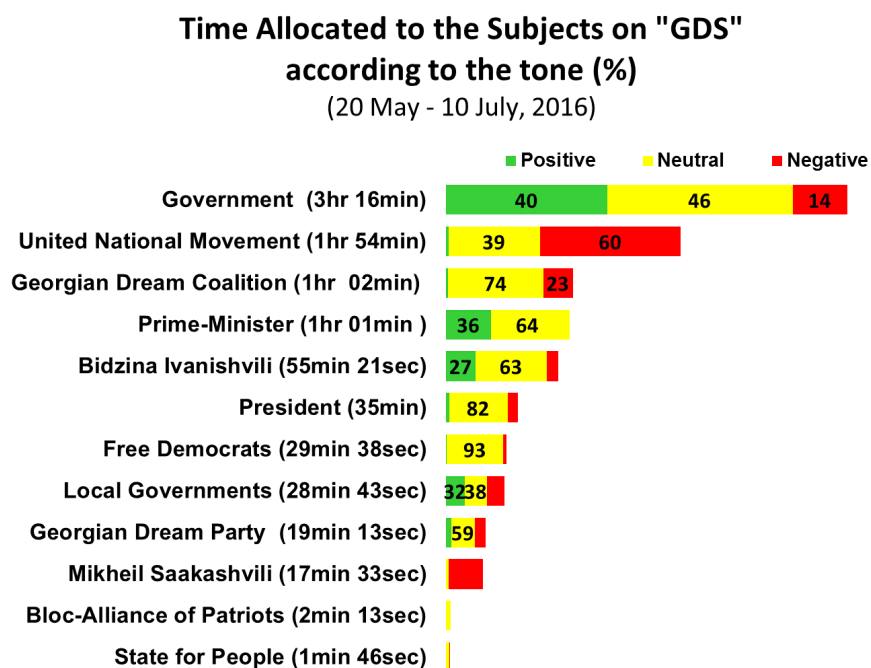
One of the stories aired in [July 7](#) concerned adoption of the strategy of traffic safety. Adoption and subject matter of the strategy was highlighted positively, relying on the narration of the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. All of the report was dedicated to representation Archil Talakvadze in a positive light. It is one-sided, does not represent differing viewpoints, opinion of experts with regard to

this strategy necessary to make the story balanced and more informative. The report is defective and does not reflect the essence of the problem.

GDS

During the period of monitoring, the monitors focused on key news program of GDS “2030” (frequency – every working day at 20:00 o’clock).

Quantitative Analysis



Here too, most of the airtime was allocated to the Government. The Government had the highest rate by positive coverage (40% of the allocated time). A leader by negative coverage (60% of the allocated time) was the United National Movement and Free Democrats were again rating the highest by neutral coverage (93% of the allocated time).

Contextual Analysis

News programs of GDS were at large balanced, yet some ethical problems were observed:

In [June 15](#) a story was aired under the heading of „Sensational evidence of Okruashvili“. The materials were entirely built on his charges against Saakashvili and Merabishvili, but none of the representatives of the National Movement were represented, excluding a remark-question of Merabishvili’s attorney. The story was full of accusations of Okruashvili against Merabishvili and Saakashvili. They also broadcasted an interview of Valeri Gelashvili with fragments of his newspaper interview of 11 years ago in which he was swearing at Saakashvili. In addition, an interview with the prosecutor investigating this case was recorded separately, and the report contained no comments of any of the attorneys and

supporters of the four people condemned in this case, as well as comments of a representative of the previous government.

The report was biased, and a balance between the parties was distorted, preventing delivery of accurate information to the audience.

In its story aired in [May 25](#), 2030 highlighted breaking up of a mass protest of 26 May 2011 on Rustaveli avenue. A respondent, a common citizen argued that one person was killed near Rustaveli cinema and another in the yard of Kashveti church and their bodies were afterwards moved to be placed on the roof of a building near Liberty subway. In his story, the journalist presented this gravest accusation relying solely on the narration of one citizen, without explaining who this citizen was and where he could get hold of such information and what were investigation outcomes regarding these two deceased men. The journalist did not inquire from the acting law-enforcement officers of the status of the investigation initiated in connection with this fact. The information contained in this story is inaccurate, unreliable, not verified or supported by facts. The report does not present any comments of the previous government, is biased and not balanced.

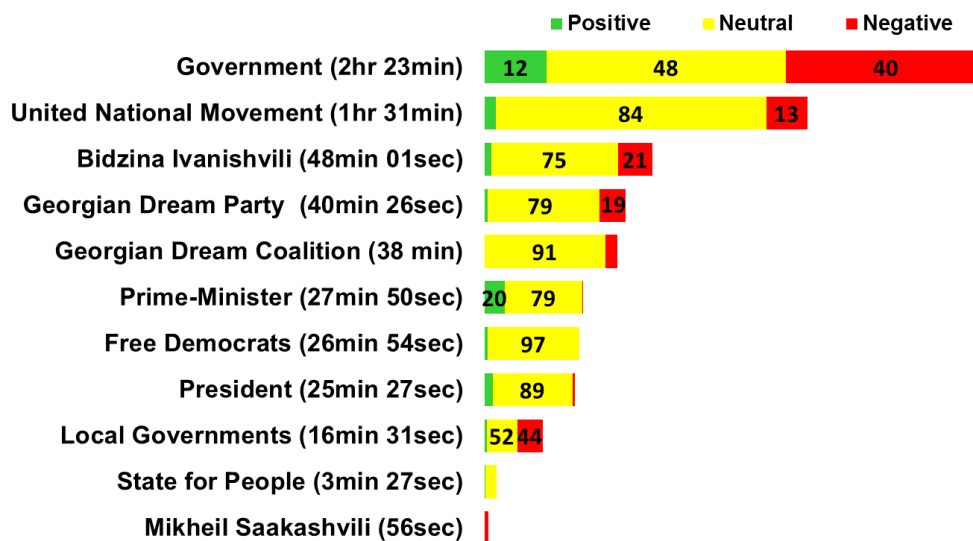
In [June 9](#), 2030 aired the story containing information on the draft parliamentary regulation pertaining to the legal assessment of the tortures of people in 2004-2012. An audience was offered comments of 3 deputies of which two criticized the previous government and referred to the problem of systemic torture of people. However, no comments of a representative of the National Movement in previous government necessary to observe the balance were presented, and so the aired story was one-sided.

Tabula

During the period of monitoring, the monitors focused on key news program of Tabula “Fokusi” (frequency – every working day at 19:00 o’clock).

Quantitative Analysis

Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Tabula" according to the tone (%) (20 May - 10 July, 2016)



Here too, most of the airtime was allocated to the Government. By positive coverage, the highest rating (20% of the allocated time) had the Prime Minister. By negative coverage, the local government was leading (44% of the allocated time) and by neutral coverage, Free Democrats were again rating the highest (97% of the allocated time).

Contextual Analysis

The news broadcasting by Tabula was observed to be more or less balanced, with some specific ethical problems though:

In the story highlighted by the news issue of [May 20](#), paraolympic athletes accused the Government and personally Minister of Sports and Youth - Taniel Khechikashvili of the pressure, threatening and bribing their members during election of their President. Fragments of interviews with only 2 paraolympic athletes are presented. Both of them represent one party and their statements containing accusations against the Government are at large identical. The aired story does not present any evidence in support of their statements, comments from a representative of the other party - Government or Minister of Sports and no attempt to obtain such comments is demonstrated that makes us think the balance was distorted.

The story aired by Tabula in [May 25](#) highlights the case of a citizen (L.B.) detained by the law-enforcement bodies for drug possession. In this report a video-interview with another citizen (B.Kh) was demonstrated in which he recognized that the law-enforcement officers forced him to plant drugs on a particular person, above-referred citizen L.B.. The story is intirely built on the comments of the organization White Noise Movement, spouse of the arrested person and their attorney. In the whole, the story is full of criticism towards the law-enforcement bodies, and namely Didube-Chugureti police

department, whose police officers were accused of blackmail and pressure. In this story, the respondents also mention that the police officers themselves provided the referred citizen B.Kh. with a supply of drugs so that he could plant them on the other citizen. One of the respondents generalizes this fact and says that it is one of the examples of how the law-enforcement officers had for years tried to harass and blackmail these people; another respondent insists on starting investigation of this fact as soon as possible. It also presented a fragment of interview with the attorney, who likewise accused the police. Altogether five representatives of one party charged the police officers for committing a crime and no comment from the law-enforcement bodies was presented, as well as an attempt to obtain their comments. This is a one-sided biased story, reflecting the position of one side only in violation of the journalist standards.

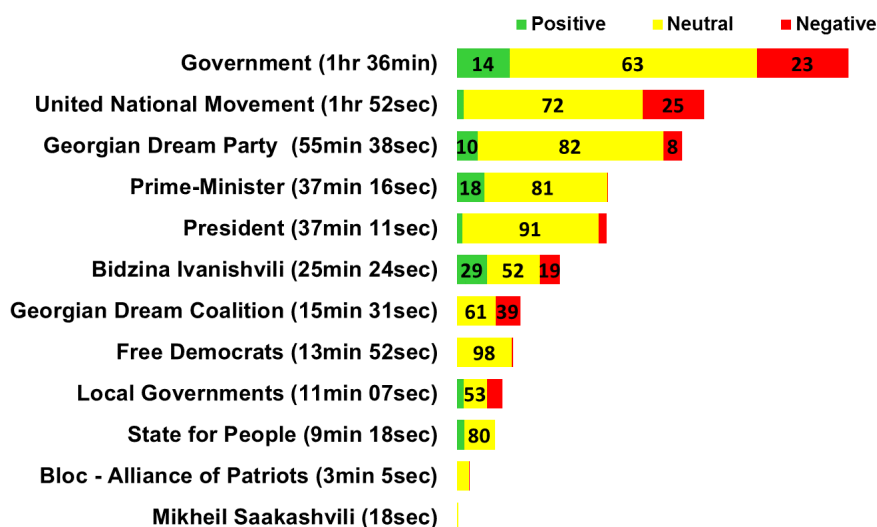
Kavkasia

During the period of monitoring, the monitors focused on key news program of Kavkasia “Dge” (frequency – every working day at 20:30 o’clock).

Quantitative Analysis

Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Kavkasia" according to the tone (%)

(20 May - 10 July, 2016)



Kavkasia also allocated most of its airtime to the Government. By positive coverage, Bidzina Ivanishvili rated the highest (29% of the allocated time). Coalition Georgian Dream was leading by negative coverage (39% of the allocated time) and Free Democrats again were rating the highest by neutral coverage (98% of the allocated time).

Contextual Analysis

The stories aired in the news program of Kavkasia were mainly balanced, but during the period of monitoring a few instances of incompliance with the ethical principles could be observed:

In its news issue of [May 25](#), Kavkasia aired frame synchro, where members of an inter-fraction group criticized the Government in connection with the amendments to be introduced to the electoral legislation. A synchro of 3 group members was aired, where they discussed “incidious plans” of the ruling power and the parliamentary minority. The parliamentary majority was presented negatively by the respondent, but the story contained no response from either parliamentary majority or parliamentary minority. The report was imbalanced.

In [May 23](#) Kavkasia broadcasted that the Chairman of Dusheti Sakrebulo left Georgian Dream and joined Paata Burchuladze movement. According to the host of the program, Chairman of Sakrebulo took such decision due to his disappointment with the political leadership. According to the respondent, Georgian Dream continues ruinous practice of the previous government. The Chairman charges the majority with the failure to fulfil their promises. On the whole, the ruling party was presented negatively, but neither their comments nor an attempt to obtain such comments were reported. In this case too representation of the story was one-sided and imbalanced.

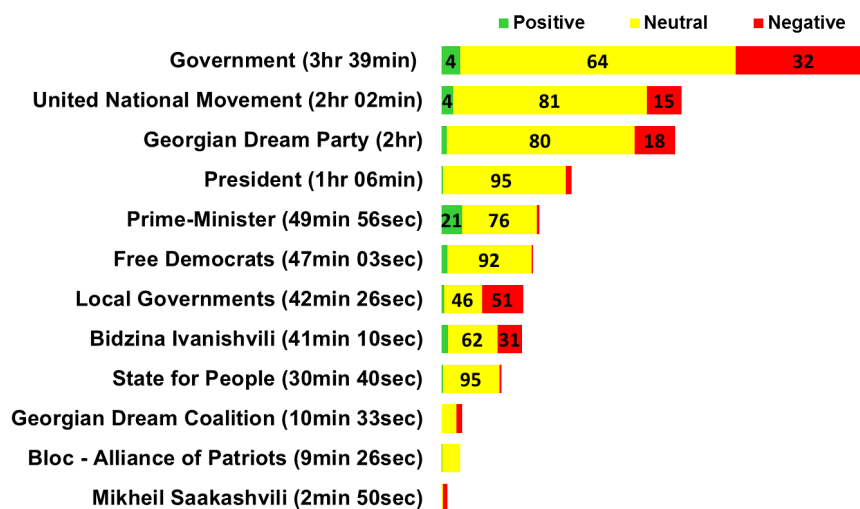
In [June 21](#) a briefing held by Khatuna Lagazidze, a member of Paata Burchuladze party was aired, where she accused the government in corruptive tenders. Lagazidze identifies certain tenders, makes allegations and mentions unearmarked expenses. The Government was represented negatively, but neither a feedback nor an attempt to obtain such feedback was reported.

TV Pirveli

During the period of monitoring, the monitors focused on key news program of TV Pirveli (at 22:00 o'clock).

Quantitative Analysis

Time Allocated to the Subjects on "TV Pirveli"
according to the tone (%)
 (20 May - 10 July, 2016)



TV Pirveli also allocated most of its airtime to the Government. By positive coverage, the Prime Minister rated the highest with 21% of the allocated time and by negative coverage, local government rated the highest with 51% of the allocated time. By neutral coverage, the President and the party State for the People had the highest rate of 95% of the allocated time, each.

Contextual Analysis

The news broadcasting by TV Pirveli was mainly balanced, with some exceptions though:

In [June 7](#), in the story related to the end of the legal proceedings against Rustavi 2, Minister of Justice Tea Tsulukiani was criticized, but neither her position nor an attempt to obtain her comments were reported.

The same day, in the news program of [June 7](#) a story of Kortskheli incident was aired, focusing on political assessments in which Kakha Kukava accused Minister of Energy Kakhi Kaladze: „Kakhi Kaladze is involved in organization, financing, management and encouragement of “zonder brigades”, „he will go to prison“ – the allegation made by Kukava in the aired report remained without answer. Neither comments from Kaladze, nor an attempt to obtain such comments were reported, distorting the balance.

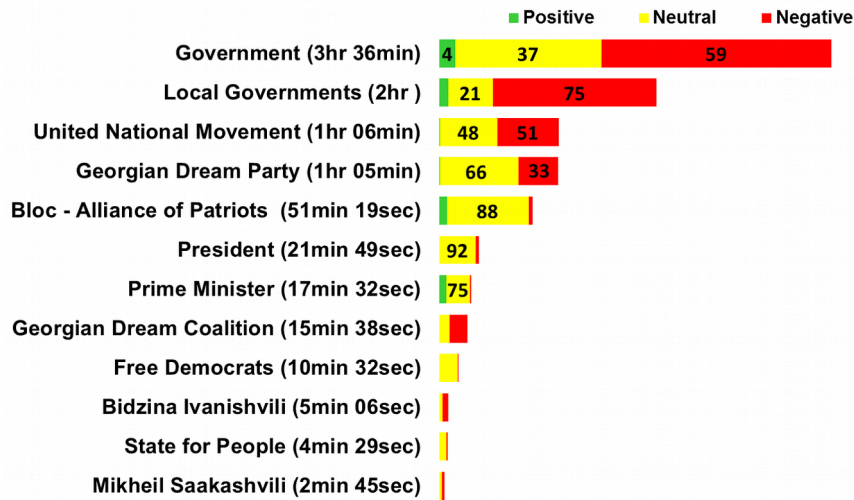
In the story aired in the news program of [May 29](#) the problems with safety of traffic were highlighted. It was reported that an action of protest was held in front of the Parliament of Georgia. The activists criticized the Parliament and the Government, in general, blaming them for impediment of the adoption of the law on safety of traffic and failure to implement fundamental changes in this area. Altogether there were 3 respondents, who were criticizing the authorities, but comments of either a representative of the executive power or a parliament member were not reported and nothing was said about whether there was any attempt made to obtain such comments. The story was one-sided and unbalanced.

Obieqtivi

The monitors focused on the key news program of Obieqtivi that was aired every working day at 19:30 o'clock.

Quantitative Analysis

**Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Obieqtivi"
according to the tone (%)**
(20 May - 10 July, 2016)



Obieqtivi TV also allocated most of its airtime to the Government. By positive coverage (8% of the allocated time), the highest rating had the bloc of Tarkhan Mouravi – Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots and United Opposition, and by negative coverage (75% of the allocated time), the highest rating had the local government, while the President rated the highest by neutral coverage (92%).

The news broadcasting by Obieqtivi was observed to be more or less balanced, with some specific ethical problems though.

In [June 1](#) the news issue highlighted the story of an officer discharged from the Ministry of Defense. The former officer presented serious allegations against Minister Tinatin Khidasheli and top officials of the Ministry, such as torture of children, corruption, nepotism, undue treatment towards the soldiers, counterfeiting of documents. The journalist several times underlined that for all this the officer laid responsibility personally upon Minister Khidasheli. The above-referred serious allegations were represented relying solely on the information from the ex-officer, despite the fact that the respondent openly named several officials, who as he said witnessed torture of children. The journalist made no attempt to contact them to cross-check the information at least via telephone communication. Neither did journalist verify facts of nepotism as the respondent (with a list in his hands) said he had a list of officials appointed through nepotism.

At the end of the story, the journalist said that the Ministry of Defense made no comment to this end. I think, this phrase alone is unable to provide reasonable balance. Similar serious allegations required taking more efforts from the journalist with a view to verify the presented accusations.

For instance: 1. Should have personally communicated with the individuals identified by the respondent. 2. Could have sent a official letter to the Ministry of Defense and inquire necessary

information. In such case, the Ministry was obliged to respond. 3. Could have approached the Minister of Defense at public meetings and ask her or any other high official of the Ministry to make a comment.

Had the journalist tried all these ways and reflected information about these attempts in his report, even in case of failure to receive an answer, this would demonstrate his respect to the audience and an effort to deliver accurate information, rendering the referred media product more reliable.

The news issue of [July 1](#) showed frame synchro, where the text of the reporter and fragments of the interview with the respondent contained allegations of nepotism and increasing incidence of suicide by soldiers against the the top officials of the Ministry of Defense. It was also said that nepotism was connected to the period of assignment of Khidasheli to the post of the minister. TV channel has reported this information relying solely on 1 source – an officer recently discharged from the Ministry of Defense. This information was one-sided, not underpinned by facts, presenting neither the position of the other party, nor an attempt to obtain information of its position.

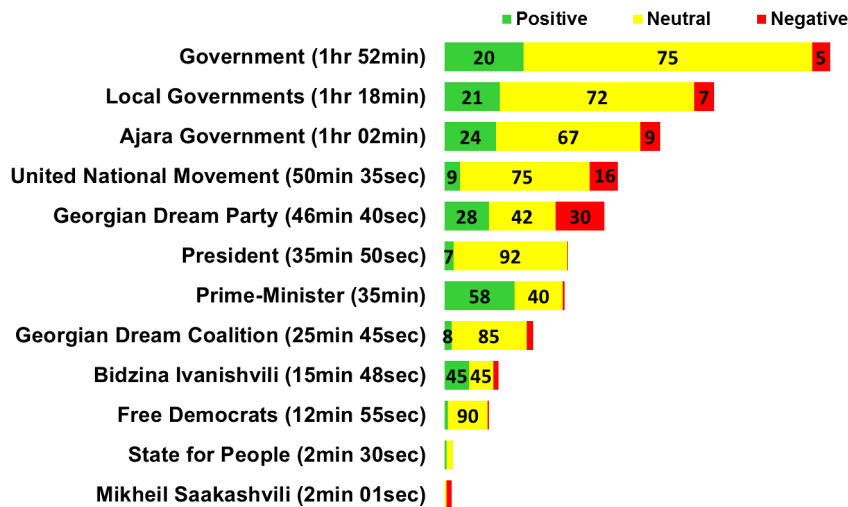
The story highlighted in [June 20](#) reported on an emergency state of a two-floor residential house in Sagarejo. According to the story, 4 families lived in the house under hard conditions and the building was likely to collapse. In his report the journalist says the following text: „Apart from the local government, residents of Leonidze street more than once approached for assistance majority deputy of Sagarejo – Tamar Khidasheli, but in vain.“ After this phrase, the journalist should have contacted Khidasheli to present her position to the audience, but the story does not demonstrate any effort to do so. In this case, the principle of a reasonable balance was inobserved as well.

Ajara TV Public Broadcaster

The monitors focused on the key news program of Ajara TV.

Quantitative Analysis

Time Allocated to the Subjects on "Ajara TV"
according to the tone (%)
 (20 May - 10 July, 2016)



Ajara TV also allocated most of its airtime to the Central Government. By positive coverage, the Prime Minister rated the highest (58% of the allocated time), by negative coverage, Georgian Dream rated the highest (30% of the allocated time), and by neutral coverage Free Democrats were leading again (90%).

The news broadcasting by Obieqtivi was observed to be more or less balanced, with some specific ethical problems though.

As concerns coverage of the autonomous government by Ajara TV, the broadcasting was neutral for 67%, positive for 24% and negative for 9%.

The news broadcasting was observed to mostly meet the ethical standards, but there were some exceptions as well:

The report of [May 24](#) covered the project initiated in 2010 under which the investors, with support of the government, planned to build hotels in Cobuleti. However, according to this report, due to the strict regulations applied towards the investors by the previous government, the project failed to properly develop. The government of Ajara was represented positively. The story contained an indication that problems caused by the old regulation need to be settled through the new ones. It would be good to have comments of one of the representatives of the previous government of the National Movement to make the story more balanced.

The news issue of [May 23](#) showed frame synchro, at the beginning of which the news reporter quotes a member of the National Movement: “Khelvachauri municipality does not pay due attention to Machakhela club” – this is followed by a statement of the member of the National Movement: „It was due to the bad management of the Head of the municipality (Gangebeli) that yesterday the club had to leave the First League, all responsibility lays with Mr. Gangebeli”. This refers to the blame of the

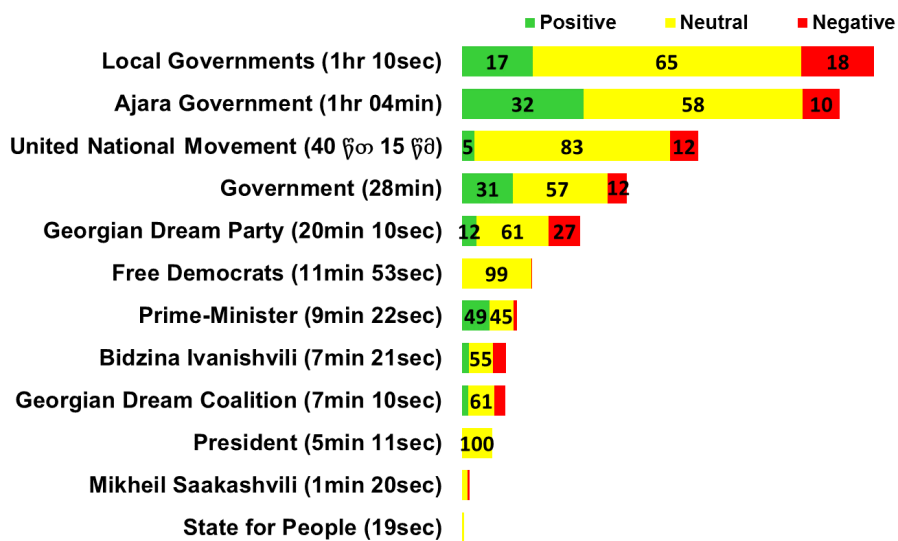
Head of Khelvachauri municipality in the failure of Khelvachauri football club on, and no comment or an attempt to obtain such comment in response is reported.

TV 25

Monitors of TV 25 focused on the key news program „Matsne“ (19 h 30 min).

Quantitative Analysis

Time Allocated to the Subjects on "TV 25" according to the tone (%) (20 May - 10 July, 2016)



TV 25 also allocated most of its airtime to the Central Government. By positive coverage, the Prime Minister was leading with 49% and by negative coverage - Bidzina Ivanishvili with 30%. Here too, Free Democrats had the highest rate of neutral coverage (99%). It should also be noted here that the government of Ajara was covered neutrally for 58%, positively for 17% and negatively for 18%.

The news broadcasting was observed to mostly meet the ethical standards, but there were some exceptions:

[The report shown in the news issue of May 30](#) is dedicated to the problems of fountains in Batumi. In this report, the population expresses dissatisfaction with the shortage of fountains and their malfunctioning. From this story, we learn that municipality of Batumi city and administration of the boulevard share the responsibility of maintaining the fountains. In these materials, municipality of Batumi city is highlighted in a negative way, without presenting its position. At the end, the journalist says that a responsible person had his telephone turned off all the day.

A failure to keep the balance is not the only problem with this report. Comments of the municipality representative would not only make it balanced, but would also render the report more informative so that the population could get more details about the problem. The municipality representative should have been given an opportunity to respond to the question as to when the fountains start operating normally.

In this case, an explanation provided by the journalist that a responsible person had his telephone turned off all day is irrelevant. The journalist could communicate with another municipality officer or even postpone the report for a day, and all the more so that this topic was not hot news and would rather be put off to be later highlighted in more detail.

The news issue of [May 25](#) contained a story of a woman, who takes care of a serious patient of 35 years of age and has no dwelling. It describes strained circumstances of the family and the jeopardy for them to be soon left homeless.

The report was represented by the following text: “It appears that the city municipality does not provide assistance to such families, there is neither a special program nor a shelter available for them”.

Although the report several times refers to the municipality, presenting it in a negative manner, it does not demonstrate a position of the municipality representative or an attempt to obtain his comments. The report is unbalanced, providing the audience with one-sided information.

The news issue of [May 25](#) represented the so-called “frame synchro” according to which a member of the National Movement accused the Head (Gamgebeli) of Khulo municipality of consuming excessive quantity (18 thousand liters) of fuel and his driver of being absent on rest for 325 days during 2 years. This was only an accusing synchro of a member of the National Movement fraction that would arise doubts in the audience concerning incur of unearmarked expenses by the Head of Khul municipality. No comments of the Head of Khulo municipality or his representative were recorded and no attempt of obtaining them was demonstrated. In this case too, the principle of keeping balance was violated.

Recommendations

TV channels mainly use the so-called “frame-synchro” to broadcast the news and in some cases relying on a single source alone. For instance, a politician holds a press-conference and announces an accusation against another politician or the authorities. The medium shows the press-conference footage and a synchro of the “accuser”, and that is all. I think, in such case it is necessary to reflect the feedback, or to prepare a separate frame synchro in the same news release in the same product, or at least to inform the audience that comments of the “accused” party will be offered as soon as they are available.

There are extensive reports likewise representing the position of either party, without evidence of making any efforts to find out the position of the other one. For instance: in their reports, journalists often use phrases: „telephone was turned off“; „was not available at the office“ „was not at work today“ „did not wish to make comments“, etc. It is to be noted that an obligation to observe balance is not a

mere formality. Balance is necessary for the audience to hear various and in most cases, differing viewpoints to be able to draw own conclusions regarding the real essence of the story. By the above-referred phrases, we deprive the audience of such chance, while there are numerous ways of presenting balanced information. Journalists should do their best to check the information: if an official party has its telephone turned off, to send a message to it via e-mail, contact a PR officer and ask to record at least another person, prepare an official letter in the name of the office from which information is required and attempt to obtain public information (in such case, the office is bound by law to respond). Although all this may sometimes cause prolongation, yet in most cases it will deliver to the audience a more accurate and exhaustive information.

There were cases, when a respondent on this or another channel was discriminative, used a language of hatred and inappropriate terminology. In such case, a journalist has two options: not to disseminate phrases made by the author of discriminative language of hatred, if it is a private person, or to disseminate them, *if they are made by a public person, political figure*, immediately explaining to the audience that such expressions are unacceptable for the newsrooms and are disseminated only because the author is a public person.

During the period of monitoring, all channels actively covered the legal proceedings against the woman charged with the murder of her husband and son. It is important for the journalists to make a distinction between a fair public interest and disclosure of private life of a person. Media has publicized much of the personal information from these legal proceedings that was unnecessary for highlighting the case. Media should treat unfounded disclosure of personal information with due care, should not blindly disseminate messages from law-enforcement bodies, but should limit its coverage to the information necessary to inform the society of the course of the trial and refrain from disclosing intimate details of the life of the defendant.