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Georgia Comprehensive Media Research: Summary Findings

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Introduction

The Georgian media landscape has long been the subject of intense debate, as well as of fierce political competition. Although Georgia enjoys the highest press freedom index in the region, it is widely accepted that there remain major problems in this sphere.¹ President Saakashvili himself has said that the media “remains a challenge” for Georgia², and visiting Western politicians regularly call for steps to be taken to cement media freedom and independence.³

In many respects, Georgia has a vibrant media scene. Laws passed by the current government have been welcomed by independent observers⁴, and there is a wide variety of viewpoints available in print and on radio, as well as on television in the capital Tbilisi. However, rather than acting as impartial providers of information, media outlets are often viewed as biased, serving the interests of one or another political group. This has a long history in Georgia, where nationwide channel Rustavi 2 is seen as having played a large role in facilitating the Rose Revolution of 2003. During the political crisis of November 2007, Imedi TV took centre stage, even being raided and closed by the authorities. More recently, Tbilisi’s Maestro TV has played an overtly political role, calling on its viewers to attend anti-government demonstrations in April this year.

With this in mind, it is no wonder that debates surrounding the Georgian media are highly charged. However, little research has been conducted into the actual state of the media landscape: how it is perceived by the public and professionals alike, what Georgians expect from this sector and what the major strengths and weaknesses are today. In an effort to bring concrete data to this politicised issue, CRRC has undertaken an in-depth and holistic study into the Georgian media landscape. The study consisted of a comprehensive survey of the Georgian population’s attitudes to media, **eight** focus groups in two Georgian cities, detailed interviews with forty-seven top media professionals, and a media-monitoring project to analyse the current state of Georgian TV news.

It is the aim of this report to synthesise the results of these studies to try to achieve a rounded picture of the media landscape in Georgia. It is hoped that by bringing specific findings to a debate so often dominated by political consideration, it will be possible to begin a constructive conversation among all stakeholders on improving the Georgian media scene.

Public perceptions of media: sceptical interest

Georgia’s media is more trusted than media in neighboring countries. Some 47 percent of survey respondents partially or fully trust the media, as compared with 43 percent in Azerbaijan, and 39 percent in Armenia {CRRC Data Initiative 2008}.

¹ See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=439> for regional scores.

² Civil.ge, *Saakashvili Speaks of New Wave of Democratic Reforms*. Retrieved 01/11/09 <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19526>

³ US Vice President Joe Biden, for example, told the Georgian Parliament in July that the Rose Revolution would only be complete “when the media is totally independent and professional.” See Civil.ge, *Biden Addresses Parliament*. Retrieved 01/11/09 <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21283&search=biden%20parliament>

⁴ International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). (2009). *Media Sustainability Index*. Retrieved September 25, 2009 from <http://www.irex.org/MSI/index.asp>

Georgians are also avid consumers of news, with 84 percent of respondents watching TV news every day, most for between half an hour and two hours {tv10}. Although TV is the most important source of information, 86 percent of respondents read a weekly paper, and 80 percent read a news magazine, at least once a month {p3.3}.⁵ In addition, 33 percent receive information from the radio each day {r4.2}, and internet use is growing, with 12 percent accessing the net daily. This shows that while TV remains the dominant force, newspapers and radio do play a significant role, and that the internet is gaining traction.

Nationwide private channel Rustavi 2 is by far the most popular in Georgia, with 79 percent of respondents watching its news broadcasts every day {tv12.3}. The high quality of presentation, as well as the nationwide reach, were frequently cited as reasons for Rustavi 2's popularity. One Kutaisi resident called it "the only watchable channel in Georgia".⁶

There is, however, a certain ambivalence surrounding the channel. While 59 percent of respondents trust Rustavi 2's news to at least some extent {tv14.5}, 51 percent also think that it reflects the interests of the government. Focus-groups suggest that the audience is drawn by the quality of presentation in Rustavi 2, but simultaneously voices skepticism. Commenting on its speed, one Tbilisi resident said that "Rustavi 2 does not provide objective information, but they are fast, when something happens they are there first". Skeptical consumption may indeed be a broader pattern. Focus group participants frequently commented that they watch a combination of news broadcasts from different channels and then decide what to believe.

It is clear that Georgian viewers like professionally presented news broadcasts. In describing their favorite journalists, the respondents value intelligence (59 percent), courage (34 percent), the ability to ask the right questions (19 percent), as well as a clear presentation of facts (18 percent). Respondents did not hesitate to identify journalists that they respect. Bad pronunciation or a provocative demeanour were considered the two most unpopular traits for a journalist to possess (by 25 and 19 percent of respondents respectively) {tv19}, showing that good presentation is an important factor for Georgian viewers. One focus-group participant spoke with disdain of journalists who made grammatical mistakes in their speech.

Georgian news consumers are not only aware of potentially biased reporting on television, but many feel they can make up for that by watching a variety of stations. However, outside the capital, it is much more difficult to access channels with editorial policies significantly different from Rustavi 2.

There is an ongoing divide in terms of access to different sources of TV news in Georgia. Most of the country can only access Rustavi 2, Imedi TV and Channel 1 of the state-funded Public Broadcaster. These stations are considered pro government by 51, 33 and 51 percent of respondents respectively. Tbilisi is also served by two channels, Maestro and Kavkasia, widely considered to be supportive of the opposition (68 percent of Tbilisi residents believe Kavkasia represents opposition interests, and 50 percent say Maestro is also supportive of the opposition). Although this means that Tbilisi residents can access a broader range of views, focus-group participants from the city showed little

⁵ Many respondents said they did not read newspapers because of their cost, or because they were not on sale in the area. This suggests that there could be a latent appetite for cheap and widely distributed newspapers among much of the Georgian population.

⁶ Focus groups, divided by age and media habits, were carried out in Tbilisi and Kutaisi.

confidence in the objectivity of any channel, also seeing Kavkasia and Maestro as “biased” and “one sided”.

Biased reporting is unacceptable to 75 percent of respondents, but most feel that the impartiality of TV news is compromised {tv36, tv35}. 61 percent believe that news coverage is influenced by the owners of the TV stations. Controversy has dogged the ownership of both Rustavi 2 and Imedi and most focus group participants felt that station owners were themselves beholden to government. Given that 49 percent of Georgians also agree to at least some extent that journalists serve the interests of the government, there does seem to be genuine concern about the level of media freedom {q9}.

Georgians are strongly opposed to any form of state censorship. 63 percent agree that the government should not control media output, with just 22 percent agreeing that the government has a right to control media output {q15}. In the focus groups, participants agreed that censorship was only applicable in a time of war. In spite of this, many respondents think that Georgia currently lacks freedom of speech. 44 percent at least partially disagree with the statement that there is freedom of speech in Georgia, compared to 35 percent who agree.

Most Georgians, therefore, are well aware of the problems in their media sector. However, it is also clear that there is a real desire to have a more professional, unbiased and independent media landscape. Many respondents have distinct ideas of issues they would like to be reflected more extensively on national television. Generally, this shows a preference for several issues that are relevant to their own lives.

	Coverage on National TV⁷ (%)			
	Too little	Right amount	Too much	Don't Know
Social issues	50	27	4	16
Human rights	39	34	3	22
Freedom of speech	38	32	4	23
Healthcare	37	35	3	23
Religion	36	37	4	20
Court system	34	32	3	28
Property rights	31	35	4	27
Economic issues	24	47	7	19
Corruption	22	42	5	28
Education	22	47	7	22
Situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia	19	44	18	17
Territorial integrity	18	44	19	16
Political stability	15	47	14	22
Relations with Russia	13	47	21	18
Elections	9	41	26	21
Politics of other countries	9	57	11	21
NATO membership	6	43	30	19

Moreover, respondents also show a clear appetite for investigative reporting. Beyond investigative films shown on Kavkasia and Maestro, there are currently no dedicated

⁷ Those refusing to answer are not shown, so numbers do not add up to 100 percent {tv7}.

investigative reporting programs on any national channel. Yet respondents were overwhelmingly positive when asked if they would like to see a wide variety of issues investigated by journalists.⁸ Over 75 percent of respondents said they would like to see investigations into healthcare, the courts, elections, the protection of freedom of speech and other issues. Interestingly, 64 percent of respondents said they would also like to see relations between politicians and the Orthodox Church investigated. This is striking given the overwhelming support the church receives, and the fact that it enjoys the trust of 84 percent of the public {CRRC Data Initiative 2008}.

Overall, the data paints a complex picture of the Georgian public's relationship with the media. It is clear that Georgians are familiar with the shortcomings of even their most popular news sources, but still watch in vast numbers. While most people demand unbiased, independent reporting from journalists, they also want professional presentation and a high quality product. Although TV news is by far the most influential, most Georgians also turn to other sources at least occasionally, and a large majority would like to see crucial current events be investigated by journalists without interference either from the government, or from the owners of media outlets.

In spite of the problems of the Georgian media, 64 percent of Georgians trust journalists to at least some extent. Over sixty percent {d15} would be happy for their children to go into journalism. This suggests that many respondents might be cautiously optimistic for the future of the Georgian media.

Media professionals: critical and concerned

Compared with the general public, media professionals are much more uneasy about the state of the Georgian media, and their own place within it. CRRC surveyed and interviewed forty-seven media professionals in October 2009, and it is clear that most are much more critical toward the media sector than the rest of the population.⁹ While almost 40 percent of general respondents broadly agreed with the statement that Georgian journalists served the interests of people like them, 79 percent of media professionals broadly disagreed {q8}.

Media professionals are also much more concerned about government interference, with 83 percent believing that journalists are often influenced by government interests, compared to just 18 percent of the general public {tv16}. Many of the professional respondents said that pro-government bias was most detectable in TV stations. Most said that a lack of ownership transparency in these media outlets made it easier for pressure to be exerted: "The fact that the ownership of the various TV channels is not made transparent proves that they are associated with particular [political] leaders and parties," said one respondent. 79 percent of media professionals believe the owners of TV channels influence coverage to a great extent {tv35}.

While problems in TV were mainly seen as arising from government interference, it was lack of professionalism that was highlighted as a primary concern in the rest of the media. Many thought this was particularly apparent in the print sector, as well as on the Tbilisi based Kavkasia and Maestro channels, which most respondents said sided with the opposition. "Georgian journalists write for the politicians they are trying to please,

⁸ This question was asked about all types of media, not only TV.

⁹ The professionals included journalists, managers and academic experts. They represented TV, print, radio and internet outlets, and came from across the political spectrum.

from one or another political group” said one respondent, another felt that Georgian journalists “don’t serve the public, they serve the political class.”

54 percent of journalists agree to some extent that they have freedom of speech but this agreement is muted. Respondents stressed that there were strong constraints to journalists' freedom. Several issues were highlighted as limiting freedom of speech, including lack of training and professionalism on the journalists' part: “journalists do not know their rights, and this hinders freedom of speech.” Other factors hindering freedom of speech included lack of ownership and financing transparency in media outlets and lack of confidence in the court process.

Self-censorship is also mentioned as a problem. “You don't like it, but you are still doing it”, is how one journalist put it. Another commented that those who did not censor themselves were marginalised, and that “a 'clean-up' has been in progress for so long that a new breed of journalists has appeared, who are inherently, consciously pro-governmental”. In this context, the preferences of the government (83 percent) and the media owner (79 percent) are more important than personal views (49 percent) in influencing how TV journalists report on issues {tv16, tv15, tv35}. Again and again, journalists highlighted the weak institutional base for sustained independent journalism as a major challenge for quality journalism.

Another issue raised was the polarization of the media scene: “journalists do not have freedom of speech in Georgia. This is because of the absence of a neutral media—channels either serve the government’s or the opposition’s interests.” Media professionals see the TV landscape as more polarized than the rest of the population. Whereas 51 percent of the general public think Rustavi 2 serves the government’s interests to at least some extent, that view is held by 94 percent of media professionals {tv17.5}.

Media professionals also believe that the public is much more distrustful of the Georgian TV sector than is actually the case. Whereas 59 percent of the general public trusts information provided by Rustavi 2 to at least some extent, media professionals thought that figure was just 28 percent. The difference is equally striking in regard to the news provided by Imedi, while 60 percent of the public trust it to at least some extent (and it is the nation’s most trusted broadcaster according to another question, tv13), media professionals thought it was trusted by just 25 percent of people {tv14.3}.

One area where survey results from the general population and media professionals coincide is in the desire for investigative reporting. While there is significant donor funding for investigative programs, and some are broadcast on Maestro and Kavkasia, no investigative programs run on a national channel. Over 90 percent of media professionals would like to see investigative reports into issues as diverse as education reform to the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, 62 percent of media professionals would not like to see investigations carried out into the private lives of politicians, compared to the 53 percent of the general public that would. In interviews, most media professionals held up journalistic ethics as the reason such an investigation would be inappropriate, suggesting that there is a strong desire for professional and ethical reporting within the media sector.

The TV sector: stations in conflict, standards in jeopardy

Given the importance and the attention focused on the television sector in Georgia, CRRC commissioned three phases of in-depth media monitoring to be carried out this year.¹⁰ The monitoring targeted national broadcasters often seen as serving the government's interests, Rustavi 2, Imedi and Channel 1 of the public broadcaster, as well as Kavkasia and Maestro, Tbilisi-based channels generally seen as sympathetic to the opposition. The monitoring was carried out in early April, coinciding with large scale anti-government street protests, late May, when those demonstrations reached their apogee, and September, when a highly publicized EU-commissioned report into the causes of the 2008 war was released.

In general, qualitative analysis of news reports from the five targeted stations found that viewers could expect to see radically different versions of events portrayed on Rustavi 2, Imedi and Channel 1 as compared with Kavkasia and Maestro, meaning that it might indeed be possible to watch a number of channels and then come to one's own conclusions. When channels covered the same news event, it was often possible to discern the editorial sympathies of the station through the differences in reportage. For example, when the EU-commissioned report was released, Imedi gave priority to MPs from both the ruling party and the opposition, who discussed how the report backed up Georgia's claim of Russian aggression. This was then followed by excerpts from President Saakashvili's speech which served to validate the earlier claims. Kavkasia, on the other hand, did not show President Saakashvili at all, and dedicated fifty percent of its coverage to the non-parliamentary opposition (who are considered more radically anti-government and had not appeared on Imedi). These speakers categorically blamed the president for the war, and suggested that his resignation was necessary to move beyond the crisis. Thus, viewers watching Imedi were informed that the report basically confirms the government's claim of Russian aggression, whereas Kavkasia's viewers were led to believe that the EU-report laid the blame for the war squarely at the feet of President Saakashvili.

The media monitoring also found that the targeted channels do indeed fall into opposing 'camps', with Imedi, Rustavi 2 and Channel 1 often broadcasting similar stories and not criticizing one another, with Kavkasia and Maestro doing much the same thing from the other side. This is highlighted by a report from September: Channel 1 broadcast a statement from the Patriarchate, saying that it was not involved in inviting some controversial Russian journalists to Georgia. The report on Kavkasia showed the same statement, but also broadcast another part, where the patriarchate criticized Imedi TV for airing a previous report saying that the patriarchate had indeed invited the Russian journalists. Thus, Channel 1 refrained from airing criticism of Imedi. The two camps also frequently refrain from criticizing the political groupings they are seen to be allied with. During the anti government protests in April, Rustavi 2, Imedi and Channel 1 broadcast the story of a student who addressed the protestors, he called on them not to use swear-words or threatening language about their political opponents, and was booed and jeered off the stage. The incident, potentially bad publicity for the opposition, was not covered by Kavkasia or Maestro. Incidents such as these demonstrate the extreme polarization of the Georgian TV landscape.

¹⁰ The monitoring was carried out by the Center of Social Sciences (CSS) at Tbilisi State University, with external double-blind review and extensive practical project management by CRRC.

Furthermore, the lack of professionalism which was complained about by a large number of focus group participants and media professionals, was readily apparent across the targeted channels. Monitoring detected several examples of unbalanced reporting, opinions presented as facts, and misleading and confusing information. After a clash between protestors and municipal officials on April 12, Rustavi 2's coverage dedicated 55 seconds to the official side of the story, and just 12 seconds to the views of the protestors. On April 1, Kavkasia broadcast an item about a group of people protesting against the alleged sale of Georgian art treasures abroad. The protest was shown, as well as sound-bites from the participants, but there was no attempt to show the other side of the story. The channel did not interview anyone from the government, the Ministry of Culture or the national museums, and the allegations of the protestors were presented as facts, with no evidence being offered. Incidents like this were in evidence regularly in all three monitoring phases.

Overall, the monitoring showed that many of the issues raised by both the general public and the media professionals are genuine concerns. Biased and unprofessional reporting is frequently in evidence on all the targeted channels. Furthermore, the perception that Channel 1, Rustavi 2 and Imedi favour the government, while Kavkasia and Maestro favour the opposition is borne out. The ongoing polarization of the television sector is one of the biggest challenges facing media development in Georgia today.

Analysis

Although much needs to be done to guarantee a free and professional media scene in Georgia, it is important not to overlook some fundamental strengths that have led to the diversity of views available to many Georgians today. News broadcasts are the most popular TV programs in the country, and more than 84 percent of Georgians watch news every day. Georgia, therefore, has a tremendous appetite for news, and the fact that high percentages of respondents think popular channels like Rustavi 2 represent government interests suggests that Georgians are not uncritical viewers. Several focus group respondents said that they watch a number of different channels in order to work out the issue for themselves, something also re-iterated by one of the media professionals interviewed. Respondents expressed a strong desire for professional and balanced reporting, showing that the Georgian population know what they want from their journalists.

Furthermore, although television is still the dominant force in the Georgian media, it is a mistake to discount print, radio and the internet as insignificant. Over 80 percent of Georgians read weekly newspapers at least once or twice a month, and this sector is renowned for the diversity of its political views. The growth of internet use also matters. The most popular activity among Georgian internet users is social networking, practiced by more than 50 percent of respondents who use the internet. Social networking sites are ideal forums to exchange information, articles and videos, and there have been several instances of internet-based discussions spilling over into the traditional media in Georgia.¹¹ Almost every journalist interviewed said that the internet has the potential to be the main source of information in Georgia within the next ten years.

However, there are significant weaknesses in the Georgian media landscape. Among the most significant is the deep polarization in the TV sphere. As the media monitoring shows, channels considered pro-government and pro-opposition both frequently

¹¹ Currently, a scandal surrounding videos insulting the Georgian Orthodox Church is one of the top stories in Georgia. The story began when these videos were posted onto social-networking site Facebook.

broadcast information that is misleading, inaccurate and highly partisan. Media professionals underscore this challenge, with one focus group participant saying that there are no “neutral” channels in Georgia, just pro-government or pro-opposition.

Georgian journalists themselves highlight a range of further shortcomings of the media sector, and are significantly less trusting of media outlets than the general public. Almost all of the media sector interviewees highlighted the need for more professionalism on the part of Georgian journalists, as well as less interference from owners.

Media professionals were also critical of themselves. One media professional commented that one of the biggest challenges facing the media sector was that there is “no solidarity” among journalists. This situation is not helped by the financial dependence of journalists. Media jobs, especially in TV, are relatively highly paid, and there is therefore pressure to toe the line of the media outlet’s owner rather than risk unemployment. Moreover, it is said that the problem is compounded by the poor contracts staff are employed under.

Nevertheless, the research findings indicate opportunities. Transparency of ownership, mentioned by many respondents, can be addressed in a short time frame. Also, with the overwhelming majority of both media professionals and the general public keen to see a wide variety of issues investigated, there is an ideal opportunity for any channel to produce a high-quality investigative show. Not only would such investigative reporting be a welcome addition to the airwaves, but with over 75 percent of the public interested in such a programme, it is likely to be popular. Moreover, the demand for policy-related programming is evident from the preferences that the public has expressed.

In addition to this, many media professionals interviewed put forward concrete ideas about how to improve the media environment. There is no shortage of ideas on how to move forward. In terms of ideas, the sector is not in stagnation.

Yet if there are opportunities and ideas, the research suggests that complacency is misplaced. In the most extreme case, an entrenched polarization can be a threat to political stability. Political disagreements should be negotiated in one arena, rather than remaining segregated in separate realms. A losing side that considers itself consistently marginalized will question the very legitimacy of the system and goes in search of radical alternatives. Once it enjoys the support of considerable parts of the population, this begins to undermine the institutional and parliamentary processes that the Georgian public is keen to see functioning.

In May 2009, when asked what issues the government and the opposition should resolve between themselves, media freedom was cited by 69 percent, closely following the issue of judicial independence (73 percent) and legislative reform to guarantee free and fair elections (70 percent). In other words, respondents believe that a further improvement of media is an integral part of the ongoing process of Georgian democratization {CRRC, Politics & Protest Survey}.

More broadly, results from ongoing opinion research suggest that this is a good time to tackle fundamental issues. Since September 2007, Georgia has faced a number of bitter internal and external challenges. By comparison, survey results indicate that the country right now is less divided than it has been for more than two years. Relatively speaking, this therefore is a real window of opportunity to move forward on the major issues facing the Georgian media, many of them highlighted by this research.

Research Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on several research components. CRRC undertook

1. baseline desk research, to summarize the existing state of research;
2. a nationally representative public opinion survey throughout Georgia with 1768 respondents;
3. 8 targeted focus groups in Tbilisi and Kutaisi;
4. in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 media professionals;
5. a mini-survey among 47 media professionals;
6. media monitoring, both quantitative and qualitative, of Georgia's main television channels.

Baseline Desk Research

The baseline desk research synthesized previous studies, but also drew on CRRC's extensive research in Georgia and the Caucasus on social, political and economic developments. It drew on multiple surveys that were conducted throughout 2007, 2008 and 2009, and contained relevant media data. The desk research helped to guide further parts of the research effort.

Public Opinion Survey

The public opinion survey (also referred to as Media Consumer Survey) was undertaken by the CRRC with its own fieldwork staff from October 3-15, 2009, with 1768 full interviews. The response rate was 64%, and the targeted sample size included a total of 2,750. To draw the sample, the country was stratified into two macro-strata (capital, non-capital), and subsequently 120 primary sampling units were selected throughout the country (70 in Tbilisi, 50 outside Tbilisi, to reflect routine higher non-response in Tbilisi). Primary sampling units coincided with electoral districts. Households were selected based on random route sampling, and the respondent within the household was selected using the last birthday method. Nonresponse arose primarily from not being able to locate the selected respondent within the survey time frame, and is not expected to have a major impact on the accuracy of results. As other surveys done according to international standards, this survey has a 95 percent confidence interval, with a 5 percent margin of error.

The survey language was Georgian, since the survey targeted those following the Georgian media. The sample excluded primary sampling units with more than 60% of non-Georgian residents. (For surveys including Armenian and Azerbaijani interviewing language, please check the annual CRRC Data Initiative.) It also excluded areas that are difficult to access, such as Svaneti.

Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were conducted in total, with four in Tbilisi and in Kutaisi each. The FG in Kutaisi also recruited participants from neighboring rural areas. FGs were divided by respondents' age (21-40, 41-70) and by the sources of information (those who rely primarily on TV for news versus those who also draw on other sources of information for news; both groups were screened for an active interest in politics in Georgia).

The respondents were recruited from two sampling points, one centrally located, and one in a suburb, and screened participants through questions to identify their eligibility. Focus groups in Tbilisi were conducted on October 14-15, and in Kutaisi on October 16-17, 2009.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 top media professionals. These comprised journalists, media managers, and academics specializing in journalism or media studies. They also represented a mix of TV, radio, newsprint and online journalists, from across the political spectrum. These interviews were mostly pre-structured, to ensure comparability. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour, and were conducted by a team of four specifically trained interviewers, under the supervision of an experienced journalist and academic with international standing. This activity focused on Tbilisi. Interview language was Georgian, and the interviews were conducted between October 7-14, 2009.

Media Professionals Mini-Survey

To compare public opinion with the views of experts, CRRC conducted a mini-survey among media professionals. The media professionals targeted for in-depth interviews were asked more than 30 questions that had been directed at the Georgian public, to allow for comparison. To increase the number of respondents, CRRC used judgmental/purposive sampling to identify further interviewees. Media experts were asked to name further media professionals who play a significant role in opinion-making in Georgia. In addition to the 20 media professionals interviewed, CRRC identified a further 30 journalists, from which 27 were interviewed, yielding a total of 47 completed interviews. The interviews were again conducted between October 7-14, 2009. These results are only indicative, and not representative, since a representative survey of journalists would require a clearly defined target population of journalists. In Georgia, at this point, the concept of journalism is too fluid to allow for such precision. (In countries with a more established profession similar surveys are sampled from lists of unions, or journalism accreditations.)

Media Monitoring

The media monitoring component of the project was undertaken by the Center for Social Sciences (CSS) at Tbilisi State University from September 15-November 15 with a sample of 350 news broadcasts. The monitoring periods were April 1-14, May 19-31, and September 1-October 13, 2009. News broadcasts were monitored from the networks Imedi, Rustavi2, Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB), Kavkasia, and Maestro. One broadcast was monitored per network per day; specifically the broadcast of longest duration during the prime-time period (defined as 8:00 PM - 12:00 AM). Monitors collected data on variables including time allocation to various actors (e.g. the state, the non-parliamentary opposition), the portrayal of news items as positive, negative, or neutral, and the number of instances of inflammatory language or hate speech. In addition, the inclusion or omission of news items broadcast by the independent sources Radio Liberty and Civil.ge was recorded. Qualitative examples of the types of media bias observed during the monitoring process were collected to complement the quantitative data.

Final Report

The report has been written by a team and received structured feedback at various stages of the drafting process, and reflects a consensus view on the findings. It focused on highlighting the main findings that are relevant to a broader debate about the current stage of Georgian electronic media and its future development.

To facilitate independent analysis, CRRC provides an appendix presenting the main data from the research. Other research findings not directly pertaining to the report have been omitted, and can be made available separately. The data set and other items will be made available online in the coming weeks. This will allow for a detailed analysis according to age, location of residence, education, sex, employment, and many other variables. Additional presentations or targeted analysis can be offered on request. Please address your requests for more information to nana+media@crrccenters.org.

Questions or Comments

This report is circulated in advance of the EU-Georgia Civil Society Human Rights Seminar on Media Freedom, due to take place in Tbilisi on November 10-11. Specific comments or questions before the workshop are gratefully received by CRRC's Regional Director, Hans Gutbrod, at hans@crrccenters.org.

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