



YEREVAN PRESS CLUB

**MONITORING OF ARMENIAN MEDIA  
COVERAGE OF THE NOVEMBER 27, 2005  
REFERENDUM ON DRAFT  
AMENDMENTS TO THE RA CONSTITUTION**

# REPORT ON MONITORING OF ARMENIAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE REFERENDUM ON DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO THE RA CONSTITUTION (NOVEMBER 27, 2005)

## I. LEGAL REGULATION OF THE REFERENDUM COVERAGE

According to a study conducted by Yerevan Press Club (YPC), the RA Law “On Referendum” and other laws regulating the rights and responsibility of the media do not ensure equal air time and newspaper space for expressing various positions in the period of campaign preceding a referendum.

The RA Law “On Referendum” simply states (Article 20) that *“the state guarantees free campaigning on the issue put to a referendum”* and that *“campaign may be conducted through the media, in the form of public campaign events (gatherings, meetings, public debates, discussions, rallies, marches and demonstrations), through publication of print materials and dissemination of audio-visual materials”*. However, unlike the Electoral Code, the law on referendum does not provide mechanisms for implementing these provisions.

Paid campaigning is mentioned only in Article 11 of the RA Law “On Television and Radio”. The last paragraph of that Article reads: *“In the period of campaign before referenda and elections, TV and radio companies shall publish the price of their airtime for paid political advertising and other campaign-related programs. Everyone who wishes to make use of that paid airtime shall do so on contractual basis and on equal terms.”*

The course of campaigning before the constitutional referendum revealed that Armenian TV and radio companies failed to meet this requirement of the law - they did not announce the price of airtime for paid campaigning. In fact, TV companies monitored by YPC did not provide any paid airtime for the campaign.

Article 21(1) of the RA Law “On Referendum” states that *“persons, who have the right to campaign, may create campaign funds for the purpose of financing their campaign”*. Paragraph 2 of the same Article says that *“the money of the fund shall be collected in a special account at the Central Bank of the Republic of Armenia on the basis of a letter by a person with the right to campaign”*. Paragraph 6 of the same Article says that *“during the campaign, it is forbidden to spend any money that is not in the campaign fund”*.

One of the reasons for small amounts of money in special accounts and insignificant expenses was the fact that the media did not provide any opportunities for paid campaigning.

## II. GENERAL INFORMATION

The monitoring of the Armenian media coverage of the November 27, 2005 referendum on draft amendments to the RA Constitution was conducted by Yerevan Press Club from November 5 to 25, 2005, as part of YPC’s “Monitoring of Democratic Reforms in Armenia” project supported by Open Society Institute Human Rights and Governance Grants Program.

### ***Monitoring Group:***

Project Director - Boris Navasardian

Coordinator/Editor - Elina Poghosbekian

Consultants - Vardan Poghosian, Mesrop Harutyunyan

Monitors - Armineh Sukiassian, Seda Shiganian, Armen Nikoghosyan, Satenik Dabaghian.

***The purpose of the monitoring was to*** collect and analyze quantitative data in order to assess the following:

- the degree of the Armenian media's attention to the upcoming November 27, 2005 referendum on constitutional amendments;
- how adequately the public was informed about the upcoming referendum, the process and content of the proposed constitutional reform.

### ***The monitoring covered:***

*Four national TV companies* - Public Television of Armenia (PTA), "ALM", "Armenia" and Second Armenian TV Channel (Second Channel), all of them broadcasting on the whole or most of the Armenian territory;

*Seven national newspapers* - official "Hayastani Hanrapetutiun" (daily) and "Respublika Armenia"; "Aravot", "Azg", "Haikakan Zhamanak" and "Hayots Ashkhar" dailies, and Russian-language "Golos Armenii".

*(See below the list and brief profile of the monitored media.)*

***The monitoring objects were:*** all publications in the aforementioned newspapers, main newscasts, news/analytical programs and commentary programs of the aforementioned TV companies containing any reference to the November 27, 2005 referendum, draft amendments to the Constitution, etc.

## **III. MONITORING METHODOLOGY**

Monitoring methodology differed depending on the media type.

### **1. METHODOLOGY OF TV MONITORING**

The methodology of TV monitoring, in turn, differed depending on the type of the programs studied (news, news/analytical and commentary programs).

#### **A. NEWS AND NEWS/ANALYTICAL PROGRAMS**

***The methodology of monitoring news and news/analytical programs included:***

- Counting the total duration (in seconds) of every main newscast, every news/analytical

program of the TV company, except weather forecast, political and commercial advertising, announcements, TV schedule presentations, etc.

- Counting the total number of TV pieces (in absolute values) in every main newscast, every news/analytical program of the TV company, except the weather forecast, political and commercial advertising, announcements, TV schedule presentations, etc.

***A TV piece was defined as follows:***

An airtime unit, distinct in its theme, composition and design, i.e.:

**a.** an individual story in a newscast;

**b.** an individual communication presented by the program host;

**c.** a thematically distinct part (section, story) of a program, touching on various issues/problems;

**d.** a thematically distinct question and answer in a TV interview, touching on various issues/problems;

**e.** a program or an interview on a single issue/problem was not subdivided and was viewed as a single piece;

**f.** introductory announcements of the TV pieces were viewed as a part of the story they referred to;

**g.** headlines/sub-headlines, leads, texts of the host introducing the TV pieces (report, etc.) were viewed as a part of the piece (report, etc.) they referred to.

- Counting the total number (in absolute values) of mentions of the November 27, 2005 referendum, the constitutional amendments, etc. in TV pieces of every main newscast and news/analytical program of the TV company. Only one mention of the monitored subject was recorded for each TV piece.

- Counting the total duration (in seconds) of mentions of the November 27, 2005 referendum, the constitutional amendments, etc. in TV pieces of every main newscast and news/analytical program of the TV company.

- Counting the total number (in absolute values) of positive, negative and neutral mentions of the November 27, 2005 referendum, the constitutional amendments, etc. in TV pieces of every main newscast and news/analytical program of the TV company. Only one attitude to the monitored subject was recorded for each TV piece.

Tinted (positive, negative) mentions were understood to be those that gave the audience obviously positive or negative impressions about the subject matter (i.e. for or against the draft amendments to the Constitution). In cases where these impressions were not unambiguous, the mention was recorded as neutral. If the monitor had doubts as to the impressions conveyed to the audience, the mention was interpreted as being neutral. *(The same principle applied to the monitoring of commentary programs and newspaper publications.)*

- Recording (in absolute values) the mentions of subjects directly related to constitutional reform in every TV piece in every main newscast and news/analytical program of the TV company.

***Following is the list of monitored subjects related to constitutional reform:***

1. Rights and freedoms of the RA citizens
2. Authority of the RA President
3. Authority of the RA National Assembly
4. Jurisdiction and authority of the RA Government
5. Independence of the Armenian judiciary
6. Status and authority of the RA Prosecutor's Office
7. Local self-government
8. Issue of dismissal of community heads
9. Status of Yerevan
10. Sphere of information and freedom of expression
11. Dual citizenship
12. Electoral rights and referenda
13. Foundations of constitutional order and other general related issues
14. Issues related to the preparations and the conduct of the November 27, 2005 referendum.

The subjects listed above were identified on the expert level. These included 12 main thematic sections (points 1-12) of the draft constitutional amendments put on the November 27, 2005 referendum. In addition, two more issues (points 13 and 14) were included. Thus, point 13 (Foundations of constitutional order and other general related issues) treated subjects contained in the constitutional reform, but not covered in points 1-12, whereas point 14 treated procedural issues related to the preparations and the conduct of the referendum. *(The aforementioned list of subjects was also used for monitoring commentary programs and newspaper publications.)*

## **B. COMMENTARY PROGRAMS**

***The methodology of monitoring commentary programs included:***

- Recording the main participants of the program, including the first and last names and position/occupation of every participant.
- Identifying (in absolute values) the subject presence form:
  1. a program fully dedicated to the monitored subject;
  2. a program partially dedicated to the monitored subject or containing any mentions of it.
- Identifying (in absolute values) the nature of attitude (positive, negative, or neutral) to the monitored subject in the program. Only one attitude to the monitored subject was recorded for each program.
- Recording (in absolute values) the mentions of subjects related to constitutional reform in every program. *(See above for list of subjects.)*

## **2. METHODOLOGY OF NEWSPAPER MONITORING**

- Counting the total number of pieces (in absolute values) in every issue of every newspaper, except weather forecast, political and commercial advertising, announcements, TV program schedules, horoscopes, crosswords, etc. Various supplements to newspapers were not monitored.

***A newspaper piece was defined as follows:***

- a. A unit of newspaper text that is distinct in its theme, composition and design (article, report, etc.);
- b. Piece announcements were considered a part of the material they referred to;
- c. Headlines, subtitles and leads introducing the pieces were considered a part of the piece they referred to;
- d. Editorial comment on various pieces clearly marked as “Editor’s Note”, “Comments from the Editor”, etc. were viewed as separate pieces;
- e. Photographs (drawings, sketches, cartoons, collages, illustrations, charts, etc.), which were not part of any newspaper piece, yet contained a headline or a text or conveyed a certain message, were viewed as separate pieces. If a photograph accompanied a newspaper piece, it was considered a part of the piece it referred to.

- Identifying (in absolute values) the subject presence form:

1. counting the number of newspaper pieces fully dedicated to the monitored subject;
2. counting the number of newspaper pieces partially dedicated to the monitored subject or containing any mentions of it.

- Counting the total number (in absolute values) of mentions of the November 27, 2005 referendum, the draft constitutional amendments, etc. in the pieces of every issue of the monitored newspaper. Only one mention of the monitored subject was recorded for each piece.

- Counting the total number (in absolute values) of positive, negative and neutral mentions of the November 27, 2005 referendum, the draft constitutional amendments, etc. in the pieces of every issue of the monitored newspaper. Only one attitude to the monitored subject was recorded for each piece.

- Recording (in absolute values) the mentions of subjects directly related to constitutional reform in every piece. (*See above for the list of subjects.*)

#### **IV. THE LIST AND BRIEF PROFILES OF THE MONITORED MEDIA**

***PUBLIC TELEVISION OF ARMENIA (PTA)*** - public TV and radio company, founded in 2001. The governing body is the Council of Public TV and Radio Company. Airtime - 19 hours per day.

The PTA First Channel was monitored, in particular: main newscast “**Haylur**” and Sunday news/analytical program “**360 degrees**”; commentary programs “**The Crossroads**” and “**5th wheel**”.

“**Haylur**” newscast was aired 6 days a week - 6 times a day Monday through Friday, and 5 times on Saturday. The objects of monitoring were the main “Haylur” issues at 21:00, except the November 24 issue, which was aired at 19:00. A total of 18 issues were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

“**360 degrees**” news/analytical program was aired once a week at 20:00 on Sundays. A total of 3 issues of “360 degrees” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

Commentary program “**The Crossroads**” was aired 3 times a week (on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays) at 18:50, except the November 24 issue, which was aired at 18:20. A total of 9 issues of “The Crossroads” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

Commentary program “**5th wheel**” was aired once a week at 22:00 on Mondays. A total of 3 issues of “5th wheel” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.



“**ALM**” - private TV company, founded in 2000 by the President of “ALM-Holding” Tigran Karapetian. Airtime - 21 hours per day.

The following programs were monitored on “ALM”: main newscast “**Day by Day**” and its Sunday news/analytical issue; commentary programs “**Position**” and “**Price of the Question**”.

“**Day by Day**” newscast was aired 7 days a week - 4 times a day Monday through Saturday, and once a day on Sundays. The objects of monitoring were the main issues of “Day by Day” at 20.00, and the Sunday issues at 17:00 (November 6) and 14:00 (November 20). A total of 20 issues were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

Commentary program “**Price of the Question**” was aired twice a week (on Tuesdays and Saturdays) at 21:30. A total of 5 issues of “Price of the Question” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

Commentary program “**Position**” was aired once a week (on Thursdays) at 21:30. A total of 3 issues of “Position” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.



“**ARMENIA**” - private TV company, founded in 1998. The founders are the Cafesjian Family Fund and the Sargsian Family Fund. Airtime - 24 hours per day.

The following programs were monitored on “Armenia”: main newscast “**Zham**” and commentary program “**Indeed**”.

“**Zham**” newscast was aired 7 times a week - 4 times a day Monday through Saturday and once a day on Sundays. The objects of monitoring were the main issues of “Zham” at 20:30. A total of 21 issues were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

Commentary program “**Indeed**” was aired 5 times a week Monday through Friday at 19:00, except two issues on November 7 and 8, which were aired at 22:30. A total of 15 issues of “Indeed” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.



**SECOND ARMENIAN TV CHANNEL (SECOND CHANNEL)** - private TV company, founded in 1998 by private persons. Airtime - 18 hours per day.

The following programs were monitored on the Second Channel: main newscast “**Lraber**” and “**Sunday Lraber**” news/analytical program, commentary programs “**The Right to Tell**” and “**The Fourth Studio**”.

**“Lraber”** newscast was aired 6 days a week - 3 times a day on Mondays and 5 times a day Tuesday through Saturday. The objects of monitoring were the “Lraber” issues at 23.00, except the November 25 issue, which was aired at 20:00. A total of 18 issues were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

**“Sunday Lraber”** news/analytical program was aired once a week on Sundays at 21:00. A total of 3 issues of “Sunday Lraber” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

Commentary program **“The Fourth Studio”** was aired as part of “Lraber” news program. A total of 9 issues of “The Fourth Studio” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.

Commentary program **“The Right to Tell”** was aired once a week at 21:30 on Saturdays. In addition, a special edition of “The Right to Tell” was aired on at 20:30 on November 12. A total of 4 issues of “The Right to Tell” were monitored in the whole period of monitoring.



**“HAYASTANI HANRAPETUTIUN”** - daily newspaper (comes out five times a week), founded in 1990 by “Hanrapetutiun” CJSC. Standard size - 8/A2 pp. Registered circulation - 6,000 copies. A total of 15 issues came out during the period of monitoring, including one issue on 12/A2 pp.



**“RESPUBLIKA ARMENIA”** - Russian-language newspaper (comes out twice a week), founded in 1990 by “Hayastani Hanrapetutiun-Respublika Armenia” CJSC. Standard size - 8/A3 pp. Registered circulation - 2,000 copies. A total of 6 issues came out during the period of monitoring, including one issue on 16/A3 pp.



**“ARAVOT”** - daily newspaper (comes out five times a week), founded in 1994 by “Aravot Daily” LLC. Standard size - 8/A3 pp. Registered circulation - 4,100 copies. A total of 15 issues came out during the period of monitoring, including 4 issues on 16/A3 pp and 1 issue on 12/A3 pp.



**“AZG”** - daily newspaper (comes out five times a week), founded in 1991 by “Azg Daily” LLC. Standard size - 8/A3 pp. Registered circulation - 3,000 copies. A total of 15 issues came out during the period of monitoring. 8 of them had “Azg-Nerdir” supplements, which were not monitored.



**“HAIKAKAN ZHAMANAK”** - daily newspaper (comes out five times a week), founded in 1997 by “Dareskizb” LLC. Standard size - 8/A3 pp. Registered circulation - 4,840 copies. A total of 15 issues came out during the period of monitoring, including 4 issues on 12/A3 pp.



**"HAYOTS ASHKHAR"** - daily newspaper (comes out five times a week), founded in 1997 by "Hayots Ashkhar Daily Editorial Office" LLC. Standard size - 8/A3 pp. Registered circulation - 3,500 copies. A total of 15 issues came out during the period of monitoring, including 2 issues on 16/A3 pp and 1 issue on 12/A3 pp.



**"GOLOS ARMENII"** - Russian-language newspaper (comes out three times a week), founded in 1991 by "Golos" LLC. Standard size - 8/A2 pp. Registered circulation - 3,500 copies. A total of 9 issues came out during the period of monitoring. 3 of them came out with "Monitor.Ru" supplements, which were not monitored.

## **V. TECHNOLOGY OF TV AND NEWSPAPER MONITORING**

In order for the findings to be comparable, the data received from monitoring the news, news/analytical and commentary programs of every TV company and pieces in every newspaper were summarized on a weekly basis and for the entire whole period of monitoring.

## **VI. THE RESULTS OF TV AND NEWSPAPER MONITORING**

Following are the monitoring results for every monitored TV company and newspaper summarized for the whole period of monitoring (November 5-25, 2005).

### **PUBLIC TELEVISION OF ARMENIA (FIRST CHANNEL)**

The total duration of the monitored main issues of "Haylur" newscast was 48,985 seconds, of which 11,459 seconds (or 23.4%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, the upcoming referendum and other related issues. 98 (or 19.7%) of the 497 TV pieces from "Haylur" touched on a monitored subject. Most of the pieces dedicated to a monitored subject were either neutral (49) or positive (41) in tone. Most of the positive coverage was found in reports on the campaign conducted by the supporters of the proposed constitutional amendments ("Yes" campaign headquarters). Those reports conveyed their position on a number of general issues related to the Constitution, the preparations and the conduct of the referendum, as well as on specific provisions of the draft on dual citizenship, authority of the President and the National Assembly, rights and freedoms of citizens. 8 news pieces were negative in their tone. In them, the opponents of the renewed Constitution (the "No" campaign headquarters) urged to vote against the draft and, later on, called for boycotting the referendum.

As for the scope of subjects, "Haylur" covered all sections of the draft constitutional amendments, except the issue of dismissal of community heads. The most frequently covered subjects on the news program included issues related to the preparations and the conduct of the November 27, 2005 referendum (in 79 pieces) and other general issues related to constitutional amendments (32). Dual citizenship was touched upon in 15 pieces, whereas the authority of the President, and rights and freedoms of citizens were talked about in 12 pieces each. 9 pieces talked about the authority of the National

Assembly. Local self-government and independence of the judiciary were treated in 5 pieces each. The remaining subjects were mentioned even less frequently.

2,604 seconds (or 29.3%) of the 8,877 seconds of the monitored “360 degrees” news/analytical program were dedicated to a monitored subject. The monitored subject was mentioned in 6 of the 18 pieces of the Sunday program. In 4 cases the mentions were neutral. There were also 2 positive mentions in the coverage of President Kocharian’s meeting with students of Yerevan State University and the President’s visit to Greece. The issue of constitutional amendments was raised during both events.

A total of 14,063 seconds (or 24.3%) of the 57,862 seconds of the monitored “Haylur” and “360 degrees” airtime were dedicated to constitutional reform. The coverage was neutral in 53 pieces, positive in 43 pieces and negative in 8 pieces.

All the three monitored issues of “5th wheel” commentary program were fully dedicated to the monitored subject. Two of the programs were neutral in tone. Their participants expressed both positive and negative opinions about the amendments to the Constitution. In one of the programs, there was a discussion for and against the issue of dual citizenship. Another program was a discussion of Armenia’s European integration prospects in the light of constitutional amendments, particularly the ones related to the rights and freedoms of citizens, and separation of power between the legislative and executive branches. The judiciary reform, included in the draft put on the referendum, was the main subject of the third program. Both participants of that program expressed positive opinion about that part of the amendments.

PTA First Channel started a new program called “The Crossroads” in the period of the referendum campaign. All of its 9 issues were fully dedicated to constitutional amendments. Guests of “The Crossroads” were, alternately, representatives of the “Yes” and “No” camps. Thus, 5 of the program’s issues were positive, and 4 - negative. They mainly touched on general subjects (in 9 cases), organizational issues related to the referendum, dual citizenship and authority of the President (8 each), rights and freedoms of citizens (6) and authority of the parliament (5).

## **"ALM"**

The total duration of the monitored issues of “Day by Day” main newscast and its Sunday news/analytical issue was 35,111 seconds, of which 9,182 seconds (or 26.2%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform. 58 (or 17.3%) of the 335 TV pieces touched upon a monitored subject. Most of the pieces on that subject were neutral in nature (35), whereas 20 were positive and 3 negative. Like in the case of PTA, tinted mentions appeared mainly in news reports on campaign by the supporters and opponents of constitutional amendments, which conveyed their opinions about various provisions of the draft. Similarly to “Haylur”, “ALM” newscast’s most frequently covered subjects included issues related to the preparations and the conduct of the referendum (in 45 pieces), other general issues related to constitutional reform (27), dual citizenship (12) and authority of the President (10). Authority of the National Assembly, and rights and freedoms of citizens were talked about in 9 and 8 pieces, respectively. Other subjects were mentioned even less frequently. There were no mentions of the status of Yerevan or the sphere of information and freedom of speech.

None of “ALM” commentary programs (“Position” and “Price of the Question”) were fully dedicated to the monitored subject. All the 3 neutral partial mentions in “Position” dealt

with general constitutional issues and the referendum, as well as dual citizenship, presidential authority, civil rights and freedoms. As for the “Price of the Question”, only one of the 5 monitored issues of the program had a guest. The only person appearing on the other four issues of the program was the owner of “ALM” and the program’s host, Tigran Karapetian. Of the 5 partial mentions in the “Price of the Question”, 3 were positive and 2 - neutral. The program touched upon general issues and authority of the President, dual citizenship and the status of Yerevan, issues related to the referendum, local self-government, authority of the parliament and civil rights and freedoms.

## **"ARMENIA"**

A total of 29,144 seconds of the main issues of “Zham” newscast were monitored in the whole period of monitoring, of which 7,624 seconds (or 26.2%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform. Thus, “Armenia” and “ALM” devoted an equal amount of news airtime to the monitored subject (in percents). However, the share of pieces dedicated to the monitored subject in the total number of monitored pieces on “Armenia” is almost twice as high as on “ALM”. Of 191 pieces on “Zham”, 63 (or 33%) were devoted to the subject of the Constitution. In most cases (38), the amendments put on the referendum were talked about in a positive tone, whereas in 25 cases the mentions were neutral. In addition, “Zham” is the only newscast among the monitored news programs that did not contain a single negative mention of the constitutional amendments. For them, the positive context was mainly the coverage of the campaign conducted by the supporters of the renewed Constitution. The coverage of the campaign by the opponents of the draft amendments was presented in such a way that the context turned out to be neutral. In other words, the journalists either ignored the content of an event they were covering, or the negative opinion about the reform, contained in the positions of the main heroes of the coverage, was compensated by commentary in one way or another. The most attention was paid to general issues (in 47 pieces) and issues related to the referendum (36). Dual citizenship and the authority of the parliament received 16 mentions each; the authority of the President, and the rights and freedoms of citizens received 13 mentions each, whereas jurisdiction and authority of the RA Government, and independence of the judiciary were mentioned 5 times each. Other subjects were mentioned even less frequently. The sphere of information and freedom of speech, status and authority of Prosecutor’s Office, and dismissal of community heads were not mentioned in the newscast at all.

In the period of monitoring, commentary program “Indeed” on “Armenia” channel dedicated 13 out of its 15 issues to constitutional reform (12 were dedicated to the subject fully, and 1 - partially). In 12 issues, supporters of the draft amendments were invited to appear on the program and they spoke positively about the amendments. The only negative opinion on an “Indeed” issue was voiced when a representative of the opposition, Chairman of the “Block of National Democrats” party Arshak Sadoyan was invited to the program. The main subjects discussed were, in particular, general issues (13), authority of the President and the parliament (10 each), issues related to the conduct of the referendum, rights and freedoms of citizens (9 each), and dual citizenship (5).

## **SECOND ARMENIAN CHANNEL**

A total of 39,206 seconds of “Lraber” newscast were monitored in the whole period of monitoring, of which 12,607 seconds (or 32.2%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform. Of 400 TV pieces in “Lraber”, 106 (or 26.5%) touched on the monitored subject. Like in the case of “Armenia”, positive mentions were dominant in the Second Channel (“Lraber”) coverage of the subject (58); there were also 39 neutral and 9 negative

mentions. The positive context was mainly present in reports on the campaign conducted by the supporters of the constitutional amendments, whereas the negative context was present in speeches by the opponents. The most attention was paid to general issues (in 82 pieces) and issues related to the referendum (73). Then came other subjects, such as authority of the President (24), dual citizenship, rights and freedoms of citizens (23 each), authority of the parliament (19), independence of the judiciary (10). On the whole, "Lraber", like "Haylur" (PTA), covered all thematic sections of the draft, except the issue of dismissal of community heads.

Of the 5,529 seconds of "Sunday Lraber" news/analytical program that were monitored, 1,326 seconds (or 24%) were dedicated to the monitored subject. It was mentioned in 7 out of 22 pieces of the Sunday program, mostly in the positive context (in 5 cases). In 2 cases the mentions were neutral. There were no negative mentions. In most cases, they talked about general issues, and preparations and the conduct of the referendum.

Of the total 44,735 seconds in "Lraber" and "Sunday Lraber" that were monitored, 13,933 seconds (or 31.1%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform. In 63 pieces, the coverage was positive, in 41 - neutral, and in 9 - negative.

Thus, the Second Channel paid the most attention among all studied broadcast media to the monitored subject. The coverage on the Second Channel, as well as on "Armenia", was distinguished by very clear slant: tinted (in most cases - positive) mentions exceeded the neutral ones.

This slant towards the positive was typical for the Second Channel's commentary programs, "The Right to Tell" and "The Fourth Studio", as well. Of the 9 monitored issues of "The Fourth Studio", 7 were fully dedicated to the constitutional amendments, whereas 2 were partially dedicated to the subject. The only negative opinion about the draft was heard in the program that was partially dedicated to the subject. The guests on 8 other issues talked in support of approving the renewed Constitution. 3 of the 4 issues of "The Right to Tell" were fully dedicated to the monitored subject (2 were positive and 1 was negative). Participants of both programs discussed various aspects of the draft amendments, except the issue of dismissal of community heads, the status of Yerevan, electoral rights and referenda.

## **"HAYASTANI HANRAPETUTIUN"**

Of 698 monitored pieces in "Hayastani Hanrapetutiun", 125 (or 17.9%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, of which 103 (82.4%) were dealing with the subject fully and 22 (17.6%) - partially. In 72 pieces, the coverage was neutral, whereas in 53 cases - positive. Unambiguously negative attitude to the constitutional reforms was not found in any single piece in this official daily. The newspaper widely covered the campaigns of the "Yes" and "No" headquarters. Articles about the campaign by the supporters of the draft were presented mostly in a positive context, whereas articles about the campaign by opponents of the amendments were neutral. In particular, there were various positive opinions about the expansion of parliamentary and the reduction of presidential powers, more independence of the judiciary, removal of the ban on dual citizenship and new developments in the area of local self-government. As a whole, the newspaper paid most attention to issues related to preparations and the conduct of the referendum (in 60 pieces), general issues (59), authority of the National Assembly (34), dual citizenship (23), authority of the President (20), rights and freedoms of citizens (19), independence of the judiciary (16). All other aspects of constitutional amendments were also touched on in the "Hayastani Hanrapetutiun" pieces.

## **“RESPUBLIKA ARMENIA”**

Of 150 monitored pieces in “Respublika Armenia”, 32 (or 21.3%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, of which 26 (81.2%) were dealing with to the subject fully and 6 (18.8%) - partially. Like in “Hayastani Hanrapetutium”, the official Russian-language newspaper with the same name was characterized by the absence of negative pieces. There were 19 neutral and 13 positive mentions only. In particular, there were positive opinions about the increase of the authority of the National Assembly at the expense of reduction of presidential powers, as well as about more general balance between the three branches of power. All the sections of constitutional amendments were touched upon in the “Respublika Armenia” pieces in one way or another, with the exception of two subjects - the sphere of information and freedom of speech, and authority of the Prosecutor’s Office. However, most of the attention was paid to general issues and issues related to the referendum (in 19 and 14 pieces, respectively).

## **"ARAVOT"**

Of 701 monitored pieces in “Aravot”, 186 (or 26.5%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, of which 157 (84.4%) were dealing with to the subject fully and 29 (15.6%) - partially. The coverage was mostly neutral (133 mentions). The number of negative mentions (42) exceeded the number of the positive ones (11) by nearly four times. This can be explained by the newspaper’s attention to the campaign and the position of opponents of the draft constitutional amendments. Removing the ban on dual citizenship was frequently mentioned as one of the negative aspects of the draft amendments, among others. Pieces in “Aravot” touched on all sections of the Constitution with more or less intensity, but most of the pieces talked about issues related to preparations and the conduct of the referendum (125) and general issues (72). All of the other subjects were mentioned in about 20 cases or less - authority of the President (21), dual citizenship (17), authority of the parliament (15), rights and freedoms of citizens (14).

## **"AZG"**

Of 530 monitored pieces in “Azg”, 43 (or 8.1%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, of which 33 (76.7%) were dealing with the subject fully and 10 (23.3%) - partially. “Azg” was the least interested in the subject of the Constitution among all the monitored print media. Also, it is the only newspaper where the number of tinted mentions is almost equal - 8 negative and 7 positive mentions. In most cases, the mentions were neutral (28). Removal of the ban on dual citizenship and expansion of rights and freedoms of citizens were noted among the positive changes in the Constitution. Negative mentions were found mostly in reports about the campaign conducted by opponents of the constitutional amendments, which contained negative opinions. The newspaper touched on all the sections of constitutional amendments. The daily more frequently talked about issues related to the referendum (in 39 cases) and general issues (21). Then come the rights and freedoms of citizens (15), electoral rights and referenda (11).

## **“HAIKAKAN ZHAMANAK”**

Of 491 monitored pieces in “Haikakan Zhamanak”, 153 (or 31.2%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, of which 131 (85.6%) were dealing with the subject fully and 22 (14.4%) - partially. “Haikakan Zhamanak” paid the most attention to the subject of the Constitution, among all the monitored print media. The number of tinted and neutral mentions in this newspaper was almost equal, with the tinted mentions being mostly

negative. There were 76 neutral, 69 negative and 8 positive mentions of constitutional amendments. In terms of the negative mentions, there was criticism of the constitutional amendments as a whole, as well as criticism of individual provisions of the draft, including the provisions on the authority of the executive and the legislative branches of power, and dual citizenship. Attention was paid to the campaign and the position of opponents of the renewed Constitution. "Haikakan Zhamanak" touched on all the sections of constitutional amendments (in most cases - actively). In the vast majority of pieces, they talked about issues related to preparations and the conduct of the referendum (127). General constitutional issues were raised in 72 pieces, rights and freedoms of citizens - in 43 pieces, electoral rights and referenda - in 39 pieces, authority of the President and parliament - in 36 and 33 cases, respectively. The newspaper touched on issues of dual citizenship, jurisdiction and authority of the Government in 22 and 20 pieces, respectively.

## **"HAYOTS ASHKHAR"**

Of 539 monitored pieces in "Hayots Ashkhar", 145 (or 26.9%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, of which 124 (85.5%) were dealing with the subject fully and 21 (14.5%) - partially. This was the second highest attention to the monitored subject among the studied newspapers after "Haikakan Zhamanak". Similarly to "Haikakan Zhamanak", the ratio between neutral and tinted mentions of the subject in "Hayots Ashkhar" is practically the same. However, unlike "Haikakan Zhamanak", the vast majority of the tinted mentions are positive (positive - 70, negative - 3, neutral - 72). This reversed picture can also be seen in pieces dedicated to individual provisions of the draft amendments. In particular, there were positive opinions about distribution of power between the executive and legislative branches and about dual citizenship. Also, attention was paid to the campaign and the positions of supporters of the Constitution. Like in "Haikakan Zhamanak", 127 pieces in "Hayots Ashkhar" touched on issues related to preparations and the conduct of the referendum. The next most frequently mentioned subjects included general issues related to constitutional amendments (70), electoral rights and referenda (51), rights and freedoms of citizens (47), authority of the parliament and the President (31 and 28, respectively), dual citizenship (27), jurisdiction and authority of the Government (20). Also, like in "Haikakan Zhamanak", "Hayots Ashkhar" also touched (mostly actively) all sections of the constitutional amendments, except the issue of dismissal of community heads.

## **"GOLOS ARMENII"**

Of 488 monitored pieces in "Golos Armenii", 56 (or 11.5%) were dedicated to the constitutional reform, of which 45 (80.4%) were dealing with the subject fully, while 11 (19.6%) - partially. Even though most of the coverage was neutral in nature (34 mentions), the ratio of tinted mentions in "Golos Armenii" is almost the same as in "Aravot", but in reverse: the number of positive mentions exceeds the number of negative mentions by more than four times (18 and 4, respectively). On the newspaper's pages, positive attitude was most frequently expressed in connection with removing the ban on dual citizenship and redistribution of power between the President and the parliament. Pieces in "Golos Armenii" touched on all sections of the Constitution in one way or another, but more often attention was paid to general issues and issues related to the referendum (31 and 28, respectively). Dual citizenship was mentioned in 16 cases, authority of the President - in 13 cases, authority of the National Assembly and independence of the judiciary - in 12 cases each, and rights and freedoms of citizens - in 11 cases.

## VII. CONCLUSION

**1. News coverage on TV channels.** Out of the total news coverage of broadcast media monitored the greatest amount of *air time* was allocated to the referendum of November 27, 2005, the draft amendments to the RA Constitution and other related issues by the Second Armenian TV Channel (31.1% of the total amount of the news air time studied on the channel). It is followed by “Armenia” and “ALM” TV companies (26.2% each), First Channel of Public Television of Armenia (24.3%).

However, in terms of *the quantity of news TV pieces* on the monitoring subject, the top position is taken by “Armenia” (33% of the total number of news pieces studied on the channel), followed by the Second Channel (26.8%), PTA First Channel (20.2%) and “ALM” (17.3%).

**2. Connotation coloring of the news coverage on TV channels.** The most vividly expressed connotation was present in the studied news/news and analysis programs of the Second Channel and “Armenia”. Here the connotation (mostly positive) references prevailed over the neutral ones. At the same time, “Zham” (“Armenia” TV) was the only news program, the coverage of which never had negative references. The news pieces of PTA and “ALM” were mostly neutral or positive in context. At all TV channels the connotation references appeared mostly in the reports of promotional campaigns waged by supporters and opponents of the amendments to the Constitution, quoting their opinion on various provisions of the draft on ballot. The small share of the negative coverage is due primarily to the fact that in many cases the reporting of the activities of the renewed Constitution opponents did not communicate on the content of their actions, thus resulting in neutral context.

**3. Commenting programs.** The monitored commenting programs of “Armenia” and Second Channel devoted 80% of the issues to the constitutional reform in full, while PTA First Channel devoted to the subject all the issues. The guests of these programs were usually the supporters or opponents of the draft amendments introduced to the referendum, thus, conditioning their connotation. However, in terms of connotation references a strong positive slant can be observed in the programs of “Armenia” (“Indeed”) and Second Channel (“Fourth Studio” and “The Right to Say”). As to PTA, the almost balanced proportion of connotation references was present in “Crossroads” program, launched during the referendum run-up. Its guests interchangeably were representatives of “pro” and “con” of the draft amendments to the Main Law. Another program of the First Channel of Public Television, “5th Wheel”, had mostly a “face to face” format, that is, its participants were both the supporters and opponents of constitutional amendments, expressing both positive and negative opinions. This resulted in the neutral nature of the program. Unlike these channels, the commenting programs of “ALM”, “Attitude” and “Price of the Question”, addressed the event number one for Armenia only “in passing”. This probably reflected the stance of the TV company, since their host and direct participant is the owner of “ALM” himself. At the same time, the nature of partial references was either neutral or positive.

**4. Coverage in print media.** Of all newspapers monitored the greatest attention to the referendum, draft amendments to the Constitution, etc., was paid by “Haikakan Zhamanak” (31.2% of the total number of pieces studied in the daily). It is followed by “Hayots Ashkhar” (26.9%), “Aravot” (26.5%), “Respublika Armenia” (21.3%), “Hayastani Hanrapetutiun” (17.9%), “Golos Armenii” (11.5%), “Azg” (8.1%). All publications displayed quite significant interest to the subject. At the same time, the pieces, fully dealing with the

constitutional reform, prevailed over the number of pieces, partially dealing with the subject.

**5. Connotation coloring of newspaper coverage.** Pieces in official “Hayastani Hanrapetutiun” and “Respublika Armenia” were presented only in neutral or positive context (no negative attitude was recorded in any of the pieces). The articles, dealing with the activities, the opinions of the proponents of the renewed Constitution bore mostly positive nature, and those of opponents - neutral.

The attitudes of “Haikakan Zhamanak” and “Hayots Ashkhar” are very similar, with a mirroring proportion. Both dailies had almost equal fraction of neutral and connotation references, yet these had polar coloring: in “Haikakan Zhamanak” negative references prevailed, while in “Hayots Ashkhar” the predominance was given to the positive ones. The criticism (on the pages of “Haikakan Zhamanak”) and approval (in “Hayots Ashkhar”) were contained in articles touching upon certain provisions of the draft amendments to the Constitution: in particular, positive/negative opinions were voiced over the power distribution between the executive and the legislative branches, the dual citizenship. “Haikakan Zhamanak” was actively covering the campaign and the stances of the opponents of the draft of renewed Constitution, while “Hayots Ashkhar” focused on those of its supporters.

Such parallel is noticeable also in the coverage of two other newspapers - “Aravot” and “Golos Armenii”. Against the background of prevailing neutral references in both newspapers, the proportion of connotation mentionings is quantitatively the same, yet qualitatively polar: in “Aravot” the negative references are almost four times more than the positive ones, in “Golos Armenii” - the positive references exceed the negative ones more than four times. There was also a drastic difference in the attitude expressed in the newspaper pieces towards specific aspects of the constitutional reform. For example, the abolition of the ban on dual citizenship was seen on the pages of “Aravot” to be one of the drawbacks of the draft, while in “Golos Armenii” it was qualified as its achievement.

“Azg” daily, paying least attention to the subject of Constitution, is the only publication having an almost equal proportion of positive and negative references, and the attitude of the newspaper may generally be described as neutral.

**6. The coverage by print and broadcast media of subjects, related to constitutional reform.** In terms of mentioning of the subjects, being directly related to the constitutional reform, the lead topics for both broadcast and print media monitored in their coverage were the issues of organizing and conducting a referendum, and on other general matters of the constitutional amendments. The third most frequently discussed subject on TV channels was the dual citizenship. In newspapers this subject was rated only the sixth, while the rights and freedoms of the RA citizens were the third. On TV the rights and freedoms rated the fifth. The television spoke a bit more about the authority of the RA President (4th place on TV and 5th in newspapers), and the press - about the authority of the RA National Assembly (4th place in newspapers and 6th on TV). The elective right and referenda is another subject that scored over one hundred references in newspapers but did not get even a dozen mentionings on TV air. Almost equal positions in broadcast and print media were given to: the jurisdiction and authority of the RA Government, the independence of the judiciary, local self-government and the status of Yerevan. The outsiders both on TV and in newspapers were: the status and the competence of the RA Prosecutor's Office, the sphere of information and freedom of expression, the issue of the dismissal of communal heads.

**7. Media direction.** All TV companies and four out of seven newspapers (“Hayastani Hanrapetutiun”, “Respublika Armenia”, “Hayots Ashkhar”, “Golos Armenii”) monitored covered the forthcoming referendum, the amendments to the Constitution, etc., with a slant towards the supporters of the draft. A strongly critical stance was taken by “Haikakan Zhamanak”, while “Aravot” was inclined towards the opponents of the document. “Azg” did not display obvious likes or dislikes.

***Yerevan Press Club expresses its gratitude to Public Television of Armenia, “ALM”, “Armenia” and Second Armenian TV Channel for technical assistance provided during the monitoring.***

## VIII. EXPERT EVALUATION

An expert evaluation was conducted in order to determine how adequately and with what quality did the monitored media inform the audience about the content of constitutional reform.

The Chairman of the “Democracy” NGO, lawyer Vardan Poghosian served as the expert.

Newspaper and TV pieces containing analysis, commentary and opinion on the draft constitutional amendments were selected from the studied media in the course of the monitoring (from November 5 to 25, 2005).

Considering that print media have wider opportunities for more detailed examination of issues of public importance, including the content of the proposed amendments, the expert analyzed mainly newspaper pieces.

The study showed that the pieces with neutral and in-depth analysis of the essence of the issue were few in number, while their impact was insignificant. Below are some examples of such materials that may be divided into three groups.

The first group includes pieces containing mostly statements (sometimes alternating with swearing) and labels. For example, an article in “Hayots Ashkhar” (November 11, 2005) entitled “Why Do They Speculate with the Issue of Dual Citizenship” did not touch on any real problems that many results from lifting the ban on dual citizenship, but only declared that *“in reality, ... this is an unsuccessful attempt to cover up the “double standards” in the current position of Armenian National Movement”*.

An editorial article in “Haikakan Zhamanak” (November 17, 2005) entitled “Stupidity without Borders” was in the same spirit. The article contains the following wording: *“In that case, a natural question comes up: what’s the referendum (moreover, a mandatory one) is for? Why are you holding the referendum? Is it to waste money from community budget, you, Venice...”, or “If we look at draft as a legal document approved by the Venice or local boneheads...”, etc.*

The second group includes pieces where one can see incompetence of their authors or intentional distortion and disinformation of the readers.

One of such examples is an article called "Beware - Conspiracy" by Anna Mkrtchian, published in "Haikakan Zhamanak" (November 25, 2005). The piece contains perhaps only one accurate statement: *"In violation of the proper procedure, with this Draft "On Amending the Constitution", the administration has put to a referendum not only its proposals, but also those Constitutional norms that have not been amended."* Then the author insists that we must be careful, because the draft contains a conspiracy. She cites provisions that cannot possibly contain any conspiracy. This indicates that the author didn't want or couldn't understand the essence of those amendments. Here are two examples. Citing Article 6 of the draft, the author thinks that removing the provision that *"laws that are recognized as contradicting the Constitution, as well as legal acts that are recognized as contradicting the Constitution and the laws, shall not have legal force"* is a negative thing. At the same time, she fails to mention other provisions, included in the draft in place of the said provision, which clearly define the hierarchy of legal norms. The author also touches upon the right to inviolability of property, saying that *"the citizens of Armenia will not have the right to inviolability of property."* However, the draft amendments to the Constitution clearly state that the Republic of Armenia recognizes and guarantees the right to property (Article 8), which also implies its inviolability.

Another example of incompetence is an article by MP Armen Ashotian entitled "The Power Belongs to the People. Every Citizen Must Be Aware of That" (*"Respublika Armenia"*, November 23, 2005). The article is dedicated to Chapter 8 of the draft constitutional amendments. In fact, the author cites the text of the current Constitution, but insists that these are the advantages of the draft amendments. In essence, Article 111 of the Constitution is practically not amended in any significant way, except for the last part that defines a time period, during which the National Assembly must discuss an issue in cases if an initiative to amend the Constitution comes from the President of the Republic. But from this, the author comes to a conclusion that *"the draft clearly differentiates between the rights and responsibilities of the President and the parliament"*. Then he makes the following incorrect statement: *"I think it is very important that the draft contains a provision allowing for referenda on draft laws that are most important for the country and the people."* This provision is not new - it exists in the current Constitution as well. Also, it is not about referenda on the most important issues, but about any draft laws that may be put to a referendum. According to the author, Article 114 of the draft is particularly important, which says that Articles 1, 2 and 114 of the Constitution may not be amended. This provision is also not new - it is taken verbatim from the current Constitution.

Serious analysis is lacking in a "Hayastani Hanrapetutiun" (November 23, 2005) article called "Serious Guarantees of Justice", in which the author, Gohar Nurijanian, hardly ever talks about issues of justice, despite the headline. She makes some general comments that, in most cases, do not lead to any logical conclusion. In the article, she raises the issue of separation of power (President-parliament) and makes a strange statement that currently *"the relations between the President and the political majority"* cannot be an object of serious discussion, because political parties often change their positions, and *"in our country, it is possible to go to bed being a Socialist or a Democrat and then wake up being a Christian-Nationalist."* The author never explains the link between that and the President's relations with the National Assembly. At the end of the article, the author notes: *"They often say that this draft is a forced step on the way to integration into the European family. According to specialists, we have taken on this obligation as a member of the European family."* It turns out that, without the specialists' opinion, the author could not reach the simple conclusion that we must carry out the obligations that we had taken on ourselves.

The third group includes pieces where authors or interviewees analyze various provisions of the draft amendments to the Constitution, but draw conclusions based on their own political or other subjective convictions.

For example, a piece in “Hayastani Hanrapetutiun” (*November 15, 2005*) called “From Hat to Local Ruler” is dedicated to issues of local self-government or, more specifically, Article 109 of the draft amendments to the Constitution, according to which dismissal of a community head requires an appropriate ruling of the Constitutional Court. Based on the amendments to this Article, the author of this publication, Aram Sargsian, draws an extremely positive conclusion, which is not justified, since local self-government is a separate and independent system of a democratic state and therefore should not be dependent on the executive branch in any way.

In a “Respublika Armenia” (*November 9, 2005*) article called “Mechanism of Democracy Deepening and Civil Society Building”, author and constitutional law expert Aram Ananian talks about the positive changes in the procedures for forming the National Commission on Television and Radio, but fails to mention that the composition of the Commission will not be changed immediately, as was demanded by the Council of Europe.

In an article called “Guarantees of Independence of the Judiciary” published in “Respublika Armenia” (*November 16, 2005*), Chairman of the National Assembly’s Standing Committee on State and Legal Issues, doctor of law, professor Rafik Petrosian notes that, under the current Constitution, the Minister of Justice is responsible for creating promotion lists for judges, instituting disciplinary procedures against judges and petitioning the President for terminating judges. The author insists that, under the draft amendments, these functions will go to the Justice Council. However, these are already functions of the Justice Council, but the Council carries them out by recommendation of the Minister of Justice. According to the author, independence of judges would be guaranteed more, if their termination required National Assembly’s approval. This is a point of view one may or may not agree with, but it would make any sense to think that this would provide “100 percent independence of the judiciary”, as Rafik Petrosian puts it.

“Aravot” published two interviews with political scientist Levon Zurabian (*November 19 and 24, 2005*). These are perhaps the only two pieces out of all monitored publications that contain deep and serious analysis. First of all, it must be noted that, in both interviews, Levon Zurabian makes a number of accurate statements. In the first piece (“*They Are Trying to Legalize the Violations with the Constitution*”, “Aravot”, *November 19, 2005*) he claims that the draft of constitutional amendments is prepared rather ignorantly from the point of view of the technique of legal amendments, which is an opinion one can agree with. The second statement is the following: in the form in which the draft was presented, it is unclear what exactly was changed. An average citizen, who does not have to be a constitutional law expert, has to take the text of the current Constitution and the official bulletin or a special booklet with the draft and compare 117 articles in order to understand what was different in the draft. This is a blatant violation of the current law and human rights, because a citizen is forced to do the work of the National Assembly. In this regard, the interviewee’s assessment is appropriate. Levon Zurabian also talked about provisions on disposition of property and dual citizenship. One can agree with him, when he says that, in comparison with the current Constitution, these provisions are regressive. The political scientist provided grounded arguments in connection with these two provisions.

In the second interview (“*The Draft Contains a Threat of a Crisis*”, “Aravot”, *November 24, 2005*) he talks about Articles 51 and 52 of the draft amendments that contain serious

faults, because they do not contain a clear timetable for presidential elections in cases when the voting does not produce a winner or when one of the candidates dies. In principle, these articles have a threat of a crisis. Levon Zurabian's conclusions on these articles are grounded. At the same time, both interviews also contain ungrounded conclusions.

Thus, talking about the Article on the protection of privacy, he claims that the amendments are a regress, even though they are simply editing changes.

Examining Article 26 of the draft, which refers to the freedom of religion and conscience, the political scientist ignores the fact that Article 23 of the current Constitution contains a typo. It says that the freedom of religion and conscience may be limited only by law, on grounds provided for in Article 45 of the Constitution. In reality, Article 45 of the does not provide for any such grounds. It should be Article 44. The draft amendments simply corrected the typo.

On the whole, the article "The Draft Contains a Threat of a Crisis" reflects the political scientist's strongly critical attitude to the draft amendments. When asked by the journalist whether Levon Zurabian really doesn't see any balance of power between different branches in the draft, he says: "*Let's analyze - is that really the case?*" Then he cites only the negatives aspects of the document. The political scientist does not even want to talk about the provisions that provide that balance and creates an impression that the draft contains a threat of a crisis.

Based on these examples and on the data of monitoring conducted by Yerevan Press Club, according to which the media mostly talked about general issues related to constitutional reforms, one can conclude that the media did not sufficiently inform the public about the essence of constitutional amendments.

## **IX. GENERAL FINDINGS**

Armenian media monitoring conducted from November 5 to 25, 2005 revealed that Armenian newspapers and TV companies paid a fair amount of attention (in terms of quantity) to the subject of the referendum on constitutional amendments. However, in covering the campaign, the vast majority of the monitored media ignored the principles of impartiality and pluralism. The public was not provided with comprehensive, reliable and competent information about the content of constitutional reform.

The above is true, above all, of the leading Armenian TV channels that are currently the most effective and influential instrument for shaping the public opinion in the country. Newspapers traditionally separated into rival camps and covered the campaign in accordance with their own political orientation. However, this was only the second time in history of YPC media monitoring during the most important political campaigns in Armenia since 1996 when TV channels turned out to be as biased as the print media. The first time such situation had occurred in 1996, when state TV channels dominated the market, whereas today Armenia has dozens of private TV companies and the law has transferred state broadcasting into public broadcasting.

While newspapers balanced each other, in a way, by standing firm on their opposing positions, and "Azg" was the only one of the monitored media where the numbers of positions for and against the draft constitutional amendments were roughly equal, all

national TV channels contained a significant slant towards a single point of view supporting the draft. Such coverage on the part of the broadcast media constitutes a violation of universally accepted international standards.

Monitoring of official Armenian media (First Channel of Public Television of Armenia, “Hayastani Hanrapetutiun” and “Respublika Armenia” newspapers) revealed that they either completely failed to give voice to the opponents of the draft amendments (in the case of newspapers) or the supporters of the draft were given advantage over the opponents (in the case of TV). The latter constitutes a violation of Article 28 of the RA Law “On Television and Radio”. However, it is necessary to mention that “The Crossroads” program on First Channel turned out to be the only one among the monitored programs where the supporters and the opponents of the draft amendments received equal opportunities to formulate their positions.

Quality coverage of the referendum campaign was made difficult for a number of objective reasons. In particular, constitutional reform covered a wide specter range of principally important issues and it would be extremely difficult for the media to give enough attention to all of them. On top of it, the situation was made even more difficult by time constraints: significant changes to the draft amendments were being made to the last moment and the final version of the text was made public only a month and a half before the referendum.

The task of informing the public about the content of constitutional reform was made difficult also because it was, as a rule, the full amended text that was presented for discussion, where it was hard to separate the amendments from the original text. Only specialists who had studied the document in great detail could judge the advantages or faults of the proposed amendments. As a results, arguments “for” and “against” that were found in the press could refer to either the provisions of the current Constitution or the proposed amendments. This only served to confuse the majority of citizens and made it difficult for them to make an informed choice.

Other objective reasons included the insufficient development of the part of the RA legislation on referenda that regulates media activities in the period of referendum campaigns. However, it is also necessary to point out the practice of evading the law in order to advance political goals, which is becoming more common in the media.

The quality of campaign coverage was significantly affected by the over-politicized situation around the constitutional reform. The conduct of various political forces had resulted in a situation where the perception of the whole process was focused not so much on the content of the amendments, their positive or negative sides, but rather on the rivalry between the authorities and the opposition. It is not accidental that, in the monitored media, the campaign was most actively covered in newspapers with radically opposing political points of view - “Haikakan Zhamanak” and “Hayots Ashkhar”. In their coverage, the component of enlightening the public was clearly less prominent than the campaign/propaganda component.

On the whole, one can note that most of the attention in the media coverage of constitutional reform was given to issues related to preparations and conduct of the referendum and to general topics, whereas the essence of the amendments and their main provisions were pushed to the background. Thus, issues of principal importance, such as guarantees of freedom of speech and information, dismissal of community heads, status and authority of Prosecutor’s Office, received minimal coverage.

It is significant that the somewhat superficial approach to covering the essence and content of constitutional reform was adopted in equal measure by both broadcast and print media. However, one would think that newspapers, given their nature, would cover the subject more deeply and with more analysis than electronic media.

The monitoring allows one to reach a conclusion about the low level of the public policy culture in Armenia. While most of the monitored media showed some biasness and one-sidedness, it is obvious that they also encountered difficulties in finding appropriate people to provide the public with better knowledge about the content of constitutional reform. There was a clear lack of politicians and experts prepared to talk about the issues of interest to the public in the context of constitutional reforms in a responsible, objective, competent and uninhibited fashion.

The current political campaign had another typical trait: some media representatives complained that politicians from the opposition refused to be interviewed. That is how some of the media explained the imbalance in presenting various points of view on the draft amendments. To some extent, this fact also evidences the aforementioned problems with public policy. However, the main reason is probably the opposition's growing distrust of the pro-government media that, in turn, is a result of precedents when words uttered by opposition politicians had been distorted, their interviews had been edited or interviewers had shown excessive partiality. The lack of live information/political programs further aggravates this problem.

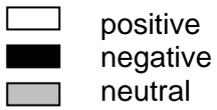
The monitoring of Armenian media coverage of constitutional reform once again brought out the negative trends in the area of information in Armenia that Yerevan Press Club, other local and international NGOs have been noticing for the past three-four years. These trends include retreat from pluralism, increasing government control (especially in the case of television), ignoring the information requirements of the society, decreasing role of the media in public and political processes.

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## **CHARTS**

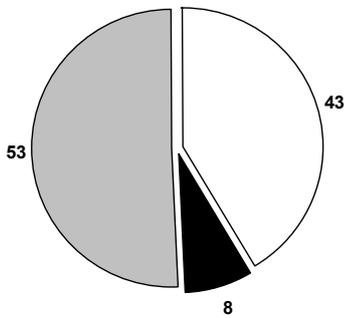
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**Nature of Mentions of Constitutional Reform in TV Pieces  
(in Absolute Values)**

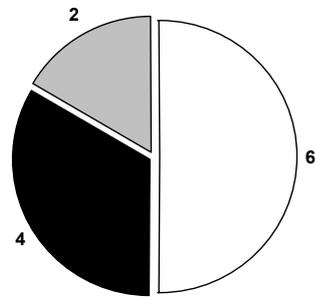


**FIRST CHANNEL OF PUBLIC TELEVISION OF ARMENIA**

**News and New/Analytical Programs  
("Haylur", "360 Degrees")**

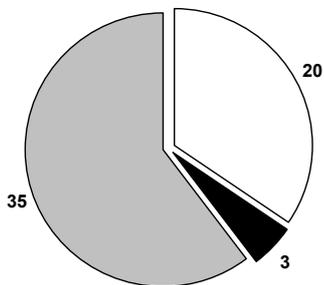


**Commentary Programs  
("The Crossroads", "5th wheel")**

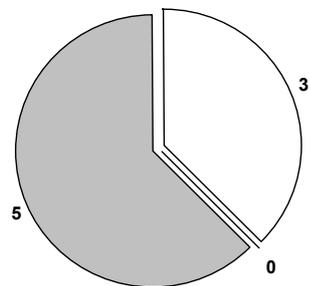


**"ALM"**

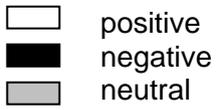
**News and New/Analytical Program ("Day by Day")**



**Commentary Programs  
("Price of the Question", "Position")**

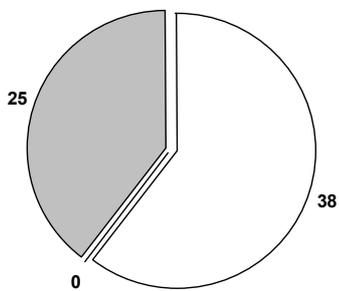


### Nature of Mentions of Constitutional Reform in TV Pieces (in Absolute Values)

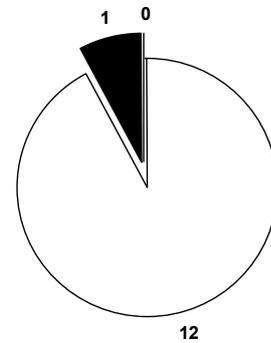


#### "ARMENIA"

News Program ("Zham")

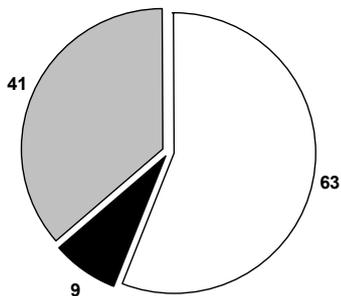


Commentary Program ("Indeed")

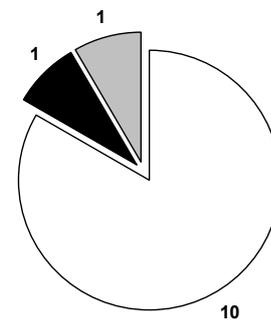


#### SECOND ARMENIAN TV CHANNEL

News and New/Analytical Programs  
("Lraber", "Sunday Lraber")



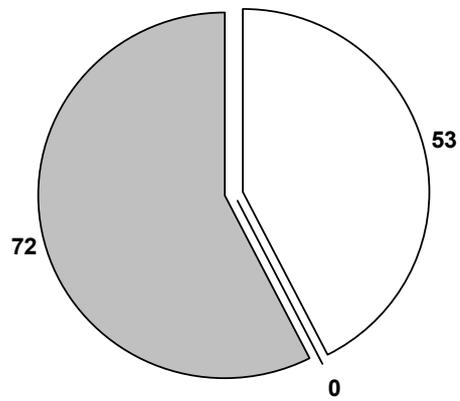
Commentary Programs  
("The Fourth Studio", "The Rights to Tell")



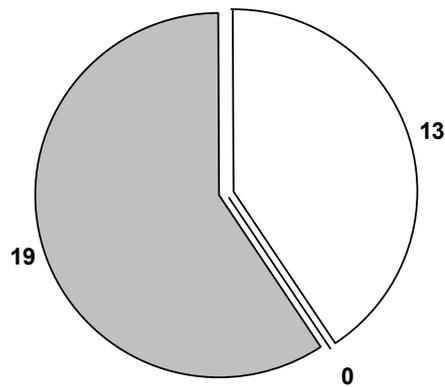
### Nature of Mentions of Constitutional Reform in Newspapers (in Absolute Values)

- positive
- negative
- neutral

#### "HAYASTANI HANRAPETUTIUN"



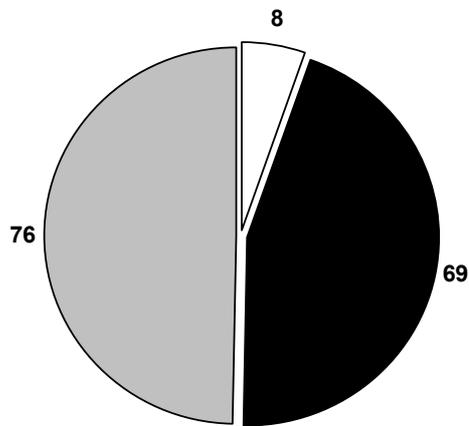
#### "RESPUBLIKA ARMENIA"



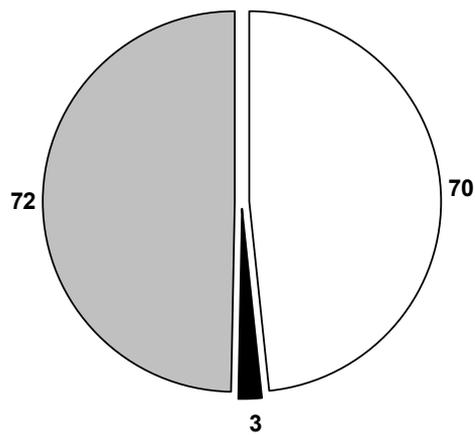
### Nature of Mentions of Constitutional Reform in Newspapers (in Absolute Values)

-  positive
-  negative
-  neutral

#### "HAIKAKAN ZHAMANAK"



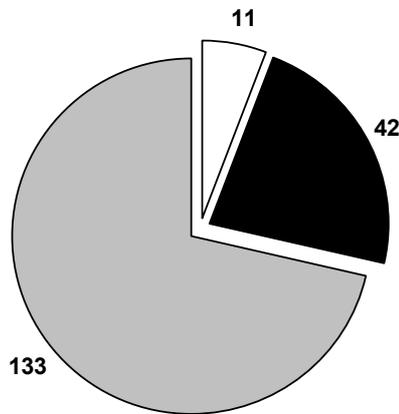
#### "HAYOTS ASHKHAR"



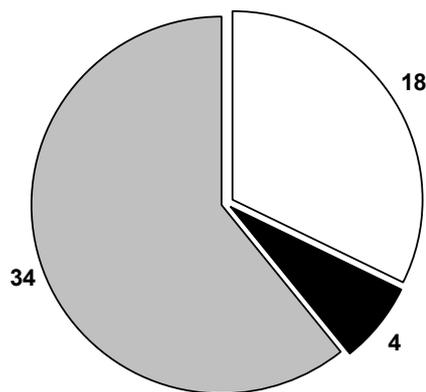
### Nature of Mentions of Constitutional Reform in Newspapers (in Absolute Values)

-  positive
-  negative
-  neutral

#### "ARAVOT"



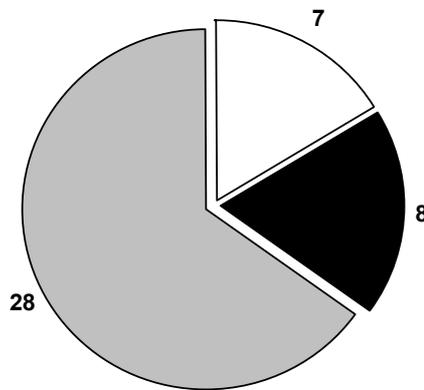
#### "GOLOS ARMENII"



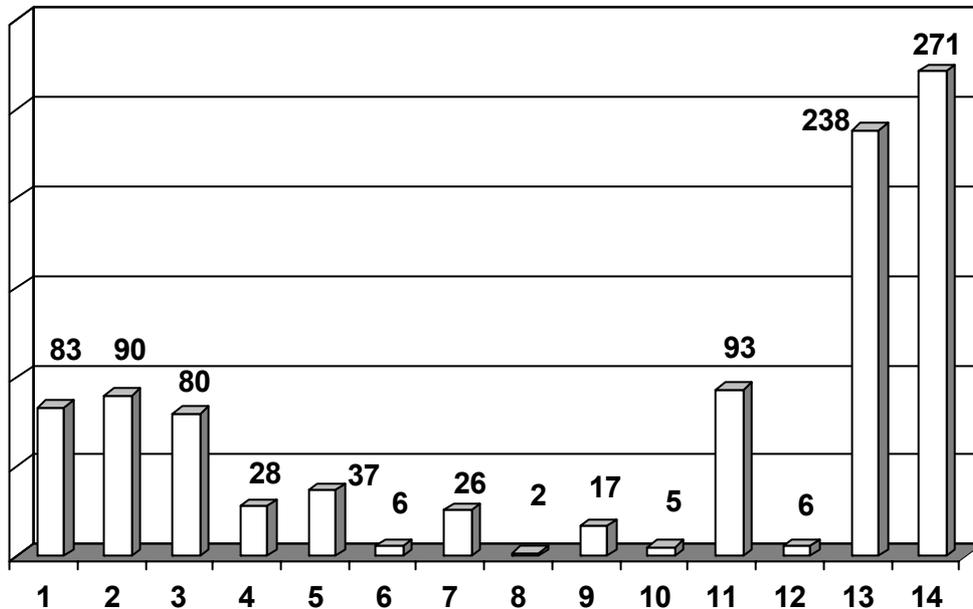
### Nature of Mentions of Constitutional Reform in Newspapers (in Absolute Values)

-  positive
-  negative
-  neutral

"AZG"



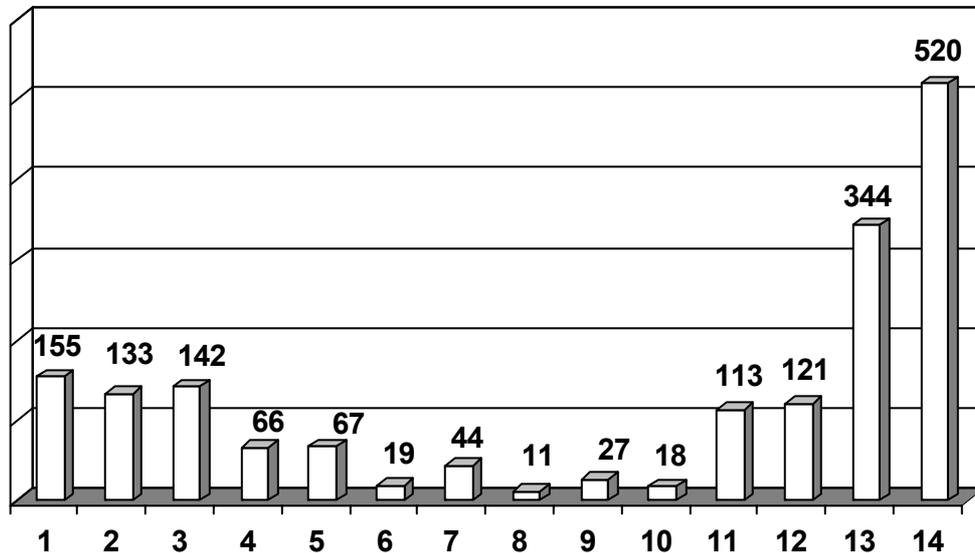
**Number of Mentions (in Absolute Values) of Subjects Related to Constitutional Reform on TV Channels: First Channel of Public Television of Armenia, "ALM", "Armenia", Second Armenian TV Channel**



**List of Subjects Related to Constitutional Reform:**

1. Rights and freedoms of the RA citizens
2. Authority of the RA President
3. Authority of the RA National Assembly
4. Jurisdiction and authority of the RA Government
5. Independence of the Armenian judiciary
6. Status and authority of the RA Prosecutor's Office
7. Local self-government
8. Issue of dismissal of community heads
9. Status of Yerevan
10. Sphere of information and freedom of expression
11. Dual citizenship
12. Electoral rights and referenda
13. Foundations of constitutional order and other general related issues
14. Issues related to the preparations and the conduct of the November 27, 2005 referendum.

**Number of Mentions (in Absolute Values) of Subjects Related to Constitutional Reform in Newspapers: "Hayastani Hanrapetutiun", "Respublika Armenia", "Aravot", "Azg", "Haikakan Zhamanak", "Hayots Ashkhar", "Golos Armenii"**



**List of Subjects Related to Constitutional Reform:**

1. Rights and freedoms of the RA citizens
2. Authority of the RA President
3. Authority of the RA National Assembly
4. Jurisdiction and authority of the RA Government
5. Independence of the Armenian judiciary
6. Status and authority of the RA Prosecutor's Office
7. Local self-government
8. Issue of dismissal of community heads
9. Status of Yerevan
10. Sphere of information and freedom of expression
11. Dual citizenship
12. Electoral rights and referenda
13. Foundations of constitutional order and other general related issues
14. Issues related to the preparations and the conduct of the November 27, 2005 referendum.