

## Election Monitoring of Radios

June 15 -July 15

Internews-Georgia is carrying out the monitoring of radio channels within the frameworks of the EU-UNDP funded project “Professional Media for Elections”. The monitoring started on June 15 and will last until November 15, inclusive. It includes the monitoring of evening news releases of 12 (+2) radio broadcasters. These are: Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster), Imedi, Fortuna, Radio Liberty, Palitra, The First Radio, Green Wave, Hereti, Old City, Atinati, Utsnobi, Voice of Abkhazia, Maestro and Adjara.

The radios: Utsnobi (since July 30) and Voice of Abkhazia (since July 12) suspended the release of news programs for an unspecified time, presumably, until September. Correspondingly, the Radio Utsnobi was replaced by Maestro within the frameworks of the monitoring, and the Voice of Abkhazia will be replaced by the Radio Adjara. It is noteworthy that during the election monitoring of 2012 the radio broadcasters were presenting the news releases non-stop, and there were no such impediments.

Counting of the time separately for presidential candidates started only since July 1, as far as the polling day had not been announced yet, and neither were the candidates nominated officially.

First-month monitoring of radio channels revealed the following key findings:

- The news of radio broadcasters were often identical: the topics were discussed in the news reports in a similar manner, and one and the same comments of respondents were encountered;
- Majority of radio broadcasters did not prepare the news stories, where the journalist would independently ‘find’ a problem and cover the positions of politicians, experts or other stakeholders around this issue;
- Monitoring subjects were covered without bias: there was no tendency observed for presenting them in a clearly positive or negative way;
- Press conferences of the monitoring subjects were actively covered. However, politicians were mostly presented in the news programs when they were commenting on the opponent’s statement, and they seldom had to answer to the journalist’s critical questions;
- Other than the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement, activities of other political parties were almost never covered;

- Some part of radio broadcasters provided less coverage of the direct speech of the monitoring subjects;
- There were no cases of manipulation with sound/music observed during the reporting period.

During June 15 – July 15, the radios paid much attention to the coverage of the national political events. Main topics of this period were the interrogation and detention of members of the United National Movement. Besides, significant time was allocated to the discussion of the issues of the items (weapons, covert recordings) discovered in Samegrelo. Coverage of this topic increased the rate of negative coverage of the United National Movement. Comparatively less negative tone was observed for the Coalition Georgian Dream, and the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament had almost no coverage on the majority of radios.

### **Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster)**

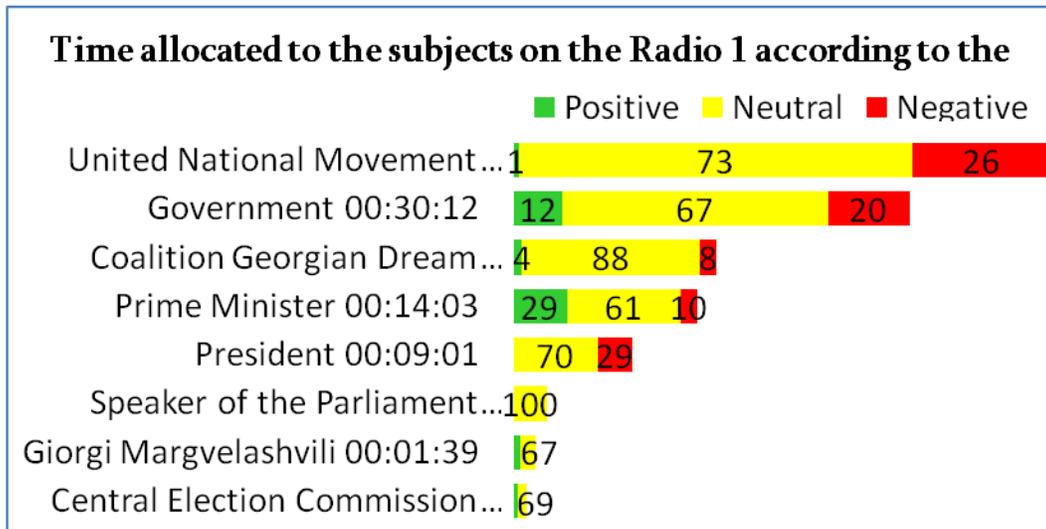
Radio 1 allocated 1 hour and 57 minutes to the monitoring subjects. Out of them, the most time was dedicated to the United National Movement (40 minutes), the next ones were the government with 30 minutes and the Coalition Georgian Dream with 15 minutes.

The United National Movement and the President were almost never covered with positive tone, however, the Prime Minister was talked about during 29% of the allocated time. Besides, the United National Movement and the President had a higher rate of negative coverage than the Coalition Georgian Dream or the government. It is notable that such distribution of tones is not the result of biased coverage of a certain subject; it is rather caused by the themes of the news. For example, in regards to the private and degrading covert recordings, majority of the respondents put the blame on former authorities.

The journalists were quoting the respondent's statements themselves in the news releases of Radio 1, and there was almost no time allocated for the direct speech. However, sometimes, when the direct speech was heard, the journalists would not introduce the respondents, thus it was difficult to get any idea of who was speaking.

In case of the Radio 1, there were no such violations observed as imbalance, tendentious coverage, bias or manipulation with voice/music. The only thing we can say is that the journalists were covering the facts superficially, without obtaining additional

information. For example, in the news stories the monitoring subjects were giving their answers not to the critical questions asked by the journalists, but they would rather make comments on the opponent's statements.



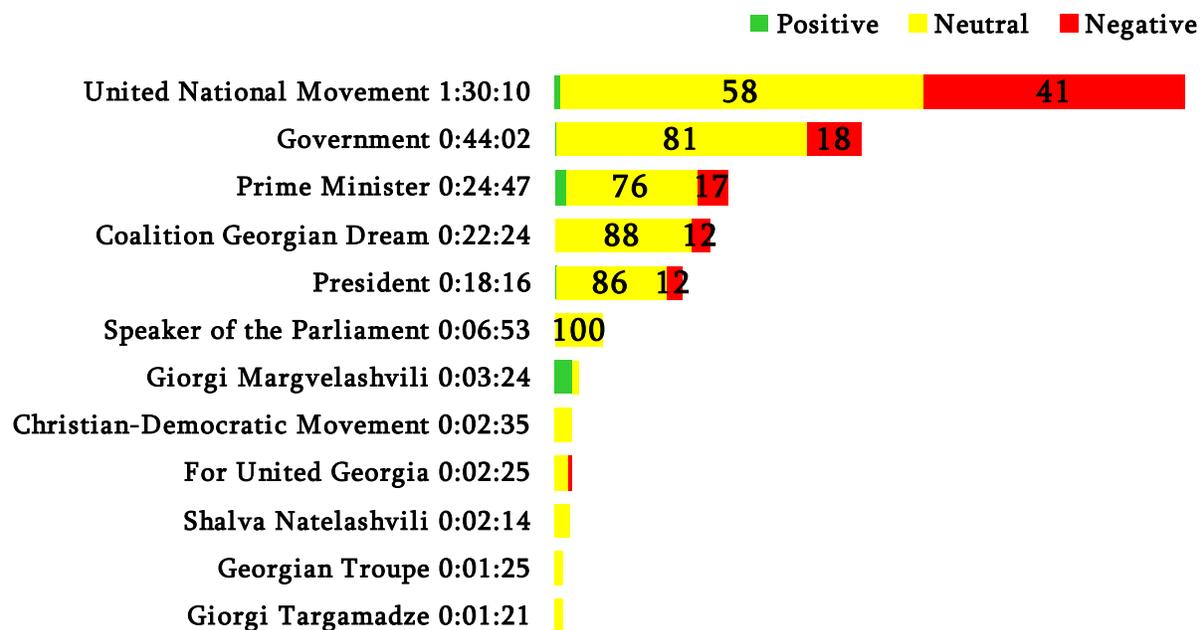
### The First Radio

The First Radio covered the biggest number of monitoring subjects during the monitoring period. In total, 3 hours and 41 minutes were dedicated to 12 subjects. 40% of this time was used for covering the United National Movement, and twice as less time (20%) was allocated to the next subject – the government.

It is noteworthy that the United National Movement was covered with negative tone during 41% of the time allocated to it, whereas the same indicator is 18% in case of the government and 12% in case of the Coalition Georgian Dream. Despite the journalist's subjective attitude was not visible, uneven distribution of tones and results of qualitative research indicates on the insufficient balance. For example, there was a broad coverage of a story of the former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili in the news release of June 24, although it did not contain any position of Merabishvili, or his team or supporters.

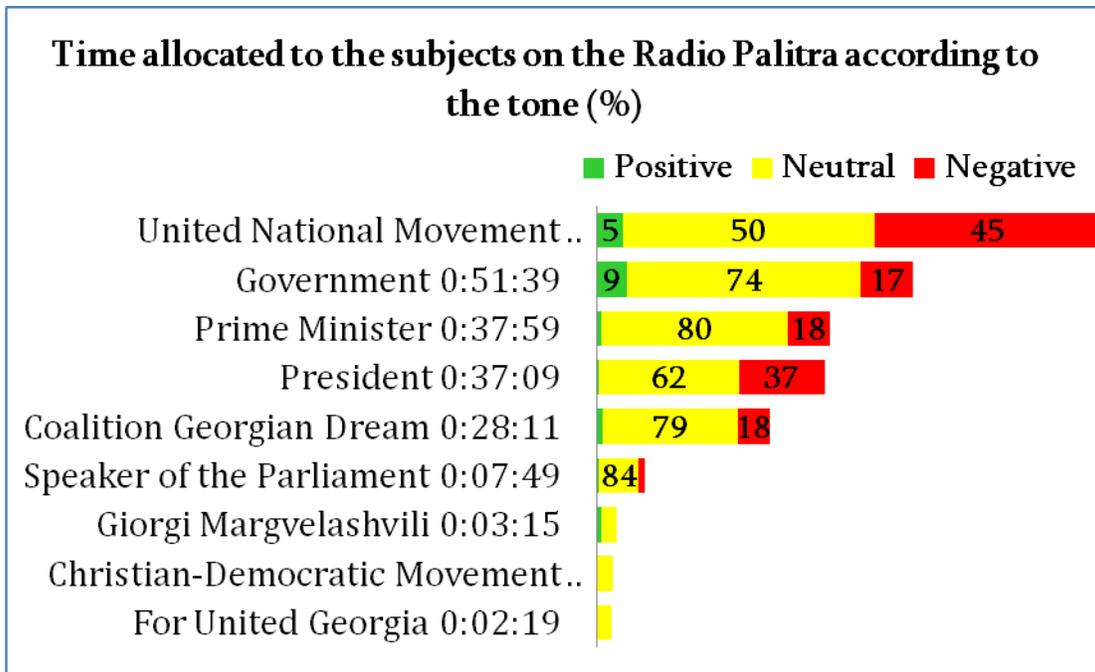
As it was in case of other radio channels, here again the problem is that the journalists seldom ask in-depth questions and mostly were limited to the coverage of superficial information received at press-conferences.

### Time allocated to the subjects on the First Radio according to the tone (%)



### Radio Palitra

Radio Palitra allocated 4 hours and 15 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The most time was allocated to the United National Movement (32%), then comes the government with 20%, and there is an equal coverage for the Prime Minister and the President (15-15%). Out of the time allocated to the United National Movement, 45% was coverage with negative tone, and then comes the President with 37%. It is noteworthy that the Coalition Georgian Dream, the government and the Prime Minister have higher rate of direct speech than the President and his team. Although the journalists did not make subjective evaluations, the quantitative data underline the problem of insufficient balance: there was a position of the United National Movement mentioned in the reports, but the share of evaluations by the ruling team was still much higher.



### Radio Green Wave

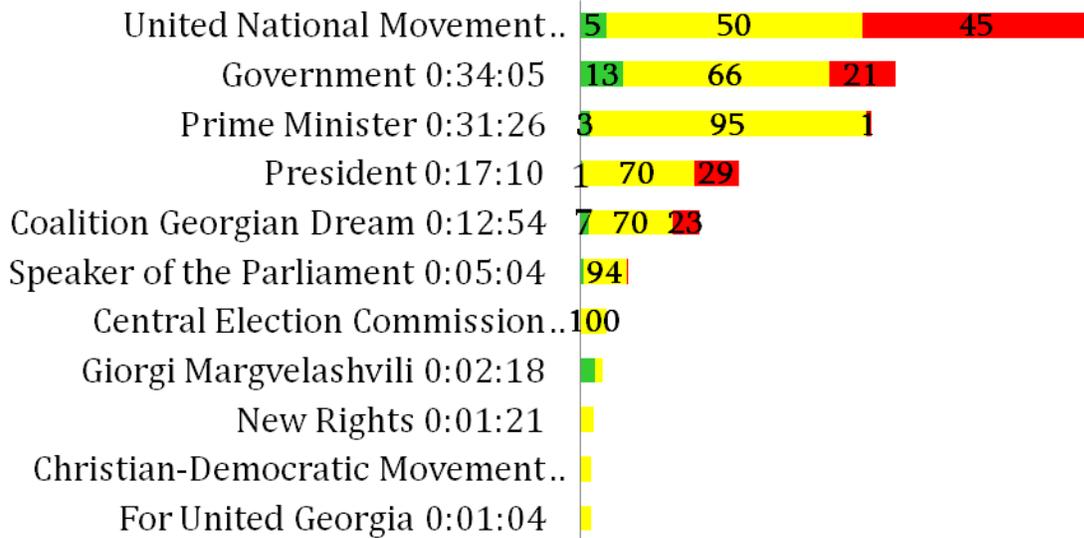
Out of the information broadcasted by the Green Wave during the reporting period, 2 hours and 44 minutes were dedicated to the monitoring subjects. Biggest share of the time (33%) was used for covering the United National Movement, the subsequent ones were the government (20%) and the Prime Minister (19%).

The United National Movement happened to accumulate almost a double share of coverage in negative tone (45%) than the Coalition Georgian Dream (23%). Besides, in case of the ruling team, 34% of time was allocated for the direct speech, but this indicator was 20% in case of the United National Movement. These data makes it clear that the Green Wave provided more coverage of the ruling team's position; however, the journalists' text did not reveal any explicit positive or negative attitude towards any subject.

It is also noteworthy that the journalists were covering the position of politicians only while commenting on the opponents' comments, and they seldom asked critical questions.

### Time allocated to the subjects on the Radio Green Wave according to the tone (%)

■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative



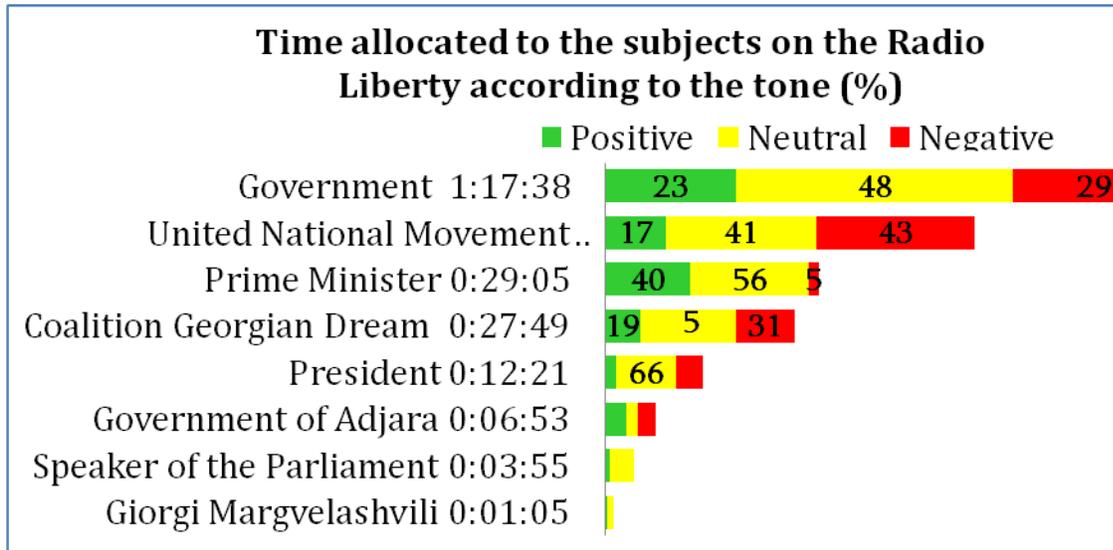
### Radio Liberty

Radio Liberty allocated 3 hours and 29 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The journalists responded to the significant events taking place in Georgia and prepared analytical stories: they asked critical questions, covered the experts' comments and also the direct and indirect speech of the monitoring subjects. It is noteworthy that the information provided by them was supported by facts and background information, which created a more comprehensive picture of the issue. In-depth and critical coverage of the news was reflected on the diversity of tones as well: the time was allocated to the ruling team and also to the United National Movement in all the three tones (positive, neutral and negative).

It is noteworthy that the indicator of positive coverage accumulated in regards to the Prime Minister (40%) is related to Bidzina Ivanishvili's meeting with the media on July 3, where the Prime Minister was represented in a positive context.

Frequent coverage of the issue of detention of a former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili, and also the issue of aggravation of guilt in connection to Sandro

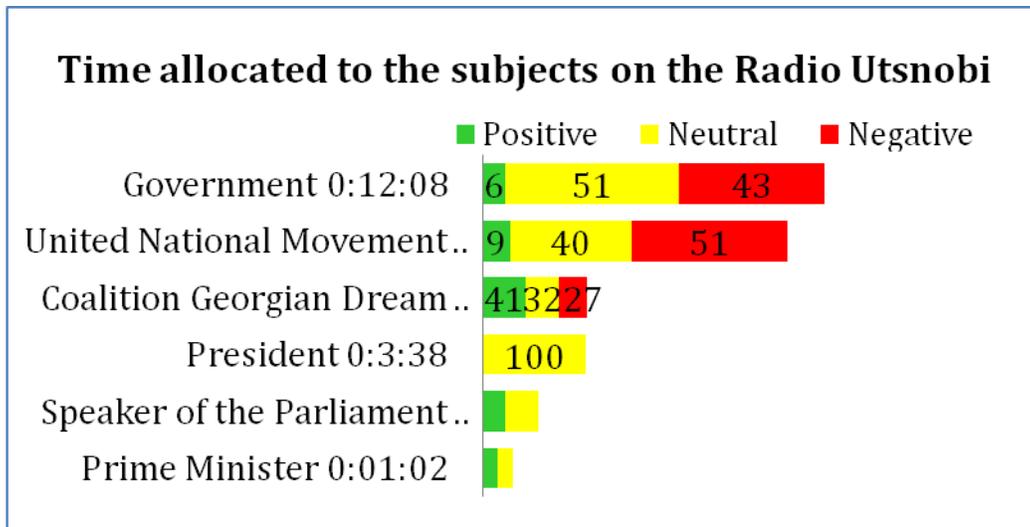
Girgvliani, increased the indicator of negative tone for the United National Movement up to 43%.



### Radio Utsnobi

Radio Utsnobi allocated 38 minutes to the monitoring subjects. In total, the channel provided a dry and superficial coverage of current events. The news releases did not present any direct speech of those subjects that were interesting for the monitoring, which made it difficult to differentiate facts from references.

Radio Utsnobi temporarily suspended its news release on June 30. At this stage it is difficult to talk about the identified trends, balance and impartiality due to a little amount of the monitoring materials.



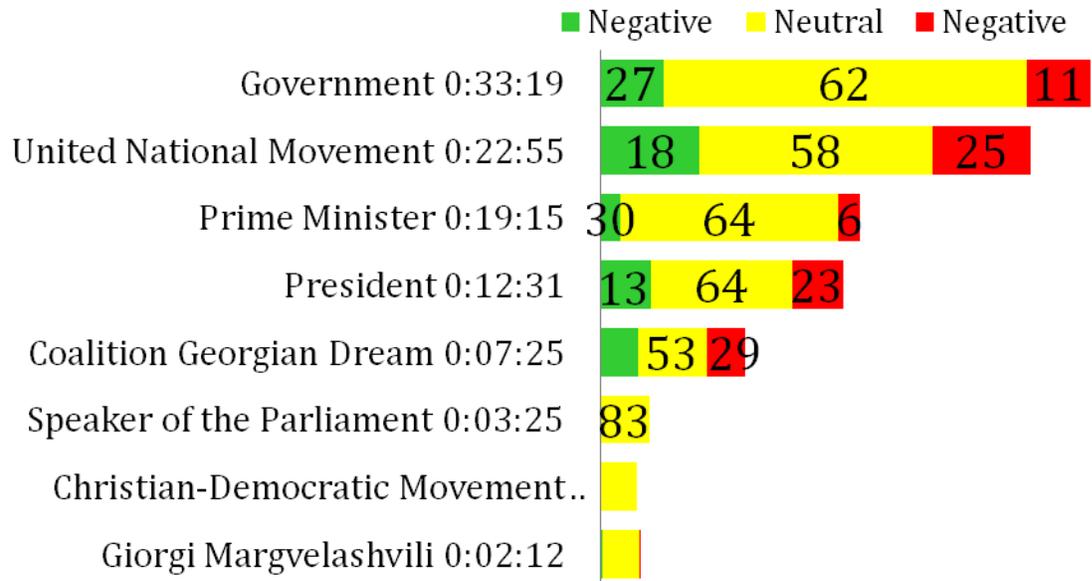
### Radio Maestro

Monitoring of the Radio Maestro started on July 2 (after the Radio Utsnobi discontinued its news releases). Maestro allocated 1 hour and 45 minutes to the monitoring Subjects. Most part of this time was used for covering the government (32%); then the United National Movement (22%), and the Prime Minister (18%) follows. The tone was mostly neutral.

The journalists covered the positions of the opposition and the ruling team without subjective evaluations. However, the news still was dry and superficial, because the analytical reports were not prepared that much and the journalists seldom asked critical questions.

It is noteworthy that a clearly unbalanced news item was observed too: there was a one-sided and superficial coverage of the information spread by the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the decrease of crime rate in the news program of July 8. The presenter of the program was reading the information provided by the ministry for about 4 minutes, without the comments of the opposition or experts, which presented the government in a clearly positive light.

**Time allocated to the subjects on the Radio Maestro according to the tone (%)**

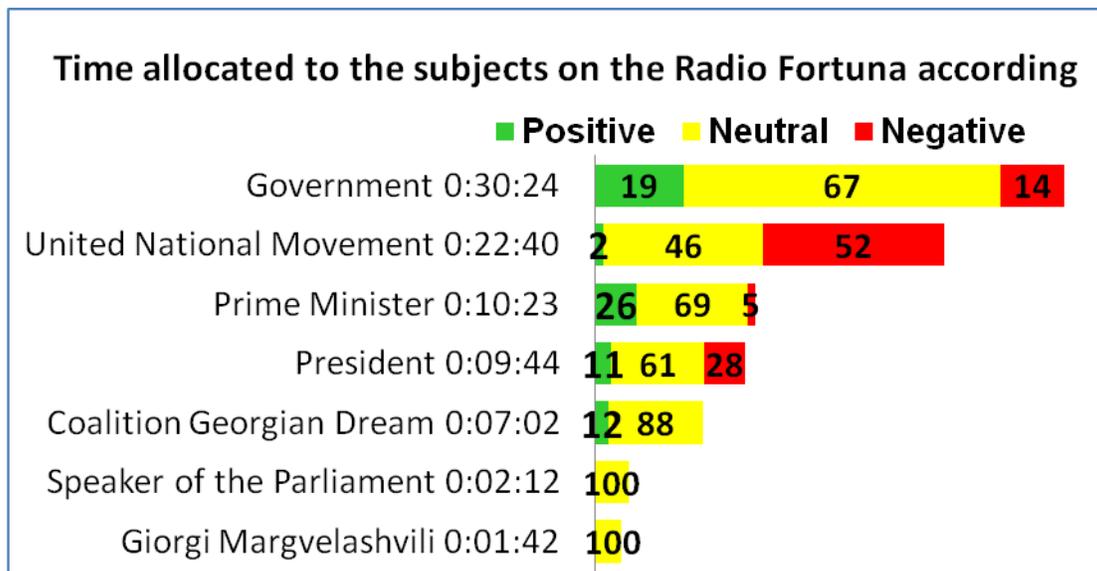


## Radio Fortuna

Radio Fortuna allocated 1 hour and 25 minutes to the monitoring subjects from June 15 until July 15. 36% of this time was dedicated to the government, and 27% - to the United National Movement, and then the Prime Minister follows with 12% and the President - with 11%.

Despite the presenters of news releases did not make subjective evaluations, the United National Movement was still covered with negative tone in 52% of the allocated time, because the journalists provided more coverage of the positions of the ruling team.

It is possible to say that the results of the Radio Fortuna are not significantly different from the results of monitoring of the Parliamentary elections in 2012. The news releases again lasted for 5 minutes, and news presenters were quoting the respondents' comments, and there was no broadcast of direct speech of the monitoring subjects. Besides, the journalists presented the facts related to the main topics of the day without analysis or without asking critical questions.

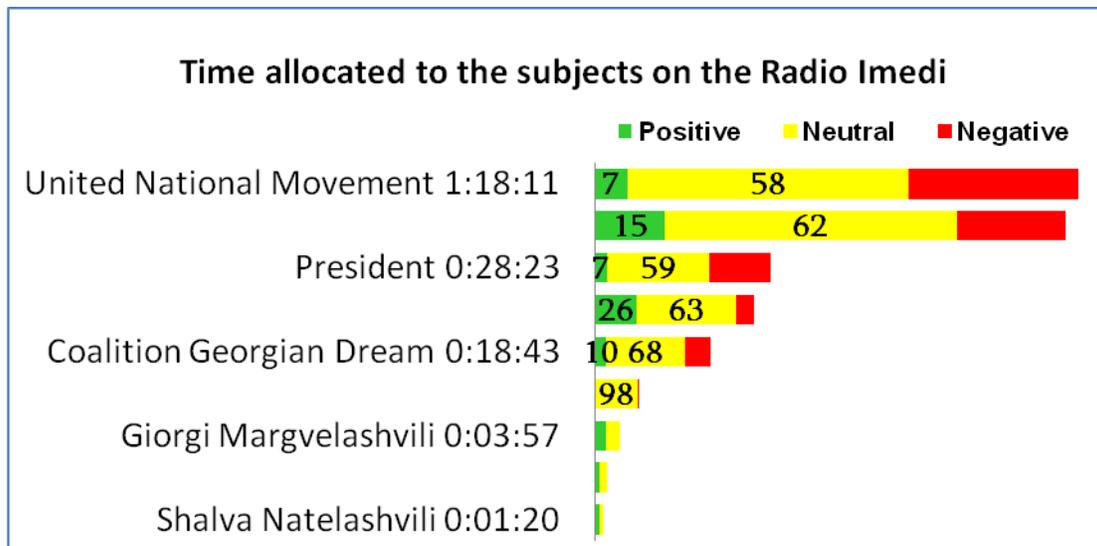


## Radio Imedi

Radio Imedi allocated 4 hours and 5 minutes to the monitoring subjects. In total, almost equal time was dedicated to the United National Movement and the President as to the Coalition Georgian Dream and the government.

Slight dissimilarities were identified in regards to the tone: the ruling team and the government have relatively less indicator of negative coverage than the United National Movement and the President. However, the qualitative part of the research showed that the radio broadcaster did not express any bias while covering any of the subjects.

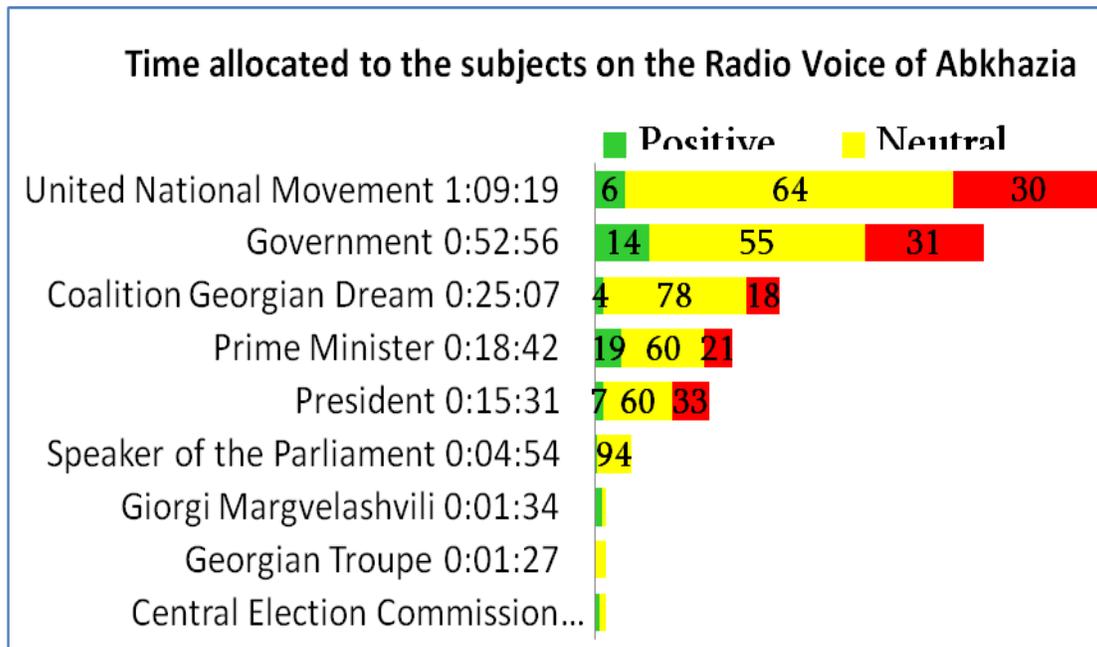
Radio Imedi allocated time to the subjects for both direct and indirect speech. The journalists did not manipulate with voice / music, did not express subjective evaluations, but still, they presented the facts superficially. Even in this case, the news items were only limited to covering the politicians' statements or opinions expressed at briefings. Like it is in case of the majority of radio broadcasters, here the journalists almost never showed initiative for 'discovering' a problem themselves and in order to obtain more information about this issue.



### Radio Voice of Abkhazia

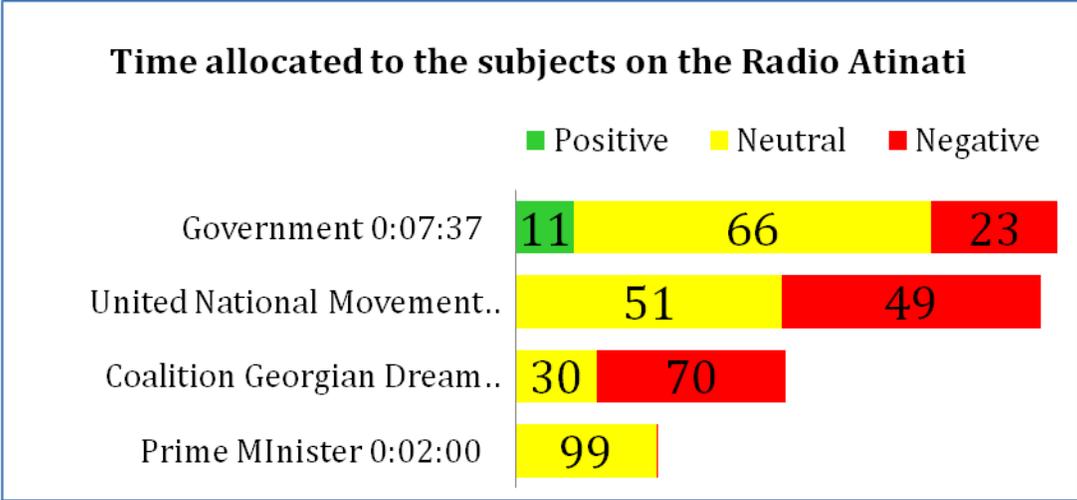
At the end of the reporting period, the Radio Voice of Abkhazia discontinued its news programs since July 12. Before this, the monitoring subjects were actively covered and in total 3 hours and 14 minutes were dedicated to them. Mostly, the United National Movement, the President, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the Prime Minister were covered. The Radio Voice of Abkhazia covered the activities of the listed subjects with direct and indirect speech. Besides, almost equal time portions were allocated to the opposition and to the ruling team, and there were no significant differences observed in regards to the tone too. Together with quantitative data, the qualitative data also shows that the news reports are balanced and the journalists are covering the facts impartially.

However, there was a little number of news reports where the journalists asked critical questions and or asked the officials to answer to their questions.



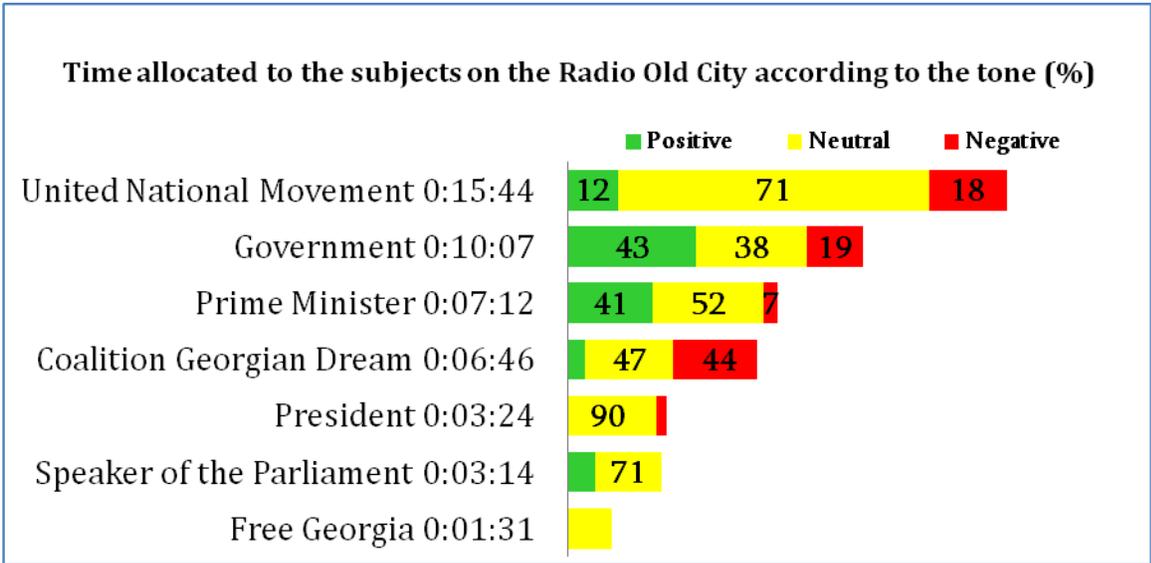
### Radio Atinati (Zugdidi Town)

Radio Atinati used its little air time (the subjects were covered only for 24 minutes during the reporting period) to cover the national and regional news. Among the subjects, almost equal time was distributed to the government and the United National Movement (32% and 31%). As for the coverage tone, the government was talked about with the positive tone (11%); also the neutral (66%) and negative (23%) tones; the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream were covered only with neutral and negative tones. There is an interesting fact that 70% of the time was dedicated to the Coalition Georgian Dream in a negative context. One of the reasons was the processes developed within the local self-government: the Coalition representatives were accused of being linked with the United National Movement, which presented the ruling team in a negative context. The radio allocated more than a minute only to four of the monitoring subjects, and these subjects, in fact, were covered only indirectly. It is notable that the Atinati's journalists did not make any subjective evaluations. Besides, they more or less tried to cover social topics and ask critical questions. For example, in the story broadcasted in the news release of July 12, the journalist independently identified a social problem, and tried to get response about this from the officials as well.



**Radio Old City (Kutaisi City)**

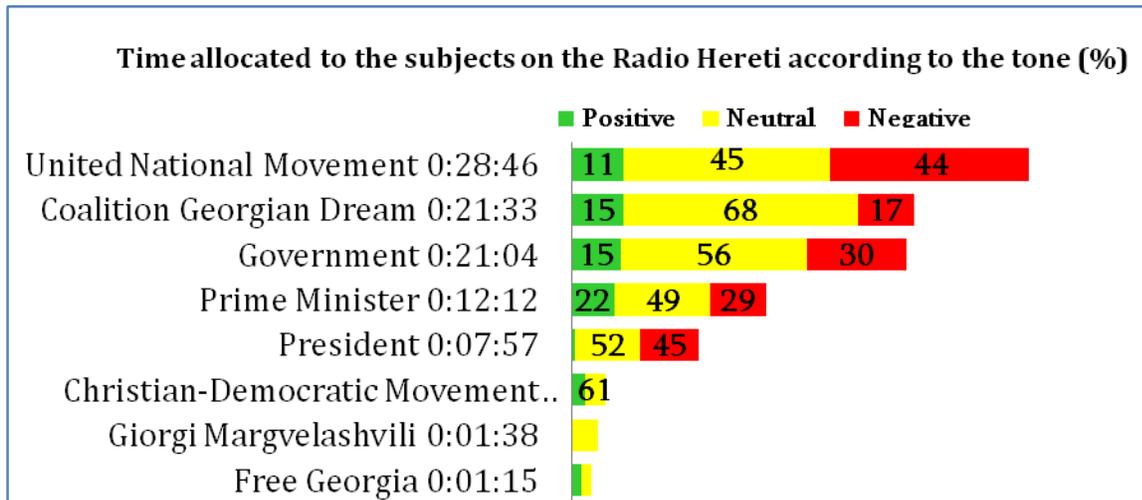
Radio Old City allocated significant time to the regional events. The channel allocated 45 minutes to the monitoring subjects. Out of them, the most time was allocated to the United National Movement (21%), then - to the government (21%) and the Prime Minister (15%). Monitoring subjects were mostly covered with a neutral tone and less time was dedicated to their direct speech. There were no facts of biased coverage by a journalist. However, the radio presented the news in a dry and superficial manner: the journalists seldom asked critical questions and did not prepare analytical stories.



## Radio Hereti (Lagodekhi Town)

Radio Hereti actively covered the national and regional events. 1 hour and 38 minutes were dedicated to the monitoring subjects. Among them, the emphasis was laid on the activity of the United National Movement (as a former government team). However, the events developed during the reporting period resulted in the increased negative tone towards them (45%), which mainly was related to the discovery of materials in Samegrelo and to bringing charges against the party members.

The journalists covered the events in a balanced way. They were equally critical to the representatives of the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement that were the members of the local government. We came across with the direct speech of monitoring subjects in the news programs, also there were live reports of journalists from the epicenter of events. Significant time was also dedicated to the coverage of social issues as well.



## Conclusion

During the monitoring period (June 15 – July 15), political events were actively covered in the evening news releases of radio channels. However, the “the pre-election temperature” has not gone up yet, as far as the presidential candidates have not started their election campaigns actively yet. However, after the Election Day was announced,

their coverage relatively increased. Since July 1, some part of radio broadcasters allocated little time to the Central Election Commission as well.

It should be pointed out that the majority of radio broadcasters presented the information in an impartial and balanced way. News items, which lacked analysis, were identified as a main problem, where the journalists seldom asked critical questions and mostly played a role of a disseminator of information announced at briefings. Neither did the journalists show much initiative: they seldom 'found' a problem about which they would inquire responses from officials. This is also indicated by the fact that other than Radio Liberty and regional radio broadcasters, there were almost no cases of making stories on social themes. Still there is a problem - the news presenters only quote the respondents' comments at some radios, and the voice of monitoring subjects (direct speech) was not heard. The journalists did not make subjective evaluations with voice, neither were any cases of manipulation with music observed there.