



Election Monitoring of Radios

May 3- May 23

2014

Internews - Georgia, under the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program, is monitoring the radio channels. The monitoring started on April 15 and will last through June 30. It includes the monitoring of evening news releases of 12 radio broadcasters: Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster), Imedi, Fortuna, Radio Liberty, Palitra, The First Radio, Utsnobi, Maestro, Hereti (Lagodekhi), Old City (Kutaisi), Atinati (Zugdidi) and Ajara (Batumi).

Monitoring of radio channels during May 3 - May 23 revealed following key findings:

- There was twice as much time allocated to the government than to any other subject;
- Reporting about elections increased, but the programs of mayoral candidates were mostly covered briefly and superficially;
- The most frequently covered mayoral candidates were those of the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement;
- Compared to the monitoring of 2013, longer coverage time was observed for the non-parliamentary opposition parties;
- Like the monitoring held in 2013, superficial reporting or using only one source remains to be the main problem;
- The journalists often asked politicians to make general comment on their opponent’s statements and did not really ask harsh questions about a specific problem;
- Compared to the monitoring of 2013, the regional radiobroadcasters provided more in-depth coverage of events. Their journalists were more proactive than the majority of reporters of central broadcasters;
- The journalists did not manipulate with voice/music, neither did they use the hate speech.

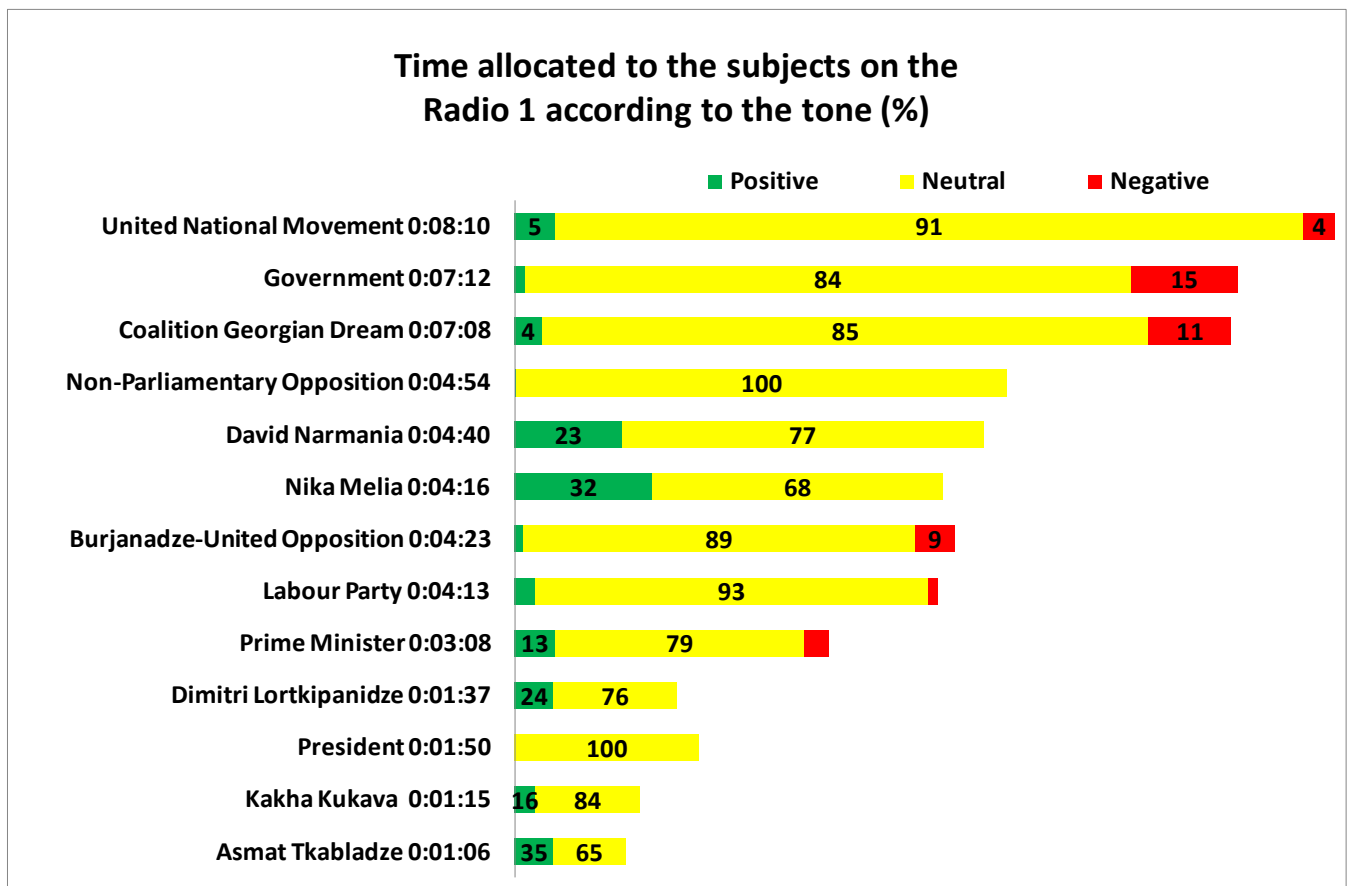
Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster)

The Public Broadcaster allocated 58 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 14% of this coverage time was dedicated to the United National Movement, 12%-12% - to the government and its political team, the Coalition Georgian Dream. Compared to the previous reporting period, the direct coverage of subjects increased. For example, the share of direct coverage was 18% for the government, 14% - for the Prime Minister, and 35% - for the President.

“Radio 1” superficially covered the events, without asking severe questions. The journalists were less proactive and the news stories were mostly limited to citing the politicians’ statements. In most cases the neutral tone was used when covering the subjects.

As the elections got closer, coverage of Tbilisi mayoral candidates of the Coalition Georgian Dream and those of the United National Movement increased. However, there were no profound stories prepared about them. Correspondingly, the time allocated to the candidates only had a positive and neutral tone.

The journalists did not make any subjective evaluations and did not demonstrate any bias towards any political force.



The First Radio

The First Radio allocated 2 hours and 3 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The largest portions of time were dedicated to the government (30 minutes) and the United National Movement (13 minutes).

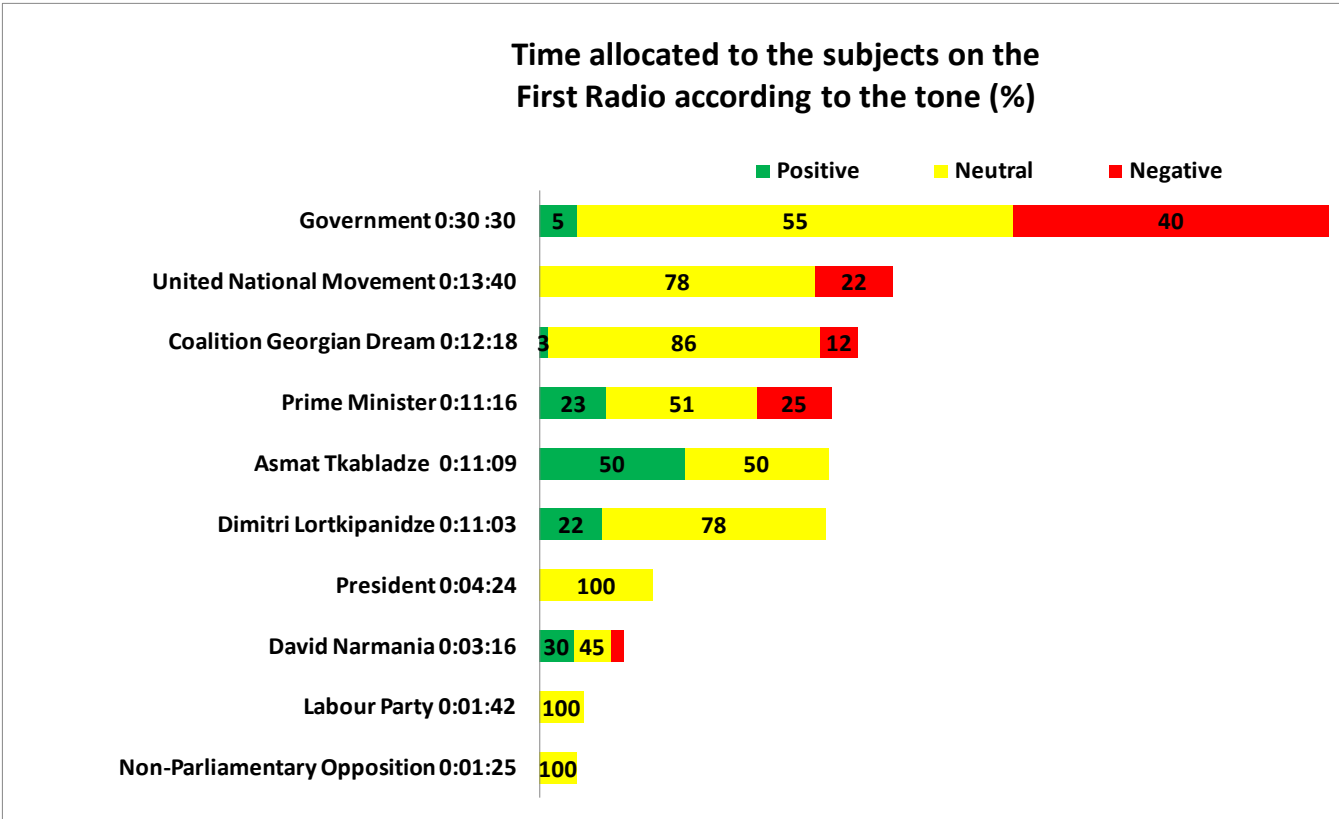
More than a half of the total time was allocated to the direct speech of monitoring subjects. For example, 68% of the time dedicated to the Coalition Georgian Dream was used for direct speech; this rate was 65% in case of the United National Movement, and 40% - in case of the government.

The journalists were highlighting different opinions about the issue, which found its reflection on the diversity of tones. Activities of the authorities were covered with special criticism. Negative tone was used for 40% of the time allocated to the government, which was basically caused by the criticism of the authorities by their opponents.

Concluding part of the news release was dedicated to the 10-12 minute interview with a certain Tbilisi mayoral candidate, which significantly increased the coverage of mayoral candidates. They had an opportunity to address their electorate and to speak exhaustively about their program priorities.

This radio allocated time to those mayoral candidates of Tbilisi, who were hardly ever covered via other radio broadcasters. They are: Irakli Ghlonti from the political union "Reformers", Mikheil-Gela Saluashvili from the political union "In the Name of God - God Is Our Truth", Dimitri Lortkipanidze from "Burjanadze - United Opposition" and Asmat Tkabladze from the "Labour Party". The journalist did not ask severe and critical questions to them, this is why the subjects were only covered with positive and neutral tones.

There were no cases of manipulation with sound or music in the news releases. The journalists were not making subjective evaluations and observed the standards of professional ethics.



Radio Palitra

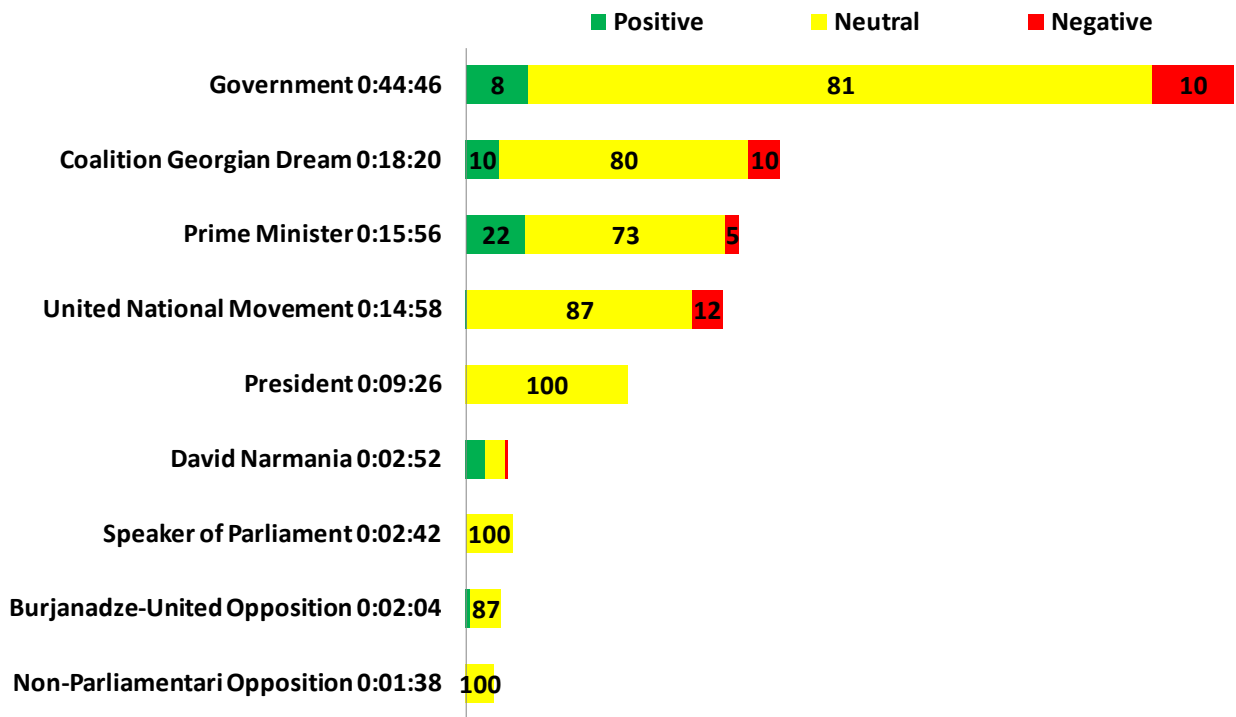
Radio Palitra allocated an hour and 56 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 39% of this time was used for reporting about the government, 16% - for the Coalition Georgian Dream and 14% - for the Prime Minister.

The radio broadcasted balanced stories about the main topics of the day. The journalists provided in-depth coverage of the issue: they reported the opinions of the authorities and opposition, also those of the NGO sector.

There were superficial stories prepared about the elections. The journalists did not ask critical questions about the election promises. Little time was dedicated to the coverage of mayoral candidates. Only Davit Narmania, Tbilisi mayoral candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream was covered for more than a minute, and 46% of this time was done in a positive context.

Overall, the journalists provided impartial coverage of the events and did not make journalistic evaluations. There were no cases of violating professional standards during the broadcast.

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



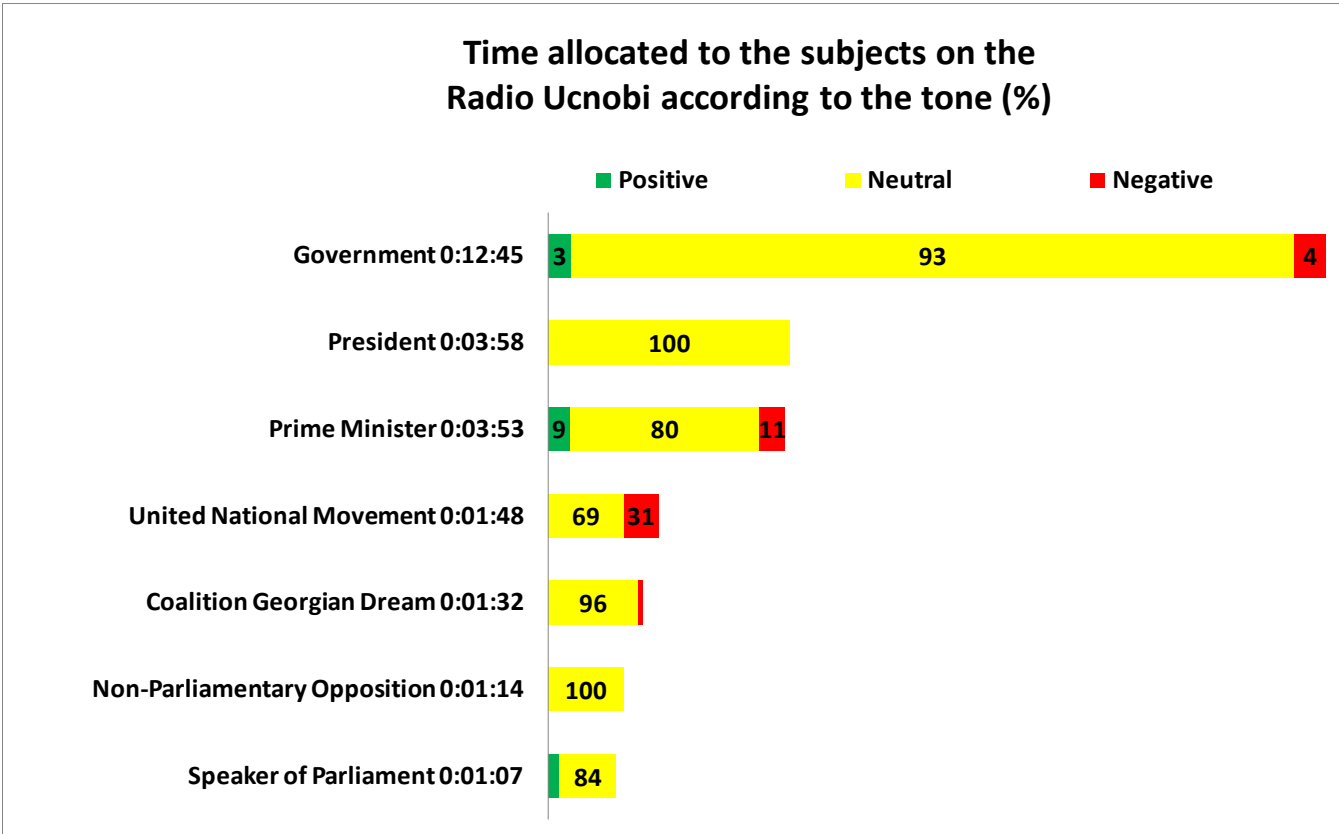
Radio Utsnobi

Radio Utsnobi allocated only 26 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 47% of this time was dedicated to the government, and 15-14% - to the President and the Prime Minister. There was no direct speech of the subjects heard on the radio.

The host mostly reported the information disseminated by the government and official agencies, which was often based on one source only. Reports about the events were dry, thus, neutral tone was used in 90% of the time on average.

There was little time allocated to the coverage of election campaign in the news releases. Consequently, none of the mayoral candidates was covered for more than a minute.

The journalists did not express subjective attitude towards any political force, neither did they ask critical questions. They prepared impartial, but brief and superficial news about the main topics of the day.



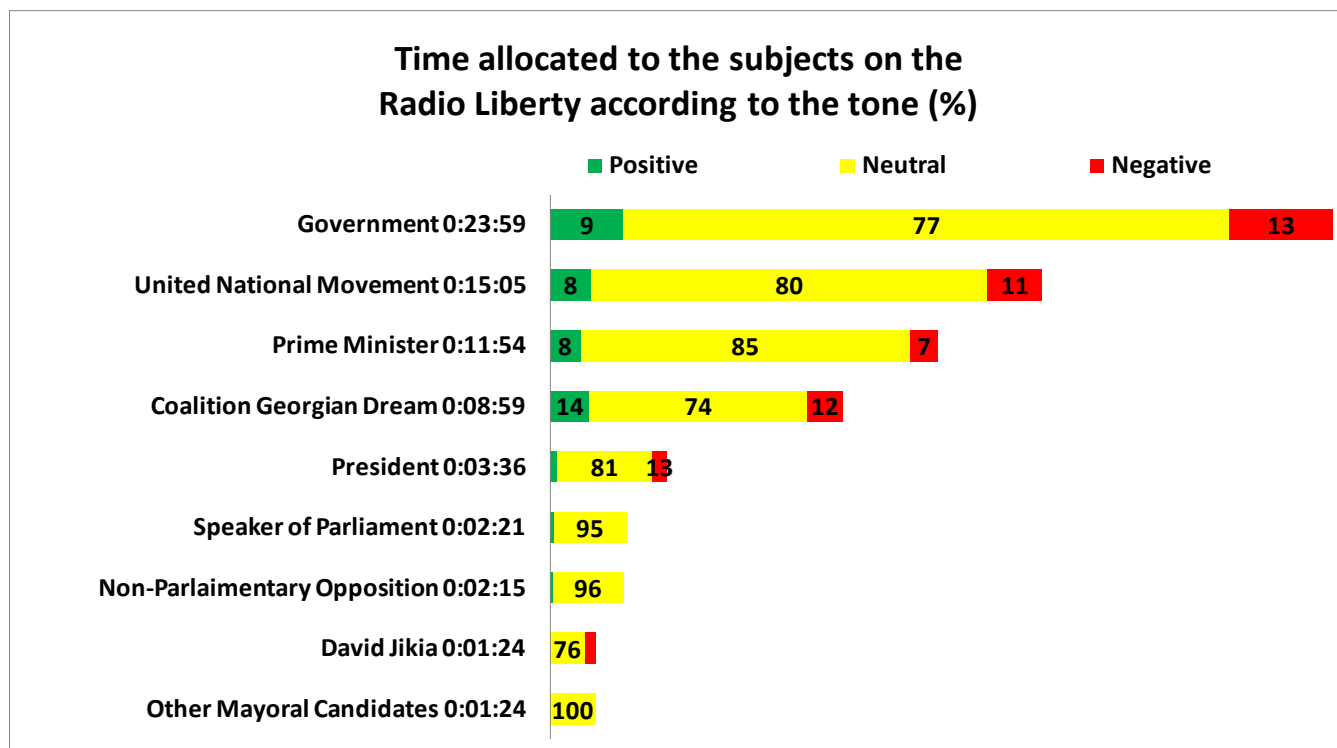
Radio Liberty

The Radio Liberty allocated an hour and 18 minutes to the monitoring subjects. Out of this time 30% was provided to the government, 19% - to the United National Movement, and 15% to the Prime Minister. On average, 40% of this time was used for direct speech.

The radio broadcaster was distinguished with diverse coverage of events. While reporting about the politician activities, the journalists often highlighted the opinions of the NGO sector and experts. The stories were not grounded on one source only and provided diverse positions about the issue. For example, there were in-depth stories prepared about the antidiscrimination law and the Association Agreement.

There was much time dedicated to the discussion of the election environment in the news programs. The journalists were preparing the stories about the situations in Tbilisi and in the regions. However, they did not increase the time allocated to the mayoral candidates yet. There was no coverage about their election programs and visions on addressing the problem. The journalists laid emphasis on the attitude of the public, the risk of using administrative resource and evaluations of the NGOs.

The radio broadcasters provided balanced and impartial coverage, with adherence to the standards of professional ethics.



Radio Maestro

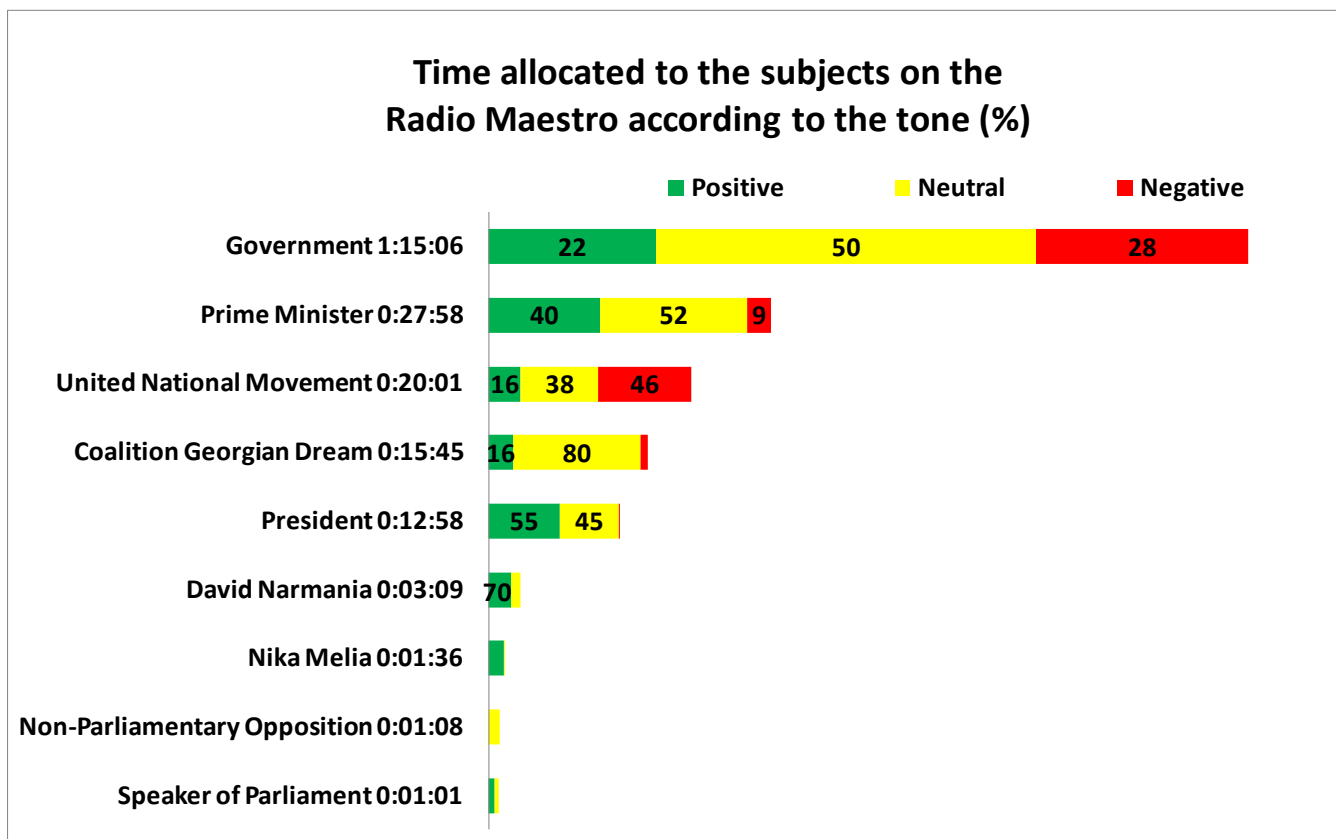
The Radio Maestro allocated 2 hours and 40 minutes to the monitoring subjects. Out of this time, 47% was dedicated to the government, 17% - to the Prime Minister and 12% - to the United National Movement. Although the timing of the news program lasted for more than thirty minutes, there was no direct coverage of the subjects.

Superficial coverage of events was observed to be the main problem of the news programs. The news was limited only to the citing of politicians' statements and lacked any analysis. The rate of negative coverage of subjects was caused by highlighting the mutually critical statements of politicians. Reports about the politicians' activities were reported without criticism: the journalists did not ask harsh questions; neither did they provide expert opinions.

The election campaign was also dry. Out of Tbilisi mayoral candidates, only Davit Narmania (the Coalition Georgian Dream) and Nika Melia (the United National Movement) got more than a minute. The stories had little to do with the election programs of candidates, and they were only limited to quoting their statements from the meetings with public. Correspondingly, in case of both candidates, more than two third of the time was covered with positive tone.

Sequence of news in the news programs was sometimes illogical. For example, the Minister of Internal Affairs was speaking about the disappeared wiretapping devices from agencies in the program of May 12. The next two news items were about a completely different issue, and only after that there was a comment of the United National Movement, which was made in response to the statement of the Minister of Interior broadcasted two stories before. Such a poor sequencing of the news was observed again. For example, in the news program of May 14, first the representatives of the Coalition Georgian Dream were providing clarifications about why the Minister of Internal Affairs was unable not make appearance at the Parliament, and statements the representatives of the United National Movement followed after two other stories, where they were making statements about summoning the Minister to the Parliament.

The radio broadcaster provided an impartial though superficial coverage of the news. The reporters were not manipulating with sound or music, neither did they make any subjective evaluations.



Radio Fortuna

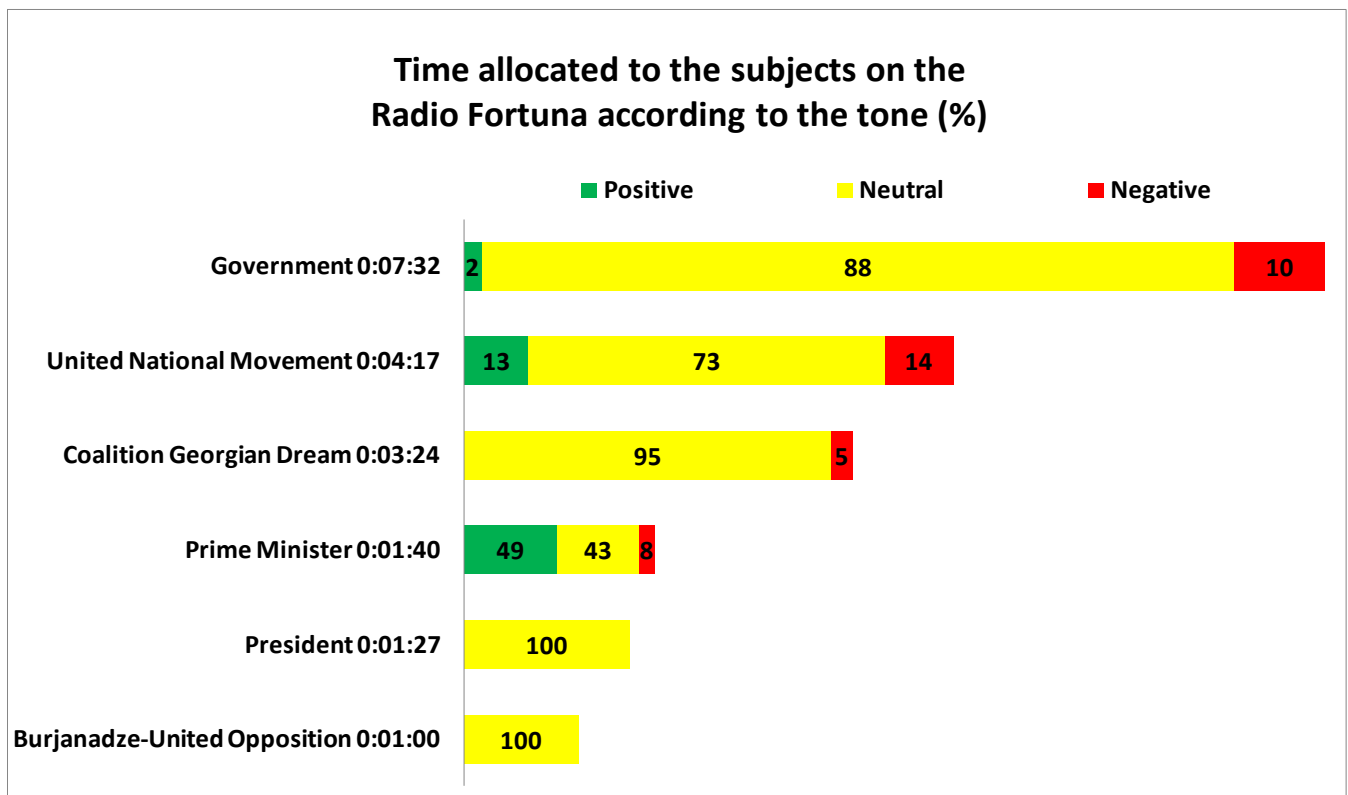
The Radio Fortuna allocated 23 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The most frequently covered subjects were the government (32%), the United National Movement (18%) and the

Coalition Georgian Dream (15%). Like the monitoring results of previous years, the radio broadcaster did not provide any coverage containing direct speech of the subjects.

The journalists quoted the statements of politicians without asking additional questions. Besides, like the previous reporting period, the news releases sometimes only broadcasted only one piece of news. For example, the news release on May 8 dealt with covert surveillance and was reduced only to the interview with Nika Gvaramia, head of Rustavi 2.

There was almost no news about elections, consequently, none of the mayoral candidates got more than a minute.

The journalists did not express subjective attitude towards any political force, but the lack of critical questions and stories prepared based on one source only - still remains a problem.



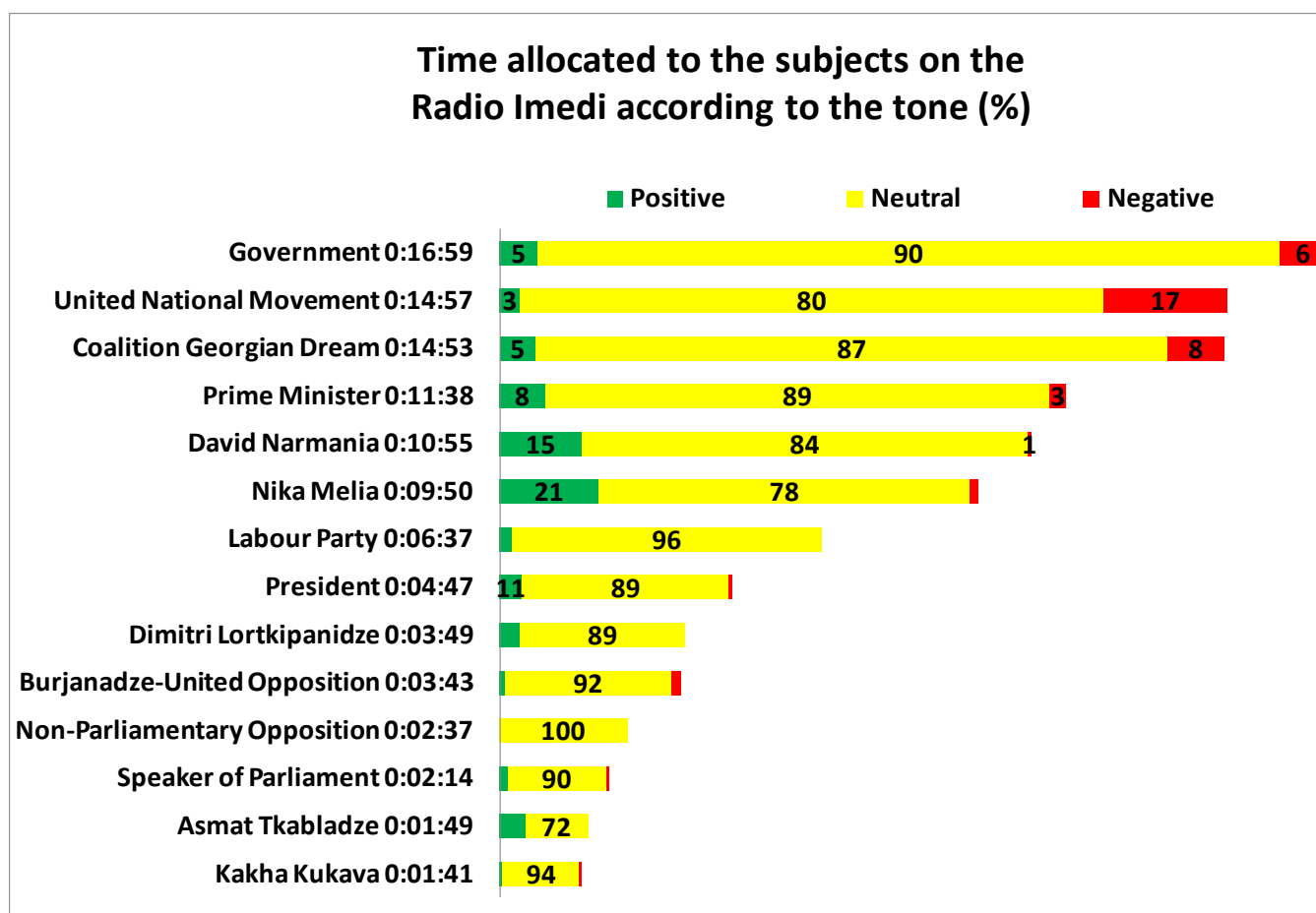
Radio Imedi

Radio allocated an hour and 51 minutes to the monitoring subjects, and 15% of this time was dedicated to the government, and 13%-13% to the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream. The radio broadcaster allocated more than a half of the total time to the politician's direct speech (53%).

The journalists prepared balanced stories about the main topics of the day. However, the politicians' activities were mostly reported without asking. This is why mostly the neutral tone was used for politicians.

The radio broadcaster was distinguished with an active coverage of election campaigns, and even prepared a separate section on this topic, reporting about the mayoral candidates running for Tbilisi and for other cities as well. Overall, the Radio Imedi covered the more mayoral candidates than other radios. The election subjects had a chance to promote their visions, but their promises were followed up by the journalists' critical questions, because of which the mayoral candidates were covered only with positive and neutral tone.

News releases were distinguished with diversity of sources. The journalists were covering the events impartially and in adherence to the professional ethics.



Radio Atinati (Zugdidi)

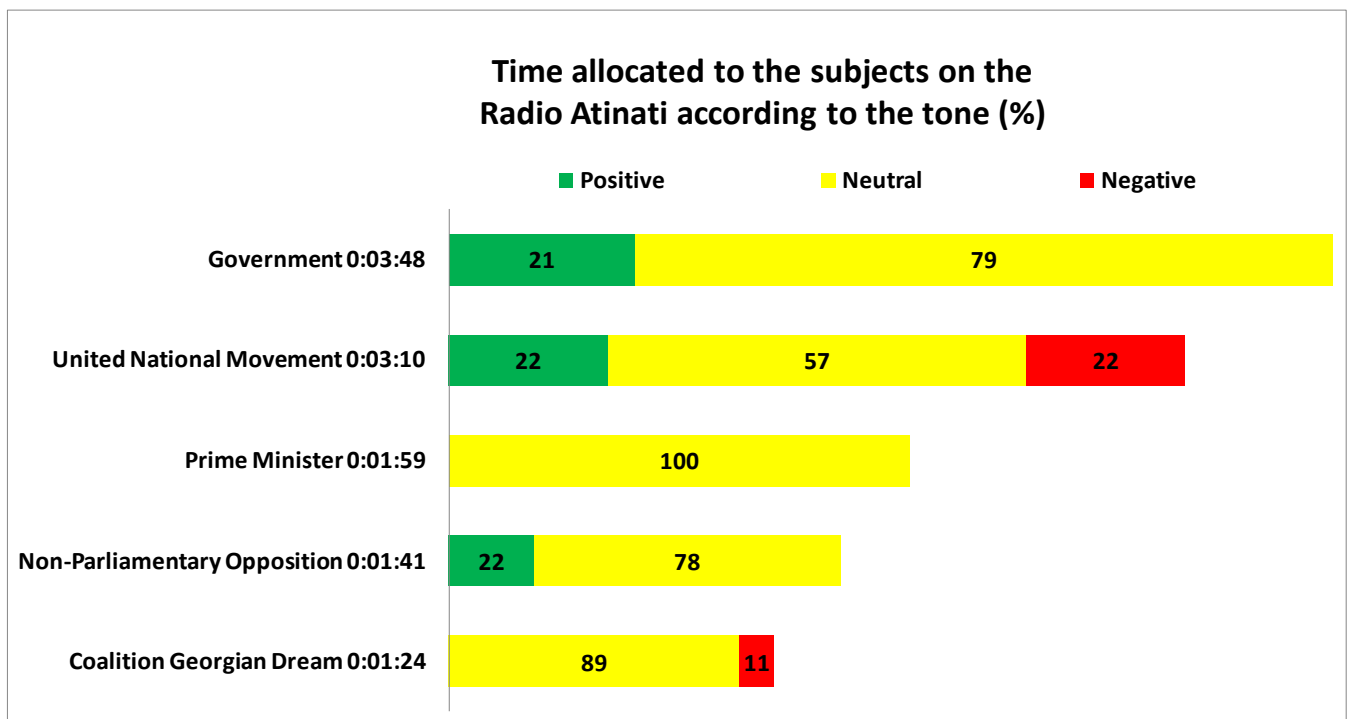
Radio Atinati was preparing brief news release; this is why only 15 minutes were dedicated to the monitoring subjects. Majority of the stories were about the events developed in Samegrelo.

The reports were dry, often based on one source. Besides, there was little time allocated to the direct speech of the subjects.

The news was superficial, which found its reflection on the high rate of neutral tone. Negative tone was observed only in case of the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream. However, this was caused by the mutually critical statements of politicians and not by harsh questions of journalists.

The journalists provided little coverage about the election environment. Neither did they lay any emphasis on the activities of Zugdidi mayoral candidates. None of them got more than a minute.

The journalists did not engage in subjective evaluations. Their reporting was dry, though impartial.



Radio Old City (Kutaisi)

Radio Old City dedicated 51 minutes to the coverage of monitoring subjects. Out of this time, 18% was allocated to the government, 15% - to the Coalition Georgian Dream and 12% - to the non-parliamentary opposition. On average, one third of this time was used for broadcasting the direct speech of subjects.

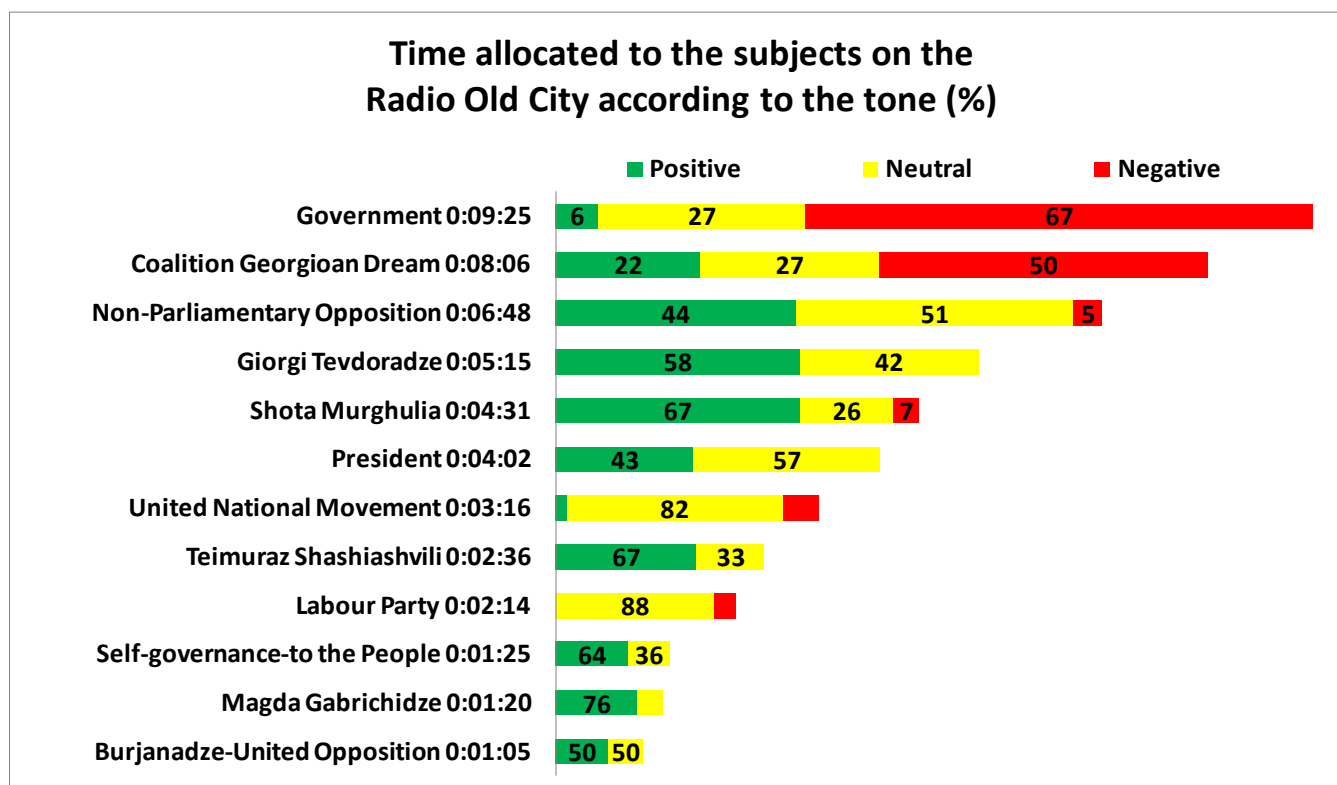
The journalists provided especially critical coverage for the government activities. Besides, the statements of parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition parties were often highlighted,

mostly criticizing the authorities. This is why more than a half of the time allocated to the officials and to the government team was reported with negative tone.

The radio broadcaster was actively preparing the stories about elections. The most frequently covered top-five subjects included two mayoral candidates from Kutaisi (Giorgi Tevdoradze – the United National Movement) and Shota Murghulia – (the Coalition Georgian Dream).

The journalists were distinguished with the diverse coverage of election campaigns. For example, they were preparing the stories about gender balance within the party lists, asked harsh questions about spending the administrative resources, also highlighted the election programs of candidates and statements of the NGO sector. Besides, the journalists were making Vox Populi and highlighted the visions of mayoral candidates regarding the social problems identified by the public. For example, in the story broadcasted on May 13, the politicians answered to the questions about how they were going to resolve the problem of water supply in Kutaisi.

The journalists did not make subjective evaluations and did not express any biased attitude towards any political force.



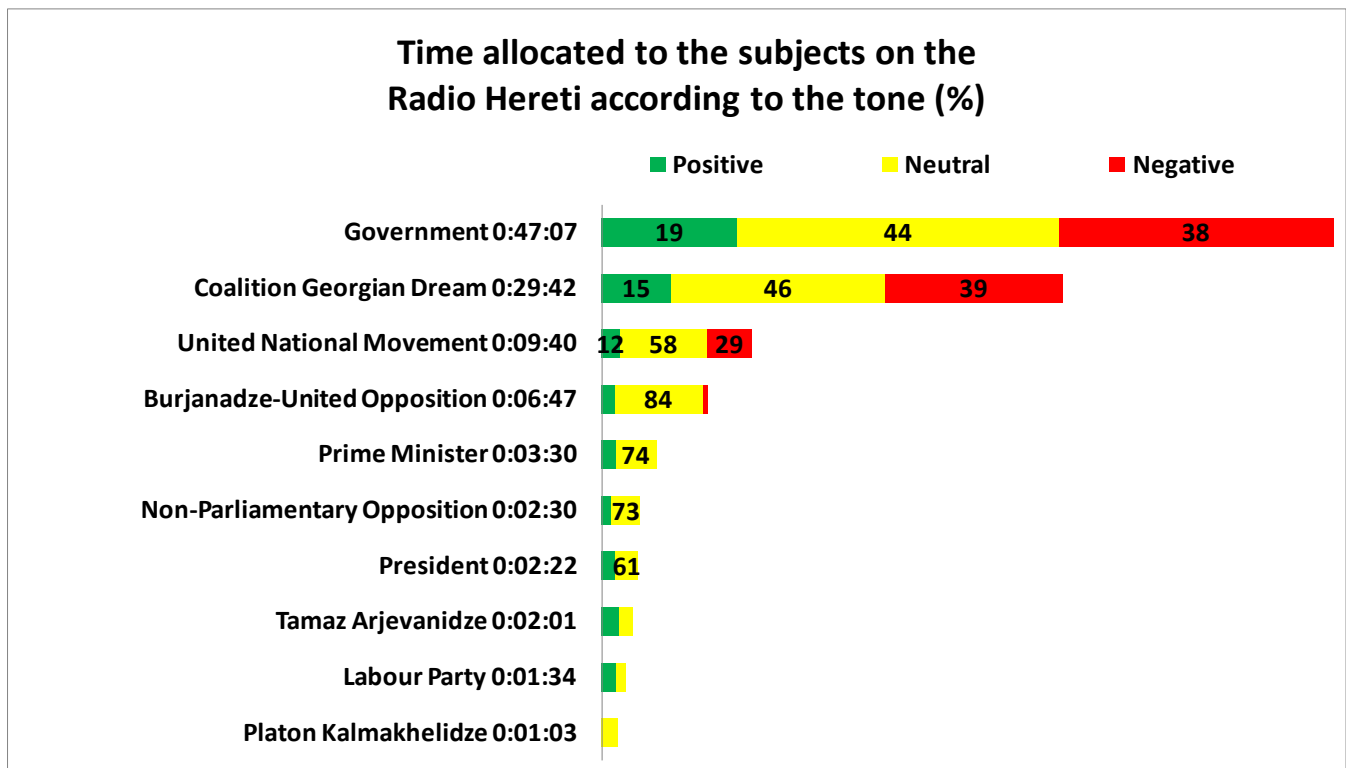
Radio Hereti (Lagodekhi)

Radio Hereti allocated an hour and 51 minutes to the coverage of monitoring subjects. 42% of this time was dedicated to the government, 27% - to the Coalition Georgian Dream and 9% - to the United National Movement. On average, 34% of this time was used for direct speech.

The radio intensively covered the ongoing events in the country; special emphasis was laid on the news of the region (Kakheti). There were certain stories that were based on one source sometimes, but in general, the events were covered impartially. The journalists were making the news stories basically about social problems and asked harsh questions to the people in charge of resolving those problems. Correspondingly, more than one third of the time allocated to the government and the ruling team was covered with negative tone.

There was much time allocated to the discussion of the election topic in the news releases. However, little time was provided specifically to the mayoral candidates. The journalists quite actively reported the statements of politicians, CEC representatives, NGOs and the public. Likewise, the election promises of candidate running for the Gangebeli's position in Kakheti and Sakrebulo's majoritarian candidates were actively covered.

The journalists of this radio broadcaster were distinguished with their critical discussions and did not violate basic standards of professional ethics.



Radio Ajara (Batumi)

On May 15, Radio Ajara temporarily discontinued news programs, and consequently only 46 minutes were dedicated to the monitoring subjects. On average, 28% of this time was a direct speech.

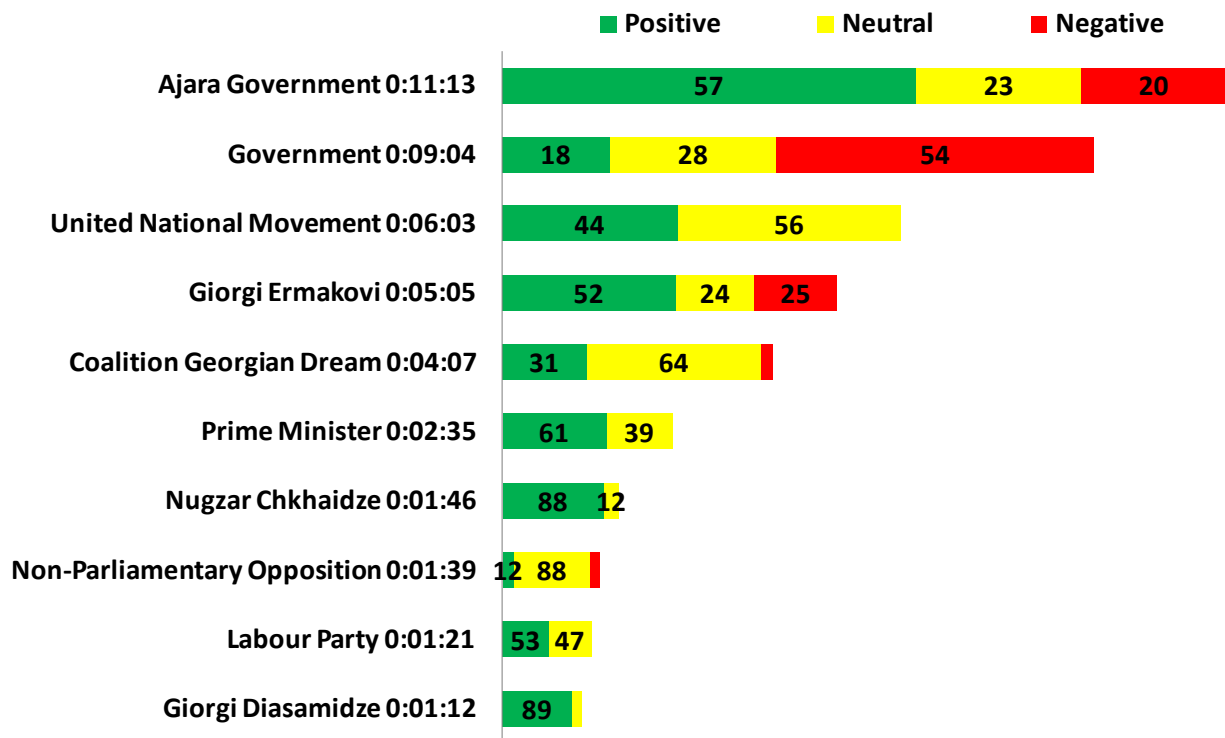
As observed, the main problem was the scarcity of sources in the stories. For example, the event of giving presents to the war veterans on May 9 was covered from one side only and the authorities were presented in a positive context. Due to similar occurrences, the 57% of the time dedicated to the Ajarian government was covered with positive tone. Other than the authorities, positive coverage was also provided for the United National Movement. Correspondingly, unbalanced stories were the general problem for the radio broadcaster and it was not an attempt of promoting a certain political force positively or negatively.

However, the journalists also prepared critical stories about the government activities. Much time was dedicated to the coverage of social problems in Ajara, and it is when the journalists asked harsh questions to the authorities. This is why, negative tone was used for the government during 20% of the time, and the negative tone was used during 54% of the time dedicated to the central government.

The news program actively covered the election campaign. The largest portion of time was dedicated to Giorgi Ermakov, Batumi mayoral candidate from the Coalition Georgian Dream, and by the way, all the three tones were used during this time. The journalists were asking harsh questions to the candidate of the ruling team about the usage of administrative resources, because of which 25% of the time allocated to Giorgi Ermakov was covered in negative tone.

The radio broadcaster adhered to the standards of professional ethics: There were no cases of manipulation with voice or music; neither did we observe any instances of hate speech.

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



Conclusion

During the reporting period the radio broadcasters actively reported the events taking place in the country. The journalists did not express subjective attitudes towards any of the political forces and neither were there any instances of hate speech or manipulation with voice/music. The trend of not violating the standards of professional ethics has been maintained among the journalists. Compared to the monitoring results of 2013, more time was dedicated to the coverage of non-parliamentary opposition parties.

Like the previous reporting period, the main problem was the reporting based on one source only. The news reports were reduced to providing quotes from the statements of politicians. Besides, the journalists rarely asked questions to the politicians about particular problems, and they were asking for general comments about their opponents' statements. The radio Liberty, Hereti and Old City were preparing more profound stories, and reporters of these radios were more proactive: they were trying to identify problems and then they would ask harsh questions to the respective people in charge.

Coverage of the election campaign increased significantly. Some of the radio broadcasters prepared a separate bloc about this topic. However, the stories were more about the election

environment, evaluations of the NGOs and statements of the CEC representatives; though, still there was little time allocated to mayoral candidates in particular, and to the discussion of their election programs. In this respect, the regional radio broadcasters were more active. Their journalists had opinion polls in the streets and highlighted the politicians' opinions about the ways of solving the problems identified by the population.

Unlike previous years, the majority of radios more critically covered the activities of officials. So far we still observe the trend that the journalists do not make subjective evaluations and do not prepare clearly positive or negative stories about any political force.