

Election Media Monitoring of Radio Channels

July 16 – August 16

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. The monitoring covers the evening news releases of 12 radio broadcasters. These are: Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster), Imedi, Fortuna, Radio Liberty, Palitra, The First Radio, Green Wave, Hereti, Old City, Atinati, Maestro and Adjara.

Second-month monitoring of radio channels (July 16 – August 16) revealed the following key findings:

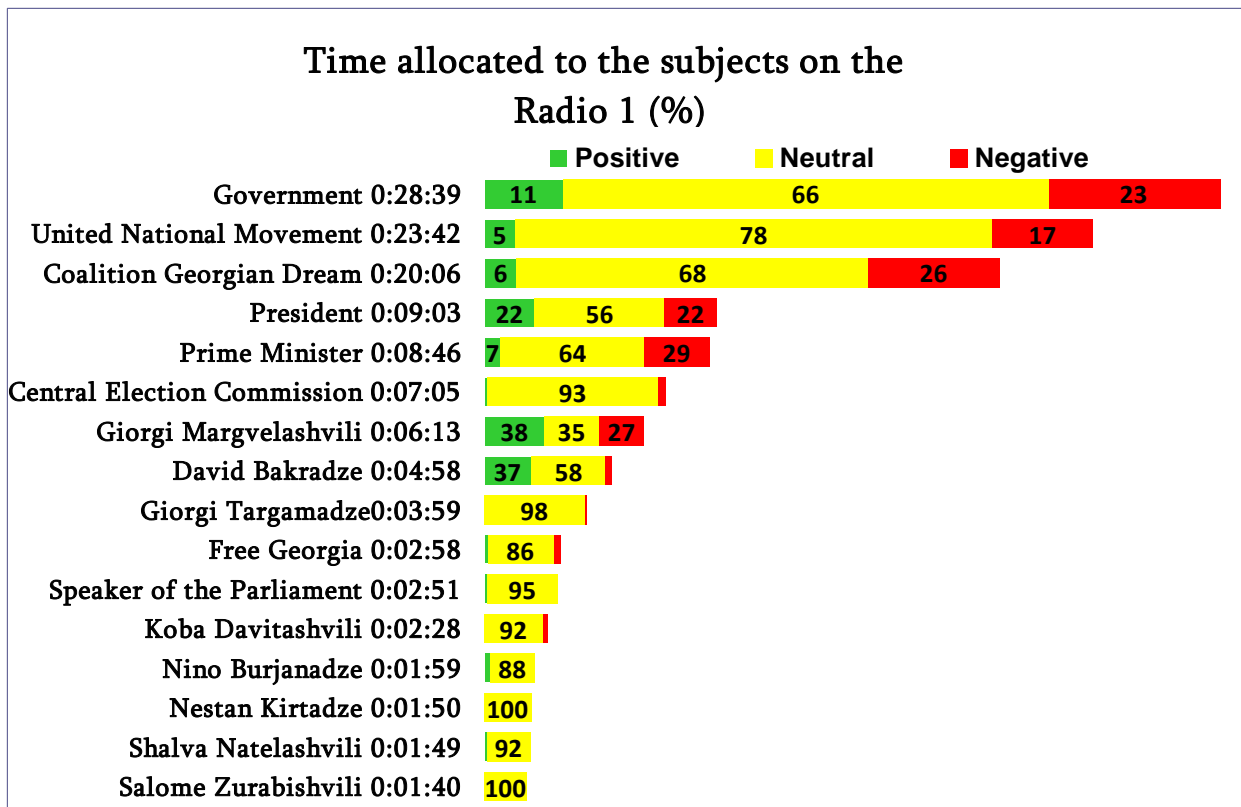
- Out of presidential candidates, the most time was allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili, candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream;
- There was almost no coverage of election programs of presidential candidates;
- The news often did not provide any background information, which made it hard to understand the story;
- The most time was allocated to the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement;
- Often the news items were based on one source only and the disseminated information was not double-checked with various sources;
- Like the previous reporting period, 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;
- The news items were mostly limited to quoting the statements of politicians. The journalists rarely asked critical questions;
- There were no cases of manipulation with sound/music observed during the reporting period.

Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster)

Radio 1 provided an active coverage of political events. In total, 2 hours and 13 minutes were dedicated to the monitoring subjects. 20% of this time was used for covering the presidential candidates. Unlike other radio broadcasters, Radio 1 also allocated little time to the discussion of election programs of candidates.

As for other monitoring subjects, the most time was dedicated to the government (21%), the United National Movement (18%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (15%). Besides, the journalists broadcasted the facts without subjective evaluations. The news programs were not biased to any of the monitoring subjects. Correspondingly, none of the subjects was discussed in an especially positive or negative context.

Still there were cases when journalists were quoting the subjects' comments themselves and there was almost no time allocated for the direct speech. Besides, the news was mostly descriptive and the main questions were left unanswered.

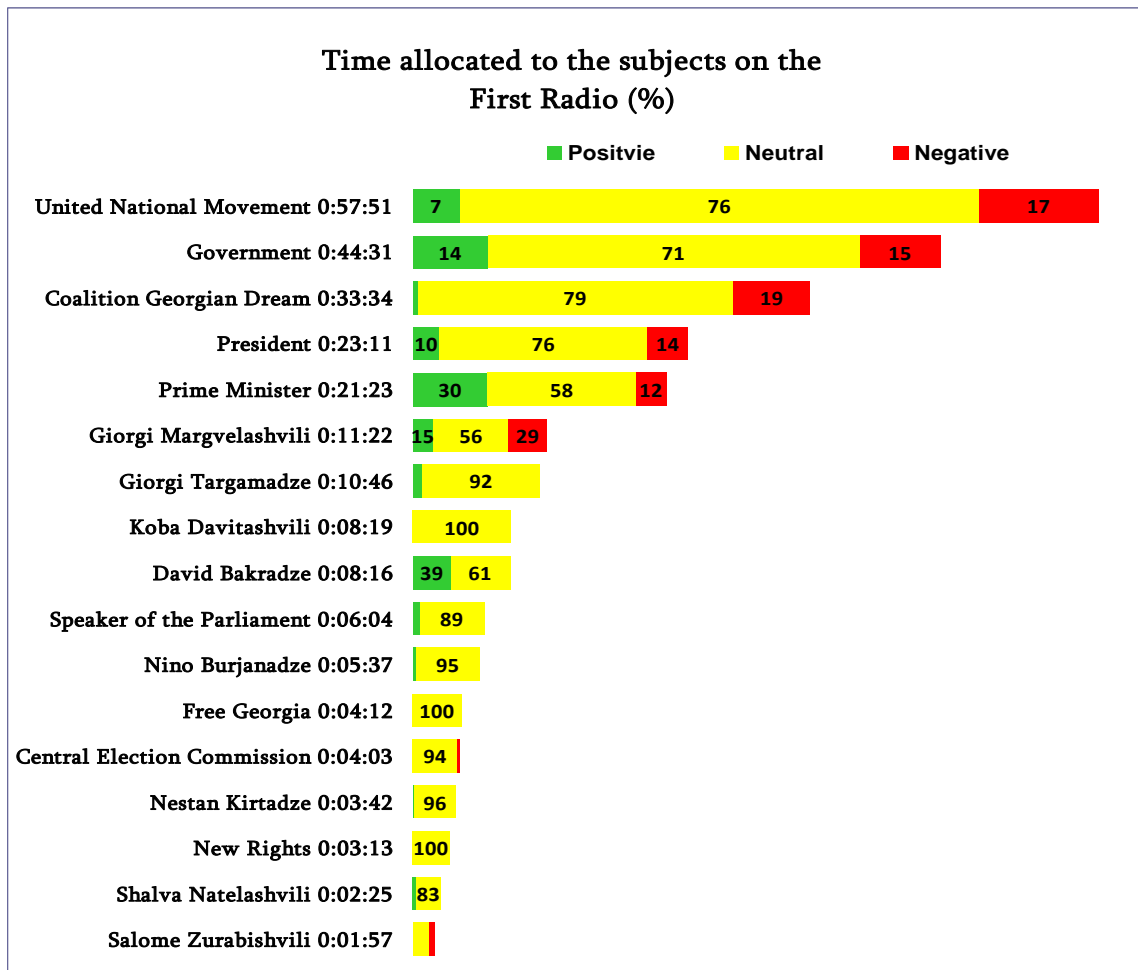


The First Radio

The First Radio covered the most number of monitoring subjects (17) and in total allocated 4 hours and 12 minutes to them. Presidential candidates were also covered actively (in total, during 21% of total time).

The First Radio is also distinguished with high rate of direct speech as well. On average, 45% of time was allocated for direct speech to the monitoring subjects. However, sometimes this was caused by the direct and non-stop broadcasting of politicians' speeches. For example, in the news program on August 8 about the ceremony of taking oath by military personnel, there was a Prime Minister's speech broadcasted during 7 minutes.

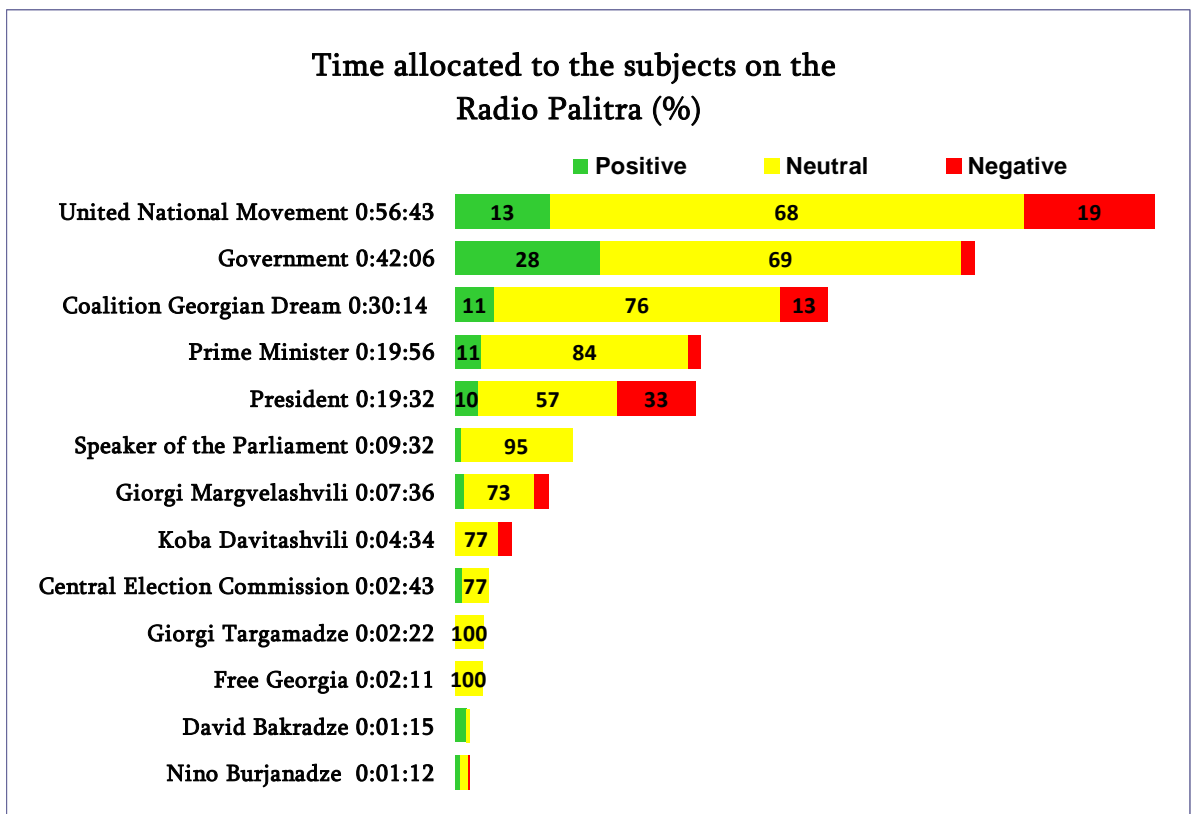
It is also noteworthy that the journalists prepared balanced stories about the main topics of the day, and covered the positions of various sides. In total, the news release was impartial.



Radio Palitra

Out of the time allocated to the monitoring subjects (3:21:17), Radio Palitra dedicated the most time to the United National Movement (28%), the government (21%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (15%). As for the coverage tone, it was mostly neutral towards all the subjects.

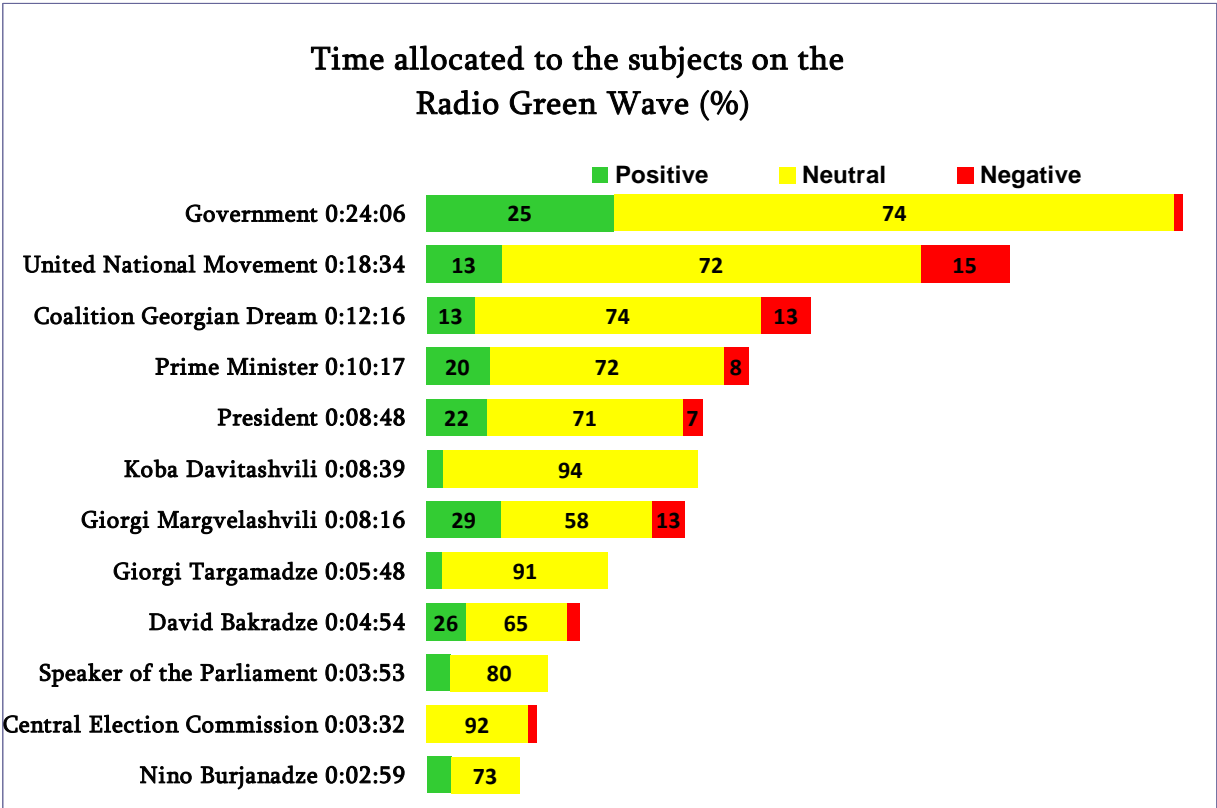
The journalists presented the news without any subjective evaluations, and the news items were mostly balanced. Extensive stories were prepared in connection to the main topics of the day, where the positions of stakeholders and expert analyses were presented.



Radio Green Wave

Radio Green Wave allocated the biggest share of time to the government (24 minutes), the United National Movement (18 minutes) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (12 minutes). In total, 1 hour and 55 minutes were allocated to the monitoring subjects.

The journalists did not make subjective evaluations and they also covered the direct speech of monitoring subjects as well. However, the news was still covered in a dry and superficial manner, which found its reflection on the quantitative data: negative tone has the minimum rate, and neutral tone prevailed in all the cases. The journalists rarely asked hard questions, did not go deep into the problems and did not try to cover the positions of interested sides or experts about the issue. In fact, the news was limited to the quotation of politicians' statements.

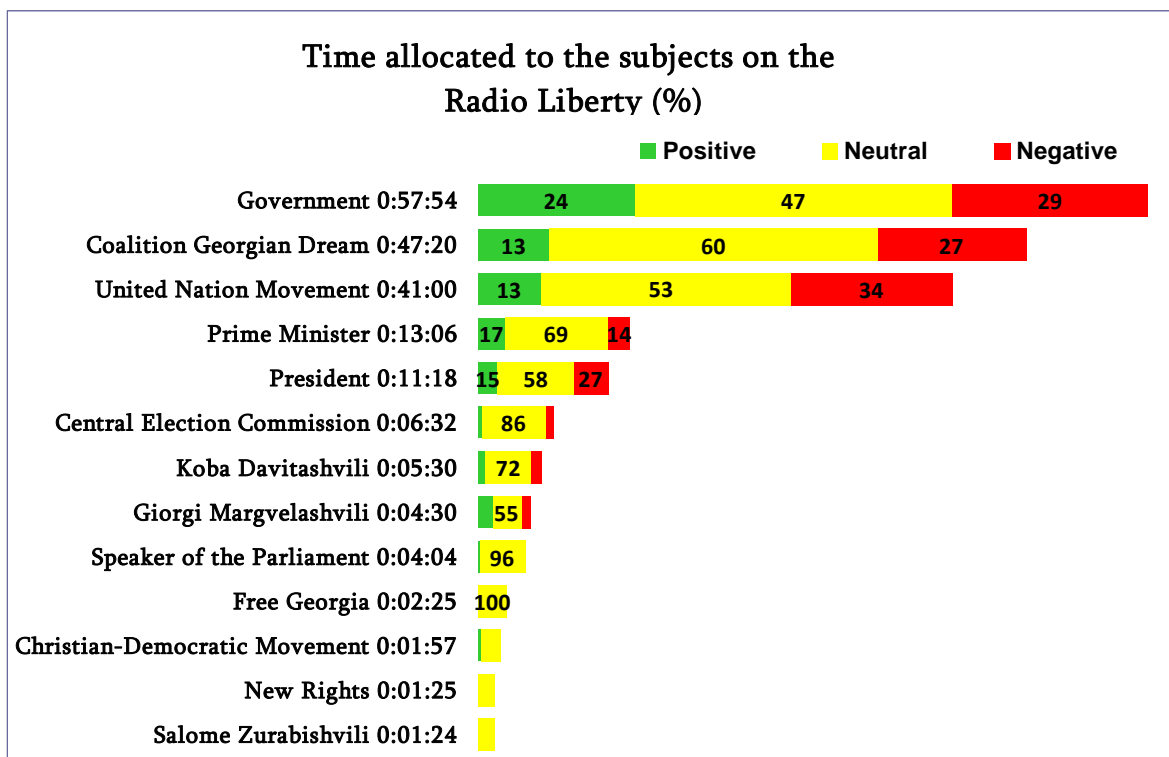


Radio Liberty

In total, the Radio Liberty allocated 3 hours and 25 minutes to the monitoring subjects. Among the covered subjects, the most time was dedicated to the government (58%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (47%) and the United National Movement (41). Compared to the previous reporting period, the time allocated to the Prime Minister and the indicator of positive coverage was reduced by 56%.

Among presidential candidates, the most time was dedicated to Koba Davitashvili, leader of the People’s Party and Giorgi Margvelashvili, candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream. In total, there were no cases of bias identified in news releases. Extensive stories were prepared in connection to the main topics of the day, which was

reflected on diverse tones. The journalists disseminated information that was double-checked with several sources, and allocated time to the subjects for direct speech as well.



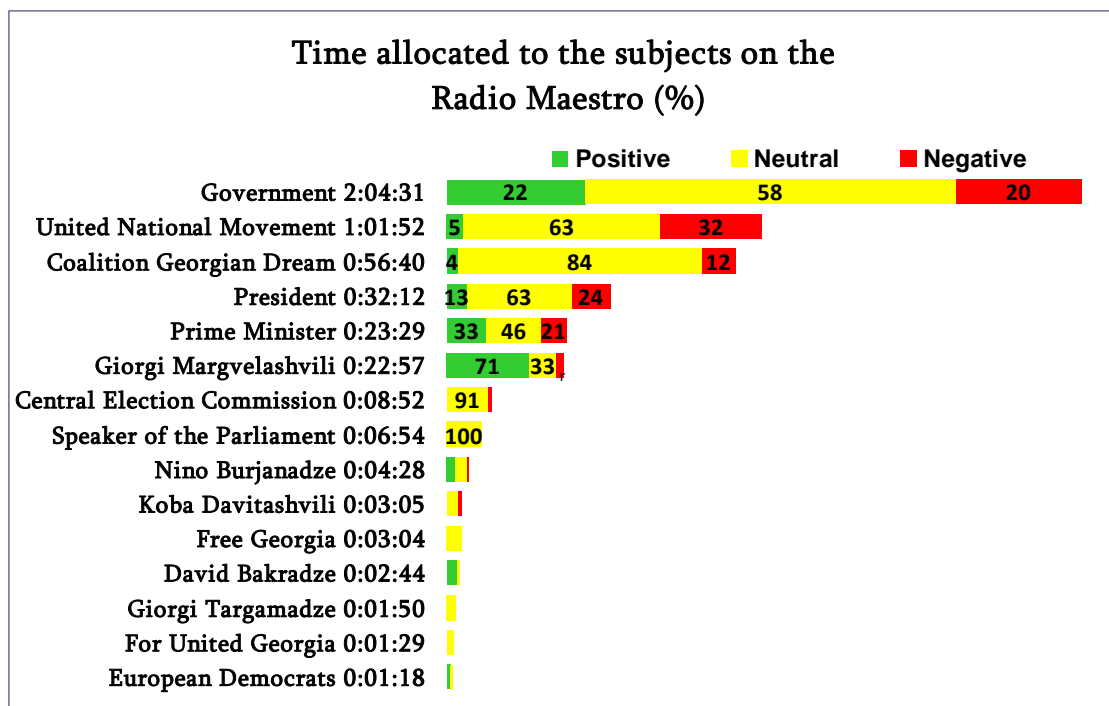
Radio Maestro

Radio Maestro allocated almost 6 hours to the coverage of monitoring subjects. Out of them, the most time was allocated to: the government (35%), the United National Movement (17%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (16%). It is noteworthy that the ruling team had the least indicator of negative coverage (12%), than the United National Movement (32%).

The share of direct speech was also distributed unequally. Whereas 28% of the time was allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili for direct speech, Davit Bakradze had a 100% of indirect coverage. The Coalition Georgian Dream (12%) and the Prime Minister had a bigger rate of direct coverage (20%) than the President (4%) and the United National Movement (6%).

The news stories often were not balanced: the journalists disseminated information superficially and based on one source only. For example, in the story broadcasted on August 1, the President was putting the blame on the Ministry of Defense and was stating that the soldiers are regularly poisoned by food. Coverage of this topic was

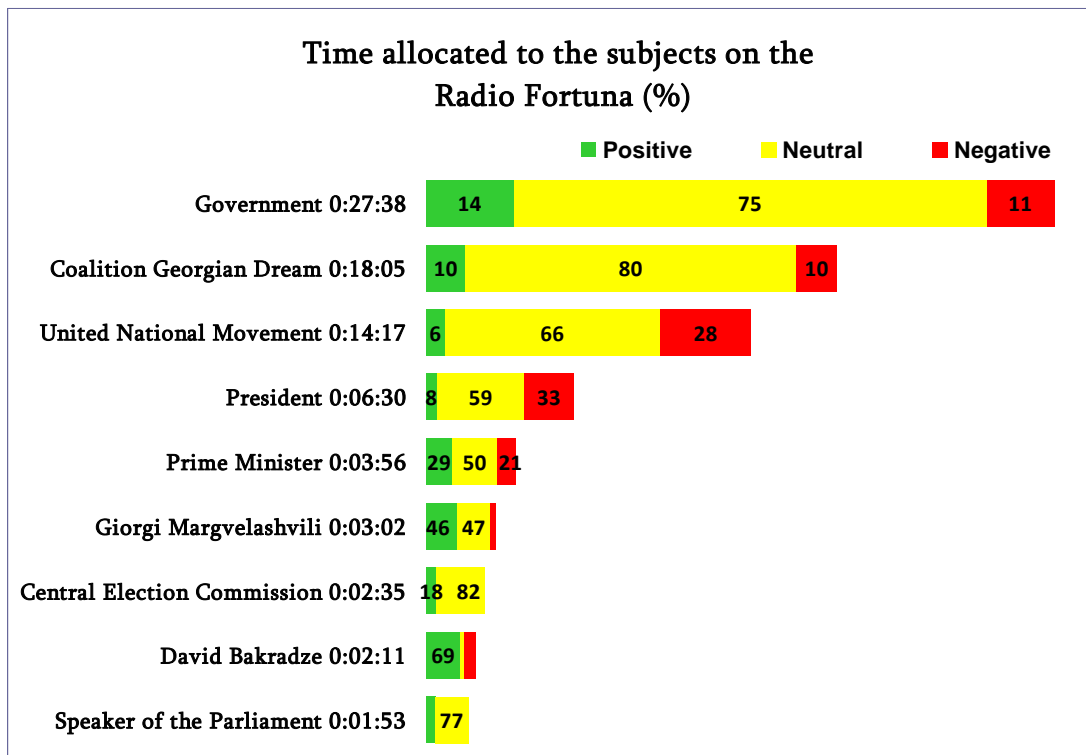
limited to the statement of Mikheil Saakashvili only: the journalist did not cover the position of the other side or tried to obtain additional information.



Radio Fortuna

Radio Fortuna covered the monitoring subjects for 1 hour and 23 minutes, out of which it dedicated 27 minutes to the government, 18 minutes to the Coalition Georgian Dream and 14 minutes to the United National Movement. As for the presidential candidates, their activities were less covered. Only Giorgi Margvelashvili and Davit Bakradze got more than a minute. There was almost no information broadcasted in the news about the election program of candidates. They were covered only when evaluating the opponents' comments or when there was a meeting with population.

Like the previous reporting period, the journalists were quoting the respondents' comments, but there were no comments with soundbites of monitoring subjects at all. Observation of the tone suggests that in total the United National Movement and the President happened to have a relatively bigger rate or negative coverage, than the ruling team and the Prime Minister. However, such distribution of tone did not result from the biased coverage and was not caused by the topics of the news. The journalists neither provided subjective evaluation, nor expressed negative or positive attitudes towards any candidate.

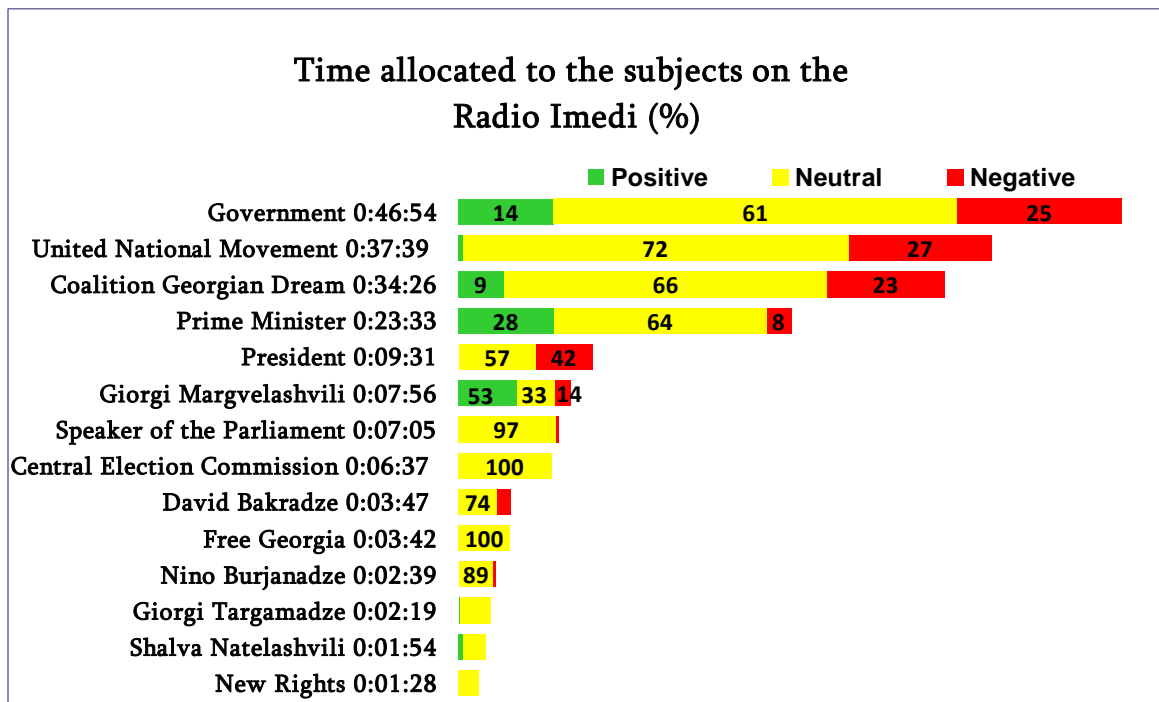


Radio Imedi

Radio Imedi covered the monitoring subjects for 3 hours and 11 minutes. The subjects also had an opportunity of direct speech.

The most time was dedicated to the government (25%) and the United National Movement (20%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (18%). They had the same indicator of negative coverage, but the indicator of positive coverage was less for the United National Movement.

In summary, it is possible to say that the news items are balanced. However, we have observed a trend of positive presentation of the presidential candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream. For example, the story prepared about the election monitoring report of the organization International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy did not cover the part that spoke about the participation of Giorgi Margvelashvili in the event that was funded from the budget. Besides, Giorgi Margvelashvili had a positive coverage during 53% of the allocated time, though less than 4 minutes was allocated to Davit Bakradze, and this was the coverage with neutral and negative tone only.

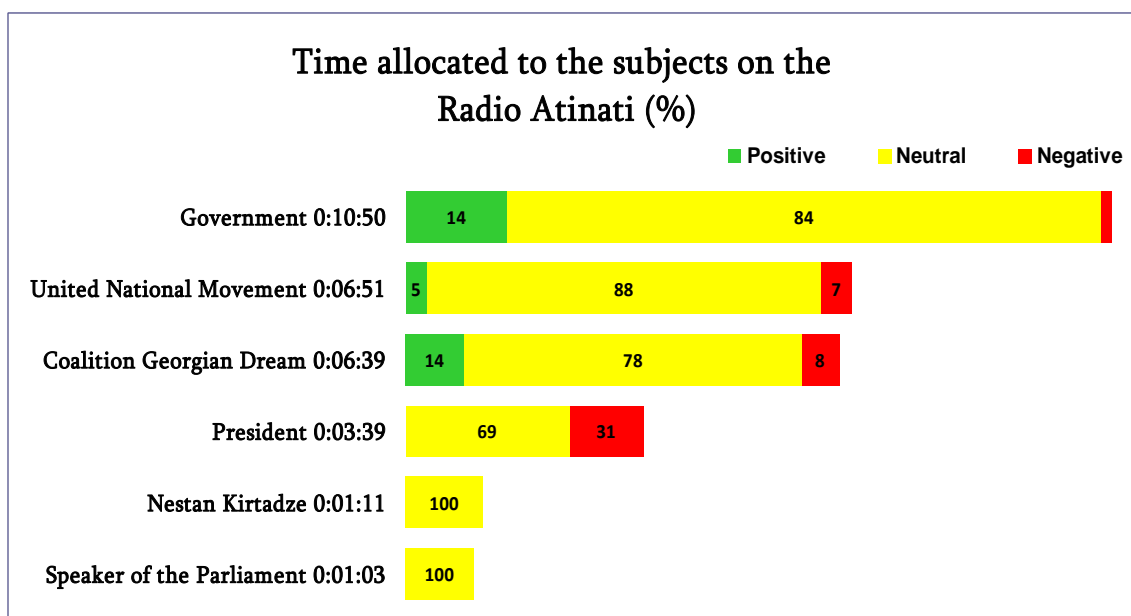


Radio Atinati (Zugdidi Town)

Only 35 minutes were allocated to the monitoring subjects in the air of Radio Atinati. It is noteworthy that there was almost no coverage for presidential candidates: more than a minute was dedicated only to Nestan Kirtadze (0:01:11).

During the reporting period the radio broadcaster mostly covered the events taking place in the region: they arranged vox-pop and prepared stories on local social problems. However, the journalists were limited only to the coverage of dry facts and rarely asked critical questions to the people in charge. Correspondingly, often the news was not presented exhaustively and was limited only to the stating a problem.

In total, the Radio Atinati covered the events impartially and did not express bias towards any of the monitoring subjects.

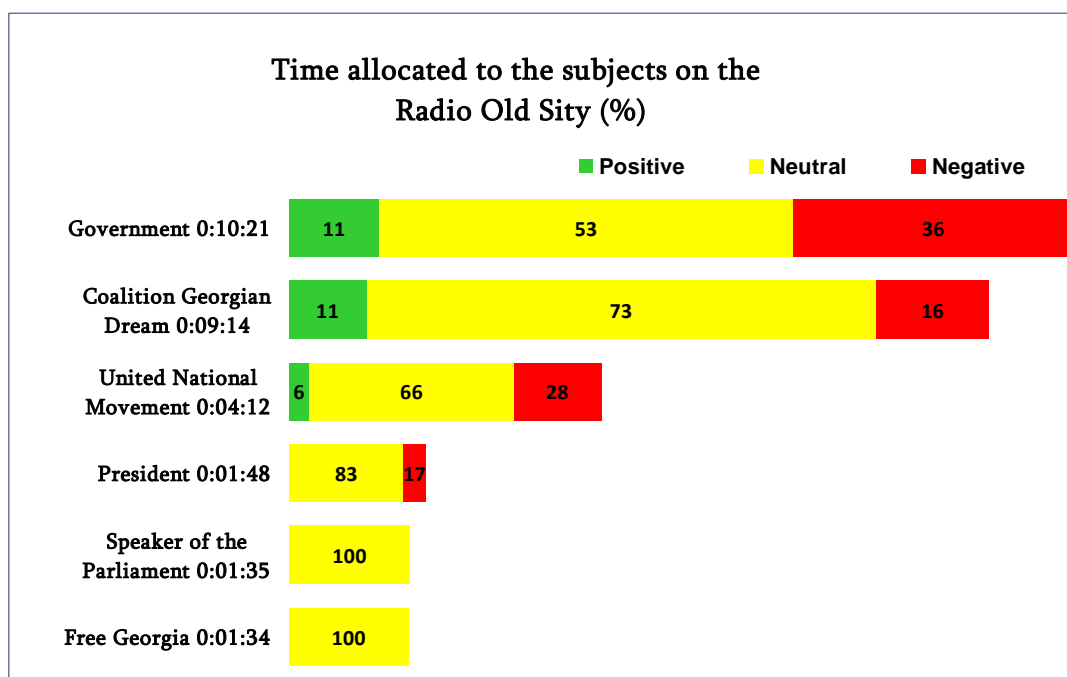


Radio Old City (Kutaisi City)

The Radio Old City temporarily discontinued the news programs for two weeks from August 5, consequently, only 32 minutes were allocated to the monitoring subjects during the reporting period. Out of this time 33% was dedicated to the government, 29% - to the Coalition Georgian Dream and 13 to the United National Movement.

Significant part of news releases on the Radio Old City dealt with the activities of representatives of the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement within the local government structures and changes in personnel. The journalists presented the events only by stating dry facts without analysis. Besides, there was a very little share of direct speech of subjects.

However, the journalists did not make subjective evaluations and covered the news impartially.

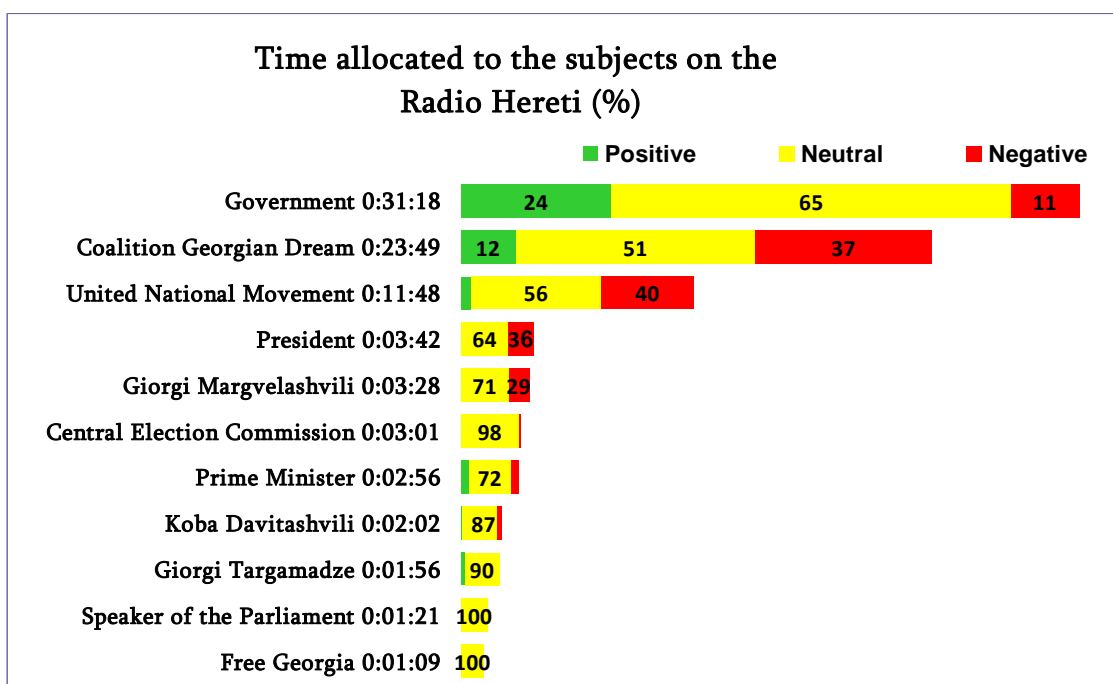


Radio Hereti (Lagodekhi Town)

Radio Hereti allocated 1 hour and 33 minutes for covering the monitoring subjects. The biggest share of time was allocated to the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream. Besides, the ruling party and the United National Movement had the same indicator of negative coverage: however, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the government were given more time for direct speech.

Hereti actively covered the national and regional events. The journalists allocated much time not only to the political, but also to the social topics, and presented the positions of officials in regards to the identified problems. Relatively less time was dedicated to the coverage of presidential candidates.

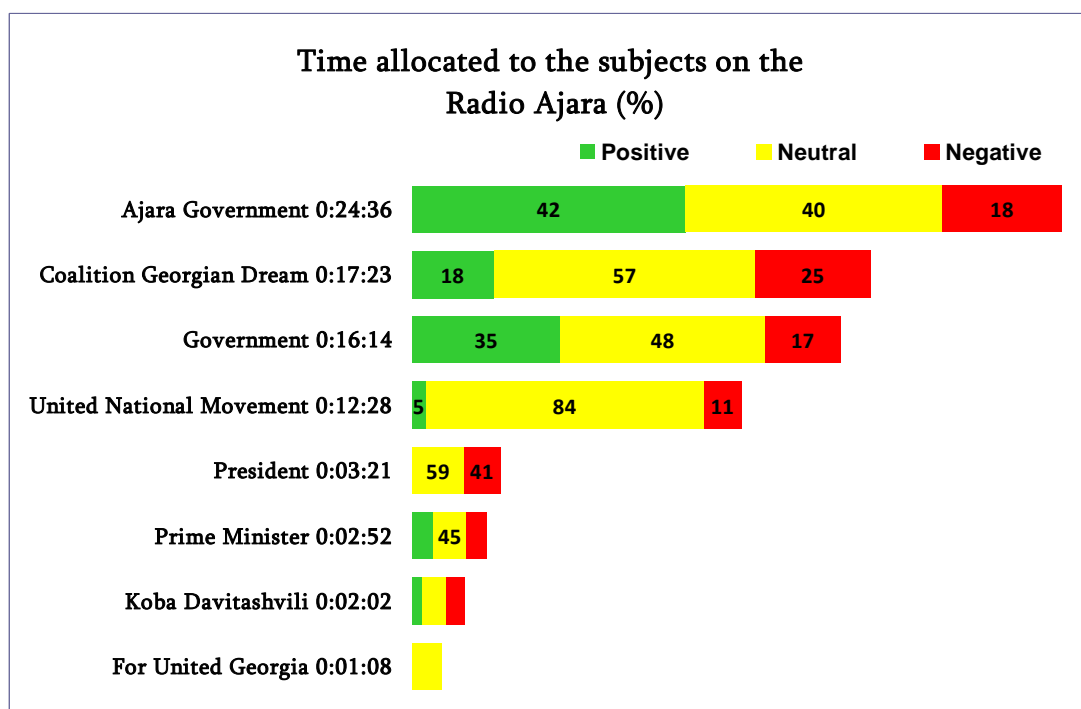
There are live broadcasts from the hotspots of events during the news releases, including the direct speech of monitoring subjects. However, compared to the previous reporting period, analytical stories were rarely produced and in some cases the journalists were spreading the information only based on one source.



Radio Adjara

Radio Adjara allocated 1 hour and 23 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 70% of this time was used for covering the government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the central government. Significant share of direct speech was used for direct speech in the news releases.

In general, the monitoring subjects were mostly covered with neutral tone, but the Government of Adjara was an exception, for which there was 42% of positive coverage out of the total time allocated to it. The trend of covering the authorities with positive tone is observed in general: governmental initiatives and projects to be implemented were covered superficially and without criticism. The journalists were limited only to the reporting of dry facts and rarely prepared analytical stories.



Conclusion

During the reporting period (July 16 – August 16) the radio broadcasters were mostly covering the monitoring subjects impartially. However, there was a lack of analysis and information sources observed in the stories. Despite the journalists did not disseminate the news based on anonymous sources, the broadcasted information was still unverified and often was based only on one source.

Compared to the previous reporting period, the coverage of presidential candidates has not increased significantly. Besides, the journalists did not ask the candidates about their vision for resolving this or that problem; the reporters covered them only when evaluating the comments of the opponents or while meeting with the population.

Regional broadcasters, unlike the previous reporting period, were not significantly distinguished from other radio broadcasters. Even in their cases, the stories were mostly limited to providing dry quotes of politicians' comments and superficial reporting of facts. The share of direct speech of subjects was reduced (especially in case of the Radio Atinati and the Radio Old City).

The unchanged trend was observed in case of all the radio broadcasters – the journalists did not make subjective evaluations and neither there were cases of manipulation with music/sound.