

Media Monitoring of Radios during Elections

August 17 –September 17

Internews-Georgia is carrying out the monitoring of radio channels within the framework 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.

Third-month monitoring of radio channels (August 17 – September 17) revealed the following key findings:

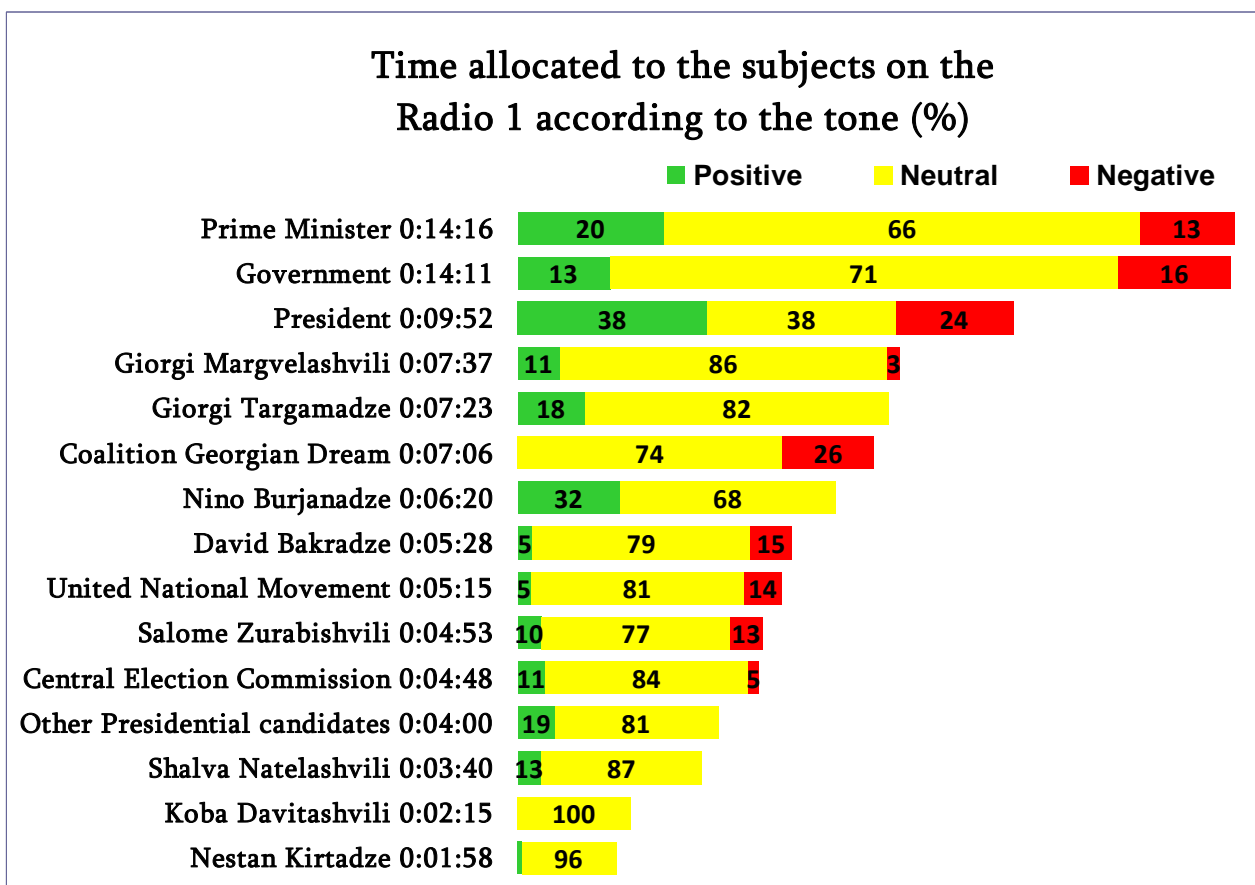
- Number of covered subjects increased during this reporting period, but the time allocated to the presidential candidates has not increased significantly;
- Among the presidential candidates, the most time was allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili, candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream;
- The reporters basically disseminated information about the meeting of presidential candidates with population and about opening their election headquarters: they provided a superficial coverage of election campaign and were reluctant to ask questions about the promises of candidates;
- Information was often disseminated based on one source only;
- The stories were often not balanced on majority of radio broadcasters;
- Superficial coverage still remains to be a main problem of news releases of radio channels. The themes of news were limited only to providing dry quotes of politicians’ statements;
- There were no cases of manipulation with sound/music revealed during the reporting period.

Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster)

Radio 1 allocated an hour and 26 minutes to the monitoring subjects in total. Among them, the most coverage time was dedicated to the Prime Minister (14%), the government (14%) and the President (10%).

It is noteworthy that the Coalition Georgian Dream was not covered with positive tone at all, which was caused by moving the coalition members to Nino Burjanadze’s party (Democratic Movement – United Georgia). At the same time, coverage of this topic increased Nino Burjanadze’s coverage rate in positive context.

The radio broadcaster was also distinguished with active coverage of presidential candidates as well. The stories were prepared about their activities on a daily basis. Radio 1 also provided coverage of the election campaign of those presidential candidates, to whom other radio broadcasters did not allocate any time. However, the reporters were basically limited to providing dry information about the candidates’ meeting with population.



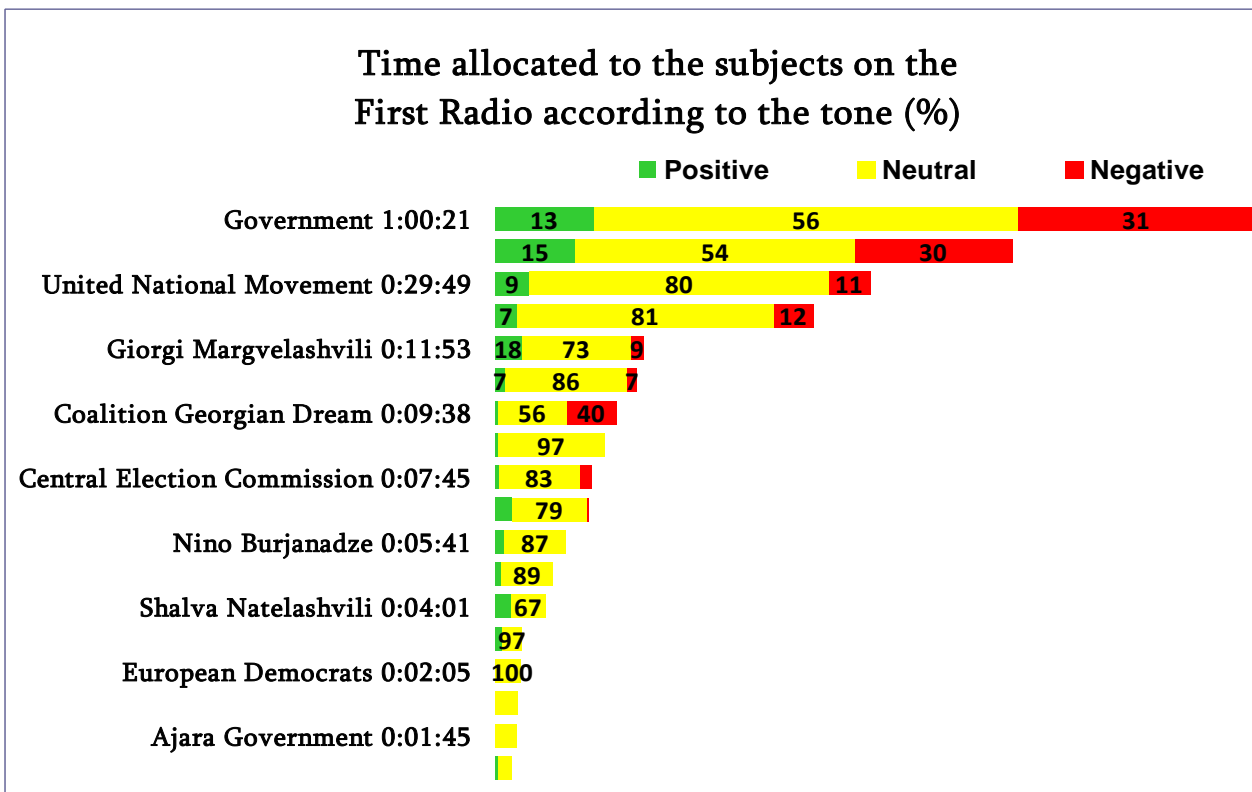
The First Radio

The First Radio covered the biggest number of monitoring subjects (18). It was also distinguished with diverse coverage of presidential candidates. Much time was allocated

to the direct speech of monitoring subjects in news releases (minimum 30% of time was allocated to the subjects for direct speech).

Out of presidential candidates, the most time, 11-11 minutes were allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili (Coalition Georgian Dream) and Giorgi Targamadze (Christian-Democratic Movement). In total, the journalists provided a superficial coverage of election campaign: they neither prepared analytical stories nor asked critical questions.

In most cases, the direct speech of representatives of the United National Movement and other presidential candidates presented the government, the Prime Minister and the Coalition Georgian Dream in a negative context; but the majority of the ruling team’s comments towards the monitoring subjects was basically neutral. A problem of insufficient balance should be added as well: the President often made extensive, critical and insulting evaluations about the ruling team, which was followed only by short comments by the other side. Consequently, compared to the previous reporting periods, the indicator of negative coverage has almost doubled for the government (31%), the Prime Minister (30%) and Giorgi Margvelashvili (12%, Coalition Georgian Dream).

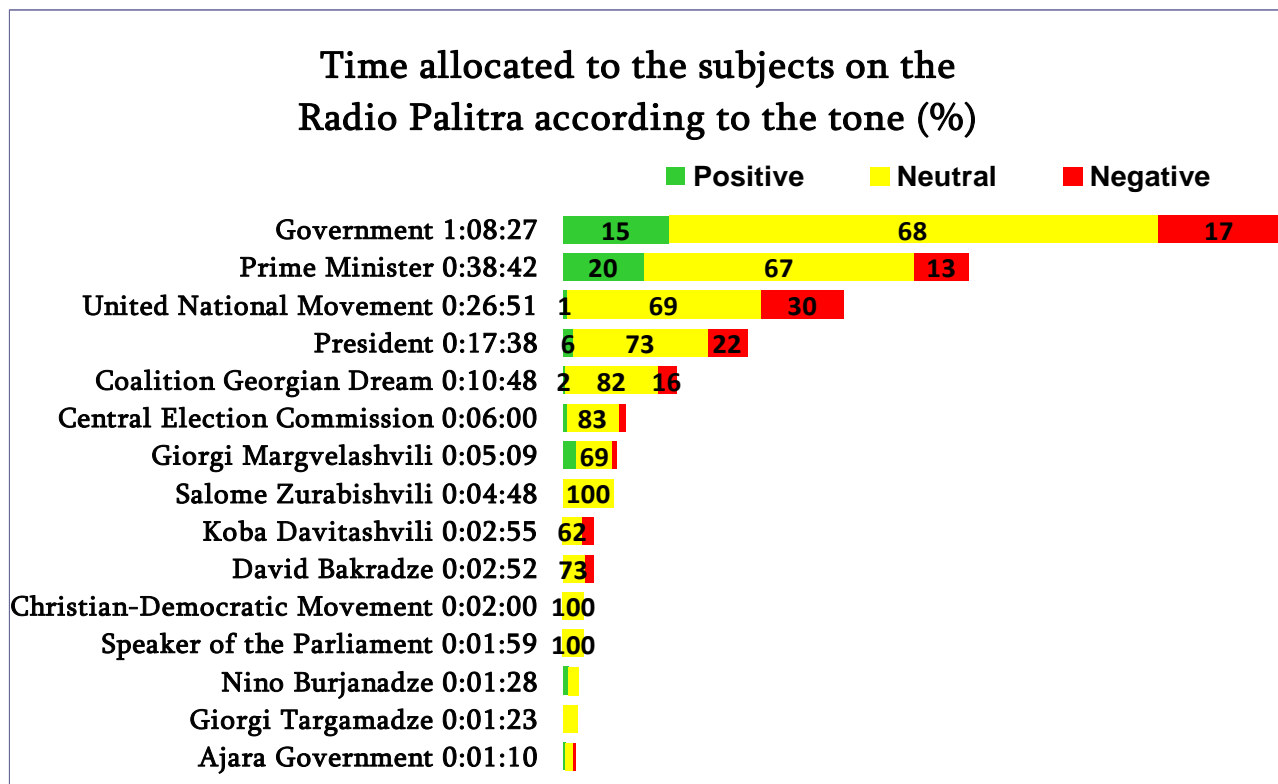


Radio Palitra

Radio Palitra dedicated 3 hours and 13 minutes in total to the coverage of political subjects. Major portion of time was allocated for covering the activities of the government (35%), the Prime Minister (19%) and the United National Movement (13%). However, the United National Movement was more negatively covered than the government and the Prime Minister, and almost no time was allocated to it in a positive context.

Like the previous reporting period, the most time was allocated in the news releases to Giorgi Margvelashvili (Coalition Georgian Dream) out of presidential candidates. At this stage, his rate of positive coverage increased by 13%. Compared to Giorgi Margvelashvili, coverage of Davit Bakradze, candidate of the United National Movement was twice as less. Besides, Davit Bakradze was not covered with positive tone, and 27% of time was dedicated to him in a negative context. As for other presidential candidates, as the elections got closer, we did not observe any sharp increase of their coverage.

To sum up, the reporters covered the events on time and without subjective evaluations.

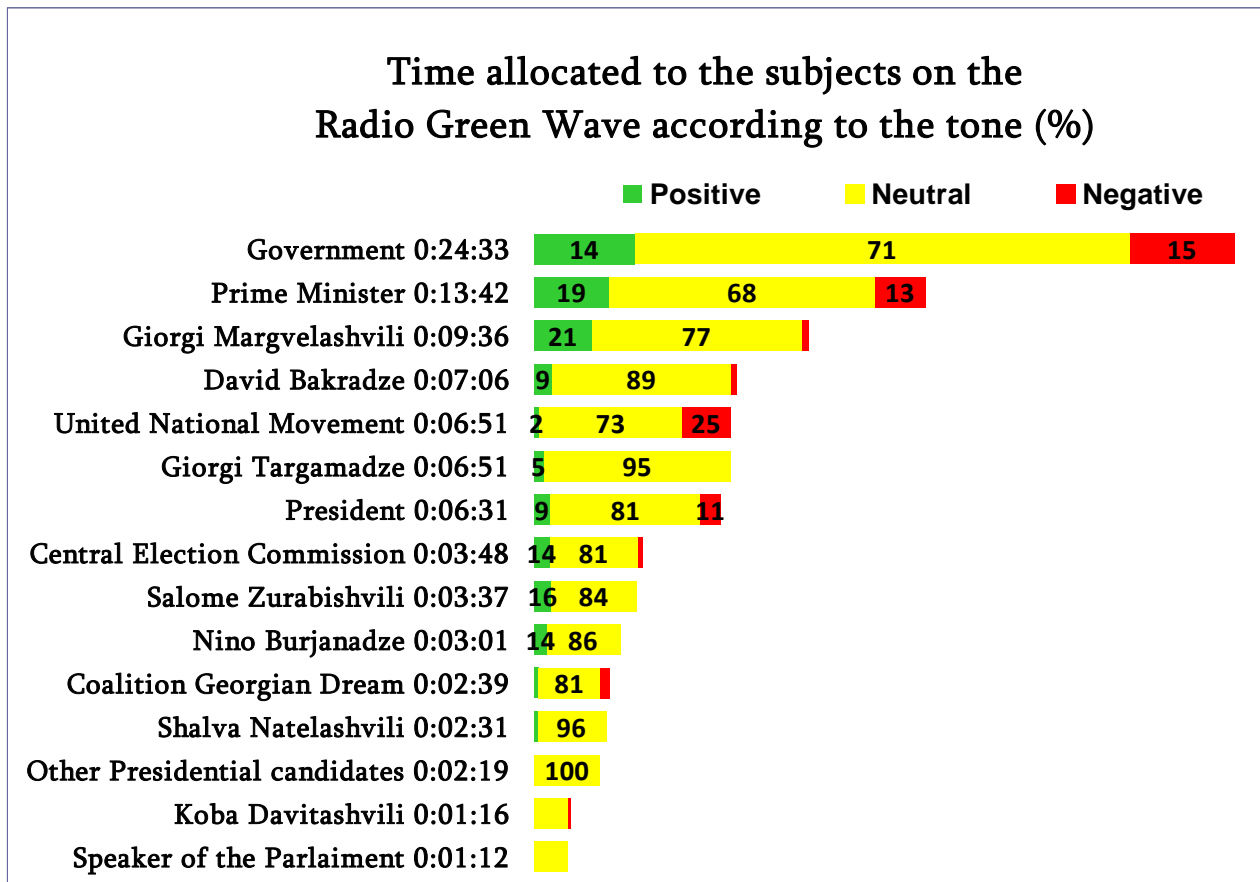


Radio Green Wave

Radio Green Wave was distinguished with its diverse coverage of monitoring subjects during the reporting period; in total, an hour and 37 minutes were dedicated to them.

Green Wave covered the biggest number of presidential candidates: There were stories prepared every day about the election campaigns of presidential candidates. However, the journalists disseminated information about the candidates' activities and election promises superficially and without asking critical questions. This finding is also supported by the quantitative data: in fact, none of the presidential candidates was covered with a negative tone.

Lack of balance was observed in some cases during the reporting period. Much more time was dedicated to the coverage of positions of one side, than those of the other. For example, there was a story about the Prime Minister's decision to leave politics on October 3, where the Prime Minister's decision was evaluated positively and no other opposing opinions were covered. Despite this, however, such cases did not end up in a pattern: Radio Green Wave was not clearly biased to any of the political subject.

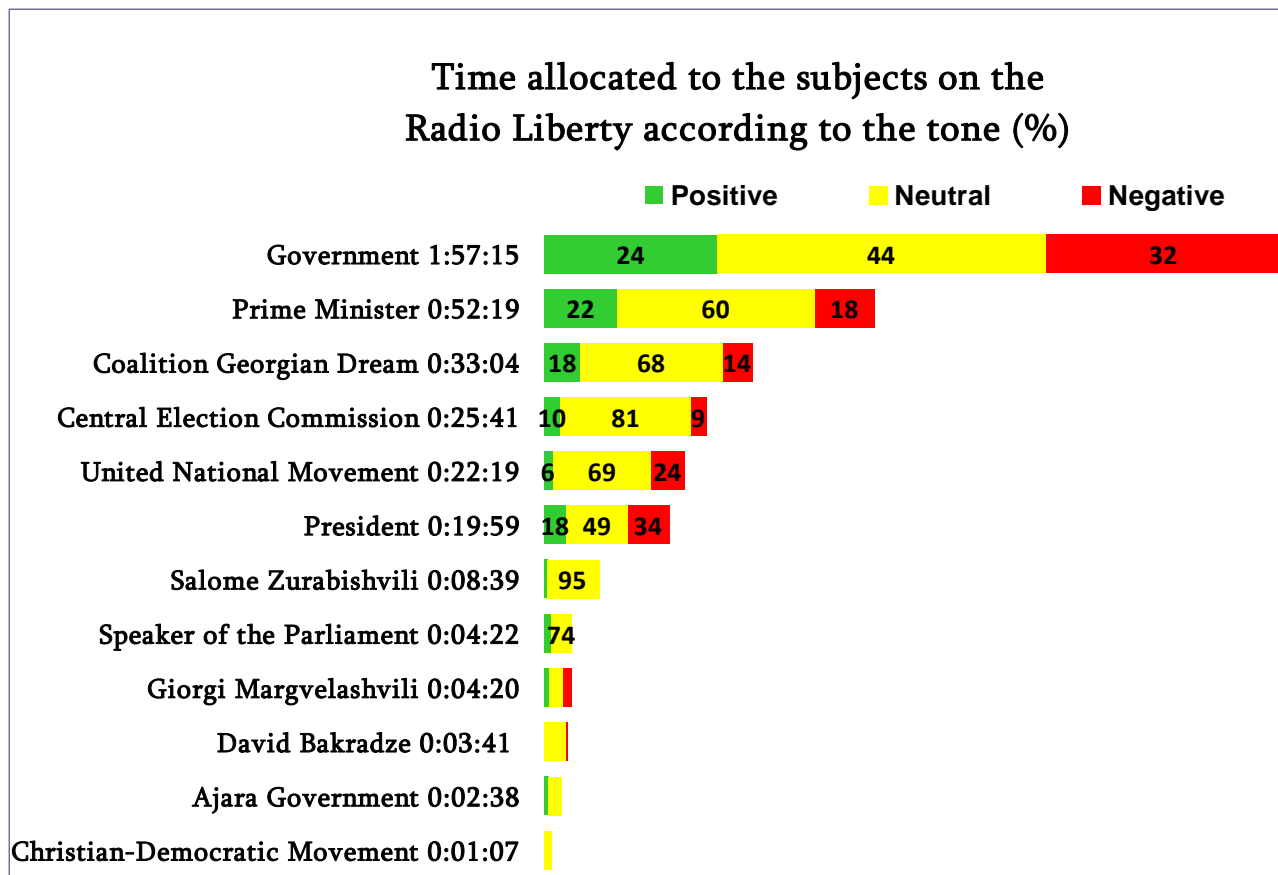


Radio Liberty

Radio Liberty allocated 5 hours to the coverage of monitoring subjects. 39% of this time was dedicated to the government, 19% - to the Prime Minister and 11% - to the Coalition Georgian Dream. The journalists prepared in-depth and critical stories about the activities of the authorities: they asked burning questions and covered the evaluations of opponents or experts. Consequently, the government was covered in a negative context for 32% of the allocated time.

Compared to the previous reporting periods, coverage of presidential candidates has not increased significantly. However, the radio broadcaster was distinguished as far as the journalists did not cover the candidates' meetings with population only, and also asked them about the ways to solve the problems in the country. For example, there was a news report where the evaluations and visions of presidential candidates were discussed about the economic problems of the country.

In total, the Radio Liberty provided an unbiased coverage of events, and was distinguished with its in-depth and analytical stories. Conclusions of journalists were always relevant to the information broadcasted in the story and were supported by facts. The news broadcasted about the main topics of the day were balanced: evaluations of not only the politicians, but also the experts and NGO sector were covered around the events. On average, 24% of time was allocated to the monitoring subjects for direct speech.

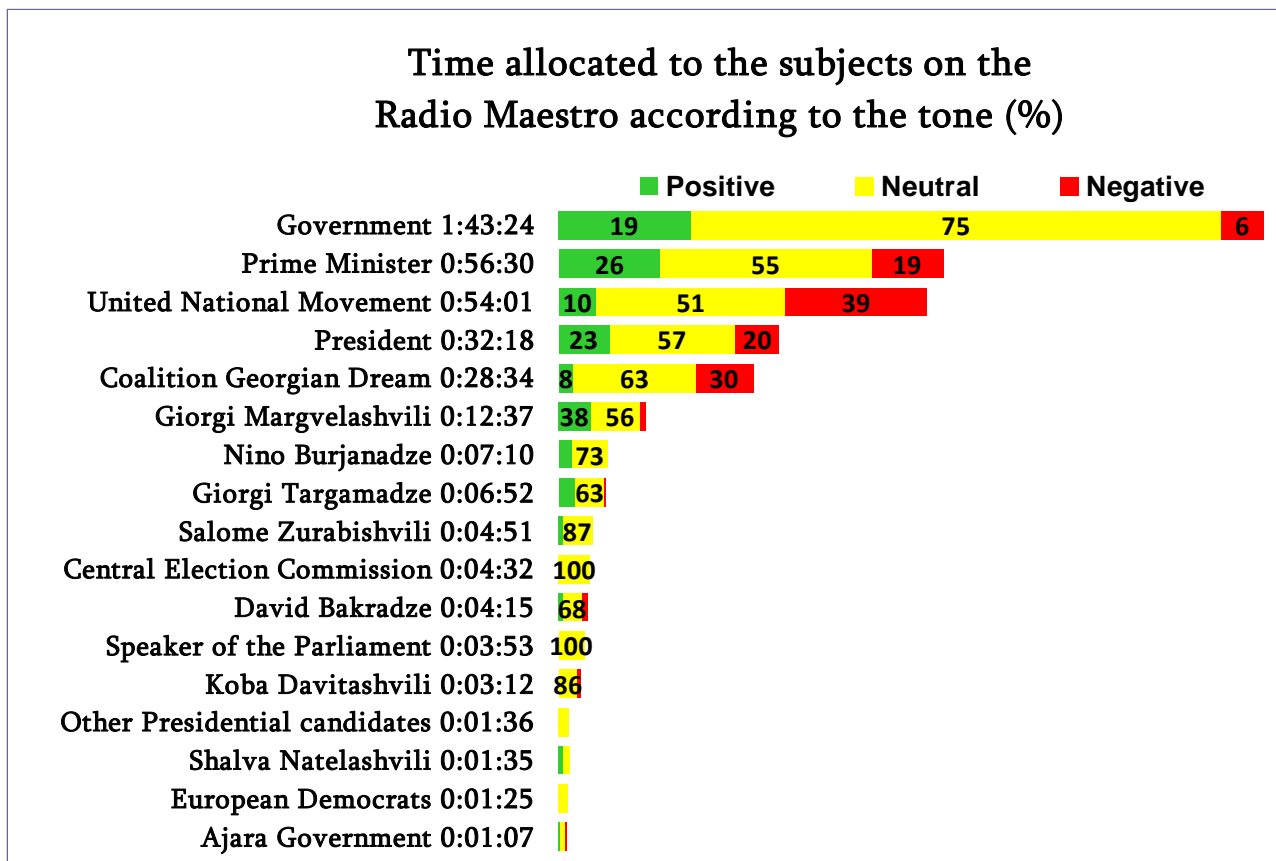


Radio Maestro

Timing of news releases on Radio Maestro exceeded the timing of all other radio broadcasters. Correspondingly, much time was dedicated to the coverage of monitoring subjects (5 hours and 28 minutes). 31% of this time was used for Prime Minister, 17% - for the government and 16% - the United National Movement.

Despite quite extensive news releases, the stories were still superficial, lacking the analytics. Besides, the direct speech of subjects was also covered less (on average, 6% of the allocated time). The journalists did not prepare extensive stories, where they would discuss different positions about the problem, or covered evaluations of experts or NGO sector. In fact, the entire news program is dedicated to the quotes of politicians' statements, where they did not have to answer to the critical questions of journalists.

The election campaign was also covered superficially. On average, the news release lasted for 40 minutes, but we did not observe any stories that would discuss the plans and election programs of presidential candidates. The journalists were not critical to them, which was reflected in the quantitative data: the time was allocated to the candidates only in positive and neutral tones.

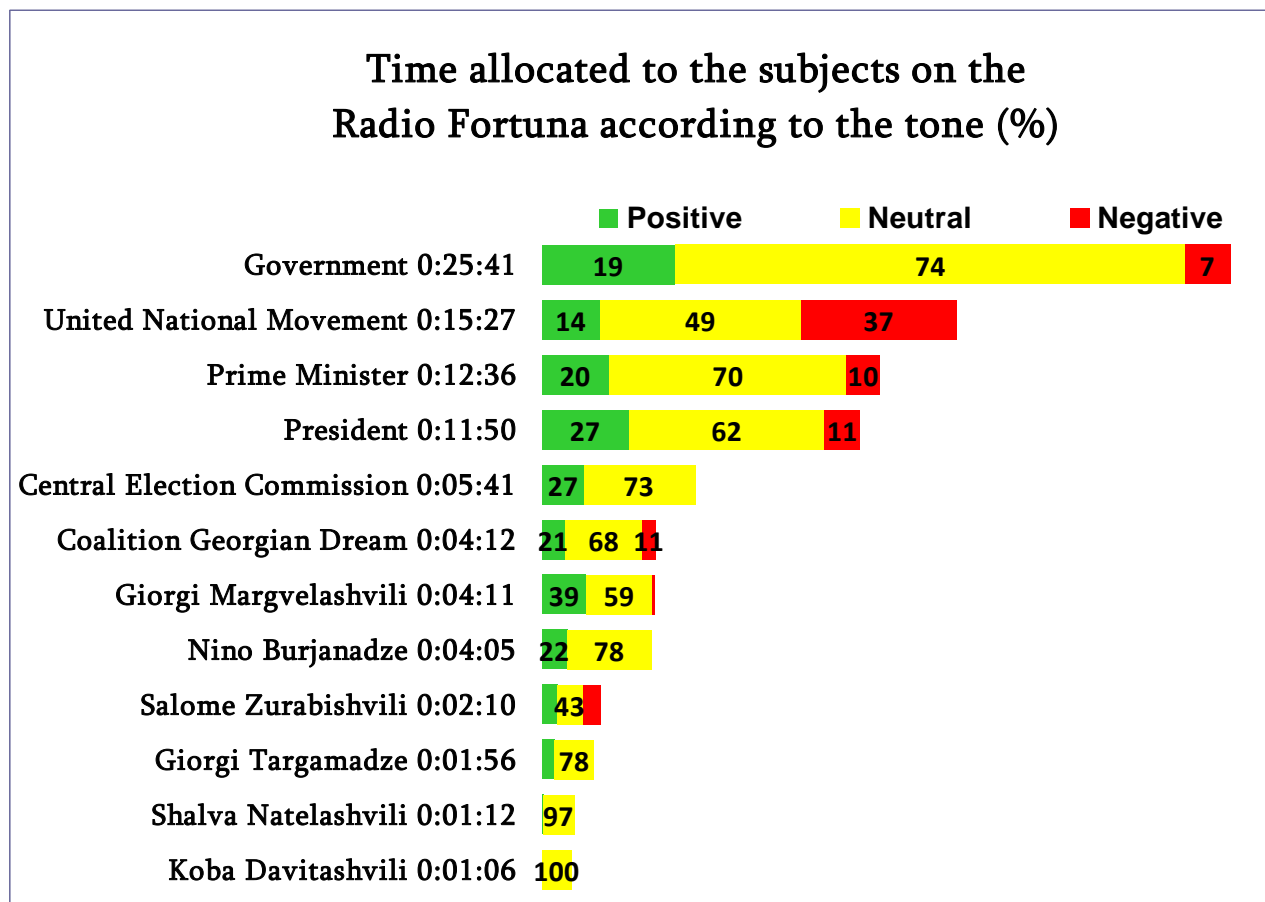


Radio Fortuna

Radio Fortuna dedicated an hour and 30 minutes to the monitoring subjects. Most share of this time was used for covering the government (28%), then comes the United National Movement with 11%, and the Prime Minister with 14%. The radio broadcaster did not allocate any time to the monitoring subjects for direct speech at all.

As for the coverage tone, the time allocated to the United National Movement in a negative context was three times more than to any other subject. It is noteworthy that the journalists did not make subjective evaluations and their text was impartial to any of the political forces. As for the coverage of the United National Movement in a negative tone, it was caused by the topics of the news.

In total, the news release does not exceed 5 minutes. The journalists are limited to providing dry quotes of the statements of politicians. Lack of analytics in the reports was applicable to the presidential candidates as well; this is why the time dedicated to them was only in positive and neutral tones.

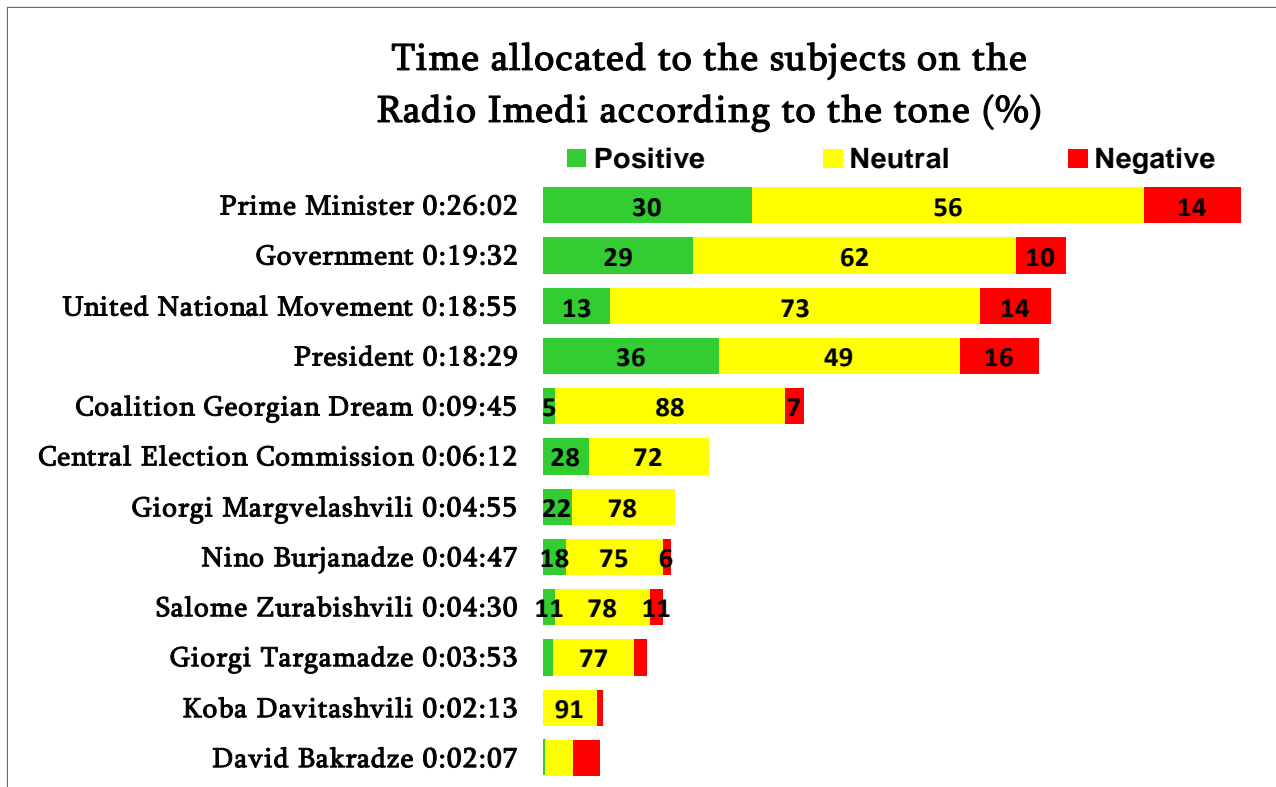


Radio Imedi

Radio Imedi covered the monitoring subjects for 2 hours in total. Most part of this time was dedicated to the coverage of the Prime Minister (21%), the government (15%) and the United National Movement (15%). Other than Davit Bakradze (the United National Movement), all the subjects had an opportunity of direct speech (on average, 59% of the allocated time).

The journalists provided an impartial coverage of the news and prepared balanced stories in connection with the main topics of the day, where they presented different positions. Such coverage was also reflected on diversity of tones. However, even in this case, the journalists were covering the politicians when they were evaluating the opponents' statements, and they almost never asked questions themselves, and thus the lack of analytical stores was observed.

As for the presidential candidates, the journalists provided a dry coverage of their election campaign, and the questions about the candidates' attitude to particular problems remained unanswered.

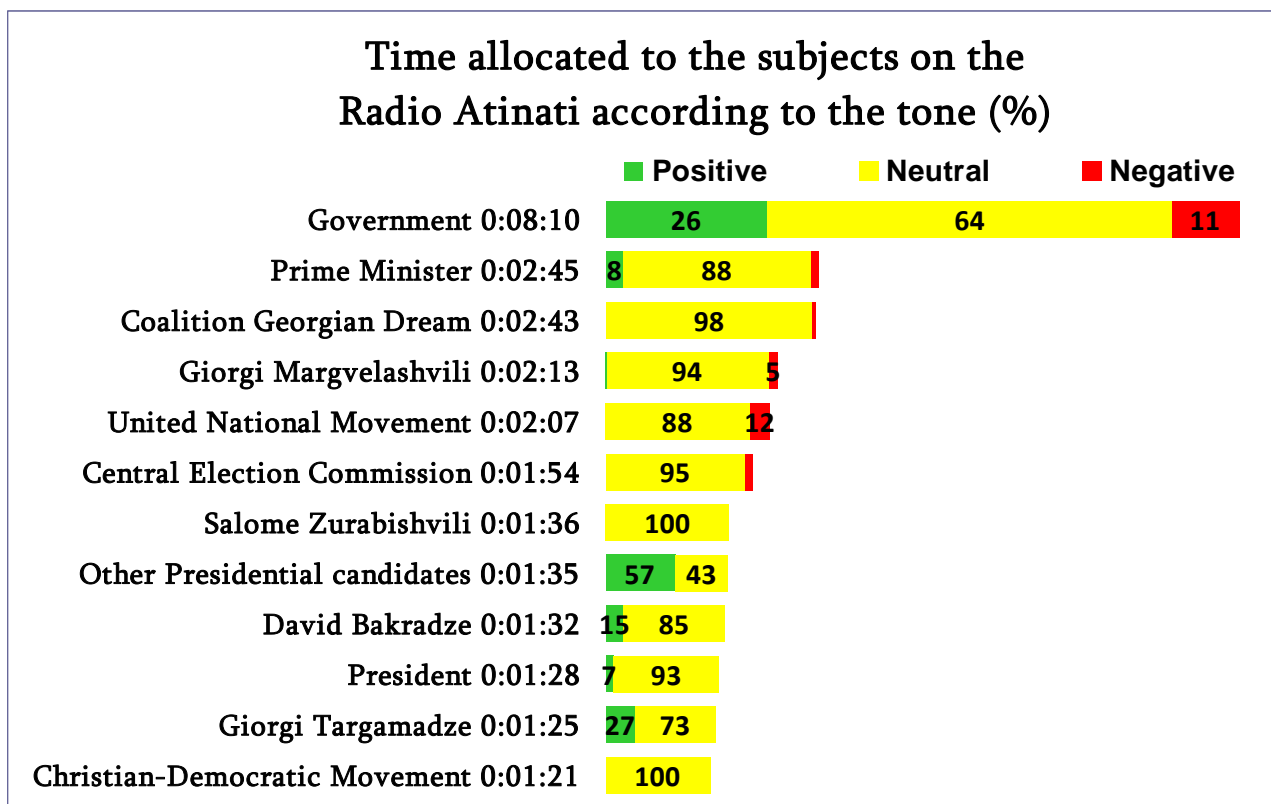


Radio Atinati (Zugdidi Town)

In total, 31 minutes were dedicated to the monitoring subjects on Radio Atinati. Due to the timing, the news releases were not distinguished with diverse coverage of the monitoring subjects. The news releases provided the direct speech of the subjects, but in most cases the journalists quoted the comments themselves.

It is noteworthy that 50% of the time allocated to the subjects was used for covering the government, the Prime Minister, the Coalition Georgian Dream and its presidential candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili. Despite the elections got closer, the time allocated to the presidential candidates has not increased on Radio Atinati.

Overall, the journalists did not make subjective evaluations, but neither did they ask critical questions, and mostly were limited to dry coverage of material only.



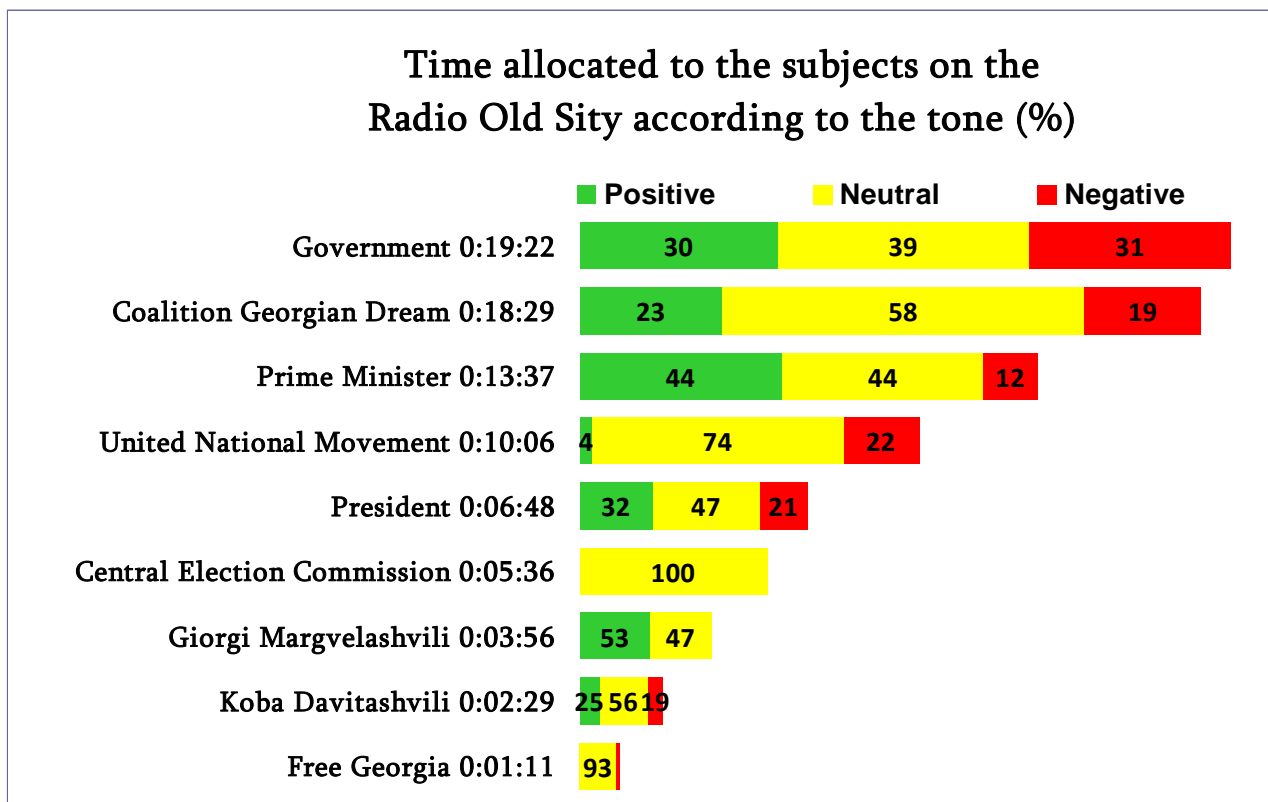
Radio Old City (Kutaisi City)

Radio Old City covered the monitoring subjects for an hour and 25 minutes in total. 23% of this time was dedicated to the government, 22% - to the Coalition Georgian Dream, 16% - to the Prime Minister. Compared to the previous reporting period, the share of direct

speech increased as well: there were only three subjects that had an opportunity of direct speech before, but now this indicator increased up to seven subjects.

The radio broadcaster disseminated information superficially and without analysis. Despite the news programs were not clearly biased to any of the political sides, there were several clearly positive stories prepared about the election campaign of Giorgi Margvelashvili (Coalition Georgian Dream). The journalists covered the activities of presidential candidate of the Coalition Georgian Dream without any criticism. Consequently, the share of positive context was 53% out of the time allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili.

In total, superficial coverage of the news and lack of sources of information remained to be a problem. The journalists were limited to making quotes of the politicians' statements, and did not really ask burning questions.



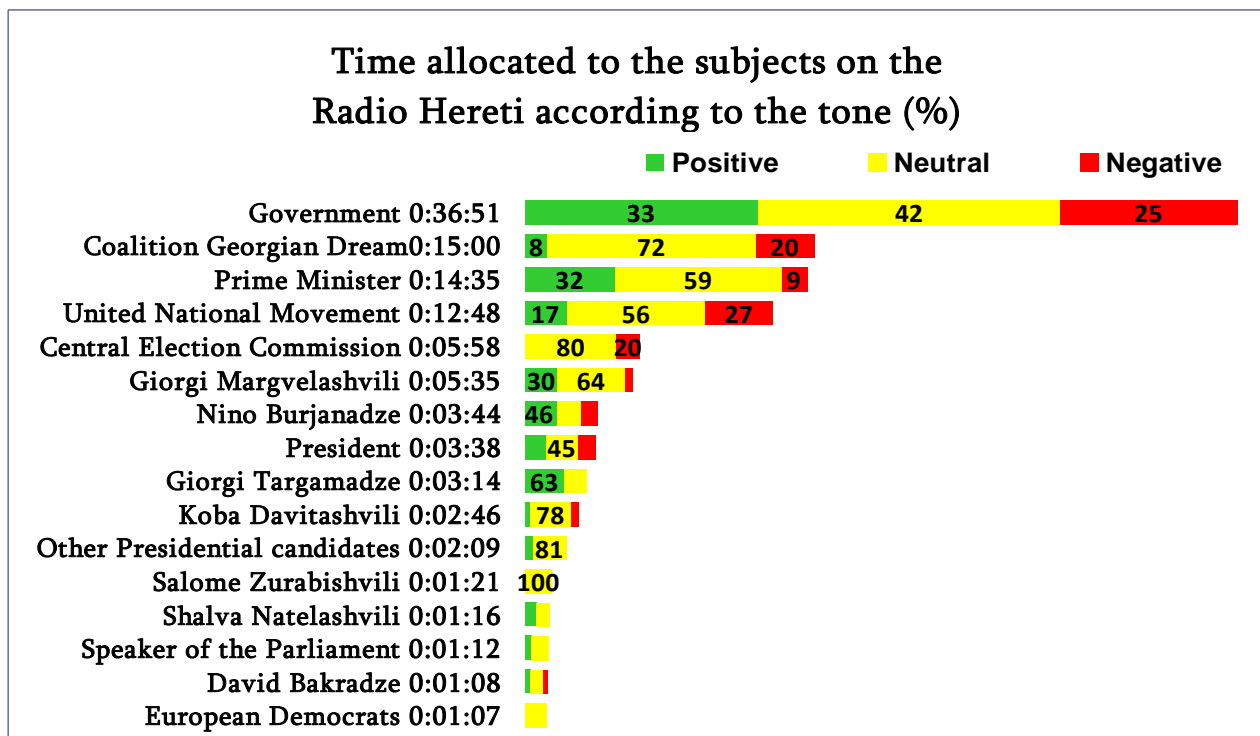
Radio Hereti (Lagodekhi Town)

Radio Hereti actively covered the regional and central political events of the country: in total, an hour and 53 minutes were dedicated to the monitoring subjects. Out of them 32%

of time was allocated for covering the government, 13-13% - the Coalition Georgian Dream and the Prime Minister. On average, about 30% of the time was dedicated to the monitoring subjects for direct speech.

Coverage of presidential candidates increased during the reporting period. For example, a separate block was dedicated to the presidential candidates and their election campaign on September 3. However, such reports were basically limited to the quoting of candidates' statements, and the lack of critical coverage was observed.

The journalists often prepared stories on social topics; they covered the problems of people and asked questions to the representatives of the authorities about the ways to solve them. The stories were mostly balanced and presented the positions of various sides. Like the previous reporting periods, the Radio Hereti provided an unbiased coverage of events.



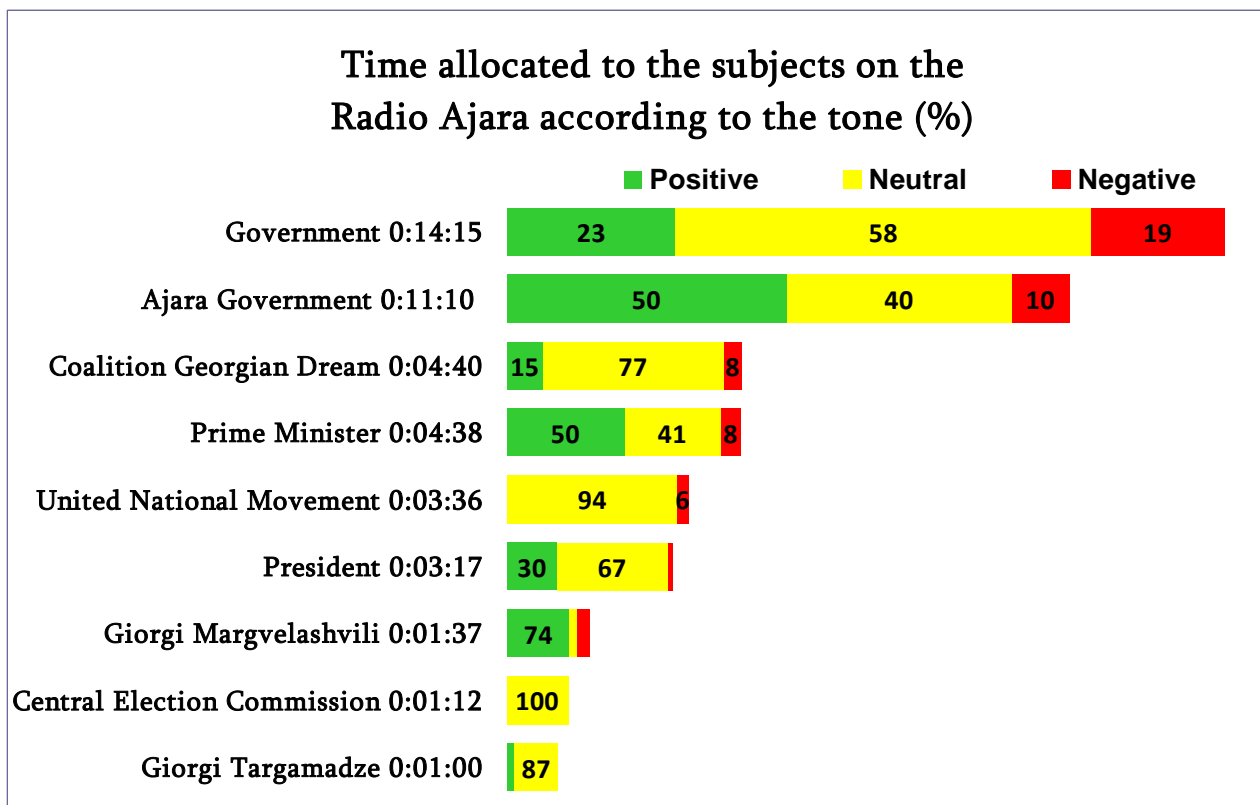
Radio Adjara

Radio Adjara covered the monitoring subjects only for 48 minutes, which is less by 43% than the previous reporting period. The most time was dedicated to the government (14 minutes), the government of the Adjarian Autonomous Republic (11 minutes) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (4 minutes). As for the presidential candidates, only Giorgi

Margvelashvili (Coalition Georgian Dream) and Giorgi Targamadze (Christian-Democratic Movement) were allocated more than a minute.

The news broadcasted in the news programs were dry and often were based only on one source. The journalists almost never asked critical questions, and activities of the authorities were covered without any analysis. This was also reflected in the quantitative data as well: government of the Adjarian autonomous republic and the Prime Minister were covered in a positive context for 50% of time. Besides, unlike the previous reporting period, the share of direct speech of the monitoring subjects decreased by 56%.

In total, most part of the news reports were unbalanced and presented the positions of one side only.



Conclusion

During this reporting period, main emphasis was laid again on the coverage of activities of the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream, the Prime Minister and the United National Movement.

Despite the polling day is getting closer, the coverage of presidential candidates has not increased significantly: compared to other monitoring subjects, again little time was allocated to them as before. Mostly, they covered the candidates' meetings with the public: the journalists limited themselves only to providing dry quotes of their statements, and did not ask the candidates about specific ways of resolving the problems. In total, the lack of analysis and cortical questions remains to be a general problem of radio channels.

Compared to previous reporting periods, the problem of balance has become more evident. The stories often relied on one source only, provided positions of one side; and the journalists did not discuss the issue from different angles. Besides, there were news reports where the monitoring subjects were presented in a clearly positive context, but such violations are just exceptional cases for now, and cannot be considered to be a general trend. Basically, the journalists did not make subjective evaluations and covered the events impartially as well.