



Election Monitoring of Radio Channels

October 27 – November 15

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 Ajara.

News release monitoring of radio channels (October 27 – November 15) revealed the following key findings:

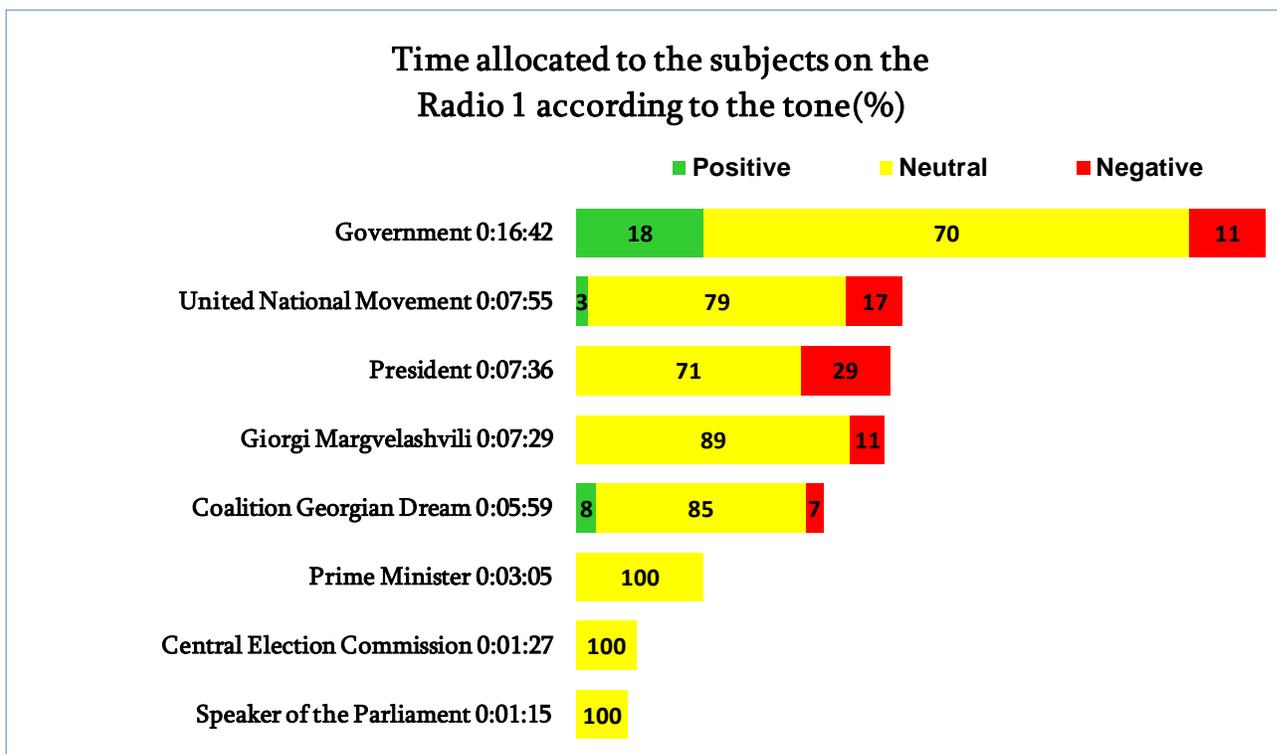
- The Government, the “United National Movement” and the coalition “Georgian Dream” were provided with largest portion of time;
- During the election day majority of radio channels provided radio listeners with operative information about the voting process;
- Starting from November 1 the candidates, except for the election winner Giorgi Margvelashvili, were provided with almost no time any more;
- Stories were often based on one source only and disseminated information was never verified with various sources;
- Lack of critical questions asked by journalists still remained an issue after the elections similar to the pre-election period. The stories were usually limited to pure quotation of politicians’ statements;
- Instances of tendentious coverage of certain political parties made only in positive or negative context decreased further after the elections;
- Journalists were not making subjective evaluations and cases of manipulating with a voice/music or using hate speech were not registered.

“Radio 1” (Public Broadcaster)

Radio 1 allocated 53 hours to the monitoring subjects. 31% of that time was used to cover the Government, 15% - the “United National Movement” and 14% - the President of Georgia. Apart from the parliamentary minority, the opposition parties were not allocated more than 1 minute of time. Besides, no other candidates but the election winner Giorgi Margvelashvili were covered.

The aired news releases were mainly of a descriptive character and no critical approach was observed while covering the activities of the monitoring subjects. Journalists were limited to quoting politicians’ statements and the subjects were not provided with time for direct speech. Such a shallow coverage resulted in a high rate of neutral coverage.

Journalists were not reported to be violating journalism ethics standards or be engaged in biased coverage.



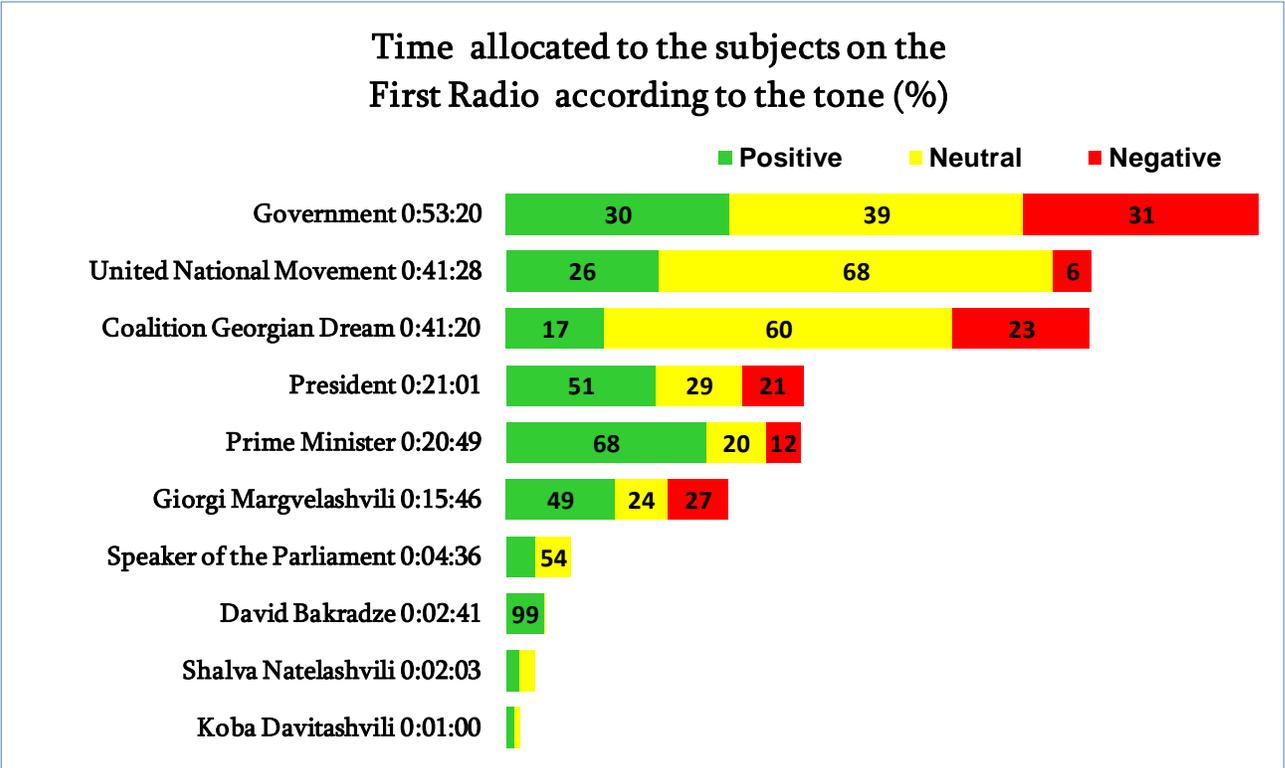
“The First Radio”

„The First Radio“ allocated 3 hours and 25 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 26% of that time was used to cover the Government, while 20-20% - the “United National Movement” and the

coalition “Georgian Dream”. More than half of the time allocated to the subjects was used for the purposes of a direct speech that reflected on increase of positive and negative tone.

The news release format did not change on the voting day: journalists prepared stories about situation on election precincts that were mainly limited to coverage of politicians’ statements.

As opposed to the previous reporting period, there was no tendency of covering the government in a negative context whatsoever. Journalists asked less critical questions and covered events without subjective evaluations.

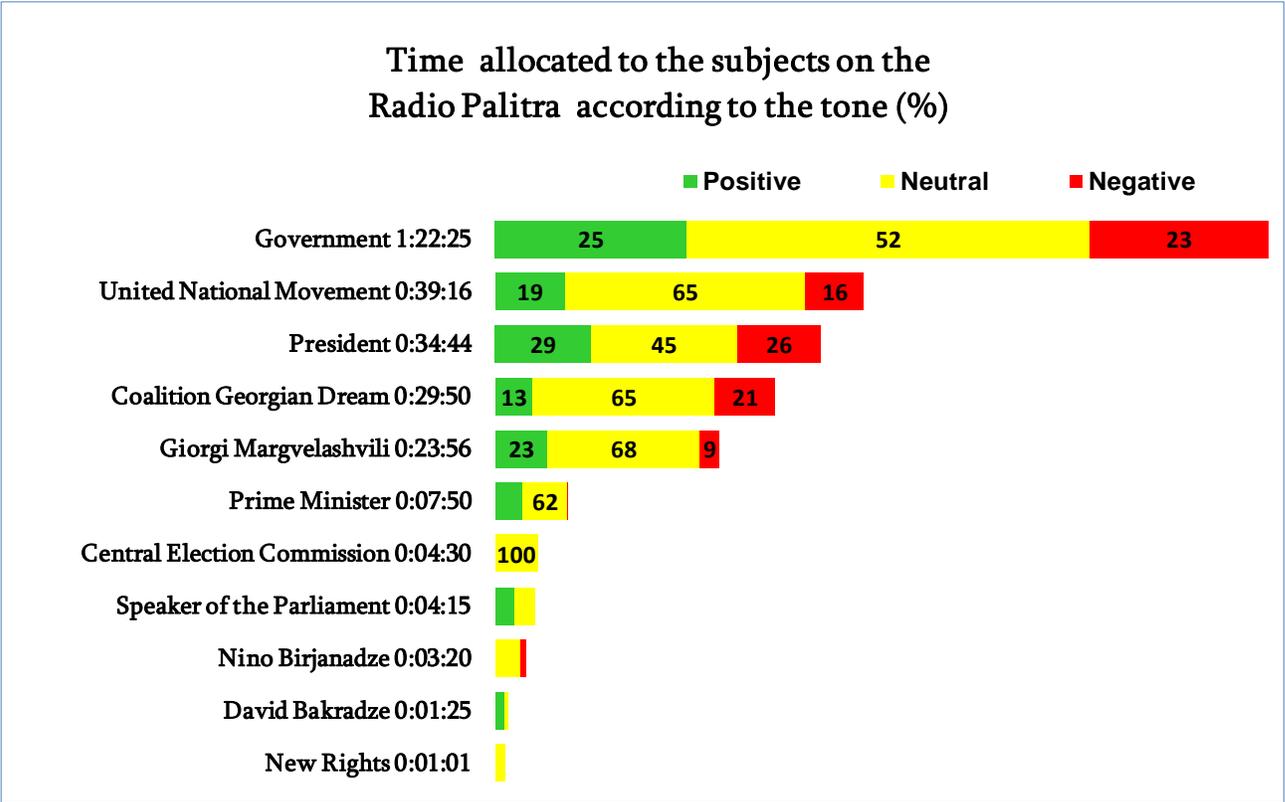


Radio „Palitra“

Radio “Palitra” allocated 3 hours and 55 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 35% of that time was used to cover the Government, 17% - the “United National Movement” and 15% - the President Mikheil Saakashvili. On the voting day, October 27, the news release was totally devoted to the election topic: the stories covered live reporting from the event spots, where journalists were operatively covering events taking place at election precincts and offices of political parties.

In general, the journalists were not limited to shallow coverage of events and they asked critical questions concerning politicians’ activities. For instance, the journalists tried to figure out what kind of threats might be possibly hidden in certain decisions of the Government.

The radio “Palitra” stories were balanced. The representatives of the Government, as well as the opposition and civil sector were enabled to express their opinion. Diverse coverage of events contributed to tone diversity as well.



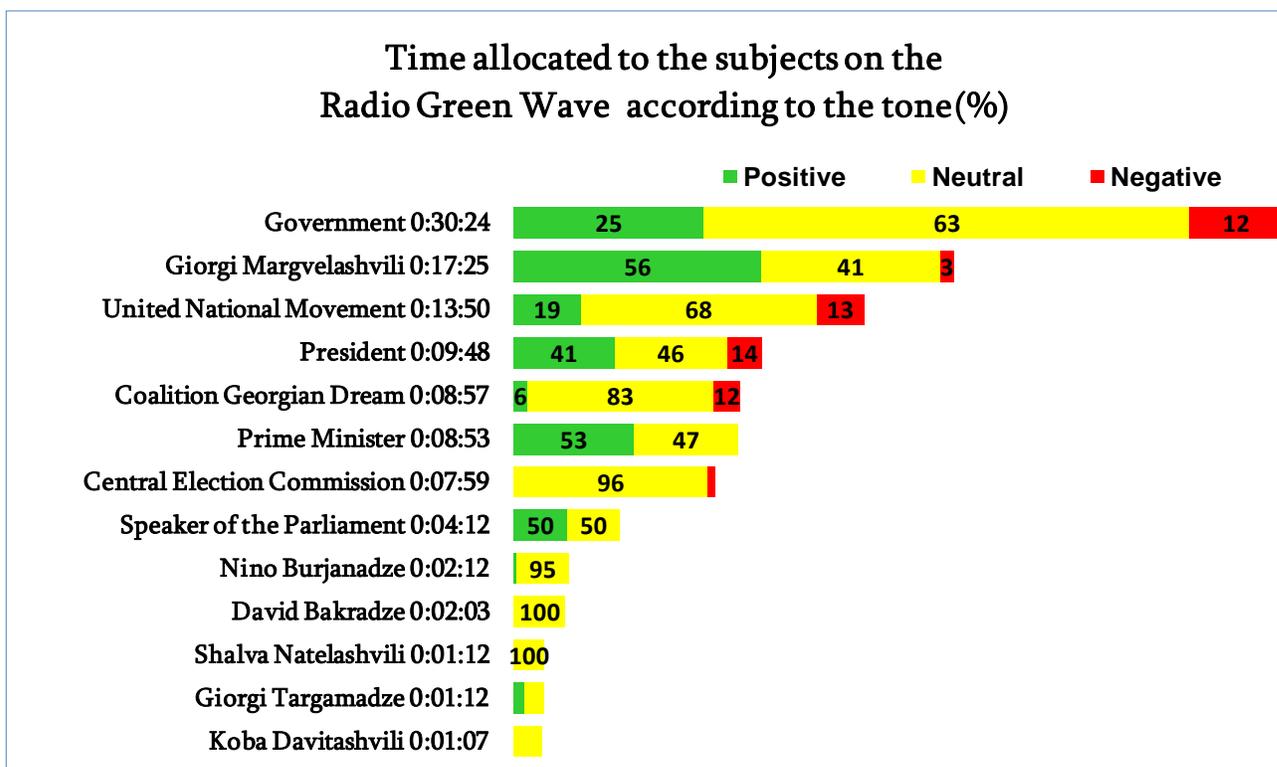
Radio “Green Wave”

Radio “Green Wave” allocated 1 hour and 50 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The largest portion, 28% of that time was used to cover the Government, then 16% - the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili and 13% - the “United National Movement”.

Specifically large news release was prepared for the voting day: the stories described situation existing on election precincts, statements made by politicians upon voting and violations registered by observers. The radio broadcaster was working operatively throughout October 27.

After announcement of the election results the news program returned to its usual format. The journalists kept covering events shallowly.

The radio “Green Wave” covered events impartially; it was not tendentious towards any political force. One would come across direct speech of monitoring subjects covered in stories. Lack of critical questions, evidenced by a high rate of positive tone coverage, however, remained an issue.



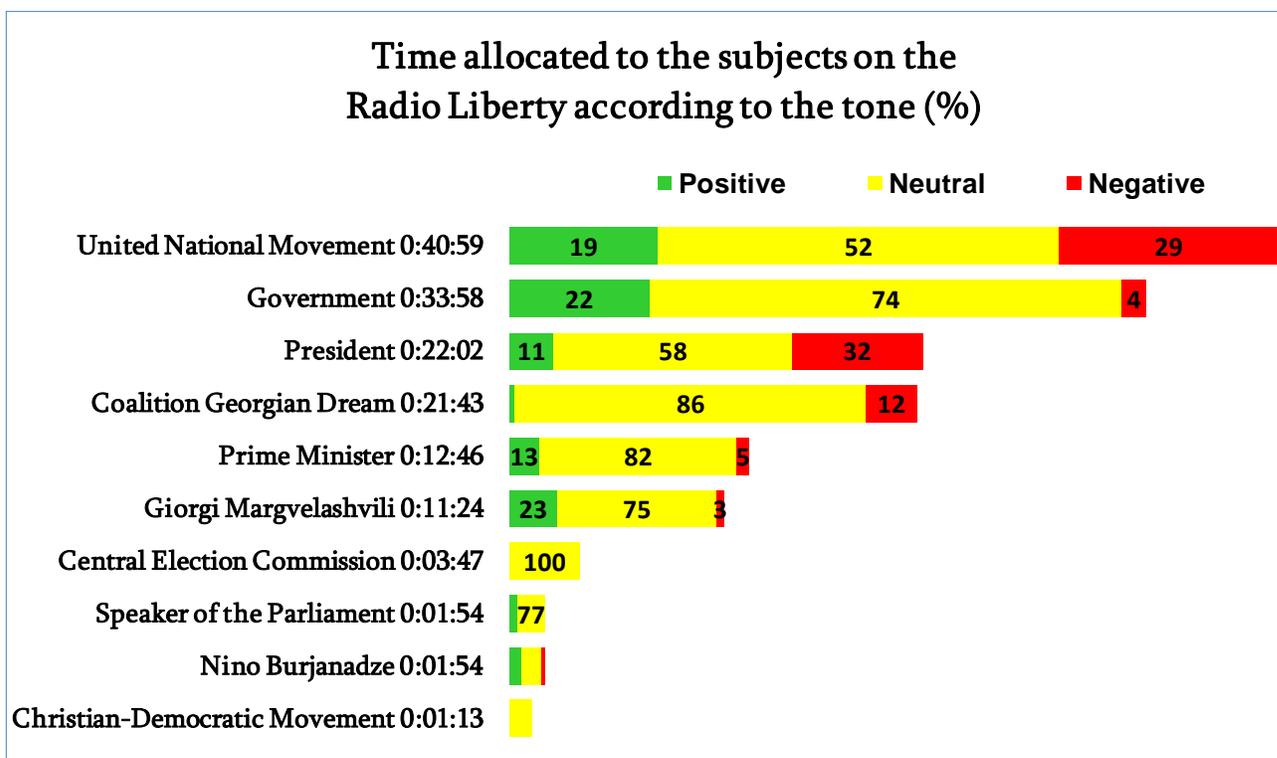
Radio „Liberty“

Radio “Liberty” allocated 2 hours and 31 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 26% of that time was used to cover the “United National Movement”, 22% - the Government and 14% - Mikheil Saakashvili. The monitoring subjects were also enabled to deliver direct speeches.

On a voting day the radio broadcaster reviewed the situation existing on election precincts in Tbilisi and regions: violations revealed by observers and evaluations made by politicians were covered.

The radio broadcaster was covering judgment of various sources related to the news, therefore the information was diverse and balanced. Most negative tone was used when covering the

“United National Movement” and the President Saakashvili, however, those stories were conditioned by a certain topic rather than tendentious coverage. The aired stories were impartial and thorough. Journalistic conclusions were always based on the broadcasted information.

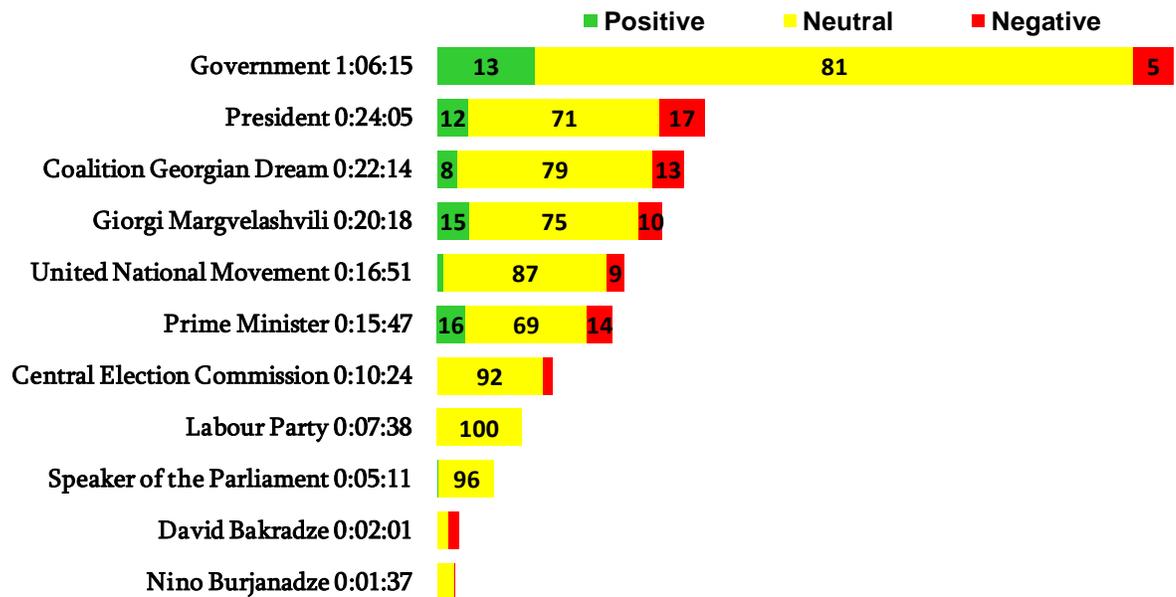


Radio „Maestro“

The monitoring subjects were provided with 3 hours and 14 minutes on Radio “Maestro”. The largest portion of time was allocated to the following subjects: the Government (34%), the President Saakashvili (13%) and the coalition “Georgian Dream” (13%). In average 80% of the monitoring subjects’ coverage was done in neutral tone. It is noteworthy that they were provided with little opportunity to deliver direct speech – journalists quoted politicians themselves.

Analytical stories were not prepared in the news releases; the anchor purely stated events. A journalist was less critical towards the monitoring subjects, however, there was no sign of tendency demonstrated on a journalist’s behalf. On a voting day, the listeners were provided with a detailed information about participation of the monitoring subjects in a voting process and events taking place at election precincts.

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



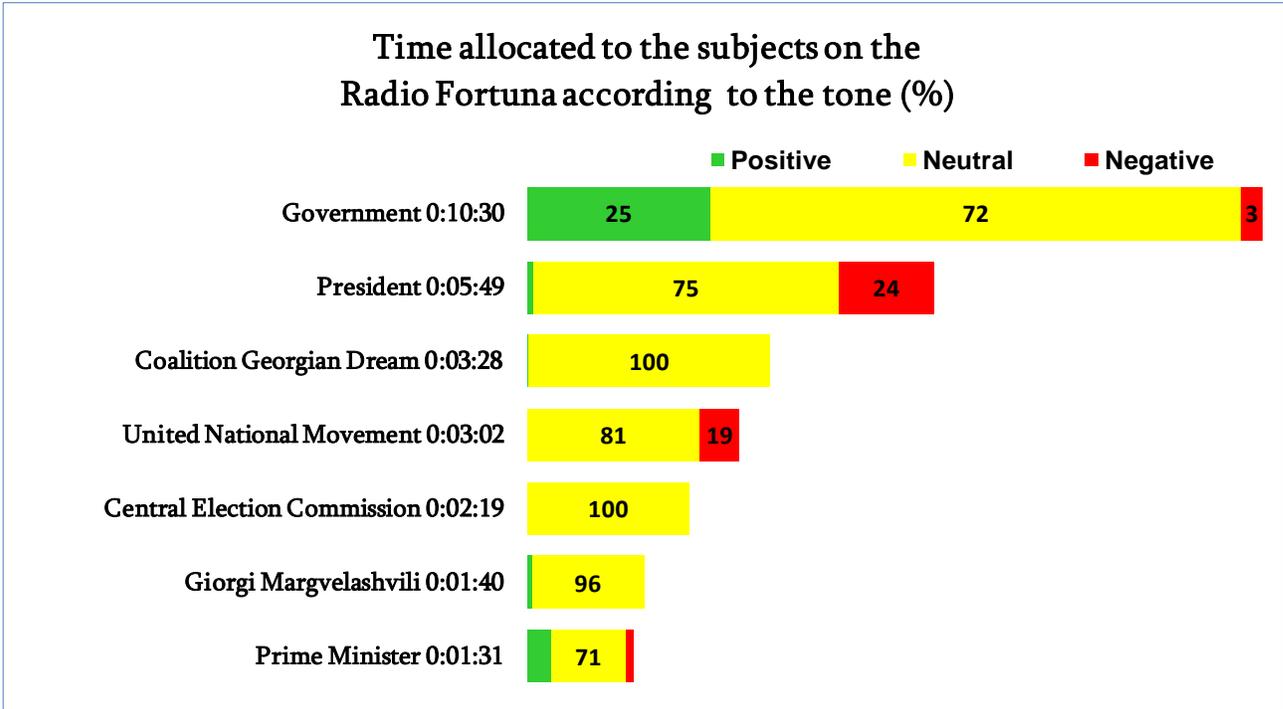
Radio “Fortuna”

During the five minute news programs the anchor was briefly describing the most important events taking place in the country. Within the reporting period most of the time was allocated to cover the Government (10 minutes) and the President Mikheil Saakashvili (5 minutes). Overall 31 minutes were allocated to the monitoring subjects.

October 27, 6 p.m. news release was aired in usual format supplying population with information concerning the voting process and voter activeness. During the program, a journalist made a live reporting from the Central Election Commission.

In general, the programs were brief and descriptive, they were mainly limited to quoting politicians’ statements. Alike previous reporting period, the monitoring subjects were not provided with time for direct speech.

Journalists were not making subjective evaluations and did not express positive or negative attitude towards any political force.



Radio “Imedi”

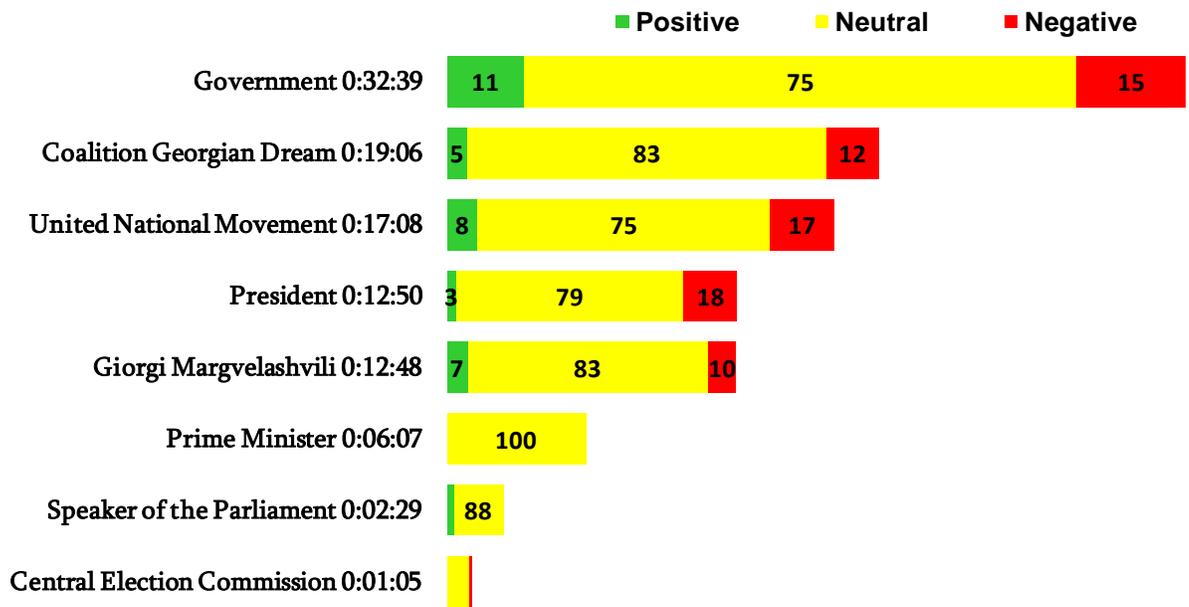
The monitoring subjects were provided with 1 hour and 46 minutes on radio “Imedi”. The largest portion of that time went to the Government and the coalition “Georgian Dream” – 48% of total time. It is noteworthy that they were provided with most time for direct speech.

Journalists were covering events without subjective evaluations, although shallowly that is evidenced by excessive rate of a neutral tone presented on diagrams.

An interview with politicians was often presented in the first part of news programs. A journalist discussed an important topic of the day with a respondent, went through details and tried to receive comprehensive answers. He/she was not expressing own position when asking questions. A politician was enabled to express his/her opinion thoroughly.

On October 27, the presidential election day, the news program was broadcasted in usual format, supplying population with detailed information concerning ongoing events and the voting process.

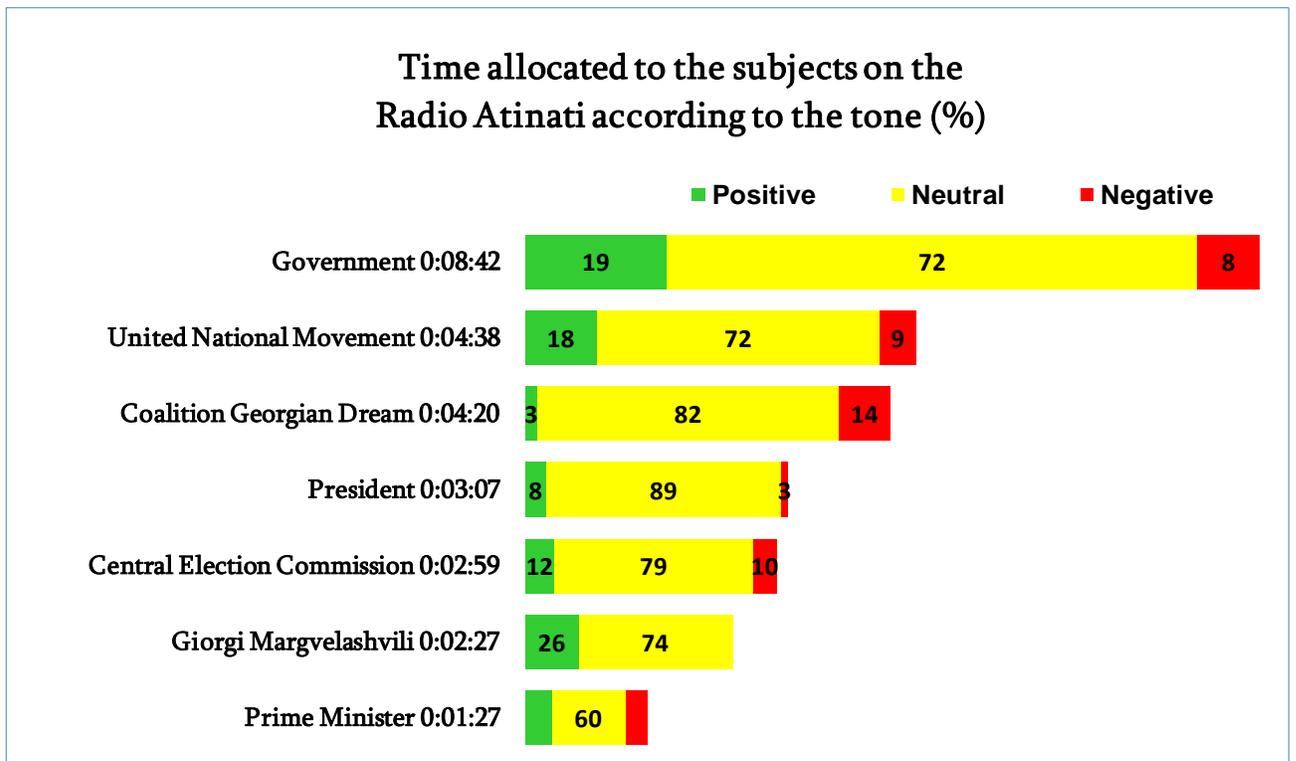
Time allocated to the subjects on the Radio Imedi according to the tone (%)



Radio “Atinati” (Zugdidi)

Radio “Atinati” provided the monitoring subjects with 28 minutes, out of which 31% was dedicated to cover the Government, 16% – the “United National Movement” and 15% – the coalition “Georgian Dream”. The news program format did not change on the voting day: the five minute release briefly overviewed the situation existing on election precincts.

The radio broadcaster was mainly covering ongoing events of the region. News programs were shallow that is evidenced by high rate of a neutral tone. The stories were sometimes disbalanced covering only a position of one source. However, no cases of tendentious attitude towards any political power were registered. Both Government and opposition collected similar rates of positive and negative tone. Journalists were covering events impartially, without any subjective evaluations.



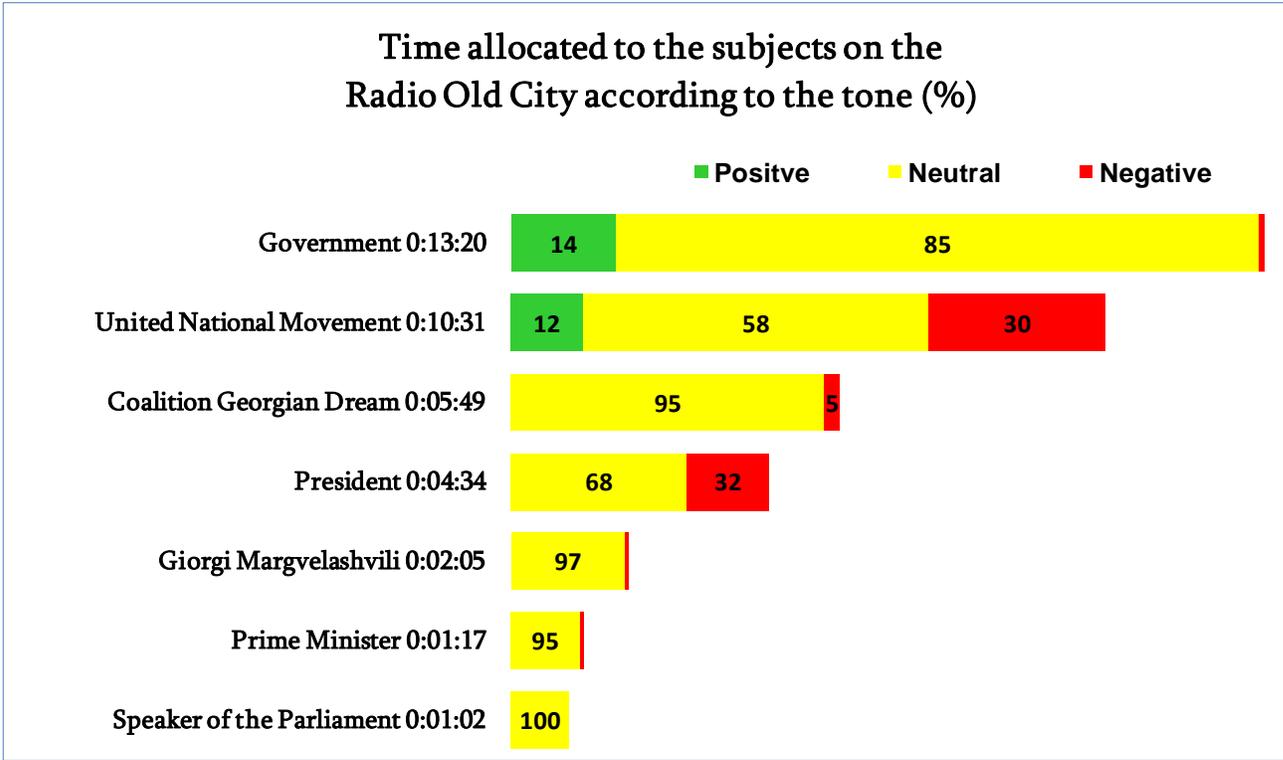
Radio „Old City“ (Kutaisi)

Radio “Old City” provided the monitoring subjects with 38 minutes air time. The Government took the first place with 13 minutes, the “United National Movement” – the second place with 10 minutes and the coalition “Georgian Dream” – the third place with 5 minutes.

The information aired in news programs provided a negative description of the “United National Movement” and the President Saakashvili. Activities of the Government, on the other hand, were covered without any criticism.

No elections related stories were prepared that would cover opinion of various political teams. Only the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili was provided with more than one minute time.

The stories were often based on a sole source and diverse opinions concerning events were not covered. One of the reasons for shallow coverage was duration of news programs that was 5 minutes in average.



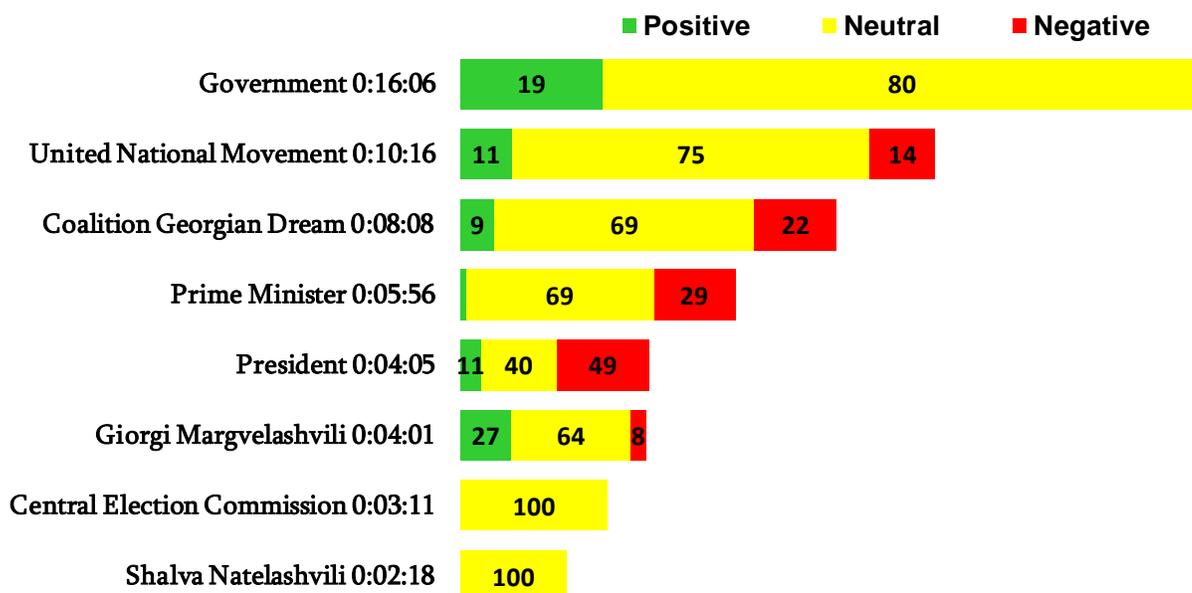
Radio “Hereti” (Lagodekhi)

Radio “Hereti” allocated 54 minutes for the monitoring subjects. 29% of that time went to the Government, 18% - the “United National Movement” and 14% - the coalition “Georgian Dream”. There was still an obvious tendency that journalists did not ask critical questions concerning activities of politicians. Therefore the Government that was provided with largest portion of time was not covered in a negative tone. At the same time negative tone addressed to other subjects was conditioned by critical statements made by opponents.

On October 27, the voting day, journalists were covering situation existing on election precincts. A brief news release was prepared concerning violation registered by observers. Giorgi Margvelashvili (the coalition “Georgian Dream”) and Shalva Natelashvili (“Labor Party”) were the only presidential candidates, who were provided with more than one minute.

Brief news releases were often based on a sole source and little time was dedicated to covering opinion of various political forces. Nevertheless, journalists were not making subjective evaluations and were unbiased towards all subjects.

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

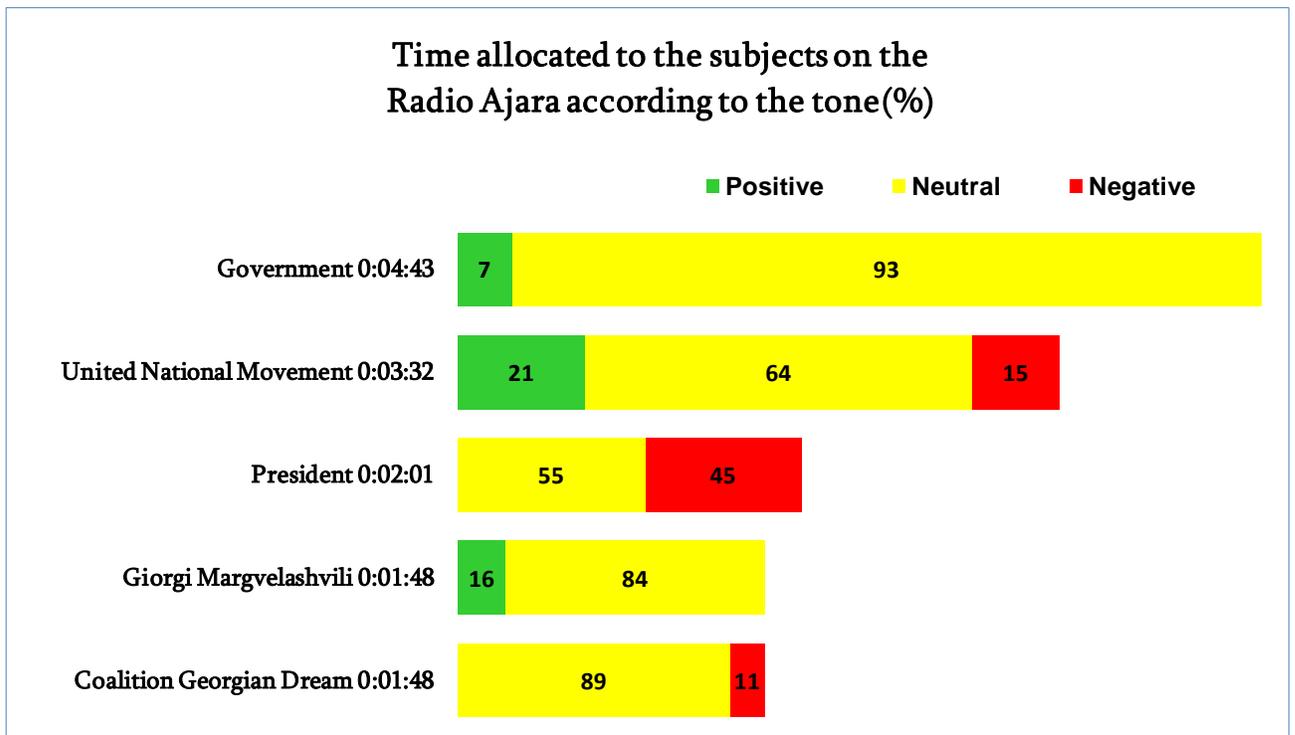


Radio “Ajara”

Radio “Ajara” was making brief news releases. The channel allocated 14 minutes to the monitoring subjects in total: almost 5 minutes to Government, 3 minutes and 32 seconds to the “United National Movement” and 2 minutes – the President Saakashvili.

It is noteworthy that the Radio “Adjara” did not make an accent on election topic neither in a pre-election period, nor at a later stage. On a voting day and afterwards only the winning candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili was covered.

Journalists were covering events shallowly, although without any bias: news coverage was limited to pure quotation of politicians statements. There was not time provided for direct speech of the subjects.



Conclusion

During the reporting period (October 27 – November 15) the radio broadcasters were covering events impartially. As compared to monitoring results of the previous months, cases of covering certain political forces in explicitly positive or negative context were further decreased. Nevertheless, stories about majority of radio broadcasters were still dry and shallow. News releases of Radio “Liberty” and Radio “Palitra” constituted exception to that rule. Journalists of those radio channels covered diverse opinions surrounding the topics and asked critical questions themselves.

On October 27, the voting day, most of the radio broadcasters worked operatively that resulted in preparation of live reporting from election precincts, coverage of violations registered by observers, revealing evaluations made by the NGO sector and review of politicians statements. In general, coverage of politicians’ statements or activities without critical approach remained the major problem faced by radio broadcasters. Moreover, majority of radio broadcasters were preparing identical stories and they did not cover diverse topics. Therefore, journalists representing certain radio broadcasters rarely demonstrated initiative to independently reveal

the problem and cover opinion of the Government, opposition and the NGO sector concerning the topic.

News releases follow journalism ethics standards. There were no cases of manipulating with voice/music or using hate speech registered within the period.