



Election Monitoring of Radios

April 15–May 2, 2014

Internews-Georgia, in cooperation with the UNDP funded project Professional Media for Elections, has carried out monitoring of the radio broadcasters. The monitoring started on April 15 and would continue until June 30. The monitoring covers evening news releases of the following radio broadcasters: Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster), Imedi, Fortuna, Radio Liberty, Palitra, Maestro, The First Radio, Utsnobi, Hereti (Lagodekhi), Old City (Kutaisi), Atinati (Zugdidi) and Adjara (Batumi).

Monitoring of radio channels within the period commencing April 15 – May 2 revealed the following key findings:

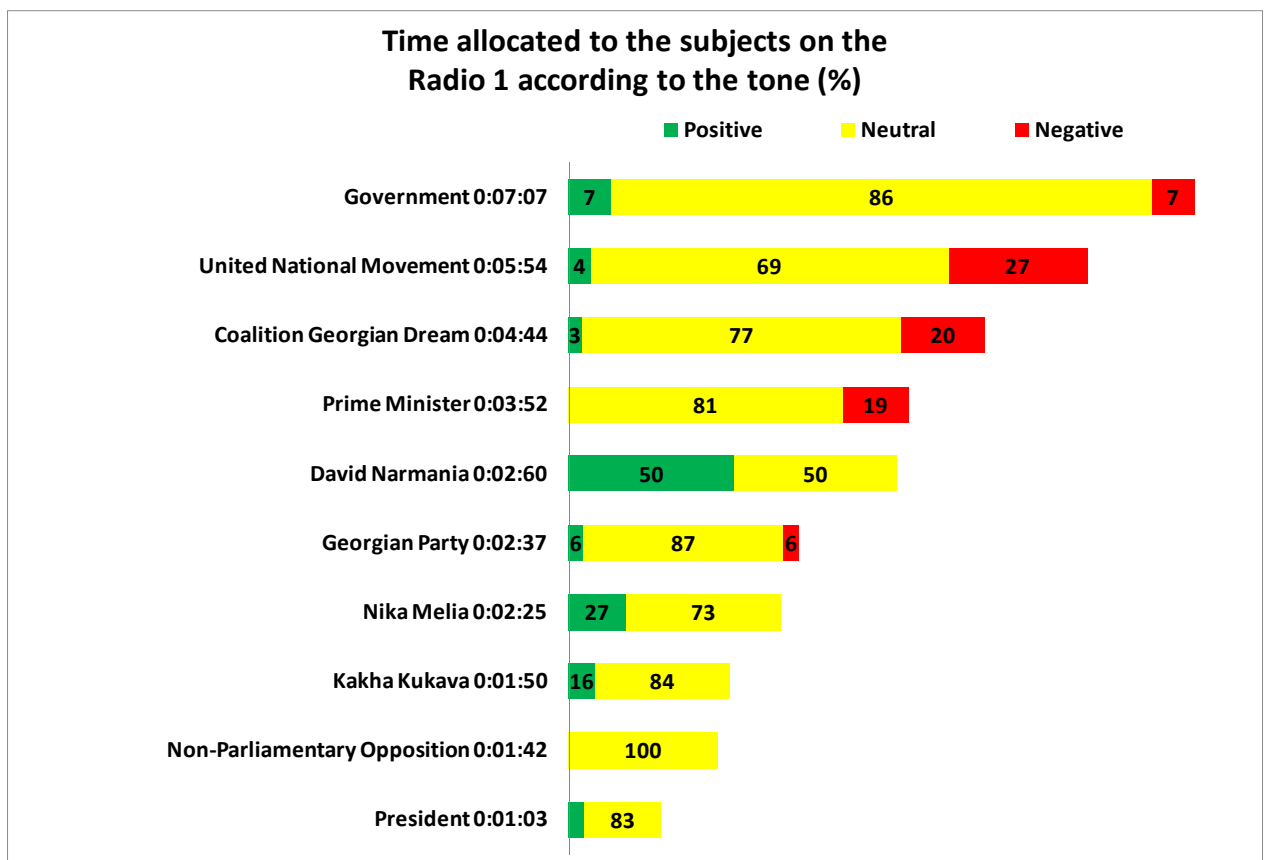
- Out of all monitoring subjects the biggest portion of the time was dedicated to the Government;
- Little time was allocated to cover election related topics;
- Among the candidates for the Mayor's position candidates from the coalition "Georgian Dream" and the "United National Movement" were covered most frequently;
- Journalists were less proactive;
- Similar to the monitoring of 2013, shallow coverage of events remained to be the main problem. Radio Liberty was the sole exception to that trend;
- Journalists often asked politicians to make general comments concerning statements made by opponents and were rarely asking tough questions related to particular problems;
- Stories were often based on sole source;
- Journalists were neither manipulating with voice/music nor using hate speech.

Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster)

The Public Radio broadcaster provided monitoring subjects with 38 minutes. 19% of that time was used to cover the Government, 16% - the United National Movement and 12% - the coalition Georgian Dream. The time was allocated to the subjects mainly in neutral tone. Negative coverage indicator was mainly caused by critical statements made by politicians rather than subjective attitude of journalists.

Radio 1 was covering events shallowly, without asking tough questions. Shallow coverage was observed most clearly in stories prepared on election related topics. Journalists were not asking tough questions and were simply supplying dry information about activities carried out by politicians. Therefore, the candidates for the Mayor's position were mostly provided with time in positive tone. They were not covered in negative context whatsoever.

Direct speech of subjects was not covered in news releases. Journalists were not making subjective evaluations or expressing biased attitude towards any political power.



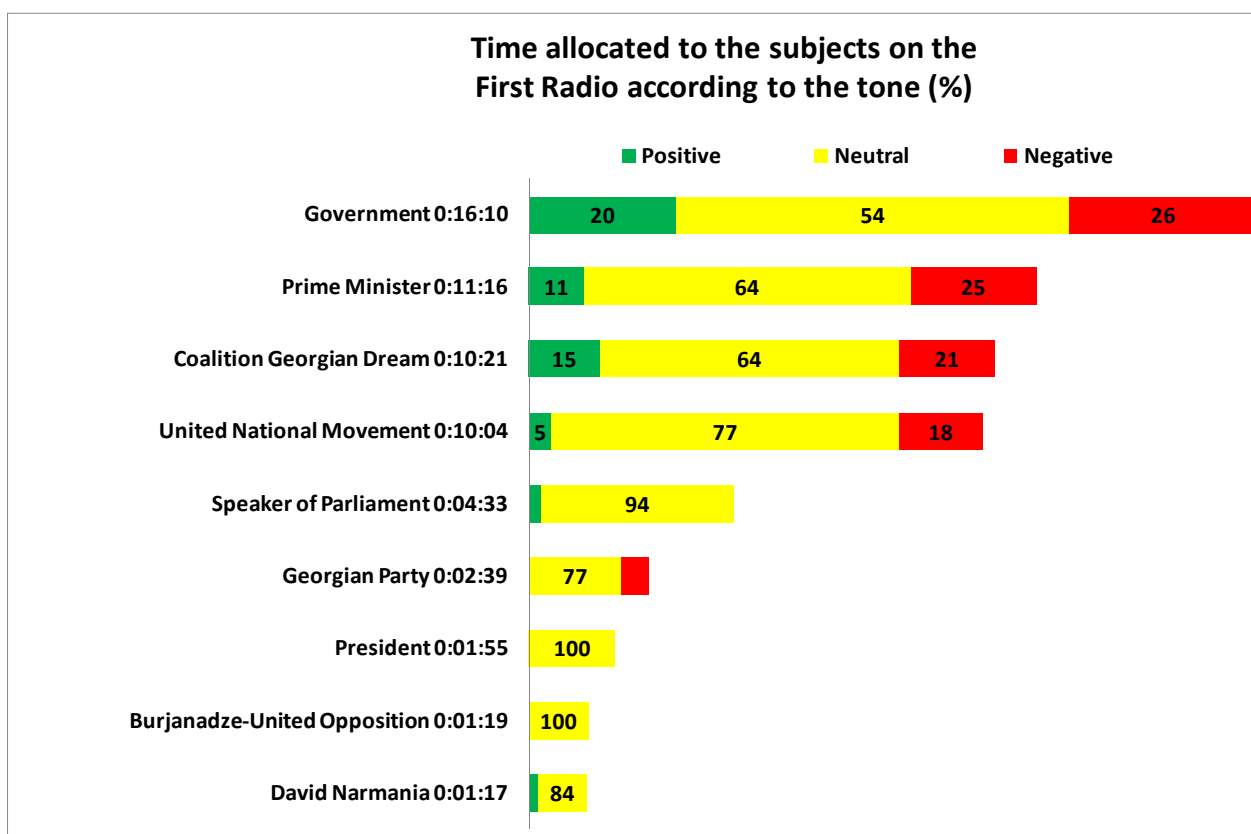
The First Radio

The First Radio provided monitoring subjects with 1 hour. 26% of that time was used to cover the Government, 18% - the Prime Minister, 16% - the coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement.

More than half of the time was dedicated to direct speech of the monitoring subjects. For instance, 44% of the time provided to representatives of the Government was dedicated to direct speech, while in case of the Prime Minister this indicator reached 53%.

The radio broadcaster was preparing balanced stories related to major topics and covered various opinions concerning the issue. Diversity of sources reflected on diversity of tones: critical information was disseminated both concerning the managing team and the opposition. Therefore, the most covered subjects were provided in average with 21 minutes of time in negative tone.

More time was dedicated to coverage of pre-election processes than to the candidates for the Mayor's position. However, no questions concerning their election programs were asked so far, therefore the subjects were mainly covered in neutral tone.



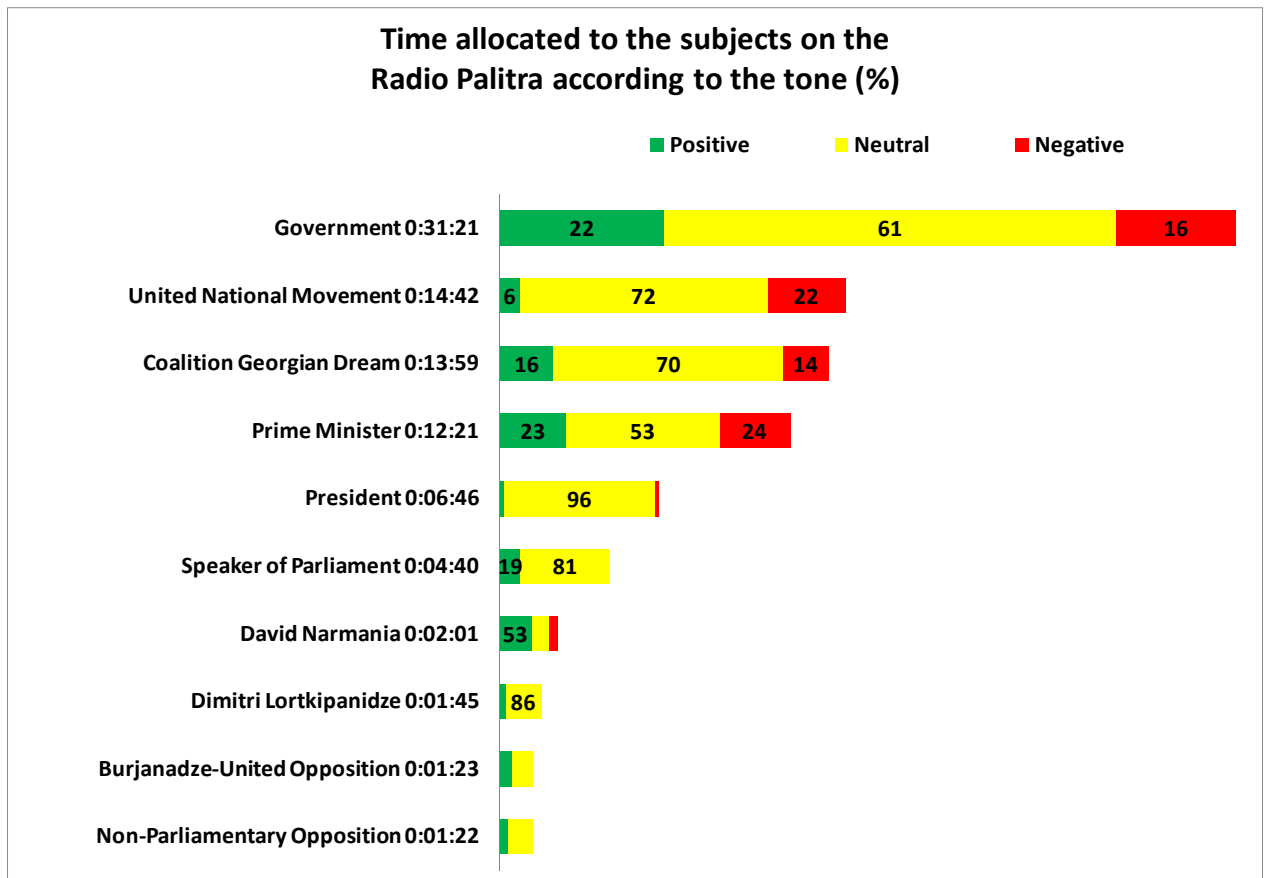
Radio Palitra

Radio Palitra provided the monitoring subjects with 1 hour and 34 minutes. Most of the time has been provided to cover the Government (31 minutes), the United National Movement (14 minutes), the coalition Georgian Dream (14 minutes) and the Prime Minister (14 minutes). In average 30% of that time was used for direct speech.

In-depth stories were prepared in relation to main topics of a day. News programs were thematically diverse. Stories were distinguished by diversity of sources. Journalists covered position of parties and opinion of experts equally and actively.

The same could be hardly said with respect to coverage of pre-election campaign. Stories prepared on election related topics were limited to quoting statements of politicians. Journalists were not asking candidates for the Mayor's position tough questions about their pre-election promises. Therefore, the candidate for Tbilisi Mayor's position from the coalition Georgian Dream was covered in a positive context within 53% of time.

Overall, journalists were covering events impartially without making subjective evaluations.



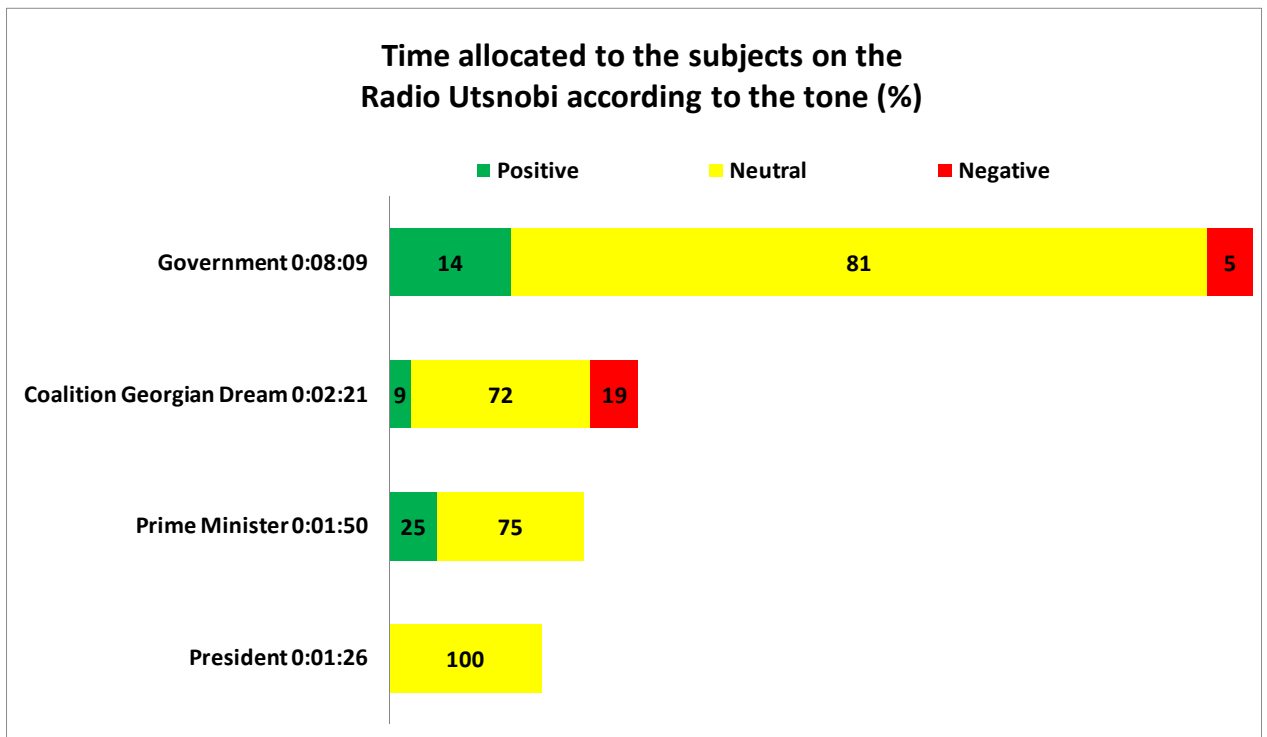
Radio Utsnobi

Duration of a news program on Radio Utsnobi did not exceed 5 minutes, therefore monitoring subjects were provided with 16 minutes in total. 48% of time was used to cover the Government, 14% - the coalition Georgian Dream, while the remaining subjects were provided with less than two minutes. The stories were shallow, hence, neutral tone prevailed while covering the subjects.

Journalists limited themselves to quoting information disseminated by news agencies and official agencies. Stories were often based on a sole source and did not present diverse opinions.

Journalists were not making subjective evaluation, however neither they asked tough questions.

Shallow coverage of events appeared to be the main problem.

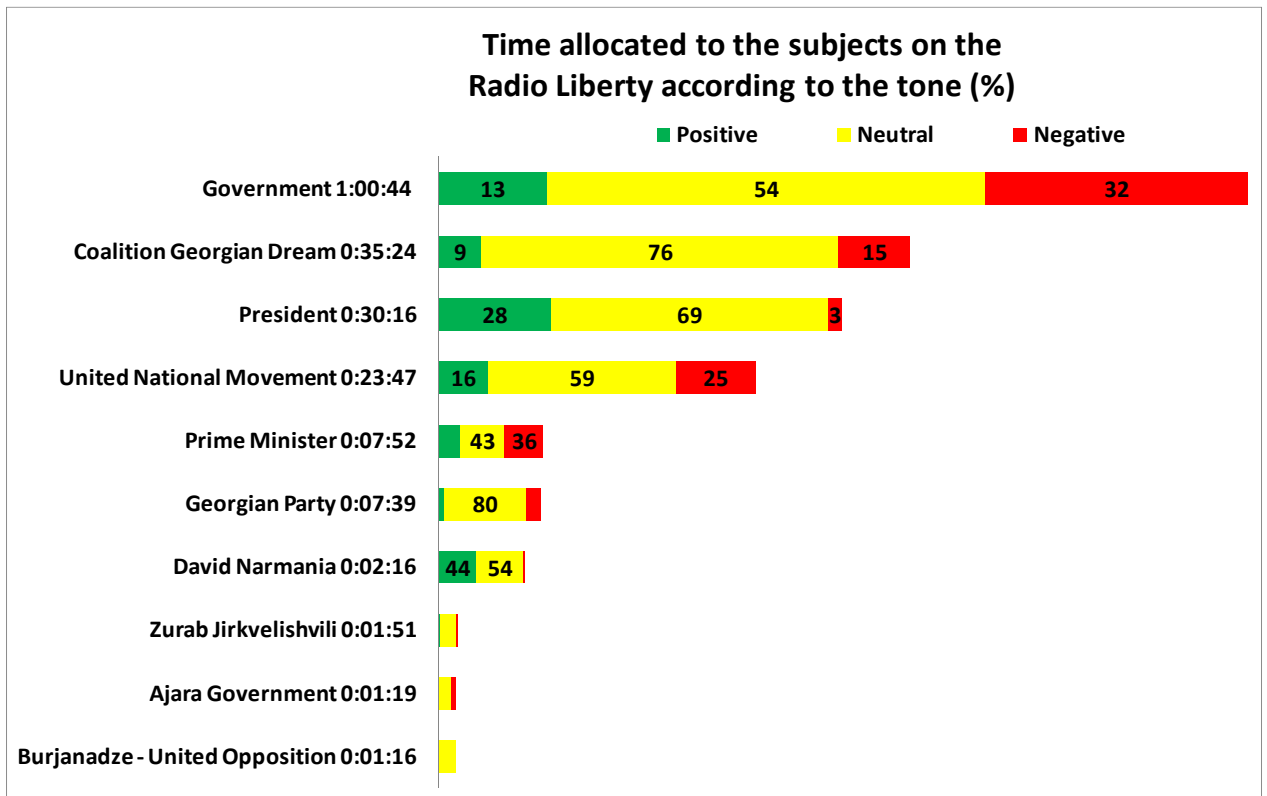


Radio Liberty

Radio Liberty provided monitoring subjects with three hours of coverage time. 34% of that time was provided to the Government, 20% - the coalition Georgian Dream, 17% - the President. Direct speech share of candidates constituted 34% in average. The radio broadcaster was distinguished by diverse coverage. Journalists were not limiting themselves by simply quoting statements made by politicians, they were preparing in-depth stories concerning news. For instance, the April 19 story related to introduction of new regulations for dental clinics, was distinguished by its diversity. Journalists were asking tough questions about the new initiative of the Government and listeners were enabled to hear different opinions and expert evaluations. Critical approach of journalists was obvious while covering both government and opposition that reflected on the following indicators: 32% of negative tone for the Government and 25% -the United National Movement.

Little time was dedicated to coverage of election programs and discussion of future plans of candidates. However, evaluations made by international observers and NGO sector in relation to the election environment were covered actively.

The radio broadcaster was paying attention to ongoing events of the region: regional reporters were discussing pre-election situation, talked about possible candidates for the Mayor’s position and tried to identify attitude of the population through street polls.



Radio Maestro

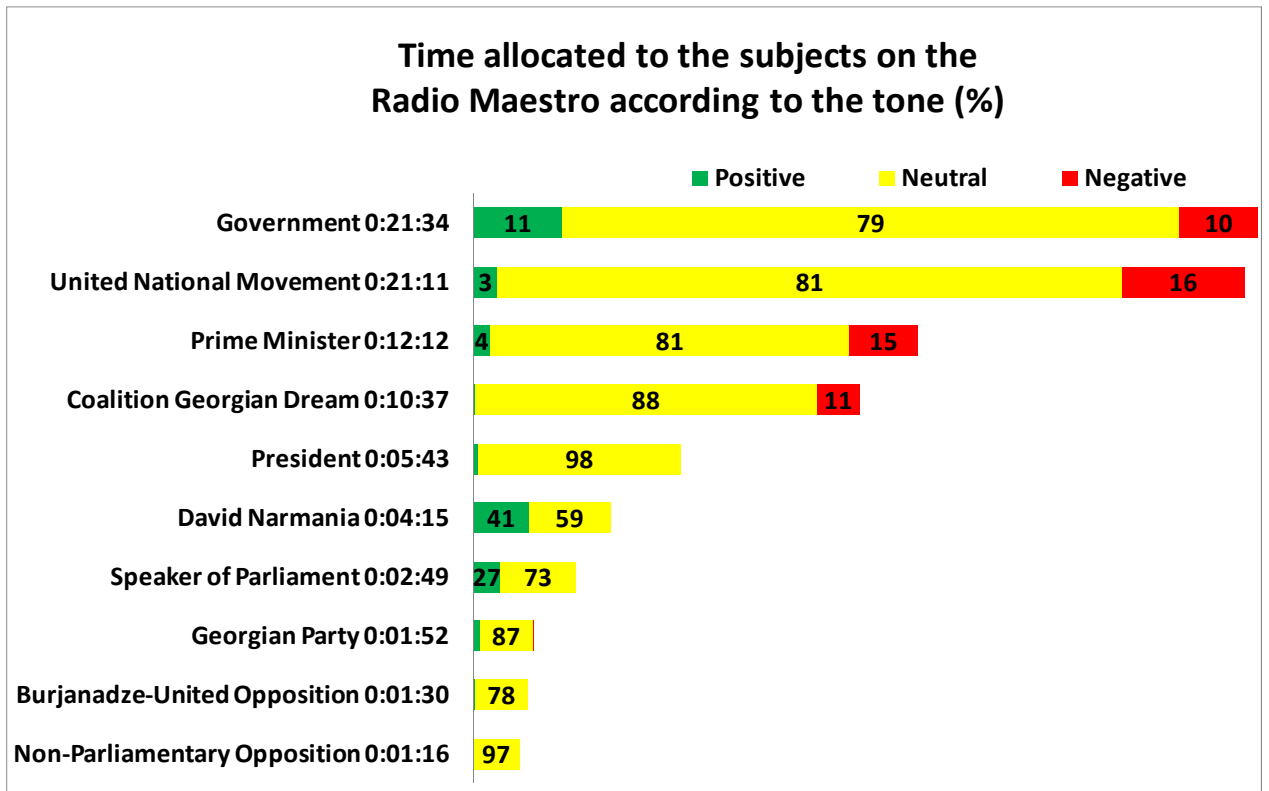
Compared to other radio broadcasters, the Radio Maestro provided most of the time (1 hour 30 minutes) to coverage of monitoring subjects. The Government and the United National Movement enjoyed equal coverage indicator (21-21 minutes), then the Prime Minister with 12 minutes time and the coalition Georgian Dream – 10 minutes. In average 35% of time was dedicated to direct speech of subjects.

Duration of the news program exceeded thirty minutes, however certain stories were still brief and shallow. Journalists were simply quoting statements made by politicians and rarely asked

tough questions. This fact also reflected on 80% of neutral tone coverage for monitoring subjects.

The candidates for Mayor’s position from the coalition Georgian Dream were among the five most frequently covered subjects. The radio broadcaster almost completely covered the presentation of candidates. In total they were provided with seven minutes of air time, 34% in positive tone. Candidates for Mayor’s position representing other political groups did not receive more than 1 minute of coverage.

In general, news programs of the radio broadcaster lacked analysis and critical attitude towards activities of politicians.

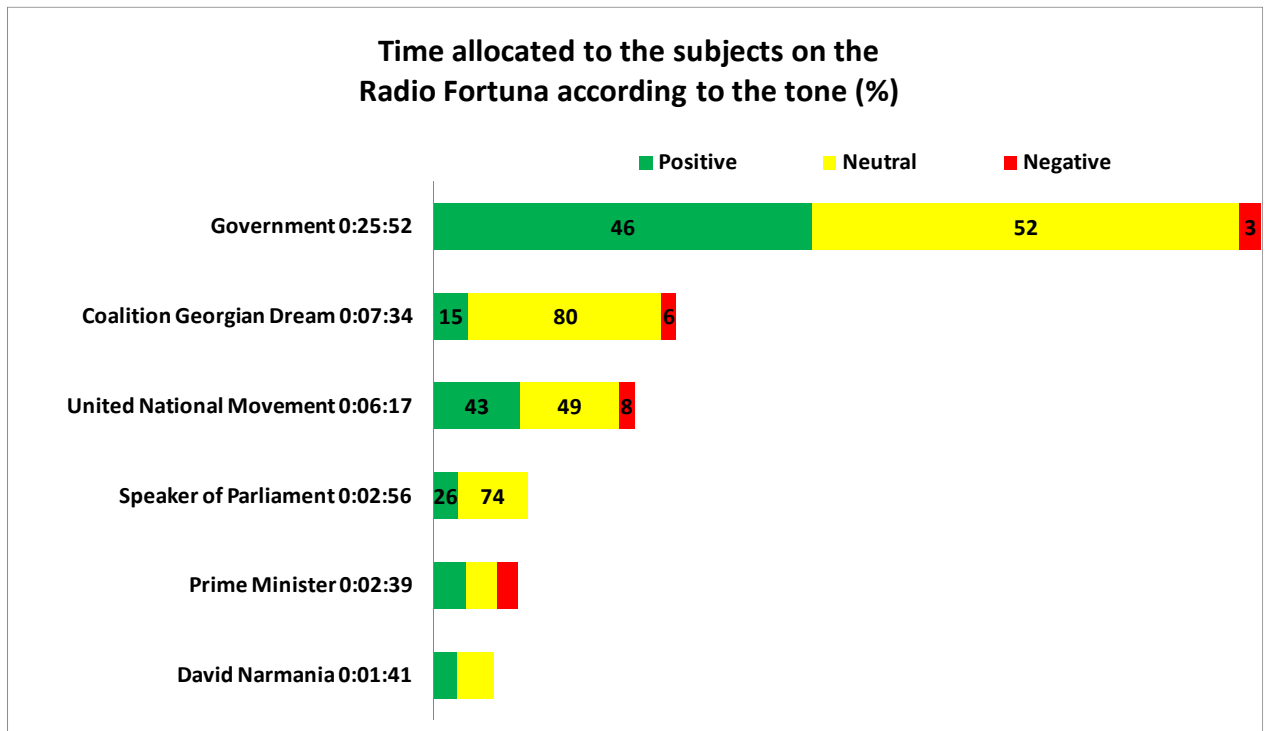


Radio Fortuna

The radio Fortuna was preparing 5 minute news programs. The monitoring subjects received 50 minutes of coverage in total. More than half of this time was dedicated to Government (52%), which was followed by the ruling political team with 15% less coverage. The Government was distinguished by high indicator of positive tone (46%).

News program of the radio broadcaster often transmitted only one news, followed by an interview with government representatives concerning that topic. A journalist was not asking critical questions during 3-4 minute interview, therefore a respondent was in a position to present his/her opinion in a positive way.

Overall, events were covered shallowly in news programs. Shortage of sources appeared to be the main problem of the stories.



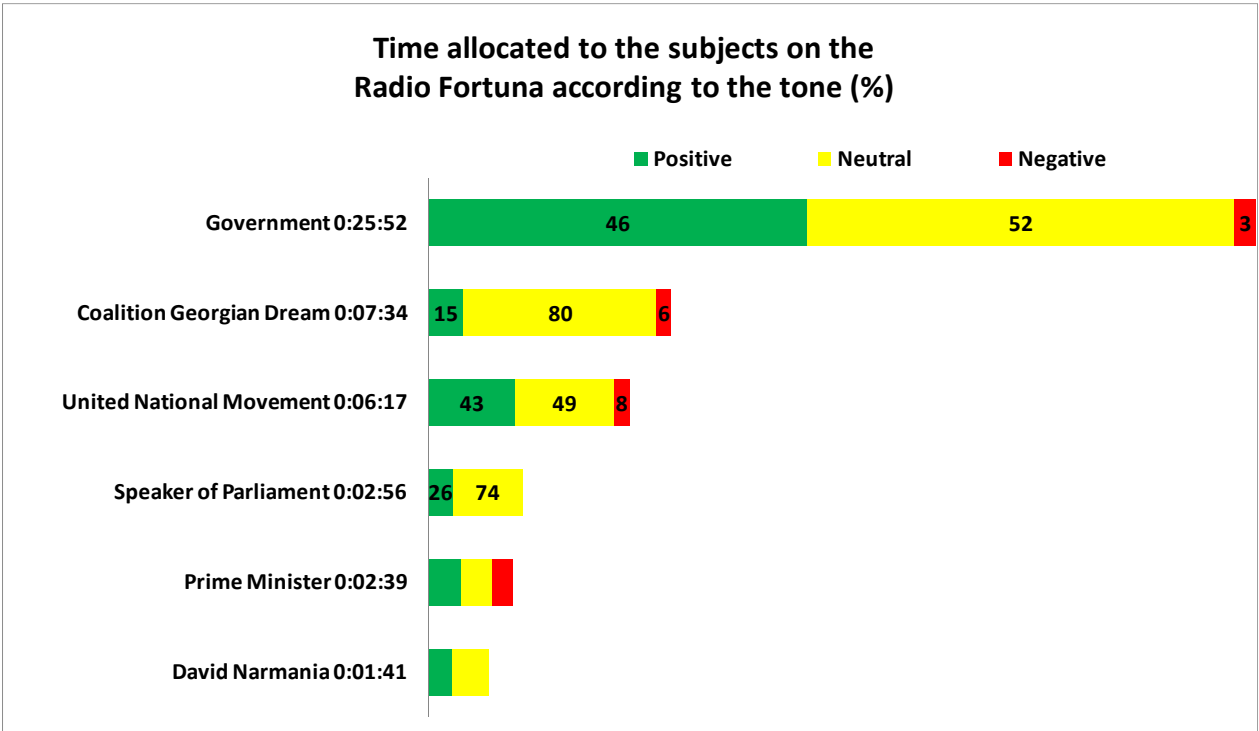
Radio Imedi

The radio Imedi dedicated more than 2 hours to coverage of monitoring subjects, out of which 30 minutes were used to cover the coalition Georgian Dream, 28 minutes – the Government, 15 minutes – the United National Movement. In average 43% of time allocated to monitoring subjects was used for direct speech purposes.

The journalists rarely asked critical questions, however the stories were balanced and presented diverse opinions concerning the topic. Therefore, the frequently covered subjects were provided with time in all three tones.

It is noteworthy that the radio Imedi started preparing a separate block for local self-governance elections. That is why, compared to other broadcasters, more time was dedicated to coverage of elections-related topics. Journalists were preparing informative stories concerning election environment and activities carried out by candidates. However, lack of in-depth and analytical stories during coverage of the election campaign was still obvious. Therefore, the candidates were mostly provided with time in positive tone.

Overall, the radio Imedi was covering events impartially, following journalism ethics standards.



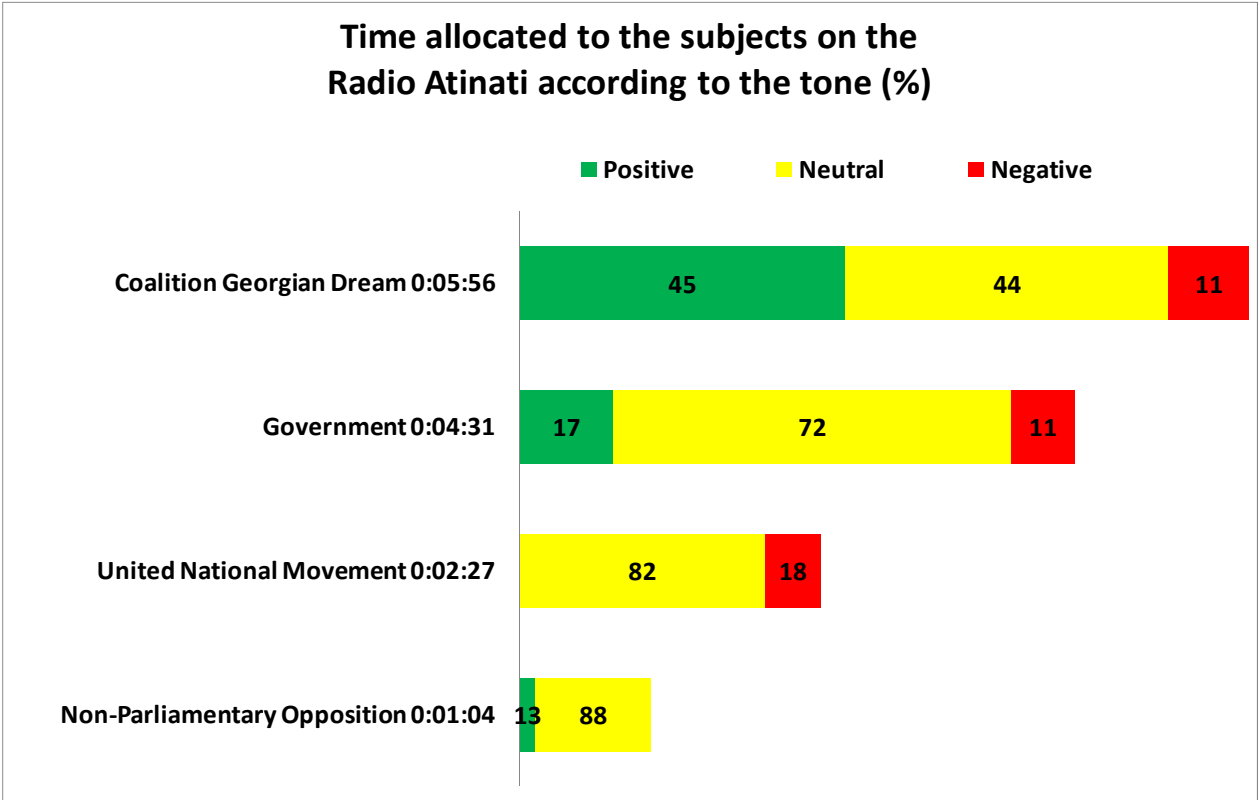
Radio Atinati (Zugdidi)

News program of the Radio Atinati ran for no more than 5 minutes, therefore the monitoring subjects were provided with just 17 minutes of air time. Only four subjects received more than 1 minute of coverage (14 minutes in total).

Journalists were covering events shallowly and rarely asked critical questions about activities carried out by the Government. Therefore, the coalition Georgian Dream was covered in positive context within 45% of time, while the Government – within 17%.

Pre-election topics were hardly covered, although stories were prepared concerning presumable candidates for Mayor’s position. Journalists were carrying out street polls related to this topic, however since candidates were not officially named, the time provided to them did not exceed one minute.

Overall, the broadcaster was covering ongoing events of the region impartially and followed journalism ethics standards.

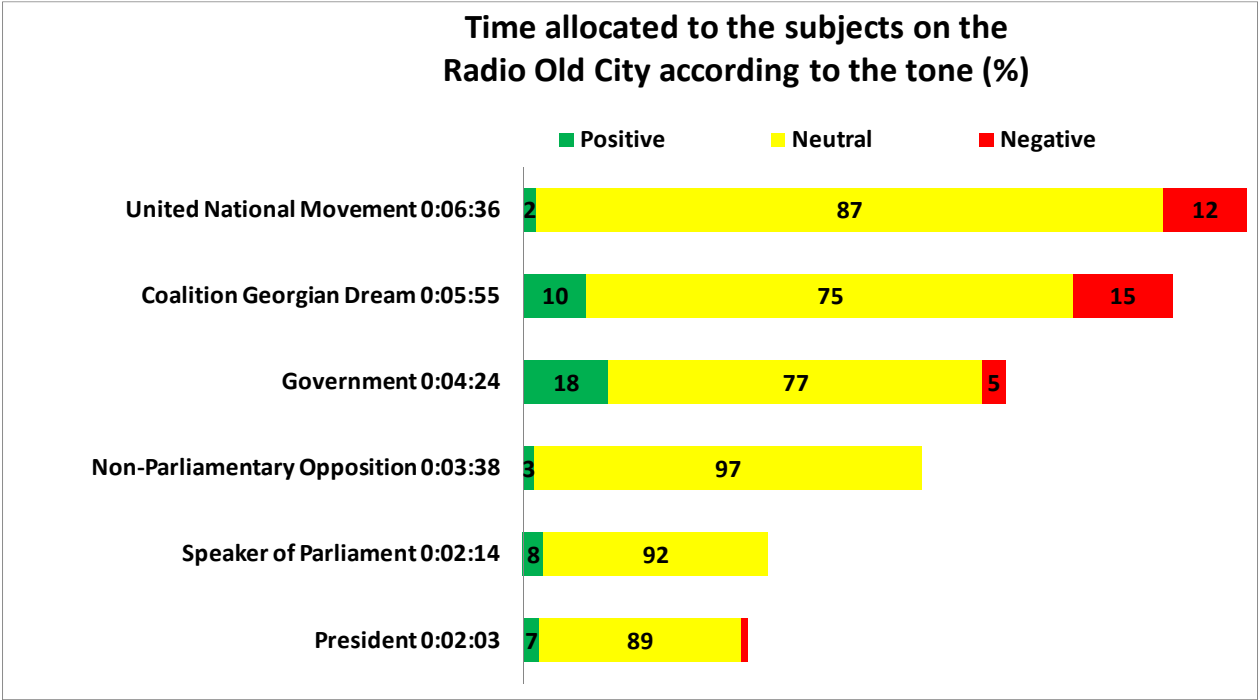


Radio Old City (Kutaisi)

Radio Old City dedicated 16 minutes to the coverage of monitoring subjects. News programs were mainly paying attention to ongoing processes of the region. Journalists were actively covering confrontation between members of the ruling coalition and the United National Movement in Kutaisi City Hall. Therefore, those political teams were provided with most of the time.

The subjects were mainly covered in neutral context. The government gathered most of the positive tone, while the coalition Georgian Dream – most of the negative. Journalists were covering events impartially, however stories were mainly based on sole source.

There were no cases of manipulating with voice/music or using hate speech registered in the radio broadcaster.



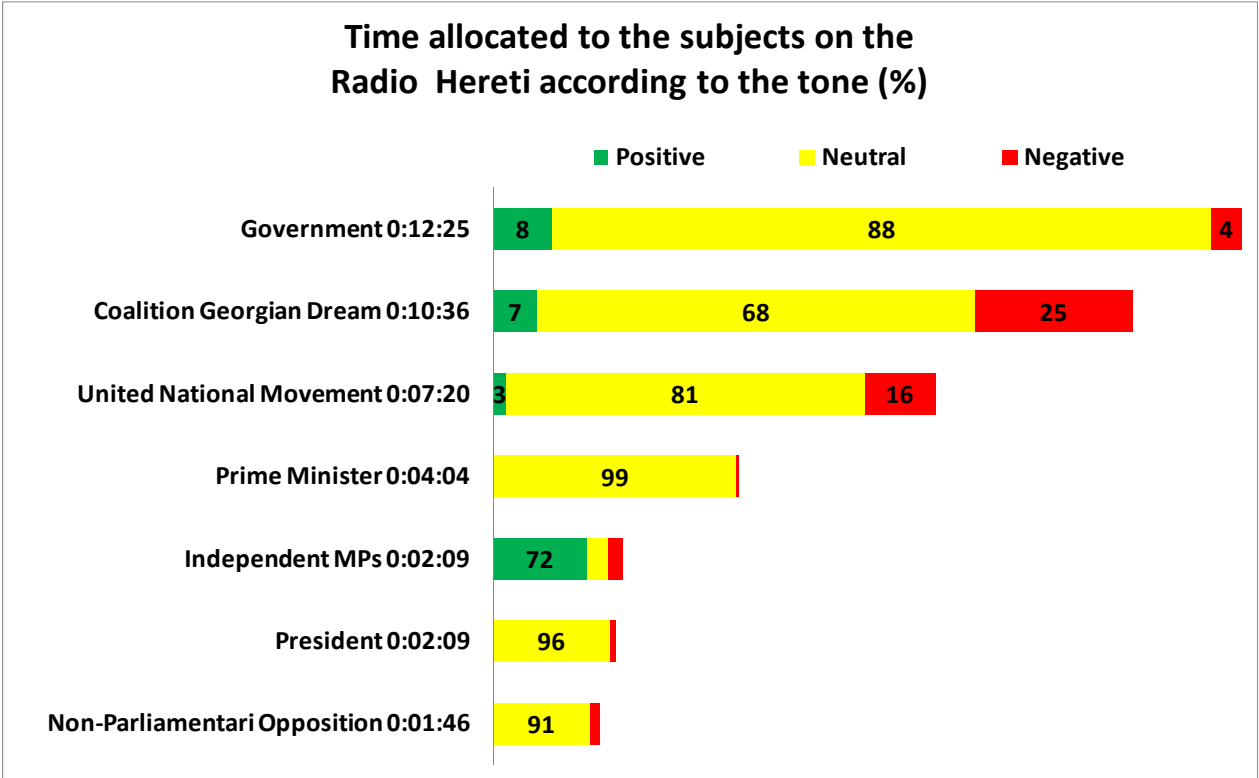
Radio Hereti (Lagodekhi)

Radio Hereti provided monitoring subjects with 44 minutes of air time. The biggest portion of that time was dedicated to the Government (26%), the coalition Georgian Dream (23%) and the United National Movement (16%). Direct speech of respondents occupied more than half of the time.

The radio broadcaster was making stress on the events taking place in Kakheti. Within the reporting period one of the major topics was the arrest of Kvareli gamgebeli David Kevkhishvili, due to which negative tone coverage of the coalition Georgian Dream had increased. The United National Movement was also often criticized during coverage of the same topic. Therefore, the former ruling team was covered in negative tone over 16% of time.

News programs were not making stress on local self-governance elections yet: No candidate for Mayor’s position from any political party received more than one minute of air time.

Radio Hereti did not express tendentious attitude towards any political power. Statements made by representatives of government and opposition were covered in a balanced way. Journalists worked impartially and followed professional ethics standards.

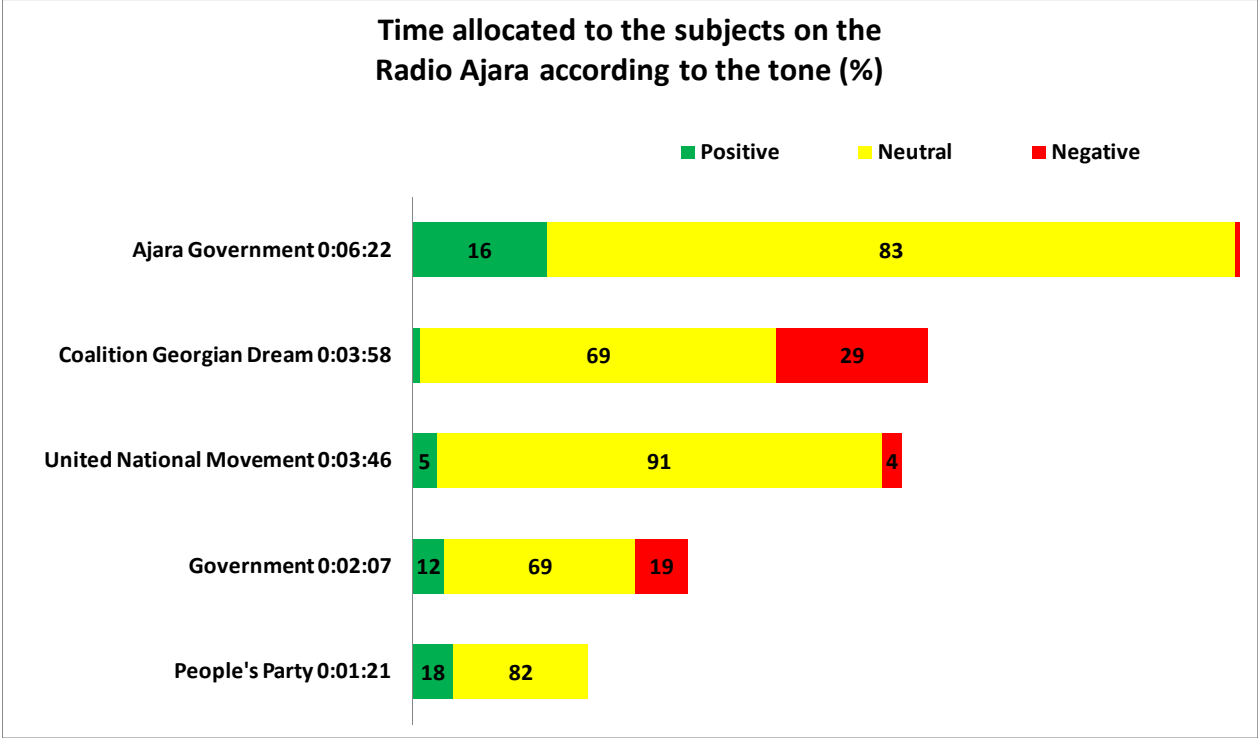


Radio Ajara (Batumi)

Radio Adjara provided monitoring subjects with 21 minutes of air time. The Government of Adjarian Autonomous Republic (29%), the coalition Georgian Dream (18%) and the United National Movement (17%) were covered most frequently.

The coalition Georgian Dream was covered in a most negative tone out of all monitoring subjects. The reason for this was consideration of problems existing in the region, during which respondents were often criticizing the ruling party.

Overall, the news programs were shallow. Stories were often based on a sole source and opposing opinions were rarely covered. However, the radio broadcaster was not biased towards any political power. Journalists were covering events without making subjective evaluations.



Conclusion

Within the first reporting period the radio broadcasters were intensively covering ongoing events of the country. Regional broadcasters were paying attention to the region-specific problems. There were no cases of biased coverage registered at all. Journalists were following ethical standards: they refrained from manipulating with voice/music or using hate speech. Similar to the monitoring carried out in 2012 and 2013, shallow coverage of events still remained to be a major problem. Journalists were not proactive: they limited themselves to quoting politicians’ statements and the stories were mainly based on those quotes. Politicians were mostly making general comments regarding statements made by opponents rather than answered critical questions asked by journalists.

The most actual topic within the reporting period was the discussion of antidiscrimination law and its approval process. The issue was covered by almost all radio broadcasters, however in-depth and analytical stories were not prepared.

Little time was provided for coverage of local self-governance election campaign within the reporting period. Candidates for Tbilisi Mayor's Position from the coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement David Narmania and Nika Melia respectively were covered most frequently. By the end of April, when the coalition Georgian Dream officially named its candidates for Mayor's positions, the number of stories dedicated to election topic had relatively increased. Radio Imedi launched a separate news program related to elections.

Stories prepared by radio broadcasters were shallow and short of sources, on one hand, but on the other, journalists were covering events impartially without making subjective evaluations addressed to any political power. Similar to previous years, radio broadcasters tend to follow major standards of journalism ethics.