



CANDIDATES ON TELEVISION

Slovak Presidential Elections

17 – 25 March 2019

Candidates Running for the Office of President of the Slovak Republic as Covered in the TV News

MEMO 98 has a long history of exploring the coverage of political subjects and their representatives in the media, both in Slovakia as well as abroad. This report analyses the presentation of the candidates running for president of the Slovak Republic in the period following the publishing of the results of the first round of the elections between 17 and 25 March. The report simultaneously brings an analysis of media coverage of political parties and coalitions as well as some other political subjects (president of the Slovak Republic, government of the Slovak Republic). Monitoring covered the main news programs of the nationwide TV channels – RTVS, TA3, TV Joj and TV Markíza.

The monitored criteria included airtime that the media dedicated to the presidential contenders and other subjects within the scope of politically relevant information as well as the manner (positive/neutral/negative) in which the candidates and other stakeholders were presented.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

Zuzana Čaputová and Maroš Šefčovič received comparable airtime on nationwide TV channels before the second round of elections, while being presented mostly neutrally. They enjoyed most airtime in TV Joj and the least in TA3.

All in all, the TA3 news channel dedicated only a little less than 3 minutes to both candidates, while it was the only channel where the most covered contender was one of those who failed to advance to the second round of the elections (Š. Harabin in particular). While both advancing candidates were significantly criticized, Mr. Harabin's presentation was mostly neutral.

Besides information about the actual elections, other nationwide topics resonated on TV channels, such as financial aid from the US to modernize the Slovak military and the investigation of Marián Kočner, while Brexit clearly dominated among foreign themes.

When it comes to the respective aspects of the presidential campaign before the second round of the elections, most information was dedicated to the general organizational aspect of the elections, the campaign itself, the topics and messages, as well as pre-election opinion polls.

The government of the Slovak Republic has had a long-standing dominant airtime in the key news programs of Slovak TV channels, especially in RTVS and TA3. In the currently monitored period, the said channels provided more than one half of their total airtime dedicated to political subjects to information about the government. When presenting the government, neutral information dominated across all the monitored TV channels.

Smer-SD was the most heavily covered political party on 3 TV channels (except for RTVS) – all in all, 17% (most on TA3 – 22%). While the news coverage of SNS, another government coalition member reached 10%, the opposition parties OĽaNO and SaS got a much more limited airtime – only 5 and 4% overall respectively (the least in TA3 – 3% each).

CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENT

The rate of favorably and negatively tinged information was leaning slightly towards favorable coverage of Zuzana Čaputová rather than for Maroš Šefčovič

In the monitored period, the four TV channels dedicated more than 45 minutes in total to Zuzana Čaputová and Maroš Šefčovič in their main news programs. This is comparable airtime when contrasted against the airtime that all the media dedicated to all (15) candidates combined before the 1st election round (almost 51 minutes); however, then we were looking at the period taking 21 days (18 February – 10 March), while this period only took 9 days. The candidates received most airtime in TV Joj – almost 17 minutes. In RTVS, it was approximately 13.5 and on TV Markíza 12 minutes. Zuzana Čaputová and Maroš Šefčovič received clearly the smallest airtime on TA3 – under 3 minutes combined. One can therefore quite unambiguously conclude that TA3 ignored the second round of the elections for the highest constitutional official of the Slovak Republic (in the first round, it dedicated 8 minutes to all candidates, the smallest share together with TV Joj). Despite not running in the second round, Štefan Harabin was the person most frequently covered on TA3 with more than 2 minutes of airtime (in the first round, TA3 was actually the only TV channel where somebody else apart from the main contenders received most airtime - R. Mistrík, who had quit the presidential race and was not a running contender anymore, just like Š. Harabin in the second round, who wasn't a relevant candidate anymore).

The rate of airtime dedicated to these two candidates was similar across all the monitored TV channels. In RTVS and TV Joj it was practically the same - 1:1. In TV Markíza, the rate was most favorable for Zuzana Čaputová as she received 56% of airtime compared to 44% of airtime dedicated to Maroš Šefčovič.

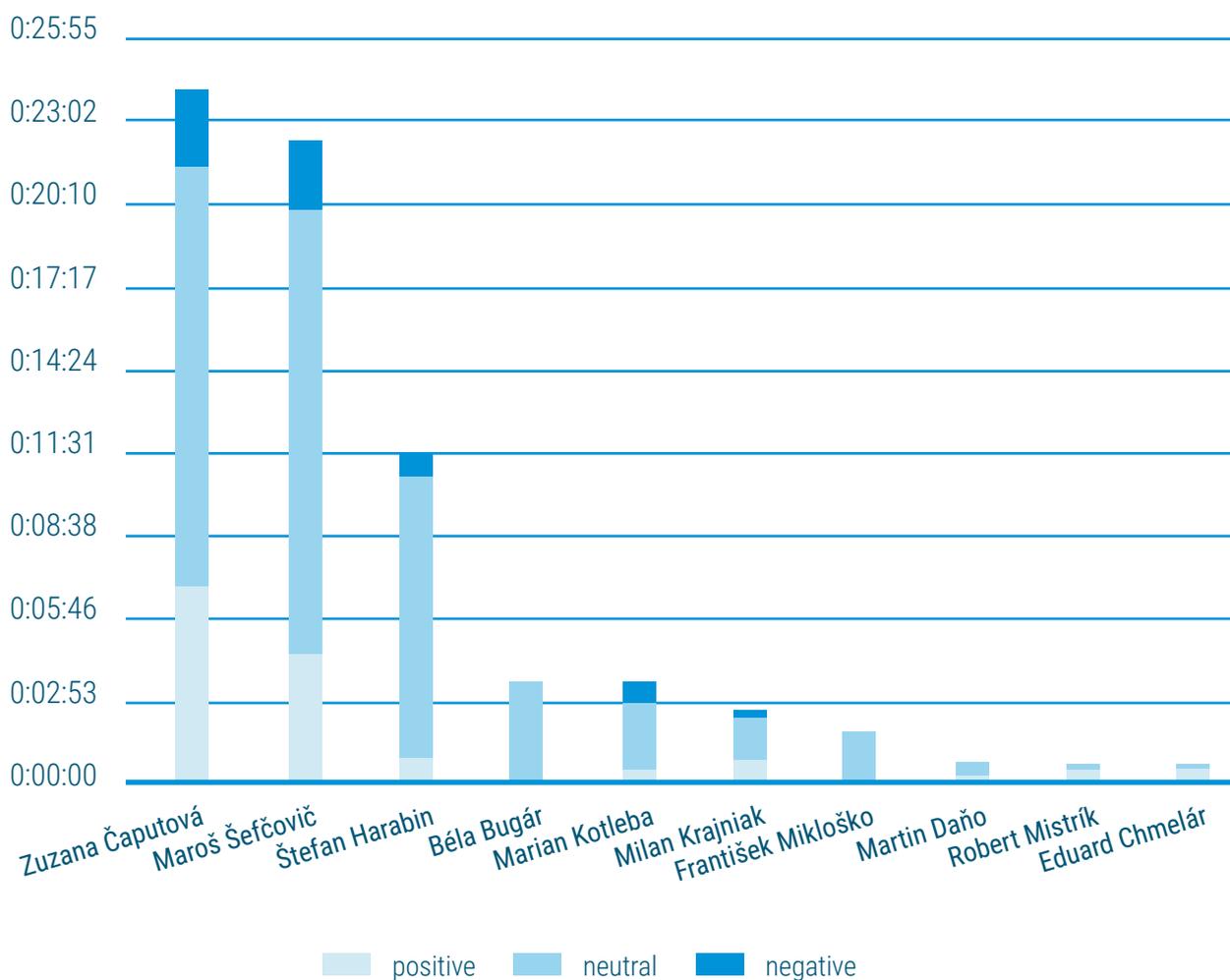
When it comes to the manner of presentation, also in the period after 17 March, most information which the monitored TV channels brought about the candidates was neutral. The rate of favorably and negatively tinged information was leaning slightly towards favorable coverage of Zuzana Čaputová rather than for Maroš Šefčovič (this was most visible in the news on TV Markíza). Only in TA3, critical information about both candidates dominated (conversely, Š. Harabin was covered mostly neutrally). In comparison to the period before the 1st round of the elections (16 March), in the currently monitored period, TV channels in general brought a larger share of negatively-leaning information about the candidates.



The monitored TV channels also dedicated considerable airtime to other candidates running for president of the Slovak Republic, mainly to Štefan Harabin. When it comes to the airtime this candidate received in the main news programs, in three TV channels he was the third and as previously mentioned, in TA3 he even received more airtime than Zuzana Čaputová or Maroš Šefčovič.

Even after the 1st round was over, TV channels to a certain degree still covered the unsuccessful contenders: all combined, Štefan Harabin, Béla Bugár, Marian Kotleba, Milan Krajniak, František Mikloško, Martin Daňo, Robert Mistrík, and Eduard Chmelár received almost 26 minutes across all TV channels.

All TV channels combined

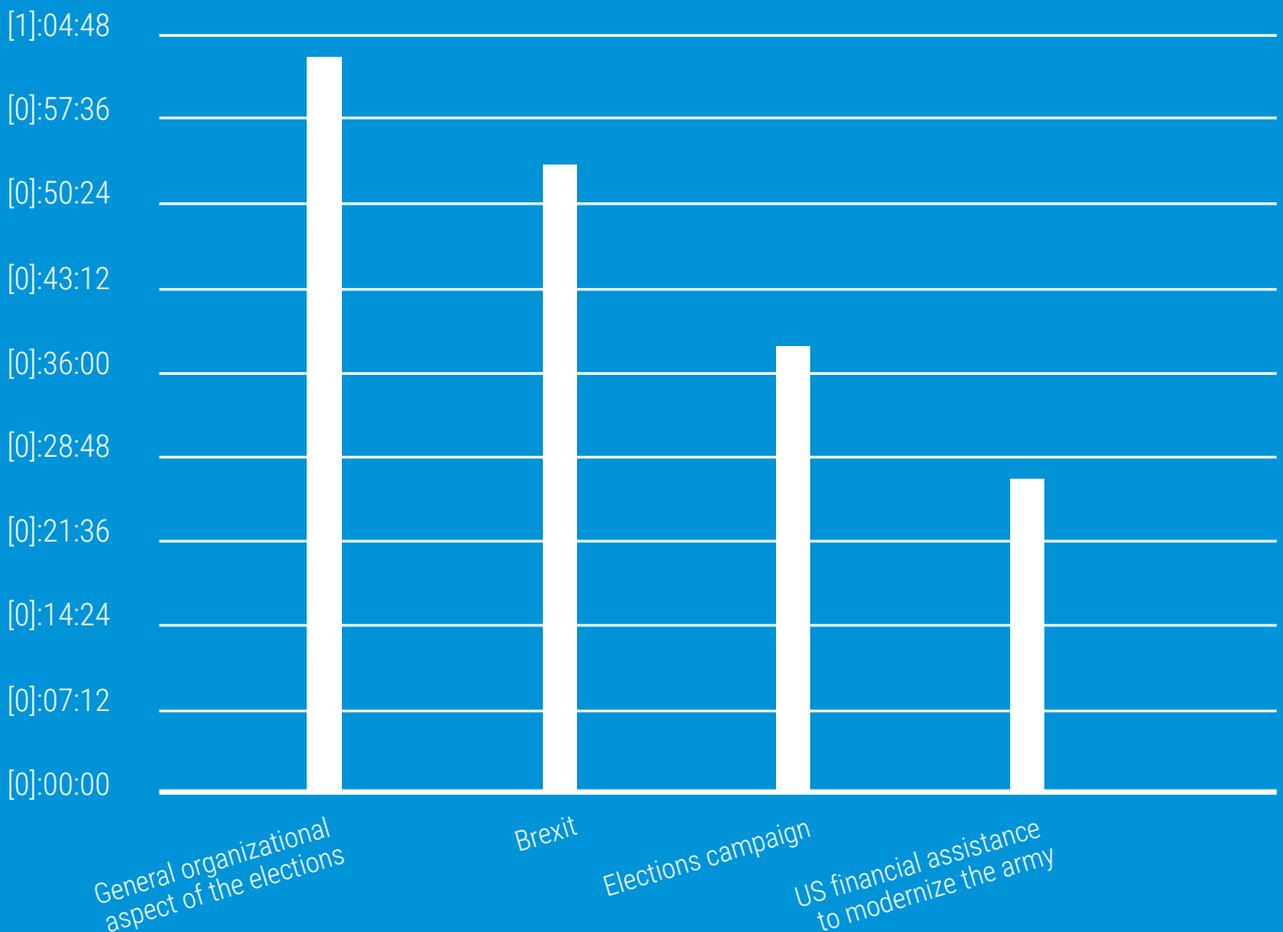


TOPICS AND AFFAIRS OF THE CAMPAIGN



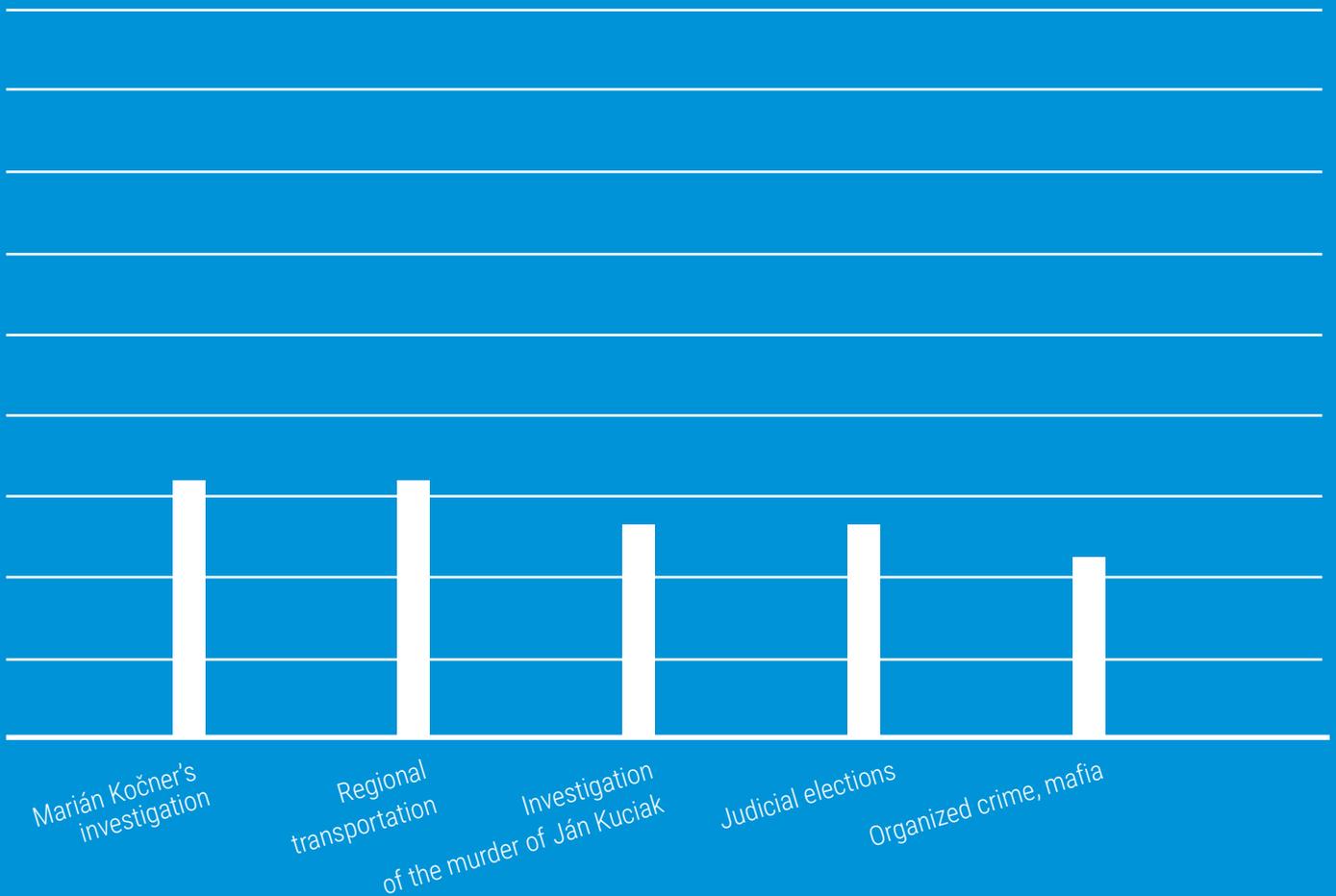
During the monitored period, news programs on RTVS, TV Joj and TV Markíza were clearly dominated by the topic of presidential elections, mainly in relation to the campaign, but also general information about the elections as such was provided (organizational provision and preparations of the elections, printing and distributing of the ballots and also coverage of the election incident when the ballot box in the village of Medzany was taken out the street and smashed to the ground). In the prime-time news program on TA3, the election of the president of the Slovak Republic (the second most intensively covered topic) was dwarfed by the topic of Brexit that this news channel dedicated almost two times larger airtime to this topic compared to the presidential elections in Slovakia. Brexit was also the second most intensively presented topic in RTVS, fourth on TV Markíza, while on TV Joj, Brexit was not among the intensively covered topics.

All TV channels combined



On TV Joj, Brexit was not among the intensively covered topics

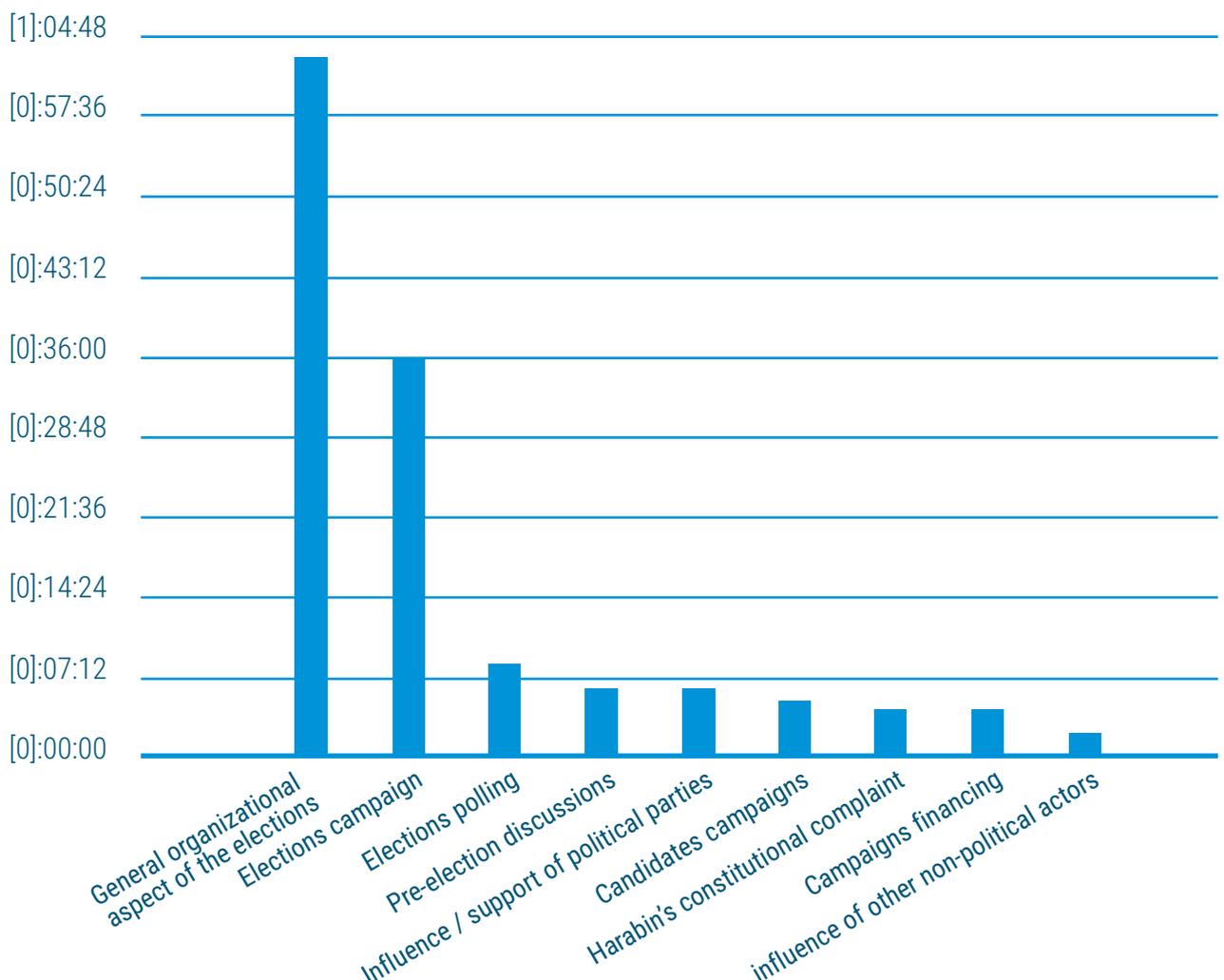
Along with Brexit, RTVS dedicated relatively large airtime also to the widely discussed topic of financial assistance by the USA to modernize the army of the Slovak Republic as well as to investigation of the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírova. In TV Markíza, after the dominant topic of presidential election elections, relatively long airtime was also dedicated to investigation into activities of Marián Kočner and besides Brexit, also regional transportation was a relevant theme for coverage. In TV Joj, the election themes clearly dominated (even if covered in 2 separate aspects), as they received comparable airtime as the five next covered topics combined. This included information concerning the convicted offender, Ladislav Bašternák or US financial assistance to modernize the Slovak military.



The topic of the elections received total airtime of 2 hours and 18 minutes, i.e. even more than in the previous monitored period

In total, during the nine days before the second round of the elections, the monitored TV channels dedicated more than 2 hours of their news airtime. The channels even dedicated more airtime to topics related to the elections during this period compared to the period before the first round of the elections: During those 9 days, the topic of the elections received total airtime of 2 hours and 18 minutes, i.e. even more than in the previous monitored period, which took 21 days and the airtime was 2 hours and 15 minutes). Quite logically, this reflected also the reaction to the results of the first round. Among all the TV channels, TV Joj dedicated most airtime to the respective aspects of the presidential elections (more than 47 minutes), followed by TV Markíza (more than 43 minutes) and RTVS (more than 35 minutes) while in V TA3 this was only 12.5 minutes.

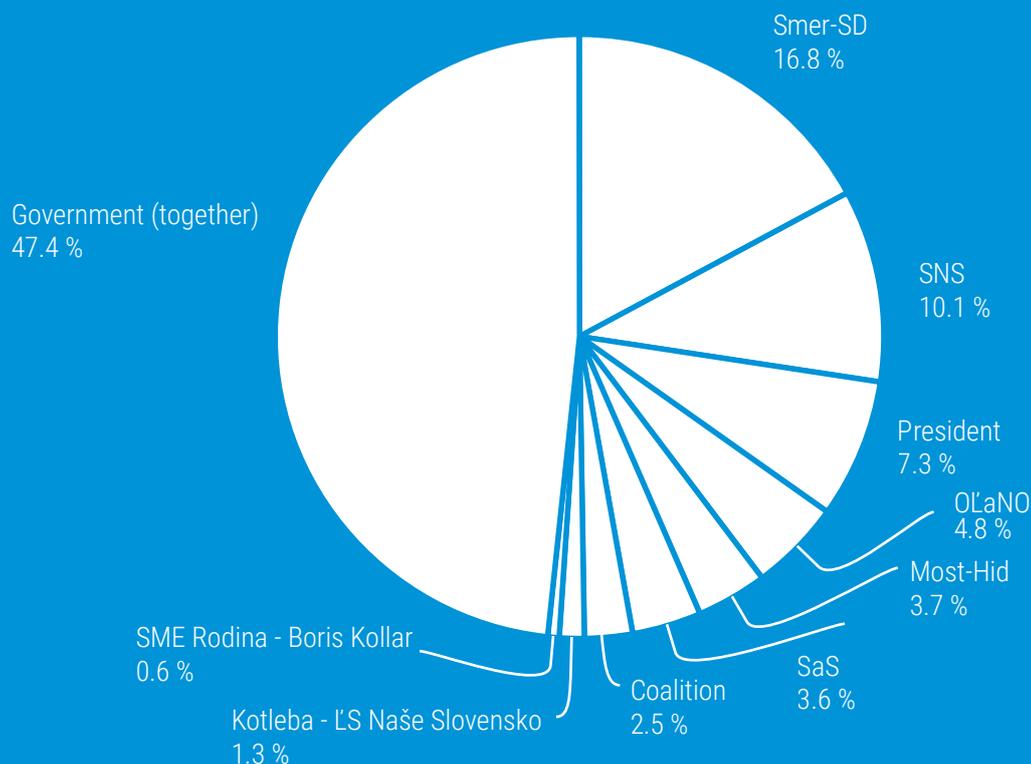
All TV channels combined



POLITICAL SUBJECTS (PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT, PARTIES AND MOVEMENTS)

The government of the Slovak Republic has enjoyed long-standing dominant airtime in the key news programs of the Slovak TV channels. This is so primarily in RTVS and TA3, which dedicated more than one half of their total airtime dedicated to all political subjects to the government – in RTVS, it was almost 52% (almost 32 minutes). Similar share of government-related information (52%) was provided by TA3 (almost 22 minutes). In TV Joj and TV Markíza, this ratio was a bit lower, however in both TV channels it represented more than 40% of their news airtime: in TV Joj, it was the total of 19 minutes and in TV Markíza it was 16 minutes. When representing the government, across all TV channels neutral information prevailed, mainly in TV Markíza (89%) and TA3 (85%).

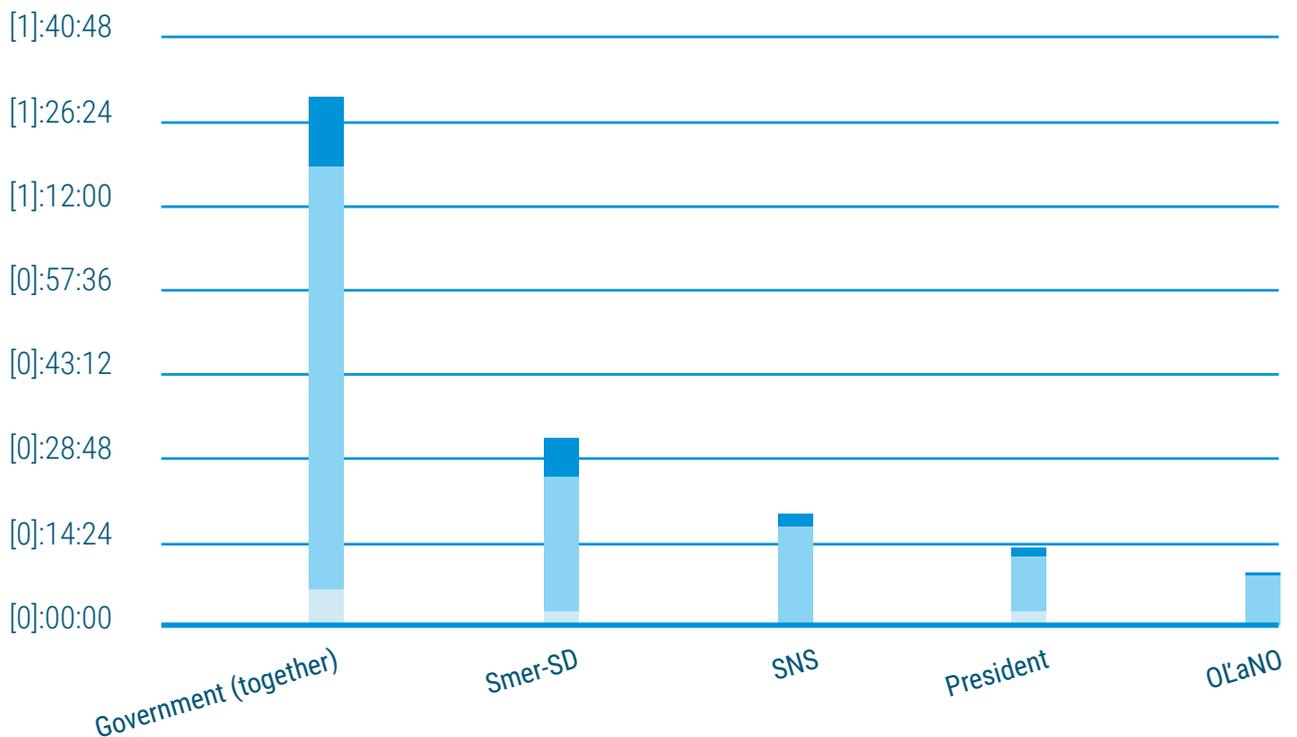
All TV channels combined





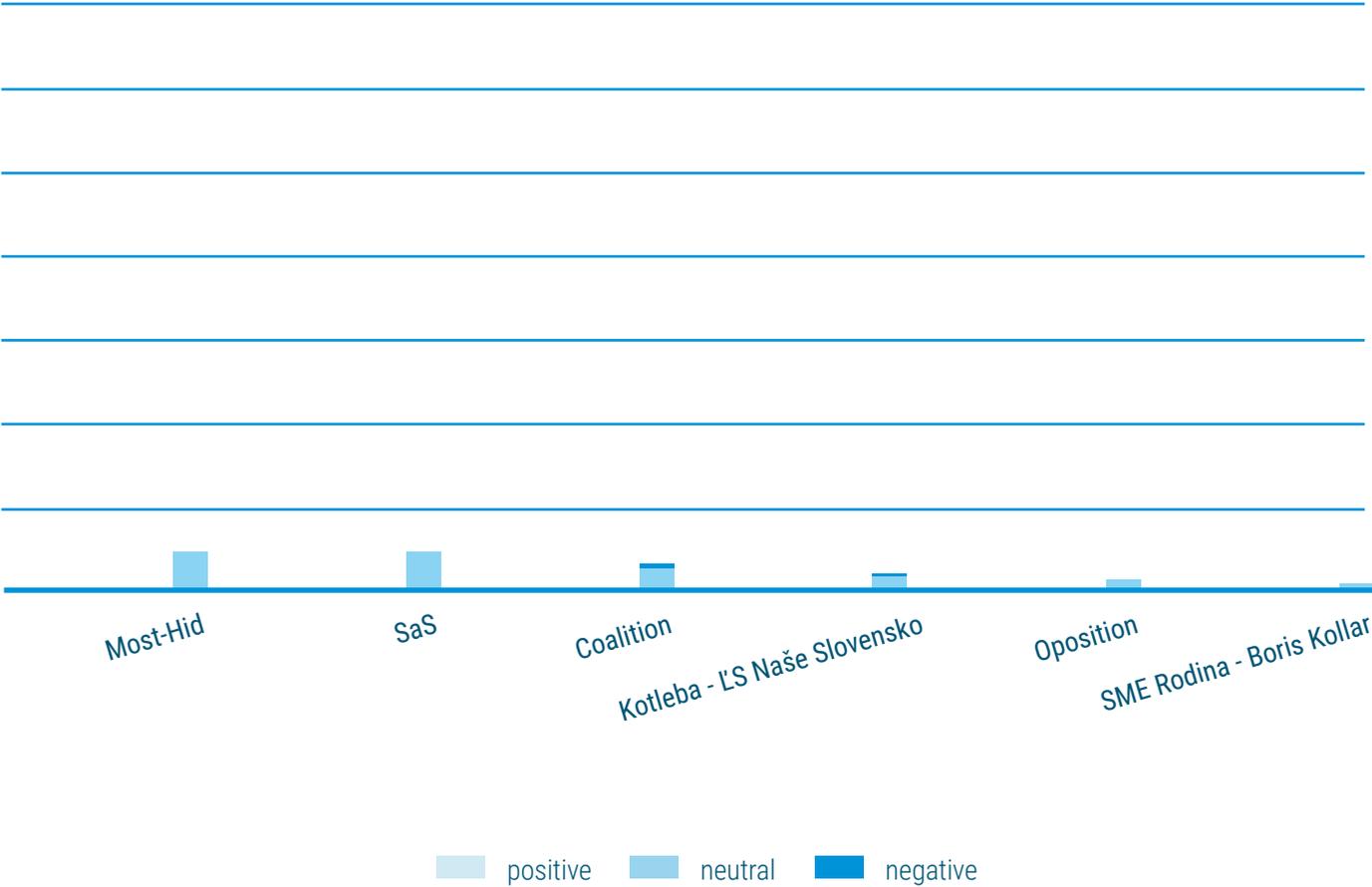
In the total summary, we can see that media dedicated their airtime mainly to Smer-SD (17%) and SNS (10%). The three privately-owned TV channels were presenting these two government parties in this particular order, while Smer-SD enjoyed airtime ranging from 22% in TA3 (21-20% in TV Markíza and TV Joj) to 9% in RTVS. The situation was slightly different on the public TV channel (RTVS): along with the significantly lower share itself, Smer-SD represented only the fourth most covered political subject following SNS and the current president A. Kiska (each 10%). SNS itself, as the second strongest coalition party enjoyed the most robust media coverage on TV Joj (12%) and on TA3 (11%).

All TV channels combined



All the monitored TV channels were presenting the parties mostly neutrally

OLaNO enjoyed most airtime among the opposition parties – all in all, when combining all TV channels, it was still less than 5% (most in TV Markíza – 7% and least in TA3 – 3%), while SaS, which is the long-standing opposition leader according to polls, received the total of less than 4% (most in RTVS – over 4% and least in TV Joj and TA3 – 3%). All the monitored TV channels were presenting the parties mostly neutrally, while in comparison to the other parties, most negatively-leaning information concerned SMER-SD (in TV Joj, also SNS received substantial criticism).



This report was elaborated thanks to the support from National Endowment for Democracy.

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