

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN TELEVISION

MEMO 98 has a long history of monitoring 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 major news programs of the nationwide Slovak TV channels - RTVS, TV Markíza TV Joj, and TA3 - during the three weeks (18 February to 10 March) before the final week of the election campaign.^[1] The report simultaneously introduces an analysis of presentation of the political parties and coalitions in the media as well as media coverage of some other key stakeholders of the Slovak politics (president of the Slovak Republic, the government of the Slovak Republic).

The monitored criteria included the time that the media dedicated to the presidential candidates and other subjects as well as the manner (positive/neutral/negative), in which the candidates and other subjects were presented.

Executive summary

Zuzana Čaputová (28%) received the biggest portion of airtime among the candidates in the summary of all the monitored TV channels. Another leading election candidate, Maroš Šefčovič received a comparable share of airtime (20.5%), while Robert Mistrík (17.7%) and Štefan Harabin (11.2%) came as third and fourth respectively. Zuzana Čaputová received most media attention in TV Markíza (8.5 min) and RTVS (2 min), while in TA3 it was Robert Mistrík (3.5 min) and Maroš Šefčovič in TV Joj (over 2 min).

When it comes to the manner of presentation, most information about the candidates was neutral or positive (in RTVS solely positive). Zuzana Čaputová was presented in TA3 and TV Joj with a larger share of negative information, the same applies to Maroš Šefčovič and TA3 as well as Štefan Harabin on TV Markíza.

During the monitored period, several major themes and events resonated across the nation - investigation of the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírova (dominant in RTVS and TV Joj, in total more than 70 minutes across all monitored TV channels), abuse of EU subsidies in agriculture and the related protests of Slovak farmers (almost 60 minutes), and regional transport-related issues, mainly in relation to the extensive traffic limitations in Bratislava (40 minutes in total). When it comes to the total time devoted to all topics, however, the individual aspects of the presidential elections dominated with TV channels dedicating it 2 hours and 15 minutes. On the other hand, this means the average of only around 1.5 min per day per TV channel.

When comparing the respective TV channels, TV Markíza dedicated the biggest time to the election campaign (71 minutes, approx. 3,5 minutes per day), while covering 11 various aspects of the campaign, the largest number across all TV channels (in RTVS and TV Joj it was 7, aspects and only 5 in TA3). As the publicly funded institution, RTVS dedicated 38 minutes to the campaign in total. Among the top 10 affairs covered on this channel, only 3 were actually related to the elections (for TV Markíza as well as TA3 it was only a single topic). TA3 dedicated the smallest share of its news primetime to the presidential campaign (fewer than 7 minutes, making this less than 20 seconds a day), while it was the only TV channel, where top 10 most intensively covered topics did not include even a single

major theme related to the presidential election.

When it comes to the respective aspects of the presidential campaign, the most resonating topic was the general organizational aspect of the elections (24%) as well as the opinion polls among voters (18.3%). Along with the above, substantial coverage was dedicated also to the campaign itself (14.6%). The influence of other, apolitical subjects as well as the resignation of one candidate for the benefit of another contender received an almost identical coverage in the media (9.1% for both topics respectively). Conversely, the messages and visions contained in the election platforms of the respective candidates resonated less intensively (7.4%).

Just like in the previously monitored periods, all TV channels dedicated the most extensive coverage to the government. During the monitoring period, the government enjoyed the biggest portion of coverage in RTVS (48%). At the same time, RTVS was the only television which covered the cabinet with the largest share of neutral information - almost 85% (at the same time, when it comes to the share of positive and negative coverage, the critical tone dominated over the positive one). Among the other TV channels, TA3 showed a different approach as it presented the government in the most positive light. _

Media dedicated time to political parties present in the parliament: Smer-SD enjoyed 18%, twice the time compared to the time TV channels dedicated to other two parties of the ruling coalition (SNS 6% and Most-Híd 3%). Among other parties, the opposition SaS and OLaNO enjoyed a similar share of the coverage (6% respectively). The incumbent president received 14% of the politically relevant time in total. Smer-SD was the most intensively covered political party across all the media, most often in TV Joj and TV Markíza, while TV Joj was the most critical in their coverage compared to all other media.

Media offered their audience multiple ways in presenting the MEMO 98 has indicated several times already that an interactive and dynamic discussion with several candidates participating, hosted by an experienced journalist and not bound by too strict compliance with the rules for keeping the dedicated time slots is the most attractive and most informative form of coverage from the audience perspective during an election campaign. We, therefore, appreciate the approach of several media outlets which preferred exactly this type of presentation of the candidates.

The full version of the [monitoring-report](#)

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