

BBC-standard after the elections?

How did the public broadcaster's evening news program change during the first week after the election?

AN ANALYSIS BY REPUBLIKON INSTITUTE



2026 April

INTRODUCTION

One of the key projects undertaken by the Republikon Institute last year was an extensive 11-month monitoring of public media. From February to December, we closely watched and analyzed all of M1's 7:30 p.m. news broadcasts. Our findings led us to conclude that the public media operated by MTVA falls short of meeting public service standards. The news program displayed a clear bias toward Fidesz-KDNP, predominantly conveying the political narrative of the ruling parties. The experts and politicians featured in the segments were overwhelmingly affiliated with these parties, while opponents, particularly the Tisza Party and Péter Magyar, were depicted in a highly disparaging manner. Moreover, the majority of political news sources were outlets tied to Fidesz and its inner circle, including Magyar Nemzet, Origó, and Patrióta.

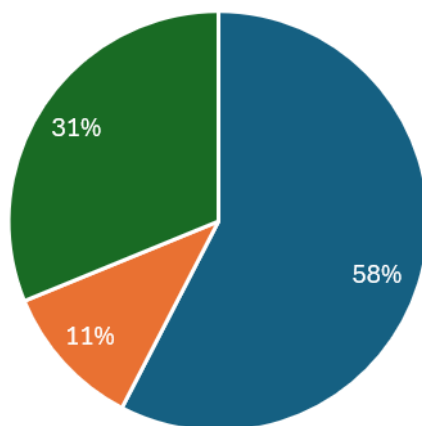
However, since Tisza's electoral victory, a number of unusual developments have occurred within the public media studios—actions that would have previously been regarded as anomalies. Notably, Péter Magyar made appearances on two programs, the news began citing independent media sources, Endre Hann conducted a studio interview, and public media even covered one of Republikon's studies and conferences. Yet, the question arises: Are these gestures indicative of genuine change, or is public media merely adopting a more sophisticated form of propaganda?

To address this question, Republikon has resumed its monitoring of public media, focusing on the 7:30 p.m. M1 news broadcasts from April 13–19, the week following the election. We will compare this data with the same period in 2025 to measure how much public media has evolved over the course of a year.

RESULTS

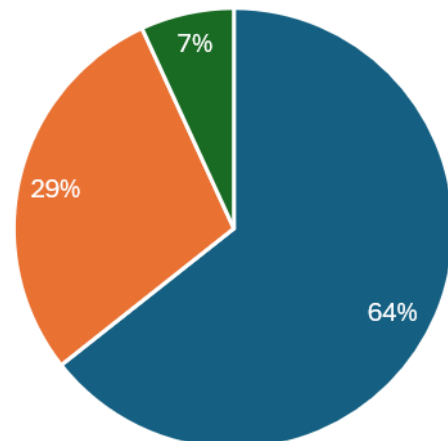
Between April 13 and 19, 2025, political news accounted for 75.8% of news broadcasts, totaling 4 hours, 30 minutes, and 11 seconds. Of this, 2:35:40 was purely domestic news, 1:24:16 was a mix of domestic and foreign affairs-related news, and only 0:30:15 was purely news regarding foreign affairs. Meanwhile, in 2026, during the same period, political news accounted for slightly less time—4 hours, 13 minutes, and 46 seconds—but the proportion of news not even touching on domestic politics was significantly higher, at nearly 29% of all political news, whereas last year at this time that figure was just 11%. Political news was distributed as follows during the two weeks examined:

Breakdown of political news by category during the 2025 study period



- Domestic politics
- Foreign policy
- Foreign policy with domestic relation

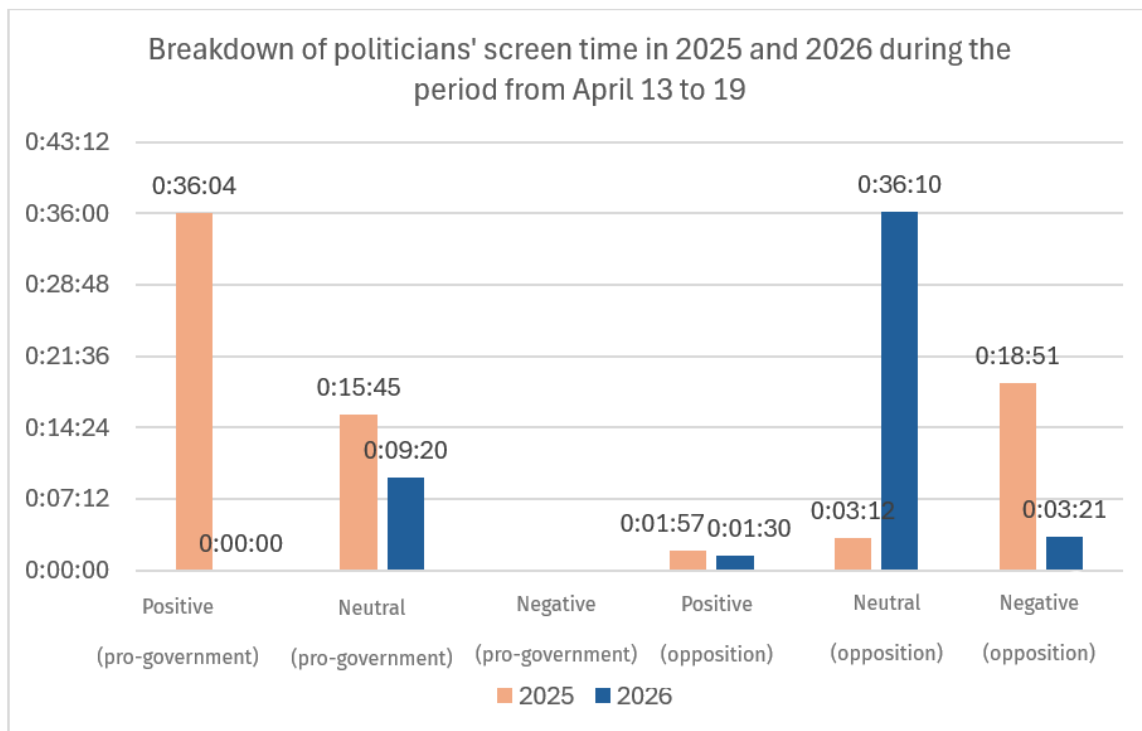
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What stands out immediately is that, while the proportion of purely domestic news stories remains consistent, there is a notable increase in the number of foreign policy news stories lacking domestic implications. In other words, segments that touch on domestic politics have become significantly shorter overall.

The situation becomes even more intriguing when we analyze how the portrayals of pro-government and opposition politicians have evolved over time. We investigate the amount of screen time allocated to these politicians, including both images and audio, and how public media frames them—whether positively, negatively, or neutrally. The data for the two-week period is illustrated in the figure below:



In 2026, the proportion of neutral portrayals of politicians in public media has increased significantly for both pro-government and opposition figures compared to the previous year. Notably, the only explicitly negative portrayal was of Péter Magyar, who was depicted unfavorably in a segment titled “Péter Magyar Threatened the Public Media on Public Media.” This report highlighted his decision to avoid answering a question about protected gasoline prices, which subsequently gained viral attention.

In contrast, the same broadcast featured a positive portrayal of the opposition, showcasing László Toroczkai’s interviews from that day. During these segments, the president of Mi Hazánk criticized the previously discredited Tisza leader, emphasizing the need for accountability regarding alleged excessive power.

Interestingly, Péter Magyar was also presented in a more favorable light during a discussion about how Tisza plans to allocate committee and vice-presidential positions more fairly to its opposition. It's worth noting that pro-government politicians had minimal appearances in the seven broadcasts examined in 2026, resulting in no positive or negative portrayals.

Looking back at the previous week in 2025, public media directly interviewed 16 politicians: 11 from Fidesz-KDNP, 3 from Mi Hazánk, and 2 from Jobbik. However, following the election, only one interview with a pro-government politician—featuring Gergely Gulyás—was aired on the M1 news program, while opposition politicians made statements on nine separate occasions. Among these, Péter Magyar appeared most frequently, with László Toroczkai and Gergely Karácsony being featured multiple times in the broadcasts.

In terms of expert interviews, last year saw 26 experts discussing political topics, all affiliated with Fidesz. By 2026, although Fidesz experts remained the majority among the 14 total speakers featured, the landscape shifted slightly with the inclusion of more independent voices (three experts). While two of these independent insights focused solely on foreign policy, excerpts from the previously mentioned interview with Endre Hann were also highlighted, indicating a gradual diversification in the perspectives presented.

The sources of the 41 news items cited at this time last year were also highly biased, breaking down as follows:

- MTI: 1
- Fidesz media: 26
- Independent media: 5
- International media: 9

In contrast, in 2026, the 26 news sources cited:

- MTI: 2
- Fidesz media: 7
- Independent media: 9

- International media: 8

The analysis reveals a significant diversification of news sources during the period under review. Notably, independent domestic media did not outnumber references from government sources at any point throughout our study.

A key focus of our research has been the public perception of Viktor Orbán and Péter Magyar. During the week we examined last year, Viktor Orbán was mentioned 45 times, with our qualitative analysis indicating that these references were overwhelmingly positive, scoring around 0.85 on a scale where a positive mention is rated 1, neutral at 0, and negative at -1. In stark contrast, Péter Magyar's name was mentioned 132 times and received a score of -1, reflecting a consistently negative portrayal.

By 2026, however, the landscape had changed considerably. While Orbán's mentions decreased to 41, Magyar's increased to 173. Although Magyar's name is still mentioned more frequently, the context has shifted from solely negative to a more balanced representation. In fact, both figures rated exactly 0, indicating a completely neutral portrayal during that week—Magyar's negative and positive mentions had balanced out, while Orbán's references remained primarily neutral and brief.

A particularly intriguing aspect of the analysis is the language used around Péter Magyar's name. In 2025, the term "Ukrainian/Ukraine" appeared 38 times in connection with Magyar, alongside references to Kinga Kollár, who was reported to be working against Hungary in the European Parliament (17 mentions), and the term "Pride," which was mentioned 5 times, despite Magyar's careful avoidance of addressing the demonstration (though reports suggested he secretly supported the event). By 2026, the language shifted significantly, with the phrases most commonly associated with Magyar being "Tisza Party" (21 mentions), "spoke" (19 mentions), and "future prime minister" (17 mentions).

Additionally, it is worth noting how often terms used in the pro-government narrative appeared across the news coverage.

Expression	Migrant/migration	War	Peace	Sanctions	Sovereignty	Soros
In total – 2025	17	61	39	14	7	2
Average by broadcast – 2025	2,42	8,71	5,57	2	1	0,29
In total – 2026	19	31	26	9	3	0
Average by broadcast– 2026	2,71	4,43	3,71	1,29	0,43	0

Only the term “migrant/migration” saw a slight increase; however, the number of mentions of all other terms decreased significantly. This is particularly true of the term “war,” which fell by roughly half (even as the main topics of foreign policy blocs are currently Ukraine and Iran).

CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that while the news report indicates public media did not abruptly shift to the BBC standard—which they themselves frequently reference—after April 12, the coverage has become significantly more balanced compared to the same period last year. It remains clear, however, that the media tends to treat the ruling parties with more leniency than the opposition. They also seem to refrain from mounting a dramatic rearguard action against the Tisza Party in their news coverage. Nonetheless, there are still numerous stories that, although not accounted for in our methodology, appear to convey negative sentiments about the Tisza Party. For example, instances where a statement from a German Green Party MEP is amplified and presented as if it reflects the official stance of the entire European Union regarding their expectations of Péter Magyar’s government. Despite this, a noticeable degree of self-restraint is evident in the programming, as the data confirms. It will be crucial to repeat this research over a more extended

period once the Magyar government has commenced its work and initiated the promised structural changes.