

Semiannual Report: Public Media Monitoring

Based on M1 news broadcasts at 7:30 PM

February-July 2025

A REPORT BY REPUBLIKON INSTITUTE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Democratic control, transparency, and impartiality in the operation of public service media are essential to a free public sphere and to ensuring that voters can make informed decisions. The joint monitoring report by the Republikon Institute and Connect Europe — the first semi-annual publication of a one-year project, covering the period February–July 2025 — seeks to evaluate, with supporting data, the balance of news coverage in public media, with particular attention to M1’s evening news program, broadcast at 7:30 p.m. The aim of the research is to assess whether public media complies with the requirements of independence and pluralism as set out in the relevant domestic and EU regulations.

During the study, the Institute applied both quantitative and qualitative methodological tools: it analyzed the full content of the evening news program on a daily basis, assessing, among other things, the screen time of politicians, the frequency and context of their mentions, the narrative framing of news items, the sources cited, as well as the presence and framing of key political topics (e.g., migration, war, economy). Based on the aggregation of the resulting data, we obtained a comprehensive picture of the structural and content-related operation of the program. Over the six-month period, it became clearly apparent that the evening news primarily follows the perspectives of government communication.

Governing party politicians appear predominantly in a positive context, with dominant screen time, while opposition figures are presented mainly in neutral or negative terms. Politicians of the Tisza Party—especially Péter Magyar—are mentioned extremely frequently, typically in a discrediting, scandal-focused context. This negative portrayal is evident not only in word choice but also in the thematic and visual environment surrounding their appearances.

The vast majority of those featured in the news are governing party politicians or experts linked to them, while opposition politicians appear at a much lower rate, and independent expert opinions are included only marginally—and usually not in matters of public or political significance. Among the media outlets cited, pro-government sources are also overwhelmingly dominant, while information from

independent or critical outlets is rarely included, and when it is, it typically appears in a rebuttal context.

An analysis of the frequency and context of various keywords (e.g., “migration,” “war,” “peace,” “sanctions,” “Soros”) also demonstrates that M1’s evening news operates in close symbiosis with the government’s current political agenda. During the observed period, a gradual shift could be identified from foreign policy topics to domestic actors and issues, in line with Fidesz’s communication strategy.

In summary, it can be concluded that M1’s evening news does not meet the expectations of public service broadcasting in terms of balance, objectivity, or pluralism of opinion. The program predominantly represents pro-government perspectives, while disproportionately silencing or placing opposition and critical voices in a negative context.

INTRODUCTION

The core function of public service media is to provide impartial, reliable, and varied information to society. Their responsibility is to support the functioning of democratic public life, ensure pluralism of opinion, and make cultural, educational, and other public interest content easily accessible. In addition, public service media play a key role in fostering national and minority identities and strengthening social cohesion. Hungary's Act CLXXXV of 2010 on Media Services and Mass Media (the so-called Media Act) defines public service media as follows:

“a) its operations are independent both from the state and from economic agents, and the managers of public service broadcasters and those involved in the performance of their operations have professional autonomy – within the applicable legislative framework; b) its system ensures accountability and the existence of social control” The independence of public broadcasting is governed not only by Hungarian legislation but also by EU regulations. The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), which came into effect on May 7, 2024, also addresses the independence and impartiality of public service media. The Hungarian public broadcaster, MTVA, has been subject to recurring criticism over its alleged bias in favor of the governing parties, the Fidesz-KDNP alliance. Such critiques seem to be supported by the fact that a court ruled in 2014 that Dániel Papp, the current director of MTVA, could legally be called a “news falsifier” due to his distortion of a 2011 news report and that Balázs Bende, head of the foreign affairs desk at MTVA, made unmistakable references to the political orientation of public media in a leaked audio recording from an internal meeting ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections.

Republikon aims to examine in an objective and factual manner the extent to which the accusations of partiality and bias frequently leveled at Hungary's public broadcaster (and in particular its news shows) are well founded. On February 1, 2025, Republikon began monitoring the evening news shows at 7:30 PM on M1, the public broadcaster's main television channel, on a daily basis. The goal of the project is to evaluate the validity of claims that the Hungarian public broadcaster's programs serve primarily to amplify government messaging rather than to provide

objective information. Our research examines M1's evening news broadcasts from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. In this report, we present the findings from the first half of the year (February-July), along with the trends and changes observed over the six-month period.

METHODOLOGY

In our project, we made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze M1's newscasts. The analysis focused exclusively on the M1 evening news broadcast that airs at 7:30 PM, as this time slot traditionally attracts the highest viewership among the channel's daily news shows.

Each news show was analyzed individually, with each news item examined separately. The daily results were compiled into monthly data sets; this study presents an analysis of the first three months.

Our research rests on three thematic pillars: the representation of political actors, the choice and framing of topics covered, and news sources. In terms of the representation of political actors, we examined the following:

- Politicians' time on screen
- Perception of the portrayal of Hungarian politicians
- Perception of the portrayal of foreign politicians
- Frequency of politicians' names
- Common expressions appearing in the context of politicians' names (the 9 words before and after each mention)

Regarding the topics covered in the news shows, we considered the following:

- Number of speakers providing a narrative frame for the news
- Political affiliation of these speakers
- Frequency of expressions central to the government's narrative (*for this, we used randomly selected episodes of RTL's evening news show as a reference point*)

For the news sources, we studied the following:

- Number of press outlets cited
- Political affiliations of these outlets
- Number of corrections issued

To analyze word frequencies and the context in which politicians' names appeared, transcripts were generated for each daily newscast using software tools. These transcripts were then processed and analyzed using the Voyant Tools text analysis program.

DATA

The length of the news shows is relatively consistent, ranging from around 45 to about 60 minutes. While the broadcasts do not consist exclusively of political news, such content makes up the majority of the program. **The the proportion of political news showed a decreasing tendency in the first half of th year.** While in February this rate was 81 percent, by May it had fallen to 70 percent, and by July to 63 percent. **We categorized political news into three types: purely domestic political news, purely foreign political news (world politics), and foreign political news with domestic relevance (world politics with domestic relevance).**

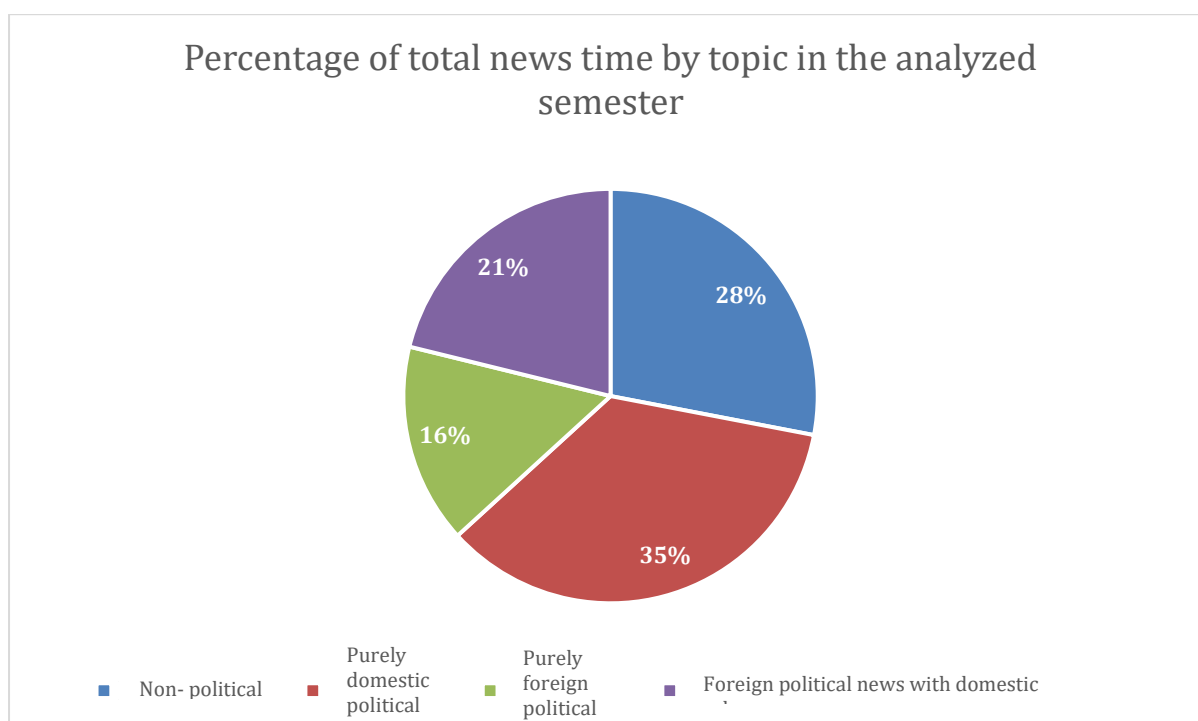


Figure 1

The proportion of political news made up by each of these three types varied somewhat across the six months examined. **In February, the share of purely foreign political news was relatively high at 31%—in part due to the early actions of U.S. President Donald Trump. By March, however, this figure had dropped to just over 18%, and by April, it had declined further to 16%.**

During the summer the proportion of purely foreign political news increased somewhat, but even in June it was only 25 percent, and in July it dropped down to

21 percent. The thematic distribution of political news is illustrated in the figure below on a month-by-month basis.

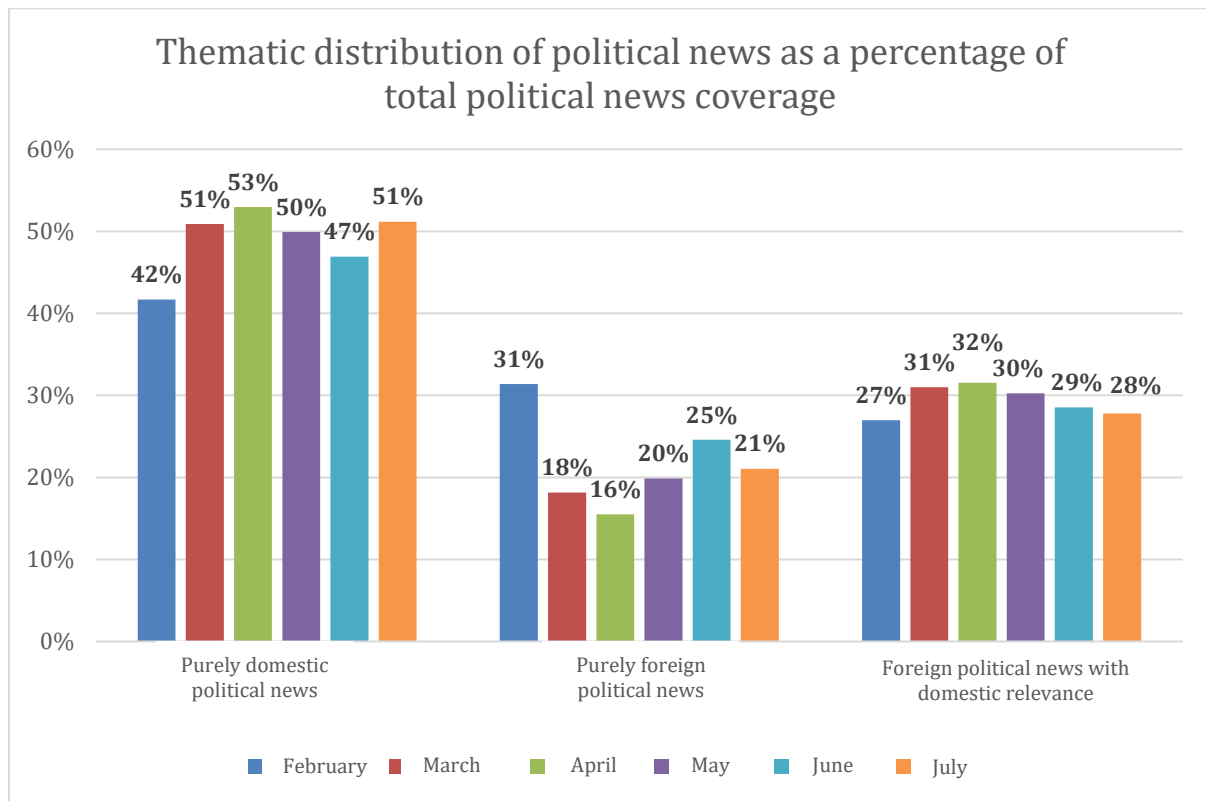


Figure 2

The data clearly show a steady increase in the emphasis on domestic political news during the spring months, coinciding with a shift towards domestic affairs in the Hungarian government’s discourse. After that, in May and June, the focus decreased slightly, but in July domestic politics once again became more prominent. The news program’s shift in focus reflects the corresponding shifts by Fidesz.

REPRESENTATION OF POLITICIANS

An important element of our study was the representation of politicians, which we examined in several ways. The most straightforward method was analyzing politicians' time on screen, as determined by the length of time for which a politician's image appeared on screen or a politician's voice was audible. Each appearance of a politician was then categorized as positive, negative, or neutral.

In making these classifications, we considered various factors, such as the context of the politician's appearance, the narrative and framing of the newscast, the politician's role in the news item, and whether expert commentary supported or contradicted the politician's statements.

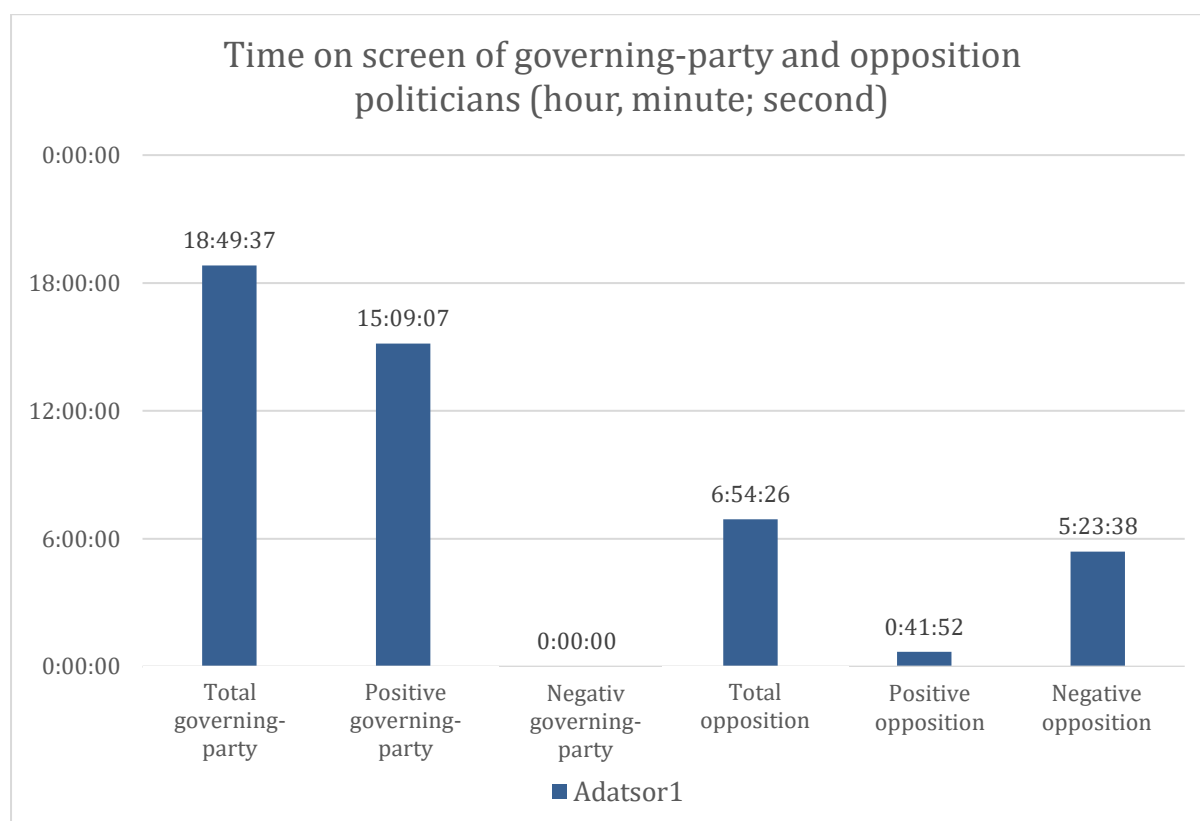


Figure 3

In every month of the first half of the year, governing-party politicians clearly received more screen time than opposition politicians.

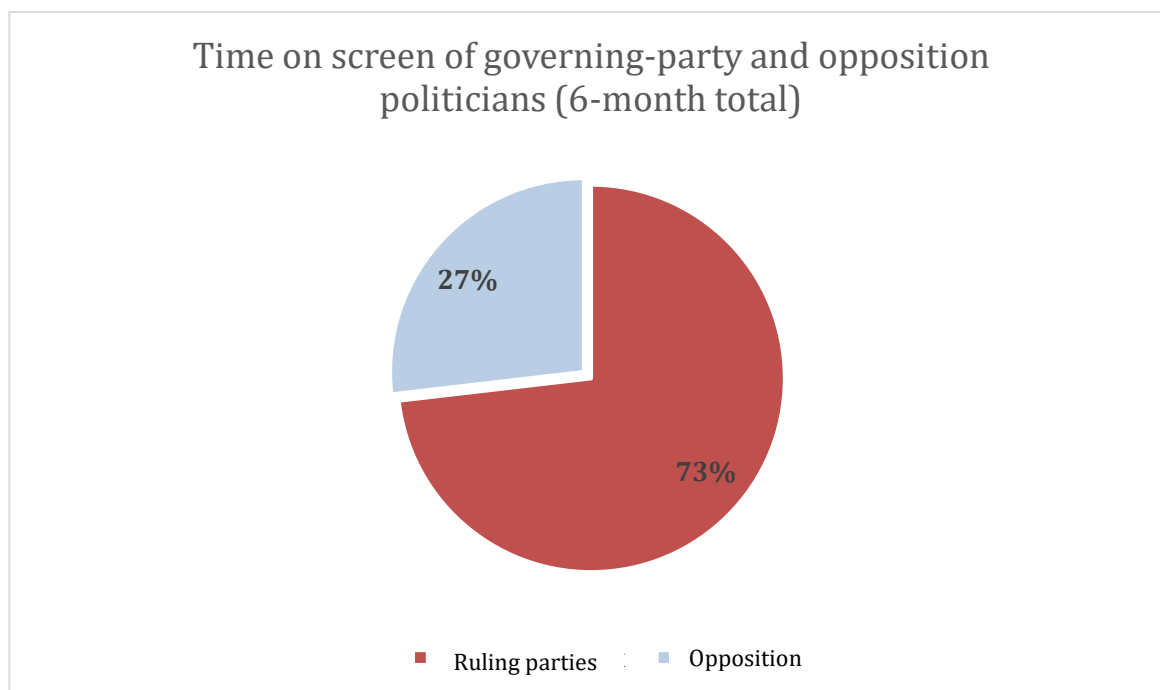


Figure 4

It is important to note that not a single instance of governing party politicians appearing on screen in a negative light was recorded over the six months examined, with their negative time on screen remaining at 0 seconds.

In contrast, the portrayal of opposition politicians was far more mixed. **For example, politicians from the Tisza Party appeared almost exclusively in a negative context, while politicians from other opposition parties were generally presented neutrally. Opposition politicians portrayed positively were most commonly from Our Homeland (Mi Hazánk) and Jobbik.**

Representation can also be measured by **how often a politician’s name is mentioned in the newscasts.** To that end, **we selected seven key “main characters” and tracked how often their names were mentioned, as well as the context of those mentions (positive, negative, or neutral).** It is important to note that **we only counted explicit name mentions**—not titles or substitute terms. Thus, for Viktor

Orbán, we only counted uses of “Orbán Viktor” or “Orbán,” excluding terms like “miniszterelnök” (prime minister) or “kormányfő” (head of government).

There were several reasons for drawing a clear line between names and titles. For one, repeating a name is a much more direct method of building political identity and enhances public recognition more than using titles. In addition, from a practical point of view, it is difficult to decide which alternate terms should count. For instance, should nicknames (e.g. “Brussels Péter”) be included? Where do we draw the line with titles (e.g. “national leader”)? What about phrases involving adjectives (e.g., “the convicted politician”)? And how many mentions is “Prime Minister Viktor Orbán” worth—one or two? For these reasons, we felt the cleanest methodological approach was to only count name mentions.

In addition to seven Hungarian political figures, we also tracked how often the name of Donald Trump—who took office in January—was mentioned in M1's evening newscasts. We encoded the context of each mention as follows: (1) for positive, (-1) for negative, and (0) for neutral.

The average values for each person by month are presented in the following table.

Name of Politician	Viktor Orbán	Péter Magyar	Gergely Karácsony	Ferenc Gyurcsány	Government or gov't members	Fides-KDNP members	Opposition or opposition politicians	Donald Trump
Február - Incidence	302	297	23	37	478	212	252	346
Február - Context	1	-1	-0,9	-1	1	1	-0,69	1
Március - Incidence	260	353	23	25	482	288	257	228
Március - Context	1	-0,96	-0,5	-0,73	1	1	-0,7	0,93
Április - Incidence	222	448	13	26	632	246	746	134
Április - Context	0,93	-0,97	-1	-0,93	1	1	-0,93	0,96
Május - Incidence	258	306	27	23	657	359	683	109
Május - Context	1	-0,97	-0,88	-1	1	1	-0,97	0,76
Június - Incidence	226	284	105	5	508	328	455	102
Június - Context	0,93	-1	-0,94	-1	1	1	-0,88	0,57
Július - Incidence	256	491	22	4	681	431	569	122
Július - Context	0,96	-1	-0,83	-1	1	1	-0,93	0,42
Six Months – Incidence	1.524	2.179	213	120	3.438	1.864	2.962	1.041
Six Months - Context	0,97	-0,95	-0,84	-0,94	1	1	-0,85	0,77

Table 1

Over the six months examined, some interesting trends emerged in how often certain individuals were mentioned. One of the most notable shifts was in the coverage of opposition politicians. While in February and March, the government or its members were mentioned far more often, by April this ratio had reversed, and it was only in June that the majority of mentions of government members appeared again.

This is not because there was less talk about government members; in fact, the frequency of mentions increased by 150 between March and April. Meanwhile, however, mentions of opposition parties and politicians nearly tripled in one month. The reversal of the trend did not mean that there was little talk about the opposition; during the summer, they were still mentioned twice as often as in February and March. However, the fact that their already negative representation became even more negative in April clearly shows how closely this coincides with Fidesz's narrative. **From April onwards, the Tisza Party featured much more prominently than before (as can be seen from Péter Magyar's references), typically in narratives in which Fidesz-KDNP or one of its politicians criticized Magyar and Tisza.** Although there was less talk about the leader of the Tisza Party in June, **by July Magyar Péterezés had broken a half-year record in the news.**

The growing trend in references to the Tisza Party and its politicians, as well as Péter Magyar, strongly echoes the communication of Fidesz and the press outlets associated with them. The prime minister himself is increasingly mentioning the Tisza party and its politicians in his own media outlets. Almost parallel to this, the number of mentions of Péter Magyar and the opposition (primarily through Tisza) has skyrocketed. **The news also presents pro-government tropes, such as Szabolcs Bóna, Tisza's agricultural expert, playing a role in the spread of foot-and-mouth disease, or that Kinga Kollár is responsible for withholding EU funds, but the focus remains on Péter Magyar, with most of the references to him attempting to reinforce his image as a "scandalous" politician** ("porn actor in the Tisza Party circle," "Péter Magyar stole electricity from the toilet at one of his events").

It is worth highlighting the politicians of Tisza in particular, since from April onwards public television typically devoted more attention to them than to Fidesz, and the news reports about them carried a narrative very similar to that used for the governing parties. At the end of February and in March, the public media focused mainly on Kriszta Bódis and Romulus Ruszin-Szendi, or more precisely on issues related to them in Fidesz's communications (LGBTQ activism, liposuction), while in April the focus shifted to Kinga Kollár. In mid-April, Kollár was among the three most mentioned politicians five times. In each case, the focus was on statements she made during the April 7 hearing of the European Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control. The framing of these news reports closely matched Fidesz's communication (e.g., "Kollár thinks it's good if Hungarians live poorly," comparisons to the 2006 Őszöd speech of former PM Gyurcsány, or the notion of a Tisza-Brussels pact). In May, Ruszin-Szendi was back in the spotlight, primarily due to his speech at the NATO meeting, for which the government accused him of exceeding his mandate by supporting Ukraine. **In June the pressure on the Tisza's politicians eased slightly, when Gegely Karácsony became the target of public media criticism in connection with Pride and the capital's financial situation, just as the government's communications at that time focused on the mayor.** Thus in June, only at the beginning of the month did they try to discredit Tisza — by further discussing Ruszin-Szendi's speech and by bringing up Péter Aranyosi's earlier Roma-related jokes — after the comedian had criticized the government on Partizán. In July, the reports focusing on Ruszin-Szendi continued, though with less intensity than before (further discussion of the liposuction, his earlier stay at an expensive hotel, etc.). In addition, at the beginning of the month, the resignation of Eszter Ordas, a member of the Budapest General Assembly, and the questioning of its reasons were repeatedly covered in the news. In addition, Réka Róka, known for her appearances in adult films, was also mentioned, but the focus gradually shifted back from her party colleagues to Péter Magyar, whom the National Resistance Movement began to portray as a puppet of Eurocrat politicians, similar to their "Hungarian Zelensky" campaign.

Donald Trump's name was mentioned very frequently in February (346 times), but less often afterwards, with 228 mentions in March and only 134 in April. This drop also reflects a broader decline in the length of the foreign affairs segment of the news broadcast from month to month. **Meanwhile, Trump's role in the news began to change.** Although there is still no negative news about it, the early-year optimism characteristic of the ruling parties has increasingly been replaced by neutrality.

During the semester, we also examined the context in which certain foreign politicians (as well as the EU/Brussels and Ukraine) appear. During the research, we coded positive contexts as 1, negative contexts as -1, and neutral contexts as 0. The results are presented below (we did not look at frequency here):

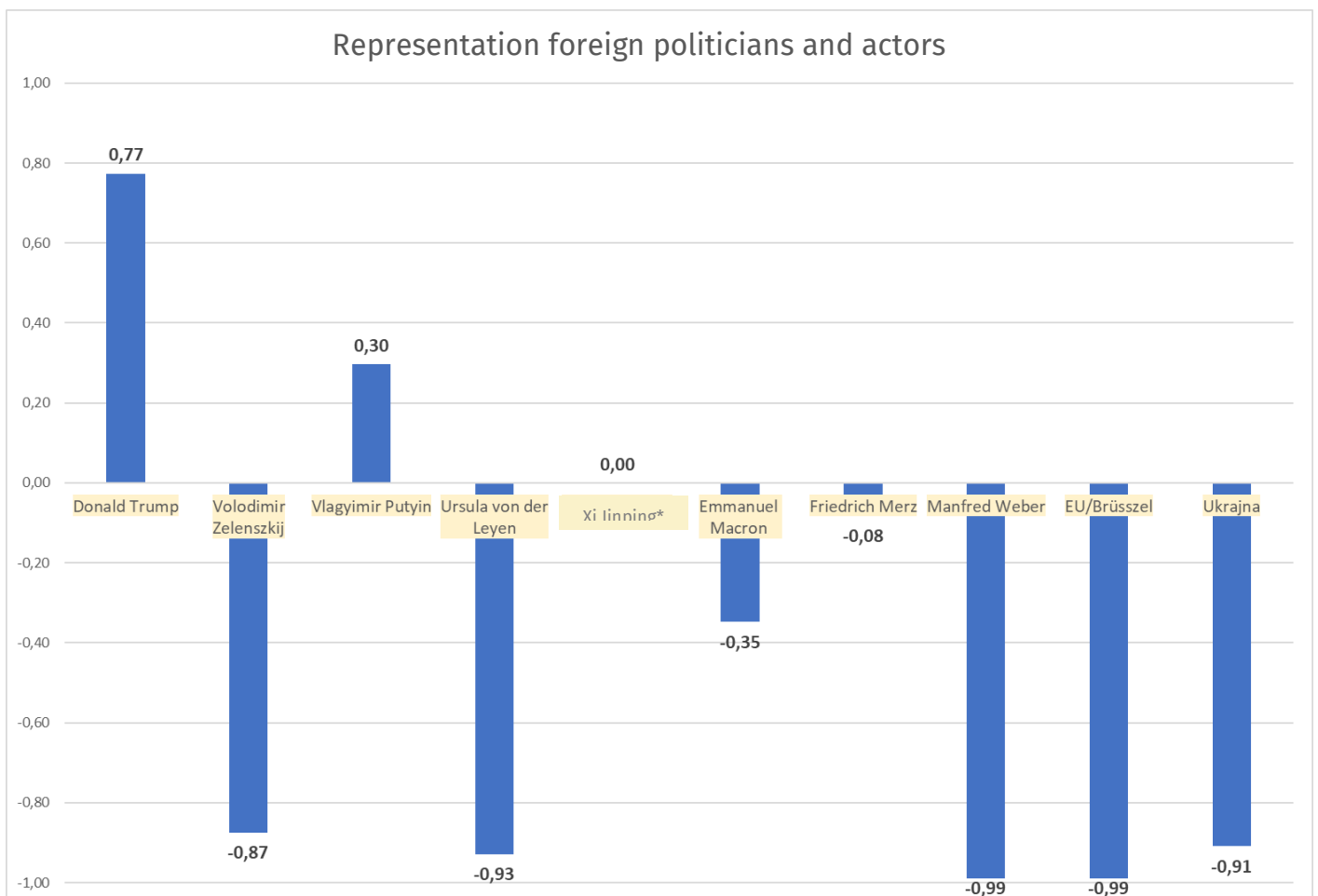


Figure 5 * Xi Jinping appeared in the news less than five times in six months.

An examination of the results from the three months in question reveals a clear tendency in the representation of political actors generally perceived as being critical of Hungary or, more specifically, the Hungarian government. **For many**

figures, it is evident that the news program treats them with an inherently hostile tone, and the perfect score of -1 is avoided only because of a few neutral appearances. **These include Manfred Weber, Ursula von der Leyen, and the EU itself (often referred to simply as Brussels). The same is true of Volodymyr Zelensky and Ukraine,** as both the country and its leader have typically been portrayed as obstacles to peace negotiations, and as attempting to accelerate EU accession through backroom deals, which would harm Hungary's interests, and possibly seeking to overthrow the Hungarian government by supporting Péter Magyar.

However, there are politicians whose tone has become noticeably more negative over time. One such politician is Emmanuel Macron, who received a largely neutral representation in February and March, but appeared in a negative light in almost all of his appearances between April and June. This was partly due to the French court's ruling against Marine Le Pen, which the news suggested may have been a political decision, and partly due to France's position on the Russian-Ukrainian war. The negative criticism of these developments is strongly in line with the communication of the ruling parties, not only in tone but also in panels discussing how Western countries (including France) are encouraging Ukraine to continue the war. Another politician who has undergone a noticeable change in terms of representation is Friedrich Merz. **The new German chancellor not only appeared frequently in February (in more than half of the broadcasts), but was typically portrayed in a positive light,** which in many cases was due to the fact that he was compared to Olaf Scholz, who was portrayed by the news as a weak, pro-war politician during the German election campaign. **Then, in March and April, he received much less media attention,** and with Scholz fading into the background, **he tended to slip into the neutral category until the summer, when he typically appeared in a negative light** in the two or three monthly broadcasts in which he appeared (the accusations were that he was obstructing the settlement of the war in Ukraine and arming Ukraine).

Another less obvious figure in international news is none other than Vladimir Putin. Putin is primarily associated with the war, yet he is portrayed in a much less negative light as a warmonger than Zelensky, who is fighting for his country's independence. Compared to his role in the war, Putin surprisingly often appears in a positive light (open to peace, his only condition being that Gazprom be allowed to supply Russian gas to Europe, etc.), even if his portrayal is mostly neutral in the vast majority of cases. The negative portrayal of the Russian president is almost exclusively evident when the news reports that, according to Donald Trump, neither Zelensky nor Putin are open to a ceasefire.

CONTEXT OF THE NAMES OF VIKTOR ORBÁN AND PÉTER

We also examined which words and expressions appear most frequently alongside individual political figures' names (primarily Viktor Orbán and Péter Magyar) in the news broadcasts. Concretely, we used a text analysis software to collect data on the nine words preceding or following each mention of a politician's name.

Next to Orbán's name (after the word "prime minister"), the word "said" (236) appeared most frequently, but among the most common words there were also many expressions referring to the prime minister's statements, such as "spoke" (154), "announced" (114), and "formulated" (86), but "emphasized" (66), "stressed" (79), and other words with a similar connotation also appeared frequently. In addition, Viktor Orbán's statements on Kossuth Radio were frequently monitored, as the name of the prime minister is mentioned 185 times in connection with Kossuth Radio.

During the six months examined, a consistent trend was observed whereby the prime minister's name appeared in connection with topics that coincide with the ruling parties' current narrative. In February, but especially in the first half of the month, Viktor Orbán's name was mentioned particularly often in connection with Donald Trump, who, as mentioned earlier, was consistently portrayed in a positive light by the news. This is clearly an attempt to establish a positive associative relationship between the two leading politicians. In contrast, the number of joint

mentions decreased significantly in May and June, with only two such occasions in each month.

Research into Viktor Orbán's name is somewhat less interesting than that of Péter Magyar, as his name is typically associated with the key issues currently emphasized by the government. In February, the focus was on families ('family' – 14; 'mother' – 8; 'child' – 10), while in March it shifted to the economy, with the word 'economy' itself appearing 19 times in proximity to Orbán's name. In the same month, in fact, alongside 'economy', Viktor Orbán's name was the fifth most frequently occurring term, after 'European', 'Hungarian', 'Ukraine', and 'EU-related'. Similarly, in May, the words most often appearing around the prime minister's name were linked to Voks2025 ('vote/ballot' – 10; 'accession' – 19; 'membership' – 16; and 'Ukraine/Ukrainian' – 95). Taken together, these results suggest that, at least in terms of expressions, the news tends to refer to Viktor Orbán in a relatively neutral manner. Notably, no large number of positive terms appears in association with his name. In the case of Péter Magyar, however, negatively connoted expressions emerge far more prominently.

The difference in the portrayal of the two politicians can be captured in numerous ways. **One of the most striking is the choice of words used when Orbán makes a statement compared to when Magyar does. In Orbán's case, throughout all six months, far stronger and unquestioning expressions dominate (such as the previously mentioned 'said', 'announced', etc.). In contrast, with Péter Magyar, the wording conveys a very different tone:**

Alongside the name of the president of the Tisza Party, the second most frequent word over the six-month period was 'according to' (217 instances). This clearly illustrates how the language differs from that used in reference to Orbán's pronouncements, since the very use of this term implies that Péter Magyar's statements are presented primarily as opinions. To be sure, neutral expressions also appeared in connection with Magyar, **but with roughly the same frequency as words such as 'responded' (89), which conveys reactivity in contrast to Orbán's forceful communication, or the explicitly accusatory 'denied' (38).**

It is also interesting to examine how the context of Orbán's and Magyar's names relates to the words 'peace' and 'war'. **Viktor Orbán's name appeared alongside the term 'peace', or one of its variations (peace mission, pro-peace, for peace), 88 times, and with 'war' or one of its variants (into war, wartime) 84 times. By contrast, in Péter Magyar's case, 'peace' appeared 19 times, while 'war' occurred 53 times.** This clearly shows that whereas for the prime minister war and the potential peace to resolve it are presented in a balanced way, Péter Magyar is associated in public media predominantly with war. This is particularly evident from the fact that **out of those 53 instances, the word 'pro-war' was used nine times in the context of the Tisza Party president's name.** Over the six-month period, the expression 'pro-war' appeared only once within nine words of the prime minister's name.

Most strikingly, **when examining Péter Magyar's name, there are numerous expressions that appeared on only a single day and not during the rest of the month, yet almost every day had at least one such occurrence.** These were not characteristic in the context of Viktor Orbán's name. **This is not limited to terms such as 'left-wing' (26), 'Pride' (22), 'SZDSZ' (8), Ferenc Gyurcsány (19), or 'gender' (6),** which the government uses as negative expressions, **but also includes genuinely derogatory words.** During the examined half-year, without claiming to be exhaustive, the following expressions (or their permutations) preceded or followed Péter Magyar's name:

'Aggressive' (14), 'brain-dead' (6), 'puppet' (5), 'clown' (3), 'scandal' (32), 'stinking' (9), 'crime' (22), 'procedure' (27), 'contradiction' (7), 'kidnapper' (2), 'violent/violence' (5), 'unprepared' (2), 'suspicion' (8), 'weak' (5), 'treason' (4), 'humbug' (5), 'oath of loyalty' (3), 'angry/fiery' (4), 'plays/plays around' (10), 'unpleasant' (8), 'spy' (26), 'serves' (3), 'corruption/corrupt' (6), 'flattered' (2), 'failure' (10), 'caught' (9), 'wiretaps' (13), 'theft/stolen' (9), 'threatened' (13), 'falsifies' (4), 'unworthy' (3), 'pro-migration' (2), 'indefensible' (3), 'sycophant' (1), 'vulgar' (1), 'shouts' (3), 'colludes' (7), 'panic' (6), 'penetrating' (1), 'brazen' (6), 'bug' (2) (particularly interesting here, as the word 'bug' was used with Viktor Orbán, but it does not appear in proximity to his name), 'humiliate' (4), 'buffoon' (2), 'poser' (4), 'propaganda/propagandist' (28), 'provokes' (5), 'hamming it up' (2), 'slinks' (2), 'sneaky' (4), 'personal attacks' (11),

'servant/serves' (5, once as 'subservient'), 'orders/instructions' (16), 'blackmails' (13).

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it clearly illustrates the tone of the news segments in which Péter Magyar's name appears. Such expressions in this quantity do not occur in proximity to the prime minister's name. However, it is not only the evaluation of Péter Magyar in which the evening news and Fidesz's communication converge. **Many expressions appearing alongside Magyar's name are fundamentally linked to topics the governing party uses to discredit him. Again, without claiming to be exhaustive, these include:**

'Insider' (trade) (43), Roland Ceber (49), 'abolishes' (7), 'parliamentary immunity' (law) (57), 'pact' (12), 'pornographic' (4), 'stock/share' (58), 'Romanian land' (3), 'phone theft' (7).

In addition, numerous politicians, as well as Ukraine (or Ukrainians), frequently appear in the context of Péter Magyar's name, in connection with whom the news clearly paints a negative picture. By appearing in the context of the Tisza Party president, the news explicitly plays on these negative associations. **For example, alongside Viktor Orbán, who regularly comments on the war, the words 'Ukrainian/Ukraine' appear only 288 times, whereas with Péter Magyar they occur 377 times. Volodymyr Zelensky, who we have previously seen is typically portrayed as a scapegoat and a delay to peace, is mentioned together with Orbán only 27 times, but with Péter Magyar 48 times.** The most striking example, however, is Manfred Weber, **depicted as pro-war both by the news and by the governing party, whose name appears 53 times in proximity to Péter Magyar's.**

KEY TOPICS

One of the important elements of our research was to examine the frequency with which certain expressions that occupy a central role in the government’s messaging can be heard in the public broadcaster’s newscasts. The chart below shows the evolution of the number of mentions of some such words and expressions over the course of the six months examined.

Expression	Migrant/migration	War	Peace	Sanctions	Sovereignty	Soros
Total	1085	2004	931	288	267	131
Average per Broadcast	5,99	11,07	5,14	1,59	1,48	0,72

Table 2

We also examined the same terms over the six-month period in 48 of RTL’s evening newscasts. The frequency of these expressions in the RTL broadcasts is as follows:

Expression	Migrant/migration	War	Peace	Sanctions	Sovereignty	Soros
Total	6	170	79	43	43	7
Average per Broadcast	0,13	3,54	1,65	0,90	0,90	0,15

Table 3

If we compare the average occurrences of key topics and expressions in RTL’s newscasts and in M1’s newscasts, huge divergences become readily apparent. This is not only because RTL's newscast covers a much more diverse range of topics (e.g., crime news, tabloid stories, non-political news of public interest, etc.), but also because **its political news differs markedly from public television in terms of language use, narrative structure, and other dimensions – they do not follow trajectories that closely align with those of Fidesz.**

In domestic and domestic-related news, we examined who framed the given news items during the month. **We counted those who were interviewed by the news or some other public media program (e.g., Kossuth Radio, M5) and whose interview was used by the news to frame the current news item. Regardless of the length of the statement, we took into account every interview that was broadcast** (for example, the interview with Judit Barna, a representative of the capital city, which appeared in the February 27 broadcast, from which only two words from the representative were ultimately included in the news). At the end of the six months examined, we created a word cloud from the names of the experts and politicians who spoke most frequently during the semester. The size of the words demonstrates the frequency of occurrence of the persons examined.



Figure 6

The word cloud also shows that Viktor Orbán's interviews are shown most often in the news, which is understandable, as many of them are excerpts from his weekly public media radio interviews, but we can also see that among the 25 most frequent speakers, there are only a few who are not politicians or experts affiliated with one of the governing parties. **The most frequently interviewed experts in the first half of the year were Géza Sebestyén (MCC), László Dornfeld (Center for Fundamental Rights) and Zoltán Lomnici Jr. (Századvég).**

In numerical terms, the distribution among the individual speakers was as follows:

	db
Pro-government politician	433
Opposition politician	117
Expert linked to the governing party	354
A non-partisan expert	143

Table 4

If we examine the group of opposition politicians based on the party affiliation of those interviewed, we can see that representatives of certain parties are strongly overrepresented, whether we compare this to the number of parliamentary seats their party holds or to the party's results in last year's EP elections. The following figure clearly illustrates the disproportionality of the party affiliations of the opposition politicians who made statements:

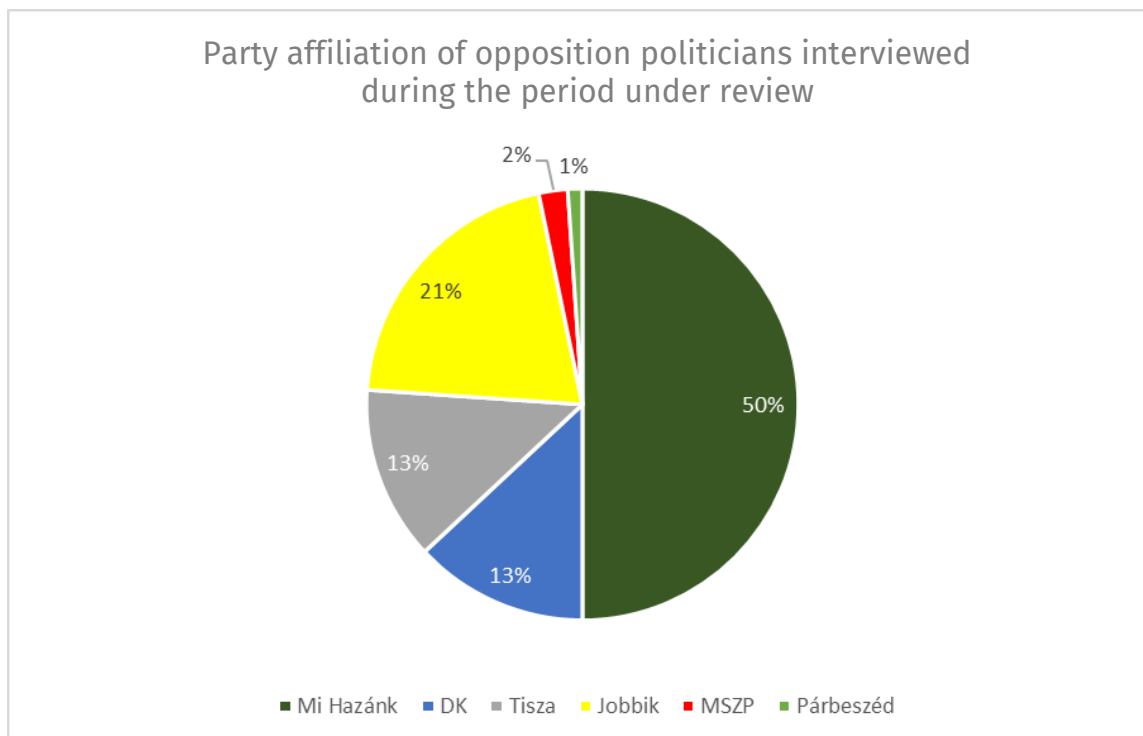


Figure 7

It is evident that roughly **half of all opposition politicians interviewed are members of Mi Hazánk**, but **Jobbik politicians are also overrepresented** compared to their poll or election results, with one and a half times as many of them giving interviews to public television as members of the Tisza Party.

It was characteristic of the six months that **experts not affiliated with the party were generally not asked to express their opinions on public issues in the strictest sense**. The vast majority of those who made statements in this form were experts in fields not directly related to politics (**wood industry experts, seismologists, library directors, etc.**). **The shaping of political narratives in the news is the task of experts and institutes affiliated with Fidesz (e.g., the Institute for the Protection of Sovereignty, the Nézőpont Institute, Századvég, MCC, and the Center for Fundamental Rights)**, while economic news is mostly covered by the NKE and the Ministry of National Economy.

It is also important to examine the sources cited by the news program. Here, we looked at the number of references and the political affiliation of the given media outlet. The distribution of the cited media outlets is shown in the table below:

Month	MTI (Hungarian Telegraphic Office)	Pro-government media outlet	Independent Hungarian media outlets	Foreign media outlet
Total	27	454	145	218

Figure 5

The foreign media outlets referenced cover a broad political spectrum (e.g., Fox News, Ukrainska Pravda, Bild, Reuters, Politico, Russian state news agency (TASS), CNN, etc.). However, **when examining references in the domestic media, the principle of plurality does not appear to be as strongly enforced.** Only a small **proportion of the Hungarian media outlets referenced are independent of the ruling parties. These account for only 17 percent of all references.** Moreover, in most cases, such references serve to support narratives that are critical of the opposition. The news program does not cover news critical of the government from these outlets. If it does (e.g., in the case of Direkt36's documentary "Dynasty"), it is typically to try to refute criticism of the government.

There were no corrections during the period under review. Between February and July, the public media lost a correction lawsuit against Árpád Tóta W., but the judgment was not final, so by the time the study was completed, the correction had not appeared either in the news or on the public media's website.

CONCLUSION

According to a study by the Republikon Institute, the evening news program on the public media channel M1 clearly failed to meet the public service requirements set out in both domestic media laws and European standards between February and July 2025. The content and structure of the news program did not reflect political diversity, did not provide equal opportunities for political actors, and did not offer unbiased, fact-based information to viewers.

Based on the research, it can be concluded that the news program's operation is determined by the goals of pro-government political communication. A recurring pattern in the news is that government figures are presented in a positive light, while opposition figures (especially politicians from the Tisza Party) are often portrayed in a disparaging context. Critical or alternative viewpoints are rarely given coverage, and when they are, it is as a counterpoint to the government's position, not as an independent viewpoint.

The skewed distribution of news sources, the one-sidedness of expert opinions, and the dominance of pro-government narratives show that during the period under review, public media functioned more as a government mouthpiece than as a public service. All this undermines society's right to democratic information and reduces the quality of public debate.

In light of the analysis, it is clear that the current functioning of public media requires structural reforms. It is essential to ensure genuine social oversight, while guaranteeing editorial autonomy. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen institutional guarantees of professional and political independence and to effectively enforce balance requirements. One of the cornerstones of democratic functioning is a credible and pluralistic media system, the creation and maintenance of which is also in the public interest in the case of public media.