



MEDIA MONITORING '05

Parliamentary Elections in Albania 2005

**Monitoring Period
14 - 27 May 2005**

Tirana, 2 June 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The factor that best characterizes the Albanian media is a division of loyalty between the two main political parties – the Socialist Party (SP) and the Democratic Party (DP).
- Public television and radio reports were strongly supportive of the Socialist Party (SP) and the government. Public television and radio are financed directly by the taxpayer and have an important role to fulfill in providing the public with accurate, unbiased information. We recommend that they revise their reporting to provide a more balanced perspective to citizens.
- In the private media there was evidence that one group of outlets is prone to support the SP or the government, while another group supported the DP, though in a less visible manner and on a smaller scale. Private media also have a duty to serve the public interest and follow well-established and accepted standards of journalism; they too must pay special attention to balanced reporting during the election period.
- The government's activities received a high proportion of coverage in all broadcast media monitored during this time period.
- Newspapers devoted more space to reporting on political party electioneering than on government activities. More newspapers supported the DP; only one was sympathetic to the SP.
- Top Channel and Egnatia TV reported in a broadly balanced manner.
- Smaller political parties did not receive enough space or time to express their opinion. This affected Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) the most; the party received minimal coverage in TVSH, TVA and TV KOHA.
- Women political leaders received almost no media coverage compared to their male counterparts.

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INTRODUCTION

While it is impossible to have democracy in a country without genuine elections, the democratic process extends well beyond Election Day. Democratic governance requires an active and informed citizenry. The media is often referred to as the Fourth Estate, indicating its important role in society. In a democracy, we look to the press to act as a watchdog of events and decisions, to help citizens stay informed about what is going on. But this role can only be fulfilled if media coverage follows key principles and practices.

Media monitoring is a tool that can help journalists report in a more accurate, precise, and balanced way. Media monitoring is a tool that promotes trust of citizens in media reporting. Wherever the media exists, it is useful to follow their work and then to analyze the media's relationship with different subjects. Media monitoring is a research discipline that includes analytical elements. Its aim is to help media in creating balance while reporting and to reflect professional mistakes. During the observation period the assignment of monitoring team is to gain data that reflect the real feelings of citizen who watch, listen or read targeted media.

Media monitoring is common throughout democracies both large and small. The Association of Young Journalists (AYJ) in Montenegro monitors domestic media on a regular basis; the findings from the monitoring efforts have influenced significantly media attitudes since the project began in 2000. Quality monitoring must be based on sound scientific methodology such as the one used for the current ACAC effort.

Principles of good journalism

There are key principles that are widely accepted as to what constitutes "good journalism." Among them are:

- Respect good journalistic ethics
- Balance reporting in terms of time/space, and context of information
- Differentiated between government and ruling party officials
- Avoid using Government as promotional tool for candidates and policy alternatives
- Avoid allocating excessive time to government activities to the exclusion of other political actors
- Provide access to alternative sides to respond to criticism or attacks
- Guide politicians to respond to what is important for citizens
- Never promote hate speech
- Behave as a public watchdog

Biased and unprofessional reporting will not influence decided voters. It can potentially influence undecided voters because poor reporting distorts perception and that distortion of truth is all that citizens have on which to base decisions. Rather than imposing decisions on citizens, the media's role is to inform citizens about relevant events so that they can make an informed choice. This reporting should be balanced,

precise, correct and fair. It should offer equal opportunities for all parties to express opinions and ideas. Government has an important role not to impede the media in fulfilling these functions and in facilitating media pluralism in order to expose the public to the widest variety of sources of information.

METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

Media monitoring uses two sets of criteria—qualitative and quantitative. Both sets of criteria are highly relevant to present a comprehensive picture of media reporting in an election campaign.

Qualitative Analysis

In qualitative research the main elements are context and presentation.

Context is the timing and setting of the information itself. For example, if political party A speaks in a positive context about itself or in a negative context about some other subject, a medium is not partial just because it broadcasts the information. What matters is whether a medium broadcasts information with positive or negative context on confronted subjects in a selective manner over a period of time so that a distinct pattern develops.

Presentation is the extent to which events are reported factually (X happened) versus the amount of editorial comment or influence on those events.¹ For example, words can be positive or negative. The tone of a journalist during news coverage can also influence perception. Finally, facial expression and body language (for television journalists) influences the way information is perceived.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis assesses the time or space in which a political party or politician is mentioned, spoken of, quoted, or appears in a particular medium.

Total Time/Space: the amount of time that broadcast media (television and radio) devote to reporting on a certain political subject, or print media (newspapers and journals) devote to political parties or Government activity.

Quotation is the time or space given to a journalist to retell someone else's words.

Sound bite (or printed remark for print media): the amount of time or space that media give political parties for expressing their own political opinions and represents part of the

¹ You will not find in every graph-cited analysis about this type of reporting. If there are not major problems in this area we shall not present them.

total time. This category covers interviews and announcements directly from political parties or political subjects.

Object Time: time when subject X is speaking about politician Y, so that politician Y is the “object” of the content. This covers cases in which journalists mention political subjects in their articles or when others talk about political subjects.

Source: where media get information, such as news agencies, other media, as well as various press statements, reports and other announcements.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Monitoring organizations

The ACAC media monitoring is being conducted by four organizations:

Albanian Coalition Against Corruption (ACAC)

ACAC was created in 2001 to reduce corruption by strengthening the role of civil society and working in coordination with government. Its aims are to increase the awareness of the causes and costs of corruption and to transform that awareness into advocacy for reforms to reduce and combat corruption.

Institute for Polls and Opinions (ISO)

Founded in 2000, the Institute for Polls and Opinions is an independent survey research center that provides services to private and public sector organizations. ISO periodically measures electronic media rating and legibility of print media in Albania. Beside the permanent staff, ISO employs other 25 external experts and has a panel of 4000 people across 36 districts.

Institute for Development Research and Alternatives (IDRA)

IDRA Research is the social and marketing research survey unit of Institute for Development Research and Alternatives (IDRA). It offers research for institutional and private clients. They have a network of more than 150 interviewers covering all the regions of Albania and Kosovo.

Center for Transparency and Free Information (CTFI)

The Center’s aim is to increase public awareness for the need for a continuous democratization of Albanian life as well as the enforcement of national policies in the fight against corruption. Some of the projects conducted by the Center include: 2003 May-December: “Media for Transparency”.

Monitoring Structure

The overall project is being conducted under the umbrella of the ACAC. The project is headed by a Steering Committee composed of all four organizations which first defined the precise list of media to be monitored in this project. Media were chosen according to the findings of a short research on the media influence in Albania.

There are 23 monitors involved in the project, apart from three coordinators, one main coordinator and other staff - technicians, finance and IT managers. The staff was selected carefully and screened for any potential political bias. Monitors rotate regularly within each of the three groups (television, radio, and newspapers), in order to get as diverse opinions as possible.

Television - conducted by ISO. TVSH, Top Channel, Klan, Koha, TVA, Vizion +, News 24, Alsat, Teuta, Egnatia

Radio - conducted by IDRA. Radio Tirana, Top Albania Radio, Radio RASH, Radio +2

Newspaper - conducted by CTFI. Shekulli, Panorama, Koha Jone, Gazeta Shqiptare, Ballkan, Korrieri

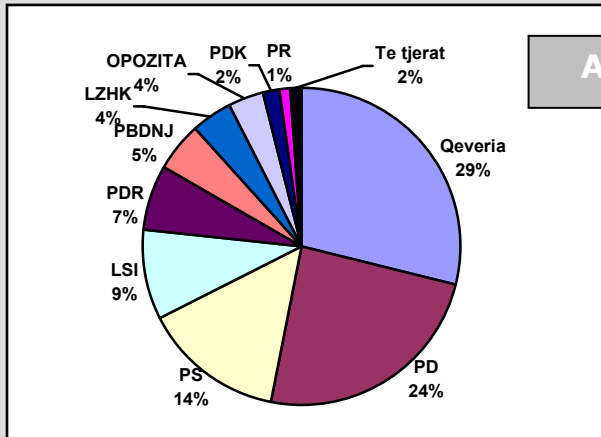
The following report is based on media monitoring just prior to the formal election period that started on May 30. The media monitoring began on Friday, 13 May. As such, it is an assessment that provides a review of media behavior in the grey area between laws that control media coverage *during* an election and the sensibilities of readers, listeners and viewers in the heated moments *before* the formal campaigns begin.

TELEVISION

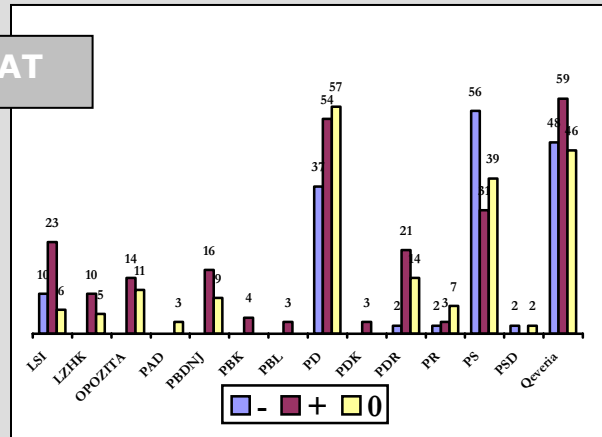
ALSAT

Although this station reported mainly about the Government, its coverage gave a boost to the DP because Alsat covered this party with more positive hits, and the SP in more negative context. The SMI and the NDP also received a visible amount of time in a mainly positive light. On sound bites, Nano got most of time to sound bites. Berisha, Meta, Pollo were mostly presented in a positive light.

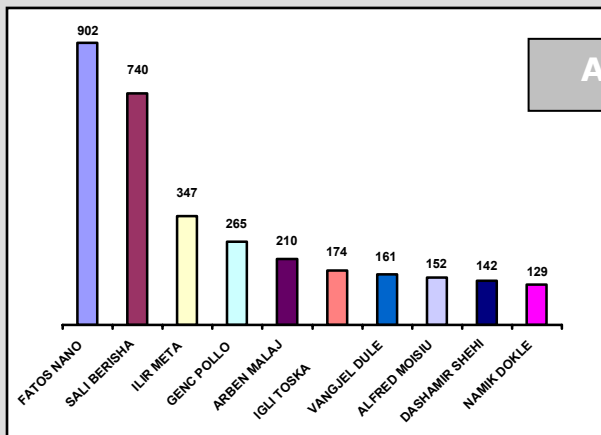
Total time



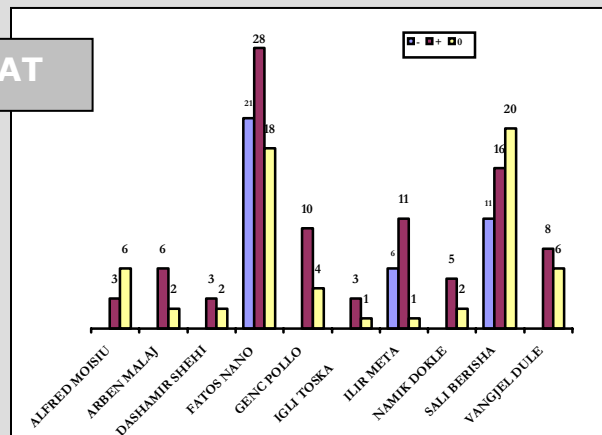
Context



Politician sound bite

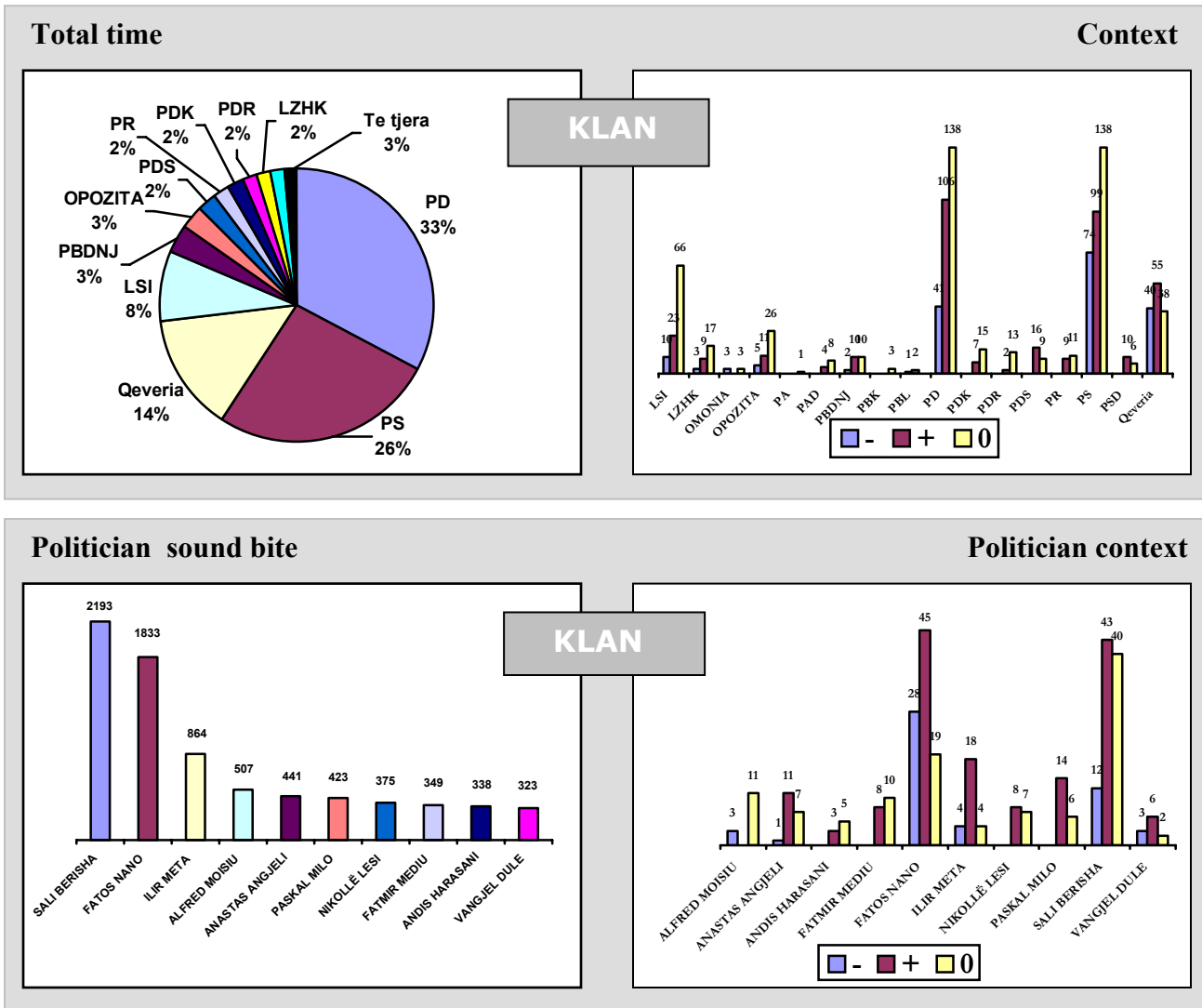


Politician context



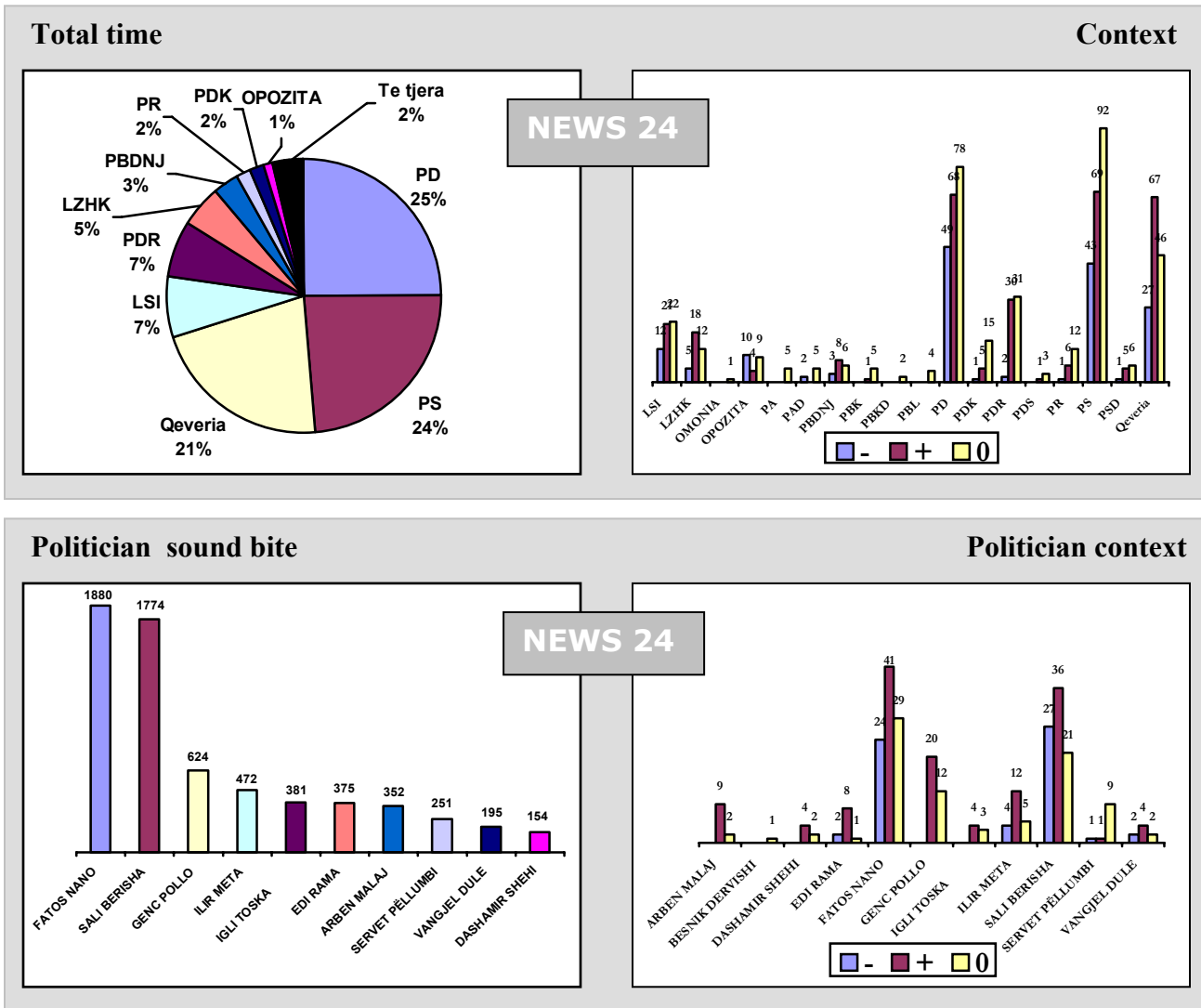
KLAN

This station showed nearly balanced total time to the SP/Government (40%) and the DP (33%). In context, this channel is more positive to the DP (106 positive and 41 negative) than the SP (99 positive and 74 negative). The same situation is for political leaders: Sali Berisha has more time and in a positive context than Fatos Nano, who received twice as much negative coverage compared to Berisha. The DP received 7% more time than the SP with a similar positive and neutral context rating, but with much higher number of negative information about the SP.



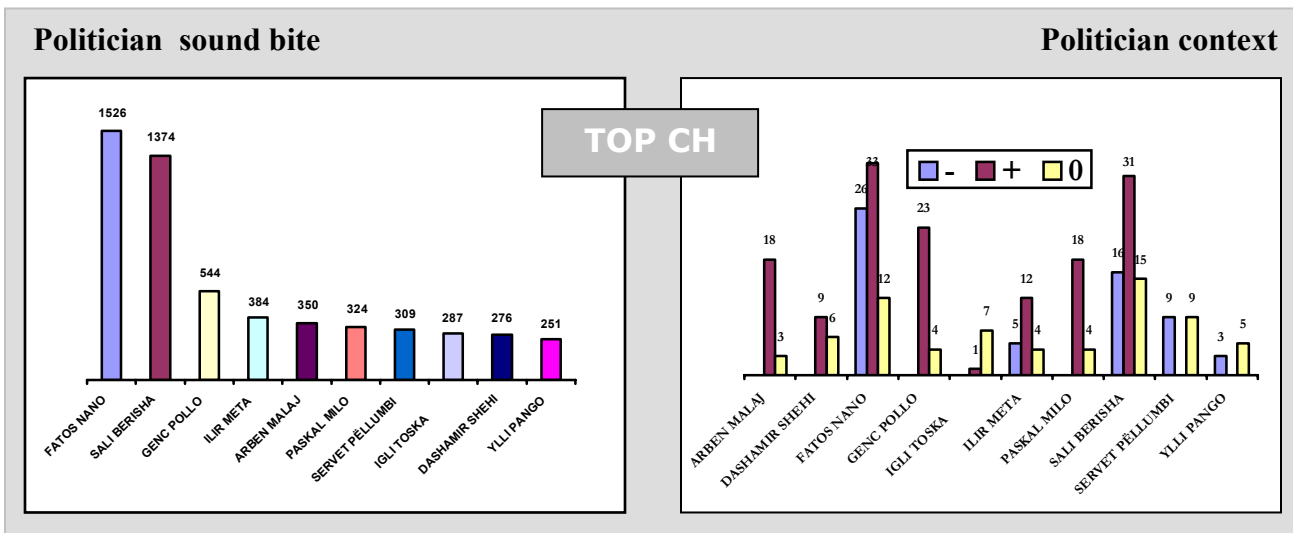
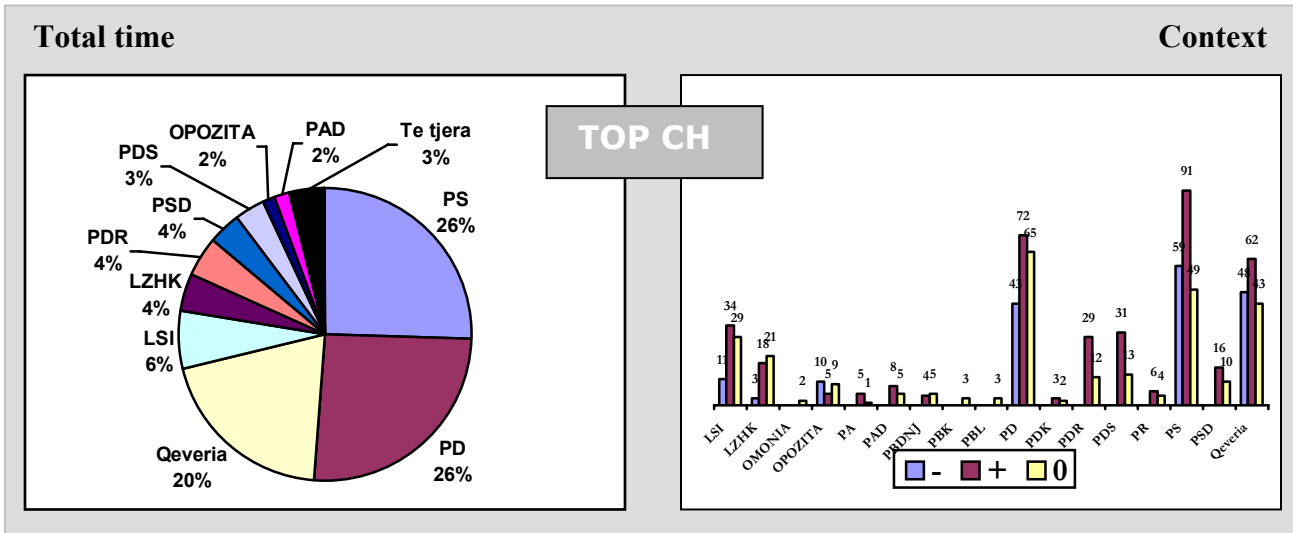
NEWS 24

This station broadcast a balanced amount of time between the two main political parties. The context of this information was even as well. However, the time given to Government was 21% and this information was predominantly positive. News 24 covered the SP/Government 45 % of the time, with the DP receiving 25% of coverage. Although main political parties had a roughly equal representation of sound bites, the Government secured relatively more time for direct quotes. Nano and Berisha are the most represented among political leaders in terms of coverage time. Nano has a slight advantage regarding given time, and that time was generally more positive in terms of context. None of the smaller parties received meaningful amounts of coverage.



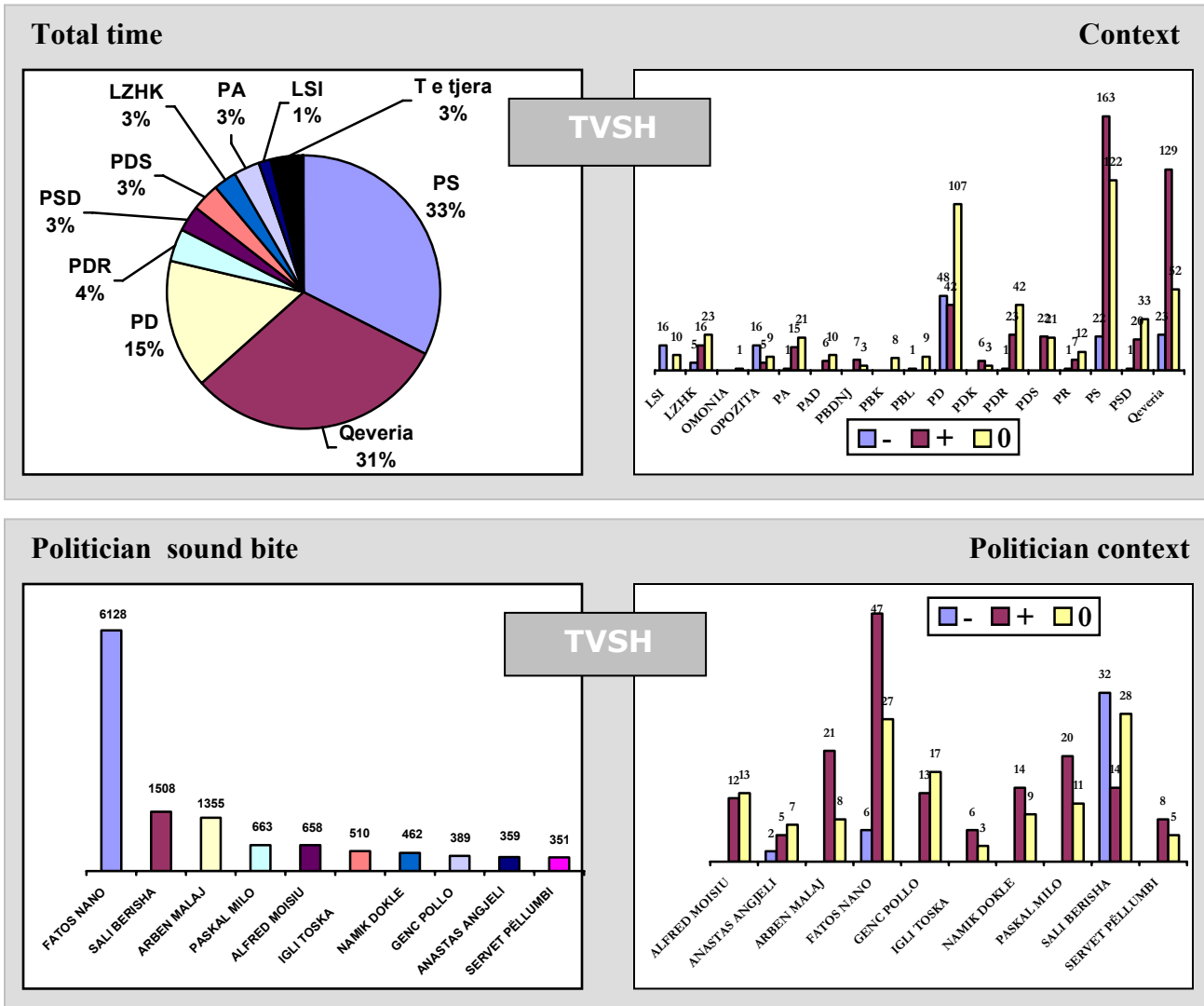
TOP CHANNEL

This station tends to cover both major parties equally (26%). The station broadcasts Government activities (20%) in a positive light. In terms of context, the SP has a slight advantage with 91 favorable hits compared with 29 negative mentions. For the DP, the comparison is 72 positive to 43 negative. SMI received 6 % with 34 positive and 11 negative hits.



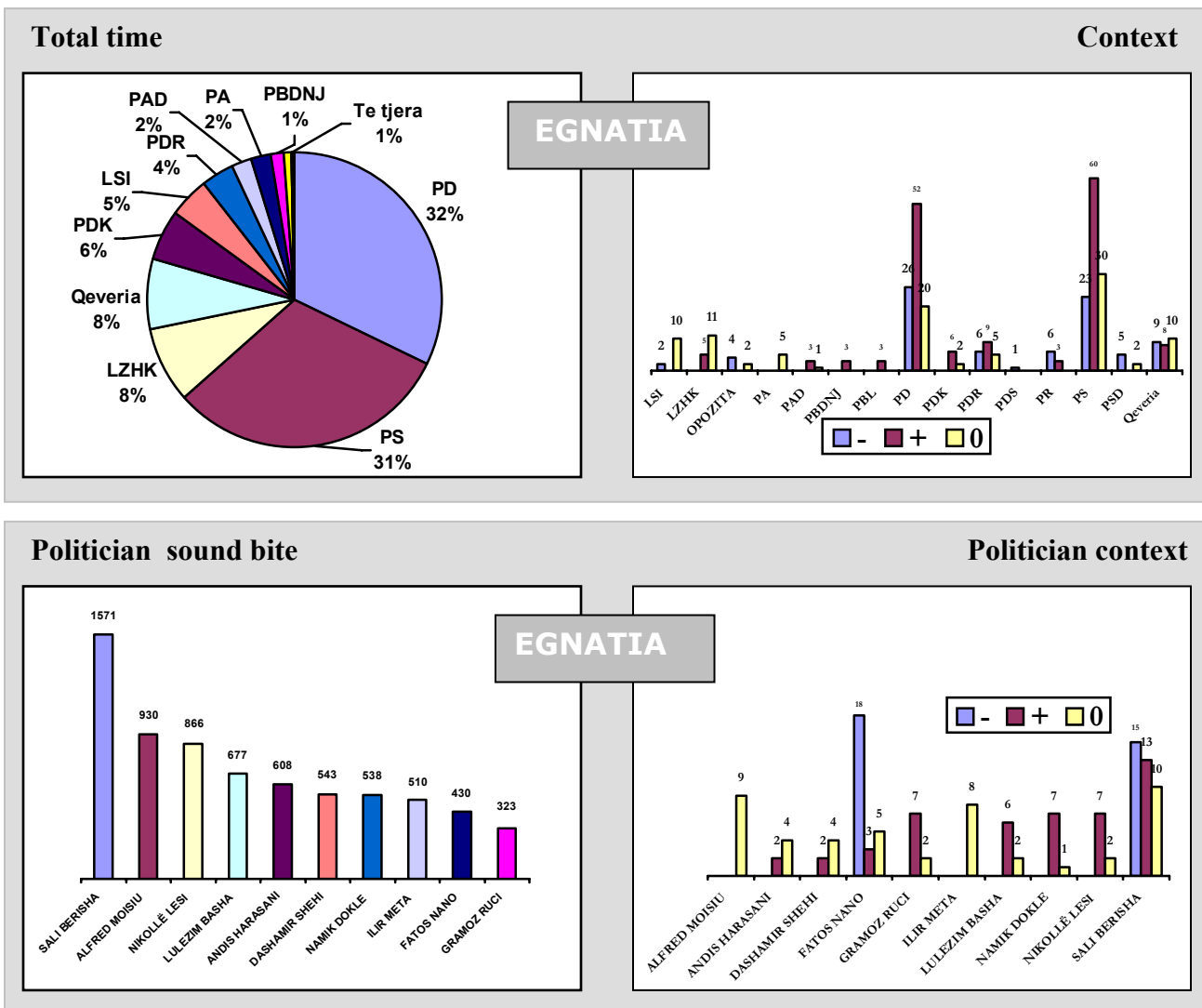
TVSH

As the publicly funded television station in Albania, TVSH has an obligation to report in a balanced manner. Based on monitoring to date, this station failed to fulfill this role. Our findings suggest that this station is quite supportive of the SP by providing it with a large amount of positive airtime (33%) in addition to the 31% of airtime that the Government secured. The DP received 15% of airtime, with more than half of that in a negative context. This analysis shows that the country's single public service television station provided 64% of its political programming to the governing political party in a predominantly positive manner. Similar scenarios play out in the appearances of politicians and their sound bites, where Nano has a three-fold advantage over Berisha. In addition, TVSH gives 4 times more sound bites to Fatos Nano than Berisha.



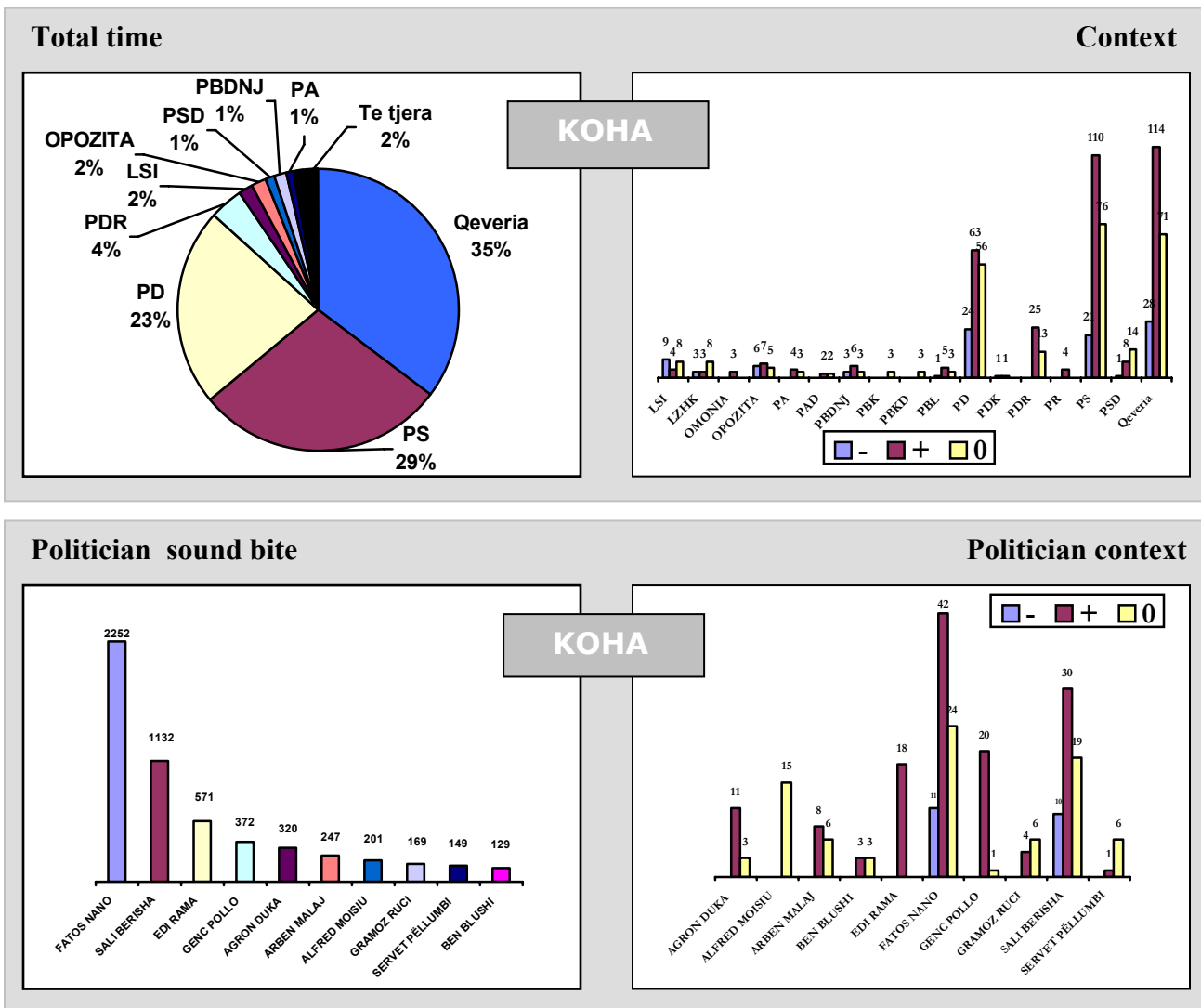
EGNATIA

Egnatia TV is one of those rare TV stations that do not report significantly on Government activities, devoting to it only 6% of time, which was mostly balanced. Most of the reporting was for the DP and the SP and this was done in a fairly balanced manner. This station is also devoting significantly negative number of information about the Nano. Nano receives a negative score of 18 and a positive score of only 3 whereas Berisha received 15 negative and 13 positive scores.



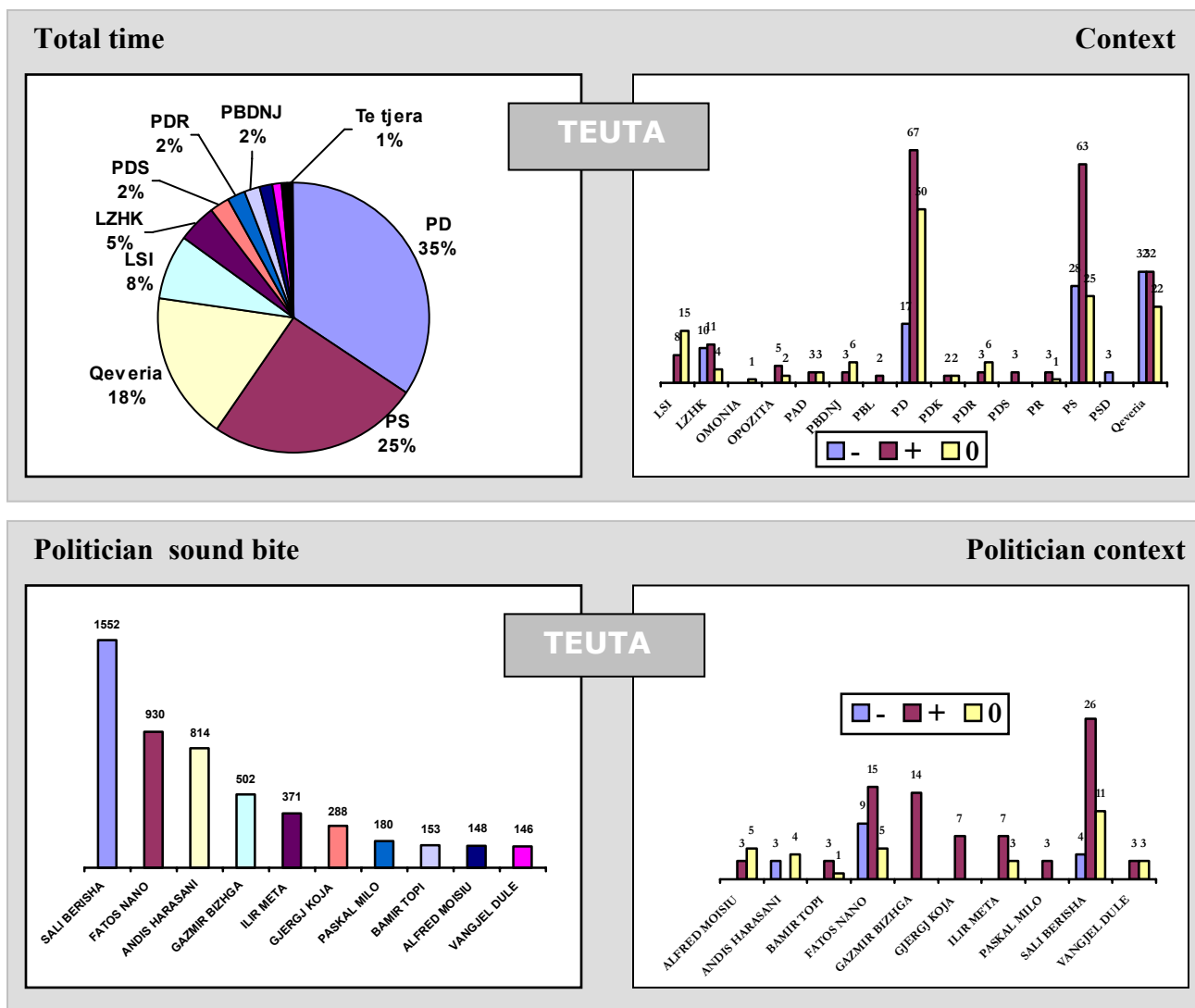
KOHA

This station is biased towards the SP and the Government as most of the time was dedicated to both in a highly positive manner. While the number of hits for the DP in a negative context was equal to SP/Government, the amount of positive information for the DP was half that of the SP. Nano received twice as much time for sound bites and was mentioned four times more positively than negatively. What was noticeable was the scant coverage given to the smaller political parties.



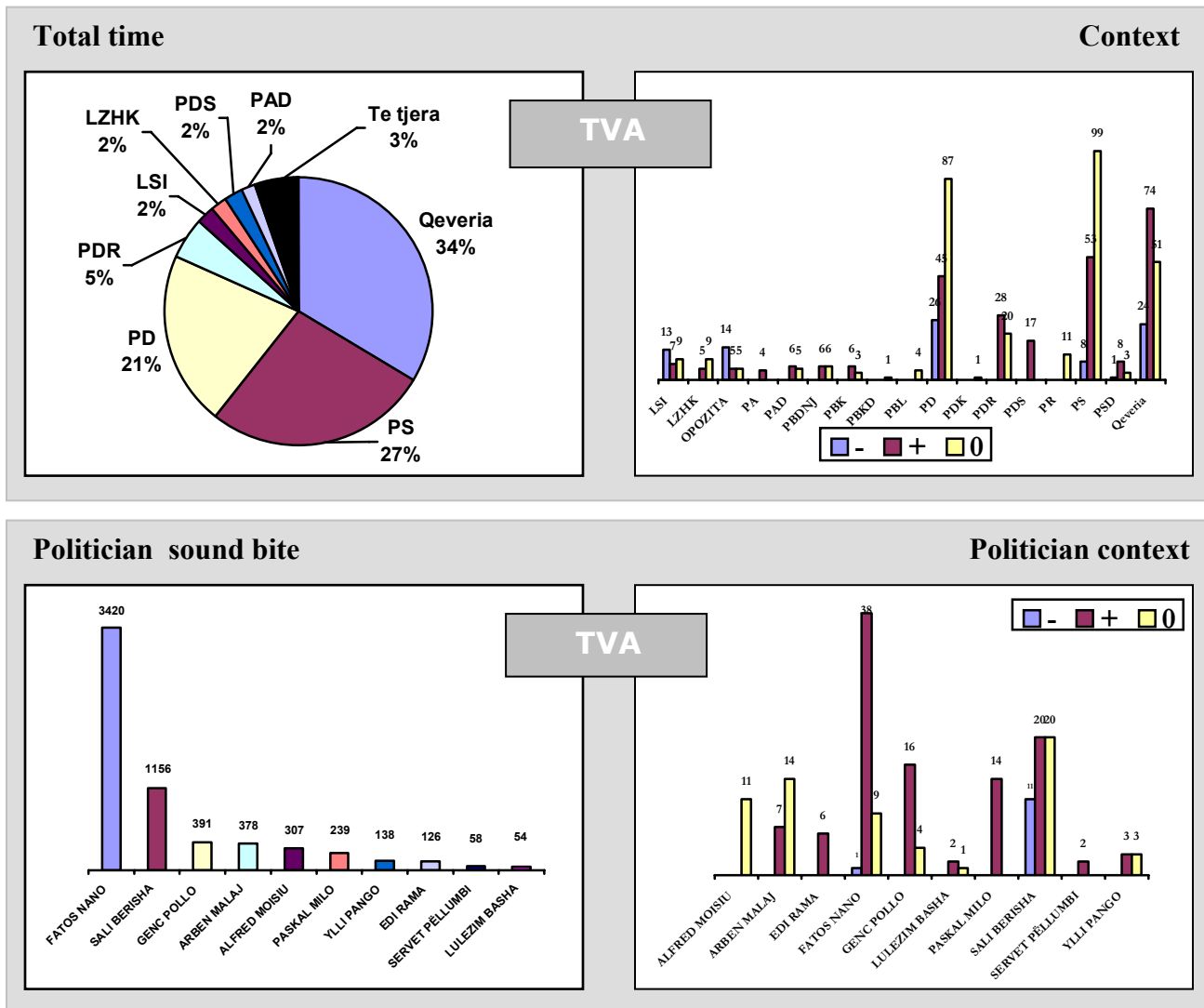
TEUTA

There was little consistency in preference in Teuta coverage, as there were days when it covered only DP activities, and other days that it concentrated on SP activities. In general, this station appears supportive of the DP. For example, Berisha received more positive coverage (26 positive hits versus to 4 negative) compared to coverage of Nano (15 positive hits versus 9 negative). Regarding parties generally, the DP received 8% less time than the SP/Government combined.



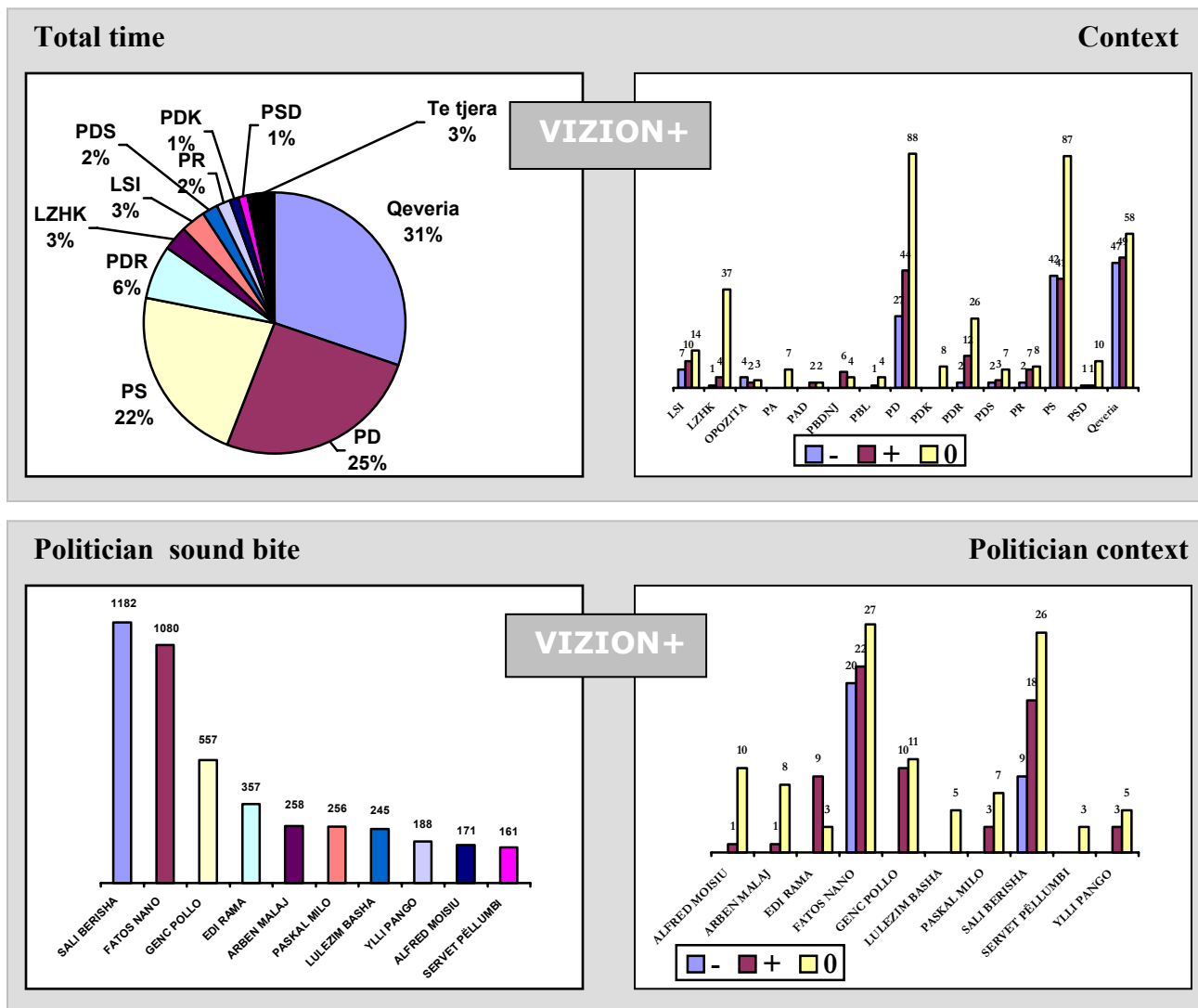
TVA

Our findings show that this station is strongly pro SP/Government through often unbalanced reporting. The DP received 21% of political program time in the main news slots, while the SP/Government got 61% and, in terms of context, those subjects were presented three times as favorable to the SP than to the DP. For us, this represents clear support for the SP. Regarding politicians themselves, the situation is also similar. In the main news, Nano received more than three times more airtime to express his views than did Berisha. The station also showed a disproportion amount of information on Nano that got 38 times more positive information than negative. In this sense, it hard to speak about balanced reporting at TVA.



VIZION +

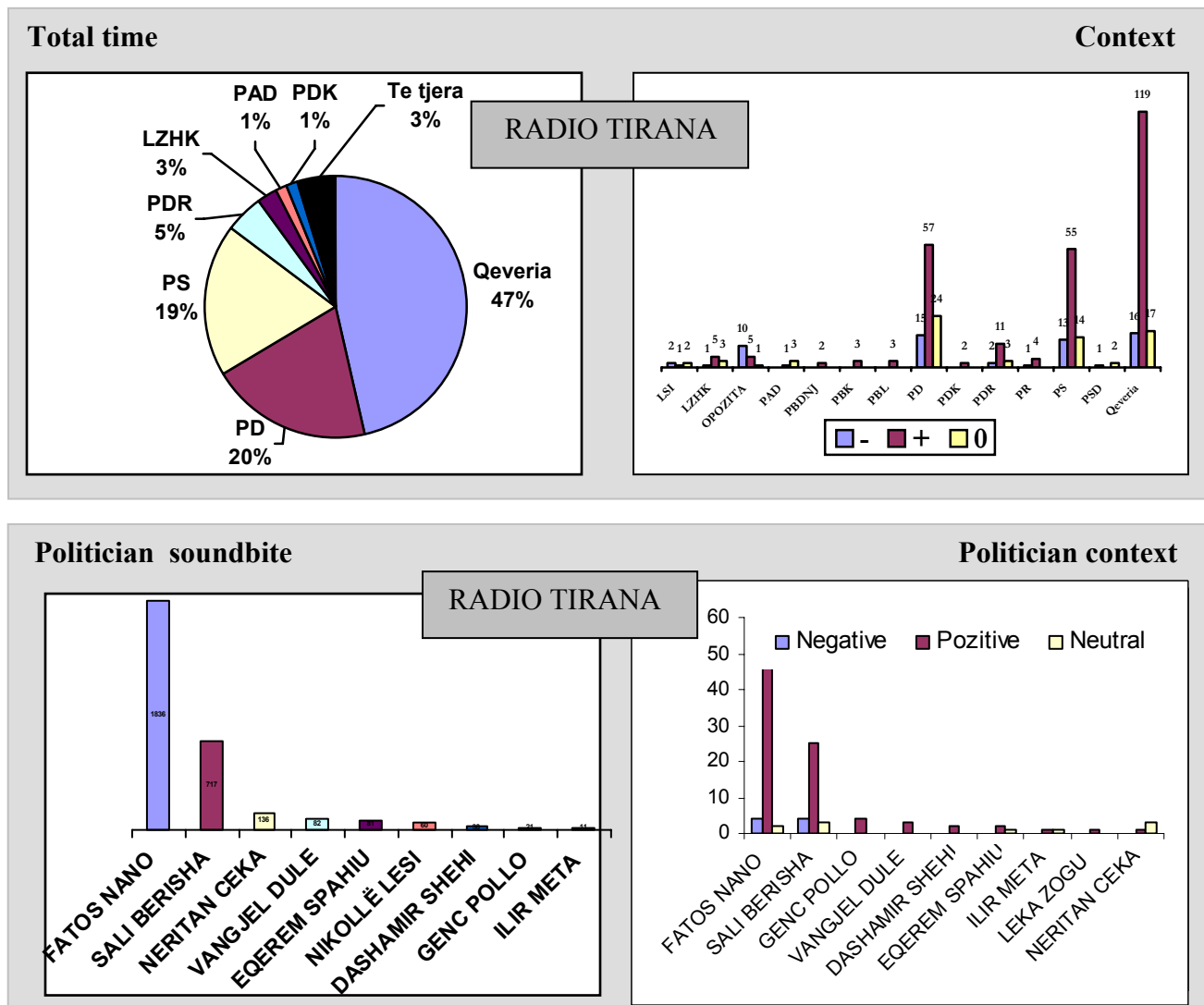
Vizion+ dedicated most of the time to discussions about Government, this reporting was balanced with almost the same amount of positive and negative information. In this TV station there is balanced reporting about the SP/Government, in terms of context, but there is a big difference of total time for SP/Government (53%) towards the DP (25%), whereas the reporting about the DP was more positive. In addition, leading DP members received more time for sound bites. Reporting about the SP was balanced contextually, whereas the reporting about the DP was more positive. The context rating for Berisha was more positive than negative, and for Nano it was mainly balanced.



RADIO

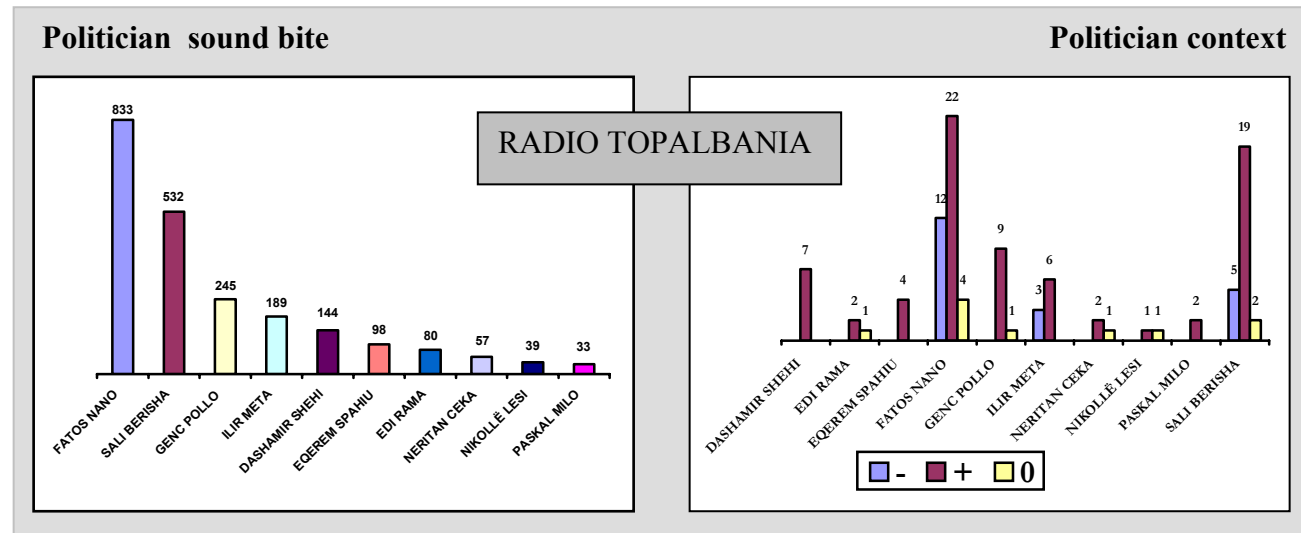
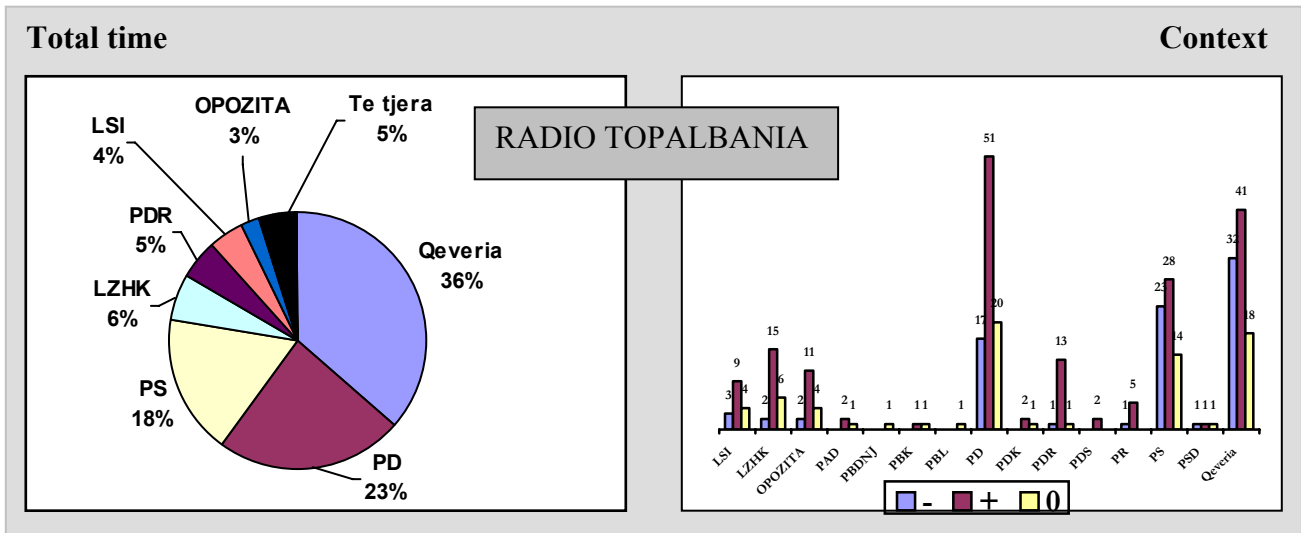
RADIO TIRANA²

Radio Tirana stands out because it has devoted a large amount of time to the information covering the SP/Government. The coverage of the SP and the DP is balanced (18% and 19% respectively), but this is misleading because of the time reserved for the Government. Combined SP/Government took 66% (SP 18%; Government 48%) of the time compared with 27% of the DP and its allies. While the positive information for the SP and the DP is about the same of the overall information given for these parties (64% and 65% respectively), 78% of the information given for Government is given in a positive light. Radio Tirana gives Nano 2.5 times more sound bites as that given to Berisha. In fact, the majority of sound bites are given to Nano as Prime Minister but this does not make any difference from the point of view of the listener.



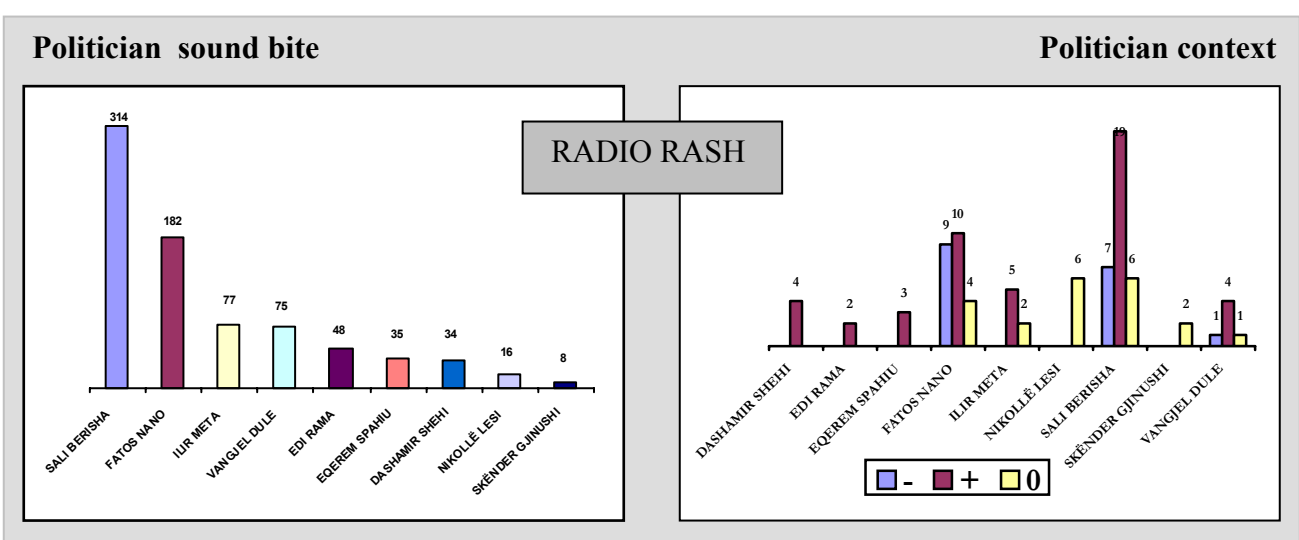
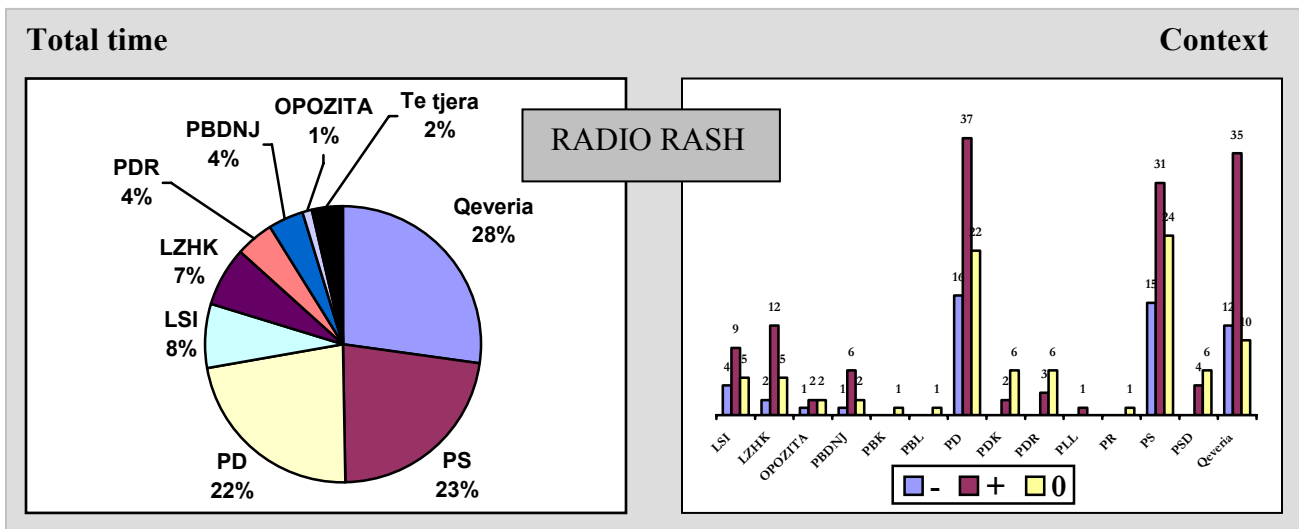
TOP ALBANIA RADIO

This station devoted 36% of its time to the Government, 23% to the DP and 18% to the SP. The commentary on Government is balanced (44% positive and 35% negative hits). Information on the DP is more positive (58% positive hits; 19% negative). On average both main political parties score positively in context across the board. Nano received about 25% more sound bites than Berisha. There seems to be a balance in the positive hits that Nano and Berisha have received in the context but there were more negative hits on Nano than for Berisha.

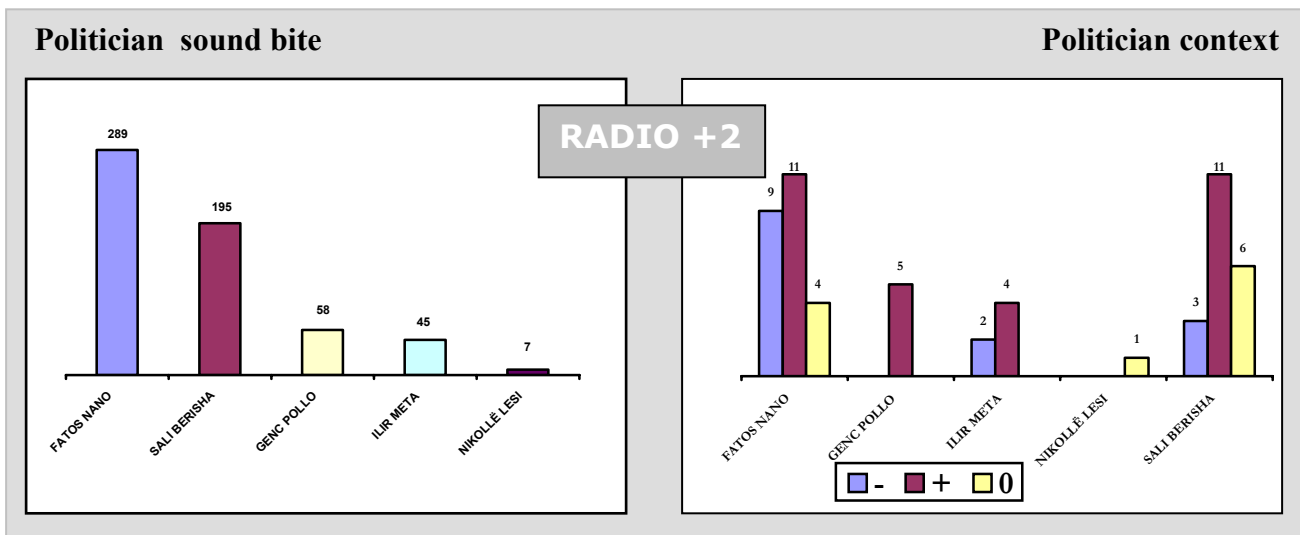
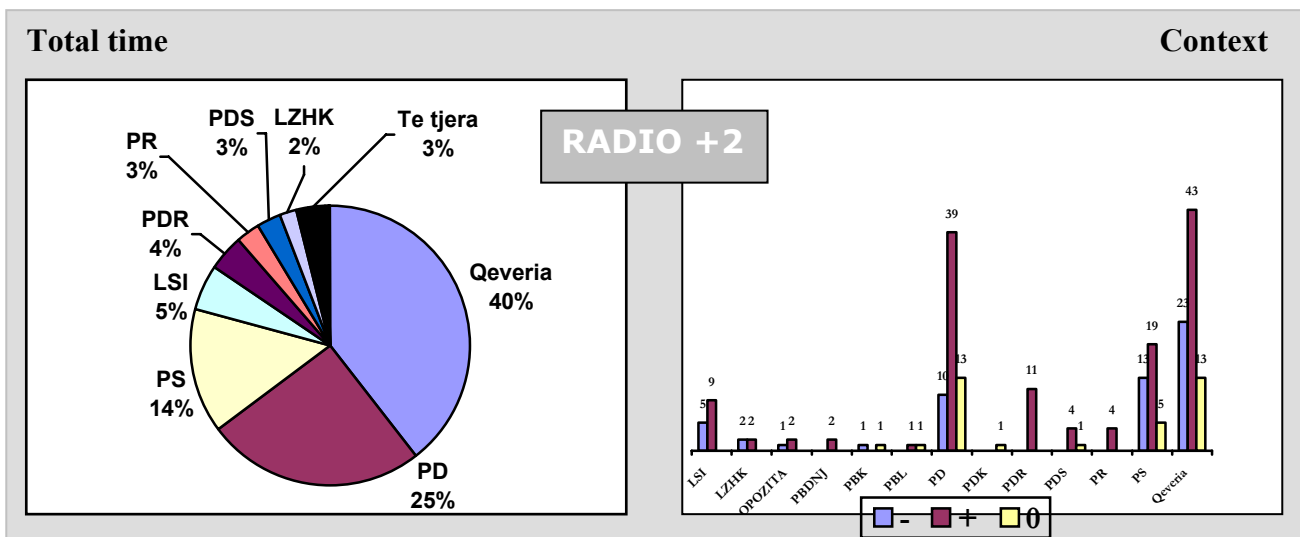


RADIO RASH

Radio Rash has kept a balance in the amount of time allocated for main political parties (22% each). And has reserved more time to the SMI (8%). However, even this station has been unable to “escape” the trap of the Government presence in the media as the amount allocated to government is significant (28%). If their scores are combined, this station has given about half of the time to Government and the SP, while the DP has 24% of the time. Concerning the context, the picture is the same for the main political parties looking mostly positive. However, the sum of “positivity” of Government and SP gives them overall a better standing. Again, the fact that government is also greatly present can be explained by the “passivity” of radio station staff that may fill their programs with press releases from government press offices. Interestingly enough, Radio Rash has not had any Sound Bites during this period of monitoring. So the microphone has not been in “the field” to get politicians to talk directly to this station.



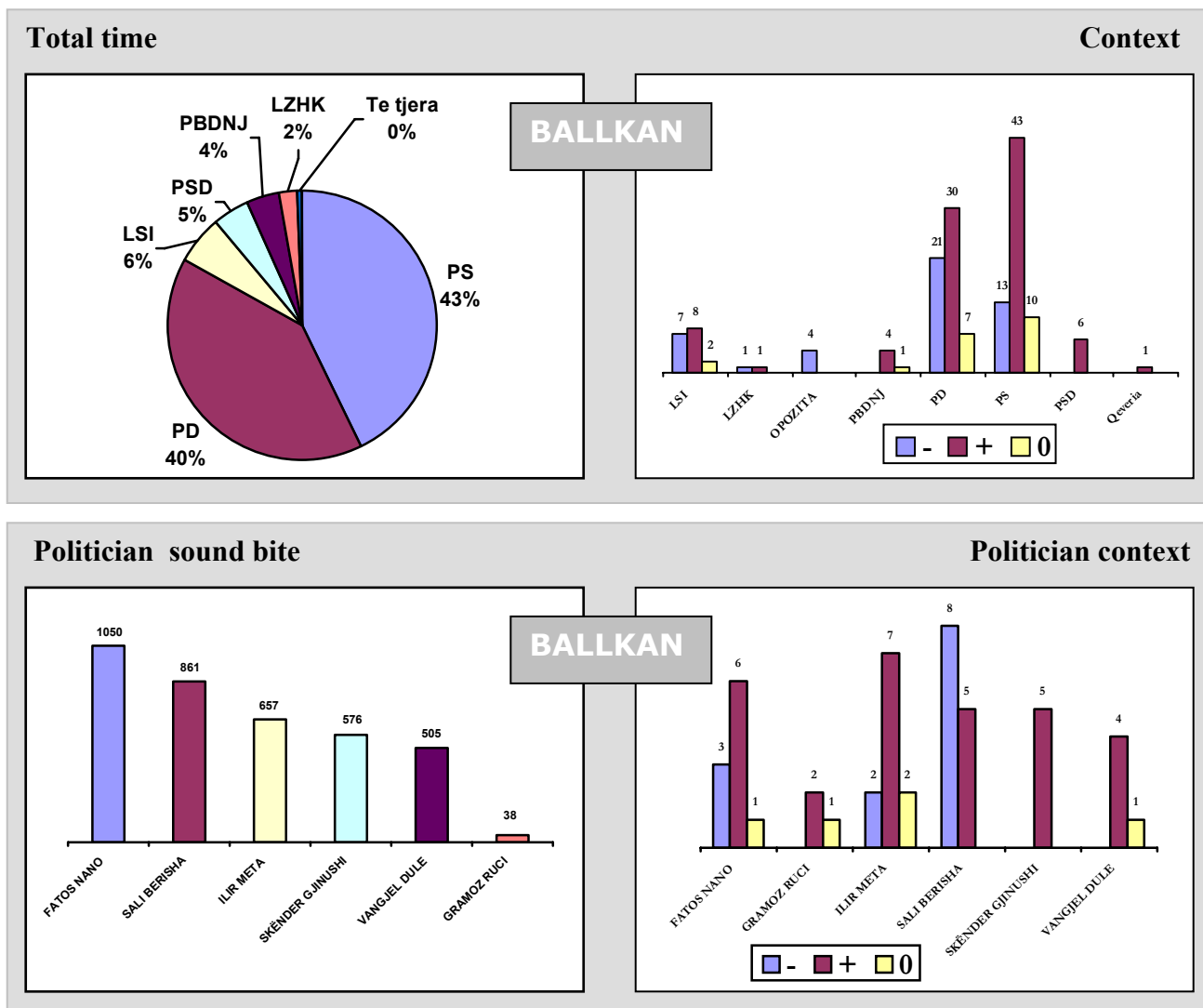
The Government received about 40% of the total airtime, the DP about 23%, the SP 15% and the SMI 5%. Combined SP/Government and SP coverage (including their ally SDP) was 55% of the total time, while the DP received about 23% of total time. Regarding the context, there is pretty much a balanced view with two parties “scoring” more positively, but also the Government received twice as many positive hits as negative ones. Radio +2 has had no sound bites during this period. There is a broad balance regarding quotations between Nano and Berisha.



NEWSPAPERS

BALLKAN

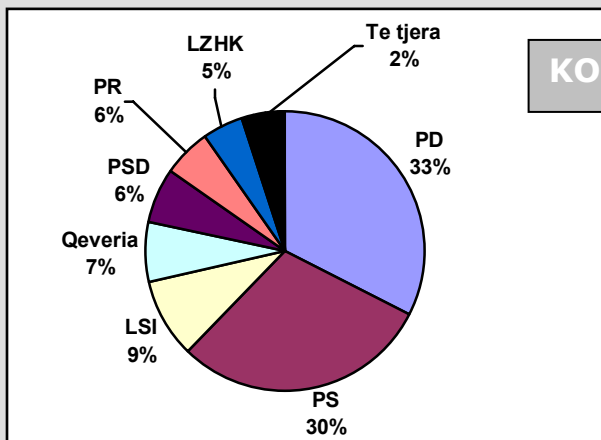
This newspaper has given a more positive light to the SP, despite a balanced allocation of space between the two main parties – SP (43 %) and DP (40%). The most represented politicians are Nano and Berisha who share very similar coverage in terms of space. Meta secured 18% of coverage. Other party leaders like Gjinushi and Dule get more coverage than in the other newspapers. Context coverage favored the SP (2 to one) over the DP, but Meta had very favorable context with 7 positive and 2 negative hits. Context coverage for the DP is almost balanced. Nano is mainly placed in a positive context and Berisha in a negative one. Gjinushi, Meta, Dule, are placed either in a mainly positive or totally positive context.



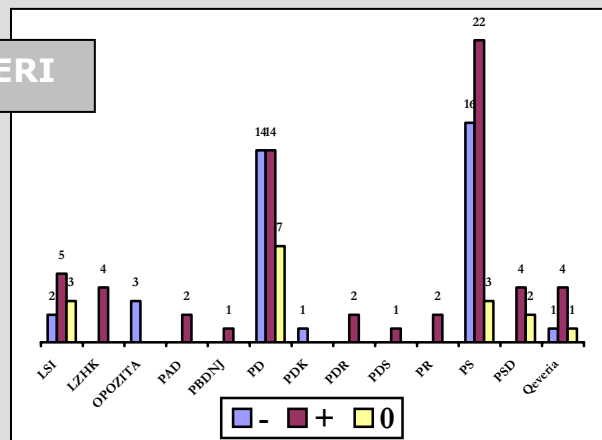
KORRIERI

This newspaper is mildly supportive of the DP and the SMI. Both the SP and the DP occupy similar space (28% and 27%, respectively) with the Government occupying only 3%. The balance is distorted when it comes to the context, where the DP has more negative than positive (19 negative; 14 positive) and the SP the reverse (26 positive; 20 negative). The SMI is the third party with 16% to be followed by the MND and both these parties are placed in a mainly positive context. The picture changes when monitoring political leaders. Meta is very close to Nano and Berisha as far as the coverage space is concerned. Nano is placed in a more negative context compared to Berisha, whereas the positive context for both is almost the same. Meta secures 24% of coverage of politicians, in a highly positive context (5 positive hits and one negative mention).

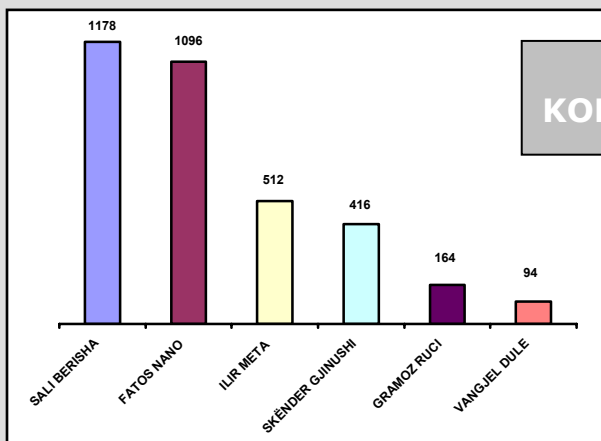
Total time



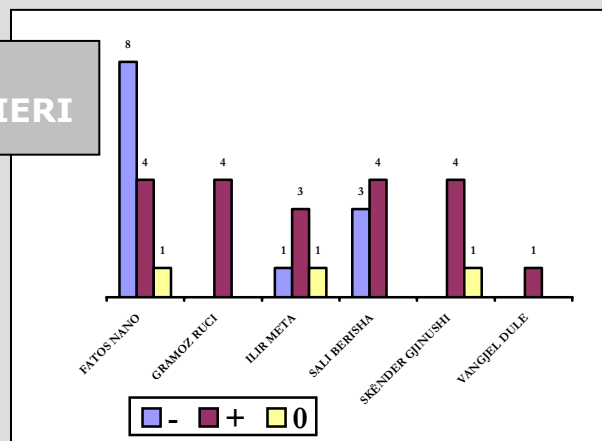
Context



Politician sound bite



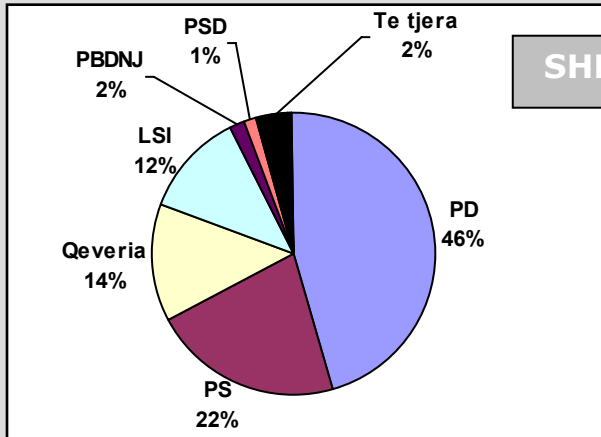
Politician context



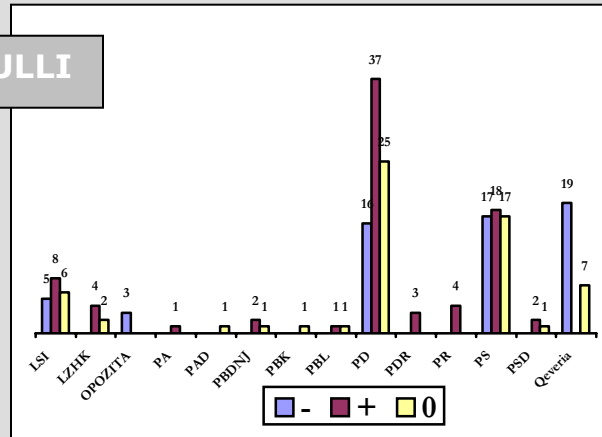
SHEKULLI

This newspaper has a distinctly supportive attitude towards the DP. On space, there is a clear bias towards the DP as news about the DP occupies 47% of coverage compared to 21% for the SP, whereas Government coverage occupies 12%. The SMI comes third with 10% of the total coverage space followed by the Green Party with 4%. Nano and Berisha share broadly the same coverage space, followed by Ilir Meta and Gramoz Ruci. On context coverage, we find that the DP has more positive information than the SP and Government together. Berisha is covered more positively compared to Nano. Politicians like as Ilir Meta, Genc Pollo, Fatmir Mediu, Leka Zogu. Skender Gjinushi are covered mainly in a positive context except for Gramoz Ruci who failed to receive a single positive point.

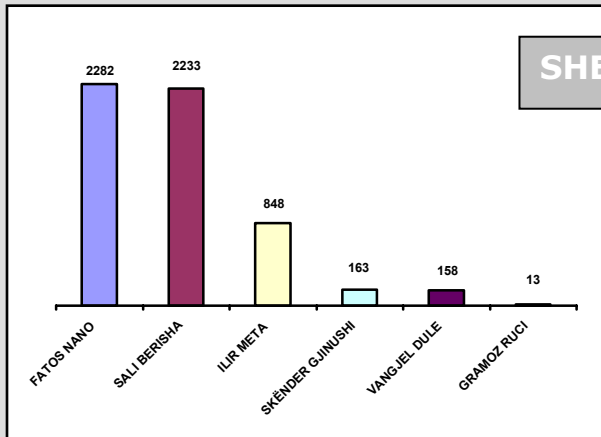
Total time



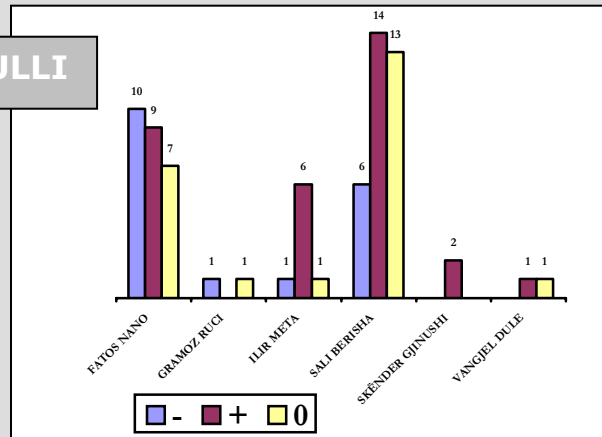
Context



Politician sound bite

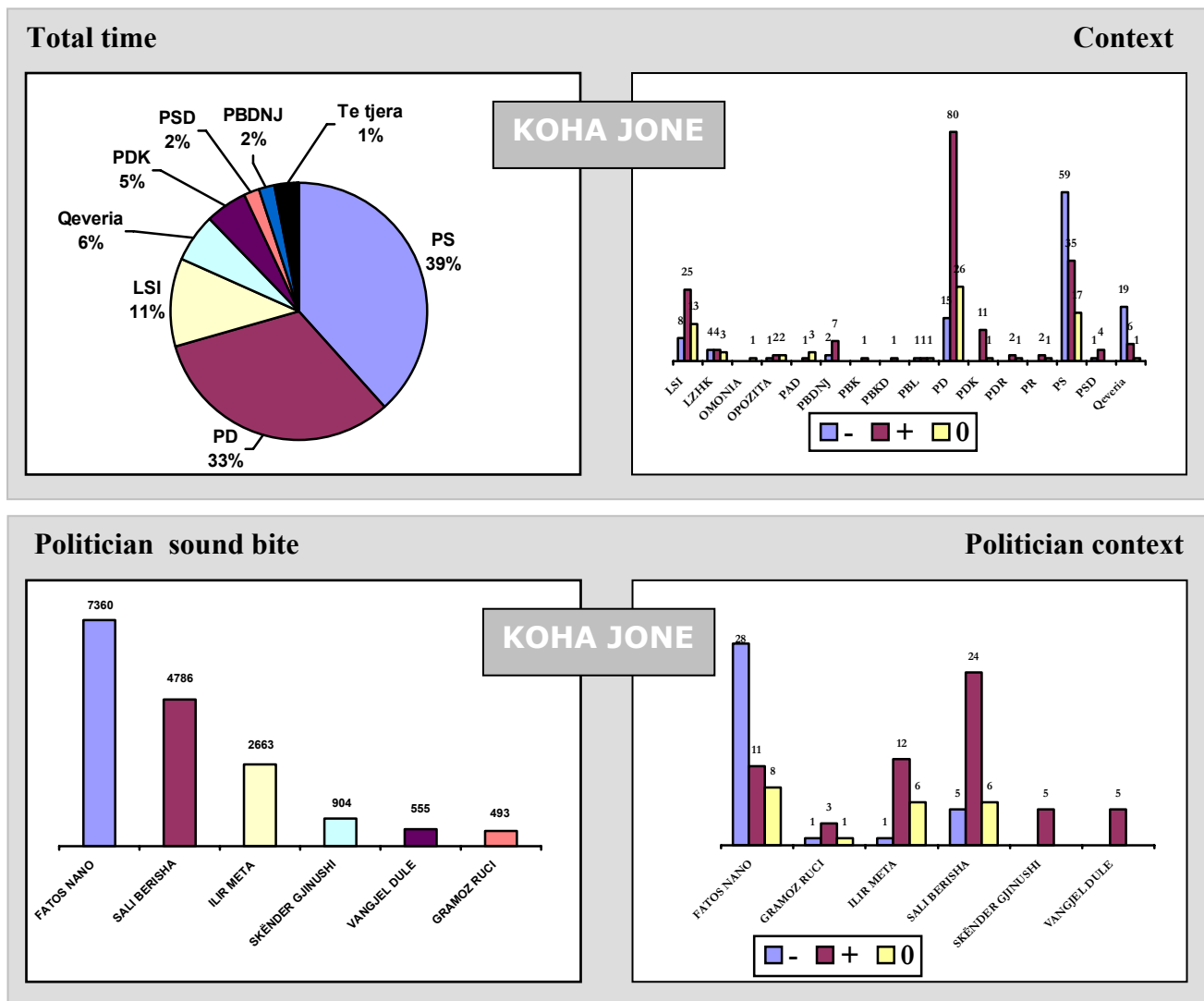


Politician context



KOHA JONË

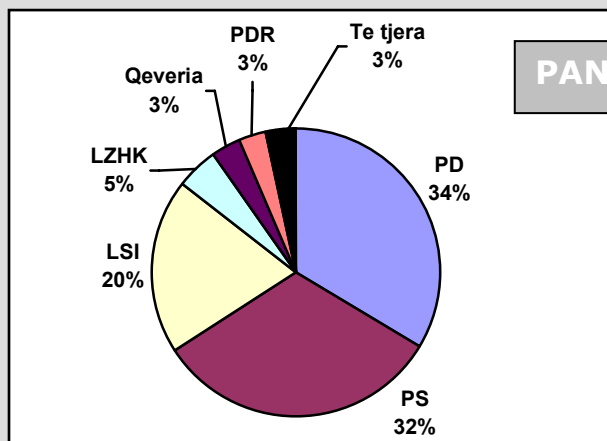
“Koha Jonë” is strongly supporting the DP and adopts an anti-government stance. Combined space devoted to the SP and Government is 45%, but the context and presentation is overwhelming negative. The SMI comes third with 11% of coverage and is mainly placed in a positive context. The CDP comes fourth and is placed in a positive context at all times. As for individual politicians, Nano comes first with 41% of total space, and is placed mainly in a negative context whereas Berisha comes second 27% placed almost totally in a positive context. Different from the rating of CDP, the leader of this party, Nikolle Lesi, who is also the publisher of Koha Jonë, occupies a unusually high percentage and is placed in a positive context at all times.



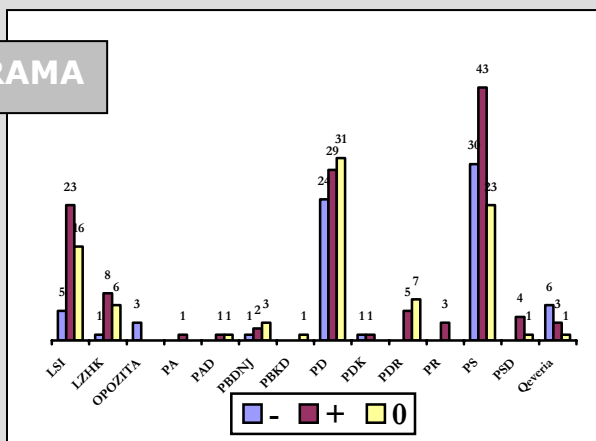
PANORAMA

This newspaper has a balanced on space and context for the two main political parties (SP 32 %; DP 34%). The SMI occupies a larger space than in the other monitored newspapers with a rating of 20% and the context is positive. However, when it comes to qualitative assessment, a bias is more apparent. The DP is rated positively compared to the SP. The printed remarks from Nano occupy 29% space compared to Berisha whose printed remarks occupy 24%. Ilir Meta's own words are covered at 14 %. Nano is covered more positively in terms of context than Berisha. Meta is placed in a mainly positive and neutral context. Most other political leaders occupy only a little space except for Genc Pollo of the NDP, who occupies 4% of the space in a positive and neutral context.

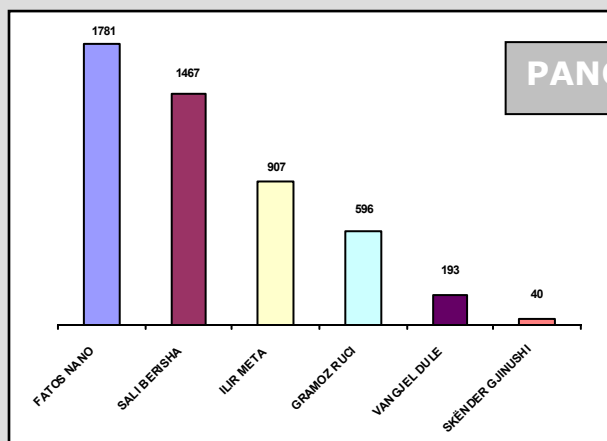
Total time



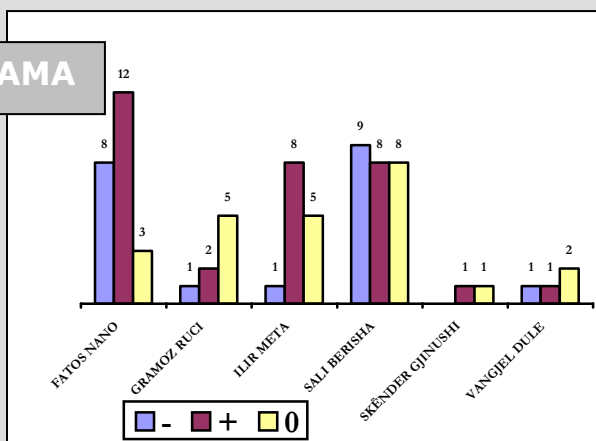
Context



Politician sound bite



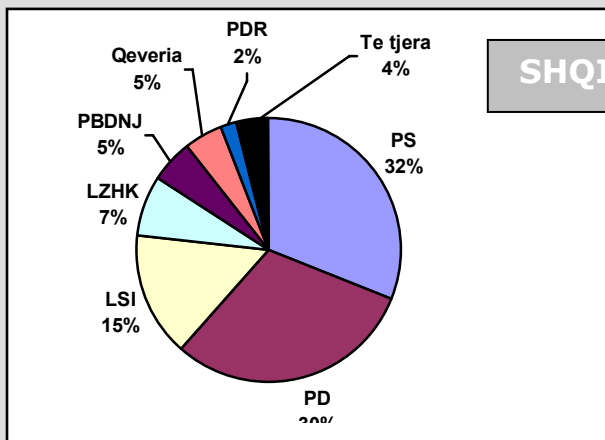
Politician context



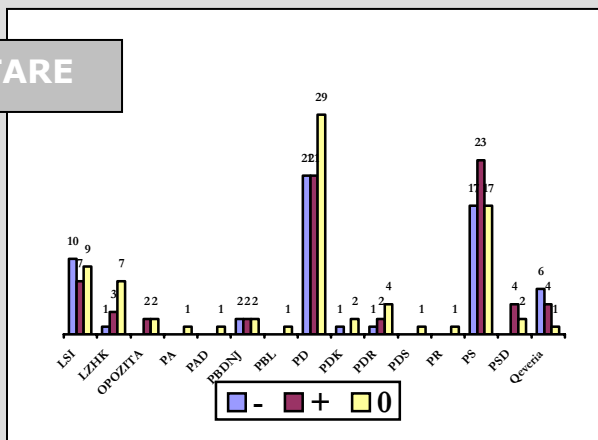
GAZETA SHQIPTARE

This newspaper has almost balanced reporting about all subjects, and as many others devote small portion of space to Government. They gave to the SP/Government almost the same level of coverage (SP 32%, Government 6%) that it gave to the DP (30%). The SP and DP get almost the same rating, though the Government is mainly rated in a positive context. Coverage is also given to other parties with the SMI third and the MND fourth. The SMI is covered in a negative light. Nano has a higher rate of printed remarks than Berisha who follows closely behind. The positive rating is predominant for Nano whereas Berisha's positive and negative evaluations are almost the same. Other politicians are given a small coverage except for Ilir Meta with 16%, matching the coverage of his political party.

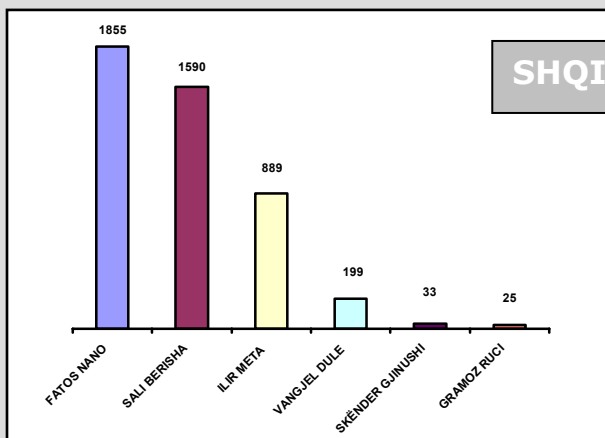
Total time



Context



Politician sound bite



Politician context

