

# The presence of political agents in news broadcasts

**Laura Rodas**

- *This article basically answers the following questions: which political agents have spoken? And when have they spoken? It is also a preliminary analysis of the behaviour of the broadcasters analysed regarding political pluralism. Always in terms of speaking time, government voices are analysed compared with all political voices; the political agents who, individually, have spoken more in news broadcasts and which groups of political agents have been more prominent.*

## **Keywords**

Pluralism, news broadcasts, politics, Catalonia, Spain

## **Analysis of government voices**

In order to analyse the comparative weight of government voices, only three broadcasters have been taken into account (TV3, TVE in Catalonia and BTV), those with the most homogeneous sample over the period analysed. In this respect, the three channels coincide in granting a relatively similar proportion, between 41.3% and 47%, to the three main governmental spheres as a whole (the Catalan government, the Spanish government and local government, including the government of Barcelona Council and that of the rest of the Catalan municipalities). However, the distribution of this speaking time among each of the spheres of authority varies according to the channel, especially in the case of the local sphere<sup>1</sup>, which ranges from 6.1% on TV3 (covering the autonomous community of Catalonia) to 19.6% on BTV (local coverage).

On observing the data, we can go no further than merely compare the channels because, as no standard has been established regarding what the relative weight of the governments should be compared with the rest of the political agents, it is impossible to verify this standard. The following figures help to complete this interpretation, in graph format.

The sample analysed (from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2005) also allows us to compare media presence (in terms of speaking time) of two governments of different political sways, both in Catalonia and in Spain. In fact, elections were held on 16 November 2003 to the Catalan parliament, resulting in a political change in government which had been

---

**Laura Rodas**

*Analyst for the Technical Services of the CAC*

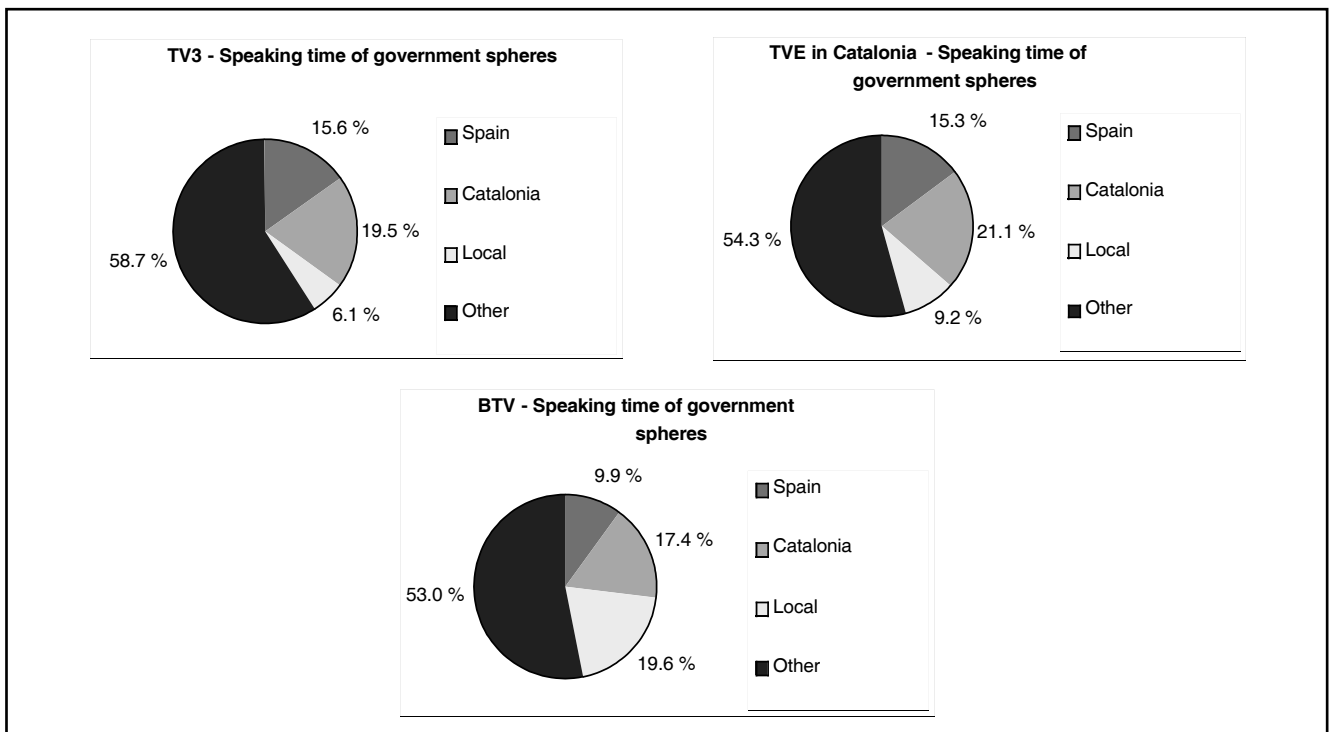
<sup>1</sup> Article number 12, about political agents groups, it also refers to the distribution of speaking time among governments of each of the spheres of authority.

**Table 1. TV3, TVE in Catalonia and BTV. Speaking time of the main governmental spheres compared with the rest of the groups of political agents**

	TV3		TVE in Catalonia		BTV	
Spanish government	15.6	<b>41.3</b>	15.3	<b>45.7</b>	9.9	<b>47.0</b>
Catalan government	19.5		21.1		17.4	
Government of Barcelona Council	1.9		3.7		17.2	
Government of local Catalan auth.	4.2		5.5		2.4	
Other groups of political agents	58.7	<b>58.7</b>	54.3	<b>54.3</b>	53.0	<b>53.0</b>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: in-house.

**Tables 2, 3 and 4. TV3, TVE in Catalonia and BTV. Speaking time of the main governmental spheres compared with the rest of the groups of political agents**



Source: in-house.

occupied by CiU and was passed on to the three political forces that reached an agreement to govern (PSC-CpC, ERC and ICV-EA). This change came into force on 18 December of the same year. A few months later, specifically 14 March 2004, general elections were held for the Spanish parliament. In this case, the electoral process also culmi-

nated in a change in the ruling party for Spain, going from the PP to the PSOE, coming into force, in a practical sense, on 17 April 2004.

In the case of Catalonia, a notable increase can be observed in the speaking time of the group corresponding to the *Catalan government* as from the point when it went from

**Table 5. TV3, TVE in Catalonia and BTV. Speaking time of the governments presided over by Pujol/Maragall and Aznar/Zapatero in Catalonia and in Spain**

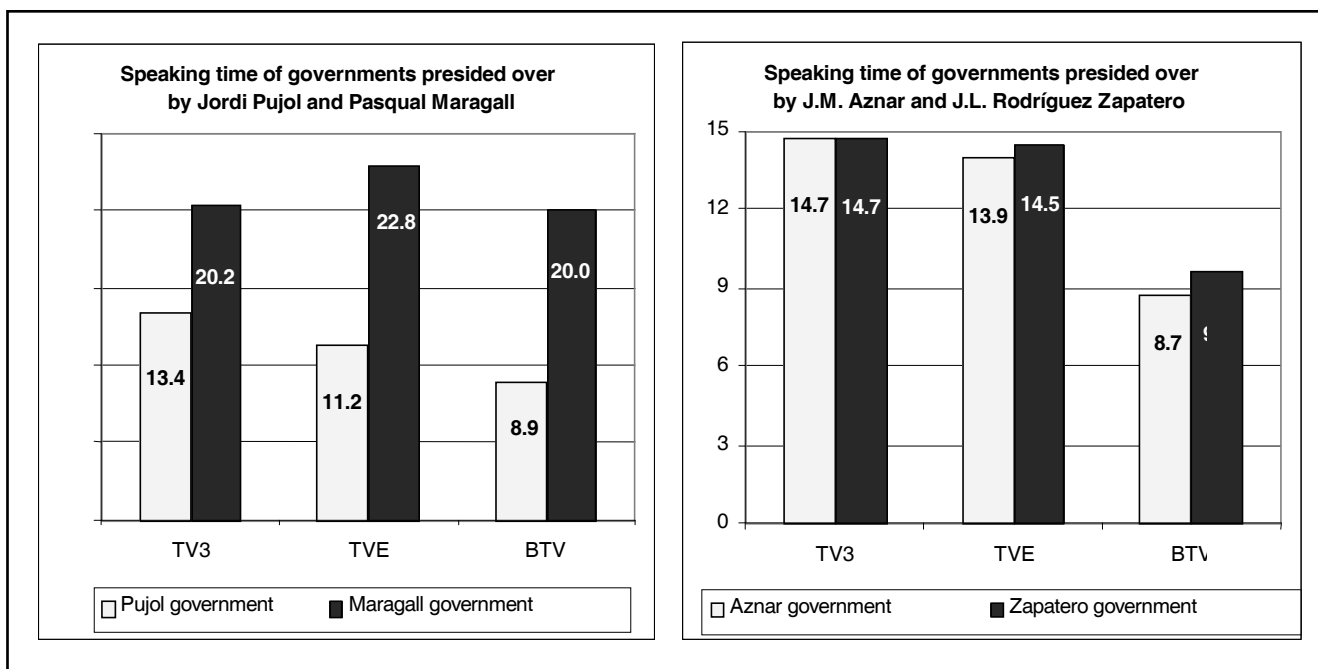
<b>TV3</b>				
	<b>Pujol Presidency (Between 01/01/03 and 17/12/03)</b>		<b>Maragall Presidency (Between 18/12/03 and 31/12/05)</b>	
Catalan government	3:50:37	13.4	16:00:07	20.2
Other political agents	24:54:57	86.6	63:02:00	79.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>28:45:34</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>79:02:07</i>	<i>100.0</i>
	<b>Aznar Presidency Between 01/01/03 and 16/04/04</b>		<b>Rodríguez Zapatero Presidency Between 17/04/04 and 31/12/05</b>	
Spanish government	6:35:24	14.7	9:16:30	14.7
Other political agents	38:06:20	85.3	53:49:27	85.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>44:41:44</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>63:05:57</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>TVE in Catalonia</b>				
	<b>Pujol Presidency (Between 01/01/03 and 17/12/03)</b>		<b>Maragall Presidency (Between 18/12/03 and 31/12/05)</b>	
Catalan government	1:25:00	11.2	8:00:07	22.8
Other political agents	11:11:04	88.8	27:07:41	77.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>12:36:04</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>35:07:48</i>	<i>100.0</i>
	<b>Aznar Presidency Between 01/01/03 and 16/04/04</b>		<b>Rodríguez Zapatero Presidency Between 17/04/04 and 31/12/05</b>	
Spanish government	2:40:46	13.9	4:09:15	14.5
Other political agents	16:33:34	86.1	24:30:17	85.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>19:14:20</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>28:39:32</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>BTV</b>				
	<b>Pujol Presidency (Between 01/01/03 and 17/12/03)</b>		<b>Maragall Presidency (Between 18/12/03 and 31/12/05)</b>	
Catalan government	3:31:00	8.9	14:21:42	20.0
Other political agents	35:56:01	91.1	57:20:38	80.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>39:27:01</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>71:42:20</i>	<i>100.0</i>
	<b>Aznar Presidency Between 01/01/03 and 16/ 04/04</b>		<b>Rodríguez Zapatero Presidency Between 17/04/04 and 31/12/05</b>	
Spanish government	4:46:44	8.7	5:25:21	9.6
Other political agents	49:55:42	91.3	51:01:34	90.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>54:42:26</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>56:26:55</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: in-house.

being made up of a single political party (CiU) to being composed of three different political forces (PSC-CpC, ERC and ICV-EA). This increase occurs in almost identical pro-

portions on both TVE in Catalonia and on BTV (more than double), while on TV3 it is slightly lower (approximately 50%).

**Tables 6 and 7. TV3, TVE in Catalonia and BTV. Speaking time of the governments presided over by Pujol/Maragall and Aznar/Zapatero in Catalonia and in Spain.**



Source: in-house.

In the case of Spain, a certain continuity can be observed with regard to the speaking time obtained by the successive governments of the PP and the PSOE. In the case of TV3, for example, both governments have identical percentages (14.7%). In the case of TVE in Catalonia and BTV, however, a small increase is observed in the speaking time obtained by the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero compared with the speaking time obtained by the preceding government, presided over by José María Aznar. Notwithstanding this, in no case, neither on TVE in Catalonia nor on BTV, does this percentage difference reach 1%.

In summary, the three channels analysed grant all the main governmental spheres (state, autonomous community and municipal) a percentage speaking time that is under 50%, but the lack of a standard to establish what the percentage of government voices should be compared with the rest of the political agents prevents us from assessing the appropriateness or unsuitability of this figure. On the other hand, the tripartite government presided over by Pasqual Maragall obtained, on all three channels, a percentage speaking time that was higher than that obtained by the sin-

gle party government of Jordi Pujol. Meanwhile, the percentage speaking time of the successive governments of the PP and of the PSOE, at a state level, remained relatively stable on TV3, TVE in Catalonia and BTV.

### Political agents with more speaking time

In general terms, an analysis of the speaking time of political agents allows us to establish a correlation between those agents with more speaking time and the leaders of the autonomous and state governments in power during the period analysed. In this way, Pasqual Maragall (president of the Catalan government or *Generalitat* from November 2003 to September 2006) appears among the top five on all channels if we add together his appearances as president of the *Generalitat* and those as leader of his party, the PSC. Similarly, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (president of the Spanish government since April 2004) is one of the political leaders with most speaking time on four of the five channels analysed, if we add together his appearances as president

**Table 8. TV3. Political agents with most speaking time**

TV3		
Maragall, Pasqual	6:28:01	6.0
Rodríguez Zapatero, José Luis	5:08:04	4.8
Mas, Artur	4:56:04	4.6
Carod-Rovira, Josep -Lluís	3:28:34	3.2
Rajoy, Mariano	2:57:39	2.7
<i>Total speaking time of the political agents</i>	107:47:41	100

Source: in-house.

**Table 9. TVE in Catalonia. Political agents with most speaking time**

TVE in Catalonia		
Maragall, Pasqual	2:58:14	6.2
Mas, Artur	2:29:08	5.2
Rodríguez Zapatero, José Luis	2:25:05	5.1
Carod-Rovira, Josep -Lluís	1:41:10	3.5
Piqué, Josep	1:37:00	3.4
<i>Total speaking time of the political agents</i>	47:44:23	100

Source: in-house.

of the government and as secretary general of his party, the PSOE. But in spite of this general trend, a study of the five political agents with most speaking time on each of the channels allows us to make specific observations about each of these cases.

TV3 and TVE in Catalonia coincide in placing Pasqual Maragall, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Artur Mas and Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira in the top four positions, although in a different order in the case of Zapatero and Mas. In fact, Zapatero is in second place on TV3 and third place on TVE in Catalonia, while in the case of Mas the order is the opposite. Fifth place, however, is occupied by different political agents on different channels. Mariano Rajoy is in fifth place on TV3, while Josep Piqué occupies this position on TVE in Catalonia. It should be noted that, in both cases, the appear-

ances of these agents mostly occurred within the context of their respective parties (PP and PPC, the Catalan branch of the PP) and not so much due to their respective responsibilities during the time the PP governed Spain.

On BTV we also find Maragall, Mas, Rodríguez Zapatero and Carod-Rovira among the first five positions in terms of speaking time. However, it is Joan Clos, mayor of Barcelona for the whole period analysed, who occupies the top position. Similarly, the spokespeople for the two municipal groups in opposition, Alberto Fernández Díaz (PPC) and Xavier Trias (CiU), occupy the sixth and seventh place respectively on this channel. BTV's local coverage is the reason for this peculiarity, although it should be noted that four out the five top places are occupied by non-municipal political agents.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The next section, on groups of political agents, also shows how the Catalan government and that of Barcelona have very similar speaking times.

**Table 10. BTV. Political agents with most speaking time**

BTV		
Clos, Joan	6:03:05	5.4
Maragall, Pasqual	5:08:10	4.6
Mas, Artur	3:52:30	3.5
Rodríguez Zapatero, José Luis	3:42:07	3.3
Carod-Rovira, Josep-Lluís	3:07:30	2.8
<i>Total speaking time of the political agents</i>	111:09:21	100

Source: in-house.

**Table 11. Citytv. Political agents with most speaking time**

Citytv		
Rodríguez Zapatero, José Luis	0:08:54	8.4
Aznar, José María	0:08:45	8.3
Maragall, Pasqual	0:05:04	4.8
Fernández Díaz, Alberto	0:04:53	4.6
Clos, Joan	0:04:49	4.6
<i>Total speaking time of the political agents</i>	1:45:50	100

Source: in-house.

**Table 12. Localia. Political agents with most speaking time**

Localia		
Mas, Artur	0:38:43	5.0
Geli, Marina	0:30:17	3.9
Ridao, Joan	0:29:56	3.9
Clos, Joan	0:27:57	3.6
Maragall, Pasqual	0:23:59	3.1
<i>Total speaking time of the political agents</i>	12:48:28	100

Source: in-house.

The data for Citytv and Localia are not comparable to those of the rest of the channels for different reasons. Firstly, the short duration of the news programmes on Citytv (approximately five minutes) means that this channel does not always include inserts. It is, for example, of no use comparing how the one hour and forty-five minutes of speaking time has been distributed for the political agents on

Citytv compared with the 107 hours on TV3. Secondly, the fact that the sample from Localia is not as extensive as that from the rest of the channels, because its analysis started later, also prevents valid comparisons from being made. However, an observation of the agents that occupy the top positions on this channel does allow us to conclude that this channel prioritises politicians from the autonomous commu-

**Table 13. Summary of the top five political agents in terms of news time**

	TV3	TVE in Catalonia	BTV	Citytv	Localia
1st	Pasqual Maragall	Pasqual Maragall	Joan Clos	José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero	Artur Mas
2nd	José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero	Artur Mas	Pasqual Maragall	José María Aznar	Marina Geli
3rd	Artur Mas	José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero	Artur Mas	Pasqual Maragall	Joan Ridao
4th	Josep Lluís Carod-Rovira	Josep Lluís Carod-Rovira	José Luis. Rodríguez Zapatero	Alberto Fernández Díaz	Joan Clos
5th	Mariano Rajoy	Josep Piqué	Josep Lluís Carod-Rovira	Joan Clos	Pasqual Maragall

Source: in-house.

nity and local level above those at a state level, as among the top ten political agents with most speaking time there is no political governor or leader from this sphere.

The results of this analysis suggest that the political agents in the top position in terms of speaking time during the period 2003-2005 vary depending on the broadcaster but they almost always correspond to a head of government: on TV3 and TVE it is Pasqual Maragall (president of the *Generalitat* since November 2003), on BTV it is Joan Clos (city mayor for the three years analysed) and on Citytv it is José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and José María Aznar in almost identical proportions (presidents of the Spanish government for 21 and 15 months, respectively).

### Political groups with more presence

In order to tackle this question we need to differentiate, from the beginning, between two kinds of political groupings: those referring to political institutions and those referring to political parties. In this respect, it should be noted that all the channels, to a greater or lesser degree, have granted more

presence to institutional groups than to party groups in their respective news broadcasts. This trend is particularly evident on Citytv and on Localia, where institutional groups account for around 70% of the speaking time for political groupings.

Observing the data for groups of an institutional nature, the first thing we notice is the higher proportion of strictly governmental spheres above the respective administrative structures, as the first three positions on almost all channels are occupied by governments from the different spheres of authority: state, autonomous region and local.

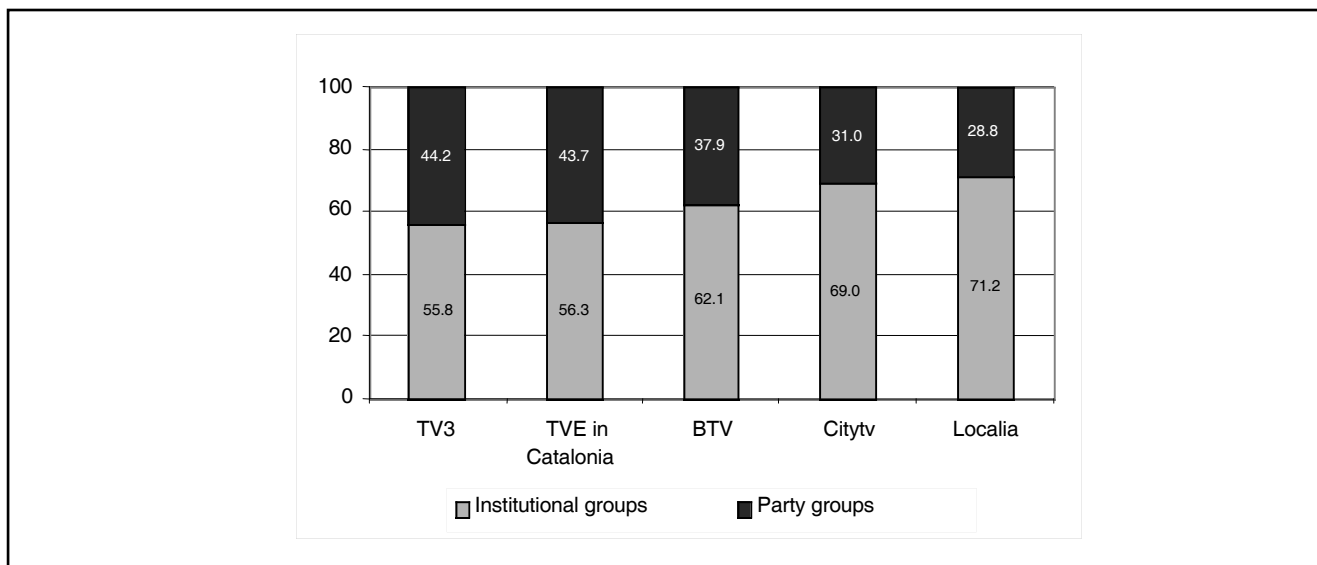
On TV3 and TVE in Catalonia, the top three positions are occupied by the same groups, in the same order and with quite similar percentages in both cases: first, the Catalan government (33.0% and 35.0%); second, the Spanish government (26.4% and 25.4%); and, third, at a certain distance, the governments of the local Catalan authorities (7.1% and 9.2%). In fact, this is quite a logical order taking into account that these channels cover the autonomous region of Catalonia. The most noticeable difference between these two channels is the comparative weight given, always in terms of speaking time, to the government and opposition

of Barcelona Council. TV3 only allocates 3.2% of speaking time to the Barcelona government, while TVE in Catalonia allocates 6.2%, almost double, to members of the government and 1.2% to the opposition of Barcelona Council.

BTV and Localia, two of the local channels in the sample,

coincide with TV3 and TVE in Catalonia on giving the Catalan government the first position but, on the other hand, they place the government of Barcelona Council second. On BTV, moreover, the percentage difference between them is only three tenths (25.9% for the autonomous

**Table 14. Share of speaking time of the groups of political agents among party and institutional groups**



Source: in-house.

**Table 15. Speaking time of institutional political groups**

TV3			BTV				
1	Catalan government	33.0	1	Catalan government	25.9		
2	Spanish government	26.4	2	Government of Barcelona Council	25.6		
3	Government of the Catalan local authorities	7.1	3	Spanish government	14.8		
4	Non-Catalan autonomous authority	6.3	4	Administration of the Generalitat de Catalunya	5.9		
5	Administration of the Generalitat de Catalunya	6.1	5	Other public bodies	5.1		
6	Administration of the state of Spain	3.3	6	Opposition to Barcelona Council	4.4		
7	Government of Barcelona Council	3.2	7	Government of the Catalan local authorities	3.6		
8	Non-Catalan local authority	2.5	8	Administration of the state of Spain	3.0		
9	Justice administration	2.3	9	Administration of Barcelona Council	3.0		
10	Other public bodies	2.2	10	Justice administration	2.6		
<i>Total speaking time for institutional groups</i>		<i>60:10:08</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>Total speaking time for institutional groups</i>		<i>68:59:30</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: in-house.



**Table 15. Speaking time of institutional political groups (II)**

TVE in Catalonia		
1	Catalan government	35.0
2	Spanish government	25.4
3	Government of the Catalan local authorities	9.2
4	Government of Barcelona Council	6.2
5	Administration of the Generalitat de Catalunya	6.0
6	Administration of the state of Spain	3.7
7	Non-Catalan autonomous authority	2.5
8	Other public bodies	2.2
9	Justice administration	2.1
10	Opposition to Barcelona Council	1.2
<i>Total speaking time for institutional groups</i>		<i>26:52:22 100</i>

Citytv		
1	Spanish government	28.2
2	Catalan government	27.2
3	Government of Barcelona Council	16.3
4	Government of the Catalan local authorities	8.8
5	Non-Catalan autonomous authority	4.2
6	Administration of the Generalitat de Catalunya	3.9
7	Administration of the state of Spain	3.8
8	Corona	1.8
9	Catalan local authority	1.1
10	Non-Catalan local authority	0.9
<i>Total speaking time for institutional groups</i>		<i>1:13:00 100</i>

Localia		
1	Catalan government	43.8
2	Government of Barcelona Council	26.1
3	Administration of the Generalitat de Catalunya	7.1
4	Opposition to Barcelona Council	4.0
5	Spanish government	3.6
6	Other public bodies	3.1
7	Justice administration	2.6
8	Administration of Barcelona Council	2.5
9	Other institutions	1.9
10	Administration of the state of Spain	1.7
<i>Total speaking time for institutional groups</i>		<i>9:07:12 100</i>

Source: in-house.

Government compared to 25.6% for the municipal government of Barcelona). On these channels the Spanish government is relegated to third position in the case of BTv and to fifth position in the case of Localia.

So the local channels in the sample do not necessarily differ in terms of which group has the most speaking time (on both, BTv and Localia, it continues to be the Catalan government), although they do differ in placing the govern-

ment of Barcelona Council among the three political groups with most speaking time.

An analysis of the data for party groups has been carried out from a dual perspective. Firstly, the speaking time of the Catalan political parties was analysed, then the speaking time of these parties added to the speaking time of their respective groups at a state level (PSC and PSOE, PPC and PP, ICV-EUiA and IU).

**Table 16. Percentage speaking time of the party groups**

	<b>TV3</b>	<b>TVE in Catalonia</b>	<b>BTV</b>	<b>Citytv</b>	<b>Localia</b>
<b>1</b>	CiU (21.8%)	CiU (23.8%)	CiU (20.4%)	PSOE (26.0%)	CiU (34.1%)
<b>2</b>	PP (15.3%)	PSC (17.6%)	PSC (18.3%)	CiU (17.5%)	ERC (27.9%)
<b>3</b>	PSC (14.7%)	PP (14.2%)	ERC (13.9%)	PPC (17.1%)	PSC (13.2%)
<b>4</b>	ERC (13.6%)	ERC (13.1%)	PSOE (11.6%)	PP (15.8%)	ICV-EUiA (13.0%)
<b>5</b>	PSOE (12.2%)	PPC (11.0%)	PPC (9.9%)	ERC (10.6%)	PPC (9.6%)
<b>6</b>	ICV-EUiA (8.3%)	PSOE (9.9%)	ICV-EUiA (9.8%)	PSC (6.1%)	PP (1.5%)
<b>7</b>	PPC (7.7%)	ICV-EUiA (7.4%)	PP (9.8%)	ICV-EUiA (2.6%)	PSOE (0.6%)
<b>8</b>	PNB (2.0)	IU (1.0%)	IU (3.3%)	Batasuna (1.6%)	--
<b>9</b>	Batasuna (1.7%)	PNB (0.7%)	PNB (1.1%)	IU (1.1%)	--
<b>10</b>	IU (1.2%)	Batasuna (0.7%)	Batasuna (0.9%)	PNB (0.7%)	--

Source: in-house.

**Table 17. Percentage speaking time of the party groups adding together the Catalan and Spanish parties**

	<b>TV3</b>	<b>TVE in Catalonia</b>	<b>BTV</b>	<b>Citytv</b>	<b>Localia</b>
<b>1</b>	PSC+PSOE (26.9%)	PSC+PSOE (27.5%)	PSC+PSOE (29.9%)	PPC+PP (32.9%)	CiU (34.1%)
<b>2</b>	PPC+PP (23.0%)	PPC+PP (25.2%)	CiU (20.4%)	PSC+PSOE (32.1%)	ERC (27.9%)
<b>3</b>	CiU (21.8%)	CiU (23.8%)	PPC+PP (19.7%)	CiU (17.5%)	PSC+PSOE (13.8%)
<b>4</b>	ERC (13.6%)	ERC (13.1%)	ERC (13.9%)	ERC (10.6%)	ICV-EUiA (13.0%)
<b>5</b>	ICV-EUiA+IU (9.5%)	ICV-EUiA+IU (8.4%)	ICV-EUiA+IU (13.1%)	ICV-EUiA+IU (3.7%)	PPC+PP (11.1%)
<b>6</b>	PNB (2.0)	PNB (0.7%)	PNB (1.1%)	Batasuna (1.6%)	--
<b>7</b>	Batasuna (1.7%)	Batasuna (0.7%)	Batasuna (0.9%)	PNB (0.7%)	--

Source: in-house.

During the period analysed, all the Catalan parties represented in the parliament of Catalonia appear among the top ten parties with the most speaking time, although not all channels distribute them in line with their respective parliamentary weight. So while TVE in Catalonia and BTV order them according to their number of seats (CiU<sup>3</sup>, PSC, ERC<sup>3</sup>, PPC and ICV-EUiA), TV3 respects the first three positions but reverses the fourth and fifth (where it places ICV-EUiA and PPC, respectively). The order of the Catalan parties on Citytv and Localia does not follow their parliamentary representation in any case.

If we add the speaking time of the Catalan parties with their respective groups at a state level (PSC and PSOE, PPC and PP and ICV-EUiA and IU), the result is different. TV3 and TVE in Catalonia place PSC-PSOE and PPC-PP at the top respectively (these totals including the two parties that have presided over the government during the period of analysis). In fact, both channels, without considering the percentage speaking time, reproduce the exact order of the parties in accordance with their number of seats in the Spanish Parliament and place Batasuna, not represented, in the last position. BTV follows quite a similar logic except that it places CiU above the sum of PPC-PP, so that it approaches more the distribution of parties existing on the Barcelona Council. Once again, the data from Citytv and Localia are not comparables to those from the remaining channels.

Lastly, it is worth noting the presence of Esquerra Abertzale in the ranking of the top ten parties with the most speaking time on all channels except Localia. It should be noted that the group of Batasuna includes, for practical reasons, the different parties that have been created and dissolved during the period of analysis in order to represent Esquerra Abertzale (Aukera Guztiak, Euskal Herritarrok, Sozialista Abertzaleak, Herritarren Zerrenda and Autodeterminazioaren Bilgunea).

An analysis of the data with regard to the speaking time of political groups allows us to draw three basic conclusions. Firstly, we may state that the institutional groups with most speaking time correspond, especially, to the state, autono-

mous and local government spheres. Secondly, we have observed that, although there seems to be a relationship between the sphere of authority of the government that obtains most speaking time and the territorial cover of the channel, the local channels analysed do not place the government of Barcelona Council as the group with the most speaking time. Finally, the order of the parties according to their respective speaking time reproduces, in broad terms, the composition (order according to the number of seats) of the Catalan parliament, if we only take the Catalan parties' speaking time into account, and the Spanish parliament, if we add together the speaking time of the Catalan and Spanish parties. It should be remembered, however, that as a consequence of the data design, in the case of CiU and ERC their speaking time has not been differentiated between an autonomous and a local level.

**3** The groups of CiU and ERC include appearances from the members of these two parties in the Spanish parliament.