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FINAL REPORT

Tirana, 7 July 2017

PART I - 1. SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

Title of the action	Awareness raising campaign for first time voters - Parliamentary elections of 25 June 2017 in Albania
Location(s)	Albania
National partner(s)	Academy of Political Studies (APS)
Other partner(s)	Central Election Commission (CEC) Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) Swiss Embassy in Tirana
Target group(s)	Secondary school students (third grade) in twelve regions in Albania
Final beneficiaries	Families of young people involved in the programme and local community in 12 regions in Albania
Summary of initial objectives and expected results	<p>The project aims to ensure a high turnout of young people, and in particular first time voters, in June 2017 local elections in Albania.</p> <p>This objective shall be achieved through two specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare over 35 000 first time voters, from twelve regions in Albania, with the basic concepts on electoral and civic participation within a democracy;• Promote young voters' participation in elections and civic engagement. <p>The expected results intent a higher turnout of youth voters turnout and an improvement of the election's process standards.</p>

PART II

1. SUMMARY: CONTEXT, ACTIVITIES, RESULTS

Brief description

In the frame of the Council of Europe action plan to support the parliamentary elections of 25 June 2017 in Albania, the Academy of Political Studies implemented an Awareness Raising Programme for First Time Voters. The programme was implemented during April – June 2017 and was carried out in close partnership and coordination with the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) and the Central Elections Commission (CEC). Furthermore, it builds on successful result of the CoE assistance to elections of 2011, 2013 and 2015 in Albania. Thanks to the positive experience of cooperation, APS involved this year in the campaign the contribution of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), as part of financial contribution that Swiss government provides to the APS programmes.

The programme targeted all the secondary schools in Albania (385 schools) addressing about 35 000 students first time voters. Thanks to the development of application software for Smartphones the programme reached out a

wide range of youth out of schools and the voters in general offering them information on elections but also the possibility of documentation and reporting the malpractices and abuse during the electoral campaign and the voting day. In the implementation of the programme, APS has utilised its resources and expertise and its wide network of alumni. The campaign was successfully implemented this year despite the political situation as results of the boycott of Opposition (from 18 February - 18 May) and the consequences reflected on the overall organisation of elections. APS used all the experience of the past year implementation of the same programme and also its prominent reputation within the country to avoid every problem and misunderstanding on the objectives of the programme.

2. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

Overall objective:

The main objective of the project was to make young people, and in particular first time voters, aware of the function of elections in a democratic society and the relevance of casting a vote.

The awareness programme proved to be a successful follow up to the previous initiatives launched by the Council of Europe in local elections and general elections in Albania (2011, 2013 and 2015). It provides for an effective tool to reach out not only first time voters but also their peers and families and thus contribute to a higher turnout in elections and other democratic processes in the country. The support for developing the application software of CEC named "Voto 2017" offered also a possible tool for avoiding malpractices and other forms of pressures on voters thus impacting the improvement of the elections process standards.

The effective cooperation with the MoES and the CEC staff largely facilitated the smooth implementation of the action. Moreover, the concept and principles of intervention matches perfectly with the foundations and objectives of the Academy of Political Studies, thus increasing the potential for success and sustainability.

In particular, the programme contributed to the Central Election Commission's rather poor strategy on voter's education, reaching out over 35 000 matura students and, in coordination with other CoE awareness campaign actions, more than 136 000 young voters in Albania. In this view, the CEC highly benefitted from the CoE assistance in meeting its objectives.

Specific objectives:

The implementation of the project might be considered as successful. All the activities took place according to the planned timeframe and with the available resources.

The programme targeted all the secondary schools in Albania (385 schools), training 385 teachers and addressing about 35 000 students first time voters from twelve regions in Albania, thus, implementing the first specific objective.

Special attention was given towards the promotion of youth voters' participation in elections and local and public life, was ensured through the informative materials and visibility of the programme. The awareness camping targeted the schools in rural areas where information on the mobilisation of youngsters is redundant. In the past, issues related to family voting or vote transfer is mainly encountered in these areas, thus hindering the electoral standards.

Results:

Formal civic education in the classroom is the primary means by which young people acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in their democracies in an informed and engaged fashion. Studies have shown that an individual's likelihood of voting increases with higher levels of knowledge and interest in politics. In addition to enhancing these variables, civic education can foster values and attitudes that encourage political participation while increasing the motivation to vote. Thanks to the programme every Matura's student was part of two classes about topics such as democracy, human rights and citizenship, the right to vote and the voting process. The methodology and the informative materials offered during these classes provided civic education for the students and also promoted their role as citizens, their rights and responsibilities, the importance of voting, and how best to make voter choices and hold those they vote for accountable between elections.

According to the official figures by the CEC around 46,72 % of citizens (1.6 million of 3.4 million voters registered on the National Civil Register) voted in the elections of June 25. The percentage is nearly the same as the participation on the last local elections of 2015 (47%). Since one third of Albanian population lives abroad and can't use the right of voting outside the country, the real turnout in elections might be calculated reached more than 80 percent of resident voters (the last Census in 2011 showed that there are only 2 million Albanians who have the right to vote and live into the country). Must be noted also the fact that the elections were organised in the religious holiday of Bajram (the most important day for Muslim community) and in a new political situation where for the first time majority and opposition where part of the government cabinet.

As regards to the first time voters the official figures in the Civil Register counts 136 239 of them. There is no possible way of identification how of them casted the vote because the percentage of participation is calculated without taking into account the age and identity of voters. In this mater of fact, the evaluation of the project's impact on young voter's turn out in elections was ensured throughout the distribution of over 1.000 questionnaires to schools in order to measure the information and awareness acquired by the students as results of their participation in the programme. The piloting survey aimed to identify the degree of participation of targeted first time voters in local elections of 25 June 2017.

So far, more than 600 questionnaires are collected from the piloted school in Tirana, Durrës, Shkoder, Fier, Berat, Vlore and Korca. The students has evaluated as follow:

- 20.07 % of students has already been informed regarding the importance of election through other channels of communication (mostly the students which are part of political movements); The other part, answered that they were not informed about voting procedures and penalties in case of malpractices;
- 83.25 % of students gave a maximal evaluation to the preparation they got from the theoretical and practical voting exercise;
- 73.54 % of students think that additional lessons regarding civic education will be useful to them;
- 88.40 % of students accepted that they would cast/casted the vote on the 25 June elections (4.70% answered to this question "I don't want to answer");
- 94.63 % of students confirmed that the programme has impacted their willingness to vote and the manner how they voted;

(The survey sample in Annex 1)

In addition, a higher presence of young people was observed on the polling stations during the elections day. Overall, the awareness programme for first time voters proved to be a successful follow up to the previous initiative launched by the Council of Europe in 2011, 2013 and 2015 elections in Albania.

Activities:

The programme of activities comprises 3 main phases as described below:

1. Training of trainers – First Cycle

The first training activity was conducted on 14 April 2017 at the hotel Diplomat in Tirana and targeted about 13 trainers representing 13 Regional Directorates of Education (RDE) in Albania. One day ToT session was conducted by Ms. Ana Tenolli, Director of Education Department of CEC respectively, as well as Ms. Tatjana Vuçani, Pre-University Education Directorate at the Ministry of Education and Sport. The selected pool of trainers got acquainted with the project design, methodology and related materials. In addition, they provided valuable feedback from the implementation of the programme in 2015,



[Picture: Training of trainers (TOT) session in Tirana]

focusing in particular on the practical and organisative aspects. The training session has prepared the ground for the two follow up phases of the programme

2. Teacher's training – Second Cycle

From 27 April to 2 May, a series of training sessions involved about 385 teachers representing all the high school schools across the country. The selection of teachers was made in coordination with the Regional Directories of Education (RDEs). Each Regional Directorate was required to prepare an overview of the number of classes and Matura students under their respective dependences. Based on such data, the project staff selected the teachers to be trained and further involved in the implementation of the action.

The 12 regions of the campaign involve 13 RDEs:

- Tirane (urban and rural area)
- Durres
- Shkoder
- Vlore
- Berat
- Elbasan
- Kukes
- Lezhe
- Fier
- Gjirokaster
- Diber
- Korçe



The detailed list of teachers, schools and students involved in the programme:

No.	Region / RDEs	Teachers	Schools	Students
1	Tirane (rural)	34	33	5266
2	Tirane (urban)	27	14	6500
3	Durres	27	23	2800
4	Shkoder	33	31	1921
5	Vlore	25	24	1844
6	Berat	25	24	1744
7	Elbasan	50	48	3658
8	Kukes	21	19	985
9	Lezhe	25	24	1662
10	Fier	40	42	2842
11	Gjirokaster	23	22	998
12	Diber	25	25	1527
13	Korçe	30	27	2097
	Total	385	356	33,844

The trainings of teachers had a satisfactory participation rate and the selected teachers expressed their interest towards such a positive initiative. Over 20 percent of the teachers involved in the programme had taken part in the previous youth voters campaign and this was very helpful for the management of the trainings and also for the implementation of the programme. Their suggestions were very helpful and contributed to further improve coordination and organization of the programme. The training sessions prepared the ground for the follow up phases of the programme.

3. Organisation of classes – Third Cycle

- **The first class** was organised during the first week of May 2017 in every high school in Albania reaching a total of about 35.000 young people. The class focused on topics such as democracy, human rights and citizenship, the right to vote, and the voting process. A special methodology and literature was selected and translated in order to facilitate the teacher's conduct. The first class was very well received by both the teachers and students, who showed an increasing interest to debate on the right to vote and expressed their interest by following up with other subjects on democracy, voting, and citizenship.
- **The second class** was organised during the second week of May 2017. Each teacher was entitled to design a work plan for the conduction of classes in coordination with the Regional Directorates of Education of the respective regions. The classes aimed at stimulating a discourse among students on issues of their concern focusing in social, economic and community based issues, considered in the light of democratic processes and human rights. Based on this discourse, each class selected 2-3 candidates to play the role of elections candidates. During the week these student-candidates compiled their "electoral programmes" addressing various thematic concerns and prepared their "electoral campaign" within the school environment utilising various means that were at their disposal.



[Picture: A candidate presenting his electoral programme at high school "Raqi Qirinxhi", in Korca]

The electoral campaign was organised based on the same experience from the last awareness campaign programme in 2015 within the school hallways where the candidates and their campaign staff placed posters, pictures and awareness messages. In addition, the candidates used the breaks between classes, free time and other social events in the school to advertise their campaign. The awareness programme provided a rich set of materials to all schools to facilitate these mini campaigns of student-candidates. In addition, a poster and a special brochure with general information on elections and democracy, as well as key aspects of the voting process was produced to inform and aware the students of their rights and responsibilities *vis a vis* the voting process. About 3.000 posters and 33.000 brochures were placed in and out of the 385 high schools premises in Albania to raise the awareness and educate first time voters.

- **The third class**, which consisted of a mock election exercise, was organised during the third and fourth week of May. In each high school there was an improvised polling station including all of the relevant infrastructure such as: ballot papers, commissioners, observers, ballot box, secret booths, journalists, guards, voter's lists, etc. The aim of this exercise was to simulate and experience the voting process in respect to all the criteria and provisions of the electoral code. Therefore, all the details of a voting process were carefully identified and put in place during the voting simulation. The students had to vote for their favourite student-candidate from their class. During the voting process, the students achieved a real understanding of how to avoid malpractices during the voting process. Prominent personalities and diplomats also participated in the mock election and addressed the importance of youth participation in the voting process.



[Picture1: The Head of Council of Europe Office in Tirana, Mr. Claus Neukirch addressing awareness messages to the students of village of Vaqarr, near Tirana on the eve of the mock election at this high school. Picture 2: Student voting in the mock election organised at high school of village of Hajmel in Shkoder]

4. Smartphone application software for education and information

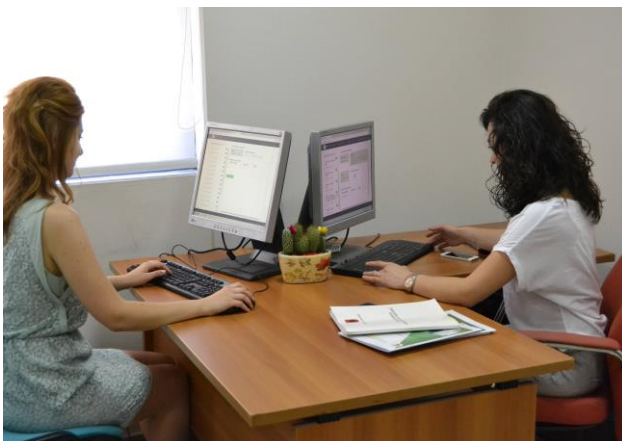
The application named "Voto2017" was part of Central Election Commission priorities and aimed to provide a dynamic form of information/interaction for Smartphone users, focusing on young voters. The application software was synchronised with the website of the Central Election Commission and provided updated information to both Android and iPhone mobile phone users in a sustainable fashion.

It served as a resource/education tool for young voters by providing election related knowledge, including:

- registration status and voting station information through National Civil Register and an interactive map guide;
- news and information on the election processes, as they happen and also updated information on the counting process and results;
- Real time reporting through images and videos for electoral frauds, intimidation and other malpractices during the electoral campaign and voting day;
- Awareness and training materials related to the election process and administration



The application software offered not only a unique and practical tool for electoral bodies, political parties and the voters in general, but also constituted a trustful tool during the voting day when the server of Civil Register and CEC were not functional due to cyber attacks. Meanwhile, the reports of malpractices and intimidation were registered by CEC staff and further submitted to the General Prosecutor office to be investigated.



[Picture: CEC operators registering the reports submitted by voters through the app software during the voting day]

Some figures about the use of application from 15-25 June:

Installs by user	18,540 installs (Android and iPhone)
Reports for malpractices and intimidation during the voting day (mostly vote buying and vote photographing)	244 reports (47 considered by operators to be transmitted for further investigation by general prosecutor office)
Information on registration status and voting station	51,162 verifications

Development of the application was outsourced to an Albanian company selected following an open procurement tendering with three competitive tenders and in compliance with article 11 of the contract. The software was submitted officially to CEC and will be used by this institution as a channel of communication for the forthcoming elections.

(More information for the application use might be found in annex 2)

3. OBSERVATIONS ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Management and Organisation

The Academy of Political Studies was in charge of the overall management, day-to-day execution, monitoring, and reporting of the education programme. The MoES played a crucial role by formally involving the 13 Directorates of Educations in 12 regions in Albania, who were responsible for ensuring that the programme was carried out smoothly. In addition, APS got support from the CEC's professional staff in conducting the training of focal points in 12 regions as well as availing its resources to make the mock election process in schools resemble those of real elections. In the implementation of the programme, the APS counted on the cooperation of its alumni network to facilitate and monitor the implementation of activities as well as work with local media in order to promote the programme. The CoE, through its Office in Tirana, provided continuous assistance and expertise to the APS on the methodology used and the quality of products delivered.

Cross-cutting issues

Through the informative brochure produced by the project along with the practical voting process in the schools, students got a real understanding on how to avoid the family voting malpractices. This negative practice, in which a father votes on behalf of his wife and daughter, still exist in some remote areas of Albania. The programme provides an effective tool to reach out not only to first time voters, but also their peers and families and thus contributes on the improvement of the gender issues and elections process standards.

Communication and visibility

Several prominent personalities such as the CoE HoO, Swiss ambassador and the general director of education at the ministry of Education and Sport, welcomed the invitation to attend the election simulation exercise with the aim to ensure more visibility to the programme and as well as address the importance of youth participation in elections. Their messages were broadcasted in several Media outlets such as: "Voice of America" TV, "Ora News" TV, "Report" TV, Scan TV, and Albanian Daily News. Through these methods, the education campaign strived to raise awareness among young people in general, including those who were not students. *(More details about the visibility in Annex 2)*

In a similar vein, APS continued to support the civic education web portal www.zgjedhjet.asp.al addressing young people with regard to election education and democracy in a wider sense. Practical exercises and a series of tests offered valuable information for the first time voters and also the young people in general. A special link to the website was placed at the CEC portal. This educational platform will constitute a resourceful reference for young voters' education.

Additionally, the "Facebook" account <https://www.facebook.com/ndergjegjesimi.votuesve> continued to promote a constructive dialog among the various schools and students through the publication of pictures and awareness messages during the duration of the programme.

The visibility of the project was further increase thanks to the application software largely advertised not only by APS publication and channel of communication but also by the CEC spots and other publication.

About 3.000 posters and 33.000 brochures were placed in and out of the 385 high schools premises in Albania to raise the awareness and educate first time voters.



[Samples of brochure and poster]

Challenges, Lessons Learned and Follow up

The volatile political situation might present a challenge for the successful implementation of the programme. The boycott of elections by the Opposition might create a misunderstanding and reluctance by students to participate in the activities of the project. With this in mind, the prominent reputation of the ASP as a non-partisan NGO that acts under the auspices of the Council of Europe proved to be crucial in ensuring student participation and avoiding implementation risks. The continuity of the project since 2011 offered more readiness and trusts by the partners (MoES and CEC) and teachers involved in the project. They were committed to it even when it was not clear if there would be organised elections.

Pursuant to the successful implementation and the long experience of cooperation CEC expressed the commitment to cooperate and outsource to APS education and training programmes for youth and other groups for the forthcoming elections. A Training Centre supported by international donors is planned to be created in the following months near to the CEC with the aim to improve the capacity building of electoral bodies involved in the process and also the education and informative campaign for special groups of voters. APS is well placed and will offer all the gained experience and reputation in offering both methodology, local and international experts and management experience for conduction of trainings courses or educative programmes for youth and other groups of population.

The website dedicated to young voter's education and the use of social media, not only acted as resources for information and references, but also the assertion for the sustainability of the action. The website will be regularly maintained by the APS staff, thus constituting a resourceful reference for the sustainability of the young voters' education programme.

In regards to the Smartphone application, it proved to be very effective in combating voting malpractice and improving the overall standards of the electoral process. In the framework of the planned electoral reform in 2018 and the involvement of e-counting or e-voting procedures in the forthcoming elections, the Smartphone application and other related technologies should further be supported by CoE and other international institutions.

Erjon Tase
Executive Director

Annex 1 – The questionnaire model

PYETËSOR

Në përfundim të projektit të zhvilluar në shkollën tuaj “Ndërgjegjësimi i votuesve për herë të parë në zgjedhjet për Kuvend 2017, jeni të lutur të na ofroni përshtypjet dhe sugjerimet tuaja.

A. TË DHËNA TË PËRGJITHSHME

Qyteti _____

Shkolla _____

B. PERSHTYPJET PER PROJEKTIN

1. A kishit marrë më parë informacion dhe edukim mbi të drejtën e zgjedhjes dhe mënyrën e votimit ?

☐ PO

☐ JO

☐ Nuk e di

2. Mendoni se duhen kryer më tepër orë mësimi mbi demokracinë dhe të drejtën e votës në shkollën tuaj ?

☐ PO

☐ JO

☐ Nuk e di

C. VOTIMI

1. Vlerësoni me noten nga 1 ne 10 përgatitjen tuaj mbi procesin e votimit pas pjesëmarrjes në këtë program dhe procesit praktik të votimit:

| _____ |

2. A do të votoni në zgjedhjet e 25 Qershor 2017?

☐ PO

☐ JO

☐ Nuk e di

3. Nëse do votoni, a ka ndikuar informacioni i marrë gjatë këtij programi në vendimin tuaj për të votuar dhe mënyrën e votimit?

☐ PO

☐ JO

☐ Nuk e di

Cilat janë disa sugjerimet të mëtejshme për orët e mësimi dhe ushtrimin praktik të votimit të këtij programi?

Ju faleminderit !

Akademia e Studimeve Politike

Projekti “Ndërgjegjësimi i votuesve për herë të parë”

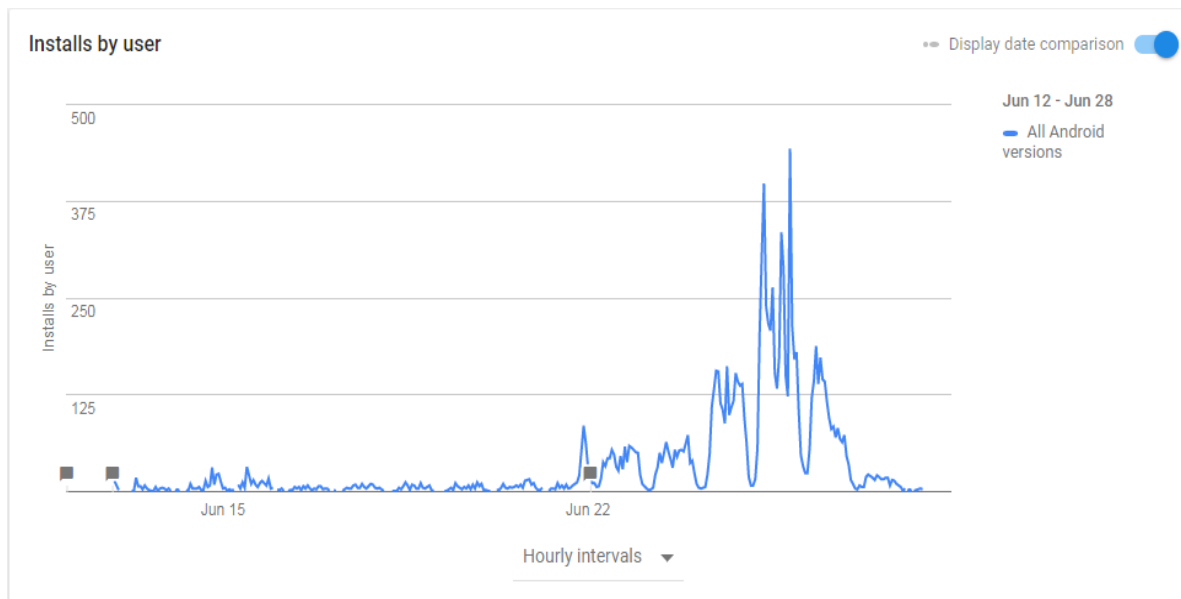
www.asp.al / www.facebook.com/ndergjegjesimi.votuesve

Annex 2 – Analytics of the application “Voto 2017”

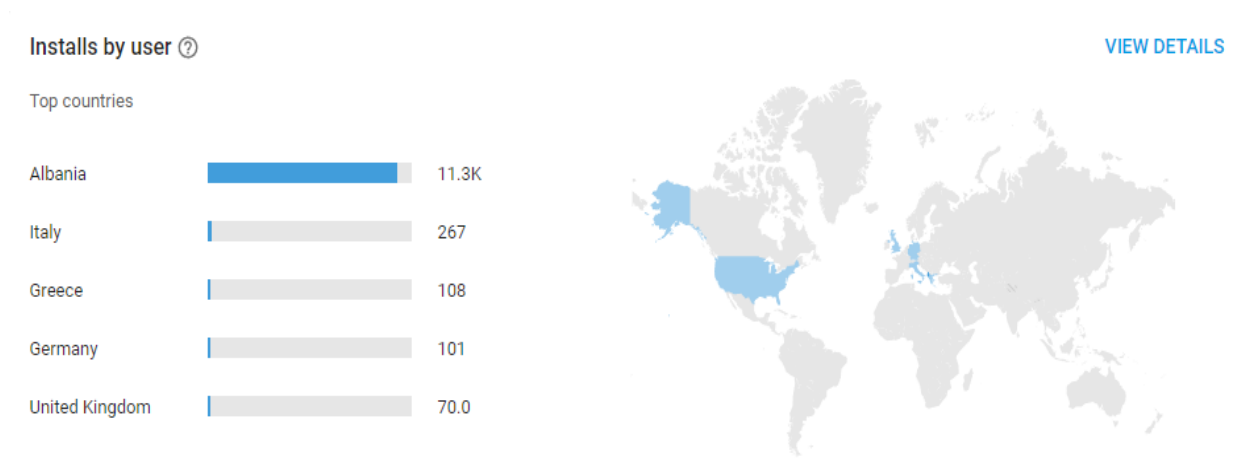
	Android system	iOS system	Total
Number of installs	12,120	6,420	18,540
Information on registration status and voting station	35,924	15,238	51,162

Analytics for Android system

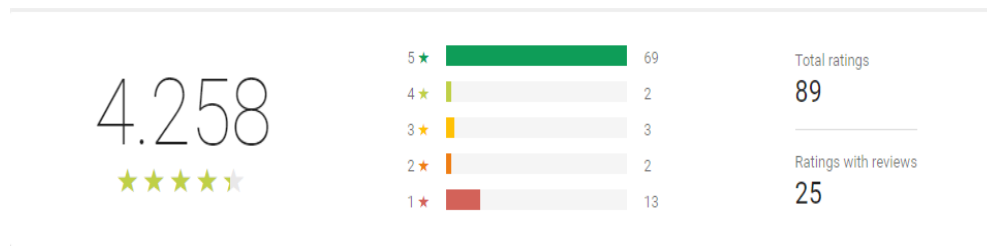
Installs from 12 – 28 June 2017 (12,120 installs)



Origin of installs. The application was used also by Albanian living abroad

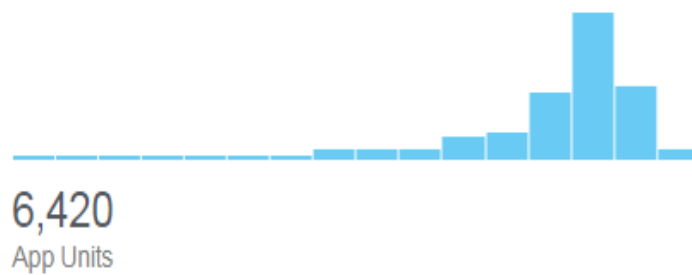


Rated by users



Analytics for iOS system

Installs from 12 – 28 June 2017 (6,420 installs)



Origin of installs. The application was used also by Albanian living abroad

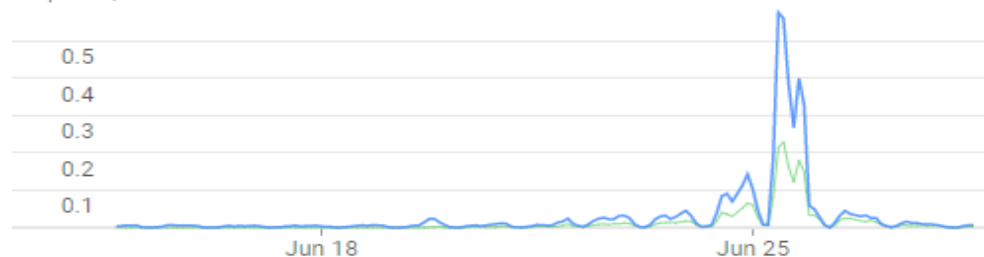


Information on registration status and voting station (15-28 June 2017)

API	Requests
Google Maps Android API	35,923
Google Maps SDK for iOS	15,237

Traffic

Requests/sec



Annex 3 – Visibility of the programme

TV links:

Voice of America TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqzZXzbIWXU>

Ora NEWS TV: <http://www.oranews.tv/vendi/voto-2017-aplikacioni-i-zgjedhjeve-te-25-qershorit/>

Scan TV: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBMQM_Nyk6I

Report TV: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLt_jGF2_qI

ABC News TV: <http://www.abcnews.al/lajme/zgjedhje-2017/9/85912>

Printed media – Newspapers and online platforms:

<https://rtsh.al/lajme/kqz-sjell-aplikacionin-voto-2017/>

<http://www.albaniannews.com/index.php?idm=13092&mod=2>

<http://www.shekulli.com.al/voto-2017-aplikacioni-dedikuar-zgjedhjeve-te-25-qershorit/>

<http://www.kohajone.com/2017/06/24/voto-2017-aplikacioni-i-dedikuar-zgjedhjeve-te-25-qershorit/>

<http://www.gazetadita.al/kqz-aplikacion-per-te-denoncuar-shkeljet-ne-votime-nepermjet-celularit/>

<http://www.afp.al/news/2017/06/voto-2017-kqz-nderton-aplikacionin-per-te-denoncuar-shkeljet-gjate-procesit-zgjedhor-30056/>

Official webpages:

<http://www.cec.org.al/sq-al/Njoftime/deklarata-shtypi/ID/706/Njoftim-per-shtyp-14062017>

<http://www.coe.int/sq/web/tirana/-/council-of-europe-and-the-central-election-commission-launch-smartphone-application-voto-2017>