

Tirana, 24.04.2017

**Information on the ongoing awareness raising campaign
for first time voters in Albania - 2017**

Introduction

The Academy of Political Studies (APS) started on March 2017 the implementation of the programme “Awareness raising campaign for first time voters in Albania” on the framework of the parliamentary elections of 18 June 2017. The programme is carried out again in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Central Electoral Commission to reach all the secondary schools in Albania (356 schools) addressing about 35 000 students first time voters. APS will be in charge of the overall management, day-to-day execution, monitoring, and reporting of the education programme. The MoES is expected to play a crucial role by formally involving the 13 Directorates of Educations in 12 regions in Albania, responsible for the well functioning of the programme. In addition, APS will get 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 the real elections. The “hot” political situation and the ongoing boycott from the Opposition will constitute a novelty during this year implementation of the project. APS will use 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 which might occur in the schools.



The main objective of the programme is 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. Up to now, the awareness programme proved to be a successful follow up to the previous initiatives launched by the Council of Europe in 2011 and 2015 local elections and 2013 parliamentary elections in Albania.

The awareness programme for first time voters aims to provide 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. Thanks to this project every Matura’s student will be 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 will provide 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.

In particular, the programme will contribute 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 awareness campaign actions, more than 135.000 young voters in Albania. In this view, the CEC will highly benefit from the CoE and SDC assistance in meeting its objectives.

Regarding financial support this year the largest part of the programme is covered by the Swiss Embassy, through direct contribution to the APS. This concern the second and the third phase of the afore mentioned action. Based on the proposal of the APS and the experience of cooperation, the Council of Europe agreed also to additionally support the programme for ensuring the first part phase of the project (training of trainers in Tirana and printing of posters) and also for the preparation of a **Smartphone application software** for education and information.

The proposed application is part of Central Election Commission priorities and aims at providing a dynamic form of information/interaction for Smartphone users, focusing on young voters. It will serve as a resource/education tool for young voters with election related knowledge, including registration status and voting station information. Further, it will enable the app users to view news and information on the election processes, as they happen. It will also serve as an alternative tool for the CEC to run surveys or polls. The application software will be synchronized with the website of the Central Election Commission and will provide updated information to both Android and iPhone mobile phone users in a sustainable fashion. Together with the CEC, the APS will conduct a nationwide campaign to promote the software and its applicability.

First phase of implementation

1. Training of trainers (TOT) in Tirana – 14 April 2017

The first training activity was conducted on 14 April 2017 at 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



[Picture: Training of trainers session in Tirana]

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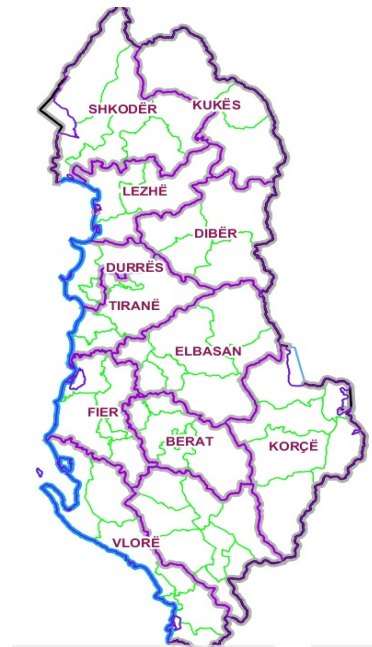
valuable feedback from the implementation of the programme in 2015, focusing in particular on the practical and organisative aspects. The training session has prepared the ground for the two follow up phases of the programme.

2. Teacher's training – Second Cycle (27 April – 2 May 2017)

From 27 April to 2 May 2017, are planned to be hold a series of training sessions involving about 385 teachers representing all the schools across the country. The selection of teachers is being made in coordination with the Regional Directories of Education in order to represent all the high schools in the country. Each Regional Directorate was required to prepare an overview of the number of classes and Matura students under their dependence respectively. Based on such data, were selected the teachers to be trained and further involved in the implementation of the action.

The 12 regions of the campaign involve:

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



A special attention was paid to the schools in rural areas where information on the sensibilisation of youngsters is redundant. In the past, issues related to family voting or vote buying is mainly encountered in these areas, thus hindering the electoral standards.

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

Forthcoming activities to be implemented

The second phase of the programme consists of two lectures and an election simulation exercise, which will be organised during the first and second week of May. The classes will aim to encourage discourse among students on the social and economic issues of their concern. Based on these discussions, each class will select two or three candidates to play the role of election's candidates. In the course of the week, these student-candidates will compile their "electoral programmes" addressing various thematic concerns and prepare their "electoral campaign", using the means and materials provided by the programme.

The third class (to be organise on the third week of may) will take the format of a mock election. In each of participating schools, improvised polling stations will be erected, including ballot papers, commissioners, observers, ballot boxes, journalists, guards, voter's lists, etc. The aim of this exercise is to give the students an experience of a properly carried out voting process; that is, as described in the electoral code. Therefore, all the elements of a voting process are identified and put in place during the simulation. Moreover, the students will get an understanding on how to identify and avoid malpractices during the voting process, such as, for instance, the family voting.

Logical framework of the project:

No .	Activities	Venue	Time	Beneficiary	Responsibility of the action
1	First training of 13 teachers who subsequently will train 385 other teachers in regions	Tirana	14 April 2017 - Hotel Diplomat - Tirane	13 inspectors from DAR-s - trained to be trainers	Academy of Political Studies
2	Training of 385 teachers in 13 regions	13 regions	27 April – 2 May 2017	385 teachers	Academy of Political Studies
3	Implementation of three classes and election simulation exercises	356 high schools in 13 regions	28 April - 26 May 2017	About 35 000 first time voters	Ministry of Education and Sport

Prominent personalities and diplomats will be invited to participate during the election exercise and address public messages stressing the importance of participating and voting process.

Further, in order to promote young people participation in elections, the APS printed and dispatched about 3,000 posters to the secondary schools. Also, a special brochure, in 33,000 copies, containing general information on elections and democracy, as well as on key aspects of the voting process, was produced in order to inform the students on their rights and responsibilities in the voting process.

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