



Vouliwatch Annual Report 2014-2015





The following report relates to the activities of Vouliwatch for the period of 16th of March 2014 to 16th of March 2015.

Vouliwatch is a registered non for profit organization with reg. no: 997496860.





VISION & APPROACH

In the wake of the economic crisis and in a country where politics has all too often been beset by scandals and corruption, **Vouliwatch** aims to help develop an **open and accountable** political system that uses new digital technology to promote citizen participation in the political process and to rebuild trust in parliamentary democracy. In the heyday of Ancient Greek democracy, citizens actively participated in political dialogue, and Vouliwatch aims to revive this essential aspect of a **democratic society** through the use of digital technology.

Vouliwatch is a digital platform that offers Greek citizens the opportunity to publicly **question** MPs and MEPs on the topic of their choice, and to hold their elected representatives **accountable** for their parliamentary activity. Moreover it acts as a parliamentary “watchdog” by providing first hand reporting on the latest legislative developments in parliament as well as by monitoring the voting behaviour of elected representatives.

It also gives users the chance to **influence political debate** and to focus the attention of both the media and the politicians on issues that citizens believe are important and are not being discussed widely.

Vouliwatch’s scope expands beyond the digital realm as it is a strong campaigner and advocate for parliamentary openness, public access to data and political transparency.





MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Greece is in the grip of one of the most difficult periods of its political history. But this also presents an exciting opportunity, and over the past five years the country's political landscape has been transforming rapidly. New political parties and new leaders have been emerging in response to novel social demands, calling for a solution to the harsh, ongoing economic recession.

Especially for the younger generations and all those that either decided not to emigrate abroad or to actually return home, politics is no longer viewed as something trivial, as we are all very much aware of the extent to which it defines our lives. At the same time the financial crisis has led many to take matters into their own hands by either experimenting with or actually actively engaging in social entrepreneurship, activism, politics, the arts and technological innovation.

Out of the frustrations of the political and economic crisis, and their dreams for a better future, Antonis, Stefanos, Panagiotis, Maria, Irene, Nadja and George created Vouliwatch. The driving force that to this day defines our work is the realization of the great responsibility that our generation has towards restoring the waning legitimacy of our democracy and institutions.

Over the past year we learnt and achieved a lot, much more than we had even hoped for. At the same time, we made lots of new friends who continually help and support us to better understand our role as active citizens and realize the extent to which we can shape a better political future for our generation.





Surely Vouliwatch alone is not going to save our democracy; it can however continue giving thousands of people the opportunity to have access to reliable information, to view politics through a different prism and help them realize the power they hold as citizens. Vouliwatch can be an ally to all those that seek to promote transparency and political accountability as it can pass on to younger generations the necessary knowledge in order for them to demand and strive for a better democracy.

This report you are about to read is a detailed account of the first steps of our endeavour which we feel concerns every one of us, and we sincerely hope that it will carry on growing with your help and support.

Keep Vouliwatch-ing!

Antonis Schwarz

Panagiotis Vlachos

Stefanos Loukopoulos





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ABOUT VOULIWATCH

Vouliwatch was officially registered as a non for profit organisation in October of 2013. The organisation formally started its activities with the launch of its digital platform on the 16th of March 2014.

Vouliwatch is a digital platform that engages Greek citizens with legislative politics and grants them with the opportunity to communicate, evaluate and hold elected representatives in the Greek and the European Parliament (MPs & MEPs) accountable. Similar successful initiatives

(“Parliamentwatch”) in countries like Ireland, Luxemburg, Tunisia, Germany, France and Austria have been sources of inspiration for our team as well.

Vouliwatch is an independent, non-profit initiative aiming to promote public dialogue, knowledge, open governance, political participation and accountability between citizens and politicians.

The mission of the project is to encourage Greek citizens to engage in politics, as well as to increase the accountability and transparency in the Greek political system.





To achieve this, the Vouliwatch team will be cooperating with politicians and civil society in order to promote a culture of dialogue and understanding. Vouliwatch incubates and cultivates a synergistic democratic culture that inspires institutional and technological innovation.

In the next pages follows a description of the main features and democracy promoting tools that Vouliwatch offers to its users:

Public questioning (“Ask your MP/MEP”):



In a moderated platform, citizens can publicly ask

questions and receive public replies by MP’s and MEP’s. To prevent misuse of the platform, all citizen questions and politicians’ answers are crosschecked according to a published code of conduct that is aligned with the principles of open government ethics.

Votewatch: This application allows users to keep an eye on the voting behaviour of each MP while



informing the public on the details and background information of the legislation put forward for voting.





“Crowdsourcing legislation” and parliamentary control (“Share ideas, experiences and make proposals”):

Citizens can publicize their experiences, ideas or proposals



either at the national or at the local level. The community of users can comment and rate them. A Google map application depicts all submitted data with the option of filtering based on different criteria (location, subject categories such as e.g. education, tourism, etc.). Every month all submitted data is summarized in a report and sent to all MPs and MEPs by our team, as food for thought and

action. In case relevant parliamentary action is taken by MP’s/MEP’s due to a citizen request or a public claim, Vouliwatch publishes and promotes reactions.

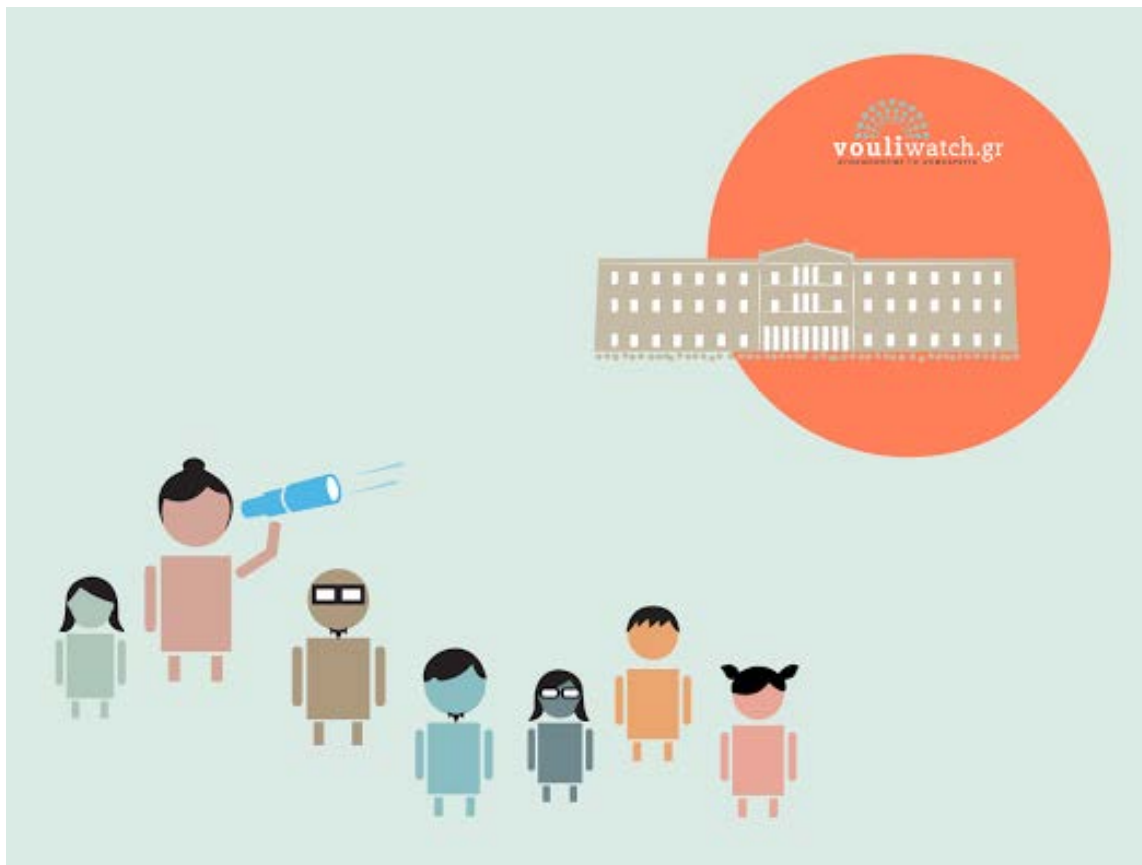
“Policy Monitor” (“compare party positions”): The Policy Monitor is a digital tool which allows our users to learn about and compare what the main political parties positions are on given issues.



It also gives them the opportunity to comment on these positions and suggest to political parties different approaches.



“The Observatory”: The Observatory is Vouliwatch’s parliamentary news section with daily updates on the latest developments in Parliament from the organisation’s own parliamentary correspondent.





THE VOULIWATCH TEAM

At present the Vouliwatch team is composed by three full time and three part time members as well as two volunteers.



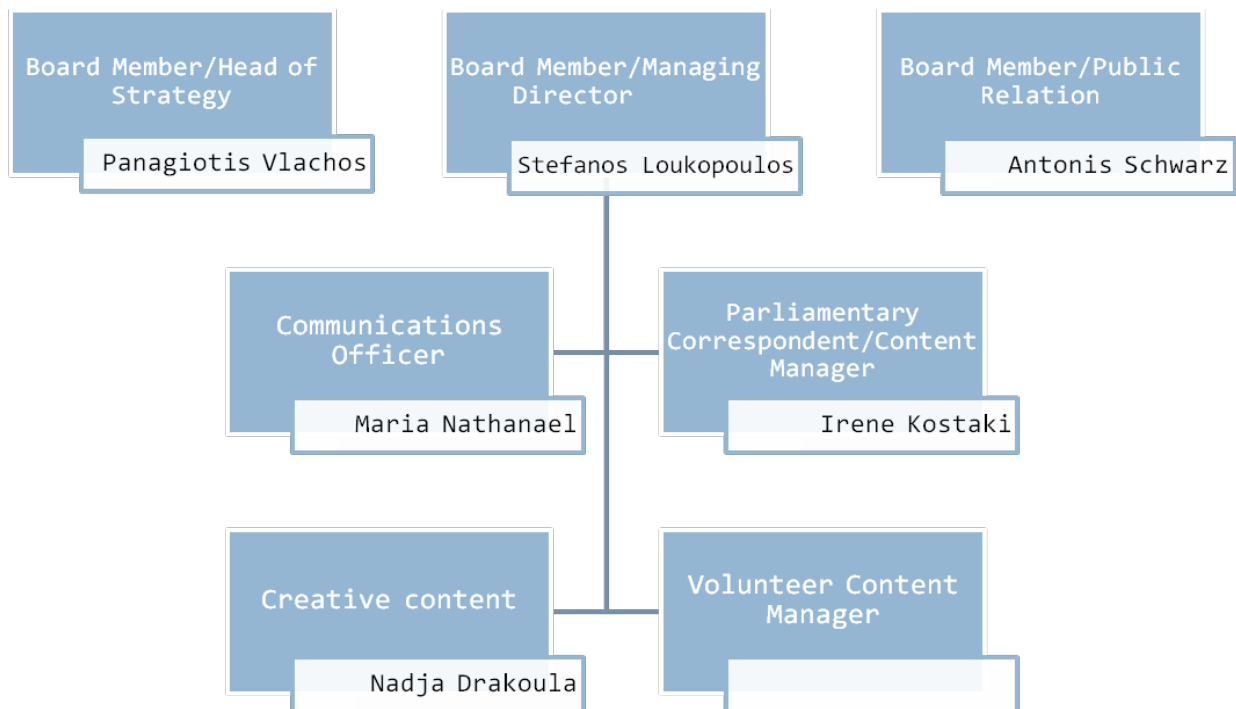
From left to right: Antonis Schwarz, Stefanos Loukopoulos, Nadja Drakoula, Maria Nathanael, Panagiotis Vlachos and Irene Kostaki.





The organisation's structure is as follows:

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The Vouliwatch team in action!





ACTIVITIES REPORT

1. The Vouliwatch website

Designing, setting up and launching the Vouliwatch digital platform was an achievement in itself given the complexity and magnitude of the task at hand. The organisation's website is its main tool and most valued "possession" as it constitutes a melange of innovative and technologically ground breaking digital applications, invaluable parliamentary data, MPs statements, voting records and crowd sourced ideas. The sheer volume of information and data accumulated over the last year is indeed impressive and of great importance as it can over the years provide an invaluable free source of information (data archive) both for citizens and journalists alike. For this purpose Vouliwatch has created online archives (**figure 1**) of past parliamentary periods which include all the aforementioned data and information readily available.

It is also important to note that Vouliwatch's platform is the first website in Greece of its kind and its overall outlook, design and navigation menu is admittedly superior to the official Greek Parliament website.





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The development, design and maintenance of the platform are performed by Crowdpolicy, a company that empowers organizations to discover and utilize tacit knowledge by providing tools and consultancy for the implementation of procedures' redesigning. It provides crowd-sourcing services for procedures' development and redesigning for Organizations and Governmental institutions.

Figure1: View of Vouliwatch's archive section

Αρχική » Αρχείο ΙΕ' Κοινοβουλευτική Περίοδος »

Σύνθετη αναζήτηση αρχείου

Κόμμα

- Όλα τα κόμματα
- Ανεξάρτητοι
- Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες
- Δημοκρατική Αριστερά
- Δράση
- Ελιά - Δημοκρατική Παράταξη
- Ένωση για την Πατρίδα και τον Λαό
- Η Κοινωνία Πρώτα
- Κ.Κ.Ε
- Λαϊκός Ορθόδοξος Συναγερμός
- Λαϊκός Σύνδεσμος - Χρυσή Αυγή
- Ν.Δ.
- Π.Α.Σ.Ο.Κ.
- Πράσινοι
- Συμφωνία για τη Νέα Ελλάδα
- ΣΥΡΙΖΑ
- Το Ποτάμι
- Χριστιανοδημοκρατικό Κόμμα Ελλάδος

Περιφέρεια

Όλες οι περιφέρειες

Επιλογή κοινοβουλευτικής περιόδου

Ευρωβουλή 2014-2019

ΙΕ' (17/06/2012 - 31/12/2014)

ΙΣΤ' (05/02/2015 -)

Search





2.Vouliwatch in the Elections

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Since launching Vouliwatch, in a space of less than a year Greece underwent three major elections (European Parliament elections, President of the Hellenic Republic elections, National elections). Undoubtedly these gave our organisation a tremendous opportunity which - considering the fact that Vouliwatch was still making its first steps at the time - was taken advantage of to the best possible extent.

European Parliament elections:

The European Parliament elections took place just two months following the launch of Vouliwatch. Given that the platform hosts profiles of Members of European Parliament (MEPs) as well, the public's interest in our project and therefore its overall visibility increased exponentially. This resulted in significant media coverage as well as in an increased response rate on the part of MEPs. Additionally prior to the election date Vouliwatch successfully organized an open political discussion where MEP candidates were invited to debate on the future of Europe in front of an audience who had the chance to actively take part in the discussion and question as well as challenge their candidates.



President of the Hellenic Republic elections:

The second major political event which took place during this first year was the election of the President of the Hellenic Republic. Although according to the Greek constitution it is the Parliament that is charged with electing the President of the Republic, the public's interest was high as a failure to reach a majority vote in favor of the candidate proposed by the government would inevitably lead to national elections.



On this occasion Vouliwatch acted swiftly and in cooperation with the independent media outlet "Thepressproject.gr" created a gamified application which



allowed its users to see the voting intentions of each Member of Parliament by hovering their mouse over their pictures which in turn were linked to their profiles on Vouliwatch. This tool was published on the website of the *Press Project* and it resulted in a surge of hits for our website including a significant widening of our audience and users.

National Elections:

Needless to say that the National Elections held in January 2015 were both the biggest challenge and opportunity presented to our team since the start of our activities. Given their prematurity - they took place 2 years ahead of schedule - the Vouliwatch team had to act swiftly and despite the short notice the results of our efforts were outstanding. Knowing the importance of the opportunity presented to us, Vouliwatch devised and launched two novel digital applications which aimed at serving as pre-elections tools: the *Policy Monitor* and the *Candidate Watch*.





The **Policy Monitor** - which with minor alterations is now a permanent feature of the platform - is a digital tool that allows users to inform themselves, compare and contrast political party positions on a series of topical issues (i.e. education, unemployment).

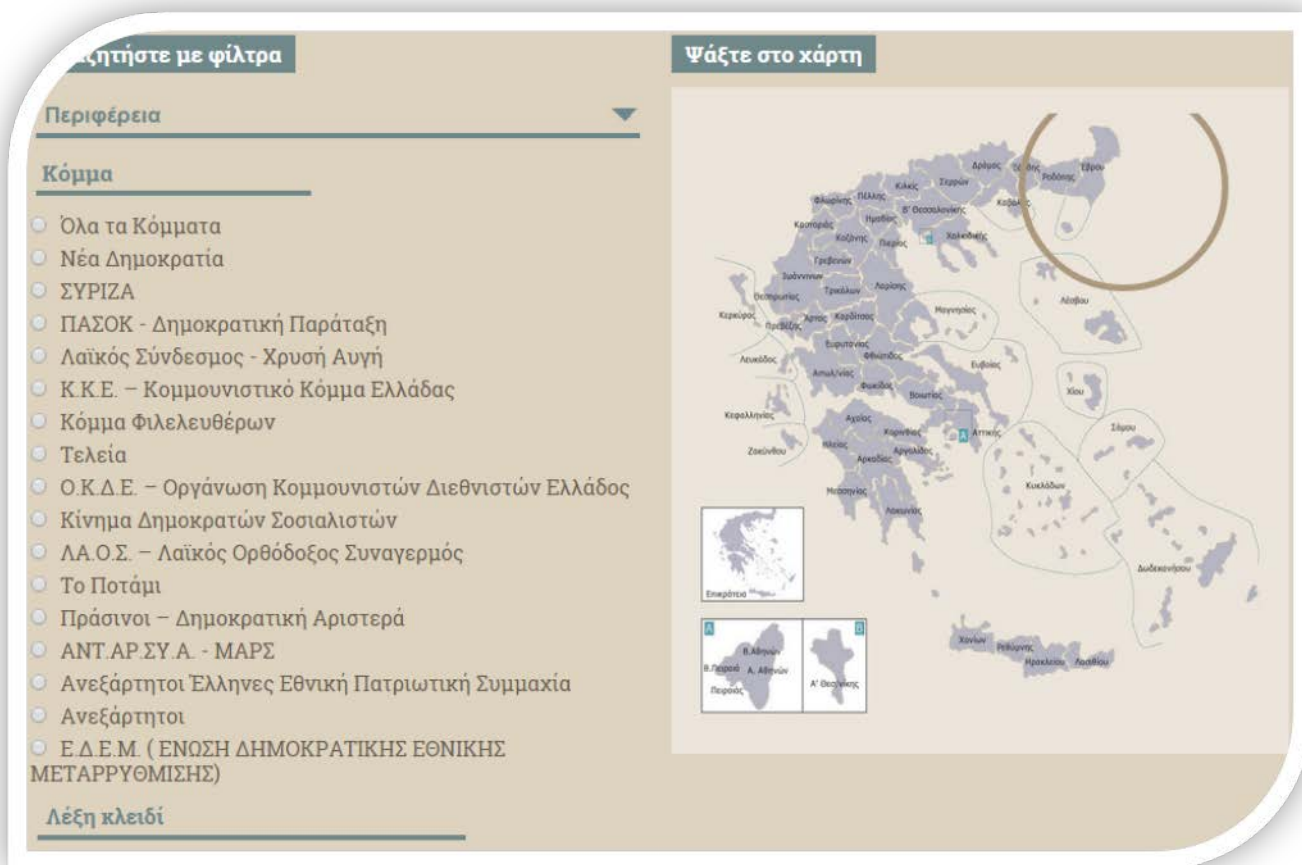
The screenshot shows the 'policymonitor' interface. At the top left, there are three buttons: 'Αγκρίνε', 'Σχολιάσε', and 'Αξιολόγησε'. The main title 'policymonitor' is in a large, bold font, with 'Crowdpolicy technology' underneath. Below the title is a quote: 'Για πρώτη φορά, δείτε συγκριτικά τις θέσεις των κομμάτων. Σχολιάστε, προτείνετε, διαδώστε.' To the right of the title are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and a 'Στατιστικά' button. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled '1. Επιλέξτε τα κόμματα και τις θεματικές που θέλετε να συγκρίνετε.' and contains a list of political parties with checkboxes: ΣΥΡΙΖΑ, ΝΔ, ΧΡΥΣΗ ΑΥΓΗ, ΠΟΤΑΜΙ, ΚΚΕ, ΑΝΕΛ, ΠΑΣΟΚ. The right column is titled 'Τελευταία Σχόλια - Προτάσεις' and contains three entries with user avatars, names, and dates. Below the party list is a second section titled '2. Συγκρίνετε και σχολιάστε τις θέσεις των κομμάτων' with a list of policy topics: Οικονομία, Ανάπτυξη, Κράτος & Πολιτικό Σύστημα, Κοινωνική Πολιτική, Δικαιοσύνη & Ανθρώπινα Δικ., Εκπαίδευση, Αγροτική Πολιτική, Περιβάλλον και Αειφορία, Ενέργεια, Πολιτισμός / Αθλητισμός, Εξωτερική Πολιτική. At the bottom left, there is a button that says 'Κάντε τη δική σας πρόταση'.

View of the home page of the Policy Monitor.





The **Candidate Watch** application, on the other hand, involved the display of the complete profiles of MP candidates running for elections through a pre structured curriculum vitae form that the candidates were asked to complete. Additionally, citizens were able to post questions on the profiles of their candidates.



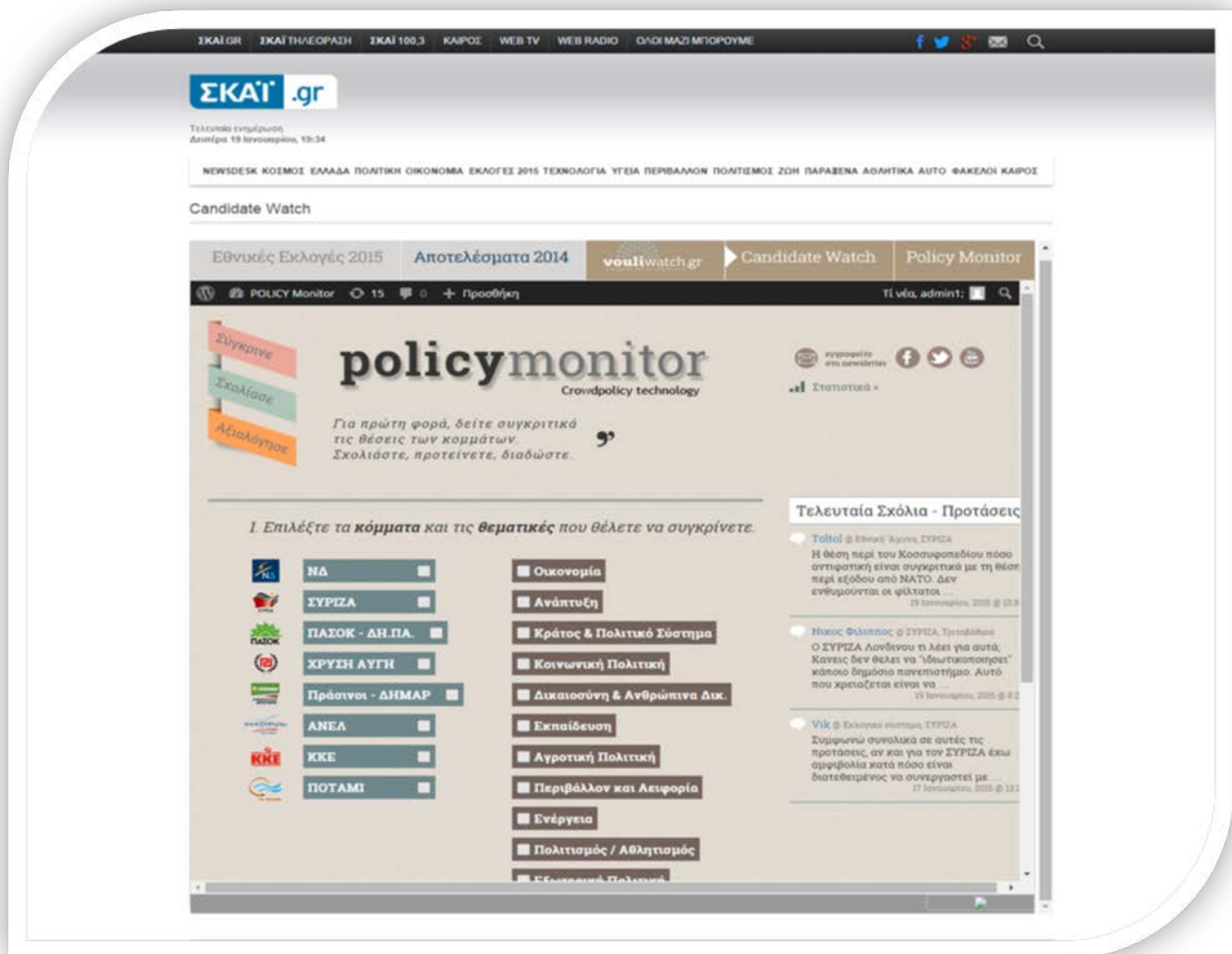
View of the Candidate Watch's search menu.





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The success of the aforementioned elections tools, that attracted a total of **20,734 unique visitors** in a period of **17 days**, was partly also due to the fact that Vouliwatch established media partnership with major news outlets, which in turn featured the applications on their own websites.



View of the Policy Monitor as featured on the website of Skai.gr





3. Media outreach and exposure




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The public's heightened interest in politics combined with the innovative character of Vouliwatch resulted in our project enjoying a great deal of media attention. Over the last year our team has given numerous interviews on local and international media, printed and digital press as well as TV and radio. Namely Vouliwatch was featured **11** times on TV, **5** times on radio and **22** times in the press. Below follows a complete list of all media appearances.



Stefanos Loukopoulos & Nadja Drakoula presenting Vouliwatch on SKAI TV.









Name of medium	Type	National/International/Local
	Digital Press	National
	Digital Press	National
	Printed Press	National
	Printed Press	National
	e-zine	National



	Digital Press	International
	Printed Press	National
	Digital Press	International
	Printed Press	National
	Printed Press	National





	E-zine	National
	Digital Press	National
	E-zine	National
	Printed Press	National
	E-zine	National
	E-zine	National



	Printed Press	National
	Printed Press	National
	Digital Press	National
	Digital Press	France
	E-zine	International
	E-zine	National





	TV	National
	TV	National
	TV	National
	TV	National
	TV	National
	TV	National



	TV	National
	Web TV	USA
	Web TV	National
	Web TV	National
	TV	Local



	Radio	National
	Radio	Local
	Web Radio	National
	Web Radio	National



Antonis Schwarz & Stefanos Loukopoulos presenting Vouliwatch on Public TV



Stefanos Loukopoulos & Panagiotis Vlachos presenting Vouliwatch on Parliament TV





4. Organized Events

During this first year Vouliwatch organized a series of events including promotional presentations, political labs, open discussions and workshops.

Pilot Vouliwatch presentation:

On the 6th of February 2014 just a month ahead of the official launch of the website, our team organized a private presentation of Vouliwatch in front of an audience of journalists, academics and members of civil society. The purpose of this event was to collect feedback and advice from the audience concerning the digital applications of the project as well as on the overall scope and potential of Vouliwatch.





Vouliwatch Presentation to Members of Parliament:

On the 18th of February 2014, our team hosted an exclusive presentation of Vouliwatch to Members of Parliament and their assistants in an effort to acquaint them with the platform and its functions as well as with the overall goals and aspirations of the organisation. Out of a total of three hundred (300) Members of Parliament, fifty (50) of them were present on this occasion. The event presented an excellent opportunity for both parties to establish a first contact, exchange ideas and build trust.



*Panagiotis Vlachos, Stefanos Loukopoulos & George Karamanolis
(CrowdPolicy) presenting Vouliwatch.*





Vouliwatch's 1st open political discussion:

Having in mind that Vouliwatch needed both a strong online as well as an offline presence, our team introduced in its broader set of activities the organisation of live participatory events. On the 19th of May 2014, Vouliwatch hosted its first political debate which focused on the upcoming European Parliament elections and in particular on the issue of the democratic deficit within the European institutions. The main speakers were MEP candidates from all major parties who, after their initial positioning, had the chance to interact with and answer questions from the audience. The event in question resulted in a very fruitful and long discussion with both speakers and guests participating actively in the debate.



Vouliwatch's 2nd open political discussion:

On the 21st of July 2014 Vouliwatch organised its second political discussion focusing on a highly controversial and unpopular legislation brought into parliament concerning the potential privatisation and inclusion in the urban planning of the Greek shore line and beaches. The panel of speakers included representatives of environmental groups, academics and MPs from the two major political parties. Once more, the audience had the chance to participate actively in the discussion and question their elected representatives as well as the experts in the panel.





Vouliwatch's NGO workshop "United we Ask":

On the 9th of March 2015, Vouliwatch implemented an ambitious yet innovative concept which aimed both at fostering a culture of cooperation between Greek civil society organisations as well as introducing Vouliwatch as a reliable ally in their efforts to advance their agendas in Parliament.

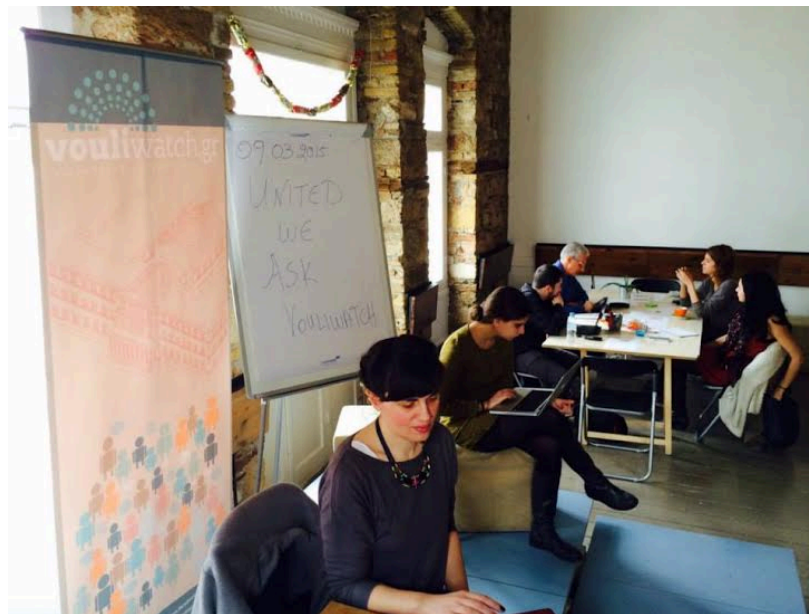


View of the workshop.





A workshop titled “United We Ask!” was organized where representatives from 25 NGOs were divided into working groups according to their field of action. They were then asked to discuss and jointly agree on specific common issues that they wished to bring to the attention of Members of Parliament. Once these were determined each group would collectively send their proposals/questions to Members of Parliament through Vouliwatch’s platform. The working groups in question were the following: Start-ups and Economy, Open Governance, Environment, Human Rights, Humanitarian Aid, Constitutional Reform, Stop TTIP.



The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for different NGOs to learn about each other’s work, exchange best practices and pave the way for future cooperation. The

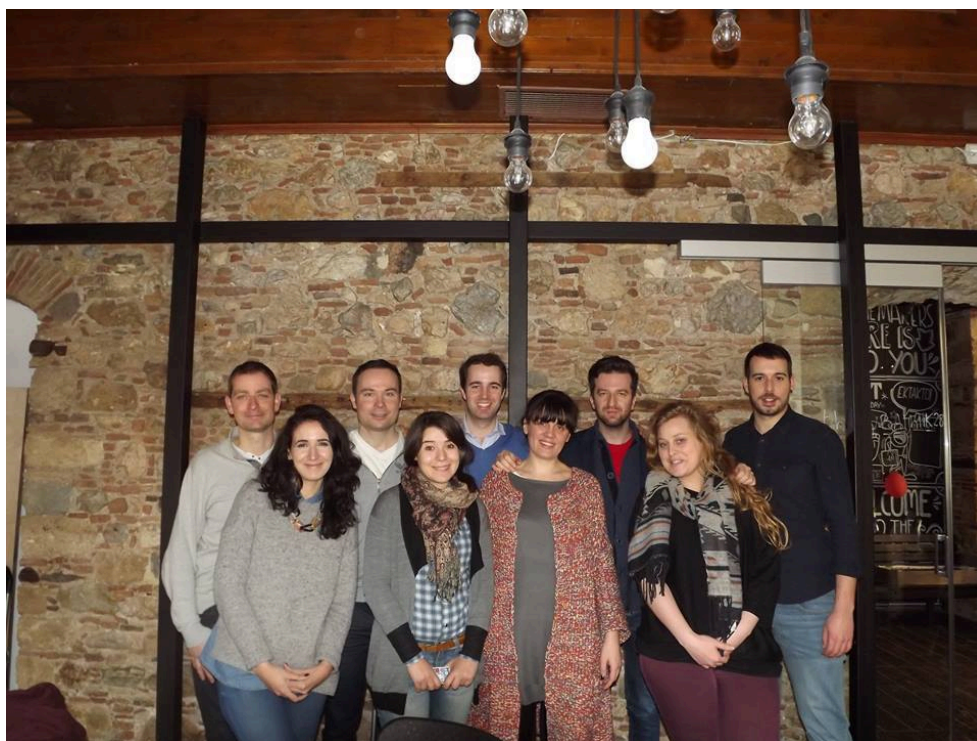




success of this event was such that the participants asked Vouliwatch to establish the workshop as a yearly event.

ParliamentWatch international meeting in Athens:

Among the goals of Vouliwatch is to build strong partnerships and linkages with similar parliamentary monitoring organisations throughout the world. Having this in mind Vouliwatch took the initiative to bring together for the first time Parliament Watch organisations from different countries, namely **Germany, France, Morocco, Tunisia** and **Yemen**. The purpose of this meeting which was



The participants of the 1st Parliament Watch Network meeting





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held in Athens from the 6th to the 8th of March 2015 was to establish strong links between the different organizations which could lead to transnational cooperation projects, exchange best practices and solutions to common bottle necks. Additionally, the participants agreed to establish an international network whose main purpose will be to facilitate the spread of the parliament watch model in different countries as well as to foster broader cooperation activities among its members. To this day, the members of the “ParliamentWatch Network” are: Vouliwatch (Greece), [Al Bawsala](#) (Tunisia), [Abgeordnetenwatch](#) (Germany), [Nouabook](#) (Morocco), [Yemen Polling Center](#) (Yemen), [Questionnezvoselus](#) (France), [Politikercheck](#) (Luxembourg) and [Meinparlament](#) (Austria).



Exchanging best practices during the 1st Parliament Watch Network meeting





4. Partnerships

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Partnership building is viewed by Vouliwatch as an essential element for the growth and sustainability of our organization. During this first year Vouliwatch formed partnerships with like-minded democracy and openness promoting organisations both within and outside Greece.

Moreover it joined important international networks often being the sole representative from Greece. Vouliwatch is now a member of the [“United Nations Coalition Against Corruption”](#) (UNCAC), a co-signatory of the [Declaration for Parliamentary Openness](#), a member of [“Opening Parliament”](#) and is a committee member of the [“Open Government Partnership”](#) for Greece.

Moreover it has established close ties with the Madrid based NGO [“Access Info!”](#) and a series of parliamentary monitoring organisations from around the world (see previous section).





Our Partners:





OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

This part of the report attempts to quantify and measure the impact of Vouliwatch's activities during this first year. All metrics and analytics presented here refer to a twelve month period (16/03/2014 - 16/03/2015).

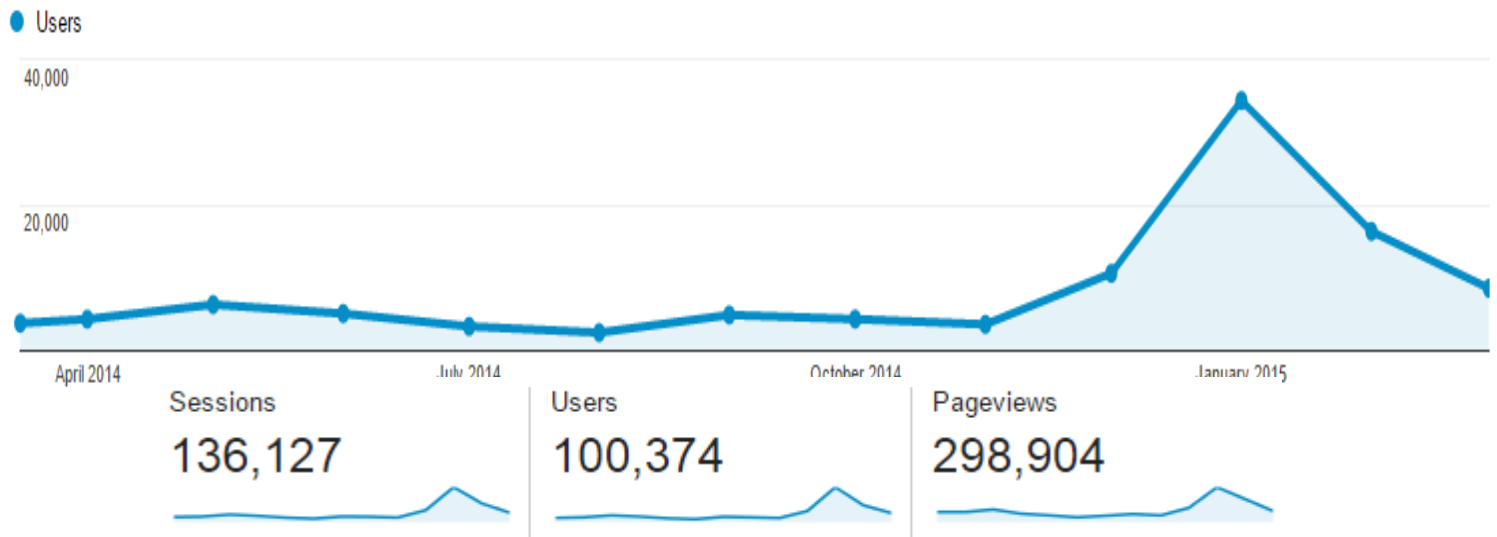
Website Analytics

The Vouliwatch website received a total of **100,347 unique visitors**, **136,127 sessions** and **298,904 page views**. These figures are very encouraging as they reflect the rising popularity of Vouliwatch which began to soar during the national elections in January 2015.

Overview

Users ▾ vs. [Select a metric](#)

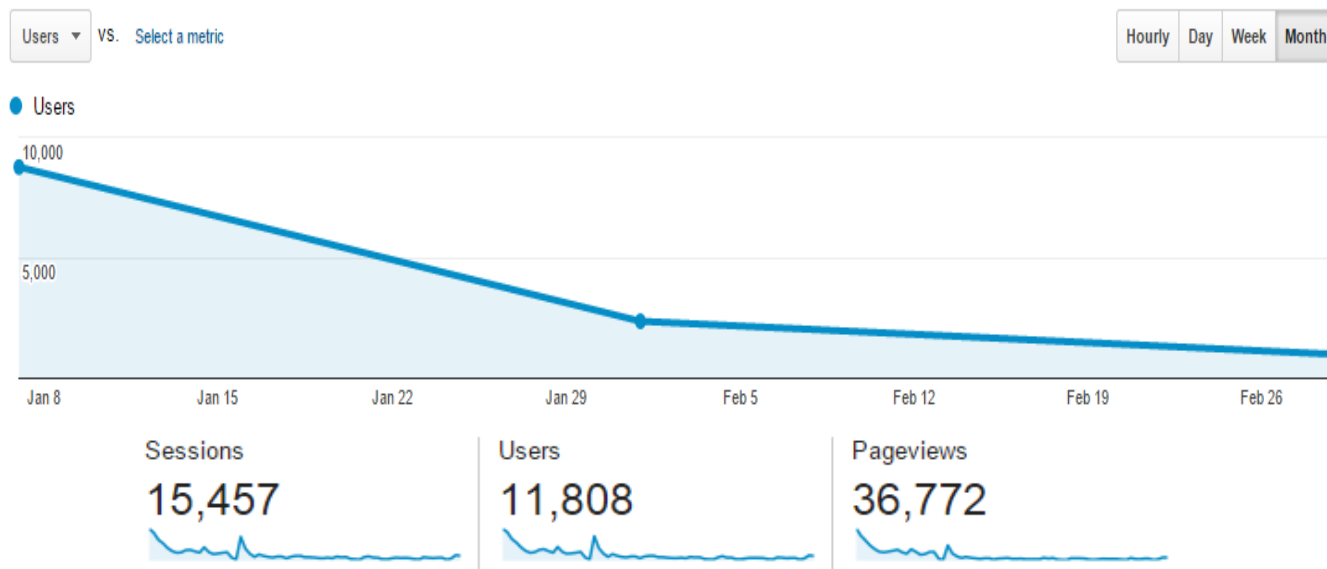
Hourly Day Week **Month**



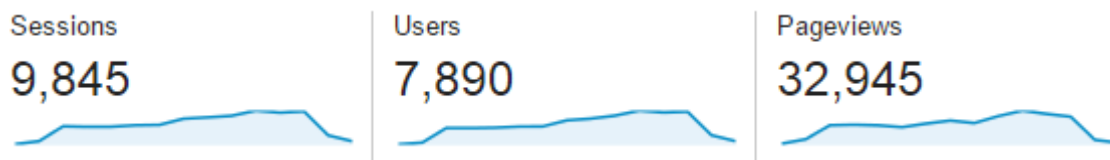


During the national elections period Vouliwatch launched two additional micro-sites - **Policy Monitor** and **Candidate Watch** - which despite their short life span managed to attract a considerable number of visitors.

The **Policy Monitor** received a total of **11,808** unique visitors from January the 8th (launch date) to March the 16th 2015.



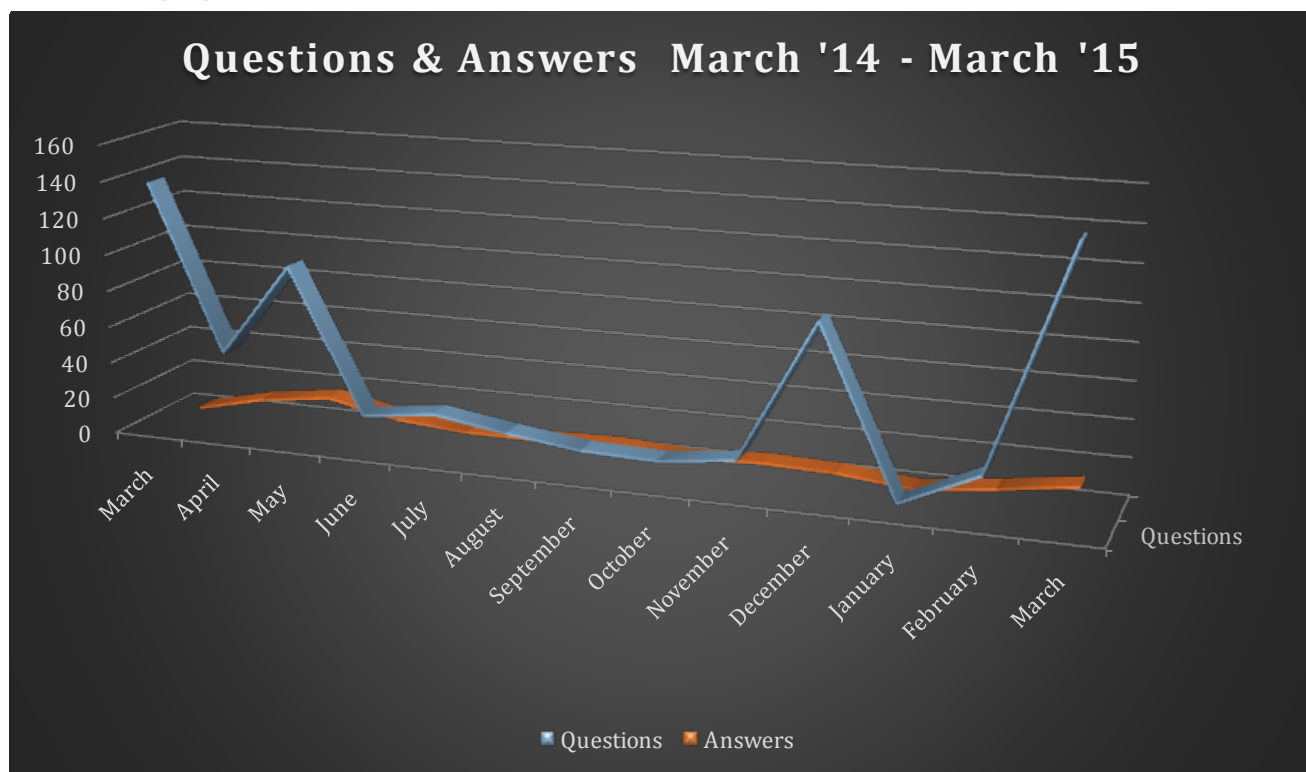
While the **Candidate Watch**, which had a life span of 14 days managed to attract **7,890** unique visitors.





User engagement

In the course of this first year Vouliwatch received a total of **672** questions from citizens directed to MPs and MEPs. Given the prevailing societal disillusionment with the political system as well as the lack of confidence towards elected representatives spurred by unpopular austerity measures and a long history of nepotism and corruption, the total number of questions can be viewed as a positive one. On the other hand the number of answers (**74**) clearly indicates that parliamentarians were hesitant to engage with the platform despite Vouliwatch's repeated

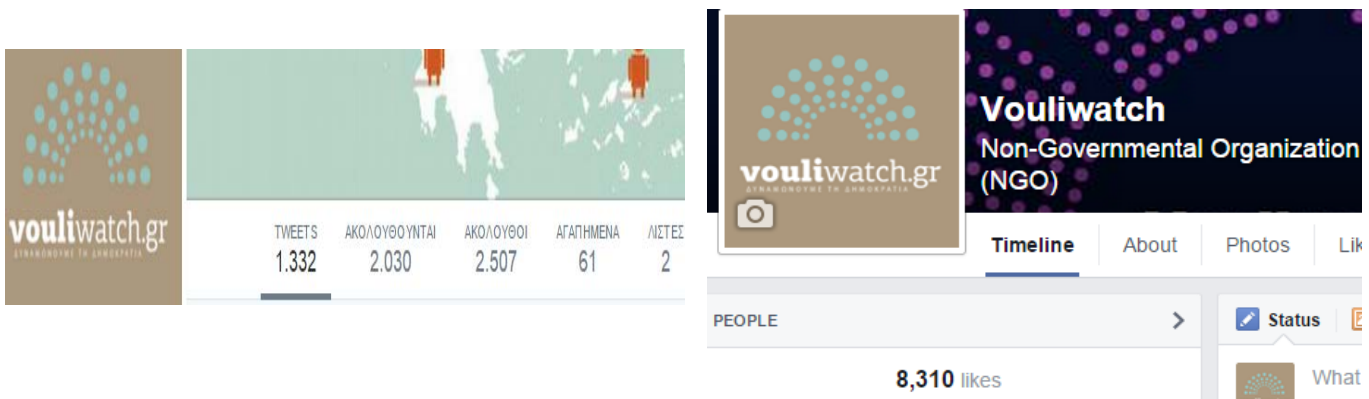




efforts. This could be attributed to a number of factors such as the outdated prevailing political culture which impedes them from conceptualizing the potential added value that participatory and transparency promoting digital technology could bring to their work, or the simple fact that they were hesitant to engage with a newly established organization. It is encouraging however to note that following the recent elections and the rise in popularity of Vouliwatch the percentage of the response rate has increased.

In addition to the questions and answers, Vouliwatch has so far been host to **56 crowdsourced ideas and proposals**, has **1,048 registered users** on its platform and **2,482 newsletter subscribers**.

As far as its social media impact during this first year, Vouliwatch's Facebook page received **8,310 likes** while it attracted **2,507 Twitter followers**.





FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Vouliwatch is a non for profit organization and as such its main sources of funding derive from private donations, crowdfunding campaigns and grants. Since the start of our endeavor Vouliwatch's team has put in a great deal of pro-bono work and with the invaluable help and support of our network of volunteers managed to keep the organization running. As with most non for profits funding is and will be a challenge, however with its continuous rise in popularity, its professionalism and proved track record of efficiency we are confident that more donors, foundations and funded projects will provide enough resources for the project to grow even further. It is important to note at this point that it is crucial for our organization to maintain its non-partisan character, therefore our team is committed to not receiving donations and grants from political parties, government agencies and organizations /foundations directly linked to political parties both within and outside Greece.

This section of the report will provide a financial overview of Vouliwatch over the past twelve months, specifically it will present our revenue and expenses by category.





Table of Expenses

CATEGORY/TYPE	AMMOUNT
Staff Salaries & benefits	38,303
Taxes	948.33
Accounting services	960
Advertising	1,776
Events organization	529
Website design-development-maintenance & hosting	18,680
Policy Monitor & Candidate Watch development	16,267.04
TOTAL	77,463.37

Table of revenues

SOURCE	AMMOUNT
Crowd funding campaign	12,112
Grants from foundations & projects	66,900.52
Individual donations	2,450.85
TOTAL	77,571.67





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VOULIWATCH

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