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Hellenic Ministry of Education Adopts Innovative Teachers Network

Greece

Customer Profile

The Educational Portal Office of the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing, operating, and maintaining the country's educational portal, which services 150,000 teachers nationwide.

Situation

The existing portal was extremely limited in functionality, hampering efforts to share and disseminate information.

Solution

The Hellenic Ministry of Education worked with Microsoft to develop an Innovative Teachers Network (ITN) portal solution.

Benefits

- More than 3,000 teaching resources available to educators through the portal alone
- 30,000 unique visitors a month—up from just a few hundred
- Gained a robust portal solution

“The new platform provides teachers—and visitors too—with a simple interface that is easy to use. Teachers can easily search for the content they prefer and at the same time, they can upload their own work using this simple yet powerful tool.”

—Aris Louvris, Head, Educational Portal Office of the Hellenic Ministry of Education

The Hellenic Ministry of Education had already deployed a teacher's portal, but a lack of functionality limited its usefulness. By partnering with Microsoft® Partners in Learning, Greece deployed a new Innovative Teachers Network (ITN) portal using both new and existing content.

Situation



The Hellenic Ministry of Education was well aware of the importance of providing more than 150,000 teachers around the country with an educational portal. As part of an overall strategy, the Ministry developed the Educational Portal Office, which was tasked with creating, developing, and deploying a portal. After considerable time and research, the department launched a portal where teachers could share lesson plans and other educational content. But as the site became more popular—with more teachers using it and requesting more features—it quickly became obvious that the platform was not meeting demands.

With the old platform, the portal lacked automated tools. As a result, content was hard to update, and people could not access information quickly and easily. For instance, any time teachers wanted to upload information, they had to send it to the portal office for the administration staff to approve and publish.

It was clear that Greece needed a new solution. “The Ministry of Education

“This was truly a team effort. They had the content, and we provided the platform.”

—Panagiotis Adamos, Program Manager, Microsoft

knew exactly what it wanted,” explains Panagiotis Adamos, Microsoft Program Manager for Greece, “but it needed a more dynamic platform.”

Solution

In December 2005, the Hellenic Ministry of Education teamed up with Microsoft Partners in Learning to create an Innovative Teachers Network (ITN). Microsoft deployed the ITN and trained six people in the Educational Portal Office on content management. During this time, the Educational Portal Office focused on localizing content and migrating existing information from the old solution. The Ministry of Education also involved The Pedagogical Institute, an independent organization responsible for certifying all education content that reaches Greek public schools. “This was truly a team effort,” notes Adamos. “They had the content, and we provided the right platform.”

The new ITN was launched in February 2007. Teachers can now upload and access lesson plans, virtual classroom tours, and other educational support materials directly into the portal, without having to send it through the administration staff first. In addition, they can access links to articles, announcements, news, conferences, and more from one centralized location.

Benefits

While Greece already had much of the content and structure required for a successful portal, it did not have the correct IT infrastructure to disseminate information broadly. By partnering with Microsoft, the Hellenic Ministry of Education could offer the information teachers need in a solution that is easy to use. As Andreas Karamanos, former Secretary General for the Ministry of Education, said, “Technology should be considered a tool for the improvement of the educational and learning process, not an end objective in itself.”

A new, feature-rich platform

The previous portal platform was functional on a smaller scale, but its lack of automated tools severely limited the rate at which the solution could grow. And because one of the major thrusts of the project is to connect teachers around the country, the Ministry recognized that it needed a better solution—the ITN from Microsoft filled that need.

Now, teachers can collaborate more effectively, in large part because its automated toolset removes the administrative burden from the Educational Portal Office. As a result, more content is available more quickly. For example, 3,000 different resources are now available for various subjects in K–12 classrooms. This number is expected to grow exponentially because the approval and posting bottleneck has been removed. “The new platform provides teachers—and visitors too—with a simple interface that is easy to use,” says Aris Louvris, Head of the Educational Portal Office for the Hellenic Ministry of Education. “Teachers can easily search for the content they prefer and at the same time they are able to upload their own work using this simple yet powerful tool.”

Immediate results

After deploying the ITN, the Educational Portal Office saw an almost instantaneous spike in users. Currently more than 30,000 unique visitors use the portal monthly. Considering that Greece has more than 150,000 teachers

who could benefit from accessing the ITN, the portal's popularity and importance is clear.

Fast, simple review processes

The Pedagogical Institute reviews and certifies all content uploaded into the ITN, such as lesson plans or virtual classroom tours. With the ITN, the review process is simple because it uses workflows built in to Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server, which forms the basis of the ITN. Efi Grousouzakou, an administrator for the Educational Portal Office, notes that information is not only available more quickly, but the quality has improved because the new platform takes care of most of the administrative needs. "Day-to-day management and content evaluation is so much easier than it was before," she explains. "Using lists and libraries, we can approve and categorize content easily."

For more information
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