

Understand IT

Project number: 2010-1-NO1-LEO05-01839

WP1

Deliverable 1.3 eTutors Portal Facts Sheet



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Executive Summary

Main Products / Features of the eTutors Portal Project

- eTutors Portal providing support of the e-learning Community of Tutors
- Portal of learning resources with 12 categories (Pedagogy, Technology, Standards, Tools and Delivery, Networks, Informal, Quality and Cost, Courses, Work based, Blended, Knowledge Management, Communities) of contents focused to give effective support on the trainers and eTutors knowledge needs concerning eLearning subjects
- Search and advanced search tools, including external contents using the Google SOAP Search API service

Project Scenario (a short story about a potential target group member using project results)

a) The e-learning lab of a school looks for a kind of e-learning encyclopedia to support tutors and technical experts in their daily work. As Google does not produce search results efficient enough the eTutors Portal is provided to allow for more efficient search on topics related to the field of e-learning

Lesson learned - for UnderstandIT

- Making project results depending on freely available 3rd party services such as the Google SOAP Search API service can jeopardize the success and sustainability of a whole project – i.e. either such 3rd party services can be bought or licensed or they should not be used for critical project features; or project results should be based on standards, which avoid dependency from one party
- Contents in dynamic areas such as E-learning can be outdated soon – i.e. rather invest in methodology than in contents

Project Description

Short description of the eTutors PORTAL Project

The currently existing eTutors PORTAL is available online at: <http://www.etutors-portal.net>.

The aim of the eTutors PORTAL project was to disseminate of the results of the E-Tutors TRANSNET Project - Nr. P/02/B/F/NT-125586, developed in 2003 and 2004 and which allowed the development of a Portal with a knowledge base of contents on only the 3 main areas: Pedagogical, Technological and Standards of e-learning and which is for to have a reference to support the community of Tutors and Trainers of e-learning systems, contributing to the improvement of their competences in the use of training systems, with the application of e-learning methodologies in the specific sectors of Metallurgy and Metalwork, Electronics and Management area in each of the Partners countries of the previous Project (Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Czech Republic and Romania) and in the new Partners countries: Hungary, Lithuania, Sweden and Greece.

So, the main characteristics of the **eTutors PORTAL Project** were the following:

- It **started on 1/10/2005** and has **finished on 31/12/2007**;
- The Partnership involved **15 Partners** from **12 European Countries**;
- It was a **dissemination Project** of the Networks **eTutors TRANSNET** Project;
- Were developed a set of tools, incorporated on the new adapted portal, to be used by the target-users for in-practice etutors community. But the main developed tool, based on the Google SOAP Search API service, are nowadays not available;;
- In terms of contents to the target-users, from the existing initial 3 areas it was expanded and passed to exist 12 Portal contents for Training of Trainers and Tutors on e-learning.

For further description, You may also consult the initial produced file with the eTutors PORTAL facts sheets as presented during the Kick off meeting (M1) on the following file: [WP1 - Facts Sheets of eTutors PORTAL - v02.pdf](#)

Outcomes

The project developed a new portal, with more powerful tools to give better support to the community of eTutors.

But after the end of eTutors PORTAL Project, so after **31/12/2007**, the eTutors PORTAL contents become to be progressively outdated, mainly because the Partnership stopped to invest on it mostly because did not resolved, in a satisfactory way, the continuity of working human resources to guarantee the continuous contents updating Portal, by not defining any Business model, and agreements between Partners, to guarantee the needed human resources attached to the Portal.

To leveraging the current **eTutors PORTAL structure and contents**, in order to make the **eTutors PORTAL** useful to the **UNDERSTAND IT Project**, it will be necessary to make some key-issues points:

1. Concerning Supported languages:

- a. There are 2 new languages to be supported on the eTutors PORTAL:
 - i. Norwegian
 - ii. Danish.
- b. **On the CMS system of eTutors PORTAL, it is easy to make available the automatic support for these 2 new languages**, in what is concerning the **U.I. (User Interface)** provided to the users, with no expressive amount of work needed to implement it.
- c. **However things are different concerning the portal Language contents, to be presented on these 2 new Portal languages:** It will be needed the definition of Language Coordinators users to be attached to each one new Portal language, in order to guarantee proper translated contents, or language/region specific contents available from those 2 new Portal languages.
- d. But we have one solution that could avoid the excessive working load, or even eliminate such need that will fall back to the Language Coordinators users, as referred below.

2. Concerning the 12 existing Contents Categories:

- a. Does those 12 categories still are enough to cover all the supporting needs of the nowadays trainers and eTutors? Or do we need to revise, by adjusting, creating or removing categories?
- b. Currently Human resources are needed, **by the existing working model available on the CMS system of the eTutors PORTAL** to dealing with the maintenance of the contents in terms of its availability, its updating and relevancy and its utility to give real and added-valuable help support to the Portal target users.

3. Concerning the usability of the **Google SOAP Search API service**, since end of September 2009 this service was finished by Google^[1].

So this makes the existing working model available on the CMS system of the eTutors PORTAL completely useless, creating this way a problem to the usability of the eTutors PORTAL by the Understand IT Project.

[1] The Google SOAP Search API service was finished. See for more details from the official Google Code blog at <http://googlecode.blogspot.com/2009/08/well-earned-retirement-for-soap-search.html>.

Relevant for Understand IT

To be used in Understand IT: As the current eTutors PORTAL is, We don't think that it could be used in Understand IT, since it will require a lot of adaptations to be useful to be used by the UnderstandIT Project.

So, nowadays, the eTutors PORTAL are outdated in terms of its contents and on its capacity, as it is, on being useful to support the Understand IT target-users.

Nevertheless to deal with the points of previous point focused, the following solution could be expressed by the following points:

1. In order to go into the desired direction of providing a real added-value to the eTutors PORTAL target users, which are teachers, trainers and e-Trainers, we are considering to migrate the eTutors PORTAL from a ZOPE/Plone based Web Server/CMS application to a Moodle Platform based system. This will bring as benefit the possibility to pass to accommodate not only useful contents to the target users, but also complete courses hosting service, namely the Portuguese VITAE courses.
2. **So what we are proposing is the creation of a network of Moodle platforms**, to be created among the Understand IT Project Partners, during the scope of execution of the Project, to begin with, in which each Partner Moodle platform will maintain and will be responsible to explore the VITAE Contents in one specific language domain.
3. Also, we propose to develop an alternative way of acquiring added-value contents, mostly by external links, automatically acquired using the new generation of Google Search API's, to be used inside any Moodle Platform, avoiding the need for overloading of work by the Language Coordinators users, by creating a service that will automatically feed the 12 current existing eTutors PORTAL Contents areas with high valued contents.