



Understand IT

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

UnderstandIT Community of Practice

Design and deployment of the CoP software.

(<http://understandit.di.uniroma1.it>)

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WP6 final report

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The web site required to implement the UnderstandIT CoP (Community of Practice) has been designed by following the planned activities:

- delivery to partners of a questionnaire to select the most important perceived requirements
- choice of an adequate open-source Social environment fulfilling most of the requirements
- installation and configuration of the UnderstandIT CoP site
- personalization, upgrades, fixes, extensions

Main Functionalities

The main functionalities requested were:

Social communities	Shared editing tool (à la Google docs)	Friends, groups, stream of interactions
Cooperative writing	RSS feed import	Friends: your network of contacts
Best practices	Antispam protection	Groups share common goals
Discussions	CoachMaster embedding	We use groups for the language communities
Blogging	FAQ manager	Friends share their activities
Embedding external content	Event calendar	Many many ways to communicate:
Tracking changes/hot topics	Social community	Synchronous: chat
New respect to Lisbon		Asynchronous: blog, page, comment, tweet, forum post ...

Platform chosen

As the main activities in the CoP are social, we have chosen the ELGG open-source social platform as the base on which to implement the CoP web site.

Access rights granularity

ELGG allows the user a very detailed granularity of access rights, in facts, a user can separately select the group of users with read access rights and the ones with writing rights:

Everybody	A Group	A subset of your friends
All registered users	All your friends	Private (you only)

Working together on documents

ELGG allows asynchronous shared editing of all contents, (depending on the writing access rights). To increase collaboration we have installed a synchronous shared editing plugin, based on the Etherpad open-source project. With the shared editing tool users can cooperate through:

- 1) normal (wiki) Pages + comments Revisions
- 2) shared (etherpad) Pages:
 - ⤴ synchronous editing (a' la Google docs)
 - ⤴ replay of all changes/revisions
 - ⤴ export/import to/from RTF/DOC/ODT/HTML/PDF
 - ⤴ Each editor's input is differently highlighted
 - ⤴ A small chat is available for coordination

Collecting best practices

The CoP has been configured to allow discussion in several language-specific communities, with a common discussion space in English:

- For local communities: in their language group
- For everybody: in the English community

How: through ELGG Groups, which keeps each linguistic community together by means of:

- ⤴ Group Blog posts
- ⤴ Group Pages
- ⤴ Group Bookmarks and files
- ⤴ Embed videos/podcasts and RSS feeds
- ⤴ Discussions
- ⤴ Comments to pages, files, media, bookmarks and blogs (async)
- ⤴ Forums (async)
- ⤴ Chat (sync)
- ⤴ (Hierarchical) Forums
- ⤴ A synchronous Chat has been configured for each language community
- ⤴ Including external content
- ⤴ Embedding uploaded content through the File tool
- ⤴ Embedding external content by reference through the Media tool (based on Embedly lib)
- ⤴ Sharing interesting resources through the Bookmarks tool
- ⤴ Import RSS feeds through the Feed tool (based on Simplepie lib)

Including external RSS feeds

External content can be quoted in the CoP either by sharing links or by embedding pages or RSS feeds, thus keeping the CoP updated respect to external changes.

The embedding of external RSS feeds has been also used to import the eTutor portal Content.

Keeping track of changes

CoP users are kept updated about the CoP activities either through automatic email notifications or by means of the CoP web interface, which collects in several principal pages the last changes happened to the user's main interests:

- ⤴ Automatic notification channels: email, the CoP site, RSS feeds, status tweets
- ⤴ Notification sources: Your content, Your friends, your groups
- ⤴ Page history: to discover last changes, to recover from bad behaviour

- ⤴ Notification of group activities
- ⤴ Keeping track of events
- ⤴ Focusing on hot topics
 - The Main Dashboard of last changes
 - Main CoP's page (fixed structure)
 - A Group's main page
 - Aggregate of group's last actions/pages
 - Your Personal Dashboard
 - Your preferred hot document sources
 - Your profile page: (Your shop window)
 - Contextual tag cloud
 - Hot tags at site, group or blog level

Language adaptation

The CoP interface is localized in all partners' languages (Lithuanian, Italian, Portuguese, English, German, Danish).

To allow cooperation among different language groups we have installed an automatic Google Translation-based tool on all pages

Because of the partner's small number we haven't planned the development of specific tools to support content translations. Partners have found the Google-translator tool sufficient to understand others' language posts.

Finding stuff

ELGG allows for both Full-text and tag-based searches

Synchronous communication

Synchronous communication is enabled through:

- ⤴ Cooperative document editing (etherpad)
- ⤴ A Chat for each language

Social tools and dissemination

To disseminate the CoP discussions towards external social networks (Twitter) a Twitter plugin has been installed to broadcast twits generated by the CoP's users.

Handling SPAM

To avoid spammers an ELGG plugin has been installed to make difficult to spammers to register:

- ⤴ Known spammers cannot register (if the username or email are found on stopforumspam.com)
- ⤴ SPAM can be reported to the administrator
- ⤴ The administrator removes the spammer (with and all its posts) and add its username and email to stopforumspam.com

Sharing files

A multiple file uploader plugin has been installed to make easier the upload of content to be shared among CoP participants.

Unexpected (positive) results

The CoP's web site has been found very stable, usable and flexible, for this reason we have decided to use it to deliver the Italian Vitae course, instead than the Moodle platform used by other partners.

The Italian Vitae course has worked flawlessly, and thus we think that ELGG has demonstrated its usefulness to deliver the Web 2.0 Vitae courses.

Delivering the Vitae course in the CoP

To deliver the Italian Vitae course in the CoP we have used the schema:

- ♣ an entrance questionnaire has been delivered as a form
- ♣ a group has been built to collect all course activities
 - Group blog for coordination and management
 - Group pages for lessons
 - Group files for documents/lecture notes
 - Group bookmarks linking external resources
- ♣ an exit questionnaire has been delivered

Technical Improvements for the course

Because of the Vitae course delivery some modifications had to be done:

- ♣ Improve page load: made the Google translate tool (very slow to load) active only on request
- ♣ Easier editing of sub-page trees through an appropriate plugin
- ♣ File trees
- ♣ Bulk file upload of zipped archives
- ♣ Forms for entrance/exit questionnaires

Other UnderstandIT project's requests

Moreover, as for the project's plans, the IQtool has been installed as a subset of pages in the CoP.