

Citizen's Portal (Portal do Cidadão)



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Organisation: Agência para a Modernização Administrativa (AMA) – Agency for the Administrative Modernization

Country: Portugal

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Digital, Public Service

Launched in: 2015

Overall development time: 11 month(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The Citizen's Portal is the central channel to access and deliver electronic public services in Portugal, facilitating the relationship between citizens, business and public administration. The portal can be defined as the single point of contact for online services provided by public authorities, from both central and local government, also presenting services provided by private entities.

The Portal was developed by the Agency for Administrative Modernization (AMA) that carried out a profound process of functional and technological development in order to create an efficient, interactive and easy portal to navigate, from a user's perspective.

The first national Citizen's Portal was originally launched in February 2004, and the Business Portal was created two years later. Both needed functional and technological essential updates to answer the demand of online public services in Portugal.

In that sense, the new Portal was created aligned with best practices, providing information and electronic public services for citizens and businesses in a simpler, clearer and more accessible way.

The new Portal has a new layout and refurbished functionalities, aggregating the previous Citizen's Portal and Business Portal's features and services, bringing together services and information of both portals in a single web point of contact.

Why the innovation was developed

- The Citizen Portal was originally launched in February 2004 but in 10 years many things change, especially considering the rhythm of Knowledge Society and the changes of habits in the Internet usage.
 - In addition to the necessary update, AMA considered crucial to review the processes, responding to the high expectations of a tech-savvy population, familiarized with access to digital services and accustomed to find an easy and quick answer to their needs.
 - The re-evaluation of the Citizen's Portal sake alignment with the new trends, providing a single point of access for online services provided by the public authorities, facilitating as well to consult information on several subjects.
 - Focused on providing the best service to users, AMA also decided to reposition the new portal integrating services for both citizen and entrepreneurs. The idea was to reunite Citizen Portal with the Business' Portal outlining a multi-diversified offer that intends to be closer and more suitable to the specific contexts of use.
 - Simplicity, ease and speed of access to public content and services were the key goals underlying and guiding the transformation initiative of the old Citizen and Business' Portals.
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Objectives

Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement, Support economic growth

- Creating a single portal, bringing together the "old" Citizen Portal and the Business Portal, and offering a single point of contact to the services provided by public authorities stood out as the main objective, aligned with the enablement of savings and economies of scale. Specifically, the new Portal allows users to search the services and information they need in a simple, easy and faster way with just a single keyword, at the most in two steps, something that is possible thanks to the search engine implemented;
 - Is adapted to different kind of devices, given the increasing use of mobile devices, and aiming at providing the services with no time or space barriers;
 - Is available in English and Spanish, making it more accessible and comprehensive in its potential use;
 - Has a whole new participative dimension, providing collaboration mechanisms, including spaces for comments, a mechanism for rating the quality of information and services all that integrated with social networks;
 - Sets some principles and objectives, particularly on the simplicity, efficiency and sobriety levels, presenting a layout focused on the essentials.
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Main beneficiaries

Businesses, Civil Society, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

- The Citizen's Portal integrates services for both citizen and entrepreneurs, and is available for all the population with Internet access (about 5,6 million citizens). The set of data from the first days visits to the Citizen's portal:
- Show an increase of participation, with the feedback more focused on the quality of the experience and the easier system of search, very similar to the traditional search engines on the Web;
- The feedback is very positive and the possibility to classify the utility of the services reveals to be very useful for the performance management, facilitating the continuous improvement of the portal, more close to the actual needs of the users;
- The number of visits to the Citizen's Portal is close to 1 million. The large majority is originated in Portugal, but there is also a significant amount of users from Spain, Brazil and Germany visiting the website.

Existing similar practices

Citizen/Business Portals

In other countries' public administrations

Other countries and businesses

Some countries provide Citizen and Business Portals. However, they have different characteristics from the Portuguese one, which focus on a Search functionality that fast and intuitively directs the user to the service he/she needs. Plus, the Portuguese Citizen Portal presents a highly collaborative approach, as it allows users to publicly rate, comment and share their suggestions and evaluations about the services and information provided. Furthermore, an option that invites users to make a suggestion, a compliment or even a complaint is available in the footnote of the portal.

Results

Efficiency

- Public services for citizens and businesses in a single portal, available in a faster way.
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Effectiveness

- Public services for citizens and businesses in a single portal, available in a simpler way.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

- Citizen's Portal has all content supported on uniform and typified structures of information that by itself are conformant with the WCAG 2.0 AA level and, therefore, independently of whom in each case provides the actual data, ensures that the portal globally complies with this standard and then facilitating its access and usability by users with disabilities.

Responsiveness:

- By being able to adapt the presentation of his (same) content and functionality to different platforms – content parity – and different screen resolutions - device-agnostic -, Citizen's Portal usability is democratized and reflects the evolution and trends of web content access (namely by promoting equal response and availability from mobile devices).

Reliability:

- A new portal, more robust and revamped.
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User satisfaction

- Improved user satisfaction is expected. The first set of data from the visits to the website shows an increase of participation, and the feedback is more focused on the quality of the experience, related specially to the very different presentation of the services, and the easier system of search.

Development

Design

Portugal has a strong and structured e-Government strategy, which result of a well-designed plan to create a number of innovative initiatives in the areas of Simplification, Services Delivery and Electronic Government. The Agency for the Administrative Modernization (AMA) is in charge of developing and promoting these initiatives, ranging from modernization projects, technological infrastructure or points of service to citizens, among many others.

Among the many reference projects developed and implemented by AMA in the administrative modernization and e-Government area, over the last few years, the Citizen's Portal is one of the key initiatives.

The Portal was originally launched in February 2004, providing a single Web entry point to public information and services for citizens and businesses. Ten years later, AMA decided it was time to go beyond the current services delivery and offer the society a cross-cutting portal.

Testing

- Tests were handled during all the implementation phase, but mostly at the final stage. The final solution was transversely and specifically tested.
 - Adjustments had to be made, for example: Charge tests to guarantee that the platform could handle the number of visitors assumed a natural preeminence as well as security tests; Since the responsiveness of the solution to be accessed by mobile devices was one of its key features, several tests and adjustments were also made.
 - The training of the users was also a key component. An intense transference of knowledge was made from the development team to AMA's Information Systems Department, so that they could operate the platform in the future with total autonomy. On the other hand, general user training was also handled to contact managers in AMA, who were in charge for transferring that knowledge to the contact points in all the public bodies.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- The development of the Portal was based in a project management model that can be synthesized in:
 1. A diagnosis of the existing situation, so that the problems and needs could be clearly identified
 2. Future Model - a wide benchmark of global, national and local trends was developed; best practices and case studies were identified and analyzed, and several informal workshops took place, getting together specialists. AMA led a Focus Group to assess the preferences and requirements of citizens and businesses regarding the delivery of public services in the Portal.
 3. The implementation's phase was dedicated to develop and implement the agreed definitions, using updated technologies and solutions.
 4. Training and Tests - Although tests were handled during all the implementation phase, a final stage dedicated to that kind of task was a fundamental part of this kind of project. In this sense, the final solution was transversally and specifically tested.

Resources used:

- The relevance and innovation of the project justifies a strong investment in time and resources to accomplish the task of implementing a better, faster and more friendly Citizen's Portal. AMA coordinated a multitasking team, with different levels of involvement during the different stages of the project regarding their field areas and time available.
 - The project received a strong commitment support from key members of the Government that helped to trigger the involvement of several teams from Public Administration players, dedicated to the definition of the taxonomy and structure of the new Portal to guarantee the best access to all the variety of services focused on citizens and companies within the site.
 - Regarding Human Resources, the project involved around 20 persons from the internal team through several phases, 3 of which were focused on current management of the project. The IT services partner provided a team of 10 resources during the implementation phase.
 - Representatives of a wide range of public entities were also integrated in the project during definition and test stages, contributing to validate and update their own services.
 - The total budget allocated for the project was 150.000,00€.
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Diffusion

- The Citizen's Portal integrates web portals from different Portuguese public entities and is prepared to seamlessly integrate more. In addition, it was designed to allow its replication and connection to other technological platforms and portals, both nationally and internationally, taking interoperability as a major principle.
 - Also, the Citizen's Portal has potential to bring benefits to other countries and contexts, as it presents a simple and user-friendly structure, and collaboration features, responding to one of the main challenges Public Administrations face nowadays: engaging the society to participate and interact with the Public Administration.
 - The Portal's information and services are also available in English and Spanish, which is a facilitator for best-practices sharing, as well as the referred replication or connection to other portals at an international level.
 - Finally, the creation of such national portal, involving the whole Public Administration, contributed for the improvement of processes underlying the public services and the communication between public entities. Within AMA itself, it gave place to the reassessment of procedures, resulting in improvements of communication flows with other entities, and internally between the teams involved.
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Challenges and solutions

- Challenges included that to upgrade an existing product, being sure that it should be assumed as something totally new, because you have previous experiences and concepts that should be maintained side by side with new approaches, committed to transform what was old into something innovative;
- Accommodate public services created by many different entities;
- Being a long-term, enduring project.
- Solutions in general included having teams from several areas of expertise;
- The stakeholders' commitment;
- And more specifically, a project implementation model by steps that allowed answers to each one of the services integration stages.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- The implementation of the new citizen Portal was a considerable challenge, as teams from several areas of expertise and from several public bodies were involved;
 - The team and stakeholders' mobilization was very important to the successful integration and development of two portals with such a wide range of services;
 - The relevance and innovation of the project justified a strong investment in time and resources to accomplish the task of implementing a better, faster and more friendly Citizen's Portal.
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Conditions for success

- Commitment of the team;
- Commitment of the stakeholders involved.

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