

Croatian government runs new web portal on eZ Publish

vlada.hr is the official website of the Croatian Government, serving content such as: session decisions; official announcements; news; photo galleries; video and audio; and a special interface for accredited journalists. In 2006, the Croatian government issued guidelines stating that Open Source software should be used as much as possible, and vlada.hr is the first government website to launch with a non-proprietary platform. The site runs on eZ Publish, and was created by two eZ Partners. Netgen, an IT Partner, implemented the technical aspect of the site, while Neomedia, a Creative Partner, provided the conceptual ideas and visual design.

"eZ Publish, with its extensibility and enterprise-level features, enabled us to make vlada.hr a better solution than anything other platforms could provide."

- Igor Vrdoljak, Owner and IT Architect at Netgen

- Hrvoje Budin, Creative Team Director, NEOMEDIA :: creative communications



Site requirements

The Croatian government needed a modern, dynamic, and engaging portal, along with a new visual identity. The new website was to provide as much information as possible regarding government activities, in a clear manner. Any article could be related to any other content, and similar content could be grouped into themes. Part of the goal was for readers to be able to easily learn what the government had been doing, for example regarding Croatian activities to become an EU member.

Other requirements included:

- A search feature for vlada.hr and also for related government sites
- Audio and video integration with CMS content
- Accessibility support where users can change visual elements on the site (such as the contrast and font size)

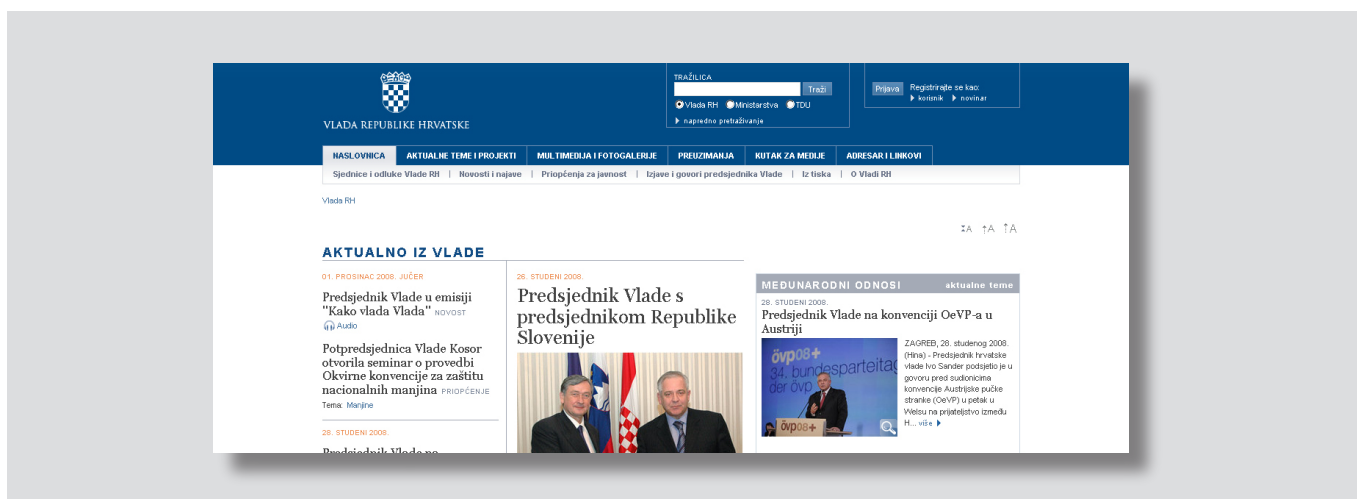
eZ Publish and its extensibility

The main reasons for choosing eZ Publish were extensibility and built-in features like versioning and multi-language support, enabling Netgen and Neomedia to provide an enterprise-level solution. They relied extensively on the core principles on which eZ Publish is built, such as the flexible content model, and clean API interfaces.

Integration with what is now known as the eZ Find search engine puts vlada.hr content into a Lucene search index. This index is also populated with content from 80 other government and public websites by search software called Nutch. This highly connected process makes content at a multitude of sites searchable from one location.

Communication between the government and the general public is enabled through contact forms and the possibility for users to create questions, comments, and job inquiries on the website. Additionally, with eZ Publish, the site supports rich multimedia content such as Flash videos and audio files. One of the extensions created for the site is a robust embedded Flash player, with features such as playlists generated from subtree content.

While Netgen and Neomedia are experienced eZ Publish integrators, they also benefited from the knowledge available within the eZ Publish community, from the online documentation to the other members within the community.



Site benefits

A main benefit of the new website is the ability for editors to communicate efficiently using different kinds of media, such as text, audio, and video. eZ Publish overcomes the technical limitations of the previous solution to make this easy to do.

Site visits are up 80%, and time spent per visit has increased. Multimedia content, a modern Web 2.0 design, and empowering user tools attract and keep visitors. Every feature has been fine-tuned to local expectations and usability methods.

Furthermore, because of eZ Publish's cache optimizations and technical architecture, this content-rich portal runs on two servers without any performance problems.

Future plans

vlada.hr is already recognized as a place to look for ideas. The site has represented many firsts, such as accessibility support for persons with disabilities, and it has influenced many subsequent government web projects.

Future plans include functionality so that small online projects can be integrated with the vlada.hr portal using customized designs and navigational structures. The expansion of the site will finally make online government activities manageable from a single administration interface and facilitate the re-use of common content.

For more information, please visit: <http://vlada.hr>

About the implementors

Netgen and Neomedia strive to make Open Source solutions recognized in a mostly proprietary-software oriented market.

Netgen is a Silver-level eZ Partner and currently the only implementer of eZ Publish based solutions in Croatia. Founded in 2002, Netgen has been developing complex web solutions based on eZ Publish since 2004. With more than 40 successful installations, its portfolio includes governmental portals, large telecom websites, online communities, online shops, theater and cultural sites, intranets and more.

Neomedia is one of the leading web agencies in Croatia, providing complete digital solutions for major Croatian enterprises and government institutions. It chooses founding technology based on project requirements and goals, and its eZ Publish solutions prove that Open Source can be viable solution for enterprise projects and government portals.

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