



CASE Oulu municipal portal

Citizens more and more expect to be able to communicate with their home municipality online. In 2008, the city of Oulu inaugurated an open network service portal. Delivered by Ixonos, the portal provides inhabitants access to the city's e-services as well as to other information society services.

Inspiring the digital experience.

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Background

In 2005, the city council of Oulu launched the TAITO Oulu 400 project, aiming to make the citizens of Oulu forerunners in using wireless services. In order to determine the kinds of online services people in different phases of life needed, the inhabitants of the Oulu region were engaged in the development, right at the idea stage. The objective was to build a functional, secure and reliable network service that would empower citizens to use municipal services. The service was to respond to the challenges of the city's service development, as well as to the information society's requirements regarding implementation of online services. It was also geared towards spawning new online services through providing the city administration with joint-use service modules as well as support components.

Solution

The municipal portal provided by Ixonos offers citizens and organizations a set of new, centralized services assembled together in one place. The functions and the user interfaces of the portal services are uniform, so using the services is easy, intuitive and dependable. The portal provides every inhabitant with a personal page, to be customized according to liking. The services exist as portlets. The user can add, remove and organize portlets according to which portal services he or she requires. Social networking services such as a notepad, blog, and picture album are also included, as is instant messaging. Additionally, the user can create a separate group page, such as for family or friends. The municipality portal also offers every citizen of Oulu an easy to use, reliable email address.

The portal model, well known from corporate intranets, was chosen to implement the service. The site was built on a standardized Liferay platform that supports an open service architecture and complies with the JSR-168 standard. More services will be added to the portal as the online services provided by the City of Oulu evolve. The municipality portal significantly broadens the city's supply of e-services. It is being developed in cooperation with the web site of the city of Oulu (www.ouka.fi) and with the Akkuna intranet.

Benefits

The city of Oulu set an example in utilizing an open source solution, as well as in promoting Finnish competitiveness, while following the policies defined by the EU Commission and by the Finnish state's strategy for the development of online government services. At the same time, it offered its inhabitants a versatile set of services, and showed that solutions based on open architectures and open source code are fully able to compete with commercial off-the-shelf software. The municipality portal boosts the opportunities for city of Oulu inhabitants to contribute to municipality affairs. Citizens are now able to track decision-making processes on their home computers, and to comment on initiatives at different stages. This increases the transparency of decision making. The portal also enhances the ability of municipality administration to create future e-services.