

School's out – but back in the cloud

In just six months—during the global pandemic—the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) launched a brand new Digital School portal in the hybrid cloud, making life easier for pupils, parents, teachers and administrators.



A single source of learning required

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) is responsible for creating the best possible learning environment for schools, universities and research institutions—across the entire education system in Austria, from early childhood to adult education.

With the onset of COVID-19, families and students struggled as schools and universities were forced to suddenly move online after centuries of face-to-face teaching. A 12,000-parent survey conducted by the Austrian parents association (Bundeselternverband) revealed the scale of the problem: parents felt they were being sent from digital pillar to post as they tried to get to grips with a multitude of digital platforms—particularly parents with children in different schools.

The urgency of the situation apparent, the Ministry set out at speed to make life easier for parents, students and teachers: the new educational landscape required a single source of learning to make sure everyone involved was kept informed in a timely manner.

The Ministry turned to Accenture to help create a single digital schooling platform that was hosted in the hybrid cloud for optimum performance. First rolled out across Federal schools, this new platform is now serving as a point of entry for all education and public administration applications.

In the middle of a global pandemic, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) launched a brand new digital schooling platform hosted in the hybrid cloud—making life easier for pupils, parents, teachers and administrators.

When tech meets human ingenuity

Collaboration brings speed and scale

With the potential size of the new portal's user base, there was a lot to take into consideration. User needs had to be analyzed and potential tools had to be evaluated. A collaborative approach was essential: a whole ecosystem of over 10 different organizations came together towards one common goal.

- **Putting people first.** Teachers, pupils and parents would be using the portal daily, so collaboration with end-users was a priority from day one. After initial desktop research, the team invited parents, pupils and educators to a series of workshops and qualitative interviews to provide valuable insights and feedback.
- **Turning competition into collaboration.** The team consulted Austrian companies to contribute to the portal, combining multiple educational, administrative and communications tools—fostering a vital atmosphere of co-operation over competition. Collaboration was the cornerstone of this

project—through the Ministry, the education community, the end-users and technology partners.

- **Agility.** Accenture brought its comprehensive range of talent and skills—from developers and UI/UX experts to GDPR experts, Talent & Organization and business analysts—ensuring everyone worked together. Through agile and inclusive working practices, the team was able to tackle multiple tasks simultaneously and cohesively.
- **Flexibility and privacy.** Due to the scale of this platform, stability, testing, speed and adaptability were essential factors.

Cloud hosting was critical for this purpose, while adhering to strict privacy and security standards to ensure student data remained safe and protected.

The project brought together a rich blend of talents and expertise, including Accenture team members from five countries. To ensure a safe environment for everyone on site, the team used more than 1,000 COVID-19 rapid tests.



Impact At Speed

Enjoying flexible access for all, through the cloud

This project was characterized by commitment and speed to support the extraordinary challenges being faced by distance learning during the pandemic. Initial work began in May 2020; announced in June by the Austrian Chancellor, the Minister of Education, Science and Research, and the Minister of Digital and Economic Affairs, the portal was launched in September.

Since then, the portal has welcomed thousands of users online and been continuously improved and expanded, with a single digital identity for all students, a fully integrated content management system, and de-centralized functionalities for schools—all available via a fast, secure cloud service. Looking ahead, the portal has parent onboarding planned, as well as more interactive features and an event hub.

As the Ministry puts it in the very first point of its [8-Point Plan for Digital Learning](#):

‘The vast array of applications, communication channels and web pages are confusing and not very user friendly. Digital School is a portal that now seeks to improve communication between pupils, teachers and parents. As a single point of entry, this portal makes available the most important education and public administration applications. All of these applications (such as Socrates, Eduthek, Moodle, LMS, MS Teams, etc.) will now be accessible through a single account, in other words with a single sign-on.’

For the entire team, the size, prominence and complexity of the Austrian Digital School portal provides an example of true collaboration between the Ministry, the Austrian educational ecosystem and Accenture. Everyone on the team is very proud to help provide students, families and educators with a next-generation learning platform.