

Competencies gap for School Virtual Tours facilitators and the VISITOR project solution

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented visitors from visiting museums and other cultural sites. This situation also affected students who traditionally visited such places as part of educational activities. This urgent situation was covered quite quickly with the help of technology and the affordances it provides today in terms of the virtual access of people to remote places.

These affordances are used today by an amount of museums around the world by providing virtual visits to the general public and to students who are allowed to make educational visits from their homes or classes.

As student educational visits have traditionally been an important activity of museums, many of them have developed suitable educational materials and tools that teachers can integrate into their teaching to support these alternative educational activities and help students get more involved.

For example, the [Acropolis Museum](#) enables students to get to know some of its museum exhibits through digital depictions or various educational programs and digital applications. The [National Archaeological Museum of Athens](#) also offers online educational activities aimed at students getting to know the museum's exhibits.

In the majority of cases, however, these resources either do not exist or are insufficient to be used by teachers to form integrated learning activities focused on the respective educational program.

Through the VISITOR project, a relevant study was published in the journal "Inclusive Digital Education", Springer, in 2022. The study highlights Greek teachers' lack of skills to implement virtual tour activities in museums and the need to create methodologies development of appropriate educational resources.

According to the findings, teachers' attitude towards using new technologies at school to diversify teaching, in general, is considered positive. Equally positive was their attitude towards using such tools to conduct virtual educational visits without the possibility of live visits in the post-COVID-19 era. Most teachers consider it essential for students from remote areas to visit museums and archaeological and cultural sites.



In the same survey, the low percentage of teachers aware of the existence of tools suitable for digital museum tours was recorded. This conclusion comes as a confirmation of corresponding research on the issue. Educators appeared only to be aware of well-known aggregators such as [Google Arts and Cultures](#) and [Europeana](#). Even smaller is the percentage of teachers aware of such 3D educational spaces as, for example, [artsteps](#). In the project context,



a systematic effort is made to record the essential aggregators at the European and international levels so that the interested party can access an organized list.

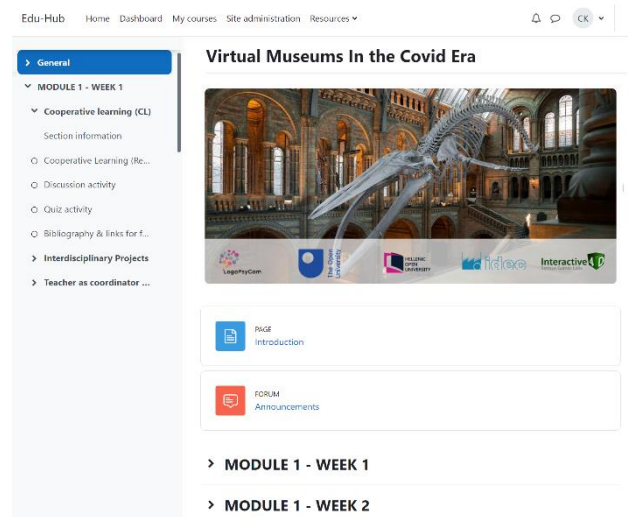
At the same time, another interesting finding that highlights the contribution of the VISITOR project is the percentage of teachers who use materials and tools for live and digital tours without using a structured educational approach with activities that would allow all students to be involved. The increasing use of virtual worlds leads us to the need to create organized educational material that will accompany the students' virtual tours.

An equally important conclusion of the same research is that most teachers do not know how to develop scenarios for the implementation of digital tours nor how to teach with them, but they would be interested in learning. Therefore, the need to create more and more educational resources themselves, suitable every time for the educational intervention, is highlighted.

On this basis, there is a broader need to train teachers in developing such resources and designing appropriate educational interventions for creating educational activities through virtual visits to museums.

A vital product of the VISITOR project is a course that aims to develop teachers' relevant digital and pedagogical skills.

To achieve this, the course will train teachers in digital storytelling projects based on an experiential approach, as teachers will have to construct their digital stories by gathering educational materials through the content of digital museums. In addition, the course will provide training for educators to leverage VISITOR project applications as facilitators for developing Project Based Learning and digital storytelling activities.



The screenshot shows a course page on Edu-Hub. The page title is "Virtual Museums In the Covid Era". The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with "General" selected, followed by "MODULE 1 - WEEK 1", "Cooperative learning (CL)", "Section information", "Cooperative Learning (Re...", "Discussion activity", "Quiz activity", "Bibliography & links for f...", "Interdisciplinary Projects", and "Teacher as coordinator ...". The main content area features a large image of a virtual museum interior with a dinosaur skeleton. Below the image are logos for LogiCity.com, University of... (partially visible), and Interactive... (partially visible). There are two buttons: "PAGE Introduction" and "FORUM Announcements". At the bottom, there are two expandable sections: "MODULE 1 - WEEK 1" and "MODULE 1 - WEEK 2".

The VISITOR project's fundamental goal is to strengthen teachers' digital and teaching skills through an experiential and innovative learning process. Schools today need to integrate these modern pedagogical approaches into their curricula and support teachers in acquiring digital skills to implement virtual museum tours. Consequently, the teacher will have the opportunity to implement a dynamic project that can suit the pedagogical and social needs of various students.

More information about the VISITOR project can be found on <https://visitor-project.eu>

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