

Citizens take urban greenery into their own hands



Client profile

WWF Hellas is the Greek national office of the global WWF network. WWF Hellas maintains absolute independence in its management and in its liberty to locally form its own priorities. At the same time, it follows the global goals and principles of the WWF network. WWF started as a small group of people engaged in protecting wild nature and developed into one of the most influential and independent environmental organizations worldwide. WWF is active in the Greek area since 1969, more than twenty years before the establishment of the WWF Hellas national organization. Some of the first actions WWF overtook in Greece were the restitution of the Kessariani forest on Mount Ymittos and the contribution to activations that secured the protected status of the lakes of Prespes and Dadia forest in Evros. The Greek office of the global WWF program was founded in 1991. The name of the office was "Worldwide Fund for Nature – WWF Hellas". In 1994, the Greek WWF organization was legally established as a public benefit foundation. Today, WWF Hellas employees almost 60 people.

Partner



Web: www.dice.gr

Software & Services

Microsoft Azure

- Azure Mobile Apps

By hosting the GreenSpaces app on Microsoft Azure, WWF Greece has created an innovative and reliable mechanism encouraging everyone's participation in urban green spaces management and promotion.

«The protection of biodiversity and the efforts to achieve a balanced relationship between man and nature require both time and resources. They also require tools that can systematize our work and help us achieve the goals set out in our strategy.»

Achilleas Plitharas, Awareness Officer, WWF Hellas

When the Cloud, which is by definition a green technology, contributes to the better management and promotion of urban green spaces, there can only be multiple environmental and social benefits.

WWF GreenSpaces is an innovative app for smartphones and tablets that allows citizens to take urban greenery into their own hands. Its function is based on the crowdsourcing model. In other words, it is the citizens who indicate and rate the green spaces in the city, while at the same time suggesting methods and actions for their maintenance and improvement. So the app's support and response needs are inevitably subject to the periodically increased demand, during seasons, days and hours ideal for a walk in the local park, a walk in the nearby grove or in the case of a call to action to highlight a space still unnoticed.

A Necessity

By general admission, green spaces are not a luxury but a necessity. As WWF Hellas highlights, in almost every major city of the country there are far fewer green spaces than those needed. But quite often, instead of embracing them, we show indifference, ignoring their importance to the environment and, by extension, to our physical and mental health.

With the GreenSpaces app, WWF Hellas has created an innovative mechanism that allows citizens to take greenery into their own hands; to see the greenery from a different perspective, while creating the conditions for a change that will benefit both society and the environment.

Besides, the mission of WWF, the World Wide Fund for Nature, is to build a future

where man and nature will coexist in harmony. Its action is multifaceted and is based on two main objectives: protecting the biodiversity and reducing the human footprint. WWF's members are engaged in an everyday struggle to protect environmentally sensitive species and areas, and to improve the management of the natural environment. At the same time, they promote sustainable solutions to reduce the environmental footprint, focusing on climate change and lifestyle, aiming for a balanced relationship between man and nature.

«I am a father of two. I enjoy going for walks with my children and my friends, I like to work out and to discover new areas in the city. That's why I use WWF GreenSpaces; to locate green spaces in the city depending on my interests and needs. And every time I visit a green space, I want to be able to comment on anything positive or negative I notice and to know that my opinion will reach the right ears, that is my fellow citizens and the authorities. WWF GreenSpaces, an app created by citizens for citizens, gives me the opportunity to do so. All we need to do is download the app and take greenery into our own hands,» says Achilleas Plitharas, Awareness Officer at WWF Greece.

Available anytime, anywhere with Microsoft Azure

Today, WWF GreenSpaces has 945 registered urban green spaces in 109 Greek cities. In fact, in virtually any part of the Greek territory, when in the vicinity of an urban area, users can find a mapped green space in the city. If not, they can suggest a new one, and that is where the real power of the application lies: in the active participation of all of us, at all levels. Meanwhile, the WWF Hellas app counts a few thousand downloads, requiring significant hosting and management resources during peak days and times. Those typically occur during the weekends or the holidays, especially when the weather conditions allow for a walk in the park, outdoor sports or simply some peaceful and refreshing time close to nature.

This need to ensure the app's «anytime, everywhere» functionality, allowing active and environmentally aware citizens' seamless access on their various devices, made WWF Hellas opt for the infrastructure and the digital hosting tools provided by the Microsoft Azure platform. «Microsoft's reliability in combination with the renowned stability of the Azure services were the main

factors that drove us to seek a potential partnership and, by extension, to opt for one specifically with Microsoft,» Achilleas Plitharas explains.

And as he highlights, the task undertaken is complex. «The protection of the biodiversity and the efforts to achieve a balanced relationship between man and nature require both time and resources. They also require tools that can systematize our work and help us achieve the goals set out in our strategy,» he adds.

Finally, having realized the important role of a reliable digital infrastructure in supporting their work, he also points out that the right technical infrastructure provides the tools that are indispensable to an organization implementing complex projects in cooperation with multiple partners