

Democratizing (certified) video conferencing

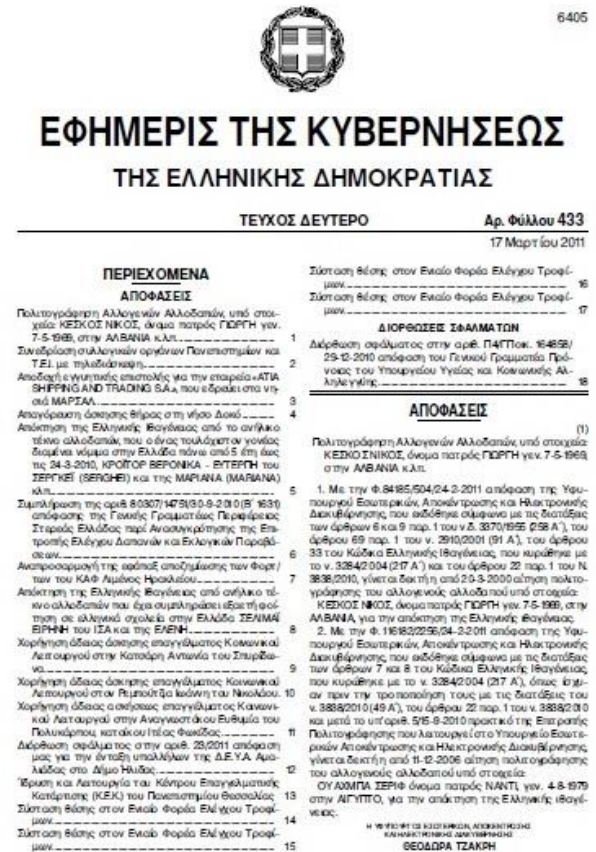
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Context

- 2011: Law grants Greek Academic Institutions the ability to conduct official meetings via video conference
- Overnight, video conferencing becomes practically required for faculty election and advancement committees



Starting point

- Just one installation fully operational
- Two more on limited availability
- Inadequate for an institution with 41 schools
- Dedicated (H.323) video conferencing equipment



The goal

- Provide compliant (“CVC” - certified video conferencing) solutions for official meetings
- Seize the opportunity to promote the adoption of video conferencing throughout the institution

The way

- Decentralize the certified video conferencing service → adequate independently operated installations at or near each faculty / school
- Demystify video conferencing by using familiar and easily replicable platforms and tools on the independent installations

The platform

Personal computer

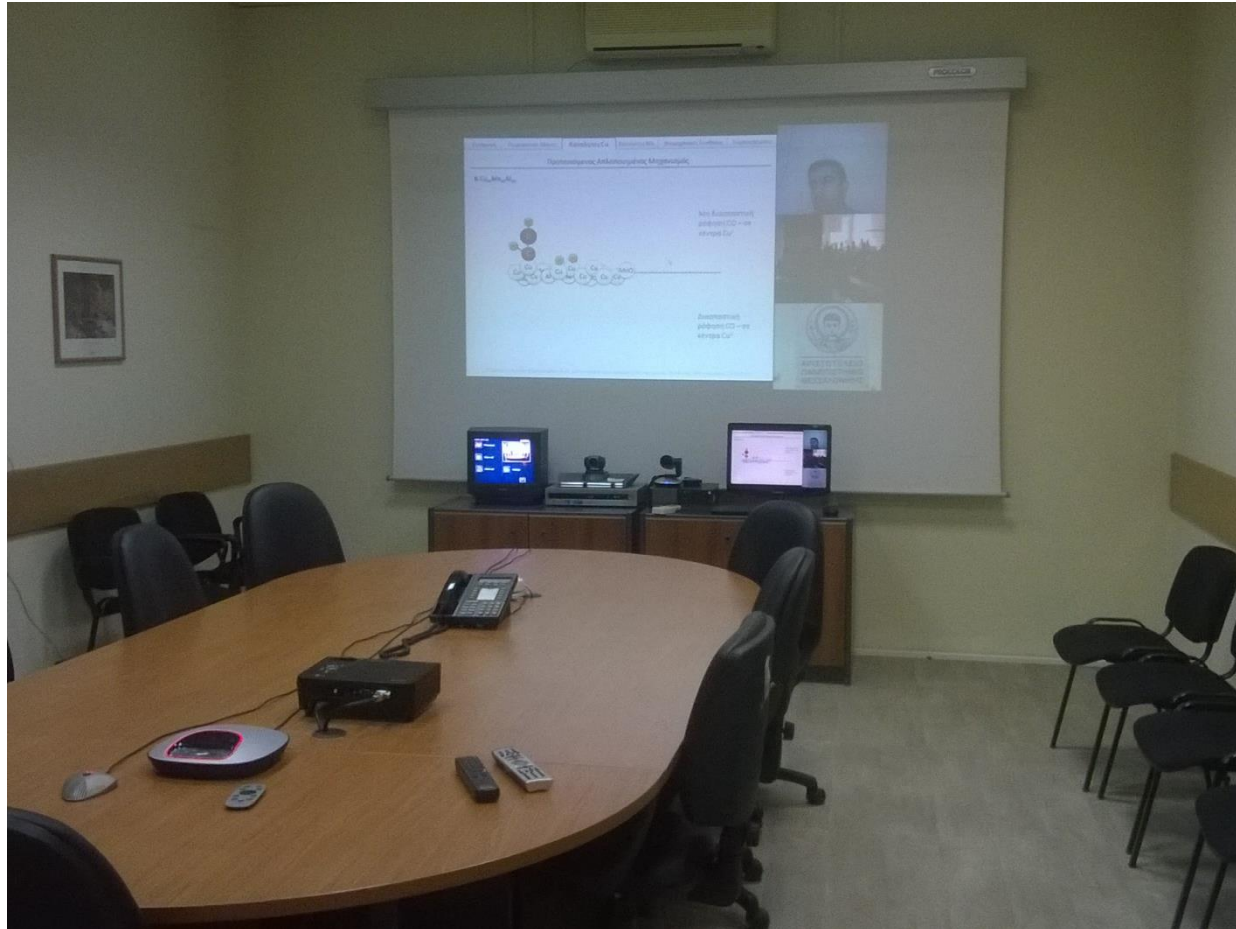
VS

Dedicated videoconferencing equipment

Criteria:

- Versatility
- Expandability
- Familiarity
- Affordability (also: repurposing existing hardware)

Verdict: Personal computer



Example implementation

PC (i3, 4GB RAM)
USB 1080p PTZ camera with remote control
USB speakerphone with echo cancellation
XGA Projector
20 inch auxiliary monitor

Results 1

CVC decentralization	2012	2015
Schools with access to an active local installation capable of hosting a certified video conference	3/41 (7.3%)	22/41 (53.7%)

Results 2

Active CVC installations at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	2012	2015
H.323 based	3	7
Personal computer based	0	9
Total	3	16

What we learned

- A. Clearly define your aim
- B. Develop comprehensive and tailor-made propositions
- C. Practice what you preach
- D. Do not antagonize peripheral operators
- E. Keep everyone in the loop

A: Clearly define your aim

- Video conferencing encompasses a broad range of scenarios and corresponding implementations
- Clearly defining and prioritizing your aims can save deployment time, effort and cost.
- Our case: Focus on the prevailing scenario: **Video conferencing involving 3-6 points of up to ten persons each.**

B: Develop comprehensive propositions

- Clear road map to implementation
- Time and cost estimates
- Technical and administrative workflow design
- Law and regulatory compliance (and misinterpretations thereof)
- Room configuration
- Equipment specifications, suggestions, possible vendors
- Equipment testing and setup
- Additional tools for scheduling and coordination
- Staff training
- Support and backup

C: Practice what you preach

- Are you yourself using what you are proposing to others? Advocating for one platform (PC) while using another (dedicated H.323) weakens your argument
- Also, people may be biased against a personal computer-based setup, typically from personal experience with sub-par equipment

C: Practice what you preach

- Response: deploy your proposed personal computer- based implementation as the primary/default in your central facilities
- Also, visibly adopt your proposed tools and workflow, so organizers and participants of every meeting can experience a live functioning demonstration of your complete proposal

D: Do not antagonize peripheral operators

- By cultivating your services to an ever-higher standard, you may be discouraging efforts to replicate and decentralize them.
- To encourage decentralization, focus on a consistent level of service across every VC point, (including your own) and always seek to propagate any improvements you introduce.

E: Keep everyone in the loop



Keep open lines for communication with peripheral operators, to benefit from feedback and help towards consistent video conferencing operations throughout your institution

What's your story?

- What legal and regulatory restrictions are you facing with regard to video conferencing in official functions of your Institutions?
- How do you go about challenging outdated preconceptions and mentalities and promoting modern technological solutions in this field?