



Privacing

O1A1 & O1A2

National Report on e-Learning in Greece
Dimitra Dimitrakopoulou



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2		

Applicable Documents

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2 Current state-of-play of e-Learning in Greece

COVID-19 has resulted in schools shut all across the world. The education system had to pass into a digital era suddenly in order to ensure a continuity in education. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (MofERA) tried to respond to the challenge of school closures by launching digital tools that enabled distance learning.

Specifically, they mobilized pre-existing digital resources, such as online libraries of digital textbooks, digital lesson plans and digital education platforms and introduced new digital platforms for synchronous online teaching, initially for the upper secondary students and schools in regions first affected by closures. Greece also introduced educational broadcasting via state television, principally for primary level students (<https://www.ertflix.gr/category/mathainoumestospiti/>). Moreover, to promote education, telecommunication services provided free of charge access to national platforms and software used for teaching and accessibility to all students and teachers.

In particular, at the first lock down priority was given to the implementation of distance learning in the last school year (Distance Learning, [Ministry of Education, 2020](#)) and then it was extended to all high schools in Greece. E-learning started on 16/03/2020 as a pilot program in three regions. However, it is important to note that the teachers in public schools weren't obliged to teach on-line during the first lock down (March 2020) because they weren't prepared to replace their traditional way of teaching, digitalize their teaching materials and deliver on-line courses. Moreover, concerns regarding privacy issues and data protection were raised. As a result, distance education proved to be very difficult and students at public schools lost their touch with the teachers and classmates. However, in the majority of private schools distance learning begun a few days after the closure of schools.

The second year of pandemic students who attended kindergarten, primary and secondary school created an account on the Cisco Webex platform and were able to attend classes while at home. Furthermore, online training was provided by the Ministry of Education to teachers with view to guide them on how to teach online and strengthen their digital skills. In addition, the Greek branch of the eTwinning project ran regular webinars to support teachers in the transition to distance education. Students also received free textbooks and two digital platforms for distance and interactive learning were made available. Moreover, the Ministry of Education with the donation of equipment (such as tablets and laptops) that reached schools across Greece ensured the sustainability of the education community.

In general terms, the response of both students and teachers to online e-learning was considered impressive in Greece ([Table 1](#)) (Statistics on distance learning, [Ministry of Education, 2020](#)) as distance teaching was quickly rolled out nationally across all school levels during the second lockdown.

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2.1 COVID-19 and distance learning

The first year of the pandemic that schools suddenly closed the approaches in public school and private schools with regards to distance learning were different. As it was mentioned above at the majority of private schools students attended classes while at home after the first week of the closure of schools but students of public schools didn't have the opportunity to keep in touch with the educational process.

At the second year of pandemic the priority of the Ministry of Education was to cover the increased needs in distance learning under these exceptional circumstances because at the first lockdown the distance learning was not mandatory for public schools. Therefore, since the day schools closed distance learning began for all students via Cisco's Webex platform. During the synchronous learning the teacher could share files, presentations even his screen and notes with his students, while he could give them the floor to pose questions or just speak, participating thus in an interactive lesson. Students in public kindergartners and primary schools attended classes from 2:10 pm to 5:20pm and they had 10 minutes break every 30 minutes. In contrast students at private schools attended classes in the morning following their regular schedule. Secondary students both at public and private schools attended classes during the morning in accordance with their regular schedule.

At this point, it's crucial to present a case of a private school. During the pandemic teachers of Ellinogermaniki Agogi School were fully supported and further trained through seminars with view to be able to use the Webex platform and create digital material. Specifically, at all educational levels used the Webex for on-line learning. In case any technical problem occurred and there was a disruption of the on-line course teachers and students were supported by the technical department of the school. In addition, they used Edmodo which is a platform that enables teachers to communicate, collaborate with students and share useful material with them. Students were already familiar with the use of this platform and were able to upload their work on it. In primary school students also use e-askiseis, which is a portal filled with exercises on several school subjects that EA teachers have created.

2.2 Methods and tools for distance learning

From the beginning of pandemic teachers had at their disposal a variety of tools such as the [Interactive School Books](#), the [Digital Educational Material](#) ("Fotodentro") and the [Advanced Electronic Scenarios](#) ("Aesop") organized by educational level, course etc. The digital asynchronous platforms "e-class" (<https://www.openecclass.org/en/>) and "e-me" (<https://auth.eme.edu.gr/?eme=https://eme.edu.gr/&cause=ntoken&eat=d9b0e37aa7f1ef9>)

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[710ca9152ee64082b&lang=en_US](#)) were also offered and used for e-learning courses, while students had the opportunity to follow “Open Classes” posted in the platforms by their teachers without prior registration. Public TV also supported distance learning by broadcasting educational programs for primary school students.

As far as synchronous e-learning is concerned during the first lockdown teachers of public schools mainly used Webex and in case technical problems occurred they used Skype, Zoom, Blackboard and Microsoft Teams instead. Some private schools paid for the use of non-free platforms like the blackboard to ensure that students don’t miss online courses. The second year of the pandemic as it was already mentioned above all schools used the Webex platform.

2.3 Technical characteristics and data protection

The Ministry of Education in order to respond to the needs of distance education has chosen the Webex platform. As far as the data protection is concerned the Greek Ministry of Education ensured that the use of this platform will protect teachers and students’ private issues. According to signed agreement any information from a user participating in the Webex service is used, collected and stored in accordance with EU data protection laws and International Cyber Security Standards (ISO 27001, ISO27017, ISO27018, ISO27701 including SOC 2 Type II, SOC 3 and C5) and are certainly not used to profile or share user data with any third party.

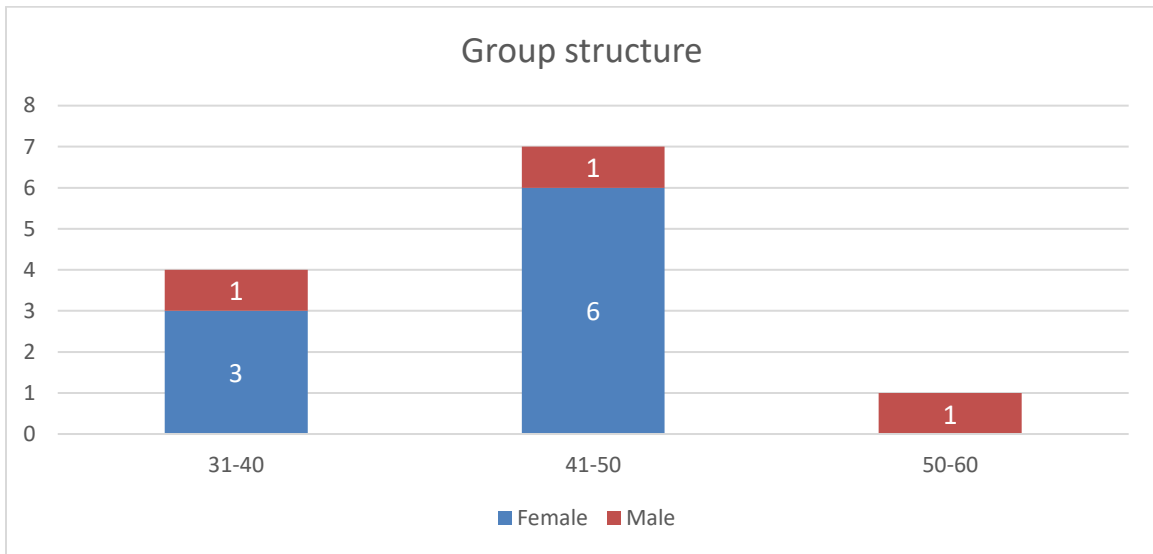
However, there was no teacher training regarding data protection. It is also true that in the Greek parliament there was a political controversy regarding the personal data protection by the Cisco company.

3 Educators’ survey results

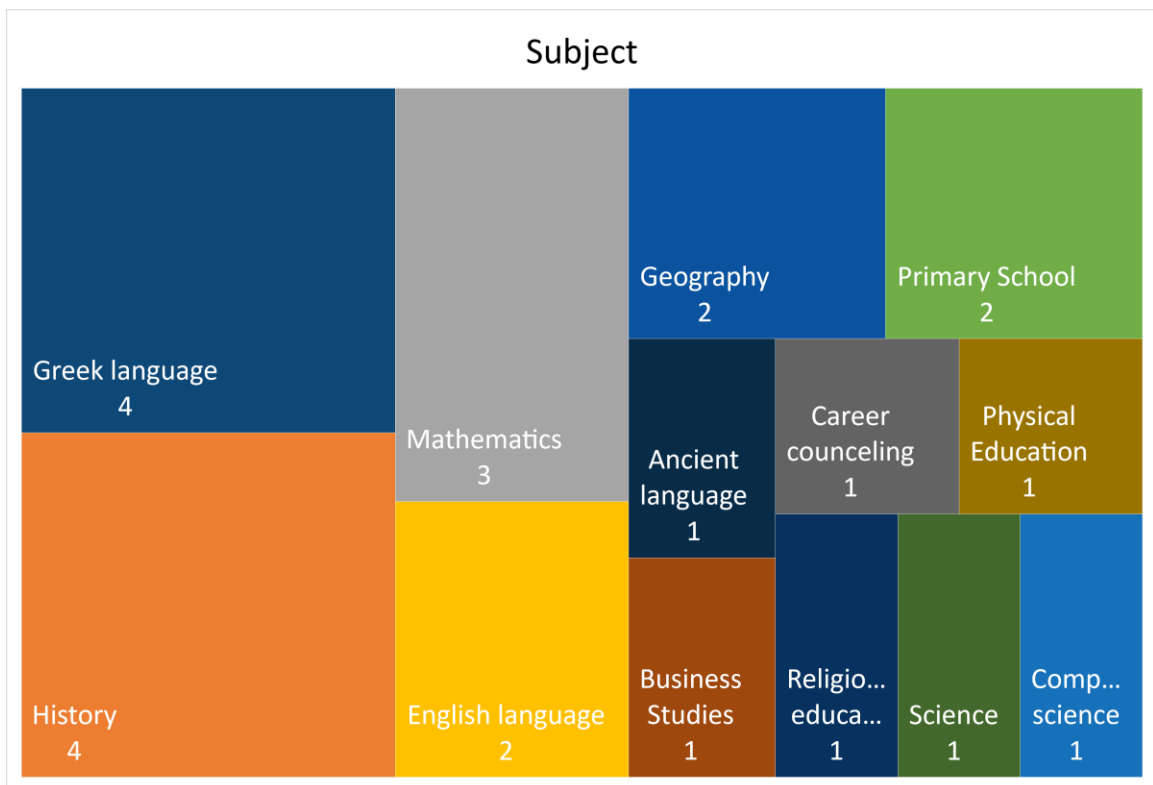
This survey was conducted by Ellinogermaniki Agogi and involved teachers who work both to public and private schools. In particular, 12 teachers participated in this survey. The majority of them are women aged 31-40 years old. As far as their field of specialization is concerned, as we can see in the 2nd graph below there is enough variety.

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Graph 1: The age and the gender of participants

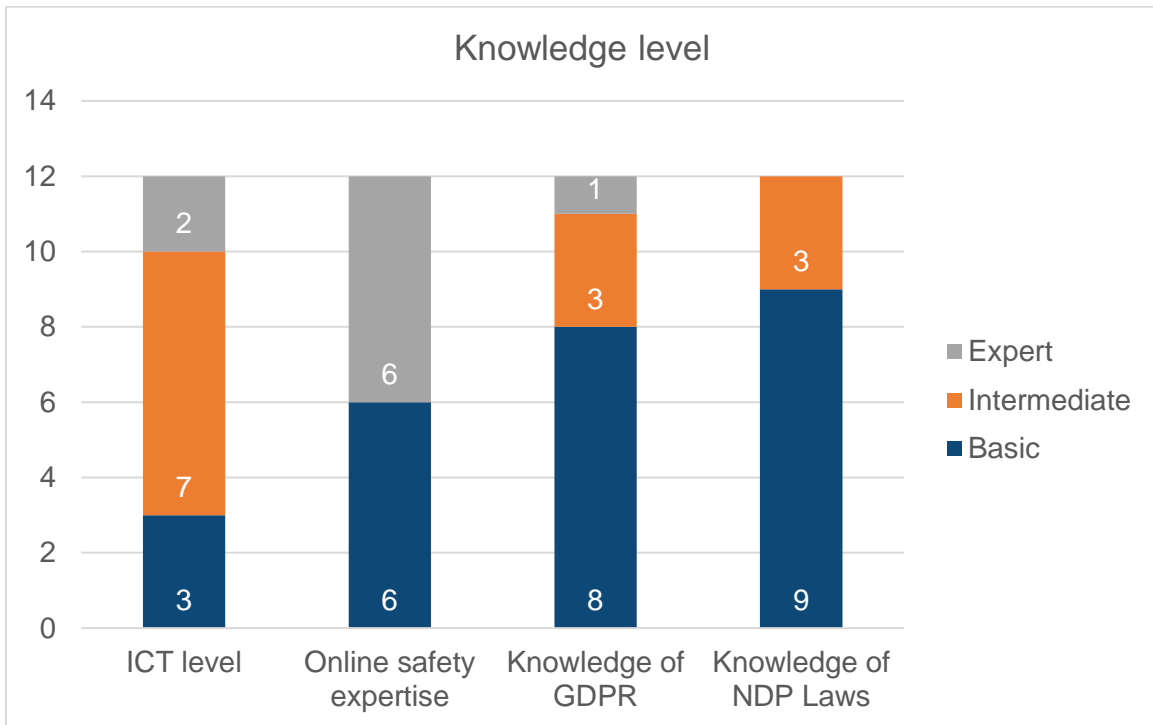


Graph 2: School subjects

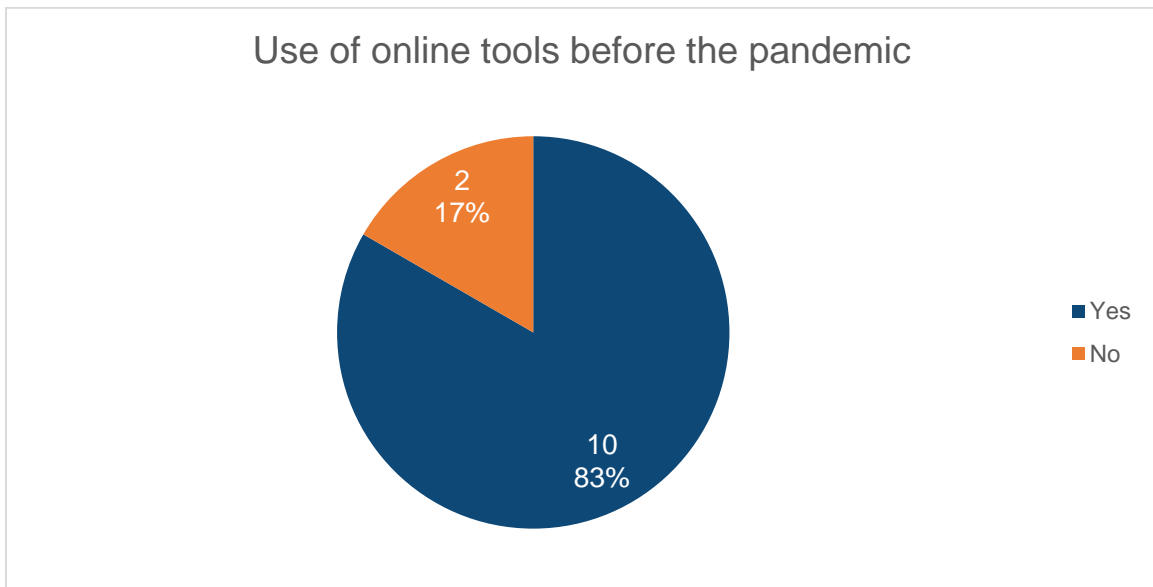
Moreover, despite the fact that most of them declared a basic or intermediate ICT level, all of them except two used online tools before the pandemic. It is also important to note that half of them stated that they are experts in the online safety, although they have basic knowledge regarding the GDPR and NDP laws.

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Graph 3: ICT level, Online safety expertise and knowledge of NDP Laws



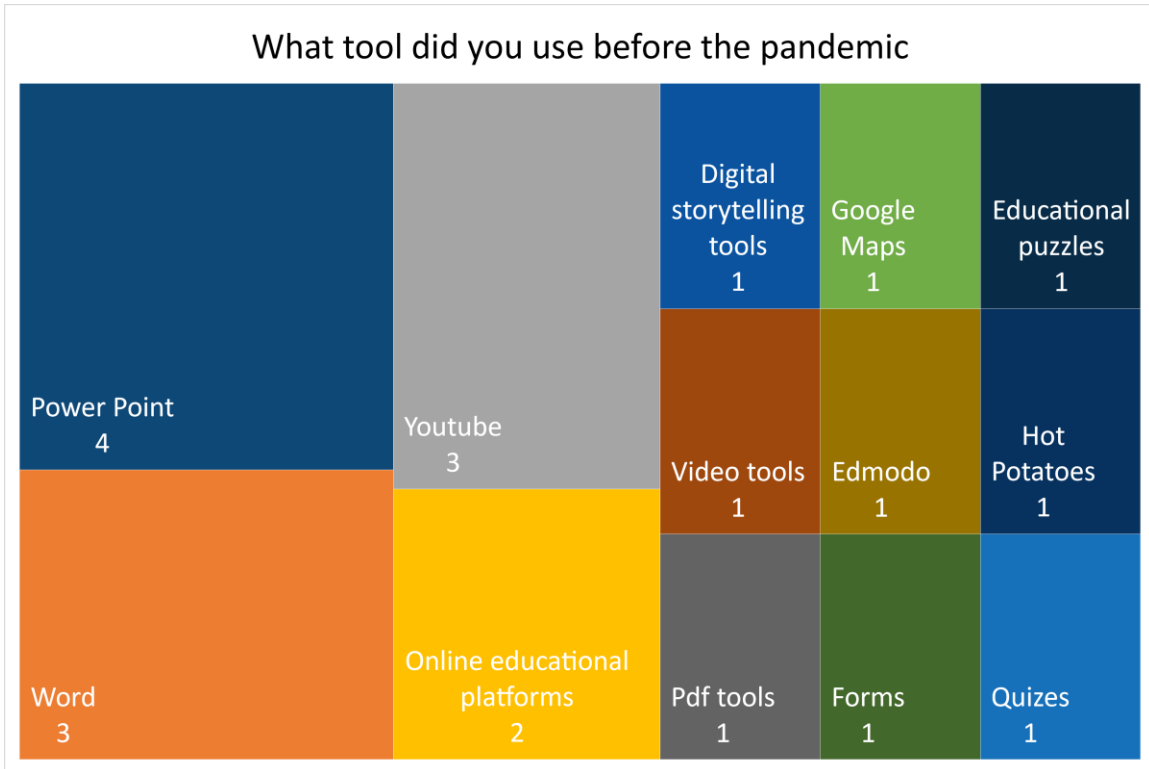
Graph 4: Use of online tools before the pandemic

It is also interesting that as depicted in the graph 5 below teachers used a variety of educational tools before the pandemic. PowerPoint, Word and YouTube are the tools that teachers mostly used. However, during the pandemic teachers mainly used videoconference and presentation tools. As far as the videoconference tools are concerned

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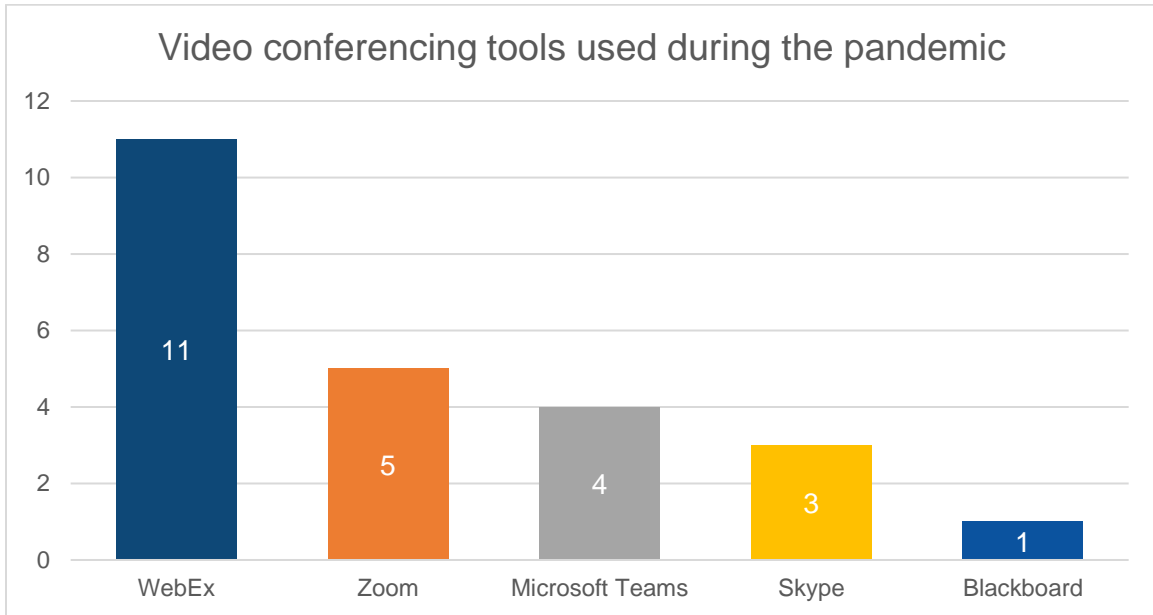
Webex is the most popular tool and this could be justified as the Ministry of Education provided the Webex to all schools in order to support distance learning. However, teachers also used Zoom, Microsoft teams and Skype. One teacher used the Blackboard. The presentation tool that teachers preferred using is the PowerPoint. In addition, they also used the blackboard/whiteboard, the PowToon. A minority of them used also Canva, Prezi, Smart notebook, Webex, Videoscribe. Half of the responders didn't use any social media during the pandemic. The others used YouTube and one stated that he used messenger.



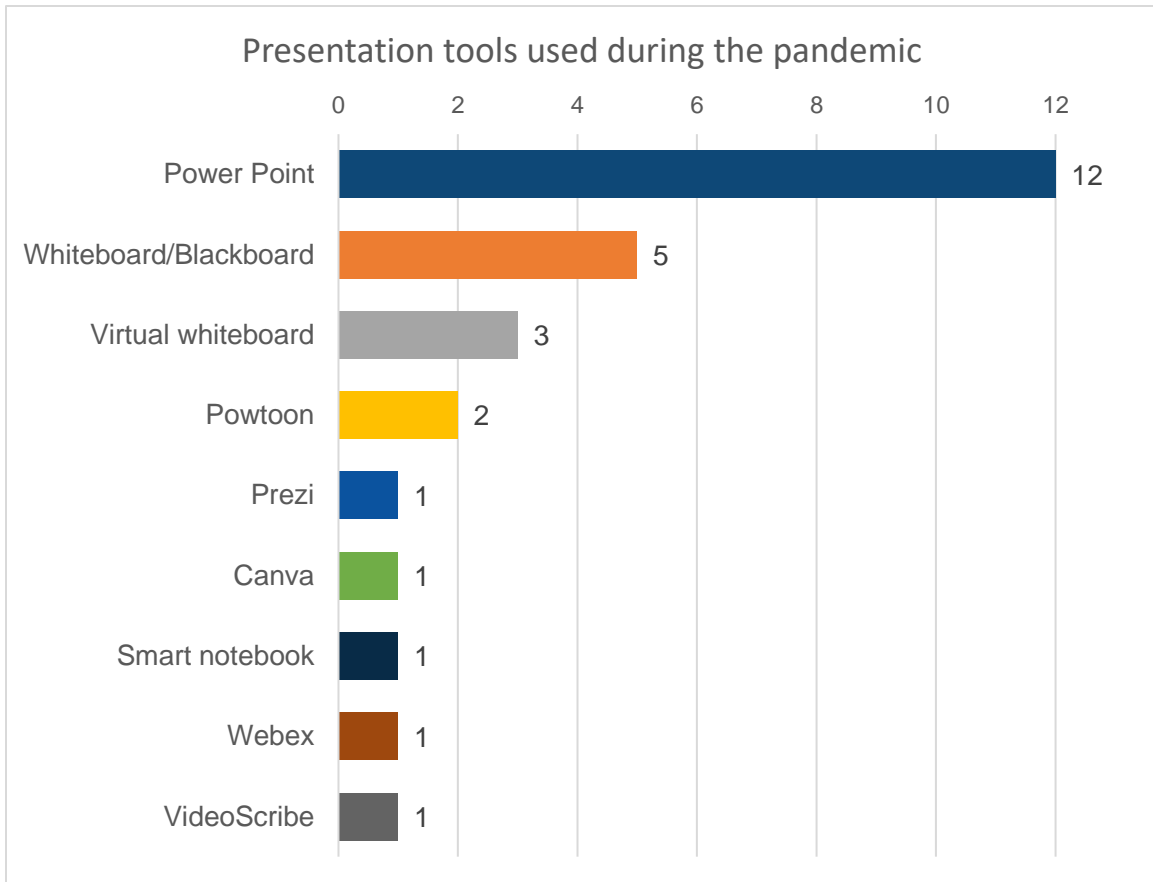
Graph 5: Tools used before the pandemic

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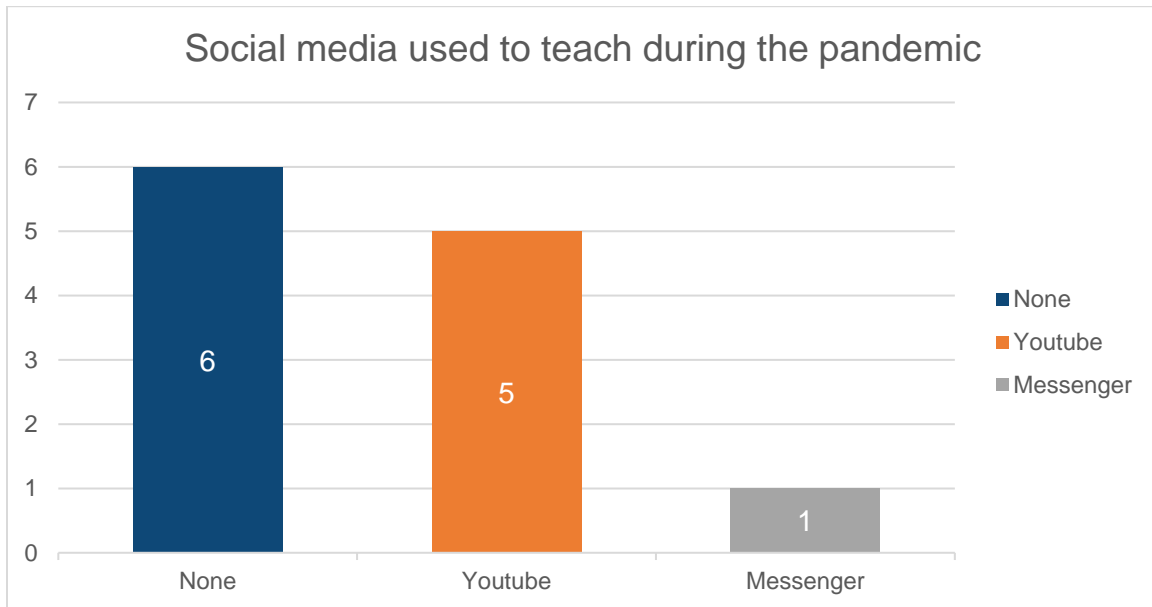
Graph 6: The video conferencing tools used during the pandemic



Graph 7: Presentation tools used during the pandemic

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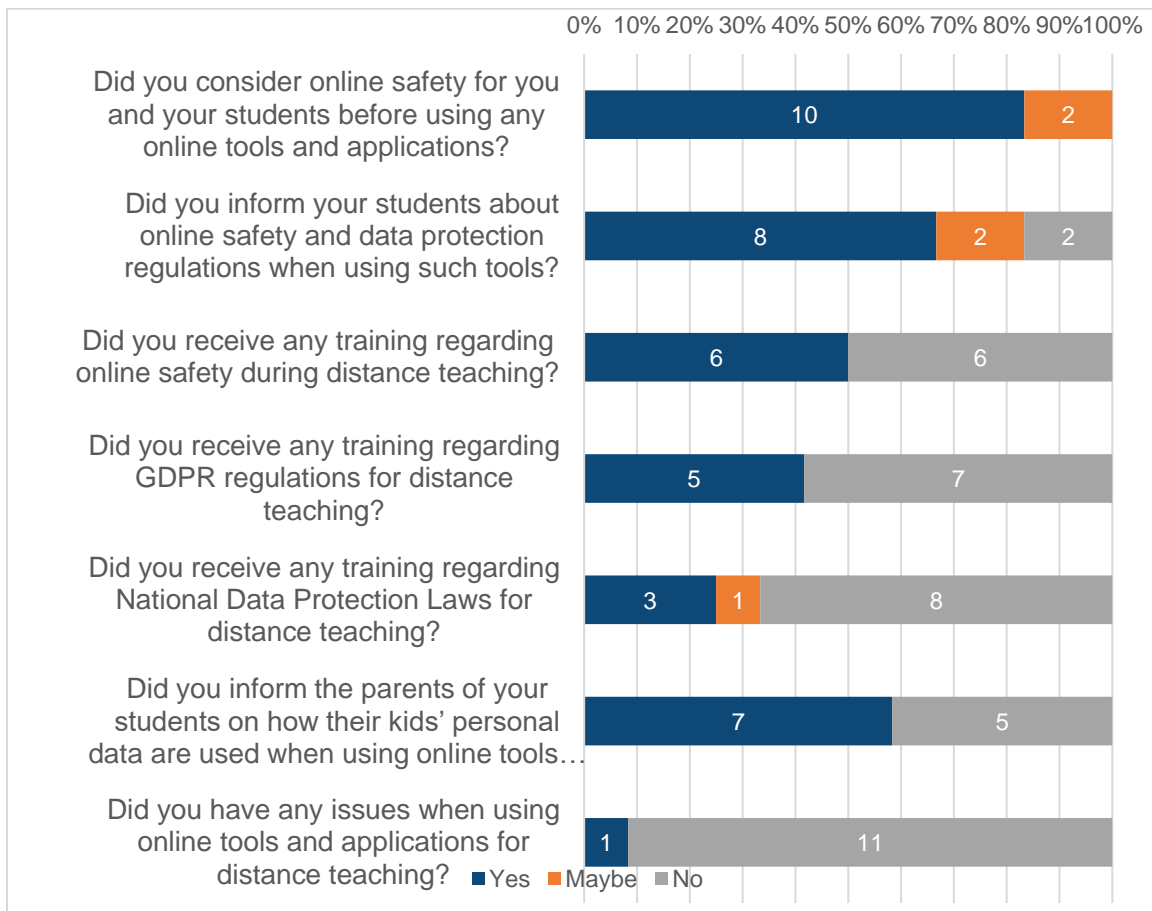


Graph 8: Social media used during the pandemic

Furthermore, as it was mentioned above teachers are informed about online safety probably due to the fact that the curriculum refers to online safety. Actually, most of them responded that they tried to inform their students on how to stay safe on-line and protect their personal data as students had more access to internet due to distance learning. However, half of the teachers didn't receive any training regarding on-line safety and GDPR laws. In addition, only 3 out of the 12 teachers were trained about the national data protection laws. However, more than half of them informed parents about how their kids' data are used while they are on-line. Fortunately, none of the teachers except one had issues when using tools and applications for distance learning.

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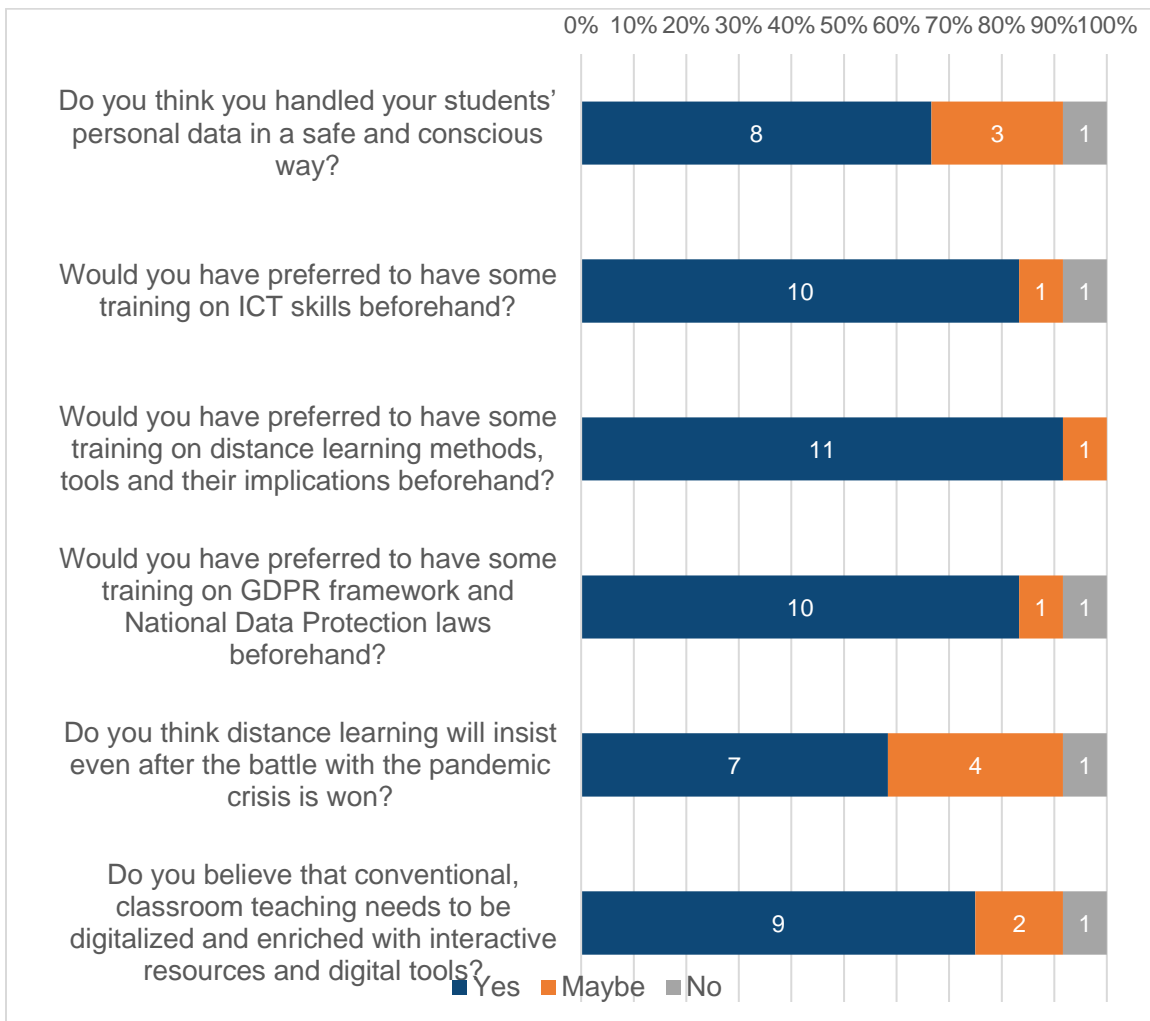
Graph 9: On-line Safety and Data protection

Even though there was no training on data protection the majority of teachers responded that they tried to protect their students' personal data. They also responded positively to all questions regarding the training on on-line safety, GDPR and NDP laws.

Finally, another interesting aspect that worth referring to is the fact that almost half of the teachers believe that distance learning will remain as a way of learning even after the end of the pandemic. In line with the above statement all teachers except one believe that the classrooms should be digitalized and enriched with interactive and digital tools.

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Graph 10: Distance learning

4 National Data Protection Laws in Greece

4.1 Specific data protection laws

The Hellenic Data Protection Authority is an established independent public authority, which has as its mission the supervision of the application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), national laws 4624/2019 and 3471/2006, as well as other regulations concerning the protection of the individual from the processing of personal data. The legislation on the protection of personal data includes the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) [2016/679](#) (GDPR), Law [4624/2019](#), Law [2472/1997](#) as well as Law [3471/2006](#) in the field of electronic communications.

In particular, the GDPR was implemented as from 25/5/2018, in accordance with Article 99(2) thereof. According to Article 288 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European](#)

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Union, the GDPR is directly applicable to all Member States, which are required to take the necessary measures to adapt their national legislation.

4.2 Legal implications for online tools for education

The Ministry of education following the guidelines of the Hellenic Data Protection Authority signed an agreement for the protection of personal data with the Cisco company to ensure that teachers and students personal data will be protected(<https://trustportal.cisco.com/c/dam/r/ctp/docs/privacydatasheet/collaboration/cisco-webex-meetings-privacy-data-sheet.pdf>). In addition, a guide was provided to all educational institutions regarding the use of on-line tools and the protection of personal data(https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2020/20200515_%CE%A6%CE%95%CE%9A1859_%CF%84%CE%92_15052020_%CE%A3%CF%8D%CE%B3%CF%87%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%B5%CE%BE%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%84%CE%AC%CF%83%CE%B5%CF%89%CF%82%CE%B5%CE%BA%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%AF%CE%B4%CE%B5%CF%85%CF%83%CE%B7.pdf)

The main features of the platform used in distance learning were the following:

1. the recording and the storage feature have been deactivated
2. "locked" digital rooms have been created, in which the teacher had the exclusive system control

It's worth mentioning that it was allowed to private schools to use other platforms for distance education as long as they respected the GDPR laws.

4.3 Components of GDPR

The GDPR requires institutions to have at least one lawful purpose for processing personal data and an additional lawful purpose for processing special category data.

4.4 Common ground between GDPR and NDP Laws

The educational organisation to be compliant with privacy legal framework should take into consideration the following:

1. Institutions should have at least one lawful purpose for processing personal data.
2. Institutions should have as well an additional lawful purpose for processing special category data.
3. Institutions should take the appropriate technical and organizational measures such encryption of data, password policy, two step authentications, etc.

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4. Institutions should implement a Data Protection Impact Assessment (Dpia) for the operation of e- learning platforms.
5. Institutions should inform the subjects (students and teachers) about the process of their personal data and their rights.
6. Institutions should take into consideration the special provisions of each national data protection law for the age of minor consent.

5 Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemia is the biggest challenge facing education systems worldwide and is obviously directly related to distance learning.

The Ministry of Education in Greece provided online tools and platforms and tried to support teachers in order continue educating their students through synchronous and asynchronous methods. In reality, in Greece the second year of pandemic the majority of students were able to attend classes while they were at home.

Although, teachers used the online tools they had at their disposal they were not trained with view to be informed about the protection of personal data. As a result, concerns were raised regarding data privacy issues and both teachers and students didn't feel protected during the online courses.

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