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Museum visits to become more fun

An EU-funded project has come up with a mobile device app that makes a visit to a museum or historical site much more entertaining and interactive through augmented reality and geolocalisation technologies.

A consortium of academic, industrial and cultural organisations across Europe have used EU investment to create top mobile technology that will enhance visitors' cultural experience through a personal, tailored itinerary and interactive experience created by museum sites.

"The museum visit is likened to a gaming experience"

The Cultural-Heritage Experiences through Socio-personal Interactions and Storytelling (Chess) project is supported by more than €2.8 million in funding from the European Commission under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme.



Sculptures will come to life and even 'talk' to you with the new Chess App.

The Chess App, which will be available to download on smartphones and tablets, aims to bring the past alive, at users' fingertips, making culture and history engaging and available to everyone. Unlike traditional museum guides, the Chess App tells each visitor a dedicated story, focused

on the exhibits most relevant to their interests and mood, with as few or as many details as preferred.

Stories can be enhanced with multimedia, 3D and 'augmented reality' games and, in some cases, objects talk and invite visitors to interact with them.

"A guided tour is a linear experience where the visitor remains rather passive. With Chess the museum visit is likened to a gaming experience, making visitors active and engaged in cultural heritage," said Dr Olivier Balet from Diginext, the French company coordinating the project.

A survey conducted among 68 museums and historical sites across Malta and Gozo revealed that these sites registered 1.9 million admissions in 2011, which is the lowest recorded since 2008. It is hoped that the app can improve the user experience in museums and attract more visitors.

With the online Chess visitor survey, people can register their interests, likes and dislikes. The Chess tool then enables non-IT professionals such as museum curators and staff to develop dynamic storylines integrated with advanced multimedia content.

Finally, the storytelling engine runs the story according to the paths defined but also personalises and dynamically adapts the story being told according to the visitors' individual choices, updating their profile right through the course of the story.

When leaving the museum, visitors will find souvenirs, i.e. a video or a picture, from their own story on the museum's website, thereby leaving them with a personal memory to share with family and friends.

www.chessexperience.eu/