



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

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Bringing mummies to life? New tools to make museums more interactive

[@chessexperience](#) developed by French, British, German & Greek partners in EU-funded project will be showcased at the [Innovation Convention #EUIC2014](#) in Brussels on 10-11 March.

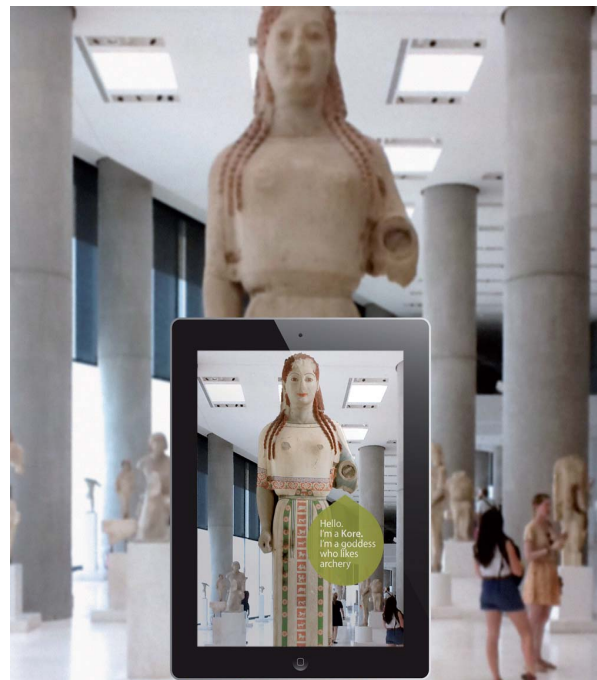
The '**Cultural-Heritage Experiences through Socio-personal interactions and Storytelling**' (CHESS) project is supported by more than €2.8 million in funding from the European Commission and aims to make the museum experience an attractive, more engaging one for all.

Visitors to museums across Europe may soon be able to shape their own cultural experience before even leaving home or getting on a plane.

A new innovation using mobile, augmented reality and geo-localisation technologies turns an ordinary museum visit into a personal, interactive storytelling experience.

A consortium of academic, industrial and cultural organisations across Europe have used EU investment to create and develop mobile technology which will enable tourists to enhance their experience by participating in a personal, tailored itinerary and interactive experience created by museum sites.

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.



"Europe has the world's best [#culturalheritage](#)"
[@NeelieKroesEU](#)

The Vice-President of the European Commission for the [Digital Agenda](#), [Neelie Kroes @NeelieKroesEU](#) said: "*Europe has the world's best [#culturalheritage](#). New digital tools aren't just about sharing that heritage, but about opening up our culture for all. To remain relevant, museums need to be a digital breeding ground for innovation and the app economy*".

Dr Olivier Balet from DIGINEXT, the French company coordinating the project said: "*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. Visitors are informed but also challenged, teased and entertained. This is vital to hold the interest of younger visitors, who are immersed in games on their consoles, smartphones and tablets. But it also makes the whole experience more enriching for everyone*".

How it works

The project has built a number of innovative tools that achieve just this by focusing on the visitors and allowing cultural heritage sites to create and publish experiences tailor-made for them. With the online '**CHESS visitor survey**', people can register their interests, likes and dislikes. This tool permits museums to create surveys with single- or multiple-choice and to link answers with a persona, i.e. a character representative of the visitor's profile. The '**CHESS authoring tool**' then enables non-IT professionals such as museum curators and staff to easily develop multi-path 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.

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 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.

When leaving the museum, visitors will find souvenirs, i.e. a video or a picture, from their own story on the museum website, thereby having a personal memory to share with family and friends. The project according to Dr Maria Roussou of the University of Athens has the potential to revolutionise the way in which we behave and engage when visiting museums.

"CHESS aims to enhance and personalise the experience of each and every visitor by creating a tailored experience, aimed at an individual's likes, hobbies and interests. By directing the visitor to the artefacts of most interest to him or her, and offering interactive content such as quizzes or games, we can greatly enhance the user experience. Not only is this of benefit to the user, but also to the museums, which want their visitors to have the best experience possible and to keep coming back," said Professor Yannis Ioannidis of the University of Athens.

Product Development and commercialisation

The CHESSE product was trialled at the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece and at the Cité de l'Espace Park in Toulouse, France, over six months last year to great success.

Developed by seven partners from four countries - France, Greece, UK and Germany - CHESSE will be introduced to the market by project coordinator DIGINEXT, bringing the project from the research stage to commercialisation. The project co-ordinators are predicting that CHESSE will be launched on the market in two years.

Dr Balet said "Without EU funds this initiative would have not been possible. It really required the combination of world-class expertise in multiple domains, which is generally not available at a national level in Europe. With 55,000 museums worldwide, the opportunities for growth are on a global level".

Michael Jennings, spokesman for European Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, said: "Europe has a rich history that technology such as CHESSE can bring to life for a digital generation and make more accessible to everyone. Building more inclusive, reflective societies is a priority of the Horizon 2020 programme and that includes innovation to communicate and educate European cultural heritage".

Enhancing Europe's cultural heritage, making it digital and accessible online, preserving it for future generations are some of the challenges of the [Digital Agenda for Europe](#) @digicultEU #Europeana.

About CHESSE

CHESSE (Cultural Heritage Experiences through Socio-personal interactions and Storytelling) is a project, co-funded by the European Commission under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The principal objective of CHESSE is to research, implement and evaluate both the experience of personalised interactive stories for visitors of cultural sites and their authoring by the cultural content experts. CHESSE is

HORIZON 2020 - The EU framework programme for Research and Innovation

-  1. Health, demographic change and wellbeing
€608 million
-  2. Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the Bioeconomy
€259 million
-  3. Secure, clean and efficient energy
€640 million
-  4. Smart, green and integrated transport
€578 million
-  5. Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials
€344 million
-  6. Europe in a changing world - Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies
€150 million
-  7. Secure societies - Protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens
€191 million

