

Comment/News

A digital rEUUnion for Europe



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A European rEUUnion is the concept under which Malta's EU presidency took off on January 1. The smallest EU country will now lead the EU during these turbulent times.

Digital is part of Malta's uniqueness, something that could help Europe in crisis. Being an island, Malta embraced global technological developments as a way of overcoming geographical remoteness.

In addition, digital found fertile ground in Malta's key resources: the ingenuity, resilience and perseverance of its people.

Many elements have come together and facilitated fast digital growth in Malta since the early days of ICTs and the internet.

The development of the national fibre optic infrastructure, initiatives to connect more schools, and the increase in Wi-Fi hotspots throughout the islands were some of the highlights of a developing vibrant digital society. Malta continues to embrace even more initiatives that take into account new trends and advances.

This unique digital growth makes Malta well-placed to help with a 'digital rEUUnion for Europe'. In particular, it can be done through the EU's Digital Single Market



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strategy, initiated two years ago, with the aim of bringing down barriers between countries to form a single market where consumers have better choices and businesses have more opportunities to grow.

The elimination of roaming charges, the creation of new partnerships for cooperation on cybersecurity, reinforced protection for network neutrality principles and proposals for a modernised copyright framework and updated consumer protection rules are some of the policy areas that the EU has been working on.

The harmonisation of rules across the EU brings countries closer to the benefits of the Digital Single Market - benefits for digital economies that EU countries have already been reaping. Further developments, such

as the introduction of 5G and more applications for the Internet of Things, can provide additional benefits.

During the EU presidency, by making faster progress on the EU's Digital Single Market strategy, Malta could help to make a strategic shift in the current trends in EU integration. A stronger digital economy can trigger more opportunities for jobs, increased research and development, healthier competition, increased consumer trust, and ultimately, more economic stability.

In addition to opportunities, the digital space will also pose risks. Cyber-attacks, the use of the internet by terrorists and cyber-crime are increasing at a very fast rate. Growing security concerns made Nato

declare cyberspace the fourth military domain in addition to land, water and air.

Countries worldwide are quickly developing cyber-military capabilities. For Europe, protection of the internet infrastructure will be high on the political agenda for 2017. This can take various forms, from the protection of cyber-military attacks to dealing with cybercrime and the use of the internet by terrorists.

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Europe's digital growth is deeply interlinked with the development of the internet. A 'digital rEUUnion for Europe' could create dynamism beyond EU shores. For example, in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the digital realm is increasingly seen as the way to stop the wave of protectionism in global trade.

In 2017, the EU can play an active role in digital trade, which is one of its priorities in the preparation for the WTO ministerial meeting in Buenos Aires. Similarly, the G20, the UN and other organisations are looking to the digital sphere as a way to re-energise growth and international cooperation. A digital rEUUnion can therefore take the notion of a European rEUUnion forward, within the EU and beyond.

The digital sphere is a symbol of connectivity and integration. A successful presidency for Malta, followed by Estonia's presidency in the second half of the year, could offer Europe the impetus it direly needs.

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Icon develops digital solution for Lux-Airport

Icon has successfully completed the development of an innovative, end-to-end digital solution for Lux-Airport, Luxembourg's main airport which acts as the country's focal hub for the rest of Europe.

The airport receives over three million passengers per year travelling to 72 direct locations around the world.

Lux-Airport's main objective is to put the traveller at the centre of its design to clearly understand

their needs and translate these into an elegant, intuitive, dynamic interface. The new assets will provide a seamless travel experience for Lux-Airport passengers by combining mobile app technology with the Lux-Airport website information, which is designed to assist stakeholders through every step of their journey.

With a deep understanding of the travel and aviation sector, and a highly-qualified team,

Icon, a Microsoft and Google Partner, was able to offer a cost-effective solution utilising a balance of 'off the shelf' technology frameworks, and bespoke software development to meet core airport requirements.

A few examples of the key features passengers can find on the Lux-Airport website and mobile application are flights' status and live flight trackers, flight timetable, indoor maps and positioning,

real-time personalisation platform and automated marketing.

Airports are increasingly challenged to improve travellers' experience and provide innovative solutions to support today's age of 'connected travellers'.

Now that the solution has been deployed, travellers arriving and departing from Lux-Airport will be able to plan their trips better, decide on the best method to get to the airport and optimise their time while at the airport, whether it is enjoying a delicious lunch or buying presents for their loved ones.

Icon director Gege Gatt said: "We were extremely privileged to work on this assignment for one of Europe's best airports."

"Luxembourg Airport turned to Icon to achieve competitive advantage and accelerate the speed and agility of its digital growth."

"Icon's deliverables are technologies that help reshape the airport's differentiation and performance."

"Embracing the strategic importance of the web and viewing it as a crucial competitive advantage is undoubtedly a key to the success that has been achieved by Luxembourg's Airport in recent years".



Lux-Airport's website and mobile application feature flights' status and live flight trackers, flight timetable, indoor maps and positioning, real-time personalisation platform and automated marketing.