

A map for all seasons

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Commerce Industry Trade Business

October 16, 2018 | Saviour Formosa and Ashley Hilli | 0

2 min read

Times of Malta

Maps are trendy. They show us for what we stand: we tweet, we post, we upload images on our location. Restaurants are located, bus stops are identified, our next house is visited digitally and on site and various other things that now sit quietly on our phone, tablet or watch.

All based on a map one forgets that even exists and even more so that someone has to create and update it. On top of that someone has to create a series of maps that identify where the bus stops are. It is useless to be told that a stop is 150 metres away when one has no idea which direction to start walking towards.

The geographic, social and physical data when brought together on a map create an integrated system known as a spatial infrastructure. In Malta, after 20 years of preparation, the SIntegraM project was born: out of an initiative by experts within the Planning Authority, the University and all the ministries and entities.

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The Maltese basemap on which all depends for environmental analysis, development planning, laying of new roads, ambulance detours, bus routes and a thousand other applications, is currently undergoing a rebirth. A new basemap will be launched over the next months and alongside that, a series of technologies for its updating, enhancement and application will be integrated into a functioning system.

A system that all entities will have access to, thus speeding up the data gathering and use process, eliminating bureaucracy, errors and discrepancies in data, delays and multiple data capture that posit financial pressures on the State. Thus a map has formed into a cascading reform process.

SIntegraM, as the project was named, is enabling change to happen: change where a person can view their property in 3D, visit a museum or an underground cave, visit places difficult to view such as cliffsides and fly around the island using a virtual reality headset or even their mobile device.

As a lead partner, the Planning Authority was awarded €7 million in ERDF funds to bring to fruition this concept and is achieving its aims through a series of tenders that have already delivered or are nearing their delivery output – which include marine and aerial drones, land-based scanners for the creation of a legacy of structures and how they can be preserved. Other applications include the ability to view the data online through 3D maps.

SIntegraM is not about a flat world, but a live and interactive reality that takes the use of national information to an entirely new level.

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