With a dedicated mission, the Urban Community of Dunkirk encourages digital innovation and falls within the framework of European, national and regional projects. Its strategy is structured around 8 priority areas, the objectives being to improve day-to-day public services and make the territory more attractive economically and as a place to live.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE THE TERRITORY MORE ATTRACTIVE ECONOMICALLY AND AS A PLACE TO LIVE

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KEY FIGURES FOR THE TERRITORY

- 200,000 inhabitants
- 17 municipalities
- More than 20 digital projects supported
- €2.410 million of ERDF funding obtained

Adopted in 2016, the Dunkirk Community’s digital strategy sets out a new ambition for the territory in the field of digital technology. Thus the community project is hinged around innovation though the exploitation of digital technology to make the territory more attractive economically and as a place to live, improve day-to-day public services and ensure our practices evolve to transform the territory.

The Urban Community of Dunkirk decided to adopt an approach placing it within the framework of European, national and regional projects. In 2016, the creation of a dedicated mission within the Communication and Digital Technology Department enabled the local authority to step up its activities in this area. Around twenty digital projects are currently being accompanied and supported, in fields as diverse as culture, economic development, the promotion of tourism, open data, citizenship, etc.

The Les Balises library network

What if all the libraries throughout the urban community became one? In 2013, this simple idea led to the creation of an inter-municipality public reading network bringing together the various towns in the Dunkirk agglomeration: Les Balises.

The first step was to harmonise library access conditions, particularly in terms of making them all free. An IT management system was provided by the Urban Community of Dunkirk (CUD), with catalogue migration in 2013 and 2014. All these operations were covered by an agreement between the intermunicipality and towns, culminating in 2015 in the launch of the Les Balises network, its unique access card and its web portal.
UNIQUE CARD AND NEW SERVICES

Bringing together 12 municipalities across the agglomeration, the network provides access to 600,000 documents that can be borrowed or consulted. The unique card enables users to borrow a document from one library and return it to any other library within the network. The CUD does not have jurisdiction over public reading; towns continue to own their own collections and are free to make decisions concerning further acquisitions. Eight community officers administer the IT tools and coordinate and manage a network of 150 municipal employees.

BENCHMARK DIGITAL LIBRARY

In 2017, within the framework of a call for projects, the Les Balises network was awarded the French “benchmark digital library” label by the country’s Ministry of Culture. The €1.9 million budget, including more than €1 million provided by the Ministry of Culture, helped equip the libraries with RFID technology (to move the lending chain over to RFID technology). Investments in digital infrastructure include automated loans systems and compatible readers now installed in libraries; all volumes have been assigned their RFID identifier. IT systems have been overhauled, both for public reading officers and visitors.

REINFORCEMENT OF ONLINE SERVICES

A reflection process conducted with partner towns led to the reinforcement of services available via the Les Balises portal, initially restricted to document searches and consultation of works borrowed. Today, users can watch 8 films per month, choose from a broad range of training options and read numerous press publications, all free of charge. Public reading officers test and choose the services provided; a provision that is set to expand in the near future with a selection aimed at younger users.

IN FIGURES

- +43% readers signed up between 2015 and 2019
- 29,000 active readers
- 31,000 visits recorded every month on www.lesbalises.fr
- > 2,000 people use the online services (VOD, training, online press)
- More than 600,000 documents available for loan or consultation
- Between 200,000 and 230,000 documents loaned every quarter

The “Operation Dynamo” tourism application

Bring back to life Operation Dynamo and the Battle of Dunkirk via an immersive digital experience, such is the aim of the application developed by the Urban Community of Dunkirk. One of the priorities of the community project, the reinforcement of the territory’s appeal went hand in hand with another specific objective: to support remembrance tourism and the creation of tours incorporating digital technologies, geolocation and data access. In the wake of anniversaries commemorating events from the Second World War and the release of Christopher Nolan’s film “Dunkirk”, a vast heritage site enhancement programme was thus launched. The first phase, conducted in 2016 and 2017, concerned symbolic locations, including the 1940 Dunkirk museum, little ship Princess Elizabeth and the Le Sablier monument. A second phase (2018-2020) is aimed at developing the sites and tours to provide a structured offer.

OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

Going beyond the physical museum, the CUD launched a call for projects concerning an open-air museum concept. The idea was to provide historical mediation surrounding relics still present - monuments, blockhouses, wrecks, etc. - and to recreate the past precisely where the traces disappeared. The result is the development of “Operation Dynamo”, an application that offers scripted historical tours in Dunkirk.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

The two tours currently available offer immersive experiences: virtual re-enactments of scenes, augmented reality of landscapes, panoramic views, sound narration, etc. Users follow an augmented map showing points of interest on each tour: visual elements, mobility, combination with other databases (tourism, culture, etc.). The scenarios developed are aimed at both family and adult audiences. Further tours will be added in 2020, covering the entire agglomeration.

A PLATFORM FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

This project led to the design of an innovative tourist tour management interface, which could be rolled out for other projects, with the possibility of incorporating a “physical” extension to the virtual experience through the involvement of the region’s players: libraries, facilities, hotels, restaurants, etc.