

Minister Bruton launches €2 million research project to digitally capture unique skills involved in Gaelic and Basque Games

- Irish & International Researchers aiming to digitize traditional sports using motion capture technology -

Thursday, 21st March 2013 – GAA Headquarters, Croke Park, Dublin

A major European motion capture technology project to preserve, promote and develop culturally important sports has been developed in Ireland through a unique collaboration between scientists, sporting bodies, cultural organisations and athletes.

Launched today by Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Richard Bruton TD at Croke Park, Dublin, **Re-Play** is a €2million research project funded by EU Framework Programme 7 (FP7) and involves top-class scientists from Ireland, Spain, UK, Switzerland and Greece. Their collaborative work will capture the styles of play and skills unique to Gaelic and Basque Games and develop 3D interactive software that will be used to educate future generations about these culturally significant sports.

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, T.D. said:

“The Re-Play project is an excellent example of the cultural impact that science can have. Sport is deeply ingrained in Ireland’s cultural heritage and this important project will help us preserve, promote and increase participation in our traditional games for future generations.”

Minister Bruton added, “This project is also another excellent example of how we can leverage additional non-exchequer funding to Ireland arising from Government’s investment in excellent scientists through Science Foundation Ireland.”

The project’s Scientific and Technical Coordinator is Prof. Noel O’Connor of CLARITY: Centre for Sensor Web Technologies, a partnership between UCD, DCU and Tyndall National Institute and funded by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). **Re-Play** will initially focus on two families of traditional sports, Gaelic and Basque that are integral to the fabric of their communities and have remained popular in spite of the competition from other more widespread sports.

The project will study the bio-mechanics and unique skills base of Gaelic football, Hurling and Basque Poleta.

Dr Kieran Moran of DCU’s School of Health and Human Performance will work closely with the GAA and the Basque Sports Federation to determine the key biomechanical aspects to be captured, whilst Prof. O’Connor and Dr Mariate Linaza of Spanish research centre Vicomtech-IK4 will coordinate the development of the required technology.

The motion sensors will capture the skills and techniques that characterize and differentiate these culturally important sports. Re-Play will then create 3D rendering of the styles of play of elite sportspersons with precision for posterity and to help educate future generations in these games. In parallel, novel lower-cost technologies using emerging sensors will be developed to enable similar motion capture at local level in order to conceivably put this technology within reach of every club in Ireland or the Basque regions of Spain and France. The project team will also be seeking out opportunities for the Re-Play project results to be applied to other traditional sports and games across the world that share the same cultural significance and are at risk from mainstream sports.

Prof. Noel O' Connor, principal investigator, CLARITY, said, "The continued development of sensor web technology allows us to undertake projects of this scale and diversity in a cost-effective way. Our goal at the end of this project is to create novel 3D software that can be used in every club and community centre across Ireland to allow the user practice new and basic skills and to emulate their national or local heroes in the chosen sport. This project will also recover techniques of past players from archive footage allowing us to unearth forgotten skills and help us analyse the evolution of the sport."

Páraic Duffy, Director General of the GAA, said, "Sport is the most universal and accessible of cultural pursuits. The GAA has played an important role in facilitating and shaping Ireland's social and cultural heritage for generations. We are proud to be part of this important project and it will enable multiple modes of training, coaching and knowledge sharing that will contribute to the increased participation and preservation of our traditional sports into the future."

RePlay brings together eight participants from five countries across Europe including Vicomtech-IK4 and Eusko Jaurlaritza from Spain, Vicon Motion and IN2 Search from the UK, CLARITY and the GAA from Ireland, the University of Geneva, Switzerland and the Centre for Research and Technology, Hellas in Greece.

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