5G: for safer, greener, more competitive communities

The Belgian city of Wavre is combining EU funding and 5G technology to become safer, greener and more competitive.

The European Broadband Competence Offices Network Support Facility

In an era where technology is reshaping our lives, the emergence of 5G technology promises to transform communities in ways previously unimaginable. With its lightning-fast speed and low latency, 5G is set to revolutionise various aspects of daily life, creating smarter, more interconnected communities.

In this interview, we explore how the city of Wavre, with the support of the European Union, is harnessing the power of 5G to enhance safety, save energy, and increase competitiveness.

Enhancing Safety with 5G

The future of community safety is taking flight in Wavre, thanks to 5G technology. Hans Similon, Director of SENSE at Citymesh, sheds light on the city's innovative approach to public safety. The city is introducing a “drone in a box” solution, which offers drones as a service to the police and fire departments. These drones are seamlessly connected to the dispatch center, poised to spring into action when emergencies arise. Upon receiving a distress call, the drone automatically takes flight, providing a crucial aerial perspective during the critical first 30 minutes of an incident.

Two key features of 5G are instrumental in making this technology deployment possible. First, its low latency ensures that the drone can be controlled in real time without any delay, enhancing responsiveness. Second, 5G enables high-quality, real-time video streaming to the dispatch center, giving first responders a comprehensive view of the situation. This innovative approach promises to help fire and police departments make faster, more informed decisions, ultimately saving lives by reducing response times.

Saving energy through 5G

Wavre is also leveraging 5G to optimise energy usage and contribute to the global push for sustainability. Roger Le Bussy, CEO of Wavre Energy Network, underscores the importance of 5G in the city's energy transition initiatives. The city has already deployed nearly 1,500 smart meters across its network, providing real-time data on energy consumption. Moreover, around 80% of the city's lighting points are equipped with sensors, enabling dynamic management of public lighting networks.

This smart approach to energy management has yielded remarkable results. During the war in Ukraine, Wavre managed to save an impressive 1 million kilowatt hours, reducing carbon emissions by 260 tons in just one year. This not only contributes to environmental sustainability but also demonstrates the potential of 5G technology to drive energy efficiency on a large scale.

Ensuring a smart and competitive future

Anne Masson, the Mayor of Wavre, emphasises the strategic importance of 5G in the city's comprehensive plan for the future. Connectivity and 5G, she asserts, are pivotal in making this ambitious plan a reality. The applications of 5G are far-reaching, spanning healthcare, technology, art, scientific research, and security.

Wavre's forthcoming new hospital, technological advancements, and renowned amusement park, Walibi, are just a few examples of where 5G will have a transformative impact. Mayor Masson highlights that connectivity is now as essential as electricity was a century ago, and the city is committed to reducing the digital divide to ensure that every citizen benefits from these advancements.

In conclusion, the future of communities is indeed smart, and 5G technology is leading the charge in Wavre. From bolstering safety and energy efficiency to fostering reliable connectivity, Wavre's visionary approach serves as a beacon for how 5G can shape the communities of tomorrow, ultimately making them safer, greener, and more competitive.

This video was filmed as part of the European Broadband Competence Offices (BCO) Network (http://www.bconetwork.eu/)’s work to raise awareness of EU support for high-speed broadband deployment and share good practices in broadband projects. Discover more interviews in the BCO

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