

A NEW STATISTICAL ATLAS FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

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One way of understanding our neighbours better, is to compare them with ourselves. This is what the international statistics are all about. They are an important, objective and down-to-the-earth way of measuring how we all live and for making those vital comparisons. A statistical atlas is therefore a tool which can be utilised towards the understanding of all those entities which interact day by day and result to what we perceive as a "fact".

The paper presents the concept for a new Statistical Atlas of the European Union (STATLAS) which is currently being developed in a project supported by the European Union.

STATLAS is a synthesis of the domains of cartography, geographic information systems (GIS), multimedia and statistical analysis. The integration of those domains takes place in an environment where interface design, map design and multimedia programming work independently and coherently. The strong point of the multimedia Statistical Atlas of the European Union – on CD/DVD combined with Internet functionality – is the explorative and interactive handling of the presented themes. The target group encompasses both the laymen with high school education and theme specific experts. The themes presented are interesting for all age categories. The multimedia atlas belongs to the interactive analytical type. Besides a high degree of interaction, both analytical and GIS-related functions are implemented.

In its final version, STATLAS will cover a considerable number of topics dealing with European Union and its regions in multimedia map form. It will provide insight into European Union's social and economic structures. This requires a comprehensive database, a cohesive processing methodology, a flexible display environment and a number of tools for the manipulation of statistical data utilising a user friendly interface. Speed, visualisation functions, thematic navigation and GIS functionality are the main characteristics of STATLAS. Visualisation is a critical factor of the system due to the high degree of interactivity required and the quality aspects of cartographic design. 2D visualisation refers to topographic and thematic map design

and the portrayal of the map elements in different contexts under dynamic conditions. One of the big challenges is the collection and homogenisation of statistical data from different countries and sources in order to create a comparable data base. The project can be a forerunner for other interactive statistical atlases covering large, heterogeneous areas or even continents. 3D visualisation refers to the display of the digital terrain model of Europe with additional topographic and/or thematic elements. Due to the great importance of GIS functionality for atlases, STATLAS will combine GIS techniques and multimedia by integrating geo-referenced data and spatial analysis functions within a multimedia authoring tool. STATLAS will also support data analyses (queries, spatial analysis, and statistical analysis). Internet functionality will be an inherent feature of the system. The project is carried out in close collaboration with the developer group of the "Atlas of Switzerland – interactive".

In the proposed paper, the aim and the current state of the project as well as first results will be presented

