

EPIC WebGIS - Sharing knowledge as a tool to integrate Landscape into planning policies

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The EPIC WebGIS is a spatial data infrastructure, which provides georeferenced cartography at a national scale. It can be seen as a tool to integrate landscape into planning policies, offering immediate access to several available themes concerning ecosystems, ecological network, and ecological land suitability. The information on this platform covers landscape sub-systems such as geology/lithology, soil, water, vegetation, climate and land morphology, considered essential to the ecosystem and natural resources management. It also integrates several themes regarding a Potential Land Use Plan for Portugal, taking into account the ecological land suitability for the establishment of different activities, such as nature conservation, agriculture and horticulture, forestry, leisure and recreational facilities, and urban areas.

The available data constitutes the outcome of the work carried by a large team with different scientific backgrounds under two projects: project PTDC/AUR-URB/102578/2008 "National Ecological Network - a proposal of delimitation and regulation" and project PTDC/AUR-URB/119340/2010 "Potential Land-Use Ecological Plan. Application to Portugal", both financed by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). Currently, the EPIC WebGIS is organized in 16 major themes and has 111 maps available for download.

The EPIC WebGIS gives a significant contribution to spatial planning in the identification and quantification of strategic topics in mapping development policies and strategies, from a sustainable development perspective. The EPIC WebGIS was created to serve as a technical and scientific reference at all levels of Planning and related political decision-making. This platform is free of charge and open to new data, contributing to the implementation of Open Access policies.

Our goal is to present EPIC WebGIS, statistical information about the users and discuss how cooperation can enhance the generalization and acceptance by society of an ecologically-based planning policy, which will bring already, recognized social and economic benefits. The use of the available cartography as an auxiliary tool in spatial planning will contribute to a more sustainable landscape management.

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