The Eu "atlas Of The Seas": A Novel Outlook On Coastal Issues

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The European Atlas of the Seas (MARATLAS) is a public, web-based, graphical database (http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeatlas) aimed at practitioners, policy-makers, managers, teachers, students, and anyone interested to learn more about Europe's seas and coasts, their environment, as well as related human activities and policies in the European Union (EU). Its current version - a communication tool foreseen by the EU Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) already in 2007 - is available in English, German and French, and presents maps with data obtained primarily from the European Commission (EC) and its Agencies. The Atlas shall be further developed in the period 2013-2014, in order to improve access to data and information related to the European Seas, and to provide a suite of ready-made instruments for the first-cut assessments of marine and coastal issues. In order to do so, MARATLAS will be hosted directly by the EC Joint Research Centre (JRC), to facilitate the development of new services and features, as well as the interaction with other information access tools currently available or planned. The future Atlas will be compatible with, though separate from, the wider family of JRC information systems (e.g. the Global Marine Information System, GMIS, http://gmis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/), as well as with its spatial data product generation mechanisms, adding also data analysis and interpretation capabilities, for the combination of basic information into coupled ecological and socio-economic indicators. Further, it will be interfaced to other databases, including both JRC in-house archives and relevant external sources, to ensure a reliable and up-to-date and authoritative window on all European Seas, using data and indicators taken from sources such as Eurostat and/or other Commission Services, or the European Environment Agency. The resulting MARATLAS shall be equipped with map services and basic data analysis capability, such as product to product correlations, or time series visualisation, capable of providing a quick, but detailed and reliable reference source of maps, facts and figures, to both the general public and a selected professional audience i.e. either figures holding policy-oriented or managerial positions, in both the public and private sector, or responsible for the planning and execution of projects and programs, or involved with educational institutions, non-governmental organisations and international bodies.