



GEOSTAT 3 WP3

The report from the feasibility study on migrating the EFGS website to the CROS portal

Project	ESSnet project GEOSTAT 3
Agreement No.	08143.2016.002-2016.752
WP	WP-3 Maintaining the EFGS website
Task	3.2: Feasibility study on migrating the EFGS website to the CROS portal
Deliverable	A short report, presenting the results from the feasibility study on the possibility to migrate the EFGS website into the CROS portal.
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1. Introduction

GEOSTAT is now in its fourth round (GEOSTAT 3 project) and the technical specification from the project owner (Eurostat) requested in the work package 3 hosting, maintaining and improving the official website of European Forum for Geography and Statistics (EFGS). A part of this work package is also a small study carried out on the feasibility to migrate the EFGS website (www.efgs.info) to the CROS portal (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros>), thereby preserving the EFGS branding and the features of the current EFGS website.

Current EFGS website is visited by many users. Member of EFGS community, as a web administrator of *efgs.info*, has possibility to check statistics and profile of users who visit the website. Recently *efgs.info* had on average about 750 users monthly, and this number increased during previous months.

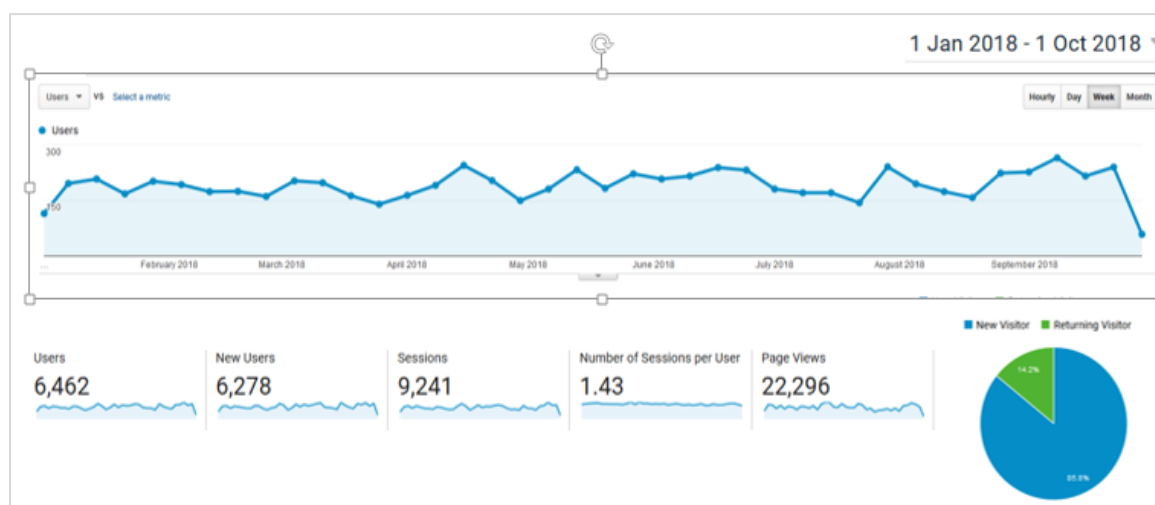


Figure. 1 Statistics on users of *efgs.info*

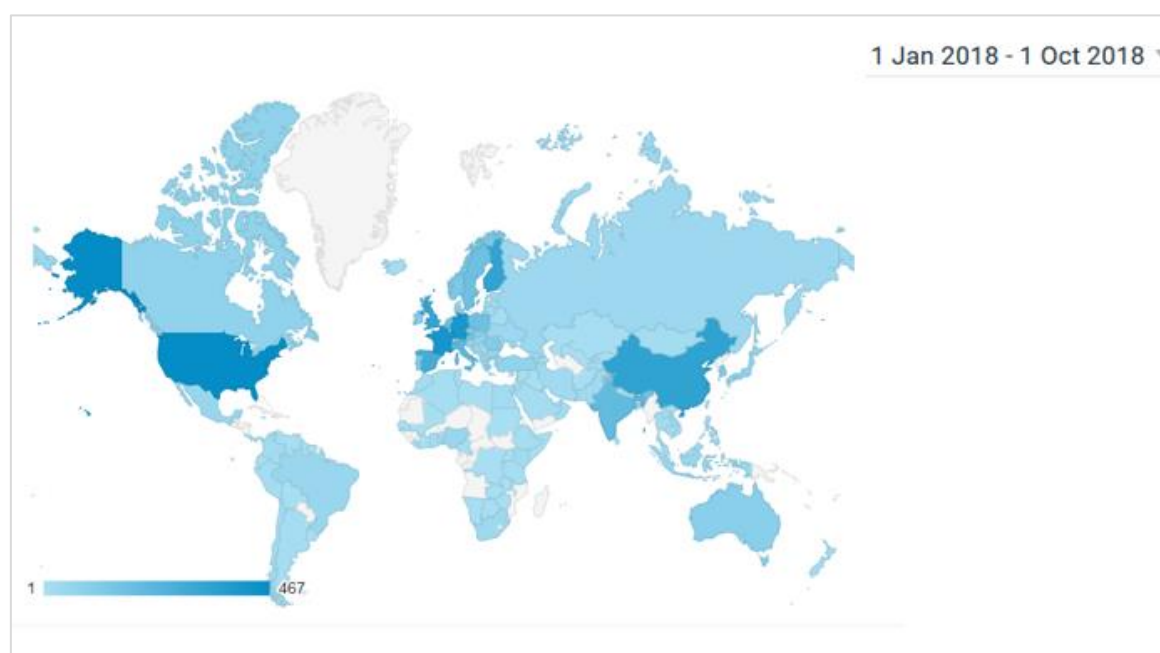


Figure 2. Users of *efgs.info* by country

2. Criteria for the feasibility study

GEOSTAT 3 project consortium discussed criteria on which the feasibility study of migrating the website should be based and which show advantages and disadvantages of EFGS webpage as independent portal and from the other side advantages and disadvantages of migration EFGS webpage to the CROS portal. In the analysis of the two portals, issues that are important for EFGS community, from web administrator and users point of view were taken into consideration during benchmarking.

2.1. Advantages of EFGS webpage as independent portal

Branding of EFGS:

- EFGS webpage was developed as a separate brand, which now is recognisable globally;
- A lot of effort, time, workload and finances has been devoted to develop and maintain the current EFGS webpage;
- The webpage is a first and main source of information about the EFGS conferences;
- The webpage has a special separated space for the Lars H. Backer Prize; Colour scheme of EFGS social community on Facebook is adjusted to the colours of EFGS logo and colours of EFGS the webpage.

Community service:

- Members of the GEOSTAT projects have current access to administrate, update and make essential or urgent adjustments of the webpage;
- It is one of the products of ESSnet GEOSTAT 2 project;
- The webpage was designed and developed in accordance with the needs identified in the user community;
- The structure of the webpage was organised in a way that facilitate usage by basic and advanced users;
- The webpage was created to facilitate users to share their knowledge within the field of spatial statistics;
- The webpage is a main reference point for the promotion of progress made in the field of spatial statistics;
- It is a place where data about EFGS, NFGS and GFGS national contact persons is collected and constantly updated;
- The webpage is a space where GIS expert can publish results and experiences of their researches, projects, surveys and other good practises in the field of spatial statistics;
- The webpage provides a calendar with different kinds of events concerning spatial statistics organized not only on European but also on global level;
- It is a contact point for EFGS management and steering committee.

Maintenance:

- The project regularly provides content and update the webpage with information from the GEOSTAT projects, annual EFGS conferences, other interesting geospatial analysis projects, methodological information, and other relevant news and results from national and international trustworthy sources;
- The webpage provides unlimited space to publish datasets, maps, presentations and photos from projects and conferences;
- The webpage has a user friendly layout;
- Hosting cost is affordable.

2.2. Disadvantages of migration EFGS webpage to the CROS portal

Branding of EFGS:

- The EFGS brand will lose its own value, quality and independence as an unbiased body which allows the exchange of ideas among network of GIS experts globally;
- High risk and probability of losing prestige and importance of EFGS on global level, due to incorporation to regional structure.

Community service:

- The EFGS bookmark will be one of the many bookmarks on the CROS portal and reaching it by potential users may be time consuming, which may discourage them from using it;
- Information about current projects on the CROS portal are very poor, without news, progress information, user's posts, calendar and upcoming events that are particularly relevant for the EFGS community, are catchy for readers and created up-to-date content of EFGS website.
- A layout of the portal is less intuitive than the EFGS website for users who look for issues concerning geospatial statistics;
- The lack of ability to share knowledge by and with users.

Maintenance:

- Lack of control over the administration of the website and revision of content;
- A long-term process of building a new website on the CROS portal;
- No guarantee that the whole content of the EFGS website will be transferred to the CROS portal;
- The current EFGS website contains a lot of data and there is no guarantee that EFGS will receive enough capacity on the CROS portal's server;
- Uncertainty about the final results of migration;
- Confirmed bad experience with using and administration of CROS portal by one of EFGS members who found it less user-friendly than the current EFGS website
- The lack of regular update of content of the whole CROS portal.

2.3. Advantages of migration EFGS webpage to the CROS portal:

- Cost of hosting and maintenance of EFGS website will be on the CROS portal site;
- Migration of the EFGS website to the CROS portal will cause that it will become a part of the Eurostat database.

3. CROS portal vs. EFGS website

The feasibility study based on the comparison of similarities and differences between the two websites shown the importance of the following issues in the assessment of the utility of EFGS website, as separated or migrated to the CROS portal:

- **Users**

The CROS portal – stands for "Portal on Collaboration in Research and Methodology for Official Statistics" and is dedicated to the collaboration between researchers and Official Statisticians in Europe and beyond. It provides a working space and tools for dissemination and information exchange for statistical projects and methodological topics. Services provided include hosting of

statistical communities, repositories of useful documents, research results, project deliverables and discussion fora on different topics like the future research needs in Official Statistics.”

The EFGS website – a reference point for European geospatial statistics. The website gives visibility to the GEOSTAT projects, the Statistical Geospatial Framework, the progress made in the field of geospatial statistics and any other relevant information on the subject of geospatial statistics and the integration of statistics and geospatial information. It provides a basis for knowledge sharing, not only for European and national users, but also for global statistical and geospatial communities. The users of *efgs.info* come, not only from statistical society, but the domain is also visited and used by researchers and experts from mapping agencies and other institutions focusing in their work on integration of statistics with geospatial information.

• Development of the EFGS website

EFGS website was created through the EFGS community, which is recognisable world widely. Initially its website was developed and hosted by Statistics Norway (www.efgs.ssb.no), as EFGS arose from the Nordic Forum for Geostatistics (NFGS). Because of the first round of GEOSTAT projects (1A) a dedicated domain name was registered and the whole content of EFGS website was moved to *efgs.info*. In the next GEOSTAT projects, the EFGS website was given a new design, was evaluated and modernized.



a) *efgs.ssb.no*



b) Former layout of *efgs.info*

Figure 3. Illustrations of the previous EFGS websites

The current design of EFGS website was created as part of the GEOSTAT projects in accordance with the needs identified in the user community. Efforts were made to organise the website in the way that would facilitate the consolidation of existing knowledge along with enhanced capabilities for users to share their knowledge.

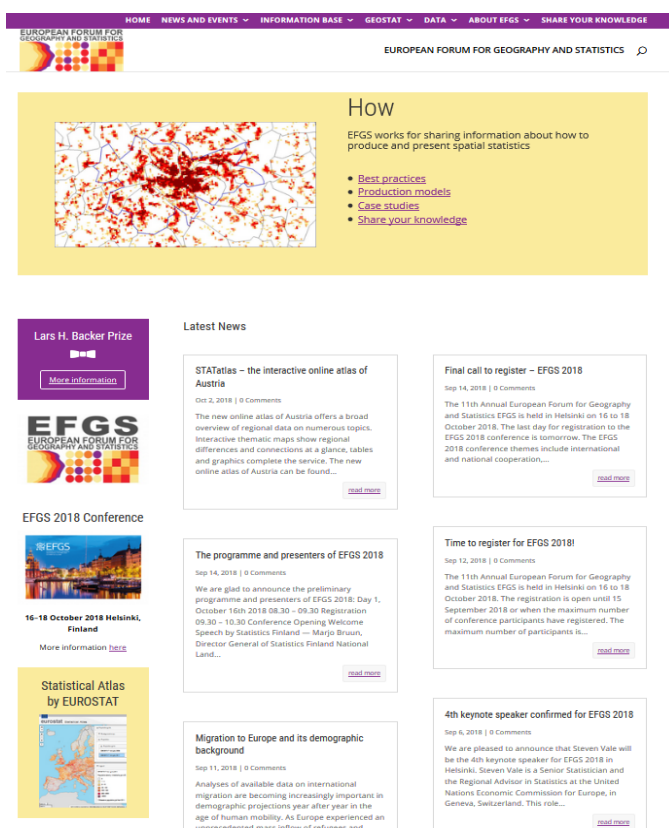


Figure 4. Illustrations of the current EFGS websites (*efgs.info*)

Thanks to the development, the site has its own brand, a high quality and is recognizable among statistical and geospatial communities not only in Europe but all over the world. EFGS has its own logo and the website has established colours and a structure that could be lost if it would be transferred to the CROS portal. *Efgs.info* has constantly been maintained, updated and developed by members of the EFGS, in a response to the community needs.

• EFGS on CROS portal

The EFGS community is active through its own webpage. However, we try to find information about its activity on the CROS portal. Although there are many sections, groups and other subdivisions on CROS portal, it is difficult to find anything about EFGS. The question is, if there is a suitable place for the content of the EFGS website on the CROS portal. On the front page, there are a few sections, which can be the paths for users that are looking for EFGS issues. For example sections "*Data collection and integration*" or "*Technology for official statistics*". They contain headlines such as "*GIS*" or "*Data integration*", which would be the most suitable. However, the content is not updated very often. Experiences of some EFGS members show that it has been difficult to find the appropriate information concerning integration of statistical and geospatial information on CROS portal and it was the reason why that they haven't used the CROS portal for their work.

• GEOSTAT projects on webpages

EFGS act as a reference group for Eurostat and the project group for the ESSnet GEOSTAT projects. Deliverables of the activities in these projects are significant for the EFGS community.

- **GEOSTAT on CROS portal**

The GEOSTAT projects are not noticeable at the beginning when we look for them on the CROS portal. They are hidden in tab “*Groups*” where we can see section ESSnet. When we scroll the ESSnet section, we find the headline “*Finished ESSnet projects*”. There we can find previous GEOSTAT projects (1A, 1B and 2). Nevertheless, the information about projects, its activity and deliverables is rather short and poor and not much information about the projects and their outcomes are presented.

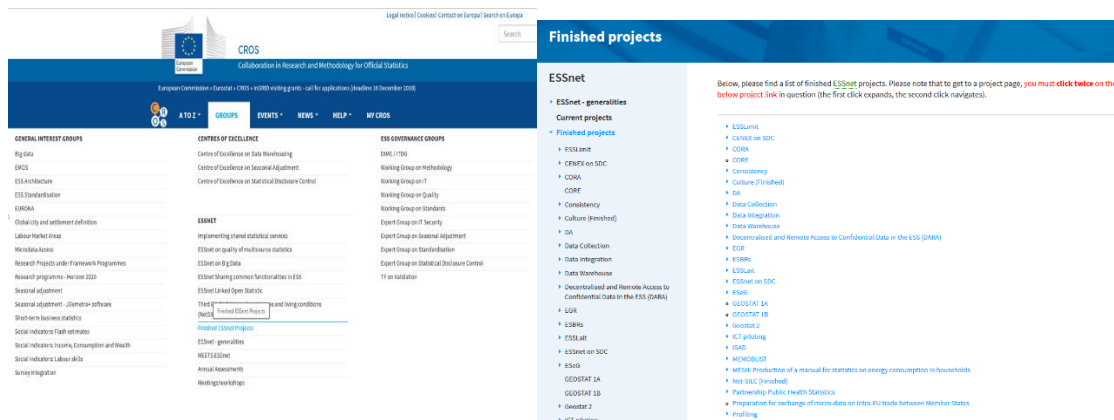


Figure 5. GEOSTAT projects on CROS portal

From the subpage of “*Finished projects*” we can switch to “*Current projects*”, where should present the GEOSTAT 3 project. However, it is not visible for users.

Moreover, the “*Current projects*” subpage should also be visible on the main list of activities, within the ESSnet section, to find it faster. Although the users of the CROS portal could be interested in the GEOSTAT activities, probably they would rather resign if they could not find what they want quickly and in an easy way.

- **GEOSTAT** on *efgs.info*

The GEOSTAT projects have their own tab on *efgs.info*, which is visible in the headlines of the front page.

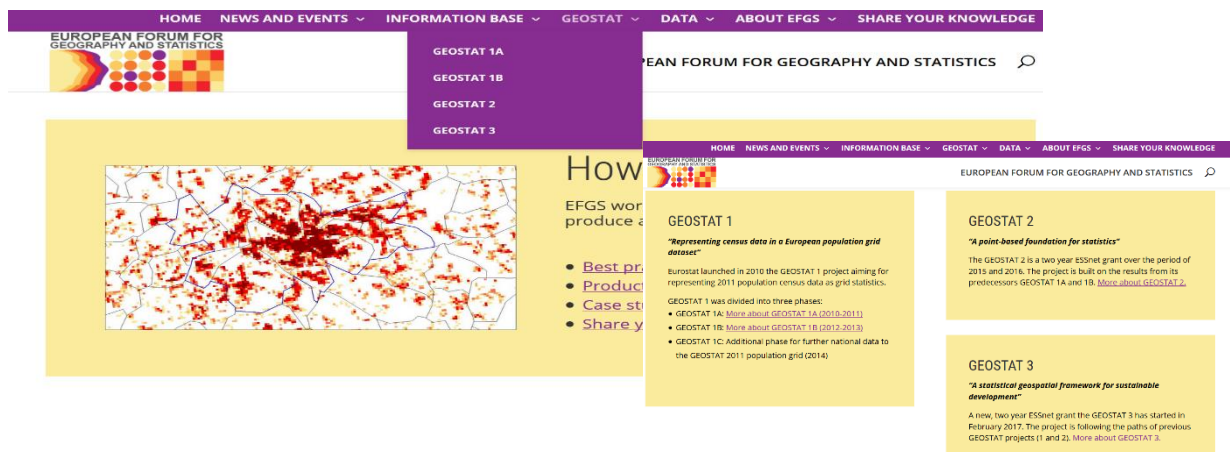


Figure 6. GEOSTAT projects on *efgs.info*

Furthermore, every project from the GEOSTAT series has its own subpage, where all the information, documents, deliverables and final results are published. Presentations made by project members during different meetings and conferences, are also accessible there. These materials can be visible and downloaded by everyone.

EU

Project deliverables:

Final results

- [A Point-based Foundation for Statistics - Final report from the GEOSTAT 2 project \(main report\)](#)
- [Annex 1. Use cases - Final report from the GEOSTAT 2 project](#)
- [Annex 2. Results from national exercises on the GSBPM - Final report from the GEOSTAT 2 project](#)
- [Annex 3. Statistics Finland's ten-point-guide for testing the implementation of the GSBPM to describe the production of spatial statistics in NSIs - Final report from the GEOSTAT 2 project](#)
- [Annex 4. Proposals for revision of the GSBPM - Final report from the GEOSTAT 2 project](#)

Results from the 2015 GEOSTAT 2 survey on geocoding practices in European NSIs

Documents from the GEOSTAT 2 meetings

Presentations made by the GEOSTAT 2 project

Figure 7. Subpage for GEOSTAT 2 projects on *efgs.info*

Similarly, for the GEOSTAT 3 project there was a new page created. It is regularly updated by the *efgs.info* web administrator. is a GEOSTAT 3 member and has participated in the project activities and most of project meetings. The GEOSTAT 3 page is the only one place where the latest news, deliverables and reports from meetings concerning current and future activities within the project are posted.

EUROPEAN FORUM FOR GEOGRAPHY AND STATISTICS

GEOSTAT 3

A statistical geospatial framework for sustainable development

Following the paths of previous GEOSTAT projects (1 and 2) the general objective of GEOSTAT 3 is to foster a better integration of geospatial information and statistics, in order for the statistical community to provide more qualified descriptions and analyses of society and environment.

The main focus of GEOSTAT 3 will be to develop the European version of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (SGF) for the ESS, taking into account existing conditions, initiatives and European and national frameworks.

More specifically, the objectives of the GEOSTAT 3 project are to:

- Develop the European adaption of the SGF (ESS-SGF).
- Develop recommendations on how to implement the ESS-SGF in EU member states within and outside NSIs.
- Test the usefulness of the ESS-SGF and its implementation on selected indicators for the UN Sustainable Goals (SDGs).
- Support the EFGS in its networking, information sharing, Community and capacity building efforts.
- Disseminate and share the results from the GEOSTAT projects among the NSIs.
- Promote the application of geospatial statistics and the integration of geospatial information into the statistical production process, within the framework of the GSBPM.
- Better involve NMCAs or other geospatial stakeholders in the charge of geocoded registers and administrative data into the network of the EFGS.
- Contribute to the work on the integration of statistics and geospatial information into the framework of UN-GGIM.

The action will be undertaken by a network consisting of eight NSIs and three sub-contractors with vast experience in the field of geospatial information and statistics. The group forms a mix of NSIs with a longstanding history of geospatial statistics together with NSIs which have made more recent progress in the field.

The action of the project will be organized under five different work packages:

Project deliverables:

Documents from the GEOSTAT 3 meetings

Presentations made by the GEOSTAT 3 project

- [GISCO working group meeting in 2017, The GEOSTAT 3 project - A statistical geospatial framework for sustainable development - Scope of the action](#)
- [GISCO working group meeting in 2017, The EFGS webpage](#)
- [GISCO working group meeting in 2017, The EFGS 2017 conference](#)
- [UN-GGIM: Europe, Plenary session, GEOSTAT 3, Brussels 20170608](#)
- [EFGS 2017 conference in Dublin, GEOSTAT 3 - A Statistical Geospatial Framework for the ESS - Preliminary results from the GEOSTAT 3 project](#)
- [EFGS 2017 conference in Dublin, GEOSTAT 3 - Intermediate results automated map generation](#)
- [EFGS 2017 conference in Dublin, GEOSTAT 3 - Survey on best practices of automated generation of WMS and WFS map service](#)
- [EFGS 2017 conference in Dublin, GEOSTAT 3 - The EFGS webpage](#)
- [Q2018 conference in Krakow - GEOSTAT 3 - A European implementation Guide for the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework \(paper, presentation\)](#)
- [EFGS 2018 conference in Helsinki, GEOSTAT 3 - A guide for implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework in Europe](#)
- [EFGS 2018 conference in Helsinki, GEOSTAT 3 - Testing SDG indicators](#)

Final results

Figure 8. Subpage for GEOSTAT 3 projects on *efgs.info*

- **Information base and data**

On *efgs.info* there are also other tabs visible on the main page, such as „*Information base*“ or „*Data*“ which offer a lot of issues important for statistical and geospatial community.

The information base contains:

- *Introduction to spatial statistics* – offering Frequent Asked Questions (FAQ) and terminology. The FAQ are based on questions often asked to EFGS, while the terminology is based on the Proposal for a common statistical-geospatial terminology database from Eurostat. The aim of these sections is to give a better understanding of what spatial statistics is in the context of EFGS.
- *Case Studies* – presenting a series of spatial statistics case studies from various phases in the data production. It should be noticed that this section is planned to be expanded so that enabling publication of case studies from testing selected SDG indicators within GEOSTAT 3 project.
- *Spatial Statistics Best Practices* – proposing some best practices produced by statistical institutes for statistical institutes in the framework of GEOSTAT.
- *Statistical Geospatial Frameworks* – understood as an information infrastructure composed of statistical and geospatial information that are connected and conceptually integrated.
- *Links* – redirecting to topics connected with spatial statistical data centres.



Figure 9. Information base on *efgs.info*

Second important section for EFGS is „*Data*“. This tab contains useful GRID data for downloading, divided per country. There are also links to European grid datasets and national view services and download services.

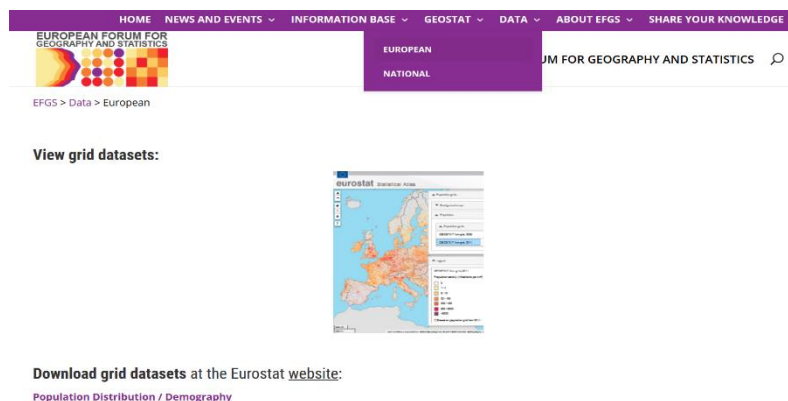


Figure 10. Data sharing on *efgs.info*

The CROS portal does not offer such a place with information base and data sharing, that are important components for the EFGS community, created in response to users' needs.

In addition, *efgs.info* also contains a section about the EFGS organization, steering committee activities and documents from their meetings. As the EFGS community is open for collaboration and is very interested in knowing more about the work done by others within the field of spatial statistics, there is also the section "*Share your knowledge*", through which users can reveal their knowledge and contribute to the information base or news posted on *efgs.info*

- **News**

On the front page of *efgs.info* are the latest news, which are constantly updated by web administrator, who actively harvests and publishes relevant information from trustworthy sources. Other EFGS members and users who want to disseminate interesting results of their work can also participate in creation of the News area. There are articles about geospatial researches, up-to-date information about statistical and geospatial communities conferences, projects and meetings interesting for EFGS.

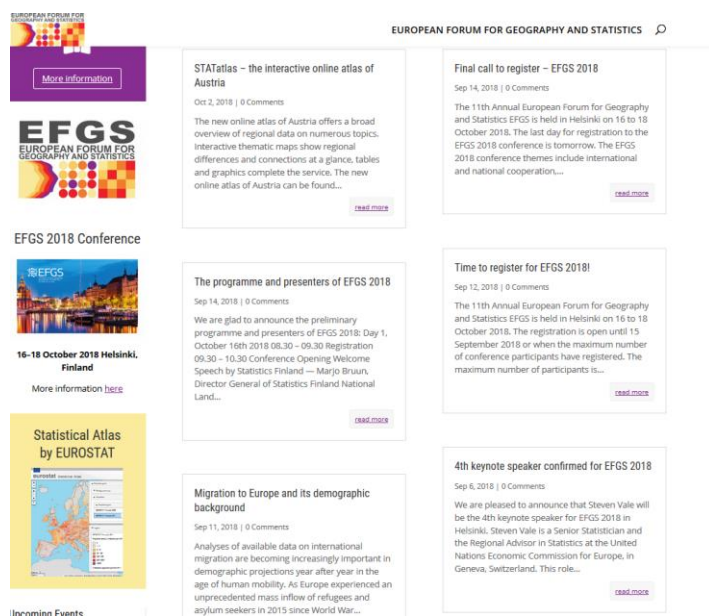


Figure 11. News area on the front page of *efgs.info*

On the CROS portal there is also space for some news. However, only three of them from the whole statistics are visible on the front page. Besides, these materials are not updated often and there is not much information about geospatial statistics.

During tests as a web administrator on the CROS portal, there were no possibility to create articles visible to all users, only for the working group in which we participate. Whereas, on *efgs.info* we can decide if our input will be available for all or selected users.

- **Events (conferences)**

The events section on *efgs.info* contain information about EFGS and NFGS and other conferences. The EFGS conference is the most important event, where the statistical and geospatial communities meet and share their knowledge and result of their work. The EFGS webpage is the first source of information about the upcoming annual conference, with all significant information about participation and registration process. Moreover, it is a significant basecamp and the only place where all documents and photo galleries from previous editions of the EFGS conferences are stored. Each year's conference has its own subpage, with the programme and the repository of abstracts and presentations of speakers, which are available to download. The EFGS conferences have been more popular for each year, among both the statistical and geospatial communities. Each year the number of participants and speakers from all over the world taking part in the annual EFGS conference significantly increases.

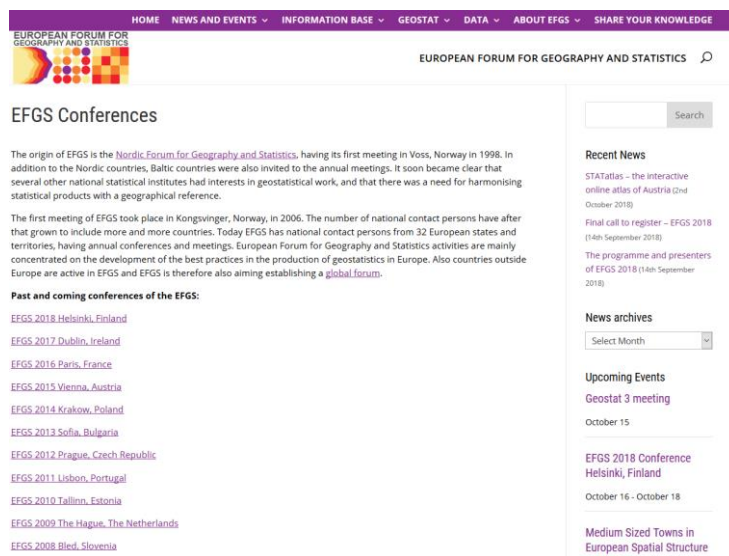


Figure 12. EFGS conferences subpage on *efgs.info*

On the CROS portal there is also an area titled “Events”. However, there is no information about recent and previous editions of EFGS conference. Besides this section, it is more like a calendar with events. There is no area for documents from the conferences.

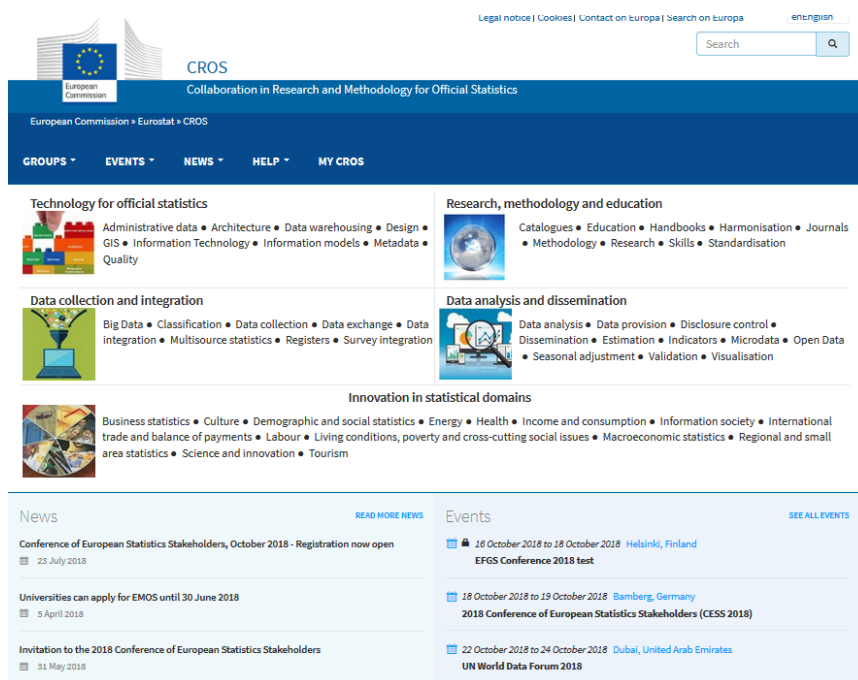


Figure 13. Events and news area on CROS portal

On the CROS portal there is a section called “*Meetings/workshops*”, hidden in the ESSnet subpage where EFGS conferences could be placed. However, this area has not been updated for many years and is almost empty.

- Calendar

Members of the EFGS community participate in many activities, projects, workshops, conferences, forums and other meeting concerning statistical and geospatial integration. All the events are regularly updated in the calendar on *efgs.info*. The web administrator collects information about such events from other EFGS and GEOSTAT 3 project members and put it in the calendar, usually together with some details, such as link to official webpage of events or information about venue.

On the CROS portal the calendar is in the “*Event*” section. It also contains some details about each meeting. However, similarly as in News section, only three events for the whole statistics are visible on the front page. The calendar is not updated often and there are many events for other domains in statistics, but not many in the field of geospatial statistics.

- Media library

From the web administrator point of view concerning good maintenance of the website, it is important to have the possibility to download documents and photos to the software framework. WordPress - the content management system (CMS) in which *efgs.info* is managed, enables to create and modify digital content in satisfying way. WordPress allows downloading of many documents, photos and even whole galleries at once, whereas on the CROS portal users who have permission to manage and modify selected subpages have to download each photo and document separately. Besides, in WordPress an administrator can create some folders in a media library where all files are segregated in certain order, in division for years and months and the possibility to create dedicated folders for news, conferences, GEOSTAT project etc.

Tests of the CROS portal administrator account show that all documents are stored in one folder containing all files. That will cause problems to find concrete file with time. On the CROS portal we cannot edit photos that were downloaded by us. In WordPress administrator we can change parameters of photos for example size if they do not fit to page or to concrete material we want to publish.

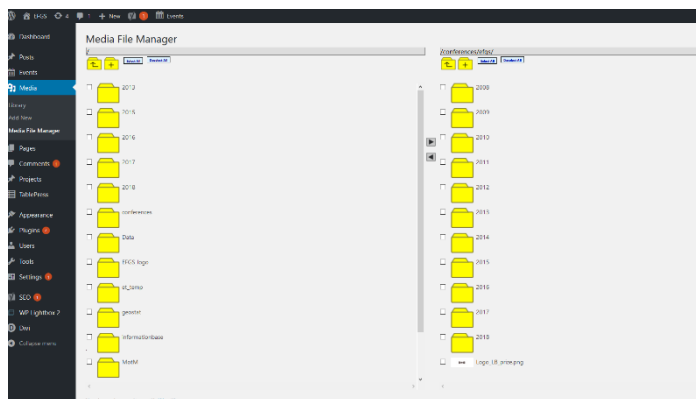


Figure 14. Media File Manager in *efgs.info* administrator account in WordPress

- **Costs**

WordPress is free CMS so the cost, which we compare, is connected with hosting and maintenance. Cost of hosting for *efgs.info* has been estimated as affordable (during GEOSTAT 3 project cost of hosting is around 1000 euro). Migration to the CROS portal will decrease the overall cost. Nevertheless, it is more important to have personal staff with substantive knowledge, not only about technical aspects of web administration, but primarily about the EFGS community, its goals, achievements, deliverables and plans for future activities. It is the crucial condition to appropriately manage and provide up to date content, important for users interested in the integration of statistical and geospatial information. Management by a web administrator is the personal cost, which cannot be reduced, no matter if it will be done on the CROS portal or on the separate EFGS website.

Migration of the website to the CROS portal would cause that the EFGS portal would become part of the Eurostat website. From one side it will be an advantage to be included in the Eurostat portal. However, from the other side, it would cause that EFGS would miss its own brand developed over the years with a lot of efforts, time, workflow and finances.

4. Conclusions

The feasibility study, regarding the possibilities to use the CROS portal for the EFGS information, in comparison to the current EFGS website (*efgs.info*) was based on comparisons of different aspects from a user and web administrator perspectives. We checked for examples in search systems, project information, news, the calendars and possibilities to put different sorts of media on the sites. The results from the testing, which should be emphasized, are:

- It is difficult to find the information that you are looking for on the CROS portal. It is made for collecting documents of separate projects, as the GEOSTAT projects. However, there is no space to gather all information of EFGS.

- The current EFGS website has a good positioning in search engines. Migration to the CROS portal could cause that users of the current EFGS website would not migrate to the CROS portal if they do not easily get the information they want. As a result, the EFGS brand will lose its importance and prestige in the field of geospatial statistics.
- The current EFGS website has a good online positioning in search engines. It has a user-friendly layout, as the projects have actively worked on improving the site and continuously update the information.
- The current EFGS website is managed in free CMS, which is handier to use. The web administrator who found it more complicated to update and put new information on the CROS portal.

The conclusions are that the current EFGS website should be maintained as it is the best choice, considering user needs, branding of EFGS and GEOSTAT, visibility of and access to information.

Although the CROS portal cannot replace *efgs.info*, there should be more interlinks between the two sites so both users of the CROS portal and the EFGS website could benefit of them.

To achieve this, an abstract with the project goals and key results of GEOSTAT 2 and 3 projects should be added to the CROS portal to make GEOSTAT findable by the wider statistical community.

Likewise *efgs.info* should include more links to interesting material on the CROS portal, e.g. on Statistical Disclosure Control and the VIP.ADMIN projects.

5. Appendix

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