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PRESS RELEASE

Completion of the first digital map of Greece within its administrative boundaries of 1940

Please refer to the sample map on page 3

As part of the research project “Database of German military and paramilitary units in Greece 1941-1944/45” and within the framework of an international collaboration between the National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF), the University of Osnabrück and the Greek National Center for Social Research (EKKE), the first digital map of Greece within its administrative boundaries of 1940 is now being created.

What is a digital map?

A digital historical map is much more than a simple scan of an old map: A digital map is a versatile digital map template that can be fed with geo-referenced data sets (so-called attributes, such as population figures, birth and death rates, voting behavior, etc.) within a Geographic Information System (GIS) in order to enable the dynamical display and evaluation of a wide variety of data. For this purpose, each place (hamlets, municipalities, cities, etc.) is provided with a specifically assigned identification number in order to ensure the correct geographical assignment of the information.

Why has such a digital map template not existed for Greece up to now?

The problem with historical maps is that not only must the attributes first be made digitally readable (e.g., by transferring historical censuses to a database), but also that the map template has to be created according to its historical limits. Current maps cannot be used for this purpose, as the administrative structures have repeatedly and profoundly changed since the 1940s e.g., by merging or splitting up municipalities. The work effort for creating such a digital map template was therefore the biggest hurdle: In order to enable the use of digital working methods in historical research, a whole range of information must first be made available digitally within databases. This is only possible with the use of considerable financial resources. As part of the research project “Database of German military and paramilitary units in Greece 1941-1944/45”, however, this work could now be implemented.

How has the work been carried out?

The digital map template that has now been created is the result of an intensive German-Greek collaboration between the following project partners:

- Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF)
- Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies at the University of Osnabrück
- Greek National Center for Social Research (EKKE)





Technical as well as theoretical and methodological problems had to be solved. Specifically, the first task was to completely digitize the 1940 Greek population census of almost 11,000 localities (including the islands of the then Italian Dodecanese) as a machine-readable Excel table. In a next step, a more recent digital map template (in this case from 1997) had to be adapted to the administrative boundaries of 1940. At this stage, it was necessary to take into account several thousand changes in municipal boundaries, whereby the working group was able to rely on the historical editions of the Greek Government Gazette (FEK) as a source. The existing map template could then be adapted with the ArcGIS cartography program to the territorial boundaries of 1940, municipality by municipality.

What are the areas of application of this digital map?

The field of application of historical digital maps is very broad. The research project “Database of German military and paramilitary units in Greece 1941-1944/45” aims to analyze the German occupation during the Second World War at the local level. In order to do this, one therefore not only needs precise information about the troops themselves, but also about the occupied area and its inhabitants, for example to show troop movements and to analyze the respective occupation density.

But beyond the core project, the map template will now undergo further development so that it can be made available to the Greek and international research community: The area of application extends across fields as diverse as research on the consequences of war, migration history, historical demography, the Greek civil war, etc.

What is the research project “Database of German military and paramilitary units in Greece 1941-1944/45”?

For the first time in Europe, a cartographic database will be created on the presence of all German troops in a country that was occupied during World War II. Although the period of the German occupation is given great significance in the collective memory of today’s Greek society, there is so far no systematic recording of all German military and paramilitary units in Greece. This is the aim of the research project “Database of German military and paramilitary units in Greece 1941-1944/45”, which is conducted at the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation. The database will:

- help to accurately identify German units involved in war crimes,
- determine the number of German units present in Greece,
- explain the structure of military and paramilitary units.

The recorded data, originating mainly from German archives, but also from publications on local Greek history and from witnesses, will be embedded in a Geographic Information System (GIS) application. This internet application will allow the visitor of the portal to use the database through personalized queries. The database will be accessible to the general public and will serve not only scientific research, but also local and regional history initiatives, school programs, etc.

The project runs since 2019 and is meant to be concluded in 2022-2023.

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More information about the research project: <http://www.eie.gr/godb>

Also on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GermanOccupationDatabase>



