SI@M

THE ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION SYSTEM OF VITORIA-GASTEIZ

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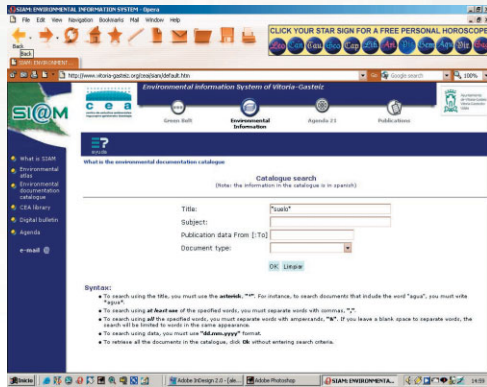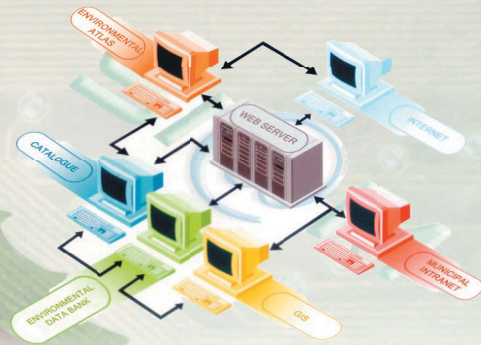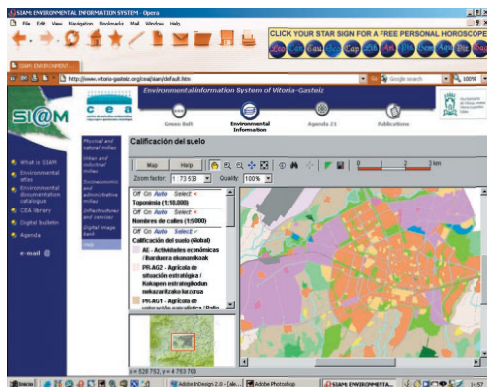MILES — MANAGING INFORMATION FOR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT IN SRI LANKA

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION SYSTEM OF VITORIA-GASTEIZ

Since the beginning of the nineties, Vitoria-Gasteiz has run an Environmental Information System, conceived as an extremely useful tool for environmental management at a municipal level and to promote, as a part of its functions, the dissemination and availability of a complete and systemised body of environment-related information. The system has played a vital role in environmental education and awareness campaigns.

In accordance with legal requirements and the undertakings entered into by the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz on signing of the Aalborg Charter, the Environmental Information System of Vitoria-Gasteiz (SI@M) has developed towards a more comprehensive view of environmental information, understood as including all written, visual and electronic data, on the status of several different aspects of the environment, the factors and substances that have an effect on this, and the policies, plans and measures intended to safeguard the environment.
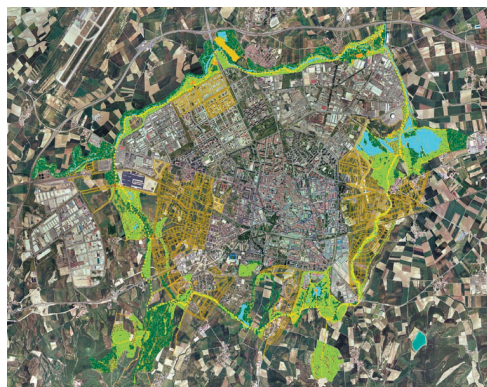
At the same time, the System has been adapted to a new scenario in which information and communications technologies offer enormous opportunities for the treatment and accessibility of environmental and territorial data.

SI@M consists of a number of different components:

• **Environmental Data Bank**, made up of basic and thematic cartography, and other kinds of data and documents of environmental interest (records of sampling stations, reports, projects, surveys, etc.).
• **Geographic Information System**, as a computer tool for the management and analysis of environmental data relating to the municipality.
• **Environmental Documentation Catalogue**, as a service for finding, describing and accessing the environmental data available in the system.
• **Environmental atlas**, which in the form of a thematic atlas contains a selection of cartographic documents, tables and charts accessible via Intranet or Internet.
• **System of communications and telematic access**, including both the website, catalogues, communications infrastructures, etc.

In short, the Environmental Information System implies an in-depth review of information flows at a municipal level and their dissemination outside this municipality. Not without a certain amount of difficulty, those involved are offered an effective and updated overview of the wide range of local environmental issues, which is the basic resource for an overall management of our environment.

The possibility of territorial analysis offered by the System has led to municipal planning surveys in widely differing fields: the planning of agricultural and forestry areas, planning the urban centre of Vitoria-Gasteiz, the development of its Green Ring, the siting of new infrastructures, etc.

For example, through its GIS, the SI@M has been an essential tool in tackling surveys such as the Special Planning of Mountain Areas, the Planning of Recreational Activities, several plans to restore degraded areas, etc., playing an important role in reviewing the categorisation of land not apt for development within the framework of the new General Urban Development Plan.

Among all the projects that the SI@M has contributed to, it is worth mentioning one of the most strategic environmental projects of the municipality, the creation of a true "Multifunction Green Ring" around the city which, besides improving the environmental quality of the surroundings, provides the city and its citizens with new urban planning and social benefits.

In accordance with the new concept of the System, special importance is given to its role of providing external entities with information, with the aim of putting into practice the principle that decision-taking in environmentally-related matters can be a shared responsibility only if we share the pertinent knowledge.

In this sense, in line with the goals established by the Environmental Action Plan of Agenda 21 for these matters, the System has been promoted as an information tool for the inhabitants of the city. In doing so, it has been tried to reflect the spirit of the Aarhus Convention, which proposes to take advantage of the enormous opportunities offered by information and communications technologies.