SHAPEDEM-EU

SHAPEDEM-EU Dashboard set up

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Abstract

This report outlines the construction of the SHAPEDEM-EU Democracy Support Digital Dashboard under Work Package (WP) 7 "Academic Synthesis and Policy Review" of the project. This task was led by the Justus Liebig University Giessen (JLU) and implemented between months 8 and 36 of the project lifecycle. The dashboard was constructed to present the project outputs to a public audience. The dashboard was conceived of an accessible and interactive platform to display the project's research, analysis and publications. The dashboard is an essential element for communicating SHAPEDEM-EU's findings. Furthermore, the dashboard is intended to provide a way to transfer the contents of its database to the public by limiting access to some of the database's more sensitive materials, while ensuring that the findings of the project remain available for others to learn from.

This report details how the dashboard was conceived and created, with information on its key features and functions.

1 Introduction

This report outlines the construction of the SHAPEDEM-EU Democracy Support Database under Work Package 7 "Academic Synthesis and Policy Review" of the project. This report details the activities undertaken in task 7.3 "SHAPEDEM-EU's Democracy Support Digital Dashboard" led by the Justus Liebig University Giessen and implemented between months 8 and 36 of the project lifecycle. The dashboard was constructed to present the project's outputs for the widest possible audience. The task was primarily implemented by the JLU as coordinated together with IT-specialists from the University of Applied Sciences Mittelhessen (THM), who produced the technical and graphical framework for the dashboard.

The actual contents of the dashboard are based on the contents of the Democracy Support Database as constituted for task 7.2 of this Work Package. The database, however, contains sensitive information which is not all intended for public consumption. Hence, the distinction between the database and dashboard allows for a barrier to prevent certain data and outputs to remain inaccessible to the public. The dashboard is thus constructed to provide an accessible and interactive format to present the project's comprehensive research, data, analysis and publications to the public. This innovative tool can be used to contain and publish the project's outputs beyond its lifecycle.

This report is structured as follows: The first section describes the activities conducted to construct the dashboard over the project lifecycle; the second section describes the key functions of the dashboard; the third section concludes the report.

SHAPEDEM-EU has produced a number of reports, publications and analyses, which can benefit from an accessible platform to present its findings. The Digital Dashboard was constructed to assemble and present these results in a central, secure location. The dashboard is intended to provide an inclusive platform that allows project partners to present their diverse outputs and expand even expand upon this presentation as the project partners continue to work on democracy support.

Construction on the SHAPEDEM-EU Digital Dashboard commenced in month 8 and concluded in month 36 of the project. The JLU Giessen worked together with IT-specialists from the THM to construct the dashboard, in congruence with its efforts to create a database. The JLU and THM implemented the construction in four phases, in parallel to its construction of a database. The dashboard is stored on servers provided by Netcup Gmbh, located in Germany, to allow for data privacy and functionality.

The sections below detail the distinct phases of database construction.

1.1 Concept development

The first steps of the database construction were detailed in a concept development phase in month 8 of the project lifecycle. This began by conceptual discussions on how to best present findings on EU democracy support in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods to a public not necessarily as deeply familiar with the regions or the policy. The JLU identified a map as the ideal format and identified local partners from the THM to implement the technical aspects of the dashboard creation. Essential to this map would be a series of arrows, borders and windows to highlight the project's findings. In addition, the JLU met with partners from the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) to discuss their potential graphical contributions, with a particular focus on the relevance of infographics for the platform.

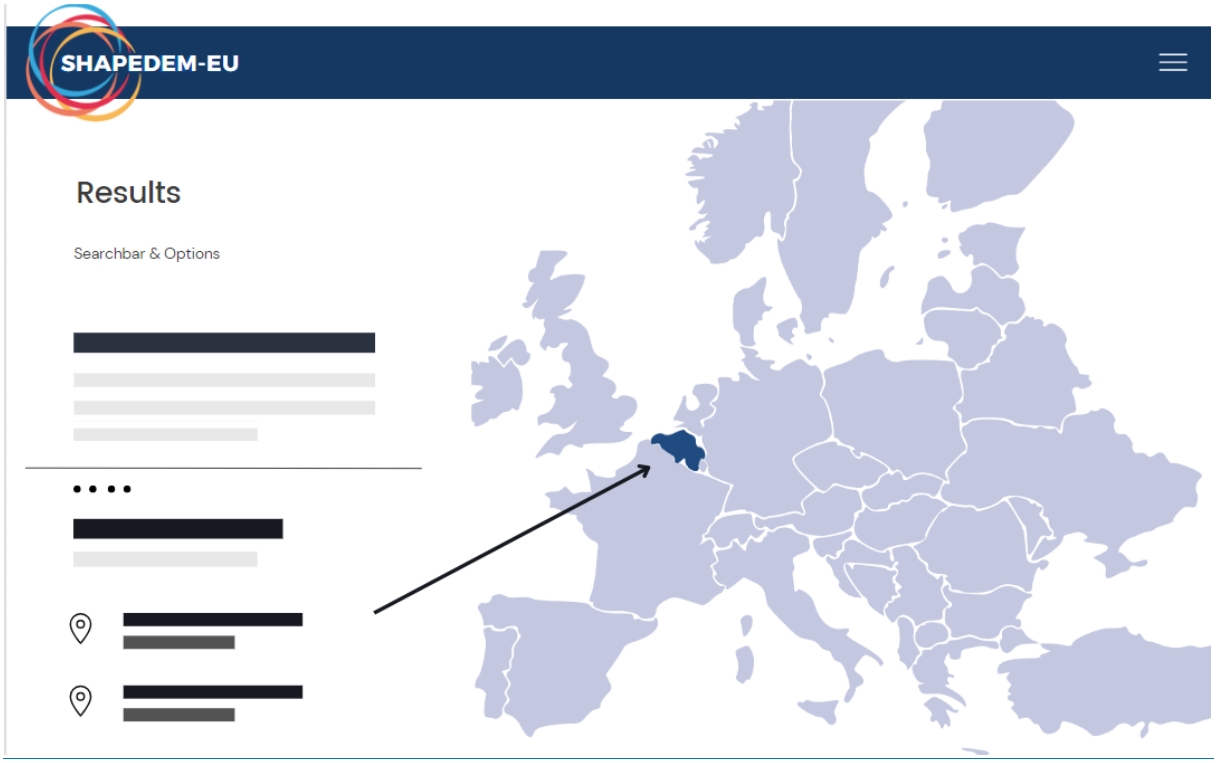

Figure 1: Initial depiction of dashboard using placeholder content

1.2 Synchronisation with database contents

The SHAPEDEM-EU Digital Dashboard is distinct from the database in that only certain materials can be viewed by the public. The dashboard itself only displays information which has been deemed appropriate for the public and non-sensitive in nature. Hence, the map's synchronisation with the database contents was designed with precautions to prevent a full publication of materials. This second phase was undertaken from month 13 of the project lifecycle.

1.3 Server integration and testing

The third phase pertained to the transferal of conceptual and planning documents for the dashboard platform to servers by Netcup Gmbh, located in Germany. The phase included the testing of different features related to the navigation of the interactive map. This phase was undertaken in month 18 of the project lifecycle.

1.4 Bug fixing and infographic creation

The third phase and final phase of this task commenced from month 18 of the project and extended to the end of the process. Through the regular use of the platform, bugs and errors were discovered in the platform functions related to the coding of certain features of the interactive map. These were regularly communicated between the JLU and THM to ensure the removal of bugs.

The final iteration of the database was presented to project partners at SHAPEDEM-EU's second annual progress meeting at the offices of CIDOB in Barcelona, Spain on 30 September 2024 after which the synchronisation with Digital Dashboard elements commenced. The creation of infographics and other graphical elements commenced from this project month as well.

2 Key Features of SHAPEDEM-EU Digital Dashboard and Results

The SHAPEDEM-EU Digital Dashboard is intended to be an interactive format to engage with the project's findings. The screenshot below represents the first impression general users will get when navigating to the site.

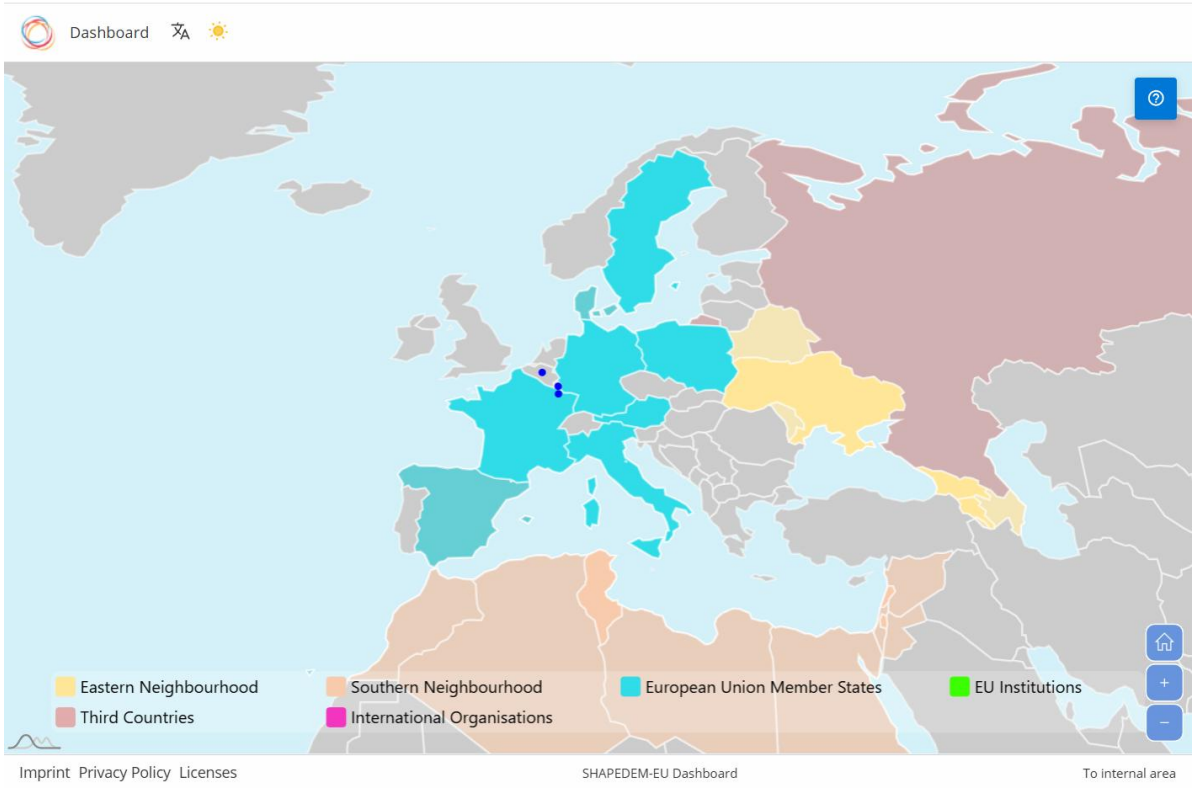

Figure 2: Landing page of SHAPEDEM-EU Digital Dashboard

Users can click on the countries on the map or country groups highlighted in the legend at the bottom of the page. Users can click on the home button or "+" and "-" buttons in the bottom right to operate a zoom function; this can also be done via a mouse's scroll wheel when visiting on a personal computer or via a pinch function on a mobile device such as a tablet or smartphone. The dashboard is created for an adaptive design, allowing for a variety of devices to access the site. The "?" in the upper right is a help button. Clicking this will afford the user an introduction on how to operate the dashboard and the purpose of its findings.

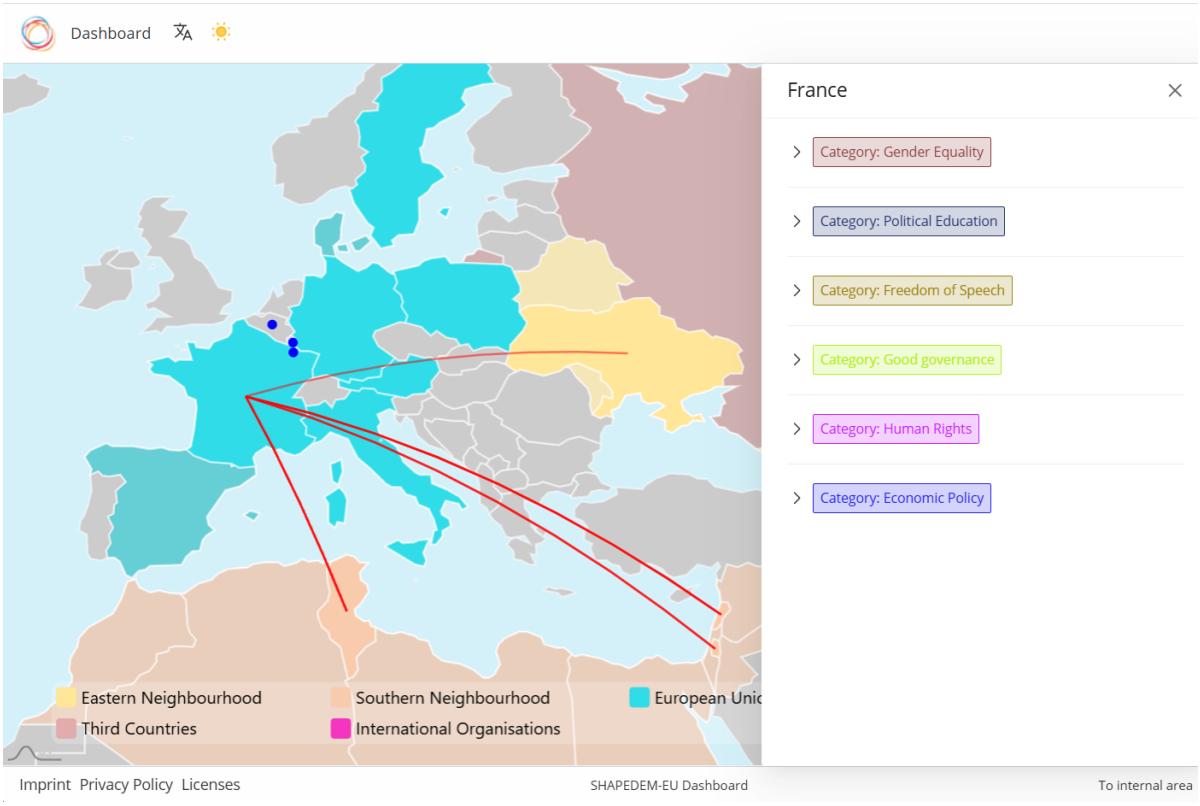

Figure 3: Country-focus depiction

By clicking on a country or an EU institution (emphasised by the blue dots), users can explore the Dashboard's contents more closely. Doing so opens a side pane which reveals all of SHAPEDEM-EU's relevant findings. These are categorised via different aspects of democracy support, highlighted by different colours. Clicking on these displays documents collected from the individual country or institution, or SHAPEDEM-EU outputs and publications.

3 Conclusions

This report outlined the phases for construction of as well as the key features of the SHAPEDEM-EU Digital Dashboard undertaken for WP 7 Academic Synthesis and Policy Review. The Dashboard is accessed via www.shapedem.eu or linked on the project website at www.shapedem-eu.eu. The database will be hosted on Netcup GmbH s