

Progress report on mapping the flora of Europe

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Progress report on mapping the flora of Europe

JAAKKO JALAS

Almost exactly five years have elapsed since the present Committee for Mapping the Flora of Europe was founded. I wish I were able to celebrate this anniversary by displaying to the participants in this Symposium a freshly printed copy of the first volume of the "Atlas of the Distribution of Vascular Plants in Europe". This would also have been tangible evidence that the Secretariat has not been idle during all these years.

Although I am at present unable to fulfill this understandable wish, which is most certainly shared by several colleagues, my feeling is that the progress made as well as the outlook for the near future, nevertheless, fully justify a certain amount of optimism. The following three points may serve as proofs of this.

1. Right from the beginning a good deal of attention has been paid to securing complete participation in the team of all the European countries. It is a great pleasure to inform you that, as far as I can see, all the essential difficulties concerning this point have been safely overcome. Especially I would like to stress the positive attitude of Professor A. I. TOLMAČEV of Leningrad and of the All-Union Academy of Sciences towards the European mapping scheme. This is particularly gratifying when we consider that the European part of the Soviet Union covers about half the total area to be mapped, and includes extensive regions which are not particularly well documented floristically. In detailed negotiations carried on in Leningrad at the beginning of June 1969, agreement was reached on all essentials, including the timetable. To illustrate the present situation in the mapping of the flora of these eastern parts of Europe, I would like to quote part of a letter of Professor TOLMAČEV dated June 15, 1970. Writing of the Pteridophytes and Gymnosperms, he mentions that use has already been made of the data available in the Herbaria of Leningrad and Moscow; he then continues as follows:

"Wir können uns aber nicht mit dem Registrieren der erwähnten Daten begnügen und versuchen unsere Vorstellung von der Pflanzenverbreitung nach den Angaben aus mehreren anderen Herbarien zu vervollkommen. Heute besitzen wir, ausser den Ihnen schon bekannten Angaben aus Estland, jene aus Litauen, Lettland, aus der Moldawischen Sowjetrepublik und aus dem Nordosten des europäischen Teiles

der UdSSR in recht befriedigender Form. Diese Angaben sind bereits auf den uns von Ihnen gesandten Kartenvorlagen eingetragen. Leider warten wir noch auf das Eingehen der Verbreitungskarten aus den Herbarien von Minsk, Kijew, Jalta, Petrosavodsk und Kasan. Die Mitarbeiter der betreffenden Institute haben uns versprochen, die nötigen Daten am Ende des Sommers zu senden... Im Herbst werden wir also in der Lage sein, die Karten für den ersten Teil des Atlas zu vervollständigen und Ihnen zu senden.”¹

2. As regards questions of a more economic nature, the problems associated with the publishing of the Atlas are worthy of special mention. After some initial difficulties it has now been decided that the “Atlas of the Distribution of Vascular Plants in Europe” will be published by the Finnish Biological Society Vanamo (Societas Biologica Fennica Vanamo) as a special publication outside the current botanical journals. This will make it possible to use a format corresponding to that of *Flora Europaea*, and better suited for printing maps with this scope and degree of accuracy than the often rather small pages of the ordinary journals.

3. Consequently, the Secretariat has recently been able to produce a proof of eight pages, comprising 10 maps with the pertinent text, with a view to obtaining constructive criticism and last minute advice concerning details of the text, maps and general layout. It must be emphasized that the maps included are still incomplete. This proof has been distributed to the members of the mapping team, and some valuable comments have already been received. A small number of copies are available on request.

Considering the position as a whole, there can now be no doubt that the “Atlas of the Distribution of Vascular Plants in Europe” will become a reality in the not too distant future, and for this, we mainly have to thank the unflagging interest of the members of the mapping team in all the European countries.

DISCUSSION

LAWALRÉE peut communiquer que l’atlas de distribution des plantes de Belgique et du grand-duché de Luxembourg sera publié en 1971. Il comportera 1518 cartes représentant la distribution de toutes les espèces spontanées et de quelques plantes introduites croissant dans la dition et montrant souvent la différence de la distribution avant et après 1930. Les unités cartographiques sont de 4 km × 4 km, conformément au plan de l’atlas des îles Britanniques.

WALTERS suggests that, on the European maps, the zones of inadequate coverage should be indicated in one way or another. It may be assumed that the enormous blank in the USSR appearing on the proof maps will be largely covered by the time of publication.

¹ Later on, at the turn of the year, the maps on Pteridophytes concerning the European part of the USSR received by the Secretariat.

It seems nevertheless certain that significant gaps due solely to lack of information will remain. In the case of the British mapping scheme, the areas known to have been inadequately covered were indicated on an overlay.

JALAS replies that overlays will in effect be used to indicate, among others, the topography and the distribution of coastal areas. The problem of indicating inadequate coverage has not yet been resolved. One clearly cannot fill in gaps due presumably to lack of information without having positive information: only known occurrences will be mapped. In the case of forest trees too common to be mapped exactly, contour lines could be used in eastern Europe.

PERRING stresses that the European botanical mapping scheme is now being regarded as a sort of pioneer scheme. An invertebrate mapping scheme for Europe, undertaken in collaboration with colleagues in Belgium, uses exactly the same methods, adopting 50 km squares. It is hoped that, as far as possible, the 50 km square mapping scheme for Europe will serve as a base for similar mapping schemes within each country, using 10 km square units: this will simplify the system of mapping throughout the continent.

Answering a question of VALENTINE, JALAS expresses his hope that the first volume of the European atlas will be published in 1971.

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