

# An utilization of the GIS and multidimensional statistical methods on the chosen EU universities: similarities assessment

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## Abstract

The paper deals with the analysis of the similarity's rate of 81 universities and other schools of university's type in EU all of which have in this consideration the same status. From each state of the European Union, three largest universities according to the number of students criterion were chosen (when such an amount of universities was existing in the considered state) and added to our database. We have used hierarchical clustering methods based on the simple join of several clusters as well as methods of explorative analysis presented by some profile diagrams in order to compare these universities. As the space analysis created in the geographical information system environment is joined here with the methods of mathematical statistics, we consider the paper being important both from the interdisciplinary and the statistical-environment analysis point of view. It points out to the fact that multi-dimensional statistical methods methods methods can be used also at interdisciplinary level.

**Keywords:** Clustering and multidimensional statistical methods; GIS; database of EU universities

## Introduction

A data analysis on a base of multidimensional statistical methods is used in the statistical data processing very often. It requires computer usage, well defined own research problem (the formulation of a task), as well as some knowledge about an interpretation of obtained results. Even if the usage-effectivity of the information obtained from the multidimensional statistical data is not comparable with the one-dimensional analysis result, one can still feel some fear to use it in other fields than mathematics. This is surprising as it already appeared in the connection to several spheres of life since 60's (see e. g. Gower, 1966; Mardia, 1970; Hoffman, Franke, 1986; Faber, 1999; Maronna, Zamar, 2002; Daszykowski, et al., 2003). The aim of this work was to analyze the similarity's rate of 81 universities of the European Union using geographical data and processing them by hierarchical clustering methods

and profile diagrams. From each state of the European Union (EU), at most 3 largest universities (in terms of the number of students) were chosen and added to our database (when there were at least 3 universities in the considered state, else all of the universities of the state were chosen). These universities were compared according to these criteria: number of students, number of teachers (pedagogical staff) and number of faculties. By this work we would like to point out at the possibility to use GIS and multidimensional statistical data-analysis also in the non-mathematical field of research.

## Data and methods

The first task we needed to solve in order to fulfill the aim of our research was to built out the input database in the ArcGIS environment. Geographic information

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system (GIS) stands as a powerful tool not only in geographic and environmental sciences, but also in social sciences as well, where data processing is required for mapping and spatial modeling (Franke, 1982; Lam, 1983; Burrough, 1986; Boltiziar, Vojtek, 2009; Hrnjak, et al., 2014). This task was very time-consuming since, as the first step, we needed to find and identify the 3 largest universities (in terms of the number of students) or schools of university's type (in this consideration they have the same status as universities) in each state of EU. Sometimes even the base comparison of universities of one single state was uneasy. The processing level of the universities' webpages were very different, there were a lot of data unpublished there and we needed to ask for them consequently by sending requests to study-departments of several universities. The major problem was also to find out to which time period the published data are related. As each university refers the number of students to the different date, we chose only the fall 2013 as a reference time of our data.

The second step was to compare the universities according to the number of students and number of teachers (pedagogical staff). A powerful tool for such an analysis is the ArcMap application of program ArcGIS. In this application, the universities were depicted by rings (the carthodiagram method) of size directly proportional to the number of students of each university. The number of students was divided into 5 intervals according to Natural Breaks (Jenks) method. The boundaries of intervals were manually customized by half-correction. The size analysis was supplemented by spatial location of the chosen universities according to their size in the considered state of EU.

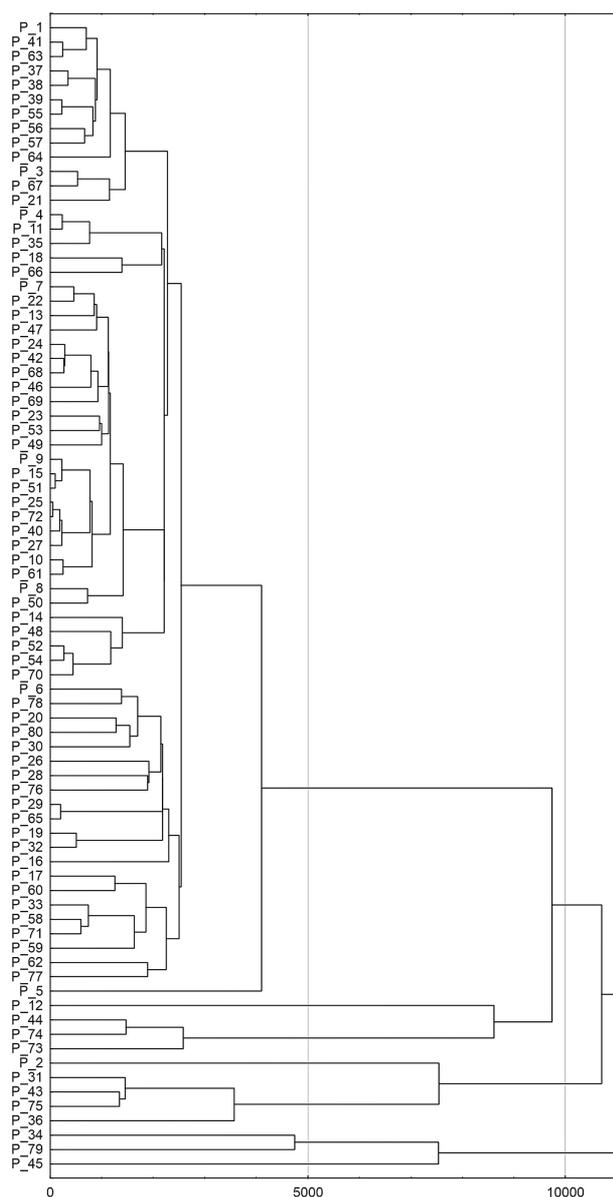
After the database creation in the ArcGIS environment we had transmit these data into the program Statistica 12 and analyzed these multidimensional data by the hierarchical clustering methods. The aim of this part was to divide these universities on the base of similarity's rate comparison according to their number of students, number of teachers (pedagogical staff) and faculties. These multidimensional statistical methods of hierarchical clustering were supplemented by the results of explorative analysis presented by profile diagrams.

## Results and discussion

Cluster analysis is one of the methods that enable to examine the similarities of multidimensional objects. One of the most frequently used distance gauge is the Euclid distance that, on the base of the distance of two objects, is able to determine their similarity's rate. In general, the smaller the Euclid distance between the two objects is, the more similar are these objects (Jain

et al., 1999). There were hierarchical clustering methods used in this paper. They are based on the hierarchical arrangement of the objects and their clusters. From the graphical point of view, the hierarchical arranged clusters are figured out by a dendrogram. In our research, we used the tools of hierarchical clustering on the basis of a simple joining of the clusters (the type of clustering technique: simple caliber, simple average). The similarity's rate was determined according to the Euclid distance. We proceed in the direction from the top to the base; hence, firstly, each university represented one cluster. On the base of similarities of the initial data the universities were clustered into groups of similarities and at the end joined into one big cluster containing all universities.

By depicting the dendrogram for all the universities according to the chosen parameters: number of students, number of teachers and number of faculties, it seemed so that the Open University in Milton Keynes (Great Britain) was a remarkable outlier with 240 000 students and 8 100 pedagogues at 8 faculties. One can compare it with the University of Primorska in Koper (Slovenia) with 36 times lesser students studying at 7 faculties. There is a big difference also in the number of students even in the comparison with the second biggest university - Sapienza University of Rome (Italy) where there are 1.9 times lesser students as at the Open University in Milton Keynes. This was the reason why we had excluded the Open University in Milton Keynes from our statistical database used for creating the dendrogram by the second analysis approach - see Figure 1. As the effect we reached a higher readability of the figure and decreasing opacity of the small clusters formed by the other universities. The highest similarity between two universities according to 2 out of 3 criteria have the Aalto University in Finland and the University of Maribor in Slovenia: Aalto University - 19 993 students, 1 786 teachers; University of Maribor - 20 025 students, 1 814 teachers), but while one of these universities has 6 faculties, the other one has 17. There is also a high similarity between the Near East University (Nicosia, Cyprus) and the Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius, Lithuania). There are cca. 20 000 students studying there too, but the number of pedagogical staff is smaller here (730 in the case of Near East University and 878 in the case of Mykolas Romeris University) but their numbers of faculties differ a lot: Near East University 16; Mykolas Romeris University 6. When we compare all 4 of the universities mentioned above, according to the number of faculties, the higher similarity is between the Aalto University and the Mykolas Romeris University with 6 faculties each, and on the other side, the University of Maribor and the Near East University, where this number differs only by 1. From this exam-



**Figure 1.** Similarity of universities according to the selected parameters: number of students, number of pedagogues and number of faculties - selected part of the dendrogram (x-axis: Euclid distance of objects; y-axis: Pi-University marked by i in Table 1, 2 and 3 respectively).  
Source: Authors research.

ple comes out that the higher influences on the rate of similarity between two universities have the number of students and pedagogical staff than the number of faculties. This is a reflection of the Euclid metrics in the background of the comparison. As the size of each university is mainly considered by the number of students and teachers, the number of faculties plays only a secondary role here.

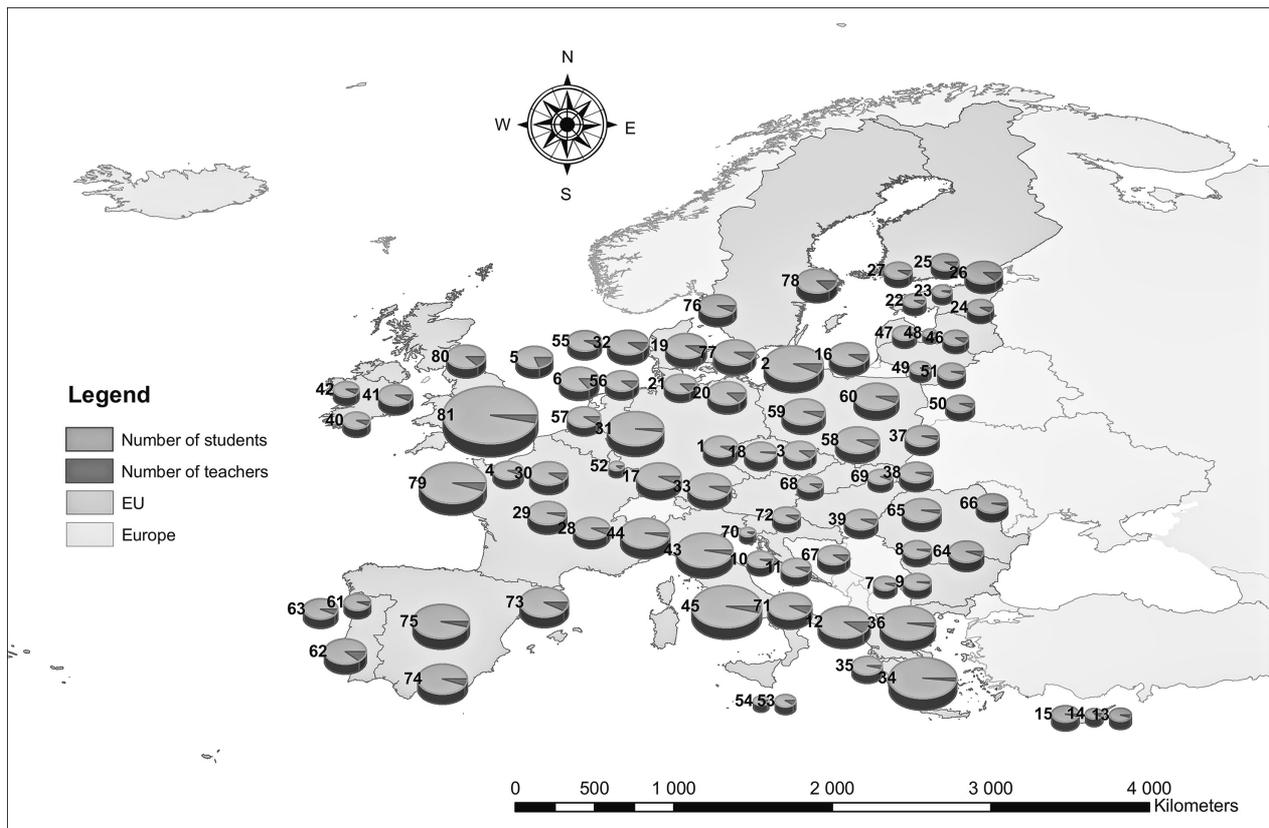
There were also some remarkable similarities between the universities 29 and 65, 54 and 52, 10 and 61, 27 and 72, 11 and 4, 41 and 63 or 39 and 55 - see Figure 1 and for the full names of universities Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3.

On the other hand, when we would like to identify the most differing universities in our statistical database, it seems to be appropriate to observe the distance connection 10 000 in our dendrogram. There are 3 clusters at this point of visible disproportionalities. The first cluster is built out of the National and Kapodistrian University (Athens, Greece), the University of London (London, Great Britain) and the Sapienza University of Rome (Rome, Italy), the second cluster is built out of the Aristotle University (Solon, Greece), the Complutense University of Madrid (Madrid, Spain), the University of Bologna (Bologna, Italy), the University of Hagen (Hagen, Germany) and the University of Vienna (Vienna, Austria) and the third one is built out of all the other universities. In the first group the number of students belongs to the interval 120 000 - 130 000 and the number of pedagogues is out of the interval 1 900 - 6 200, in the second group the number of students is from the interval 81 500 - 86 000, the number of pedagogues 1 700 - 3 500. In the third cluster there are universities with wide-spread variability of both number of students (4 000 - 93 000) and number of teachers (450 - 8 650). Out of this cluster, the smallest number of students study at the Turiba University (Turiba, Latvia) - 4 826, the highest amount (92 486) of students study at University of Vienna (Vienna, Austria). The number of pedagogues vary in this group from 461 - Tallinn University (Tallinn, Estonia) to 8 622 - Ghent University (Ghent, Belgium).

One can refer to the quality of education from the aspect of rate between the number of students and the number of teachers at each university. From this point of view the outlying position has the Ghent University where there are circa 36 000 students to 8 600 pedagogues. That means one pedagogue can teach small groups of 4-5 students - see Figure 2. Some of the universities, like the University of Vienna (Vienna, Austria) with 92 486 students and University of Zagreb (Zagreb, Croatia) with 72 480 students can be given to the second cluster according to the number of students, but as there is a big rate between the number of students and number of pedagogues, they are in the third cluster - see Figure 1.

**Table 1.** List of the universities marked by numbers from 1 up to 6.

No.	University	City	State
1	Universität Graz	Graz	Austria
2	Universität Wien	Vienna	Austria
3	Technische Universität Wien	Vienna	Austria
4	Université Libre de Bruxelles	Brussels	Belgium
5	Universiteit Gent	Ghent	Belgium
6	Katholieke Universiteit	Leuven	Belgium



**Figure 2.** Rate of the number of students and number of teachers at selected universities of the European Union.

Source: Authors research.

**Table 2.** List of the universities marked by numbers from 7 up to 42.

No.	University	City	State
7	South-West University	Blagoevgrad	Bulgaria
8	Sofia university	Sofia	Bulgaria
9	University of National and World Economy	Sofia	Bulgaria
10	Sveučilište u Rijeci	Rjeka	Croatia
11	Sveučilište u Splitu	Split	Croatia
12	Sveučilište u Zagrebu	Zagreb	Croatia
13	Eastern Mediterranean University	Famagusta	Cyprus
14	Cyprus International University	Lefkosia	Cyprus
15	Near East University	Nikosia	Cyprus
16	Masarykova Univerzita	Brno	Czech Republic
17	Univerzita Karlova	Prague	Czech Republic
18	Česká zemědělská univerzita	Prague	Czech Republic
19	Aarhus Universitet	Aarhus	Denmark
20	Københavns Universitet	Copenhagen	Denmark
21	Syddansk Universitet	Odense	Denmark
22	Tallinna Tehnikaülikool	Talinn	Estonia
23	Tallinna Ülikool	Talinn	Estonia
24	Tartu Ülikool	Tartu	Estonia
25	Aalto-yliopisto	Aalto	Finland

No.	University	City	State
26	Helsingin Yliopisto	Helsinki	Finland
27	Turun Yliopisto	Turun	Finland
28	Université Claude Bernard Lyon I	Lyon	France
29	Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne	Paris	France
30	Université Paris Descartes	Paris	France
31	Fernuniversität in Hagen	Hagen	Germany
32	Universität zu Köln	Cologne	Germany
33	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität	Munnich	Germany
34	National and Kapodistrian University	Athens	Greece
35	University of Patras	Patras	Greece
36	Aristotle University	Thessaloniki	Greece
37	Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem	Budapest	Hungary
38	Debreceni Egyetem	Debrecen	Hungary
39	Szegedi Tudományegyetem	Szeged	Hungary
40	University College Cork	Cork	Ireland
41	University College Dublin	Dublin	Ireland
42	National University of Ireland	Galloway	Ireland

**Table 3.** List of the universities marked by numbers from 43 up to 81.

No.	University	City	State
43	Università degli Studi di Bologna	Bologna	Italy
44	Università degli Studi di Milano	Milan	Italy
45	Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza	Rome	Italy
46	Latvijas Universitate	Riga	Latvia
47	Rīgas Tehniskā Universitāte	Riga	Latvia
48	Biznesa Augstskola Turība	Turība	Latvia
49	Kauno Technologijos Universitetas	Kaunas	Lithuania
50	Vilniaus Universitetas	Vilnius	Lithuania
51	Mykolo Romerio Universitetas	Vilnius	Lithuania
52	Université du Luxembourg	Luxembourg	Luxembourg
53	University of Malta	Valetta	Malta
54	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology	Valetta	Malta
55	Universiteit van Amsterdam	Amsterdam	The Netherlands
56	Rijksuniversiteit Groningen	Groningen	The Netherlands
57	Universiteit Utrecht	Utrecht	The Netherlands
58	Uniwersytet Jagiellonski	Krakow	Poland
59	Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza	Poznan	Poland
60	Uniwersytet Warszawski	Warsaw	Poland

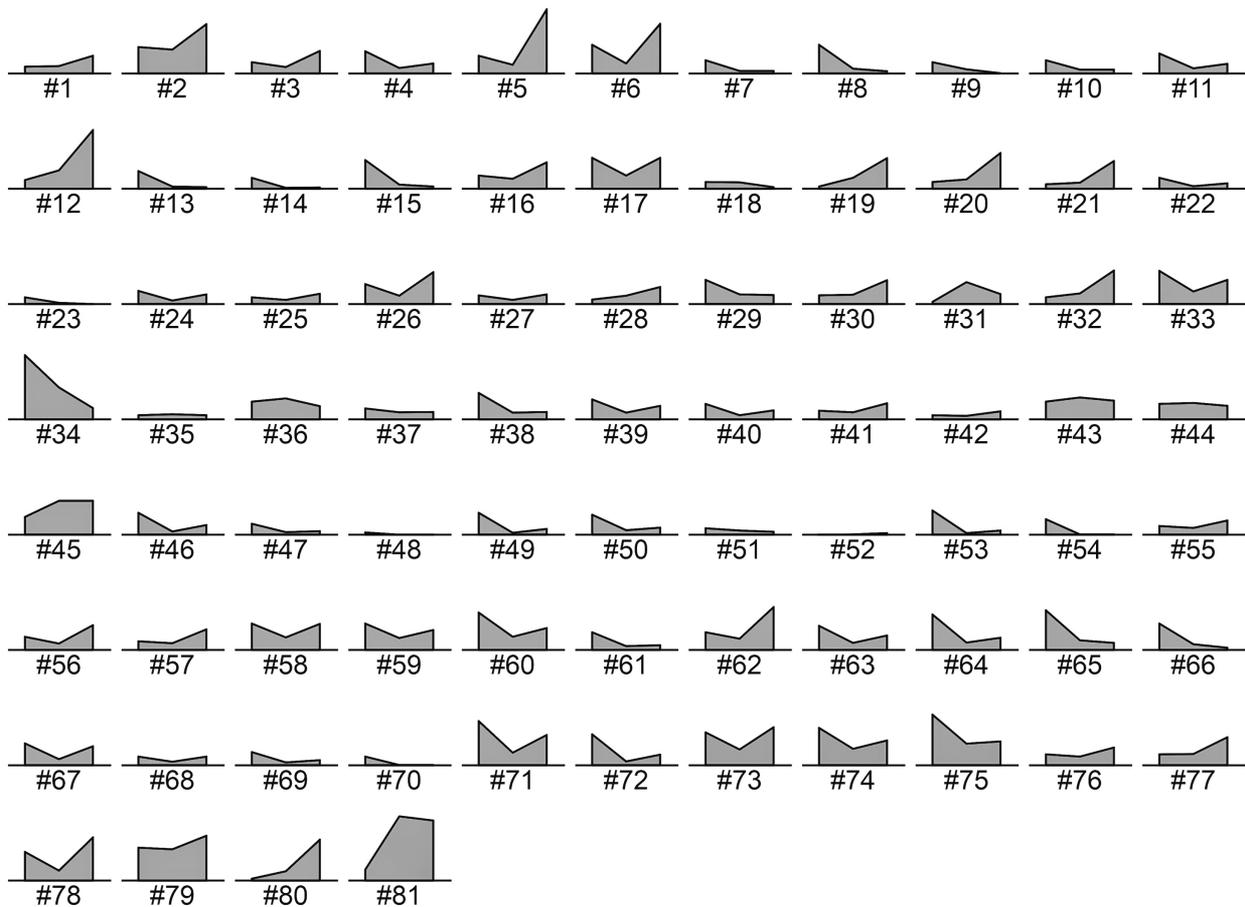
No.	University	City	State
61	Universidade do Minho	Bragg	Portugal
62	Universidade de Lisboa	Lisbon	Portugal
63	Universidade do Porto	Porto	Portugal
64	Universitatea din Bucuresti	Bucharest	Romania
65	Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai	Cluj Napoca	Romania
66	Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza	Iasi	Romania
67	Univerzita Komenského	Bratislava	Slovakia
68	Slovenská technická univerzita	Bratislava	Slovakia
69	Technická univerzita	Kosice	Slovakia
70	Univerza na Primorskem	Koper	Slovenia
71	Univerza v Ljubljani	Ljubljana	Slovenia
72	Univerza v Mariboru	Maribor	Slovenia
73	Universidad de Barcelona	Barcelona	Spain
74	Universidad de Granada	Granada	Spain
75	Universidad Complutense de Madrid	Madrid	Spain
76	Göteborgs Universitet	Goteborg	Sweden
77	Lunds Universitet	Lund	Sweden
78	Uppsala Universitet	Uppsala	Sweden
79	University of London	London	Great Britain
80	University of Manchester	Manchester	Great Britain
81	Open University	Milton Keynes	Great Britain

## Exploratory Analysis

Focusing on the research analysis of the data (even before the analysis of multidimensional data according to the multidimensional statistical methods) one can use several techniques to outdraw these data into the two-dimensional coordination space. One such possibility is the usage of symbolic graphs where all the characters are coded according to real values into different geometric shapes. From this outdraw, one can deduce the vectors, or coordinates of the vectors, that seems to be outlying from the statistical database, respectively, it allows to identify several structures in the data (see Meloun, et al., 2012). In order to fulfill the aims of our research, we had used profile diagrams that belong to a group of iconic graphs. Each fault of the curve represents a new value of considered parameter of either number of students, number of pedagogues or number of faculties (with this order) in the graph on Figure 3 (For the names of universities here see Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3).

As one can see from the profile diagrams, a remarkable outlier from the number of students point of view is the Open University in Milton Keynes in Great Britain with 240 000 students. This one is followed by the Sapienza University in Rome (128 963 students), the National and Kapodistrian University (122 000 students), the University of Vienna (92 486 students), the University of Hagen (85 051 students), the National Aristotle University (81 500 students) and also the University of Zagreb (72 480 students). The least number of students, 4 826, has the Turība University.

The absolute leader in the case of number of faculties is the National and Kapodistrian University with 32 faculties (122 000 students and 1 900 pedagogues). The high amount of faculties - 26, has also the University of Madrid with 84 837 students. Even if the Open University in Milton Keynes has almost twice more students than the Kapodistrian University, the number of faculties here is 4 times smaller. On the other hand, the smallest university from our database, Tu-



**Figure 3.** Profile diagram of the similarities of number of students, number of pedagogues and number of faculties  
Source: Authors research.

riba University, has only half number of faculties than the Open University in Milton Keynes.

As it was already mentioned above, one of the criteria of education quality could be the ratio between the number of students and the number of pedagogues at each university. As this information is not well readable from the graph, we used the program Microsoft Excel in order to find it out. One can suppose that the smaller this rate is, the higher quality it can reflect. It points out to the greater possibility of self-realization and individual approach of the teacher to the student. But this information cannot be generalized.

The smallest number of students for one pedagogue have universities in Ghent (4 students per 1 pedagogue) and Leuven (6 students per 1 pedagogue), both in Belgium. A similar situation is in Denmark in Odense (cca. 7 students per 1 pedagogue) and Copenhagen (cca. 8 students per 1 pedagogue), as well as in Great Britain in Manchester (cca. 7 students per 1 pedagogue), in Sweden in Uppsala (cca. 7 students per 1 pedagogue) and in Portugal in Lisbon (cca. 8 students per 1 pedagogue). On the other side, the highest number of students per one teacher, cca. 49, is at the University of Hagen in Germany and at the Alexandru

Ioan Cuza University of Iasi in Romania, cca. 34. Approximately 30 students per one pedagogue have also the Open University in Milton Keynes in Great Britain and the universities in Bologna and Milan in Italy.

### Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to point out to the rate of similarity between 81 chosen universities of the European Union by using the tools of geographical information systems and multidimensional statistical methods. Their coalescence enables us to observe the similarities and differences in the analyzed structures, as well as to cartographically and graphically figure out the pointers of number of students, pedagogues and faculties. In order to make the explorative analysis of the data, we used profile diagrams, which helped us to discover most outlying objects in our structure.

The remarkable outlier was the Open University in Milton Keynes in Great Britain, which was executed from our statistical database for creating a dendrogram thanks to enormous number of students studying there. To compare it with the second biggest university, Sapienza University of Rome in Italy, the

number of students here was cca. 1.9 times greater and almost 50 times greater than at the smallest university in our database - the University of Turība (Turība, Latvia).

The second pointer was the number of pedagogues at each university. As the number itself is unimportant if it is not compared with the number of students at the considered university, we asked us a question how many students per 1 teacher are at each university. Here the information was remarkable set apart. The greatest values were counted for the University of Hagen (cca. 49 students per teacher) and the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi in Romania (cca. 34 students per teacher), the smallest number was counted for the University of Ghent (cca. 4 students per teacher).

The results of hierarchical clustering methods pointed out at the fact, that the size of the university is primary considered from the number of students point of view and number of pedagogues. The number of faculties plays only a secondary role here. The highest similarity between two universities in the first cluster had the National Kapodistrian University (Athens, Greece) with the University of London (London, Great Britain) and the Sapienza University of Rome (Rome, Italy); in the second cluster the Aristotle University (Solon, Greece) with the Complutense University of Madrid (Madrid, Spain), the University of Bologna (Bologna, Italy), the University of Hagen (Hagen, Germany) and the University of Vienna (Vienna, Austria) and in the third cluster there were all remaining universities. The analysis of the results showed that several universities that seemed to belong to the second cluster according to the number of students were associated with the third one due to a big ratio between the number of students and number of pedagogues here.

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