



eEnviPer Profiles #2

Interviewing Indjija: Learning through collaboration

The eEnviPer project will install and test a cloud-based e-government solution for the application, administration and consultation of environmental permits in five European municipalities and regions. This Profile explores the experience and lessons learned of one of eEnviPer's five pilot sites, the Serbian town of Indjija.

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The eEnviPer project

eEnviPer is an integrated web-based platform for the application, administration and consultation of environmental permits. By making the environmental permits process more transparent, accessible and efficient, eEnviPer will help to reduce the environmental impact of economic activities.

The EU-funded eEnviPer project will set-up and test its existing multi-purpose cloud platform in five pilot communities between 2012 and 2014:

1. Region of Crete, Greece;
2. Municipality of Indjija, Serbia;
3. Krapina-Zagorje County, Croatia;
4. Niğde Region, Turkey; and
5. Apulia Region, Italy.

This Profile explores the experience and lessons learned of one of eEnviPer's five pilot projects, the Serbian town of Indjija, based on an interview carried out by the eEnviPer Dissemination Manager.

More detailed information on the eEnviPer project and platform can be found at www.eenviper.eu.

Municipality of Indija

One of eEnviPer's five pilot sites, the Serbian town of Indjija, lies at the intersection of two of Eastern Europe's main transport corridors: the Danube and the E75 highway, providing links from Scandinavia through to the Mediterranean. For centuries, life in Indjija has been marked by the Danube and the beautiful landscapes along the river's course. In addition, fertile soil and the south face of Fruska Gora Mountain have allowed the development of fruit harvesting and vineyards throughout the municipality.

Today, Indjija is busy developing into a modern municipality, promoting innovation and advanced technology in harmony with environmental protection. **Dejan Dmitrović**, the Head of Urban Planning, Public Utilities and Environmental Protection at Indjija Municipality, is at the forefront of this transition. Wiebke Herding, the eEnviPer Dissemination Manager, had the pleasure of interviewing him in February 2013, during an eEnviPer meeting in Belgrade. He explained the municipality's potential to serve as an example for municipalities in Serbia and beyond, and their experience so far in making the platform a reality.



Dejan Dmitrović

Why did Indjija get involved in eEnviPer?

Dmitrović: Urban planning, public utilities and environmental protection are all very important for the quality of life in a town. At the same time, we also have the potential to significantly improve business conditions and increase economic development by simply making our work more efficient.

When the idea of eEnviPer came along, we quickly saw its potential to enable faster environmental licensing procedures. It would also provide an elegant solution to help us build e-government services that are easy to use for our administration, whilst making Indjija more attractive for potential investors. The platform will also help interested citizens get involved in the protection of the environment.

What is the main challenge with environmental permits in Indjija?

Dmitrović: In the last few years, we've been listening to issues relating to environmental permits that concern citizens and investors alike. Through our experience, we've learned that there are a number of bottle necks or inefficiencies inherent to the existing system. We are hoping that eEnviPer will provide investors, citizens and environmental consultants with all the necessary information and tools, making communication with our administrative office easier.

For example, instead of wondering which documents are needed, and spending precious time coming to the administration office and getting information from our staff, investors, citizens and environmental consultants will find a list of all necessary documentation on the eEnviPer platform, together with relevant laws and bylaws.

Moreover, communication with our staff will be done through the eEnviPer messaging system and therefore the investors will not need to come to the administration office to bring submit their requests. In the past, when documents were missing, the applicants would have to return a second time with the additional documentation.

Until now, citizens who wanted to get involved in environmental protection also had to take time to come to our offices and go through the documentation on site, or request copies. eEnviPer will make all documentation available online for inspection at any time, making the whole procedure more transparent and empowering people to really have an influence on what's happening around them.

Where do you stand now in the introduction of eEnviPer?

Dmitrović: We are currently testing the platform internally to make sure it fits our needs, as well as the specificities of the Serbian legal framework, before we go live for it to be tested by the public. Everyone in the Indjija administration is eager to see the platform up and running.

To be able to reach this point, we had to look beyond the existing environmental permitting procedures, and try not to merely make a digital replica of what we already had. To add value to our system, we are using this opportunity to provide a service that will go beyond what we already have, address the inefficiencies identified and satisfy all the different users.

For this purpose, we first had to identify the different profiles of users and their roles and expectations from the process:

- **Investors** would be mostly interested in having the procedure completed faster and more cheaply, so they don't have to waste time and money before even starting work on their project.
- To save time, **environmental consultants** who work on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are interested in having all the necessary information available in one place, as well as the tools to draw meaningful conclusions from the available data.
- **Citizens** want to be informed about processes that might have an impact on the local environment, and therefore to have instant access to relevant data. In addition, the means to complain about a particular permit request - should they need to - should be easy to access and understand, thereby increasing the transparency of the entire process.
- Finally, **administrators** in particular need a better overview of all the procedures, enabling them to manage it more efficiently and effectively.

Therefore, we tried to think of all possible use-cases, i.e. real-life situations which different users might encounter - such as "starting a new request", "filing a complaint", "uploading data", "downloading documentation", "performing GIS analysis" - and then translated them into the eEnviPer platform. The next step was to think of all the necessary information each of these users needs to know when starting a procedure, such as laws, bylaws, etc. ... Finally, we aimed to find ways to make communication between administration and citizens easier and more instinctive.

As a result of this process, we have a system that recognises different types of users and their requirements, and therefore provides the means for an effective involvement of all users in our environmental licensing procedures.

How do you think citizens, investors and environmental consultants will react?

Dmitrović: The Pilot is soon ready to start, which will make eEnviPer freely available to everyone in Indjija to try out. Although citizens everywhere tend to be a bit suspicious of new ways of doing things, Indjija's administration has a good reputation and has earned the trust of its citizens and investors. We believe that, once we present eEnviPer to future users, they will be predisposed to try it, as it is coming from a reliable source.

We are also confident that the needs we identified for this e-government service will be what citizens, investors and environmental consultants expect and require. Of course, we also plan a lot of promotion activities to introduce the platform (and in particular on new concepts such as e-government and cloud computing) and users will have the possibility to provide feedback to us if they wish.

What have you learned - in this process, from the collaboration with the other pilot sites, about the technology?

Dmitrović: This project has given us a great opportunity to learn through cooperation with partners from other European regions. We are working closely with them, as well as with our Serbian technology partner, Evrogeomatika, to implement eEnviPer in the specific context of the Serbian environmental permits process.

It has been very interesting to compare the work we're doing here in Indjija with what is being done in other European countries. I am very pleased to see Indjija as part of a group of regions and municipalities willing to implement the newest technological solutions in their everyday work, making it cheaper, faster and more efficient.