



eEnviPer Profile #3

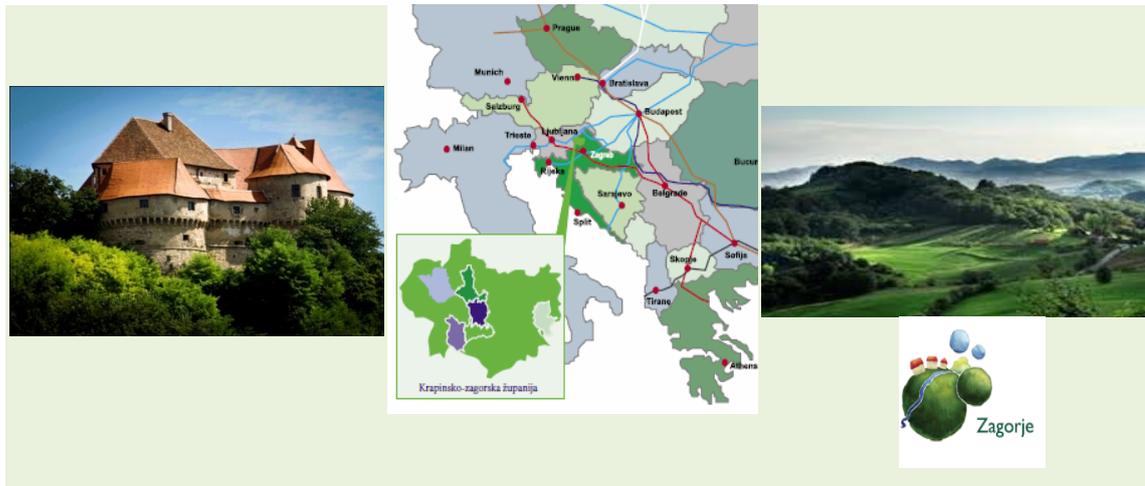
eEnviPer in Krapina-Zagorje County

The eEnviPer project is currently installing and testing 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 so far of one of eEnviPer's five pilot sites, the Croatian County of Krapina-Zagorje.

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Krapina-Zagorje County: doing business close to Zagreb

Located 50 kilometres north of the Croatian capital Zagreb, Krapina-Zagorje County is an idyllic county with areas of outstanding natural beauty. In addition, many investors point to the high quality of Krapina-Zagorje's work force, its favourable geographical position for transportation, as well as access to new markets. Balancing its economic development with agriculture (especially vineyards) and tourism, it therefore provides possibilities for the thorough testing of the management of all types of environmental license requests.



More information on Krapina-Zagorje County can be found at: <http://www.kzz.hr>

The context of the Croatian eEnviPer pilot

The Croatian Government has adopted a National Strategy that requires environmental protection to be integrated into economic development programmes, based on the principles of sustainable development, modern spatial development, satellite monitoring and sustainable tourism development.

The Aarhus Convention of June 1998 (ratified by Croatia in 2007) establishes that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders. It links governmental accountability and environmental protection and focuses on the interactions between citizens and public authorities in a democratic context. In this regard, people should be informed, made aware and become involved through access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

The pilot in Krapina-Zagorje County will provide the vehicle to achieve these objectives in a timely manner. As a regional public authority, Krapina-Zagorje County is responsible for a range of issues aimed at improving its citizens' standard of living: education, health, urban planning, traffic, energy efficiency, infrastructure, economy and civil society. Its portfolio includes many projects and actions, such as financing schools, clinics or local roads, nature conservation, support to the local economy, improving transparency in procedures, and involving citizens in decision-making processes.

The major objective of the eEnviPer pilot in Krapina-Zagorje is to make the permitting process transparent and inclusive for all participants. The official portal of the Ministry for Environmental and Nature Protection offers basic information about the organisational structure and the responsibilities of the Ministry with details about applicable laws and bylaws. The existing e-government portal at national level provides application development guidelines and action plans with pilot development projects, but no infrastructure for managing the normal EIA process.

Nor is there currently any software application that supports the environmental permitting process at the County level. Krapina-Zagorje County has its official website with information about its administrative structure and the services it provides to citizens, its plans and activities and different announcements relevant to businesses and the community. The website also contains contact details, instructions and the *Request for Access to Information* form that citizens can download and use for formally requesting information on subjects of interest.

“We expect that, by using the eEnviPer system and other available technologies, the whole permitting process will become more efficient and effective”, say Mr Stjepan Bručić, Anđelko Ferek-Jambrek and Zvonimir Tušek, the county representatives for the project.

Permitting process in Croatia

The Croatian eEnviPer pilot case covers the entire life cycle of the environmental permitting process, involving all stakeholders according to the legal framework and administrative practices applied in Croatia.

The legal framework of the EU requires Member States to ensure the protection of the environment from the early planning stages of projects and activities, taking into account all the necessary measures for environmental protection and the mitigation of any negative impacts. For this purpose, environmental permits are required in a variety of situations, including regulating industrial emissions, waste management and pollution prevention and control.

Public authorities assess the expected impacts, and issue the relevant environmental permits for approved actions. In addition, citizens or their representative bodies can exercise their constitutional rights for environmental protection by monitoring the adequacy and effectiveness of the administrative decision-making process.

Unless the project is smaller than a certain size, applicants must carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA process is defined by the Environmental Protection Law (OG 110/07) and Regulation on EIA (OG 64/08, 67/09)¹. The EIA procedure formally starts with the application by an investor or an authorised environmental consultant to the appropriate authority, depending on the type of project and its potential impact on the environment. For complex

¹ <http://www.mzoip.hr/default.aspx?id=3707>

projects, the application is submitted to the Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection, while others are submitted to the Department of Environment protection at county-level. According to the regulation on information and participation of the public and public concerned in environmental matters (OG No. 64/08), the public is notified on the official authority website.

The next step of the process is the appointment of an Advisory Committee, which is a technical body consisting of members of state administrative bodies, county and municipality representatives and experts in relevant fields for the evaluation of the environmental impact study (EIS) (landscape, fauna, noise, meteorology, cultural heritage, etc.). The Advisory Committee decides on the completeness and quality of the study and on the duration of the public inspection in the counties and municipalities where the project is located. The investor, environmental consultant and project designer are present during the Committee sessions as well as during the public debate, to present the project and provide clarifications if necessary.

After the public consultation, the Advisory Committee reviews all comments received and the responses prepared by the environmental consultant. The result of the Committee's work is an opinion on acceptability which includes a proposal for mitigation measures and a programme for environmental monitoring which is the basis for the decision on the environmental acceptability issued by the authority as the final document of the EIA procedure.

Actors in the permitting process

The eEnviPer pilot aims at building a communication channel for all stakeholders groups related to the permitting process (investors, permitting authorities, other relevant public administration, consultants, interest groups and citizens) using the existing platforms (the County web site and other official portals).

The identified stakeholder groups are as follows:

- **Investors (applicants)** - individuals or legal entities applying for a permit.
- **Environmental consultants** - the agents who submit applications on behalf of investors. They are expected to be the main users of the eEnviPer system.
- **Authorities** - the county-level administration responsible for the permitting process.
- **Other agencies** - public administrative bodies at other levels (national, ministry, agency or municipality) or other agencies involved in the permitting process (see below).
- **Interest groups** - representatives of different civil society groups or citizens with an interest in the outcome of the permitting process.

In terms of public administration, the other agencies involved in the permitting process mentioned above are as follows:

- The **Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection**, which has a leading role in the permitting process, being responsible for managing, administering

and/or checking all applications. However, the process requires and is dependent on well-coordinated multi-agency cooperation.

- The **Directorate of Physical Planning**, which issues certificates stating that projects are in compliance with physical planning requirements, which is a precondition for starting an EIA procedure; it participates in the Advisory Committee for the evaluation of the EIS.
- The **Directorate for Environmental Assessment and Industrial Pollution**, which conducts the EIA procedure and issues the final decision on environmental acceptability for larger wind power plants.
- The **Directorate of Protection**, which conducts the assessment for projects affecting Natura 2000 sites. It participates in the Advisory Committee as well, while the associated State Institute for Nature Protection acts as consultative body for the Ministry in pre-assessment and main assessment procedures.
- The **local and regional self-government units** at county level, which prepare and organise public consultation and public debate within the EIA procedure in relevant municipalities, and participate in the Advisory Committee to provide expertise during the EIS evaluation and to represent the municipality.

Implementing the eEnviPer pilot test

The eEnviPer pilot testing started in April 2013 following the installation and customisation of the system. A demonstration of the eEnviPer platform was made to the representatives of the Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection who agreed to support Krapina-Zagorje County during testing phase. Ms Ivana Lalić, has been nominated as contact person at the Ministry.

The pilot test at county-level started with the registering of key officials from agencies involved in the process as users. All phases of the permitting workflow are being checked on a number of test county application projects. The pilot test is based on the following pilot scenarios:

- **Case 1.** Elaboration of an EIS where an investor or environmental consultant uses the eEnviPer portal to find out about the legal obligations and procedural steps, and to download the permit application templates.
- **Case 2.** Submission of application for an environmental permit in which an investor uses the same portal to submit the application for an environmental permit with the required EIS study and other documentation.
- **Case 3.** Stakeholder involvement where necessary two-way communication between all interested parties is enabled using the collaboration features of the eEnviPer system, with status information about the permitting process being publically available on eEnviPer home page.
- **Case 4.** Evaluation of applications and permitting process finalisation where multi-agency cooperation is enabled by allowing the Advisory Committee to evaluate the applications, taking into account the EIS, relevant legislation and feedback from other stakeholders. The Committee uses the eEnviPer system modules to retrieve necessary information and to submit its findings and recommendations. The permitting process ends with issuing or rejecting the permit based on the report and stakeholder

opinions. The outcomes are communicated to all involved via the eEnviPer portal.

Initial pilot test results and reactions

During the first stages of the pilot test, it became apparent that the predominant benefit of eEnviPer is that different agencies with distinct roles and responsibilities within the process can cooperate easily. Users found the collaboration platform where agencies can share their opinions and inform others a critical success factor for a successful environmental permits process.

Other clear benefits of the system so far include:

1. The inclusion of all activities in a single workflow that is dictated and driven by an enforced timeline proved to be very useful for organising the input of all users.
2. Officers from the public authorities at national and county level found the notification function extremely useful. It serves as a reminder of the next step to be taken for each application and thereby supports the planning and inclusion of the agencies next-in-line in the process.
3. The availability of all relevant information and legislation through a user-friendly interface allowed a more effective use of time and resources, not to mention spatial and non-spatial data that are available online in an electronic format more suitable for browsing, querying and search.

On the other hand, users felt that - as advanced as the eEnviPer system is - its use does require some getting used to and requires training and assistance at least in the first year or so of implementation. Moreover, as the users at the launch event in Krapina-Zagorje rightfully pointed out, progress comes at a price: users will have to fight against the old paper-pushing routine that everyone is familiar with, and invest time and effort in learning how to use the system for their long-term benefit. As a result, the Croatian implementation team is determined to use the time remaining for their pilot to build their knowledge of and familiarity with the system, and to acquire the necessary skills for using the system.

About eEnviPer

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 helps to reduce the environmental impact of economic activities. The EU-funded eEnviPer project is setting-up and testing its existing multi-purpose cloud platform in the following five pilot communities between 2012 and 2014:

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

More detailed information on eEnviPer can be found at www.eenviper.eu.