



EVALUATION SUMMARY NOTES

EPISA2011061: ELECTRONIC PUBLIC RECORDS

Submitted by: Norwegian Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Difi)

GENERAL CRITERIA

1) Innovation

OEP is an outstanding Norwegian public e-service, fully operational, which offers on a one-single-internet portal access to all public records from all ministerial departments and public agencies. It creates a seamless flow of information to all interested citizens, journalists, etc., which contributes significantly to political and administrative transparency in the country. To publicize public records is required in most countries by law. But to introduce an electronic public record system open to everyone is innovative. OEP is a system of publicizing public records developed jointly by the Norwegian government and public agencies. It is intended to enhance the transparency of Norwegian government and its capacity to communicate with the citizens and private bodies. The originality of the solution is that OEP is not a database of public records but a record of entry data for each document, thus a platform allowing the contact between diverse users.

2) Public Concern

Transparency and free access for the citizenry to all public documents is a cornerstone of an adult and well-being democratic system in the age of information society. The public concern is very high as easy accessibility to public documents is a central criterion of modern governance. The project responds to the imperative of ensuring an equal and unbiased access to public information, an imperative acknowledged by the European authorities in general and endorsed by the Norwegian Constitution.

3) Sustainability

The great sustainability of this service is fully demonstrated in the application, which gives a clear record of the past and future developments of OEP. The sustainability is high as the publishing system OEP is deeply rooted in Norwegian law and demanded in the Norwegian Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The OEP is embedded in longer term strategy according to which by 2012, all the Norwegian governmental entities should be connected to the platform. OEP is built on an open source code. However, if information about the input costs is offered, no data is provided about the costs of maintaining and developing the platform.

4) Impact

The section on "Results" gives precise facts and figures that demonstrate the strong development of the use of this online service by the target users. The rise in the number of requests and also of public institutions connected to the network, including embassies abroad in the nearest future, demonstrates that the use of OEP is constantly growing. Due



to OEP information is better available and the number of inspection requests has increased by 56%, therefore easier governance and openness indicates a good impact. The facts and figures provided by the applicant prove the judicious fulfilment of the objectives in terms of both activities and results.

5) Learning capacity and Transferability

The lessons learnt are of potential high value for any other State: by its nature, vast scope, and rich modus operandi, this e-service happens to be a "flagship" service that could, should be replicated elsewhere. Depending on the IT resources the system can be implemented in every administration. Developing an open and transparent public sector is vital for every administration. The project has high potential of transfer due especially to this proven capacity to improve the time-result balance of the communication governmental bodies and the public. OEP is to be replicated to all levels of Norwegian administration and even extended beyond Norwegian frontiers. In this respect, versions of the OEP in French, German and Spanish are to be developed.

THEME-SPECIFIC CRITERIA

1) Willingness to open up the different phases of processes to civil society

This impressive e-service contributes undoubtedly to a more participative democracy by empowering citizens, the civil society and the media to completely inform themselves about all ongoing files dealt with by public administrations and the government. However, compared to other more modest projects, this one derives of the enforcement of Law and its design and elaboration do not seem to have involved the citizens as proactive actors. The implementation of an electronic public records system as an open tool is a very efficient way to open up and provide information. OEP increases the transparency of public processes and governmental agencies and facilitate the contacts between civil society and government. Its development supposed the tight collaboration of various governmental agencies. The collaborative nature of the project remains however reduced with respect to its service delivery dimension.

2) Link between objectives and results, including measurement indicators

The link between the objectives and the results is made very clear in that application. This project is a key driver and enabler within an overall strategy which is exposed in full details. The indicators of performance and success are exposed professionally in comparison to other projects. The objectives are described as the duty to keep public records and make these available via internet. The application offers a clear presentation of the objectives, a detailed description of the implementation of the project and a quantitative measurement of the results obtained.



3) Assessment against alternatives for collaborative governance

The presentation of the reasons and rationale which drive the adoption of the series of orientations and measures that OEP project consists in are presented and discussed extensively and convincingly. It is stated clearly why these measures were chosen as the most valuable and collaborative tool to achieve the greatest transparency. The implementation of the program responded to legal requirements and to the assessment of the initial situation in terms of public access to information. OEP was also preceded by a series of measures implemented since 1993 aiming to facilitate the access of citizens to public information. Also, OEP development and implementation was preceded by a thorough risk assessment. Its collaborative nature remains however low.