Category: **Obligation to Facilitate Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making**

Sub-Category: **Innovative Participatory Mechanisms**

Name of Good Practice: **Harava, Web-based Participatory Planning**

Key Words: Participation, Internet, Technology

Implementing Actors: National Ministry: The Ministry of Environment of Finland

Location: Finland

Description: In 2009, the Finnish Government implemented the Action Programme on eServices and eDemocracy (SADe), a national development project designed to develop new tools for citizen participation and interaction in land use planning. Launched in June 2013 as part of SADe, Harava is an interactive map-based application being used by municipalities, cities, and local governments for collecting insights, ideas, and feedback from citizens who often have practical knowledge and understanding of their surroundings which the authorities and organisations might not be aware of. To this end, Harava utilizes various information gathering tools. For example, it enables government organisations to conduct structured surveys to gain a wider perspective in decision-making. For instance, a map-survey function allows citizens to mark on an online map an ideal place for a planned new green area. Harava also functions as a question and answer platform, allowing residents to ask questions to the authorities. In addition to map-based project surveys, Harava offers an option for a social forum. In the map-based social forum, all parties involved in a project, from government to individuals, can openly discuss any defined subject. The participants can comment by writing or mark important opinions on a map and attach pictures or videos to illustrate their ideas or concerns.

According to the Government, Harava has created a lot of interest in the public sector, with around 70 per cent of the major cities in Finland already using the service. In addition, over 60 non-government organisations already use Harava. The Government has indicated that Harava has been an efficient method of increasing the level of public participation in living space development. According to the project’s webpage, “By offering citizens the integrated option to response both interactively on map and in writing promoted with the place independent mobile response alternative, Harava enquiries have reached increased response rates, very useful local knowhow and ideas to make the living space better. By sharing the visual map reports of enquiry results the public participation loop can be closed in an understandable and informative way with all the parties.”

**Further Information:** <http://www.eharava.fi/default.aspx>; <https://www.eharava.fi/en/> (English)