

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

# What **UNECE** does for you



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...**UNECE** works  
for sustainable  
land management

Sound land administration and sustainable land management are indispensable for economic, social and environmental development. They are also a vital part of good governance of a country. The UNECE Working Party on Land Administration works for security of tenure and the strengthening and modernization of land administration systems in the UNECE region.

Christina von Schweinichen, Deputy Director of the UNECE Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, and Peter Kreuzer, Chairman of the Working Party, present the activities of the Working Party in this area.



### **What is the main purpose and the strategic priorities of the Working Party?**

The UNECE was the first international organization to define and address the issue of land administration in Europe in a comprehensive manner. The Working Party was established in 1999 to bring together policy officials and experts from the now 56 UNECE member countries. The overall goal of the Working Party is the promotion and improvement of land administration and land management in the UNECE region. Within this context, it focuses on strategies to develop better land management systems, on measures to improve cadastre and land registry systems, and on policy tools to facilitate the more efficient operation of real estate markets. In particular,

the Working Party focuses on two essential aspects: *land administration and management for sustainable land use*.

### **What are the main activities of the Working Party?**

The activities of the Working Party are based on cooperation and the exchange of experience among all countries in the region through seminars and workshops. Every year, we organize at least two international workshops on topics as diverse as real estate markets and land administration, land cadastre and e-governance, and sustainable land management.

Work on informal settlements is carried out jointly with the Committee on Housing and Land Management and the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), taking

into account the cross-sectoral nature of the challenges that exist in this area in a number of countries. This involves land administration as well as housing, spatial planning, infrastructure and economic policies.

Other important elements of the Working Party's programme of work are its land administration reviews of countries in transition and the preparation of publications on specific land management topics.

### **What is a land administration review? What is the process?**

A land administration review is carried out upon the request of a member country. The secretariat organizes an international team of experts, who collaborate with their local counterparts during a one-week fact-finding mission in the host country. The experts prepare individual chapters of the land review document. Working intensively with policymakers and experts from the host country, the secretariat is responsible for the harmonization of the final report.

The end result of a country review is a set of policy recommendations that address the main challenges identified by the international experts. These recommendations are put forward to the host Government. Thus far, land administration reviews have been carried out in Armenia (2001), Georgia (2001), Russian Federation (2003), Lithuania (2005) and Azerbaijan (2007).

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### **Much of your work is related to countries in transition. What are the most significant challenges for land management there?**

In most countries in transition Governments have privatized land with various degrees of success. The scale of land tenure transformation has been remarkable, particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, where private ownership of land was limited and almost non-existent in urban areas. So-called land reform projects also involved the restoration of land rights to previous owners, the redistribution of land rights, and land consolidation measures to transform dispersed and scattered land holdings into more viable land structures. Economic considerations such as the development of land and property taxation and the use of land as collateral for mortgages have been equally relevant.

Despite the considerable progress made in most countries in the region, significant challenges to the implementation of land reform remain, in particular: (a) the establishment of a modern land administration system is still incomplete; (b) control over the implementation of land policy is ineffective; and (c) institutional frameworks and capacities are inadequate.

### **How does the Working Party facilitate collaboration between countries in the UNECE region?**

The Working Party has developed into an effective network of land administration officials in Europe and North America. We facilitate collaboration through specialized workshops and also provide policy advice and expert assistance upon request. Our publications — on issues such as land administration systems, the elimination of restrictions of ownership, and the leasing, transfer and financing of land and real estate — are in high demand. Several of them, for example *Land Administration in the UNECE Region and Social and Economic Benefits of Good Land Administration* (both 2005), are

excellent resources for policy learning and the dissemination of good practices in the region.

In addition, we encourage partnerships between the public and private sectors as well as their involvement in managing land resources and capacity-building for sustainable development, as expressed in our publication *Guiding Principles for Public/Private Partnerships in Land Administration* (2005). The Working Party works with experts from the real estate sector and educational institutions to enhance capacity-building activities.

### **Who are the main partner organizations?**

The Working Party closely coordinates its activities with those other international governmental and non-governmental organizations active in related fields. We have an extensive network of partner organizations such as the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Development Programme, European Union institutions concerned with land management activities (e.g. the INSPIRE Initiative, EULIS Project), FIG, the Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union, the European Umbrella Organisation for Geographic Information and the European Land Registry Association.

### **What are the plans for the immediate future of the Working Party?**

The Working Party will continue to focus its activities on its strategic priorities — better land management systems, land registration and spatial planning — in both interdisciplinary and holistic ways. In the next two years, the Working Party will be carrying

out land administration reviews in Bulgaria, Tajikistan and Latvia. Our future workshops will facilitate the exchange of experience on technical issues such as documentation of ownership rights, cadastral mapping, database activities, real property valuation and innovative tools for sustainable land management. These activities are fundamentally important for the economic prosperity and development of socially equitable public policies in these societies.



For more information:  
<http://www.unece.org/hlm/wpla/welcome.html>

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Information Service  
Palais des Nations  
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
Phone: +41 (0)22 917 44 44  
Fax: +41 (0)22 917 05 05  
E-mail: [info.ece@unece.org](mailto:info.ece@unece.org)  
Website: [www.unece.org](http://www.unece.org)