



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
10 June 2013

Original: English

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Housing and Land Management

#### Seventy-fourth session and Ministerial meeting

Geneva, 7 - 9 October 2013

Item 5(c) of the provisional agenda

#### Review of the implementation of the programme of work 2012-2013

#### Land administration and management

## Overview of the activities undertaken by the Working Party on Land Administration

### Note by the Working Party

#### *Summary*

The Working Party on Land Administration is an intergovernmental body that, under the direction of the Committee, promotes and improves land administration and land management in the ECE region. This note describes the activities carried out by the Working Party to complete its programme of work for 2012-2013, approved by the Working Party during its seventh session.

The programme of work, organized according to the clusters “land-administration policies”, “major trends in land administration” and “land-administration reviews”, is included as an annex.

The Committee is invited to take note of the activities of the Working Party.

## I. Land-administration policies

1. The Working Party on Land Administration promotes the improvement of land-administration policies, including the reform of cadastre and registration systems, the establishment of institutional frameworks for land use, security of tenure of real estate, public access to land information and the resolution of land disputes.

### Workshops

2. The Working Party held a workshop on “Supporting Global Economic Recovery: the Role of Land Registration Authorities” from 10 to 13 October 2012 in London in cooperation with Her Majesty’s Land Registry of England and Wales.

3. The goal was to improve the understanding of how land registration can contribute effectively to economic recovery and growth. The main themes were as follows: re-building confidence in the lending market; providing data to stimulate investment growth; using technology to support efficient lending; and how land registration authorities can meet changing market needs.

4. The following were the main conclusions of the workshop:

- To rebuild lender confidence, land registration authorities should ensure that they operate within a secure legal framework that is easily understood by all. Governments should be clear in their support for keeping a land register that comprehensively includes the tenure, rights, obligations and burdens on each piece of land.
- Advances in technology should be used to support the drive to rebuild confidence in land markets, as they help ensure the efficiency of registration processes and the transparency of land-related information.
- Land registration authorities should always consider the types of data they record and be prepared to adapt data recording processes to the changing lifestyles of the citizens they served.
- Land registration authorities should make their data transparent and accessible so that lenders can easily obtain land data from an authoritative source.

5. From 29 to 31 May 2012, the Working Party held the workshop “Collaborating for Secured Ownership” in Uppsala, Sweden in cooperation with the Swedish Mapping, Land Registry and Cadastre Agency and the European Land Registry Association.

6. The goal was to discuss how e-government can be developed in a way that gives landowners better service and better enables the administration to serve society more efficiently.

7. The workshop focused on four themes: the exchange of experiences in developing e-government in different countries; collaboration within the public sector and between the public and the private sectors; e-services for the benefit of European citizens; and the role of land-administration data in society.

8. The following were the main conclusions of the workshop:

- E-government services must be designed for the benefit of the end-user. The design should involve a dialogue between authorities and citizens. Land registries and cadastre agencies should operate on the principle, “As simple as possible for as many as possible”.

- By making data open and accessible, land registries and cadastre agencies could benefit citizens as well as other users, including government agencies that use the data.
- Organizations could encourage the use of more efficient e-services through user outreach and education, as well as by creating incentives for the use of e-services through, for example, lower fees, greater convenience and quicker processing times.
- Agencies must ensure the quality of the data collected, the interoperability of different registries, the stability of information systems and the protection of personal data.

## II. Major trends in land administration

9. The Working Party aims to promote security of tenure by introducing and improving cadastres and land registries and developing sound real estate markets. This includes work related to informal settlements as well as to sound land registry and cadastre data to support security of tenure.

10. The Working Party carried out a survey on the benchmarking of land administration systems with input from the Real Estate Market Advisory Group. The results of this study are described in informal note 6 (available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=32586>).

11. The Working Party organized the panel discussion “How can property administration help in post financial crisis recovery?” as part of the Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty held in Washington, D.C. from 8 to 11 April 2013. Panellists discussed land administration and management in Europe, current challenges in land administration in Europe and Central Asia, the survey of the benchmarking of land-administration systems, and preliminary work on a proposed study on the administrative structure of land management institutions.

### Workshops

12. The Working Party held the workshop “Spatial Information, Informal Development, Property and Housing” on 13 and 14 December 2012 in Athens in cooperation with the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG).

13. The goal of the workshop was to study the progress and efficiency of the legalization of informal settlements in the UNECE region and the impact of this on property markets, with an emphasis on the economic, social and environmental aspects of the process, and with particular reference to:

- Affordable solutions for the fast privatization of squatted land, title issuing and property registration.
- Affordable solutions for the fast legalization of planning and construction illegalities through the pragmatic planning of retrofitting.
- Adoption of pro-growth planning and construction permit procedures to facilitate development and economic growth.
- Raising awareness among local experts and decision makers as Greece goes through structural reforms due to the current economic crisis.

14. The following were the main conclusions of the workshop: :

- Although legalization and regularization projects have been initiated by several Governments, there is a need to raise awareness among politicians, experts and the

general public about the purposes and expected benefits of these initiatives and to emphasize the need to coordinate conflicting policies.

- Solutions to problems related to informal settlements must be applied in an inclusive, pro-growth manner that is sensitive to the needs of socially disadvantaged communities.
- Planning or building informalities should not be related to ownership rights, credit access and/or transfer of property. Property titles should be strengthened and property markets should work for the benefit of the economy. It should be possible to regularize informalities before or after property transactions.

15. The workshop “Land Administration in Central Asia: Building Systems for 21st Century Challenges” was held in Bishkek on 19 and 20 March 2013 in cooperation with the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the World Bank. The objective of the workshop was to provide participants with an understanding of the main characteristics and key issues facing land-administration authorities in Central Asia.

16. It discussed the following topics:

- Building cadastre and registration systems in Central Asia
- Technology and land administration
- National land administration experiences, including discussions on land-administration systems of countries outside of Central Asia
- Future trends in land-resource governance for Central Asia and Europe.

17. Participants in the workshop reached the following conclusions:

- Central Asia’s land-administration systems are rapidly developing and closing the gap with those in Western Europe.
- Continued improvement of land-administration systems should be done in cooperation with international partners in and beyond Central Asia.

### **III. Land-administration reviews**

18. In this area, the Working Party promotes the practical implementation of land-administration policies through country-specific studies. Land-administration reviews and related follow-up activities are carried out at the request of member States.

19. The Working Party contributed a chapter on land administration to the country profiles on housing land management for Ukraine and Tajikistan. The country profile of Ukraine, which contains a land-administration review, has been completed. Preliminary work on a country profile on the Republic of Moldova has begun, which will also contain a chapter on land administration with contributions from the Working Party.

## **Annex: Programme of Work of the Working Party 2012-2013<sup>1</sup>**

### **I. Land-administration policies**

Description: The Working Party promotes the improvement of land-administration policies, including the reform of cadastre and registration systems; the establishment of institutional frameworks for land use; security of tenure of real estate; public access to land information; and resolution of land disputes.

Work accomplished: A study on fraud in e-registration and e-conveyancing was prepared after an in-depth discussion of the subject during the Working Party's sixth session. The study examines different approaches to coping with this challenge in UNECE member States. A workshop addressing the issue of transparency in land markets was held in Baku on 4 and 5 March 2010. Another workshop, on the impact of e-government reforms on real property cadastre and registration services, was held on 8 and 9 June 2010 in Minsk. A workshop on the subject of economic information for real estate markets in the UNECE region was held in Rome on 5 and 6 May 2011.

Work to be undertaken: Activities in cooperation with the Real Estate Market Advisory Group are expected to be further developed, in particular a study on the rating of financial instruments that use real estate as collateral. A workshop will be organized during early 2012 to be hosted by Her Majesty's Land Registry, the land administration agency of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The United Nations Development Programme has expressed interest in holding a joint training event with the Working Party in Tbilisi addressed to Georgian civil servants during the third quarter of 2011 on the topic "Empowering the Poor through the Rights to Immovable Property". The Working Party will also contribute to discussions at a number of meetings organized by other international organizations dealing with land administration (e.g. Eurogeographics, Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union (PCC) and the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) among others).

### **II. Major trends in land administration**

Description: The Working Party aims to promote security of tenure by introducing and improving cadastre and land registry and developing sound real estate markets. Sound land registration and cadastre data to support security of tenure is a core issue in the Working Party's agenda. The Working Party also pursues work on these topics in relation to the question of informal settlements.

Work accomplished: The issue of security of tenure from a land-administration perspective was discussed at a workshop held on 28 and 29 October 2010 in Antalya, Turkey. The Working Party has continued working with other international organizations active in land administration. Activities in cooperation with the Real Estate Market Advisory Group were further developed. These included the publication of guidelines for sound regulations for real estate markets (*Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets* (April 2010)), roundtables to discuss the dissemination and implementation of the guidelines in Ukraine

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<sup>1</sup> ECE/HBP/WP.7/2011/2, available at <http://www.unecce.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2011/WP7/ece.hbp.wp.7.2011.2.e.pdf>

and Portugal; and a workshop on greening real estate markets (Dessau, Germany, 29 and 30 November 2010).

Work to be undertaken: During the next biennium, the Working Party will conduct a study of land-administration systems in different Member States based on two questionnaires. One includes questions on qualitative aspects of land-registration systems and related services, and the other is an updated version of the questions contained in *Inventory of Land Administration Systems in Europe and North America* (2005). The study will provide data that can be used for benchmarks in national or subregional contexts. Work by the Real Estate Market Advisory Group will complement the study, including research on national legal frameworks for real estate valuation, transactions, finance and rating. Follow-up action based on the results of the study will be considered, including publishing an updated version of the inventory of land-administration systems. A workshop on the topic of land administration in a network society will take place in the Netherlands (13 and 14 October 2011).

### **III. Land-administration reviews**

Description: The Working Party promotes the practical implementation of land-administration policies through country-specific studies. Land-administration reviews and related follow-up activities are carried out at the request of Member States.

Work accomplished: A research mission to develop a land-administration review as a part of the country profile on the housing sector of Tajikistan took place from 7 to 14 February 2010. The country profile on the housing sector of Tajikistan has been completed and will be submitted to the Government for review. Other countries were invited to consider the undertaking of land administration reviews during the biennium 2012–2013.

Work to be undertaken: The Government of the Republic of Moldova has expressed interest in undertaking a land-administration review in the next biennium. A chapter on land administration will be included in the next country profile of the housing sector of Ukraine. The Working Party may wish to decide on the next land-administration reviews, based on requests received.

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