



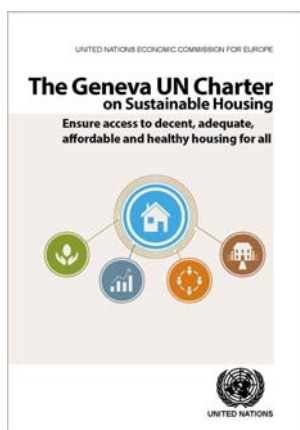
# VITAL SPACES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNECE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT AND THE WORKING PARTY ON LAND ADMINISTRATION

Dear reader,

This newsletter informs on the ongoing and planned meetings and activities of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management. For more information on the areas of work of the Committee, please visit the website: <http://www.unece.org/housing> or write to [housing.landmanagement@unece.org](mailto:housing.landmanagement@unece.org).

## UNECE MEMBER STATES ENDORSED THE GENEVA UN CHARTER ON SUSTAINABLE HOUSING



Countries in the region are facing enormous challenges in providing adequate housing to all, especially to vulnerable groups such as the young and the elderly. Uncontrolled urbanization has expanded informal settlements, where residents often lack security of tenure, infrastructure, water, sanitation, and other public services.

According to UNECE studies, housing is the least affordable human right. 100 million people in the UNECE region spend more than

40 per cent of their disposable income on housing. High housing costs leave limited resources for low-income households to cover other basic needs, such as food, health, clothing and transportation, making other human rights increasingly unaffordable. Although available data are limited, it is estimated that 52.08 million people in the EU cannot keep their homes adequately warm and 41.74 million face arrears on their utility bills.

To help countries address these problems, UNECE member States developed the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing.

The *Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing* is a non-legally binding document that aims to support member States as they seek to ensure *access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing* for all. It was negotiated for five years by UNECE member States and endorsed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its 66<sup>th</sup> session on 16 April 2015.

The main purpose of this historical document on sustainable housing is to ensure the access to decent, affordable and healthy housing in the UNECE region. The charter is based on 4 key principles: environmental protection, economic effectiveness, social inclusion and participation, and cultural adequacy.

UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach stressed that the Charter will be an important tool to support the implementation of

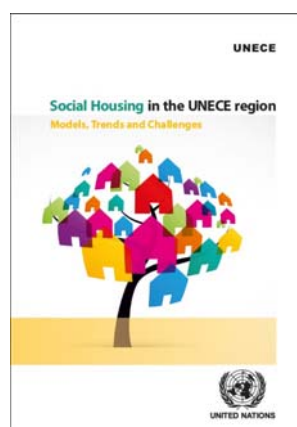
the expected Sustainable Development Goal on cities and human settlements. *"The Charter is the expression of the political will of our 56 member States to ensure a high quality life to their citizens through the provision of adequate, safe, healthy housing and sustainable cities. We will make it available to all UN member States at the HABITAT III Conference"*, he said.

The implementation of the Charter will be assisted through the preparation of country profiles on housing and land management, the organisation of national urban policy dialogues in economies in transition and bi-annual regional reports on housing and urban development, which will allow benchmarking the achievements of countries in the region in implementing the Charter principles.

The Charter was forwarded to the Third Global Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – HABITAT III, (Quito, Ecuador, October 2016), which will adopt the "New Urban Agenda".

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/housing/charter>

## UNECE STUDY "SOCIAL HOUSING IN THE UNECE REGION: MODELS, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES"



Adequate affordable housing is the bedrock upon which to build healthy lives, strong and resilient cities, and thriving national economies. However, since the financial and economic crisis of 2008, countries across the UNECE region have been facing marked increases in the need for social housing and reduced availability of funds to meet these needs. Securing funding for the housing sector in general and especially for social housing is therefore one of the key challenges in the region.

In the past, social housing may have been a home for the vulnerable and poor in the majority of countries in the region. However, the 2008 crisis has made middle-income as well as middle-class households in marked need for social housing.

Considering the limited housing supply and the sharp drop in new housing starts and completion since 2008, ensuring the quality of the existing stock and establishing energy efficiency standards for new stock are increasingly important. These are some of the main findings of the study ***Social Housing in the UNECE Region: Models, Trends and Challenges*** released by UNECE in September.

The Study examines the current trends, challenges and social housing models in the region.

According to the study, homeownership is the dominant tenure in the UNECE region. But the middle-income and in some cases middle-class households find it increasingly difficult to access and sustain decent housing due to the combination of three factors: a) housing price increases over the last decade, b) lack of accessibility to mortgage finance, and c) lack of tenure alternatives. Affordability is particularly problematic in heated markets such as large metropolitan areas. There is also growing concern for the businesses operating in these areas because limited access to affordable housing limits labour mobility.

The middle-income population in North America and Western Europe face an additional challenge: they usually earn too little to be able to afford a mortgage (especially because mortgage rules have been toughened in most countries since the crisis) but earn too much to be considered for social housing.

In the Eastern part of the region, people who acquired homes during the privatization of public housing are often facing decreasing living conditions due to the lack of maintenance, energy inefficiency and health hazards. The combined costs of utility bills and high mortgage rates (from 7 per cent in Serbia to over 22 per cent in Belarus) raise serious questions about the way first-time buyers (after privatization is over) will access homes.

The Study finds that in nearly all UNECE countries, there is some support for those who cannot afford market housing costs, through social housing. However, in addition to traditional vulnerable groups, such as the low- and no-income groups, refugees and homeless, new vulnerable populations are emerging, including the ageing and the young (first-time buyers).

As a result, even in countries with a long tradition of social housing and sizable social housing funds, the demand for social housing is not met. Observed waiting lists for social housing are breaking historical records, reaching 1.8 million people in the United Kingdom, 1.7 million in France and 1.17 million in Ukraine. In the United States of America, there is a shortage of 5.3 social housing homes while the waiting period for this type of housing in the Russian Federation is estimated to be 20 years.

The housing sector therefore needs to respond to these needs, adjust to the new dynamics of the housing markets and meet new aspirations, such as energy efficiency and customer adjusted design.

The Social Housing study provides recommendations for possible future activities based on an extensive literature review of housing issues in over 50 countries and interviews with over 30 representatives of governments, private and non-governmental organizations.

It suggests ways to address the lack of affordable housing and fundamental housing market failures, including a reassessment of the links between the financial and housing markets. It proposes an integrated approach to improving social housing supply and funding, energy efficiency and health, and increasing housing choice to meet demographic changes. It also looks at: how to promote better social housing governance; developing public-

private partnerships for cost efficiency; shifting from home-ownership-focused to tenure-neutral policies; and making available housing that is appropriate for the needs of different population groups, including an aging population and the young.

At a time where the majority of UNECE member States are in the process of reassessing their housing policies, the Study illustrates that social housing can play a positive role in solving emerging housing needs.

The Study is available from:

[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Social\\_Housing\\_in\\_UNECE\\_region.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Social_Housing_in_UNECE_region.pdf)

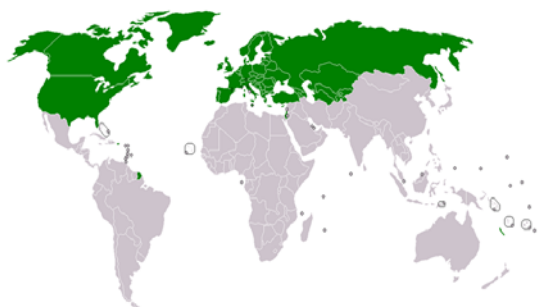
Listen to interviews with senior governments' representatives from the UNECE region on social housing trends and challenges at <https://goo.gl/Rvy3hh>

#### Key principles for effective social housing policies based on good practices in the UNECE region

- Provision of social/affordable housing is considered an important part of public policy with added social, environmental and economic benefits;
- Long-term political commitment to housing in general and social housing in particular exist;
- Comprehensive social housing policies with a clearly defined vision for social housing, related legislation and institutions governing competencies for financing, housing supply and allocation are in place;
- Clear evaluation system of housing needs as a base for policy reassessment and/or design is operational;
- There is an institutional capacity and professional expertise in housing policy design, implementation, maintenance and management;
- Clear standards regarding construction quality, dimensions of space (minimal ceiling height, minimal number of windows per room, minimal size of rooms), basic amenities (toilets/bathrooms, cooking facilities), access to public space are available;
- Fair and transparent allocation systems of available social housing stock are in place.

Source: Annex 1, *Social Housing in the UNECE region: Models, Trends and Challenges*

## PREPARATION OF THE HABITAT III REGIONAL REPORT FOR THE UNECE REGION



By 2050, almost three-quarters of the world's population will live in urban areas – this will be the Century of the City. The trend towards increasing urbanization is clear across the entire UNECE

territory but the character, nature and pace of this change varies between sub-regions and member states. The most urbanized region of the world is North America with 82% living in urban areas in 2014. Europe is close to this at 72% and both are in contrast with Africa at 40%. The urban population has grown rapidly since 1950 from 746 million to 3.9 billion in 2014. Continuing population growth and urbanization are projected to add 2.5 billion people to the world's urban population although little of this growth will take place within the UNECE region and nearly 90% of it will be concentrated in Asia and Africa.

The UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management will meet in Geneva at its 76th session and discuss issues related to urbanization both in the UNECE region and globally as part of its preparations towards the HABITAT III - the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, which will take place in October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. At the session on 14 December 2015, the Committee will be requested to endorse the key messages of the HABITAT III Regional Report for the UNECE Region "Towards a city-focused, people-centered and integrated approach to the New Urban Agenda".

The draft regional report was prepared by UNECE and UN-Habitat under the guidance of the HABITAT III Secretariat, in close consultation with other UN agencies, international organizations, universities, urban research networks, stakeholders and experts. The report builds on national reports prepared by countries in the UNECE region; a regional report by UNECE "Challenges and Priorities in Housing and Urban Development in the UNECE Region"; a sub-regional report on housing and urban development in the CIS countries prepared by UN-Habitat; and on a series of expert consultation meetings.

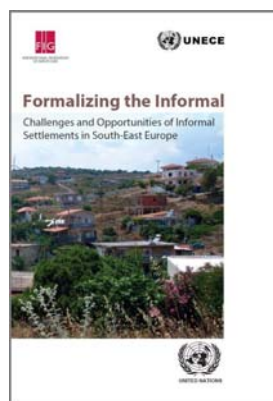
The draft report is structured around five key topics, which are (1) Trends and Patterns of Urbanisation; (2) The Economy of Cities; (3) Living in the Cities; (4) Environment; and (5) Governance.

Among key challenges highlighted in the draft regional report are those related to demographic changes in the UNECE region. Ageing is one of main issues in most countries of the region and it poses problems for cities in regards to shrinking local tax revenues, and provision of services, transportation, housing, accessibility to public spaces. At the same time, Central Asian countries of the region experience continuous growth of the young population and face difficulties related to providing jobs and housing for this particular group of population. Migration is another key issue throughout the UNECE region that has increased in the past 20 years. Migrants settle mainly in large cities; this trend with lack of planning in many countries has led to urban polarization. There is also a challenge of increasing gap in economic performance between large and small cities as larger and best performing cities or neighbourhoods tend to attract the population, especially the youth, and economic activities, leaving other areas in a state of economic stagnation and demographic shrinkage. This in turn reduces opportunities for positive social interaction and cohesion. Housing affordability is another key challenge for urban development in the UNECE region.

The HABITAT III Regional Report for the UNECE Region will be submitted to the HABITAT III Secretariat as the official input from the UNECE region to the New Global Urban Agenda, which will be adopted by the HABITAT III Conference.

The draft report is available at <http://www.unece.org/housing/committee76thsession.html#/>

## UNECE STUDY "FORMALIZING THE INFORMAL: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE"



Over the last 25 years, informal settlements have become an increasingly important and urgent issue in the UNECE region. This dates back to the early 1990s as a result of the political and economic changes in Eastern Europe and former-Soviet countries coupled with rapid urbanization and uncontrolled, massive internal migration due to poverty, conflicts, marginalization and natural disasters. The impact of these developments was compounded by the frequent lack of effective policies on social and affordable housing.

In 2014, there were some 3.5 million informal buildings (i.e. constructed without building permits) in South-Eastern Europe, including approximately 2,500,000 in Greece; 500,000 in Albania; 350,000 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and 130,000 in Montenegro.

In spite of the initiatives taken in recent years in many countries to implement formalization measures, greater efforts to legalise informal settlements and prevent future illegal construction are needed in the region. These are the main findings of the study *Formalizing the Informal: Challenges and Opportunities from South-East Europe*.

The study focuses on five South-East European countries – Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – looking at the impact of informal development and recent urban policies. These include: privatizing occupied state-owned land and defining compensation for occupied, privately-owned land; revising zoning and planning procedures, regulations and standards; regularizing and upgrading informal settlements; applying controls and upgrading individual constructions.

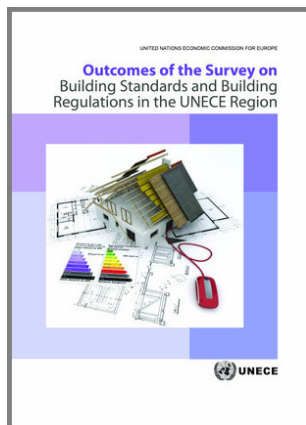
The study provides policy guidelines and recommendations to address informal development, and contains lessons learned and best practices that can be applied throughout the UNECE region. It recommends a range of actions to address informal settlements, including: simplified processes for housing and construction permits; strengthened private property rights; the effective implementation of legalization measures for all kinds of properties; major public involvement in the legalization process; and the enforcement of clear formalization laws that are designed in order to protect the environment, encourage secure tenure and promote economic growth. Such actions are a key to enabling countries to take full advantage of the economic benefits that come from a well-functioning real estate market with wide-spread participation across different sectors of the population.

The study is a joint effort by the Bureau of the *UNECE Working Party on Land Administration* and the *International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) Task Force on Property and Housing*. It builds on the conclusions of the 2009 UNECE publication *Self-made Cities: In Search of Sustainable Solutions for Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region*.

This publication is available for free download - [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Informal\\_Settlements.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Informal_Settlements.pdf)



## UNECE PUBLICATION “OUTCOMES OF THE SURVEY ON BUILDING STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS IN THE UNECE REGION”



Standards are an effective instrument for addressing energy efficiency in buildings and supporting the achievements of the targets set by international initiatives such as the Global Goals, the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, and the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing. All these initiatives stress the importance of energy efficiency to ensure energy security, mitigate GHGs emissions and grant access to affordable energy for all.

In March 2015, the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and the Committee on Sustainable Energy jointly conducted a survey that aimed to understand the situation and the challenges of the member States in the field of standards and regulations, in particular in the sector of energy efficiency in buildings; and to identify the most important areas and activities in the field of building standards and regulations where UNECE can support member States.

The outcomes of this survey are reported in this online publication and will serve as the background for UNECE future work on standards on energy efficiency in buildings.

This publication is available for free download - [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Building\\_standards\\_survey\\_outcomes.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Building_standards_survey_outcomes.pdf)

## FAO AND UNECE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE 2012 VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON THE RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE OF TENURE OF LAND, FISHERIES AND FORESTS IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY



By  
*Rumyana Tonchovska, Andrew Hilton; Javier Molina; and David Palmer: Senior Land Tenure Officers, FAO, Rome*

The **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 16 April 2015 on Land Administration and Management between UNECE and FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)** brings the document *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (Voluntary Guidelines)* to the fore of the agencies' cooperation. The document was endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012 and is the ground-breaking first global 'soft law' on tenure. Implementation of this Voluntary Guidelines has been repeatedly encouraged at the highest levels of the UN system. The Voluntary Guidelines are:

- the global consensus on internationally accepted principles and standards for responsible practices in governance of tenure;

- a tool to improve governance of tenure for the benefit of all, in particular vulnerable and marginalized people;
- not legally binding, nor replacing existing national or international laws, commitments, treaties or agreements;
- an essential mechanism in the fight against hunger and poverty.

The Voluntary Guidelines:

- encourage multi-stakeholder consultation when developing and implementing strategies for governance of land and other natural resources;
- provide a framework that States and other stakeholders can use when developing their own strategies, policies, legislation, programmes and activities;
- allow governments, civil society, the private sector and citizens to judge whether their proposed actions and actions of others constitute acceptable practices;
- seek to improve policy, legal and organizational frameworks regulating the range of tenure rights that exist over these resources.

Awareness of the importance of the Voluntary Guidelines has spread rapidly through civil society organizations, the private sector and academia, with household names including ActionAid, Caritas, Oxfam, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestle and Cargill using the Voluntary Guidelines as an integral part of their programmes.

Real changes are happening. Government policy makers and other stakeholders in countries of the Western Balkans are increasing gender equal access to land based on the Voluntary Guidelines. Country level commitment to implement the Voluntary Guidelines is not limited within the UNECE region: the Voluntary Guidelines' principles are integrated into Guatemala's new Land Policy; Sierra Leone has committed to implement the Voluntary Guidelines in the process of improving its land policy and in the Philippines, the Voluntary Guidelines are being mainstreamed across key legislation.

The international community, through the Voluntary Guidelines-inspired Global Donor Working Group on Land, is sharing information to improve donor coordination. Mapped activities show widespread Voluntary Guidelines initiatives, including in the UNECE region: <http://www.donorplatform.org/land-governance/programme-map>.

FAO, the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA), and other stakeholders see great opportunities for strengthening government, civil society, private sector and academia partnerships, sharing awareness and experiences within and across countries and making available technical guides, e-learning and other materials to facilitate greater implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

The 2015 UNECE, FAO, World Bank and EU JRC (Joint Research Center of the European Commission) joint Action Plan has achieved positive Voluntary Guidelines-related results:

- the joint UNECE/FAO/World Bank/EU JRC session at the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty was held on 23-27 March 2015 (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2014/08/06/landconference2015>). It focused on the way forward for land governance in the UNECE region;
- EU INSPIRE's *Geospatial World Forum* held on 25-29 May 2015 demonstrated the use of Voluntary Guidelines in support of the Smart Cities concept (<http://geospatialworldforum.org/2015/proceedings.html>);

- following the WPLA June 2015 workshop in Geneva on Informal Settlements, a Technical Guide on Informal Tenure will be prepared with World Bank financial support;
- the WPLA June 2015 Moscow workshop established an Innovation Working Group to document success stories from the region and share know-how and innovations;
- reforms in UNECE countries on valuation, taxation, informal settlement, state property management, open data and spatial data infrastructure are greatly assisted by sharing successful practical experience at joint workshops, such as the World Bank/FAO Property Valuation and Taxation workshop in Vilnius in June 2015 and by interregional exchanges of experiences, including recent exchanges between Nicaragua, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to spread knowledge about tenure reforms in Nicaragua.

The MoU, which formalizes cooperation on land administration and management in the framework of the Voluntary Guidelines in UNECE member States, is a key element towards progress on these Voluntary Guidelines. UNECE and FAO are working with the World Bank and EU JRC to support governments to bring Voluntary Guidelines principles and practices into land administration reforms through policy advice and technical projects.

The Voluntary Guidelines is available from:  
<http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

## SOCIOECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF LAND ADMINISTRATION SERVICES



Pia Dahl Højgaard,  
Danish Geodata  
Agency



Virginia Cram-  
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Michael Milligan,  
ex-UNECE

What are the potential benefits of effective and transparent land registration services? How can land registration data support effective land administration? And what socioeconomic potential can be reaped when countries use their land registration data alongside other geospatial data for purposes beyond the management of the property market?

### Land registration information is the basis for land administration

Land registration institutions, i.e. cadastres and land registries, provide the foundation for stable and reliable property markets. The registration of property and ownership provides security of tenure which is a prerequisite for investment and provides other benefits as well. Registered property, in turn, constitutes collateral for the lending market. Thus, where properties can be registered efficiently and transparently, there is a basis upon which the land market and related interests can prosper.

The cadastre, along with land registry data about land and property, are important sources of information for a range of land administration functions. These include valuation, physical planning, the issuance of building permits and the monitoring of environmental impacts, among others. Still, in many countries, barriers prevent the effective use of this data by potentially interested parties. Problems can stem from the use of diverse

definitions and specifications, mismatching data formats, excessive costs or regulatory restrictions.

By increasing interoperability, focusing on standards, generating metadata (including standard definitions) and opening access to the data for public use, the barriers to wider use of property data can be removed. This can contribute to the increased incorporation of this data in e-government solutions, leading to both increased effectiveness and better services for citizens as well as to new business opportunities for the private sector.

A workshop organized by the Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA) and the Danish Geodata Agency (GST) last year investigated the socioeconomic potential that might be realized through the increased use of information that is collected through a variety of land administration processes.

The workshop discussed the barriers to free and open data, and the need to improve the interoperability of public data. Interoperability” in this context means the ability of different computerized applications to use the same data and the ability to combine data on the same objects coming from different sources. The participants to the workshop also explored the socioeconomic potential of developing land administration techniques based on open and standardized property data.

The Danish experience on implementing an ambitious strategy for broader e-government was highlighted. Other participating countries also presented their initiatives for providing sound land registration systems and data. There was significant focus on the drivers for increased access to and use of property data, as well as the obstacles to achieving these goals.

The workshop gave its participants the opportunity to explore new applications for property data and to discover new approaches to making them more accessible and interoperable with other types of data. With the identification of a number of barriers to the greater use of these data, participating countries now have an explicit challenge, as well as new ideas and approaches, to finding solutions and opportunities for maximizing the value of land registration and property data.

*Continued on page 7, column 1*

## UNECE SIGNED MoU WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA ON THE PREPARATION OF A COUNTRY PROFILE AND SMARTY CITY PILOT PROJECT



UNECE formalized its cooperation with the Government of Armenia on April 2015 via two Memoranda of Understanding, with the Ministry of Urban Development and the UNDP office in Armenia. These provide the framework for cooperation for Armenia’s second Country Profile on Housing and Land Management (Country Profile) and for the development of a smart city pilot project in the town of Goris, initiated within the UNECE-led “United Smart Cities” initiative. UNECE and UNDP Armenia will support Armenia in conducting the

analysis of the housing and urban development situation and developing specific policy recommendations and action plans at both country and municipal levels.

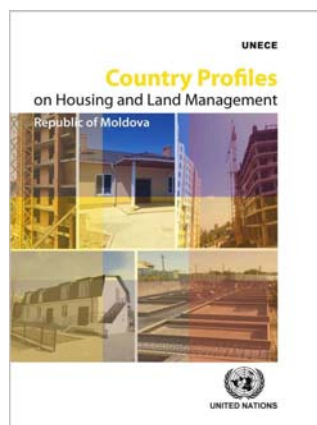
UNECE experts conducted a research mission in the country in April 2015 for its second Country Profile. The recommendations to be formulated in the Country Profile will form the basis of the country's national action plan on sustainable housing and urban development. The Country Profile is expected to be completed in March 2016 and launched in spring 2016.

The Republic of Armenia is committed to improve its housing condition and urban development. The country is actively working towards the preparation of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – HABITAT III (October 2016) and has already submitted its national report on housing and urban development to the secretariat of the conference.

Coherent actions of the government and international partner organizations, efficiently facilitated by the UNECE, will be an essential stimulus for implementation of the national goals of sustainable urban development prioritized by the Republic of Armenia, which in its turn will be a contribution in the global action towards the implementation of the New Global Urban Agenda.

For more information on Country Profiles, please visit:  
<http://www.unece.org/housing/country-profiles.html>

## COUNTRY PROFILE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA LAUNCHED



Improving the quality of the housing stock, making it more disaster resilient, increasing its energy-efficiency and making it more affordable for the population are some of the most pressing housing challenges faced by the Republic of Moldova. These are the main findings of the 2nd UNECE Country Profile on Housing and Land Management of the Republic of Moldova.

Since its independence in 1991, the Republic of Moldova has considerably improved its housing legislation to accompany its transition to a market economy. Several laws were adopted recently, including the Law on Housing (2014) and the Law on Energy Performance of Buildings (2014). However, despite all efforts, many challenges in housing and urban development policy still remain.

Soviet-era multi-apartment buildings, which represent 63% of the housing stock in the capital Chisinau and 62% in Balti, the country's third largest city, are rapidly deteriorating, and are in urgent need of repair.

Most of them are not energy-efficient: buildings consume 40% of the country's total energy usage, of which 65% is consumed by residential buildings alone. Considering that the country imports 95% of its energy, raising housing energy-efficiency is a top priority.

Disaster Risk Reduction principles, as set in the New Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, have to be included in any urban development planning to mitigate existing

risks and avoid new ones thus contributing to sustainable development.

The population has low access to water and sanitation. In 2012, about 1.5 million people were served by the public water supply system. This represented 42.1% of the population (68.9% urban and 22.7% rural). 761,000 persons had access to sanitation - 50.1% in urban areas and only 1.0% in rural areas.

The utility infrastructure for water supply has not been upgraded for many decades; its operational efficiency is low. It is estimated that modernizing pumping equipment in water supply and sanitation networks could reduce electricity consumption by 25-30%.

The Government adopted the goal to reduce energy consumption in buildings by 10% before 2020. It is also taking measures to increase the housing stock, for example via a project, co-financed through a loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank, destined to provide social housing to 4,000 people.

From an institutional perspective, effective implementation of the legislation is lagging behind and hinders progress.

The country must also complete its real estate register - some 15% of the country's properties are unregistered - and update its Master Plans. In most cases, Master Plans do not even exist and, where they do, most are outdated, dating back to Soviet times. Only 33% of urban settlements and 1% of rural settlements have updated Master Plans.

The Country Profile contains a series of recommendations for the government, such as amending the Housing Code on the work of condominiums, and new laws providing clear regulations on the establishment and operation of homeowners associations. It also recommends strengthening energy-efficiency standards for renovation of residential buildings, as well as new construction. It calls for strategic urban planning, and clearer responsibilities for different levels of government in the implementation of urban plans to make cities and the society more resilient.

The findings and recommendations of the Country Profile were discussed at a workshop in Chisinau on 8 September 2015. Participants recommended the development and implementation of a National Action Plan, based on these recommendations.

For more information on Country Profiles, please visit:  
<http://www.unece.org/housing/country-profiles.html>

## UNECE SUPPORTS SERBIA IN DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGY



Adequate housing is scarce in Serbia, where most of the multi-apartment buildings are dilapidated. The continuous decline in the quality of housing drives down the value of real estate and increases risks of injuries and health problems. Energy and water



infrastructure are obsolete with an average leakage from water systems exceeding 30%. This has resulted in very high utilities costs.

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Ms Leilani Farha, "Heating, electricity bills and other housing charges for homeowners and renters (in Serbia) alike are simply unaffordable". The current migration crisis in Europe is an aggravating factor. Urgent actions are thus needed to ensure decent affordable housing.

To address the issue, the Government of Serbia has elaborated a draft National Action Plan on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development with the support of UNECE and UN-Habitat, which was presented to a wide group of national and local stakeholders in November 2015 in Belgrade.

The National Action Plan includes a comprehensive set of activities aiming at improving the quality and affordability of housing and at promoting sustainable urban development. This includes at least three new laws, including a new Law on Housing, as well as the development of a nationwide urban development plan.

The proposed new Law on Housing will help overcome the inconsistencies and overlaps in the housing national legal framework. This comprehensive law will help regulate the ownership of housing and establish a management system for multi-apartment buildings. It will also include procedures protecting the population from forced evictions, an issue affecting particularly the Roma minority living in informal settlements. This law will be based on the principles of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, endorsed by the 56 member States of UNECE in April 2015. The Civil Code's section regulating property rights and the Law on Social Housing will also be amended as part of the National Action Plan implementation.

The draft Action Plan is expected to be adopted by the Government. UNECE, UN-Habitat and the UNDP Office in Belgrade intend to support the Government in its implementation.

## *From page 5,* **SOCIOECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF LAND ADMINISTRATION SERVICES**

### **The Danish experience**

The purpose of the Danish Basic Data Programme is to establish a shared infrastructure which ensures that basic data are accessible and easy to use by the public and private sectors. The focus is initially on information about individuals, businesses, real properties and geography. A number of registers have been modernised to ensure that they conform to the same technical requirements and are compatible, easing their integration into new and existing digital procedures.

The most important objectives for developing basic data are as follows:

- Basic data need to be as correct, complete and up-to-date as possible.
- All public authorities must use the shared public-sector basic data instead of local copies or alternative data sets (which can get out of sync).
- As far as possible, basic data (excluding sensitive personal data) must be freely available to businesses and the public.
- Basic data must be distributed efficiently, in a way that accommodates users' needs.

Currently, a variety of government authorities with responsibility for elements of Danish property registration information record their data in separate, unique registers. As part of the Basic Data

Programme, these registers will be combined, so that all property data will be stored and maintained in the cadastre alone. In the process, data on addresses will be isolated in a new register that will link to the cadastre by geographic reference. A new administrative register of real property owners (the Register of Property Owners) will also be established to include data on tenants and administrators in addition to the legal owners that are registered at the Land Registry. The new register will relate directly to the properties defined in the Cadastre and to the individuals and businesses registered in the person and business registers.

To ensure easy and direct access to this array of diverse but standardised data sources, the Basic Data Programme fosters the development of a new, shared data distributor. A common set of rules for data models and specifications for distribution services will ensure that data can be used interoperably.

By making basic data easily accessible to public and private sector activities alike, the Basic Data Programme fosters a reduction in parallel work and processes. When all parties use the same data as the foundation for their administrative processes and decision making, their knowledge can be more easily shared and their results can be more compatible (and comparable). This applies to all types of basic data, including property data.

Where the contents of the cadastre have traditionally been used for specific administrative activities, these data can now be applied to a wide range of other applications. For example, property data can be combined with other public information to generate new solutions for managing local government land taxes. When integrated into the national emergency response system, property data can help to improve the efficiency and impact of emergency services. And, as climate change brings new patterns of rainfall and flood risk, property data can be used to identify at-risk property owners for mitigation purposes as well as insurance assessment.

When combining property data with geographic location data for roads, traffic counts, pollution measurements, etc., the effects of infrastructure projects on property values can be forecast, thus assisting public authorities and citizens to make qualified decisions on investments. Property data and value assessment methods can also be used to evaluate the effects of placing, for example, a new school or allowing a bar to be established in a neighbourhood and thus can provide town planners with insights which can improve living conditions for urban dwellers. Workshop discussions pointed out that adding demographic information might even further improve these models.

In order to use property data in these and many other new applications, the data need to be standardised and unambiguous. Data updates, which are continuous in a cadastre, must be conducted and managed in such a way that the accessible public data set always reflects the most recent changes. This contributes to the reliability and validity of the data, which are critical factors for making cadastral – or any other public data – valuable in a range of simultaneous applications.

The use of public data in Denmark has grown substantially since the Basic Data Programme was launched in January 2013, making basic data freely available. The National Geodata Agency, which released its topographic and cadastral data as part of the Basic Data Programme, has subsequently witnessed a 1,000% leap in the number of registered users accessing its web services. Several new companies have been launched with free basic data as a key driver for their business models. The value of spatial data integration with other basic data is increasingly evident through the emergence of new and more streamlined applications.

An intensive analysis was conducted prior to the launch of the Basic Data Programme, and it resulted in a positive business case for the programme which, by 2020, is expected to deliver annual revenues in excess of €100 million. The greater part of the potential benefits

is expected in the private sector, especially in the real estate, insurance, financial, telecom and navigation industries.

Just under a third of the long term revenue is expected to be realized in the public sector, with the bulk of revenue coming from savings in the form of more effective and efficient data registration, operational savings on IT systems, reduced manual workflows, reduced error and improved control. Open access to high-quality basic data on real property can now save public authorities the resources traditionally used to register and check data (that was often duplicate), and waiting times for data delivery from other providers disappears. Simplified work procedures also make it possible to reduce the risk of human error and make it easier for new employees to adapt to administrative procedures without having to be experts in real property and/or old and complex IT-systems.

#### UNECE activities on land administration

The UNECE region leads the world in data interoperability and land-administration process automation for land management; this means that innovations in this region show the trends that the rest of the world is likely to follow.

Through a series of workshops, the WPLA explores relevant and emerging issues in land administration. The WPLA also supports member States through its publications. In 2014, the WPLA released its *Survey on Land Administration Systems*, which is a comprehensive compilation of data on the land administration systems in 25 member States. This year, the *Formalizing the Informal: Challenges and Opportunities of Informal Settlements in South-East Europe* has been published, which is a study on the impacts of informal, illegal housing in the UNECE region, including an analysis of policies to address the issue. In 2016, the WPLA plans to produce a study on the advantages and the disadvantages to be derived from the unification of land registers and cadastres.

More information on UNECE WPLA from - [www.unece.org/housing/working-party.html](http://www.unece.org/housing/working-party.html)

## SMART SUSTAINABLE CITIES INDICATORS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE OF CITIES



Over 73% of the population in the UNECE region lives in cities. By 2050, this figure is estimated to rise up to 85%. Cities are engines of economic growth so development of countries depends on how their cities will develop in the future. At the same time, the expanding cities are vulnerable to economic, social and environmental risks: cities are sprawling; the society in most part of the region is ageing; and cities are using natural resources unsustainably. The high level of urbanization presents also serious challenges for sustainable development and climate change adaptation. The urban areas are responsible for considerable amount of world's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions at the same time. This situation has the potential to become critical and irreversible if not acted upon soon.

Recognizing the need for urgent actions to provide support to sustainable urban development, representatives of the UNECE member States will gather in Geneva on 15 December 2015 for the 76th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management to endorse the UNECE/ITU Smart Sustainable Cities Indicators. The indicators have been developed by UNECE jointly with the

Environment Agency Austria (EAA) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in consultation with member States and a wide group of stakeholders.

The UNECE/ITU Smart Sustainable Cities Indicators are the first indicators to assess cities for both their smartness and sustainability. The list includes 72 indicators, both the core and some additional ones, grouped under three areas: Economy, Environment, and Society & Culture. The indicators will serve as a tool to evaluate how smart and sustainable cities are and support them in setting their development priorities, and in designing and implementing concrete actions and measures.

The Smart Sustainable Cities Indicators reflect the content of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), approved in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. Therefore, these indicators will help cities to evaluate their performance against the SDGs. The indicators will also be used to develop UNECE Smart Sustainable Cities Profiles with specific recommendations for actions, including investments at city level.

The indicators are available at <http://www.unece.org/housing/committee76thsession.html#/>

Information on the "United Smart Cities" project, within which the indicators have been developed, is at the project website - <http://www.unece.org/housing/smartcities.html>

## NEWS FROM PARTNERS

### CENTRIC: Centre for Excellence in Territorial management and Cadastre



Centre for Excellence in Territorial management and Cadastre



Co-funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union

The National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration (ANCP) was founded as a natural consequence of property concept development in Romania and out of the need for creating a solid base for securing property. The merger of cadastre and land registration, under a unique authority, creates the premises of a correct, transparent and easy to administrate recording activity for the real estate at national level.

Unlike most European countries, Romania does not have yet a general cadastre. Such a deficiency represents a critical element for the economy of the country, since it makes legal contracts, such as land purchasing, very difficult to be implemented.

Starting from such a complex scenario, the initiative of the project Centre for Excellence in Territorial management and Cadastre – CENTRIC (nr. 664573) came as natural. The project is financed by the EU Framework Program Horizon 2020 – Teaming action which is aimed at associating advanced research institutions to other institutions, agencies or regions for the creation or upgrade of existing centres of excellence.



The main purpose of CENTRIC is to create a Centre of Excellence which will be capable to achieve, in the medium to long-term, strong scientific presence at the EU and international level, acquiring a position that will enable it to actively participate and influence developments in scientific domains such as airborne and satellite imagery processing, 3D/4D geospatial big data analysis and analytics, linked geospatial data (regarded as important topic for National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies - NMCA), photogrammetry, surveying, simulation, feature extraction, land classification, change detection, and territorial monitoring from remotely sensed data.

Furthermore, the project aims at the creation of a suitable ecosystem at the national Romanian and EU level, through a number of capacity building and dissemination activities. The whole project is based on the creation of long-lasting joint venture between partners from both advanced and low performing countries, including institutional cooperation between ANCPi and its counterpart in the Trentino region (Italy), considered as a best practice at the EU level. Under the coordination of ANCPi, the project involves various research and innovation (public or private) institutions: Provincia Autonoma di Trento (Italy), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), Fondazione Bruno Kessler (Italy), TRILOGIS Srl (Italy), TECHNOPORT (Luxembourg), INI-NOVATION GmbH (Germany), URBAN-INCERC (Romania).

The complexity of the domain targeted by the CENTRIC (management of the territory, land mapping and land registry), and its scientific, economic and societal relevance will require the definition of a long-term vision and mission for the Centre resulting from the intersection of horizontal (enabling) factors, e.g., social and economic factors, with vertical (technical) research and technological trends.

For the best framing of the activities and development of the future Centre of excellence, the project will gather a community of local Romanian stakeholders from both public and private sectors around the CENTRIC initiative, as well as establish cooperation relationships between the local stakeholders and the international community of reference. The involvement may range from institutional involvements (Advisory Boards, Committees etc.), informal involvement (Special Interest Groups, Forums etc.), and collaborative delivery of services to licensing technologies for specific services to be offered.

The project aims at the creation of a new cluster, a research and innovation ecosystem built around the CENTRIC Centre of Excellence and Innovation Centre, where the various players (research centres, public administration and industry) can benefit from significant "know-how" transfer from other EU countries by leveraging on a number of successful and innovation-related concepts.

In this context we would like to invite all potentially interested stakeholders to join the CENTRIC community, through the dedicated section of the project's website: [www.centric.center](http://www.centric.center)

#### ANCPi



**ANCPi**  
**AGENȚIA NAȚIONALĂ**  
**DE CADASTRU ȘI**  
**PUBLICITATE IMOBILIARĂ**

The National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration is organized as a public institution with legal personality, under the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration of Romania, established in 2004 through the reorganization of the National Office of Cadastre, Geodesy and Cartography and by merging the Land Registry of the Ministry of Justice. The strategic objectives of ANCPi in view of developing a national integrated cadastre and land book system, as well as of the institutional consolidation, have led to a considerable improvement

of cadastre and land registration legislation. ANCPi carries out and it maintains the geoportals INSPIRE of Romania and ensures its compatibility with the geoportals INSPIRE of the European Union. For further information on the CENTRIC project, please access the project website [www.centric.center](http://www.centric.center) or contact the Project Coordinator, Ionut VIRLAN at [ionut.virlan@ancpi.ro](mailto:ionut.virlan@ancpi.ro)

## EULIS: A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD?

by Rik Wouters



**Rik Wouters** is Managing Director of EULIS and Senior Land Administration Expert at the Cadastre, Land Registry and Mapping Agency of the Netherlands. Rik is a member of the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration.

### A short history of EULIS

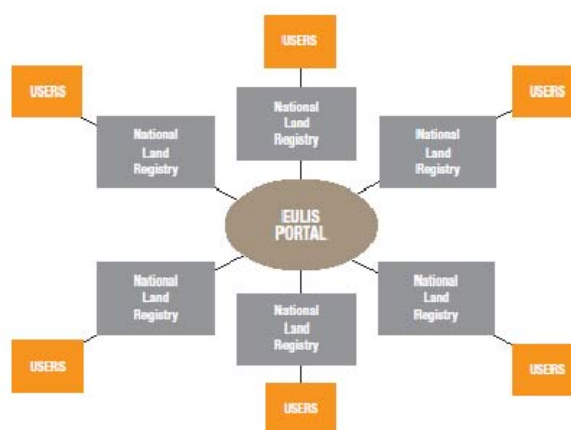
The European Land Information Service (EULIS) initiative has come a long way since the initial project to demonstrate its feasibility. With its official launch in November 2006, it is now a reality for almost 10 years. The aim of EULIS is to provide easy worldwide access to European land and property information in order to underpin a single European property market.

The EULIS European Economic Interest Group (EULIS-EEIG) consists of members from twenty-one of Europe's most advanced land registration organizations. With EULIS, professional users gain online access to cross-border official land information. Currently, EULIS provides cross-border access between Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Ireland and Spain.

### What is EULIS?

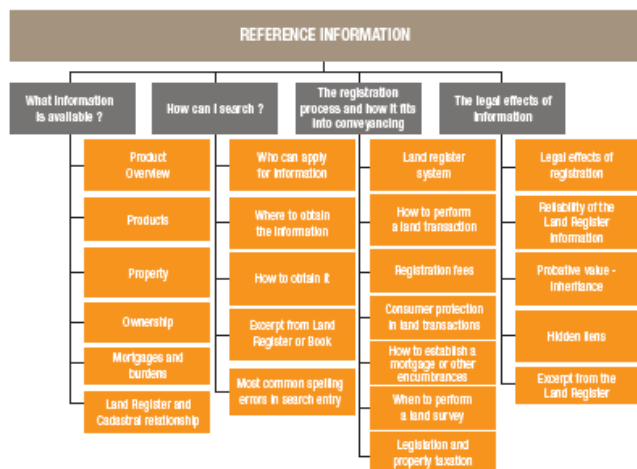
All EULIS partners have widely used services providing society with land and property information. Because of the need to connect a number of diverse systems, the technical design for EULIS should be as simple as possible. Thus, a design using portal technology was chosen. The EULIS portal acts as a hub through which different land registration systems are linked (see Chart 1). It provides national land information online via the internet. As soon as national providers go streaming, customers are able to access systems of other countries through the EULIS portal simply by logging on to their national system in the normal way. The national systems take care of matters such as authentication, security, billing and firewalls.

Chart 1 ► The EULIS portal acts as a hub to link the different Land Information Systems



Frontline customer support is provided by the respective national providers. EULIS is also a hub for other country reference information like the legal system, procedures for transfer of title, price information, and a lot more (see Chart 2). It also provides a glossary of terminology.

Chart 2 ► Structured Reference Information is a key feature of the service



### Integration with e-Justice portal

Recent developments in the e-Justice domain are striving to open up and connect important key registers across Europe. A key register is a registration system that houses data information essential to the public such as registers for citizens, companies, buildings, and, most importantly for EULIS, a register for property and land titles. In a modern society, a comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date registration system is vital not only to protect the ownership of property, but also to have a reliable source of information for tax collection, privatisation of state property, legalisation of buildings, city planning, valuation, environmental protection, etc.

The creation of a true single market and the free movement of capital is a great challenge to a united Europe. Cross border information on real estate that is easily accessible and online is a crucial pre-requisite to success. EULIS was created to fulfil this purpose.

Since the beginning of the EULIS initiative, the EU-Commission was a very important supporter of the basic concept of connecting national land registers to one European platform. In 2008 the Commission decided to establish the e-Justice portal. To a certain extent this portal can be seen as an extension of the EULIS-concept in the sense that it provides meta-information related to various legal topics and direct access to legally oriented registers such as business registers, insolvency registers and others. In 2012 the Commission developed strong interest to integrate the EULIS portal in the e-Justice portal, thus giving direct access to the land registers of the member states via its own portal.

After a preliminary internal study, the Commission finished a comprehensive feasibility study in September 2014. The study has revealed that EULIS offers a good base for a future European portal. The study has also given an insight into the position of the member states' land and cadastre registers. In December 2014 the results were discussed in the working party for e-Justice and 18 EU members have given their support to developing the portal further. In close consultation with the EULIS organisation, decisions will be taken if and how the integration will be implemented. The ultimate goal of this undertaking is to have all member states' land registers connected to the portal.

### What will be the future?

Apart from the integration, we see that future developments will focus more on customer needs and requirements. Simply providing data via a portal is not enough. The kind of information available is more important as recent market research proved. Additional information needs pertain to location bound information, tax and market values of properties, land use type, etc.

EULIS will take stock of achievements and stimulate the use of the e-Codex programme. Vital services such as e-Authentication, e-Payment and other facilities are also important to stimulate the use and flexibility of the EULIS portal.

It is EULIS' mission to maintain the portal not only as a piece of infrastructure. It is also one of the prime goals to maximise its use and it is therefore more important to stimulate national land registers and cadastre organisations to provide information for cross border use, to find out what kind of information really serves the public and to promote the use of one unified information portal to customer groups such as banks, real estate agencies and notaries. In December 2015 the EU Commission will start a project that will eventually deliver a completely renovated and extended interconnection portal. In the meantime the Commission actively supports the (re)connection of 7 more countries. This will greatly enhance the attractiveness of the EULIS portal.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### AT THE SECRETARIAT:

#### Our new acting Director



Since June 2015, **Dr Marco Keiner**, born 1963, German and Malian citizen, married, with 3 kids, is acting Director, Forests, Land and Housing Division at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). From 2008-2010, he was Director, Environment Division and from 2008-2010 Director, Environment, Housing and Land Management Division. Before, he was Chief, Urban Environment Section, UN-HABITAT. Until 2007, he was a senior researcher and lecturer for spatial planning at ETH Zurich and the University of Innsbruck. In the first years of his career, Marco served as spatial planning officer at cantonal level in Switzerland. He has also been an expert in urban and rural development in developing countries with six years field experience in Africa.

He studied geography and did post-graduate studies in spatial planning. He holds a PhD in sustainable land development and a habilitation in regional planning.

#### Our consultants



**Domenica Carriero** coordinates the "United Smart Cities" and the Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings projects at Housing and Land Management Unit of the Forests, Land and Housing Division of UNECE. She holds an MBA in Sustainable Business from the University of St. Gallen and at the Business School Lausanne (Switzerland), a Masters' Degree with honors in Foreign

Languages at the University of Turin (Italy) and joined the University of Leiden (The Netherlands) as a PhD candidate in English Philology. She has several years of experience in teaching, capacity building, marketing and communication, coordinating inter-governmental meetings and has worked as a consultant for the private sector. Domenica is specialized in sustainability strategy, sustainable performance assessment and marketing and communication. Her professional interests include corporate social responsibility, energy efficiency, sustainable development, human rights, supply chain management and disaster risk reduction.



**Regina Khanbekova** has been working as a Consultant at the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit since March 2015. She holds a Specialist Degree in East Asian Studies from Novosibirsk State University (Russia), Specialist Degree in Economics and Company Management from Novosibirsk State Technical University (Russia) and Master's Degree in Economics and Law of East Asian Countries from Goethe University

Frankfurt (Germany).

She has previously worked at the United Nations Office at Geneva; Media, Design and Architecture Institute and in the private sector.



**Muwaz Ahmed** graduated with a technical degree in Engineering and holds a Master degree in Business Administration from Christ University, Bangalore, India. He has been working with the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit as a Consultant since April 2015, providing support to its communication activities. Prior to this, he has worked with the UNECE Environment Division. He has previously worked as a

Management Consultant with a multinational entity Accenture and with Prequate Consultants devising communication strategies for multinational organisations, startups and NGOs.

#### Our Intern



**Francisco Febronio Peña** holds a Bachelor in Science in Civil Engineering from Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon (Mexico), completing a thesis in urbanism and urban land management at Institute National des Sciences Appliqués (INSA) Lyon, France.

Francisco is currently working as an intern at UNECE since September 2015. He has assisted in the finalization of a comprehensive study on urban development in the UNECE region and has contributed to the collection and analysis of data on urban development, including the environmental, disaster risks and climate change aspects, for the HABITAT III Regional Report.

He is a passionate experienced professional on the disaster risk reduction field with expertise on flood risk management. Francisco has previously developed flood risk assessments and mapping projects for the private and governmental sector in consultancy firms in Mexico and for international research centers in Italy and Mexico. He is looking forward to pursue a Master degree in Flood

Risk Management at UNESCO-IHE in the Netherlands in September 2016.



**Camilla Cattoi** graduated with a degree in Political, Social and International Science from the University of Bologna (Italy) with a thesis in Criminology. She did an internship as intercultural mediator and has recently started working as an intern at the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit, supporting the organisation of the 76th Committee session and other workshops.

### UPCOMING KEY EVENTS OF THE UNECE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT IN 2016

- European Habitat Regional consultation on HABITAT III, 16-18 March 2016, Prague, Czech Republic
- 77th CHLM session and Housing Europe General Assembly, 13-16 September 2016, Geneva, Switzerland
- HABITAT III Conference, 17-21 October 2016, Quito, Ecuador

For more details, please visit our website - [www.unece.org/housing](http://www.unece.org/housing)

### A NOTE ON THE COORDINATOR:

Inputs to this edition of the newsletter were coordinated and edited by **Ms. Cecilia Batac**. You may contact her at the email address below.



Cecilia.Batac@unece.org

Article contributions to this newsletter are welcome.

For more information on the standard requirements for the articles, you may write the Vital Spaces coordinator

Ms. Cecilia Batac, email: [cecilia.batac@unece.org](mailto:cecilia.batac@unece.org)

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