



## International trends in land administration.

Land administration methods, polices and procedures are the means for effective management of land and the information about land.

Moreover, they are of fundamental importance to sustainable economic growth, good governance, social security and the well-being of rural and urban dwellers. Therefore, research on land administration, land policy and impact analysis of specific land management interventions has long been of interest to the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), United Nations (UN), World Bank and other academic and civil society institutions.

As used by these organizations, the term "land administration" (LA) refers to the processes of administratively recording and disseminating integrated records of information about ownership, value and use of land and its associated resources. Ownership relates to the possession of rights in land, value normally relates to market value, and use relates to the rights to use and profit from the land. This information provides support for real estate markets, security of credit, environmental monitoring, management of state-owned land, facilitation of rural land reforms, improvement of urban planning and infrastructure development, reduction of land disputes and provision of statistical data in support of good governance.

Through their activities, research and publications, FIG and other organizations play a significant role in establishing new—and modernizing the existing—LA systems all over the world. They achieve this by identifying current needs and problems related to LA and land management, and by bringing experts from various countries together to share views and experiences.

In the 16 years following the political change in formerly communist countries (e.g., Russia, Lithuania, Hungary, Czech Republic, Latvia, Armenia, Romania, Georgia, etc.) due to privatization, there has been an urgent need to establish ownership rights, valuation and use-controls of land. New LA systems are being developed in these countries applying the experience from similar systems that have evolved over a period of time in existing market economies.

In Europe and other areas of the world, the development of LA systems and agencies has required a long-term public investment in infrastructure. The administrative reform that has been introduced in many European countries in recent decades has brought a business approach to LA agencies in order to increase financial sustainability and efficiency of operations. In many cases, partnerships are contracted with the private sector for such activities as data collection, data conversion, maintenance of hardware and software, and

operation and maintenance of information systems. Modern LA agencies focus on identifying potential users and on providing services and data to meet their needs. In many countries, the costs of maintaining and updating the systems are recovered through user fees and taxes charged for transactions, making partial cost recovery possible.

As technology rapidly improves, an increasingly broader range of land-related data and transaction documents is being handled electronically by national LA systems, an example of the trend toward electronic commerce in support of "e-governance."

Along with several other professionals, such as lawyers, information and communication technology experts, and notaries, surveyors have an important role to play in LA. Surveyors' roles are no longer restricted only to classic land surveying; they may consult in the design, structuring, maintenance and operation of LA databases and information systems. Those surveyors interested in becoming more involved in LA must also develop expertise in other relevant land management aspects such as urban planning or zoning regulation, land valuation and an understanding of the emerging needs of real estate markets. As the surveying profession progresses in developing economies, there are new opportunities for surveyors to participate in LA, contribute to good governance and bring tangible improvements to the social welfare.

The terminology used in LA, the existing legal framework, the land policies and the technical spatial data structure differ among countries. Much of the effort to assist harmonization among countries is focused on better understanding the different existing systems and compiling guidelines for bringing together information. The goal is to assist countries so that they can share data on land and real property, thereby facilitating international cooperation and cross-border business, trade and real estate endeavors. This has been an objective of research by the UN, the World Bank, FIG and other institutions. More information about the trends in LA can be found at the websites of these organizations: [www.unece.org/hml/wpla](http://www.unece.org/hml/wpla), [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) and [www.fig.net](http://www.fig.net).

*Note: While Editor Lieca Hohner is on leave, this column will feature the viewpoints of guest editors. This month's international perspective corresponds with two events being held the second week of October in Germany: the XXIII FIG Congress and InterGEO 2006, the world's largest conference and trade show for geodesy, geoinformation and land management.*

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