

Results of Central European Land Knowledge Center (CELK) Activities

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Key words :CELK Center, Property Rights and Land Market Development, Networking, direct knowledge transfer

SUMMARY

The Central European Land Knowledge Center (*CELK Center*) was set up in the beginning of 2003 in Budapest, Hungary, on the basis of International Letter of Agreement between the World Bank and the Government of the Republic of Hungary.

The Center has been established within the Property Rights and Land Market Development project for European Union Candidate and Balkan Countries by the financial support of the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Republic of Hungary.

The Center is professionally supported by UN/FAO, UNECE/WPLA, FIG and many other organisations.

The purpose of the Center is to improve the efficiency of land markets and the safety of Real Property Rights in the EU Accession and Balkan Countries as beneficiary countries

Activities and results of the Center

The CELK Centers' activities, as it stems from the name, involve knowledge management in land market and real property rights within the Central Eastern European Countries.

Knowledge management at CELK means :

Networking, Direct knowledge transfer, WEB based knowledge pool developing and related services, taking part in project coordination

In the last 15 months CELK has developed an extensive network of experts and actors in the region.

The Center has organised six events to gain and disseminate information and to strengthen the personal and institutional connections.

The CELK database as knowledge sources are operational. The expert and contact database contains 2000 people with their contact information. Individuals can search for experts by skills, location, scope of activity, etc. By connecting the expert database with document database, expert can share their knowledge and the sources of their knowledge. The organisation database contains the most important land related organisations in the region.

The Center is taking part in projects like FAO Land tenure database project, etc.

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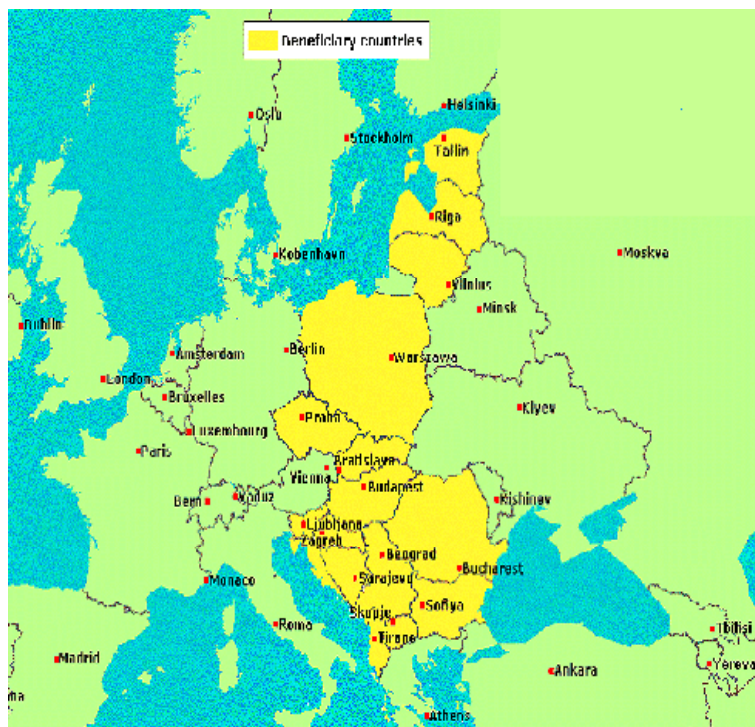
1. INTRODUCTION

CELK Center was formally established in January 2003 in Budapest, Hungary. Its establishment occurred in conformity with the Letter of Agreement between the World Bank and the Government of the Republic of Hungary, under the Property Rights and Land Market Development Project for European Union Candidate and Balkan Countries. Under said project, the World Bank granted Hungary a US\$ 390 000 institutional development fund grant. The Hungarian Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is co-financing the project through budget and in-kind contributions.

2. BACKGROUND

Three international conferences held in Vienna between 1998 and 2000 and sponsored by the Government of Austria, UN/ECE, the European Commission and the World Bank on the issue of real property rights and land market development, and successive discussions with the World Bank resulted in proposal to create network, called the “ECA (Europe and Central Asia) Initiative on Real Property Rights” and subsequently, in the decision to establish a Regional Center to serve as a knowledge management institution concerned with secure land tenure regimes, real property rights in the region

2.1 Countries and Organisations Involved in the Project



Beneficiary countries
Albania
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Czech Republic
Estonia
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Hungary
Latvia
Lithuania
Poland
Romania
Serbia and Montenegro
Slovakia
Slovenia

Participating International Organizations	
The World Bank	UN FAO
EuroGeographics	UN ECE
EUROGI	UNECE WPLA
KFW	UN-HABITAT
GTZ	ITC

2.2 Problems in the Region

Since 1990 and currently there have been several projects in Central Eastern European and Balkan Countries to develop, modernising land administration infrastructure. Many projects dealt with the development of land registry, cadastre institutions, establishment of property and land taxation, implementation of land consolidation projects, etc.

According to experience not all the projects have been successful, different projects in the same country have not been co-ordinated, the output of projects not always satisfactory.

There are many donor organisations supporting land and property related projects, sometimes parallel in the same country and they don't always support each other because of different interests.

It's also a fact, there is no information flow between countries in the region concerning land administration matters. Neighbouring countries have no mutual information about projects related land administration issues and the result of projects.

There is no database about information in the Central Eastern European and Balkan region regarding land and real estate property issues.

Professionals (land surveyors, land registrars, legal experts, technical experts) from Central Eastern European Countries have no involvement in international projects in the region.

Besides the result of the three international conferences held in Vienna between 1998-2000, the above mentioned problems also contributed to the decision to establish a Regional Center.

2.3 The Role of the CELK Center

Mission statement

The Center mission is to serve Central Eastern and South Eastern European countries as a regional knowledge management, dissemination and advisory center.

The Center assists these countries to secure functioning land tenure regimes, support sound land market development and improve sustainable land management

Objectives

- To operate as a knowledge management center on land tenure regimes, land market development and land management issues
- To become an acknowledged and sustainable Regional Center of Excellence supported by beneficiary countries
- To provide technical assistance and advice for beneficiary countries concerning relevant policies, strategies, program and projects.

3. ACTIVITIES OF CELK CENTER

Since the establishment of the Center on 1 st. February 2003 there have been two main tasks to be achieved.

- managerial and organizational developments
- professional activities

3.1 Management and Organisational Developments

Organisational activities

The Center started its activities prior to the establishment of a formal organizational structure. The official organizational structure, the financial model and its practical implementation were detailed out in the first few months.

Operational tasks

These tasks included the creation of the operational structure for the office and the establishment of a practical daily work schedule. It was important to prepare contracts between the Center and its collaborators. The development of the infrastructure, and make it operational, have also priority to start the daily activities.

The activity started with four member of staff, in September 2003 three new staff members were added.

Financial tasks

Due to the complicated organizational structure, setting up the practical financial working model was a complicated task. However, a smooth financial process was created, which allows for daily and future accounting for revenue-generating activities of the Center.

3.2 Professional Activities

Besides the practical activities the main tasks of the Center is to achieve its goals during the two years period through professional activities. In the first six months the Center explored the field, got to know “who is doing what” who the organisational participants on Land market related fields are, where the gaps in services are, the possible focus for the Centers’ work. Based on the collected information, the first, general Strategic Plan was defined in September 2003 and the activity plan was established.

At the end of 2003 CELK started to establish the database structure, started information data collection and established a very strong network of professionals.

Database-Knowledge management

The basis of the Centers’ professional work, the purpose of the information gathering and the tool for the information dissemination is the Land-Meta database and the Landnet web portal. The reason for the creation of the knowledge base is to collect independent public digital data that provide partial solutions to various problems, establish connections between them, synthesize and organize them and subsequently publish these data.

The steps that were carried out within the task are as follows :

- Map the Land Market related issues
- Determine the information collection fields
- Design the Database structure
- Start the systematic data collection process and upload the data
- Process the relevant results of all the professional meetings
- Design the web-based database search interface
- Establish of the web-portal, design implementation and testing of the user functions
- Collaborate in the elaboration of the legal, economical and statistical database and in the implementation of storage for data and meta data
- The publicly available data was collected
- Connections were established for future sources of specific data from the beneficiary countries
- Detailed questionnaires (expert data, problematic issues, needed services, possible educational fields, etc.) were developed and disseminated to all the contacted organizations and subsequently processed the replies.

The Center has to follow up during the next few months, that all interested party will provide data to ensure an overall picture of the region.

The results of the information already collected :

The Center

- Has the accurate organizational structure on land related issues
- Has the most updated contact and expert database on land related issues. Based on that the Center can carry out the most effective information dissemination, market researches or can prepare relevant invitation list for events
- Can provide information on projects, links events and news from the region
- Has the Land Market overview of the region

To fulfill all the goals the Center needs to further build capacity.

Use of the expert database is an important step for self-sustainability.

The local experts are needed from most eastern, from the current beneficiary region. An important role for the Center can be to identify relevant experts for the right regions, identify relevant projects at the right time.

Networking

Based on the evaluation of the representatives' opinion from the beneficiary countries, the biggest demand is for (out of the Centers' services) networking. Therefore the most important activity is to build connections within the region and to perform country visits.

The steps that were carried out within this task are the following

- Preparation and performance of contact-building visits to the governmental land administration agencies of the beneficiary countries
- Continuous and direct contact with all institutes' representatives
- Organizing the first networking workshop on land related issues (Visibility Workshop)
- Mapping the organizational structure of the land market model in each country

Participating in various professional forums is an excellent method for networking, information gathering, as well as for raising awareness of the Center among land administration professionals.

The organization of professional meetings will be one of the Centers' main fields of services in the future, therefore this activity has to be carried out at an ever-increasing quality level.

Based on the networking activity, an initial "country membership circle" needs to be established. This circle can be extended, of course, but in the initial phase of the project the services of the Center would focus on the actual needs of these member countries. The achievement of the conditions for the long term operation will depend on the satisfaction of the members of the beneficiary countries that use the services. If they consider the activity of the Center to be useful and important, the operation can continue on basis of a subscription fee system that can develop later, before the end of the project.

Direct Knowledge transfer

The Center has organised 7 events to gain and disseminate information to strengthen the personal and institutional connections. These most important events were the following

- Project launching workshop Budapest, February 2003
- Spanish-Hungarian Land Administration Conference Budapest, April 2003
- French Land Administration Conference Budapest, May 2003
- Visibility Workshop Budapest, October 2003
- FAO Land Tenure Conference Budapest, November 2003
- LUC Land Consolidation Workshop Budapest, March 2004
- Cadastre Data Conversion Challenges Workshop Budapest, April 2004

The Center is also organizing international training services for the beneficiary countries in those areas which were identified in the course of training needs assessments.

Visibility and Networking Workshop

Budapest, Hungary October 31. 2003

The CELK Center hosted a Visibility and Networking Workshop which was attended by 75 participants, representing the governments and organizations of 18 countries, of which 14 were beneficiary countries.

The purpose of the workshop was

- to introduce the Centers' services
- to learn about the demand for and Information Center in the region
- to build the base of the Land-related network
- to receive and discuss opinions of the participating countries about the Land markets' problematic issues

Major outcomes of the workshop

There was a discussion, what are the "Land Market and Real Property Rights" related problematic issues in the region

How these issues have changed since the Vienna conferences (1998-2000) and how the Center can help in solving these problems ?

Participants have different opinions but the majority has shown strong interest in CELK Centers' web service and Networking

The Centers' introduced services (based on the strategic plan) were accepted.

The participants agreed the importance of the proposed services of the CELK Center and the need in the region for the following activities

- Information Center Services on Land Market and Real Property Rights issues (Web portal-based on Meta data base
- Direct knowledge transfer- Networking and training/ education services
- Project participation and co-ordination

CELK Center collected and process data from different countries, prepare analysis, provide accurate information that are useful for policy makers, researchers and investors. It also provide an electronic newsletter covering land market issues and disseminate guidelines. It is basic but very important for all possible users to keep and updated expert list and showing the actual organizational structure of the beneficiary countries on the web page. The success of the valuable data base is on condition that everyone well contribute information and data.

The participants agreed on, that there is a need of compiling a memorandum of understanding.

Web based knowledge pool and related services

The CELK database as knowledge sources are operational. The expert and contact database contains 2000 people with their information. This intelligent “Yellow pages” enables experts to identify their skills, experiences, expertise by creating their professional profiles. Individuals can search for experts by skills, location, scope of activity, etc.

The organisation database contains the most important land related organisations in the region. The Center has an overall and accurate land administration and land market organisation structure for every country.

In the project database you can find couple of hundreds land related projects with the most important descriptive information such as funding organisations, beneficiaries, target groups, cost, etc. The database extends to the last five years and of course it contains the currently running and planned projects as well.

The document database compiles meta data on more than 600 documents. You can search and download the document of your interest.

The strength of these database is the IKON software, developed by GTZ, that enables the intelligent data entry and superfast searching. The intelligent data entry and superfast searching is based on the principle of Fingerprinting. The fingerprint of a document or of a project description is the unique representation of each piece of information (such as a publication in Word, an e-mail, a Power point presentation, selected text on a web site, etc.).

A thesaurus is a specialized vocabulary (repository of knowledge) of a particular topic such as land registration. It contains selected words, terms and concepts with their semantic relations in a hierarchical structure and can also contain synonyms. To produce such a thesaurus is a huge and very professional task, but fortunately FAO has already produced one

that is related to land issues. This thesaurus is called AGROVOC and FAO was kind enough to permit us to use for this purpose.

I don't want to go into details concerning the methodology of using the system but the main advantage is that the user will have only those documents, experts, project descriptions which they are interested in. No more thousands of matches, no more browsing for days without results.

Project participation, co-ordination

The Center is taking part in the follow up of the former ACE (Action for Cooperation in the fields of Economics programme of the European Union) project which described the land market situation and development in the Central Eastern European Countries. This referred project was finished in 1997 and it's a high time to update the results and to see what changes have happened.

Another important project is the FAO Land tenure database project which aims to connect this existing land related data with other socio- economic data sets being at governments' disposal. One of the benefits of such databases can be to serve as a decision making support system for the highest decision makers in the rural development questions.

CELK Center is also involved in the "Building up Land Information systems" pilot project initiated by Lithuania.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The CELK Center and the project is financed by the World Bank and the Hungarian Government for two years only. To extend the project and activities in the future, CELK is looking for new partners, donors which are willing to co-operate, support the future activities, besides CELKs' own knowledge and sources.

CELK Center must be acknowledged by the land administration organisations from the beneficiary countries, international organisations and other potential partners.

The Center serves equally all of the beneficiary countries.

The Center participated in more than 25 local, regional and international conferences, events or ensuring the Centers' representation or dissemination of informative material about the Center. The CELK put great efforts on marketing by making their voice heard on many occasions.

FIG conferences, events
UNECE/WPLA symposiums
UNECE/REAG symposium
FAO workshops
EUROSTAT

EUROGI
and many others

The Center is looking for new partners supports, potential sponsors (private companies, donor organisations, others) finding long term interests in land and property related activities in the region.

e-mail : landnet@celk.org Web-site: <http://www.celk.org>

REFERENCES

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CELK Center : CELK Center's activities in April 2004

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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Academic experience Dipl. Ing. Land Surveyor MSc. Budapest Technical University
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Professional experience

Head of Survey department Budapest Land Office 1971-77, 1987-
International expert in Nigeria 1977-79, 1982-86

Current position Deputy director, Budapest Land Office 1994-

Practical experience

Cadastral surveying and mapping 1966- international expert on
Cadastre, large scale mapping, land registry matters

Activities in home and International relations

Member, Hungarian Society of Surveying and Remote Sensing
International relations Member, Chamber of Juridical Experts 1996-
FIG Commission 7 Hungarian delegate 1995-
Chairman FIG Commission 7. Working Gr. 3. on Land Markets
1998-2002
Chairman FIG Comm.7. Working Gr. 1. "Creation Land
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