



# HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

## Promoting policy reforms in the housing sector

### Achievements in 2010

The work of the Committee on Housing and Land Management and its Working Party on Land Administration in 2010 addressed several challenging issues that countries in the UNECE region have faced in recent years.

**Promoting policy reforms in the housing sector.** Given the importance of effective housing policy formulation and implementation for the success of economic and social reforms, the Committee and the Working Party assisted countries in transition in assessing their institutional, legal and financial frameworks for the housing and land management sectors and provided specific recommendations to Governments through the project on the Country Profiles on the Housing Sector. The Country Profile of Azerbaijan was finalized and the official launching event was held in Baku in November 2010. The Government of Azerbaijan expressed interest in developing an action plan to facilitate the implementation of recommendations contained in the study. As a follow up to the Country Profile of Georgia, a training workshop was co-organized with UNDP to strengthen the capacity of national policymakers and practitioners on the legal aspects of housing and land management policies (Tbilisi, November 2010). The Country Profile on the Housing Sector of Tajikistan, developed jointly with the Land Administration

*The Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region provides guidance to accelerate the transition towards climate neutrality in cities*



Review of this country, is under preparation. The study will provide recommendations on housing and land management policies, with a particular focus on challenges connected to infrastructure and settlements in disaster-prone areas. Albania, Belarus, Serbia and Slovakia continued to incorporate recommendations from their country profile studies in the reform of national legislation on urban planning and new spatial development strategies, as well as on social housing and condominium management.

**Energy efficiency in housing.** In the UNECE region, buildings are responsible for over a third of total final energy consumption. It is widely acknowledged that improving energy efficiency in the housing sector brings better and quicker results than increasing capacities for energy supply. While available technology provides a potential to reduce energy demand in housing, the sector generally maintains inefficient practices, leading to even higher levels of energy demand. To address these challenges, the Committee at its seventy-first session adopted an Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region. The Action Plan offers a framework for the member States to raise energy efficiency in the housing sector and provides guidance on 12 policy goals to accelerate the transition towards climate neutrality in cities. It also lists a range of targets and measures aimed at removing barriers to energy efficiency and moving towards a low-energy and carbon-neutral housing sector in the UNECE region by the year 2020.

**Climate neutrality in cities.** Improvement of urban environmental performance is vital both for promoting sustainable quality of life and for reducing carbon emissions. Urban areas are not only the main contributor to climate change; they are also themselves vulnerable to its adverse effects. To promote sustainable use of energy, water and land in cities, the Committee is developing a comprehensive study on climate neutral cities aimed at providing policy recommendations and guidance on how to apply an integrated cross-sectoral approach to urban development that includes housing, land use management, energy efficiency, transportation, waste management and green areas. An in-depth discussion of the extended outline of the study, held at the Committee's seventy-first session, highlighted the urgency of tackling climate change in cities and considered the case studies and best practices in the implementation of policies for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. The study will be finalized and submitted to the Committee's seventy-second session for endorsement.

The issue of improving urban performance was also the focus of a UNECE workshop held in Prague in May 2010. The workshop reviewed best practices of successful integrative approaches to urban planning, and contributed to increased knowledge and understanding by policymakers and experts of such issues as the role of urban planning in achieving sustainable development; the application of a comprehensive approach to spatial planning, energy efficiency and affordable housing; and strengthening social cohesion.



**Strengthening the real estate sector.** The recent sub-prime mortgage crisis damaged financial institutions globally and sparked the financial and economic crisis. For the countries with economies in transition, financial volatility was further triggered by the lack of transparent regulatory frameworks in their real estate sector. To address this challenge, in April 2010 the Real Estate Market (REM) Advisory Group published a *Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets: Principles and guidance for the development of a country's real estate sector*,

which defines key rules and principles for the development of sound real estate markets. To promote the principles contained in the publication, the Advisory Group organized a launching event and round table in Ukraine in June 2010. As a follow-up, the Ukrainian Government established a task force to implement institutional reforms in the real estate sector based on the guidance contained in the Policy Framework. Through the international forum on Greening Real Estate Markets organized in cooperation with the Federal Environmental Agency of Germany (Dessau, November 2010), the REM Advisory Group also addressed the potential of real estate markets to contribute to the consolidation of a green global economy. In addition, workshops will be organized by the Working Party in Italy to discuss the importance of transparency of economic information for real estate markets and in the Netherlands (autumn 2011) to discuss the implications of the "network society" for land administration authorities.

*The Working Party on Land Administration analysed ways to prevent fraud in real property registration and conveyance*

**Improving land registration and land markets.** To address challenges faced by countries in transition in the areas of land registration and land markets, the Working Party on Land Administration organized workshops on efficient and transparent land management (Baku, March 2010); on the impact of e-government reforms for real property cadastre and registration services in the UNECE region (Minsk, June 2010); and on the role of spatial planning in improving security of tenure in the UNECE region (Antalya, October 2010). In addition, a study analysing various approaches to cope with the challenge of fraud in real property registration and conveyance in UNECE member States was finalized by the Working Party.

**Construction and building safety.** In recent years, there has been a significant increase in political will in the region to address disaster prevention, across both developed nations and countries in transition. Recognizing the link between strengthening disaster preparedness and improving security in building construction, the Committee organized an International Forum on Natural Disasters and Building and Construction Safety (Baku, November 2010). The Forum considered a number of case studies on disaster preparedness and reconstruction and discussed relevant policy solutions.

Finally, with a view to increasing the visibility of the Committee's work, a video on the role of UNECE in making cities more sustainable and climate neutral was developed in cooperation with United Nations Television and presented at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen and the UN-Habitat World Urban Forum in Brazil, and was posted on the UNECE website and on YouTube.



## Challenges for 2011

In 2011, the Committee will further address major housing challenges in the region by tackling the topic of affordable, healthy and ecological housing and exploring the added value of developing a UNECE-wide comprehensive policy framework in these areas. This task will be carried out by the Working Group on a possible legally binding instrument on affordable, healthy and ecological housing established by the Committee's seventy-first session.

When it adopted the Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the UNECE Region, the Committee recommended UNECE member States to adapt it to their local conditions and to implement respective policies with a view to removing barriers to energy efficiency in the housing sector. To facilitate this work, the Committee will be organizing capacity-building activities in 2011 to assist countries with economies in transition in the implementation of the goals and targets contained in the Action Plan.

The Committee will continue to prepare country profiles on the housing sector. In that connection, the secretariat will finalize the country profile on housing and land administration of Tajikistan and start the preparation of a pre-mission for the development of the country profile of Ukraine. As a follow up to the country profile study on the housing sector and at the request of the Ministry of Architecture and Construction of Belarus, a training course for CIS officials on policy frameworks for affordable housing will be organized by UNECE in cooperation with UN-Habitat in Minsk (Belarus) in March 2011.

In June 2011, the Working Party on Land Administration will hold its seventh session. It will discuss the final version of the study on fraud in real property registration and conveyance to be endorsed by member States. It will also analyse a concept note for a study on benchmarking of land administration systems. For its part, the REM Advisory Group will prepare a study on real estate rating, which will further develop specific guidelines and recommendations contained in the Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets.