



LANDNET

(Proposed)
Set up
October 2012

Introduction

Most countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) face severe problems in their rural land structure. Fragmentation of ownership and small scale of holdings are prominent. Weak institutional frameworks cause bad functioning land markets that prevent investments and creation of viable, competitive rural areas. A weak land structure has different dimensions. The FARLAND network has concluded in 2007 that Europe faces many challenges in making its rural land structure sustainable. This involves anticipating changing market conditions (like liberalisation, open competition) but also anticipating environmental developments (increasing occurrence of floods, forest fires). Climate change increases the risks for environmental hazards and puts important parts of ecological systems under threat. The land use and the land structure are important foundations, determining the resilience of territories to cope with changes from outside. The challenges mentioned, are not limited to CEE countries but are valid as well for many other countries in the broader European region.

Since 2002, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia has been organising annual workshops to discuss instruments like land consolidation and land banking. Since 2007 the FAO led network of CEE countries and FARLAND are connected, creating excellent conditions for exchange of knowledge and upgrading of approaches related to land tenure issues. Between 2010 and 2012 activities of the network are supported by a project called: 'Support to network on Land Market issues in Central and Eastern Europe', G2G09/MC/8/1, implemented by the Netherlands Government Service for Land and Water Management (DLG) in cooperation with the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. In total four international workshops were organised. Moreover, some inventories were carried out in good cooperation between LANDNET participants (land banks, pre-emption rights). Organisations and key experts in the various countries involved need an international network to exchange effectively experiences on instruments, approaches and legislative frameworks. Continuation of such a network in economically difficult times is at stake. The main aim is to make the LANDNET less depending on incidental (short term) funding but to have a stronger set up with more legitimacy among European policy makers. This aim follows earlier steps like professionalising the yearly / half yearly workshops, to intensify activities in between the workshops and to deepen the level of content discussions. Also a name was chosen (LANDNET) and a visual identity.

During the workshops in February 2012 ideas were developed and discussed to develop further the institutional set up. It is believed that a stronger organisation needs more commitment / legitimacy from international and national organisations. For this, an important step has been set during the past workshop: a LANDNET Declaration asking for recognition, participation and support has been discussed and agreed among the 27 countries (**Annex 1**). The Declaration will be used by the various members to promote the LANDNET and to create more support and legitimacy. It will also be used to create interest among possible financing organisations. A stronger LANDNET will put the aim and objectives (such as formulated beneath) at the first place. The LANDNET does not want to become a network for the sake of being a network. Its main qualities are reflected by the key words 'action', 'commitment' and 'project discipline'. Apart from a core package of exchange and development, the network wants to stimulate other cooperation projects between partners. This set up is meant to get clarity about aim, scope, identity and operational objectives. It proposes an organisational set up and it proposes a first programming round of 3 years and describes the pre-conditions needed for this. In a next step, each member / supporter of the LANDNET will then look for capacity to make a stronger LANDNET possible.

Aim and objectives of the network

The **aim** of the LANDNET is to stimulate proper and timely responses to (changing) needs of society regarding land use and land tenure in rural and peri-urban areas. By various activities like studies, collection of knowledge and experiences, exchange and capacity building, innovation of institutional frameworks and implementation approaches is stimulated.

The **scope** is the broad set of institutional requirements needed to facilitate, guide and complement rural land markets. This concerns both the 'hard side' of regulatory / legal frameworks for market functioning like laws of land ownership and leasing, taxation and the 'soft side' like promotional measures, mediation and solving of land use conflicts. Moreover it includes the range of public and public/private interventions to adjust the use and/or the ownership structure of land to the current economic, environmental and social reality. Interventions often take place as integrated territorial development projects serving different objectives at local, regional and national level, including instruments like land swapping, land consolidation (voluntary or statutory) and land banking. Approaches are 'people oriented' in the sense that they are carefully planned and implemented and contain sufficient opportunity for recourse. LANDNET activities are based on principles laid down in the "Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security"¹.

Main **operational objectives** are to:

1. Deepen the understanding of the issues that hamper rural land markets and their interrelation in various parts of Europe
2. Exchange knowledge and experience to enhance capacity among its members and to create a broader knowledge base
3. Identify good practice in order to formulate common visions on the main elements needed to come to effective policies
4. Stimulate the establishment and upgrading of regional and national approaches and institutional frameworks
5. Influence upgrading of the national and European policies by joining policy consultations and taking part in public and policy debate
6. Stimulate and facilitate professional training and capacity building in order to create the organisational preconditions for implementation

¹ <http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

Activities and outputs

The Network will have the following **activities**:

- Organise thematic international workshops focused on knowledge exchange
- Organise study visits focused on new (experimental) applications and approaches
- Study specific themes and country cases
- Contribute to implementation of pilots in different areas of the LANDNET mandate
- Contribute to guidelines and good practice manuals
- Facilitate E-discussions and a web forum
- Formulate common positions related to new policy developments
- Mobilise and organise the participation in other events or programmes
- Participate in policy debate sessions
- Identify relevant international events and subsidy programmes
- Maintain a webpage (linked to the FAO site and the FARLAND site)
- Issue a yearly newsletter
- Maintain an international contact point
- Compile and maintain a database of experts

Not all of the above mentioned activities will be carried out on an annual basis. However a certain minimum package of activities is needed to maintain a lively active network. In addition the network will be active in identifying opportunities for further study and cooperation between (parts of) members in concrete projects and events (externally financed). These projects and events will be linked to the LANDNET but they are not part of the network itself.

Such projects / events can deal with:

- More intensive forms of knowledge exchange
- Development of methods, tools and norms
- Field experiments and mutual coaching in concrete pilots
- Training and capacity building events
- Publication and representation on international forums

The **outputs** will be the events themselves and the proper documentation of these events (reports, minutes, news items) on the LANDNET web pages of the FAO and FARLAND websites

Programming and Sponsoring

To ensure more continuity it is proposed to plan activities and to ensure proper sponsoring, based on three year programming cycles. Based on a specific programming period, the financing of activities will be arranged. Financing can be either provided in 'kind' (provide staff hours, venues, facilities) or in terms of 'contributions to the budget'. Supporting organisations can either provide support in general or finance a particular event. FAO has agreed to fulfil the role of secretariat of the LANDNET.

Sponsoring can come from national governments / funds, partners, international organisations, specific programmes etc. To ensure a minimum package ensuring continuity a minimum budget of EUR per year is needed as well as the input of .. staff member(s).

Annex 2 provides an outline for the period 2013-2015 (to be developed during the workshop).

Identity and Organisation

The LANDNET's **identity** is a community of professionals from different countries and different organisations under the FAO initiative. Professional involved can represent the government, the private sector, NGO's, universities and other research institutes.

Regarding the **organisation**, a proper functioning of the LANDNET needs three preconditions, (1) financing, (2) time from its members and (3) a more institutionalised set up. The exact organisation needs to be tuned gradually to the programme it implements. The objective is to keep the organization 'light' but a certain formalization of this organization is needed. Initial ideas for this were collected and discussed and also the organisation required and the financing needed.

Initial ideas for the organisation are:

- FAO REU in Budapest is willing to be the Network Manager and to fulfil a function as Secretariat
- Each country (EU / Candidate EU and New Neighbours) appoints a national contact person to ensure linkages with the relevant government organisation.
- In each country, the organisations that support the LANDNET will be formalised by registering as LANDNET partner organisation
- A small board of high level representatives representing FAO and the members determines the main directions
- A small core team of European experts is created to assist FAO in the preparation and implementation of content related activities (workshop programs, studies etc.)

The first programming cycle (2013-2015) gives room to investigate the most suitable form of organization in the next stage.

Important is that from each of the partners a clear commitment is asked to support the LANDNET either by providing human or financial resources to organise events and activities.