# Country Report

(Based on the PCGIAP-Cadastral Template 2003)

# Latvia

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## I. Country Report

### A. Country Context

***Geographical Context***

Latvia is to be found in the North-eastern Europe, on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. It is the central country of three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). The territory of the Republic of Latvia is 64 589 square kilometers. The length of state border is 1 862 km, but the length of the coastline – 494 km. Latvia borders Estonia, Russia, Belarus and Lithuania. The capital of the state is Rīga, almost one third of the population of the state lives there (at the beginning of 2005 – 731,762).

The landscape of Latvia is marked by lowland planes and hills. The average altitude of Latvia is 87 m over sea level. Inland-waters cover 2,543 $km^2$ or approximately 4% of the territory of country. In Latvia, there are totally 750 rivers that are longer than 10 km, and approximately 3,000 lakes that are greater than 1 ha. Forests cover 45.2% of territory, agricultural land – 38.1%.

Population of Latvia is 2.29 millions (Apr. 1, 2006), Latvians make 58.8%, Russians – 28.6%, Belorussians – 3.8%, and other nationalities – 8.8%. The ethnic mix of populations is largely the result of massive immigration during Soviet occupation, which resulted in a decline in the share of ethnic Latvians from 77% in 1935 to 52% in 1989.

***Historical Context***

Latvian ancestors Proto-Balts arrived in the territory of nowadays Latvia in the first half of the 2000 BC. In the 900s AD the ancient Balts began to establish specific tribal realms and gradually four Baltic tribal cultures developed: Couronians, Latgallians, Selonians, Semigallians. Starting from 1200s, when German Crusaders invaded the territory of Latvia, until the beginning of 1900 the territory of Latvia was under rule of other countries. In thirteenth century a confederation of feudal nations Livonia was developed under German rule. After the Livonian War (1558 – 1583) Latvian territory came under Polish-Lithuanian rule, later after the Polish-Swedish war (1600 – 1629), part of the territory passed under Swedish rule. It can be considered that consolidation of the individual tribes into Latvian nation occurred in the 1600s.

At the beginning of the 1700s, during the Great Northern War Russia conquered the part of territory of Latvia that had been under Swedish rule and by the end of the 18th century the whole territory of Latvia was under Russian rule. The latter half of the 1800s marked a period of national rebirth, and the situation shaped after the First World War made it possible to establish the independent state of Latvia on November 18, 1918. In the 1930s, likewise as in many other European countries, an authoritarian regime was established in Latvia. The existence of an independent state was interrupted in 1940 by Soviet occupation. From 1941 until 1944 it was replaced by German occupation. In 1945, Soviet occupation was reinstated and it remained until 1990-1991, when taking advantage of liberalization of communist regime, pro-independence forces managed to achieve restoration of the independence of Latvia. Since 2004, Latvia is member country of European Union and NATO.

### *Current Political and Administrative Structures*

Latvia is democratic, parliamentary republic with unitary structure of state. The country's head of state is the President, who is elected by the parliament for a period of 4 years. The President performs mainly representative functions. Legislative power is in the hands of a single chamber parliament – the *Saeima* that is elected in general, equal, direct, secret and proportional elections for a period of 4 years. Executive power is performed by Cabinet of Ministers consisting of ministries and headed by Prime Minister.

There are municipalities of two types in Latvia – 530 local municipalities (cities, counties and civil parishes), and 26 district municipalities. The local municipalities are elected by residents in direct elections, council of district is made by chairmen of councils of municipalities of the corresponding district. At present, reform of municipalities is in process with aim to reduce the number of local municipalities up to 167 in order to optimize their operation.

### *Historical Outline of Cadastre*

As in many other countries, cadastre historically was established in Latvia for the classification and registration of properties in order to tax them according to their quality and quantity. As territory of Latvia was under the rule of other countries from 1200s until the beginning of 1900s, development within cadastral sector was defined by policies and interests realized by these countries.

Beginnings of land accounting in Latvia can be found already in Middle Ages. In 900s – 1200s classification of land possessed by farmers in cadastral measurement units – 'aratrum' – was started in the territory of Latvia in order to define impost and corvee. In 1500s-1600s land surveying and valuation was started. Under Swedish rule from 1683-1693 the first cadastre that was based on unified land surveying and valuation methodology was established in the territory of Latvia. Methodology and data of Swedish cadastre were used for more than 200 years.

Changes in land administration occurred when serfdom was abolished - since 1860 farmers started to buy out their land, thus tasks of cadastre included preparation of information for purposes of calculation of land buy-out price, arrangement of and preparation of ownership documentation for property registration. Vidzeme's cadastre (1861-1912), as well as later Latvian state cadastre (1931-1940) performed real estate valuation instead of land valuation.

After the establishment of Latvian state in 1918, one of the most important tasks was the land reform that was performed in 1920–1937. Initially, cadastral data of Vidzeme compiled before the First World War were used, but they covered only approximately one third of territory of the country. Cadastral Law of the independent Latvia was adopted in 1931. It prescribed to carry out cadastral surveying of the territory of the country, producing of plans and cadastral valuation of real estate. Latvia developed its own real estate cadastre and system for its maintenance. Also Land Book that performed registration of ownership was established.

When Soviet rule established in 1940 and land nationalization was performed, state cadastre system of Latvia ended its existence. However, during the period of occupation due to activities of leaders of land utilization systems, significant work was done in taking of aerial photographs of territory, soil mapping, land account and valuation.

History of contemporary Cadastre of Latvia started in 1992, simultaneously with land reform that was necessary, when independence of state of Latvia was regained and transition to market economics took place. Land ownership for natural persons officially was restituted 1993. New

institution was established – State Land Service. The first eight years of operation of National Real Estate Cadastre were devoted mainly to data collection and initial registration, but since 2001 data updates and quality is the main priority. 100% of the territory of country is registered in cadastre that is organized in digital form. On December 1, 2005 new Law on National Real Estate Cadastre was adopted by parliament of Latvia, thus finalizing more that ten years lasted work on the preparation of law that would lay down the provisions for coherent operation of National Real Estate Cadastre regarding administrative, organizational and technical matters. Another institution – Land Register that was restored in 1993, registers ownership.

## B. Institutional Framework

### *Government Organizations*

Registration of land and buildings and cadastral surveying that is carried out on the national level, is responsibility of two governmental institutions under the Ministry of Justice.

The State Land Service (SLS) of the Republic of Latvia is governmental institution, which is in charge of implementation of land reform, maintenance of National Real Estate Cadastre, Address register and the information system of protective zones, as well as valuation of real estates, cadastral surveying of buildings and performance of other related functions. SLS has 8 regional offices.

Until 2006 State Land Service performed also surveying and mapping functions. In the result of reorganization of SLS that took place at the end of 2005 since January 1, 2006 surveying function (except cadastral surveying of buildings) is delegated to private sector and to newly established State Limited Company “Latvia State Surveyor”. Functions of geodesy, mapping and of producing basic data of state geographic information and building and maintaining its infrastructure are performed by newly established government agency “Latvian Geospatial Information Agency”.

Real property ownership registration is carried out by Land Register under Land Register Department of Court Administration and 28 Land Register offices of regional courts. According to Law on Land Register, all 28 Land Book databases are merged in State Unified Computerized Land Register (SUCLR), so SUCLR is central database, where it is possible to get information on all properties registered in Land Register in Latvia.

### *Private Sector Involvement*

Private sector is involved in performance of several functions related to real property registration and cadastral surveying.

Cadastral surveying of land can be carried out by State Limited Company “Latvia State Surveyor” and by licensed legal entities and certified natural persons. SLS furnishes necessary information to private surveyors from National Real Estate Cadastre Register.

Work done by private surveyors is subject to certain control. Control for activities of licensed legal persons is performed by Licensing Commission of SLS in cooperation with Latvian Society of Surveyors (LSS), activities of certified surveyors is supervised and examined by Certification Commission of LSS.

From private sector also notaries are involved in the registration of real property. They prepare application for registration of real property and corroboration of right related to it in Land Register, compile different documents connected with change of ownership and confirm authenticity of other documents.

### *Professional Organization or Association*

Surveyors and specialists working in surveying sector are joined in Latvian Society of Surveyors (LSS). It is professional non-governmental organization that aims at promotion of technical and scientific development of surveying and at protection of surveyors’ professional and social interests. Members of the organization are natural persons whose professional activities are related to geodetic, topographical and cartographical works in the Republic of Latvia.

LSS was established in 1920. It actively participated in the realization of land reform started after the establishment of independent state and it was both scientific and technological

organization. The society actively co-operated with foreign specialists and joined International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) in 1926. After interruption during Soviet occupation Latvian Society of Surveyors resumed its activities in 1988; its membership in FIG was restored on February 15, 1993.

LSS has 185 members at present.

### *Licensing*

In Latvia, cadastral surveying and land utilization system works can be carried out only by licensed legal entities, certified natural persons and by State Limited Company "Latvia State Surveyor".

Licensing Commission of SLS issues special license to legal entities for a period of 1 up to 5 years. It is required that at least ½ out of members of executive institution shall have higher education in some kind of licensed activity and experience at some of the to-be-licensed type of work for at least 3 years during the period of last 7 years. Not less than ¼ out of total number of employees shall have higher education in some the to-be-licensed type of activity.

Latvian Society of Surveyors (LSS) issues certificates to natural persons for a period of 5 years and assigns name of Certified Surveyor. To qualify for certification in corresponding sector of surveying, persons shall have higher education, corresponding praxis in surveying, be members of LSS for at least 2 years, as well as pass examination of professional qualification in national language in sector of surveying to be certified: 1) engineers of geodesy and land surveying shall have documentarily certified length of service in surveying at least of 3 years and 2) persons with higher education shall have documentarily certified length of service in surveying at least of 5 years.

### *Education*

In Latvia, two universities offer education in cadastral surveying and land surveying programs.

Latvian Agricultural University offers 4-year academic bachelor program in land surveying with engineering bachelor degree in land surveying and 5-year professional program in land surveying with engineer degree. Post-graduate 2-year program is available with MSc. ing. degree. From 2001 until 2005 average annual number of graduating students with bachelor degree was 19, with MSc degree - 2.

Riga Technical University offers 3-year bachelor program in geodesy and cartography with engineering bachelor degree in civil engineering and 4-year engineering professional program in geodesy and cartography with engineer qualification in geodesy and cartography. Post-graduate 2-year academic program is available receiving MSc. ing. in civil engineering (geodesy) or 2-year professional program receiving engineer qualification in geodesy and cartography. From 2001 until 2005 average annual number of graduating students with bachelor degree was 15, with MSc degree - 5.

RTU since 2005 offers new 4-year bachelor professional program in real property management receiving real property economist qualification and bachelor degree in real property management. Post-graduate program for master degree will be available.

## C. Cadastral System

### *Purpose of Cadastral System*

Purpose of Latvian cadastre is to provide society with up-to-date official information on all real properties in the Republic of Latvia by registration and maintenance of it in a unified system.

Cadastral data are used for:

- corroboration of right to real properties;
- preparation of documents for transaction with real properties;
- use of real properties and planning of development;
- cadastral valuation;
- real property tax administration;

- planning of economical development of country, regions and municipalities and territorial planning;
- performance of land utilization system works and environmental protection planning;
- preparation of national statistical information,
- preparation of land balance;
- creation and maintenance of geographic information system;
- securing of interests of holders of other registers and information systems;
- other purposes.

Thus cadastre has multi-purpose role.***Types of Cadastral System***

There is one unified real property cadastre system, covering the total territory in Latvia. The system covers the total territory regardless of ownership and land use.

There is no information available on illegal settlements in Cadastre.

### *Cadastral Concept*

In Cadastre of Latvia, the smallest uniquely identified and surveyed unit is land parcel that is defined as delimited piece of land registered in the National Real Estate Cadastre Information System having cadastral designation assigned to it. Likewise as land parcels, also buildings and groups of premises are surveyed, identified and registered in cadastre. Also real properties that are defined as land with buildings and waters lying thereon that is juridically attached to natural or juridical person are registered in cadastre. Rights to real properties are registered in Land Register.

In Latvia, real property is recorded in Land Register regardless of number of parcels. In practice, scenario (i) of scenarios mentioned in question 2.3. applies to situation in Latvia mainly in urban areas, but scenario (ii) - in rural areas.

In Latvia, there are properties of four types: property comprising land; property comprising land and buildings; property comprising only building and apartment property.

When land is distinguished as type of real property, this means real property in broader sense, i.e., together with buildings and constructions owned by landowner, however also properties consisting of parcel only not having buildings on it are included. Building properties are real properties consisting of building only that lies on land owned by another owner. Apartment property (i.e. 'condominium unit') in multi-apartment house where apartments are owned by several owners is individual property of each owner together with corresponding ideal part of condominium.

### *Content of Cadastral System*

In Latvia, two registers regarding land and rights related to it – National Real Estate Cadastre Register and Land Register – are operated by different institutions.

Cadastre, as we see it, is unified account system that by administrative, organizing and technological processes secures obtaining, maintenance and use of up-to-date official textual and graphical data on real properties situated in the territory of the Republic of Latvia, land parcels, buildings, groups of premises included within them, as well as on owners, legal possessors and users, objects for real property tax and tax-payers. Content of National Real Estate Cadastre has gradually increased: if during the first four years from its reinstating only land parcels and land properties and land assigned for use were registered, since 1996 also registration of building data was started and since 2000 – mass registration of apartments. Also procedures of valuation of land, building and apartment properties are carried out in cadastre, as well as registration of archive files is carried out.

Cadastre consists of:

- textual data including data on location of real property, cadastral designations and areas of parcels, buildings and constructions, value, encumbrances and restrictions on real property, as well as on owner, legal possessor or user;
- graphical data – cartographical images that show boundaries of parcels and buildings, cadastral designations and other information characterizing real property.

Both textual data of cadastre and cadastral map (graphical data) are organized only in digital (vector) form, and connection is ensured between textual and graphical part. Textual data are completely computerized, 99,8% of parcels registered in textual part and 99,3% of buildings that are to be depicted in cadastral map are depicted in cadastral map (June 1, 2006).

Corroboration of rights related to property is carried out by the other register – Land Register. As owner of a real property according to Civil law shall be recognized only the person recorded in Land Register. Land register stores data on real property, owner of real property, encumbrances of real property and debts of real property.

According to Law on Land Register, all the 28 databases of Land Register offices are merged in State Unified Computerized Land Register (SUCLR), so SUCLR is central database, where it is possible to receive information on all properties registered in Land Register in the country. The main function of SUCLR is to maintain and store Land Register data submitted by Land Register offices ensuring data security and invariability.

## D. Cadastral Mapping

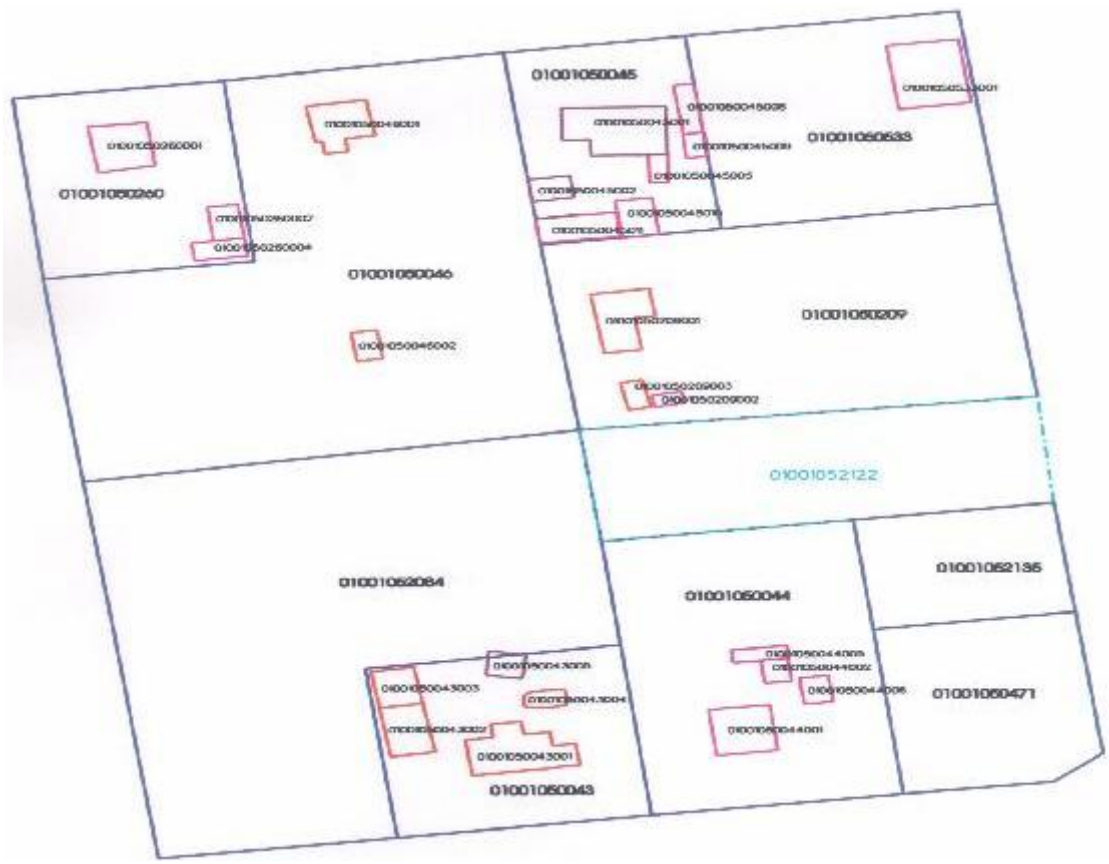
### *Cadastral Map*

Cadastral map is digital (in form of vectors) in Latvia; it covers the whole territory of the Republic of Latvia and serves for overview on location of depicted objects in the territory. Map is created in Latvian coordinate system LKS-92 in TM projection; it is obtained by method of alignment of boundaries of parcels. In rural areas, Cadastral map is maintained with accuracy of scale 1:10,000, but in urban areas – with accuracy of scale 1:2,000. At present, data of cadastral map are stored in file system, but from the end of 2006 it is planned to accumulate data of cadastral map in central database.

Following elements are represented in Cadastral map:

1. boundaries of cadastral territories and cadastral groups;
2. boundaries of parcels and their cadastral designations;
3. outlines of buildings and their cadastral designations;
4. areas occupied by encumbrances of right to use real property and their designations;
5. leaseholds and their cadastral designations.

***Example of a Cadastral Map***




Cadastral map with cadastral designation of parcels and buildings (Rīga City).

***Role of Cadastral Layer in SDI***

Cadastral map is consistent part of Latvian map system; it is one of thematic maps. Information of Cadastral map can be used for following purposes:

1. ascertainment of location of specific cadastral object (objects);
2. overview on location of cadastral objects in certain area;
3. territory planning;
4. changing of boundaries of administrative territories;
5. other purposes, where Cadastral map obtained by method of alignment of boundaries can be used.

Cadastral map is compatible with following cartographic material:

1. simplified topographical map at scale of 1:10,000;
2. topographic plan at scale of 1:2,000;
3. topographic plan at scale of 1:500 for separate areas;
4. graphical part of State Address Register;
5. map of boundaries of administrative territories;
6. other thematic maps.

By use of data publishing/distribution subsystem of State Land Service (SLS), customers have an opportunity to use cadastral map as reference material, as basic information for creation of data sets or databases according to customer's requirements (graphical data service) and as basic information for creation of public databases (thematic Internet web-sites) maintained by customer and for insuring of functionality of them (satellite map service).

## E. Reform Issues

### *Cadastral Issues*

1. In Latvia, one of problems is discrepancy of boundaries of parcels in graphical data of Cadastre, which historically were surveyed with different accuracy, because boundaries of parcels were established with different methods during the land reform. There are three groups of accuracy: surveyed (by using inaccurate instruments), surveyed (by using accurate instruments) and designed (by using cartographic material) land parcels. Quality of historically recorded data generally is one of problems in Cadastre of Latvia.

2. In Latvia, Cadastre Register that carries out registration of objects making property and formation of property for corroboration in Land Register and Land Register that carries out corroboration of ownership right are separate systems that are maintained by different institutions. Therefore large overlapping of data exists and procedures of corroboration of ownership right are complicated.

3. The absence of Cadastre central database is also a problem. At present, data registration is carried out in 8 regional databases that were created by merging 28 databases that existed initially.

### *Current Initiatives*

1. With merging graphical part of Cadastre in central database, which is planned at the end of 2006, the problematic overlapping of land parcel boundaries will be identified. In January 1, 2006, Surveying Department has been established in SLS in order to deal with land disputes.

2. Both Cadastre Register and Land Register are state institutions in subordination to Ministry of Justice. Ministry of Justice has adopted decision on merger of them until 2010 in the framework of Lisbon protocol program.

3. As mentioned in the first point, it is planned to implement central database for graphical part of Cadastre in 2006. This task is set as a top priority for SLS in 2006. Problem of creation of central database for textual data will be solved later.

## References

www.vzd.gov.lv

# II. Questionnaire

## 1. Cadastral Principles

***Deed or title registration***

1.1 Is your cadastral system based on deeds registration or on title registration ?

- ☐ deeds registration
- × title registration
- ☐ other: …….

***Registration of land ownership***

1.2 By law, is registration of land ownership compulsory or optional ?

- × compulsory
- ☐ optional
- ☐ other: …….

1.3 If felt necessary, please, comment on the actual practice and the legal consequences.

| |
|---|
| By Civil Law, ownership rights are only those rights registered in Land Register, i.e. registration is compulsory. However, no deadline is established for registration, and sanctions for failure of registration of property are not prescribed. |

***Approach for the establishment of the cadastral records***

1.4 Are landowners required to register their properties systematically during the initial establishment of the cadastre or is registration sporadic, i.e. triggered only by specific actions (such as for example sale) ?

- ☐ systematic
- ☐ sporadic
- × both
- ☐ all properties are already registered
- ☐ other: …….

## 2. Cadastral Statistics

***Population***

2.1 What is the **population** of your country ?

2.29 million
(Apr. 1 2006)

2.2 Please, estimate the **population distribution** between urban and rural areas.

| | |
|---|---|
| urban: | …68.0… % |
| rural: | …32.0… % |
| total: | …100… % |

***Number and distribution of land parcels***

2.3 Please, estimate the approximate **total number of the smallest uniquely identified land units**, often called "land parcels" in your country, including urban and rural areas ?

*The total number would include all freehold and state owned land, regardless of registered, non-registered or informal holding.*

0.94 million
(June 1, 2006)

2.4 What is the approximate **total number of registered strata or condominium units** ? This number would be in addition to the number of land parcels indicated in 2.3 ?

0.56 million
(Apartment properties in complete and accelerated privatization, June 1, 2006)

2.5 For **URBAN areas**, please, estimate the **distribution between the smallest uniquely identified land units, often called "land parcels"** (i) that are legally registered and surveyed, (ii) that are legally occupied but not registered or surveyed, and (iii) that are informally occupied without any legal title (this may include illegal occupation or squatting).

*If the estimation is too difficult or complex using land parcels, you may base your estimation alternatively on the number of people occupying these forms of land parcels.*

legally registered and surveyed:
…71.5… %

legally occupied, but not registered or surveyed:
21.6… %
(not surveyed and rights are not registered in Land Register)

6.9… %
(surveyed, but rights are not registered in Land Register)

informally occupied without legal title:
……0… %

total: …100… %

2.6 For **RURAL areas**, please, estimate the **distribution between the smallest uniquely identified land units, often called "land parcels"** (i) that are legally registered and surveyed, (ii) that are legally occupied but not registered or surveyed, and (iii) that are informally occupied without any legal title (this may include illegal occupation or squatting).

*If the estimation is too difficult or complex using land parcels, you may base your estimation alternatively on the number of people occupying these forms of land parcels.*

| | |
|---|---|
| legally registered and surveyed: | …66.1… % |
| legally occupied, but not registered or surveyed: | …23.4… % |
| (not surveyed and rights not registered in Land Register) | 10.5… % |
| (surveyed, but rights not registered in Land Register) | |
| informally occupied without legal title: | ……0… % |
| total: | …100… % |

***Number of professionals***

Please estimate the total number of *academic professionals* that are active within the cadastral system and the proportion of the time that they actually commit for cadastral matters (as opposed to work outside of the cadastral system) ?

| | |
|---|---|
| 2.7 Total number of **professional land surveyors**, such as licensed surveyors active within the cadastral system: | 173 * |
| 2.8 Proportion of the time that these land surveyors commit for cadastral matters: | 100% |

* Number of persons working in State Land Service as land surveyors is 154. Not all of them have university education in land surveying. Besides, according to Latvian Society of Surveyors data, there are 19 Certified Surveyors in Latvia.

| | |
|---|---|
| 2.9 Total number of **lawyers/solicitors** or equivalent active within the cadastral system or land market: | n/a |
| 2.10 Proportion of time that these lawyers/solicitors commit for cadastral matters or land market: | n/a |

***Remarks and Comments***

Please, identify the best aspect of this questionnaire ?

This questionnaire serves as wide background enabling to conceive the present situation.

Please, suggest the area in the questionnaire that could be improved ?

Probably it would be better to compare content of cadastre, if objects that shall be registered and their main parameters would be given in tables.