

Preface / Editorial

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Rural areas in most of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) are still in a process of transformation that often is somehow blocked. They are marked by a stagnating agricultural production, too small and fragmented agricultural lands, a lack of medium size farms, deficits in mechanisation etc. This leads not only to increasing poverty, it also interferes with their competitiveness in regard to their accession to the European Union. Positive experiences in land consolidation and rural development or so-called lessons learnt from Western European countries might enable CEEC to implement more successful programmes which link local measures with regional planning and development, combine different assistance programmes etc. It was the conference's aim to provide an opportunity for experts to discuss about land fragmentation in CEEC and how to cope with it.

The conference which took place at TU Munich in the time from 25th to 28th of February 2002 was initiated, organised and supported by GTZ, FAO, ARGE Landentwicklung, FIG and TU Munich, Chair of Land Tenure and Land Development.

This documentation includes the papers presented during the four days conference at Munich as well as background papers such as the four extended case studies on land fragmentation and land consolidation in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria and the two strategy papers for land consolidation and improved land management in Armenia and Georgia recently prepared by FAO, partly in co-operation with GTZ. Included in the documentation is also the Munich Statement on land fragmentation and land consolidation in CEEC as part of the results. In addition, the outputs of the working groups have been documented.

The documentation consists of two parts: a printed one including abstracts and a CD ROM containing the original papers and country case studies.

Convinced that land consolidation – if executed in a comprehensive way – can contribute to improvements in the productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness of the agricultural sector thereby securing jobs and facilitating private and public investment in rural areas, while at the same time supporting environmental protection and natural resource management, we hope that the conference and this documentation will lead one step further to a sustainable rural development in CEEC.