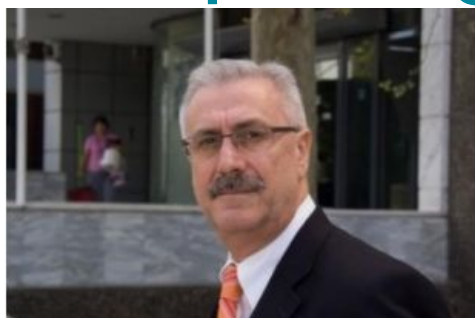


GIM INTERNATIONAL INTERVIEWS AKIS MARKATOS

Completing the Greek Cadastre



Earlier this year, work started on the completion of the cadastral registration in Greece, in the south-east corner of Europe. More than 60 percent of the territory still has to be surveyed, and the project should be completed by 2020. The IT infrastructure has been set up, new laws passed, 28 survey projects tendered, and a new board and management are in place at the National Cadastre and Mapping Agency. Here Akis Markatos, general director of the Cadastre, talks about their eagerness to tackle the many challenges.

What is the current cadastral situation in Greece?

In a country in such great need of a well-functioning property market, fair property taxation and more investment in real estate and infrastructural projects, the importance of having effective property registration is obvious. Greece covers an area of 132,000 square kilometres and is home to 11 million people. But despite considerable effort and many millions of euros invested by both the state and the European Union, only 40 percent of the territory is currently covered in the national cadastre. That accounts for approximately 60 percent of the country's property rights. In the remaining part, a very 'heterogeneous' property system does exist but it is far from adequate. There is no certainty that private property is administered correctly, and coastal and forest zones and public property are not registered at all.

There have been numerous pilot schemes since 1996 but most of these merely resulted in high monitoring expenses, errors and delays. The results have improved in recent years, but candidate contractors for the survey work have frustrated many tenders by going to court (300 cases) to contest competition instead of forming consortia. A new cadastre law (2013) has simplified procedures and cut red tape. 126 older survey projects are now being implemented and 28 new ones were tendered in October 2013.

A new phase, a new management approach?

Yes, new management has been in place at the NCMA S.A. (National Cadastre and Mapping Agency) since August 2013, and a new board of directors was installed in March. With our staff of 365 people, we are willing to move mountains to complete the national cadastral survey. The NCMA is neither a private nor a public organisation, but was instituted as a legal entity of private law in order to operate according to the rules of private finance. The sole shareholder of the company is the Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change. This legal form was chosen in order to give NCMA flexibility and a government guarantee. However, due to the recent restrictions imposed on all government bodies, the initially intended flexibility and autonomy has been considerably limited. But I don't expect that to frustrate our efforts to achieve the 2020 deadline.

What will be the total initial cost of the Hellenic cadastre?

The total cost of the project was estimated at EUR1.5 billion. Our assessment is that the current cadastral survey tenders will be around 25 to 30 percent cheaper than the previous ones. In other words, we expect the remaining budget of circa EUR1.1 billion will be used to an extent of less than EUR800 million in the end.

It's not all publicly funded. An owner pays EUR35 per registered deed and – in the new projects – 1 per mille over the value of the property. For this, a new feature will be added in our systems in the next semester which will enable all transaction prices to be recorded in the cadastral database.

Will the structural effects go far beyond the cadastre registration?

Yes. The process of developing the cadastre has brought to the surface many administrative problems that have plagued Greece for the last 200 years. The state can now resolve these problems, which mostly involve the extent of state property, the illegal development of certain areas, and the lack of authoritative information on a series of administrative data layers. Furthermore, in the areas where a cadastre has been developed, the Greek state now has a reliable data source for the first time enabling it to make documented decisions about the country's development. And future investors now have a clear view of the extent and the boundaries of properties.

There will also be a growing effect on the state income through property tax. A link is currently being built between the cadastral database and the taxation database in order to develop a more comprehensive and fair taxation system.

It is very important to note that this process is creating 12,000 new jobs for engineers, lawyers and IT specialists. A new IT infrastructure

has been set up using EU budget for the digital conversion of Greece. For instance, the Hellenic Positioning System (HEPOS) is in place with accuracy of 2 to 4cm. And we now have a data infrastructure for the management of all spatial and non-spatial data to support all the organisation's projects. Important internet services have been developed, targeted at citizens as well as the contractors of the cadastral surveys. We also have unified national base maps.

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