



F:ACTS! Project - Internship in Galicia Report

Hosting Organizations	Xunta de Galicia and BanTeGal
Visiting Organization	DGADR
Date	24-25th January 2011
Duration of the visit	Two days
Subject of the internship	Land Bank (both, general / broad and related to the pilot in Baixo Vouga Lagunar)
Proposed agenda (issues at stake)	BanTeGal: - land leasing (as part of a land bank) as an instrument to fight against land abandonment - legal and policy related aspects - land bank management, procedures and database - results of Galician experience

1. Which role do you have in your organization? How did you prepare for this internship?

The persons who participated in this internship were Margarida Ambar and Maria de Fátima Caetano, both technicians from DGADR, involved in the F:ACTS! pilot project team and in the working group dealing with the creation of a land bank at a national level.

Exchange of experiences and knowledge between the two organizations involved in this internship comes back to the previous Interreg project – FARLAND, so DGADR has been following the innovative Galician experience with BanTeGal. As a result, there was no need for a major preparation of the internship, basically we needed to make clear and settle beforehand, what were our learning points as detailed as possible, so that a good time management would be facilitated.



2. What were your objectives and learning needs before your departure?

Since DGADR is the organization in Portugal that is in charge of presenting a proposal for the creation of a Land Bank at a national level, learning with the Galician experience was considered a major input for this task. One of the main goals when creating the Land Bank in Portugal is related to land abandonment. This has been recognized as a problem in some regions because it may promote (directly or indirectly) certain phenomena that decrease soil quality (like erosion), frequently it provokes loss in biodiversity and in the quality of the landscape and, to mention not the least of the bad effects of this problem, it has a direct relation with forest wild fires, similar to Galicia. In areas where the land management isn't appropriate or doesn't exist at all, conditions are created so that, in combination with high temperatures and less rainfall, wild fires become more frequent and affect an increasing number of areas. So, this is one of the basic common points between Portuguese and Galician goals when developing such instrument.

Besides this broader national perspective, there were also learning points at the pilot scale: DGADR is considering using several parcels in the Baixo Vouga area, that are state owned, in order to fight against land abandonment and/or to use for the implementation measures regarding the adaptation to climate change effects. DGADR was interested to hear about the Galician approach to land abandonment.

Therefore, DGADR's interests in the internship were both broad (related to the creation of the Portuguese land bank) and related to the F:ACTS! pilot.

3. What did you do during your internship: specific assignments, other activities, and products?

DGADR representatives asked the Galician partner to organize working sessions/meetings with experts involved in content/methodological and logistical aspects, both on technical and policy levels. Therefore, during this internship, several work sessions took place, with the specific experts that are working on each of the different aspects we focused on. This was very good since we could discuss all kinds of practical aspects that only persons having the deep practical experience of such instrument could be aware of.

4. Which competences (knowledge and skills) did you gain during the internship?
Relation to F:ACTS! principles.

There were various competences (knowledge and skills) that we gained during the internship and they are situated on different types and levels, but the ones that are directly related to the six F:ACTS! principles are mainly based on two aspects:

- use and users – this land bank is an innovative instrument since it introduced the leasing component which is meant to promote users' action in order to provide a better land use (while providing a service to users as well); therefore, owners who don't want or can't use their land put it to lease via the BanTeGal and farmers who want land, use it to find land (available, good conditions, clear price and procedures) and lease it;
- people oriented - BanTeGal is unique in the sense that it has been implemented associated to an informatic websystem - SITEGAL, which is extremely user-friendly to any user that has access to a computer; this system brings two immediate major advantages: transparency and simplification of procedures. These two aspects support the promotion of such tool among land users and land owners. Adding to this, new functions for the land bank are being considered in order to provide some technical support to land owners (mainly related to the promotion of parcels' exchange processes, avoiding formal procedures). These aspects are closely related to the F:ACTS! principle regarding the establishment of people oriented approaches. As a general principle, when promoting people oriented approaches, we have to start considering the "inner part", that is to say, the working team itself. In the case of BanTeGal, it is very clear that all people working there are extremely dedicated to their work, frequently quite beyond their obligations since the staff is quite limited considering the amount of work they have in hands. Besides, a cheerful and friendly atmosphere has been created, which stimulates personal cooperation and understanding, this facilitating the work quality.
- governance – this is an important issue here as well, in terms of the appropriate type (form and level) of organization that should be responsible for such policy instrument; BanTeGal is a private enterprise and this has been hampering other possible roles for the land bank, such as the investigation of property rights; this is one of the reasons why the Galician land bank will be incorporated in an existing public-private agency.



Related to this aspect is also the fact that such organization needs to have a broad collaboration of technicians (either from its own staff or from other organizations) in the field all over the territories within the sphere of interference of the land bank for all kind of technical tasks and for the promotion and dissemination of the instrument itself.

One more point that was made very clear in this internship is the need for good cooperation between organizations dealing with all related aspects, in this case, mainly between BanTeGal, Xunta de Galicia, the cadaster service and the organization responsible for the “Sistema de Información Geográfica de Parcelas Agrícolas – SIGPAC”.

5. How may this internship influence you, your work and your region? How will you use what you have learned during your internship?

This internship was very useful for DGADR on what concerns to the present needs while creating the Portuguese land bank. The Galician experience - after three years since BanTeGal has been implemented - has made them assess their own approach and procedures, identifying a few bottlenecks and points for future improvement (as a matter of fact, Galicians are preparing a new act to introduce some changes). This means that DGADR can also benefit from this.

Therefore, the internship will certainly influence our work because we could get to know the Galician approach, principles, procedures and products in more detail, consider their recommendations and judgement of their own experience. Now we can think about all we've learned, consider this in relation to both our needs and context and develop our own approach and instrument. In this sense, this internship was a good source of inspiration and promotion of new ideas (big and small) regarding our present task.

6. How will you share what you have learned with your colleagues and other FACTS partners ?

We will share what we have learned with F:ACTS! partners via the present report and through meetings with colleagues in our country.

7. Describe the guidance you received during your internship. Was it adequate?

The guidance we received during our internship was extremely adequate. First of all, we were put completely at ease to ask questions regarding any point of interest – total openness from our hosts. Secondly, we had the chance to have direct contact with the technicians and experts that are actually and directly dealing with the different types of issues we wanted to address, also with experts on policy-making level, so these were the most suitable persons to assist us. Thirdly, all people that we had meetings/working sessions with had total availability for us, even for many hours in a row.

8. Which are your conclusions/recommendations for your organization? And for your host?

We have many recommendations for our organization, small and big, such as (for instance): be precise when defining beforehand all the data that will be needed to fully characterize each land parcel, as well as the info associated to the different phases in procedures (while leasing, selling and buying) that will be included in the database because this is the “backbone” to constitute the structure of the database and has strong influence in the resources (human and informatic) that will be needed.

Besides, as general aspects, we want to stress a few basic ones considering the state of the art in Portugal:

- a. Before designing such an instrument, one should be well aware of all the pretended objectives and then, design the procedures accordingly.
- b. Strong basis for good cooperation between different organizations involved in the land bank must be actively promoted since the beginning of the process.
- c. A land bank dealing with land lease can be an effective mean of promoting a more suitable land use (and this fighting against its abandonment) as long as it attracts enough people. In order to achieve this, you need to:
 - make procedures as transparent and data as accessible as possible;
 - make procedures as user friendly as possible;
 - allow access to land owners who don't have ownership official documents;
 - be active in raising awareness and promoting this instrument (use media, create your own products, think about marketing).



- d. The land bank needs to be well designed, with careful planning beforehand. Therefore, it is necessary to:
- develop the appropriate planning for all the procedures and make sure that you have the necessary resources (human and informatic) for the planned responsibilities and tasks;
 - constitute an appropriate team considering, not only their knowledge and technical skills, but also their character so that every person appreciates what he/she's doing and build up the team spirit as a means of motivation and increase of work quality;
 - take in consideration that it is needed to create a core team which will be working on this on a full-time basis.

As a general recommendation for our host we would just suggest to keep on building up from the experience they have with BanTeGal and use it smartly in future institutional reorganisation and improvement of the existing law. A lot of innovative and smart work has been in progress until now, so it's important that they will be sure that this is not lost and that the Galician land bank keeps on progressing well. In principle, this is harder in times of political changes and serious financial crisis but we could recognize, in our host, their willingness to do so.

9. What are your recommendations for future FACTS internship?

Our main recommendation for future F:ACTS! internships is to consider well the time schedule in relation to the objectives of the internship: talking, discussing, meeting and interviewing people, reading documents, ... usually take longer than predicted when preparing the internship, since there's always new info and different perspectives that one was not aware of beforehand. This means that is better to predict a low intensity timeschedule so that one has some margin to deal with unexpected points of interest. This means that it is also important to settle in detail the programme/agenda for the internship so that things can be well prepared and there won't be waste of useful time.