

Government Property Division

Joint Office

INTRODUCTION

The roles of the Joint Office are:

- managing and administering the immovable estate transferred to Government by the ecclesiastical authorities in terms of the Ecclesiastical Entities (Properties) Act, Chap. 358;
- validating and verifying the data being transferred to it by the ecclesiastical entities. The scope is to determine the exact value of all the properties transferred so that the necessary adjustments are made to the original amount of Lm28,067,000 which the Government issued in Bonds in terms of the 1991 Agreement with the ecclesiastical authorities;
- to register at the Land Registry all the properties which it administers, as well as those retained by the ecclesiastical entities.

Property Administration and Alienations

In 2008, the following properties were alienated:

As per 1996 Scheme	4
As per 2002 Initiative or original deed	226
As per Tenders/Exchange/Direct Disposal/Conversion	21
Total	251

Four premises were transferred to the Housing Authority for social housing purposes.

The Department also received and processed requests for the recognition of emphyteutae and tenants in their respective properties.

2002 Initiative

By the end of the year, the Joint Office had received 5,445 applications for the redemption of ground rent and for the purchase of leased premises. This was a result of the Government's announcement in the 2002 Budget Speech, that the Government was putting on the market all the properties being administered by the Joint Office which are either resident-occupied or used as a summer residence.

Of the 4,671 applications processed so far, 821 applications were invalid and a further 3,516 applicants were informed of the amount of redemption or of the selling price, as determined by established criteria, and 334 applicants were given an interim reply. With a view of hastening the process, the Joint Office farms out to architects in private practice the valuation of certain properties.

Agriculture Leases Scheme

The Joint Office is also processing applications received by February 2001 in terms of a scheme, whereby persons, occupying government-owned land for agricultural purposes without title, were given the opportunity to regularise their position.

Reconciliation, Verification and Registration

Transfer of Information on Properties

During 2008, the transfer of information from the Church Administrative Offices to the Joint Office regarding properties transferred to the Government by the Church continued at a steady pace. Up to the end of this year, 24,523 forms concerning properties listed in Annex 8 of the Church/State Agreement were forwarded to the Joint Office by the ecclesiastical entities.

In 2008, the Control Committee approved 552 corrections, as provided for in the Agreement. These corrections entail additions of properties inadvertently left out of the Annexes to the Agreement, deletion of others that were erroneously included, and correction to the capitalised amounts of properties. The Committee also signed 300 property forms, thus confirming the final amount due to the ecclesiastical entities in respect of the properties concerned.

During the year, the Joint Office continued to reconcile the values of properties previously owned by the 99 different ecclesiastical entities. In fact, during 2008 the Joint Office verified and determined the exact value of 1,248 properties transferred to the Government by the Order of Saint Augustine, bringing the total of reconciled entities to 52.

Registration of Properties

The Department continued with the registration of property with the Land Registry in terms of Chap 358. During 2008, the Joint Office registered 607 properties which include 1,910,781 square metres of land which is not built up. The related work entailed the drawing up of relative plans. This brought the total number of properties registered as on 31 December 2008 to 11,726.

The following figures show the number of properties which were registered during the past three years:

	2006	2007	2008
Registered Properties	877	567	607

Revenue Collection

Besides the collection of rent of leased properties, the Department identified properties available for disposal in terms of the Disposal of Government Land Act. The following figures show the comparative figure of revenue collected during the past three years:

	2006	2007	2008
	€	€	€
Rent	1,195,460	1,416,501	888,428
Sales	10,840,892	4,959,101	13,266,255
Total	12,036,352	6,375,602	14,154,683

27% of the amount of rent collected during 2008 consisted of arrears. This was the result of an ongoing enforcement exercise undertaken by the Department in conjunction with the Land Department.

The Control Committee

The Control Committee is a body set up in terms of Article 17 of the 1991 Agreement between the Holy See and the Government of Malta. Two members of the Committee are nominated by the Holy See and two members are nominated by the Government of Malta. Chairmanship of meetings is by rotation. The present members representing the Government of Malta were nominated in January 2002.

The functions of the Control Committee are promoting and monitoring the correct and timely application of the provisions of the above-mentioned Agreement with particular reference to the approval of corrections to the Annexes; and the alienation of property and in particular to bonds that have to be issued to the Foundation for Church Schools.

By Legal Notice No 150/2008, the sum of €6,542,600 in Government Stock was issued to the Foundation for Church Schools in respect of property alienated in the previous year.

Co-ordination with the Estate Management Department and the Land Department

The co-ordination and related co-operation of the Joint Office with the Estate Management Department and the Land Department, both departments falling under the Government Property Division, continued to be essential for uniformity in adopting common policies of the Division.

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