

## **Partnership between the Austrian allotment garden federation and the Russian Datcha association**

During a visit of a delegation of the Austrian allotment garden federation in Moscow last winter, the Russian Datcha association informed them that they were interested in a long term exchange of ideas between the two federations. The results of the contacts existing since that time were the signature of a partnership agreement by Ing. Wilhelm Wohatschek, president of the Austrian central federation and Oleg Walentschuk, president of the Russian Datcha association and Member of Parliament, in July in the Parliament in Moscow. Juri Schaliganov, a leading person of the Moscow federation, was also present.

Intensive discussions between the members of the two delegations highlighted the fact that, after initial difficulties, there are in many areas similar structures for the administration of the gardens in both countries. Up to 1991 firms put gardens at the disposal of their employees and cared for the infrastructure. After the reorganization of Russia the Datchas had an uncertain future. Nobody felt responsible for the sites and the maintenance of their infrastructure. This problem was only solved in 2002 with the creation of the Russian Datcha federation. As far as its structure is concerned this federation resembles the Austrian central federation. Besides the central federation it includes both national and district federations as well as associations.

Nevertheless some differences exist from district to district. In Novosibirsk for example the grounds have been transferred to the associations free of charge. A body similar to the Vienna allotment garden advisory board – composed of province and town politicians, as well as of civil servants, deal, together with representatives of the Russian allotment gardeners, with questions that are important for the associations. In this body the members for example discuss the necessary financial aid for the construction and maintenance of the infrastructure. The discussions have led to up to now to a funding of approximately 25 millions Euros. The same amount taken from the affiliation fees, had to be paid by the associations.

The direction of the Novosibirsk federation, under the leadership of Lenstalya Iwanowitsch Mashkovtsev, has still to deal with very important tasks. In fact there are still 400,000 allotment gardeners waiting for a lease contract. Often the biggest difficulty is first of all to prove the real “ownership” of the plot.

One has also to mention that markets and supermarkets have to put free stalls at the disposal of the allotment gardeners in order to enable them to sell their products. This fact is easy to explain: According to the season 60 - 80 % of the local provision of fruit and especially of vegetables is made by the allotment gardeners.

Additionally to this vast official programme, the Austrian delegation had the opportunity of an interesting visiting programme.

President Ing. Wohatschek invited the president of the Russian Datcha federation Oleg Walentschuk with a delegation to take part in the celebrations for the hundredth anniversary of the Austrian federation, which are going to take place in four years. This invitation was accepted with thanks and pleasure and further meetings were planned.



*The Austrian delegation together with representatives of the Russian Datcha association.*



*Signature of the partnership agreement between the allotment gardeners from Austria and the Russian Datcha association*