

The allotment gardener and the European year of sport

Sport and the allotment garden movement have doubtlessly some things in common. Both have among others a positive influence on the health of human beings. Most men and women today lack physical exercise, which causes them to frequently suffer from overweight as well as from other and various sicknesses or health problems.

For this reason, we, the allotment gardeners, are supporting the activities of governments and international organisations in order to promote sport and the aims assigned to the European Year on the education by sport. In particular, we would like to promote fair competition in popular sport disciplines and ask for measures to be taken for a healthy sport activity. Yet, we condemn any unfair behaviour in sport and in particular the sadly enough largely spread use of doping substances in many sport domains. Such practices are not only harmful for the health of those who take them but they also cast a very bad light on the relevant disciplines and the organisations in charge thereof.

Yet, for the most various reasons it is not possible for everyone to actively participate in any sport activity. This can be due to the fact that maybe the person lacks the necessary interest or else health problems and physical disabilities can prevent a person from actively doing a specific type of sport.

In this case, allotment gardens can represent a true alternative. Allotment gardens as well offer the possibility for regular physical outdoor exercise, to move and work in the fresh air. The allotment garden offers this possibility to almost everyone independently of their age, thus from children to adults and elderly people but also to persons with a disability of a certain degree. Whereas in sport there are certainly limits to this even though depending on the sport activity and in particular if practiced on a non competitive level, many sport types can be practiced up to a certain age.

Thus, it appears that allotment gardeners as well as sport people like outdoor activities, do something for their health and try to keep fit and in form while they get older. This is certainly a reason why sport people and allotment gardeners should manage to get along well, be it together or as neighbours while avoiding entering into any unnecessary competition with one another. Any person practicing a sport is free to also work in an allotment garden and any allotment gardener if he or she so wishes can also practice some type of sport.

This should therefore be considered as an important reason why sport installations as well as allotment garden areas should be saved from being converted into any other use. We have to work together to avoid that our areas

are the first targets of building companies looking for the necessary grounds to launch building projects be they for housing or business purposes or for streets and motorways. Together with politicians we have to try and protect our areas and installations so that even in the long term we will be able to practice our healthy leisure activity – be it sport or work in the allotment garden.

It cannot be permissible that – even though it is tried again and again and sadly enough sometimes even carried out – allotment garden areas are eliminated in order to set up sport facilities on this ground. Because of the above stated reasons politicians and administrations should give the same value and rights of existence to allotment gardens and sport fields even though sport people are, generally seen, probably the most important lobby.

In Switzerland for example, some allotment garden areas have the status of "area for allotment gardens" and hence are very well protected. Yet, there are also allotment gardens that are located in a so-called "area for leisure and sport". Unfortunately in the latter case, protection of allotment gardens is far from optimal and it has already happened that allotment gardens were eliminated from such areas in order to set up sport fields. This leads to a competition that to our opinion should not be allowed to exist and we have to take any possible measures to avoid such conversions in the use of land happen again.

We, allotment gardeners, also support the fact that sport people get and have available sport facilities that correspond to their needs. But, we also expect that sport people support our needs and help to make sure our areas are maintained and are not changed in order to fit their needs. We can provide mutual support to together reach our aims and together also, we can make sure our members can in future dispose of areas which allow them to practice their preferred physical activity.