



# OFFICE INTERNATIONAL

## du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux

### association sans but lucratif

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Regroupement des fédérations européennes des jardins familiaux  
Statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

Dear allotment gardeners

The subject of our international congress in Utrecht this year was: „Focus on allotment gardens“.

Gardening is more in fashion than ever before, waiting lists for plots are very often long and politicians underline the value of allotment gardens for people, towns and nature.....However, despite all this, allotment gardens still too often lose out against more profitable projects. Why?

Because the value of the allotments for the whole of society is not known enough and because their acceptance is still too weak. Therefore, the congress subject “Focus on allotments” was necessary.

We have, on one hand, to underline the value of the allotments for everyone and make them better known because they have a social mission today and tomorrow. They are building stones of a humane town because:

- they contribute to the improvement of the town climate, to the reduction of noise, the fixation of dust, and to the safeguarding of biodiversity
- they allow a slow drain away of rainwater
- they stimulate social contacts and integration as well as combat people's isolation
- they allow a healthy nutrition and a light physical activity as well as the reduction of stress
- they are a green classroom for young and old.

On the other hand, in order for allotments to remain, everywhere, an unavoidable element of a humane town, we have to take up the new challenges and find solutions. Allotment gardens and allotment gardeners are a part of society and they cannot avoid trends.

Consequently, the allotment gardeners must take into consideration the new forms of gardening in order to remain attractive for people with other aims and needs. They have to introduce the necessary changes to fulfil their members' new desires and expectations. They have to open up to all groups of society in order that everybody will be able to find a space on allotment sites. Taking into consideration the urbanization of the towns, the yearning for a green shelter is increasing for everyone.

Allotment gardens as gardens in general are an element of our history. However, we must realize that they are not unchangeable. On the contrary changes have to be taken into consideration in order to respond to today's and tomorrow's needs (flexibility and less rules could be helpful).

The allotment gardeners have to innovate. They increasingly have to realize innovative projects throughout Europe and make them known. Therefore, a collection of such projects has been issued at the occasion of the international congress.

The allotment gardeners have to find solutions for the problems concerning voluntary work and have to consider that less people are ready to do the administrative work.

New "clients", new organizational forms, new partners have to be found and new synergies have to be created.

The allotment gardeners have to underline the value of the allotments for all in an optimal and continuous public relation work.

They have to change the views of the authorities and politicians and convince them of the utility of allotments for all in order that they do not only report with satisfaction what they have done for allotment gardening, but that they will inform us with conviction about what they will do for the allotment gardeners in the future.

And then, last but not least, the allotment gardeners have to be proud of their hobby and have to underline the "we feeling" because only then will we be strong and will we have laid the ground stone for our future development.

Our mission for 2015 has therefore to be to question our actions in order to make our sites ready for the future and so worth of support. We have to start a changing process, fix ourselves the goals of this process and not let third parties do it for us. The allotments must remain in the focus of society and of the authorities.

"Who creates a garden believes in the future" said environment minister Carole DIESCHBOURG at the occasion of the allotment congress in Luxembourg.

In order for you and all responsible people of the allotment movement to have the necessary courage and strength to promote this vision for the future I address my best wishes for 2015 to you and your family and wish you much strength.

Malou WEIRICH  
Secretary General of the International  
Office du Coin de Terre et des Jardins  
Familiaux

