



OFFICE INTERNATIONAL

du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux

association sans but lucratif

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

Dear allotment gardeners

This year we have celebrated the 90th anniversary of the International Office. 90 years of work, progress, success, but also sometimes regrets, deceptions or failures.

90 years after its foundation, do we still need the International Office? What can the Office offer to the individual allotment gardeners in a society where on all levels egoism, individualism, national specificities and absence of solidarity seem to be the keywords?

If we analyse our movement we have to acknowledge that today, like yesterday, the gardeners still have the same problems. The solutions in their detail cannot be the same everywhere because the habits and legislations are different. If in certain countries one finds allotments with sheds only used to protect the gardener against bad weather, one finds, in other countries, sheds that enable the gardeners to stay over the day, overnight and sometimes even to live here. All these types of gardens coexist and complete each other. There is not today, as there was not in the past, one model garden.

However, on the whole the solutions adopted have to reach the same result, i.e. a general development of the allotment garden, its stability and all the means necessary for its insertion in the modern town, an insertion highly justified in a civilization, where the social problems, the protection of nature and the fight against pollutions have become major problems.

Taken individually the federations are still not strong enough to reach their aim, which is the sustainable development of the allotment movement in an environment that is becoming more and more complex. Alone they are not sufficiently equipped to face the new challenges in an optimal way.

Therefore, without hesitation, one has to say that we still need the Office.

The roots are invisible but they make a tree grow. Our roots are the love of the 2 million allotment garden families for gardening, our social engagement, our efforts for the protection of nature and environment and for a sustainable development, the fellowship and our efforts for the well-being of all. The ethic is more important than the form.

These roots have allowed the tree representing our movement grow. They are still sufficiently strong to make new branches grow and to make the movement develop for the well-being of all the allotment gardeners and for society as a whole.

The national federations are alone legitimated in order to represent the national allotment gardeners. However, they are as well a transmission organ of the Office's work towards the national gardeners. The Offices work is not an aim for itself, but this work directly serves the national gardeners.

- The exchange of experiences within the International Office remains essential in order to enable the federations to know everything that is happening around them and so to optimize their own actions and to be able to defend the interests of the individual allotment garden members in an optimal way.
- The taking of common positions to influence decision makers will have positive consequences for each individual gardener.
- Texts, actions and directives to be adopted will help the gardeners to improve to develop activities and projects in order to better become integrated in society and towns.
- The Office by the services offered has to help its members to face the new challenges for example by the technical gardening advice, which has to be generalized and then regularly updated.

Allotment gardens are not yet protected everywhere. Together we have to make a survey of all the means and methods used in addition to specific legislations in order to protect them, as for example their integration in the urban green infrastructures, their inclusion in cultural roundtrips, them being taken into consideration as ecological compensation grounds as well as their integration in social projects.

We have to welcome new interested people and consider all forms of gardening. Urban gardening often focuses on another category of people with different objectives than traditional allotment gardeners. Together we have to analyze this phenomenon and take it into consideration. These two phenomena can and have to complete each other harmoniously.

We have to see what the authorities' and the population's concerns are and propose and solutions that are in accordance with people's requests our projects.

The Office together with the federations has to take part in scientific missions, campaigns and activities in order to focus the attention of the authorities and international organizations on our movement, on the federations and the allotment gardeners' activities in order, on one hand to better anchor them in society and, on the other hand in order to better orientate the activities to be developed.

We have to be extraordinary. We have to be and remain a modern, attractive and combating force. We have not only to administer what we have achieved, but we have to innovate and prepare the future. We have to become the most sustainable form of urban gardening.

In this way I wish you a good health and much success for 2017.

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