



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

Several of our federations are already a hundred years old. Others, as well as the Office, are preparing to celebrate this anniversary. It is certainly a performance after all these years not only to still exist, but above all to still be attractive.

This is, however, not self-evident. Constantly our philosophy, methodology, meaning and purpose have to be challenged and objectives have to be reformulated and/or expanded.

Gardening is trendy again. More and more people are looking to get in touch with the soil and are interested in gardening, in eating healthy fruit and vegetables and having interpersonal contacts. They want to live in a humane neighbourhood, in towns favouring people's development.

Yet, many people lack the necessary knowledge about gardening. However, they can find this knowledge in allotment associations as the allotment gardeners have gained a great experience over the years. That's why the waiting lists to get an allotment are long. This is considered as frustrating by some people.

Some others, on the contrary, believe that allotments are over regulated, too conservative and situated too far away.....Therefore, people sometimes wish for a freer way of gardening, on smaller plots, on their doorstep, without many rules or contributions to be paid to an association. So now new forms of gardens arise: community gardens, intercultural gardens, city farms.....

In the past, the construction of buildings or industrial activities were considered as main priority in order to create economically viable cities. According a study of the European Environment Bureau over the last ten years 5% of the EU area has been covered by constructions and changed into an artificial zone. The motorways have been extended by approximately 41% (15,000 km). However, one believes, that now a paradigm shift can be discerned towards an ideology showing a greener urban design. The EU Commission has also elaborated guidelines for urban green infrastructures.

So it is now our mission as allotment gardeners, both on national and international level, to use this trend and take appropriate measures so that people can continue gardening or get the possibility to do so and that allotments will be considered and permanently protected as an active green area in the urban green infrastructures. It is not to be denied that allotments contribute to the improvement of the urban environment, to the preservation of biodiversity, to the improvement of the urban climate as well as social cohesion to name only these few.

The federations and the Office have to make an in-depth analysis of the urban environment and question the challenges and positive aspects in

order to develop the best future strategy for the allotments to be considered all over Europe as an unavoidable element of more environment equity.

During its study session in Copenhagen the International Office analysed the wishes of the national allotment gardeners and questioned its methodology in order to adapt itself to the current situation and to develop an innovative strategy for the future. Many steps were proposed that should now be put into practice: better communication, increase of visibility, lobbying, conclusions of partnerships, networking, increased efficiency and a better participation of all through the preparation of subjects in workgroups and the reshaping of the meetings etc.

A study group is analysing the various forms of urban gardening in order to be able to best position ourselves in this area. Another study group is dealing with the elaboration of a concept for future orientated expert advice in order to provide the necessary missing knowledge to the allotment gardeners and perhaps also to other amateur gardeners in order to enable them to practice a nature friendly gardening. Our federations have in fact accumulated a great deal of knowledge over decades and gained a great excellence in this area.

Allotments must remain an all-round product and continue to serve people. We must combine tradition and innovation, inspire young and old and continue to make our contribution to the wellbeing of people and society, to nature and sustainable development. We were and are a form of urban gardening, perhaps also the most lasting one. We have to reach out to other forms of urban gardening in order to create human friendly cities.

In the coming year 2018 may the words of Einstein on the one hand “One cannot solve a problem with the same way of thinking as it came about” and of Francis Bacon on the other hand: “The young vine gives more grapes, but the old one gives better wine” accompany our deliberations and our actions for the well-being of the allotments and our cities.

In this spirit I wish you a good health and much success for 2018.



Malou WEIRICH
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Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux