

The Polish allotment garden federation's appeal to national allotment garden federation at their 2nd conference

The Polish allotment garden federation is a supra-regional membership group incorporating nearly one million Polish allotment gardeners and 5,000 allotment garden groups. In our association we perpetuate the century-old tradition of the allotment garden movement in Poland. We are also a member of the *Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux* in Luxembourg, which includes 15 allotment garden federations across Europe and Japan.

As with other national federations, the activities of the Polish allotment garden federation (Polnischen Kleingärtnerverbandes –PKV) are based on the law of 8th July 2005 on allotment gardens, which regulates their movement. This relatively recent law was adopted with the support of the entire allotment garden organisation, with more than 230,000 signatures behind the government bill. The general acceptance of the law is due to the fact that it contains solutions that tie in with the traditions of our movement, and answers to the new challenges facing allotment gardeners. For this reason our members largely supported adopting this law in the hope for a better future for Poland's allotment gardens.

Unfortunately the law on allotment gardens has also been attacked since the beginning by groups who see the allotment gardens as nothing more than occupied land. The law contains a number of mechanisms to protect allotment gardens from being erased for commercial reasons. It somehow impedes this goal of reclaiming the land and closing any allotment gardens on it.

Until now the Polish allotment gardeners, unified in their national organisation, have been able to successfully defend their rights. Only two years ago was a law rejected by parliament thanks to a huge initiative by the PKV. The consequences of adopting this law would have been the widespread closure of allotment gardens, the dispersion of the allotment garden movement and would have left allotment gardeners standing before the public authorities. Unfortunately we have to face up to a similar attack today. It is the first time in history that a law has been condemned in its entirety by the constitutional court. Another important point is that specific regulations are being contested separately, namely those concerning the legal security of allotment gardeners, i.e. the right to use the land, restrictions regarding the closure of allotment gardens and respectively the right to belong to a sovereign, inter-regional organisation. This concrete expression of the complaint clearly shows the basis of the threat of this law, and the real goals of this initiative.

The dangers facing allotment gardens in Poland today must be taken very seriously. Without the guaranteed protection of the law, they will quickly become victims of influential economic groups. Unfortunately a number of

politicians in Poland advocate a short-term view, feeling that a top-class economy is the only factor to take into consideration. The lack of understanding of the need for sustainable development in towns, in which the economy must go hand in hand with protecting the environment and the needs of the population, is best shown in town planning. A number of “progressive” groups see heavy and chaotic construction, the destruction of green areas and the widespread decline of allotment gardens in town planning as a sign of civilisation.

Allotment gardeners of Europe!

The participants of the 2nd congress of the Polish federation of allotment gardens ask you to support Poland’s allotment gardeners in their battle to protect their rights. We have gathered 620,000 signatures as part of our protest for the protection of our law, but the majority of Polish politicians are ignoring these. It may be that your voices can have a stronger influence. A voice, that will make them see that Poland’s allotment gardeners, as members of a European allotment gardeners’ association, are not alone. Together we must show them that the attempt to eliminate allotment gardens is a blatant contradiction of the European Treaty’s regulations that demand the protection of the environment and a sustainable development policy that takes into consideration the needs of its people.

Together we can protect Poland’s allotment gardens!

2nd congress of the Polish allotment garden federation

Varsovie, 22nd of September 2011