



# Hyphen 62

News from the Office

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux  
association sans but lucratif | October 2017

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# Belgium: the volunteer

Daan Van de Vijver



Tuinhier is active in the Flemish part of Belgium. Our organization counts 210 local associations and 23000 members. Apart from the members on the allotment gardens we also have members who own their own garden. All members are united in local associations.

The local associations are the roots and fruits of our organization. They organize workshops, garden trips, exhibitions and other group activities. On top of that, they do a whole lot more tasks to keep the whole association working, e. g. they make sure there are new members attracted to our organization and they communicate with local partners and local governments.

All these local associations work with volunteers, who do this as a hobby. From time to time, members of the local boards get older or they have a short term vision and as a result the activities decline in amount, the members start to leave and in the end the local association stops.

To prevent this, Tuinhier started a project. We made up a talent / diversity-tool for local associations. The

goal is that every association uses this tool every three years to check if their board and activities are still diverse enough.

In our test cases we noticed that it is good for a local board to think about its mission. 'Where do we put our accents? What do we have to do, to achieve that? What kind of talents do we need in the board to achieve a good quality and contentment? And how do we connect everyone in all their diversity?'

With the talent-tool we tried to bundle all these questions.

To visualize the whole process we used a flower.

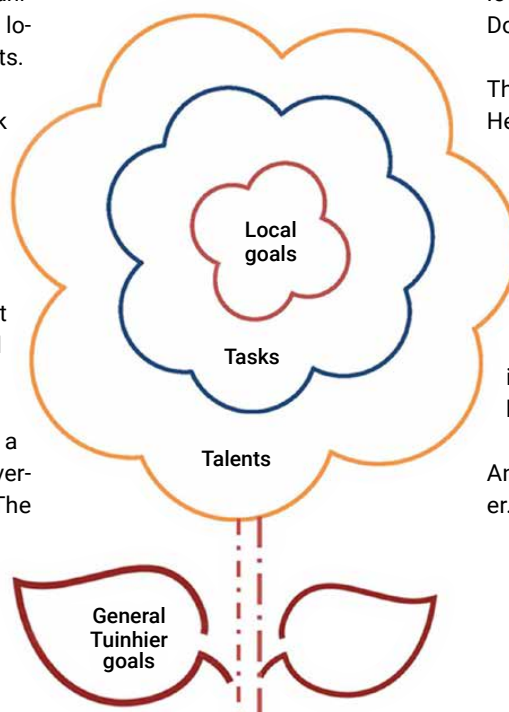
The stem represents the organization on a national level and the goals they set out to achieve, and what target group they hope to reach. These goals should be the base of the local association.

The flower represents the local association. We start with the most inner flower 'the local goals'. What does the local association wish to achieve? Does it have a mission on its own?

The second flower is the task-flower. Here the main question is:

'What must the local board do to achieve the local and national goals? Will you need partners? How will you communicate with your members? What does the annual program look like? And how is it going to be financed?' The local board bends over these questions.

And last there is the talent-flower. Here the board checks what tal-







ents / skills are required to achieve the tasks set out in the previous flower. They might notice that they need to attract new people in their board to get all tasks done.

In this talent-tool we added multiple didactical tools to discuss every flow-

er. Tuinhier also provides guidance for the local boards to coordinate these self-reflections.

Tuinhier thinks it is very important to respect and acknowledge the work volunteers put into the organization. We try to help these volunteers with

tools like this, because without these local boards we stand nowhere.

To end this note, we wish to thank all our volunteers that make our organization thriving and interesting.

# Activity report 2016

## 2nd part

### b) Representation of the Office by national events

The Office was represented by M. WEIRICH at the occasion of the Day of the Garden in Germany.

### c) Diplomas

This year the Office received 9 demands to grant diplomas for ecological gardening, social activities, respectively innovative projects.

These diplomas were awarded during the closing ceremony of the international congress in Vienna. Because these diplomas should have both an internal and external effect, a summary of these projects was published on the internet and they will be presented in detail in the next Hyphens. The projects that got a diploma can be used for lobbying purposes.

#### *Received the diploma for ecological gardening:*

- The allotment garden association „Ons Buiten“ in Leiden (NL)
- The allotment garden association „ATV Zonnegaarde“ in Den Haag (NL)
- The allotment garden association „Moseley und District Allotment Holders Ltd, Birmingham (GB)
- The association from Feldkirchen, near Graz (A)

#### *Received the diploma for innovative projects:*

- The allotment garden association „Blumenfreunde“ in Vienna (A)

#### *Received the diploma for social projects:*

- The allotment garden association „De Doordouwers“ in Utrecht (NL)
- The allotment garden association „De Driehoek“ in Utrecht (NL)
- The market commune Feldkirchen, near Graz (A)

#### *Received the diploma for social activities and ecological gardening:*

- The allotment garden association „Zur grünen Insel“ in Bremen (D)

### d) The support from federations / associations

After the issuing of the information brochure in Vienna, this brochure was given to the federations for lobbying purposes and was on request sent to the allotment gardeners in Sankt-Gallen (CH) in order to be used during the discussions to limit the closing of allotment plots considered in the planning of the extension of the university library.

The factsheets, elaborated during the Cost study, were sent to the federations for lobbying purposes. These factsheets can help the federations with advice to be given to the members, respectively with information for the authorities.

### e) Cost and scientific studies

The Office took part in the two Cost meetings.

A. HOBELINK, W. HEIDEMANN and M. WEIRICH took part in the meeting in Thessaloniki. In the workshops the factsheets were discussed in order to adopt a final version.

The factsheets have been translated into several national languages. They have been put at the disposal of the federations in English respectively in the existing translation. They can also be read or downloaded under: <http://www.urbanallotments.eu/factsheets.html>.

The Cost Action was closed in September in Basel. Were present: A. HOBELINK, W. HEIDEMANN, B. and C. ZYJDEVELD.

Several important conclusions were drawn:

- 1) There is a strong need for follow up. In the near future ties between universities and the Office International may lead to a co-ordination for bottom-up researches of urban and allotment gardens and associations.
- 2) Importance of allotments and community gardens for lively and healthy cities in the future. This COST Action made clear that we have to work on safeguarding and promoting the broad diversity of collective gardens for the coming generations.
- 3) Professional researchers helped to increase the visibility and values of allotment and urban gardens in their broad range of diversity. They contributed to an agenda for the future, and even managed to influence politics during their researches in order to help allotments in their struggle for existence in some cities.
- 4) Improved awareness of policy-makers concerning the role and importance of urban gardening for the city, the society and the environment. A completely new network for scientific and other collaborations has been created.

During the international congress R. FOX-KÄMPER presented her conclusions in an impressive PowerPoint presentation.

In August 2015 the Office was contacted, as mentioned before, to take part as a partner in a scientific study on climate and urban green. The

members of the executive board, however, were of the opinion that the requested conditions were not fulfilled by the Office.

The demand to take part in a network on urban planning was rejected too.

The federations were invited to take part in a conference on urban green infrastructures: "Panacea green infrastructures" (16 / 17 February in Essen) and in its preparatory work so as to make sure that the allotments will be considered.

It is extremely important that the allotment garden movement takes part in such events in order to present its ideas and contributions.

It is great that the German allotment federation has positively considered this call and will on principal present the ideas of the allotment gardeners in general and of the German allotment gardeners in particular during this conference.

The German speaking federations have been informed on the fourth International meeting concerning social work and town planning in Basel dealing among others in this context with allotment gardens. However, no federation announced its participation.

## 2) International congress

The congress this year took place from 17th August until 21st August in Vienna. The subject was: "The expert advice of the future considering sustainability and responsible resource management".

W. HEIDEMANN gave the introductory lecture and presented the German gardening advice service. F. HAUKE presented the gardening advice in Austrian and D. CAZANOVE the French one. During the workshops the following subjects were dealt with fruitfully.

- 1) Workshop 1: Gardening advice considering sustainability and re-

sponsible resource management

- 2) Workshop 2: Gardening advice today and in the future

- 3) Workshop 3: Guideline for establishing a gardening advice system

The aim now is to put the conclusions of the workshops into practice and to give the necessary guidelines for an up-to-date gardening advice to the federations.

The congress was highlighted by a message sent by Mr. J.- C. JUNCKER, president of the European Commission, the presence of Mrs. V. REDING, member of the European Parliament and L. WIETOR, Director of the administration for agricultural technical services, as representative of the Luxembourgish Minister for agriculture. Their stimulating words must help us to continue to work constructively over the next years in the interest of the allotment gardeners, society and nature.

W. WOHATSCHKE could inform the congress that the discussions he had together with M. WEIRICH with the Luxembourgish Minister of agriculture had been positive and that the Office subsidy could, even in this economically difficult period, be increased. Hearty thanks go to the Luxembourgish government for the support over all the past years.

Once more a very hearty thank you has to be addressed to the Austrian federation for the extraordinary congress, the excellent organization, the hospitality, the good discussions, the indescribable program and festivities and the unforgettable days in Vienna.

## 3) International Organisations Council of Europe

The Office took part in the meetings organised for the non-governmental organisations.

It was underlined that the NGOs have to play an increasingly important role in order to help avoid / reduce inequalities and to help preserve the autonomy of the most fragile.

Many allotment associations already have innovative projects for elderly people (shared sheds / plots; help offered; cooperation with elderly people's homes ...) and for refugees / migrants (voluntary work on sites, education ...)

There are many ways to act. The allotment movement has to seize them and help to propose solutions to reduce the effects of these problems.

This year, the Office could present five examples of allotment activities in the area of inclusive towns (a better living together in a multicultural society) for the European Week for Local Democracy and these projects were put online on the homepage of the Council of Europe. This is a good publicity for the allotment gardeners and shows both authorities and society the numerous efforts made by the allotment gardeners in the social area, especially for the harmonious living together of all the citizens.

The Council of Europe, however, asked that these projects should be even more highlighted during the European Week for Local Democracy (10th until 16th October). It was decided to award a certificate to the concerned associations underlining that the project is a best practice example of the activities organised by the allotment gardeners in the social area and to stimulate more associations to do similar projects. The certificate should be awarded during the European Week for Local Democracy to the association under the best publicity conditions.

In 2017 the projects for the European Week for Local Democracy should be fixed already in March, so that the concerned associations can organize

a good publicity event during the European Week for Local Democracy.

### **European Union**

A meeting took place between H. BONNAVAUD, M. WEIRICH and the representatives of commissioner VELLA on December 15th 2015. The Office representatives could present the allotment garden movement and underline its strengths and the multi-functionality of the allotments.

The Commission representatives were impressed by this multi-functionality.

The Commission representatives informed that Commissioner VELLA's staff is preparing a framework document concerning the green infrastructures. Spaces outside the Nature 2000

areas are mainly concerned.

It was acknowledged that the European Union cannot issue legislation in this area, but needs the support of the national States. The European Union can only give stimulation and try to improve the transposition of the framework document.

H. BONNAVAUD and M. WEIRICH asked the allotments to be considered / included in this framework document / policy.

It has to be checked if the document in elaboration in Germany concerning the integration of allotments in the urban green areas can be "internationalised" and given to the European Commission in order to influence the elaboration of the guidelines concern-

ing the urban green infrastructures and to integrate the allotment gardens in this green urban infrastructures.

### **4) Contacts with federations who are not member of the Office**

The German, respectively the English federation have contacts with the allotment gardeners in South Korea. They transmitted the coordinates of the Office to the latter so that they could, if they wish, take up contact with the Office.

### **5) Information to interested persons and medias**

The Office regularly gives information on allotment gardens to students and the press.

*Luxembourg, December 2016  
The executive board*



# The allotment association “Am Kienberg” in Berlin (D) received the diploma for ecological gardening



The “Am Kienberg” allotment garden site was developed between 1983 and 1985 in the wake of East Germany’s largest construction project of new accommodations in the Berlin-Marzahn district, and was managed thanks to help from a number of organisations.



The allotment garden area belongs to the “Am Kienberg” allotment garden association, which has around 400 members. The area covers around 10 hectares and includes 260 allotments. The average size of an allotment is between 350 to 450 m<sup>2</sup>. Before 1990 (the year that Germany reunited), raising small animals was not only authorised but required in order to use the garden, a rule that still exists today.

In recent years, the association’s gardeners firmly decided to proceed with a way of gardening on their allotments that does not use any toxic products. This practice is not only the subject of strong communication from the association’s executive board and very active specialist gardening advisors but is also encouraged through the means of tangible projects.

Over the last three years, the number

of fruit trees planted in the allotment garden association’s communal areas reached around 200 ancient species of indigenous fruit trees. Now some 300 such species decorate the allotment garden site’s paths and squares, of which a good number attract bees.

The allotment garden association and the members of the “Marzahn-Hellersdorf” community college invite local residents to take part in pruning lessons for the fruit trees. In this way the association’s training activities in nature and environment matters are shared with the Berlin population.

In the meantime, three of the allotment garden association’s members have become beekeepers. They support the association’s other gardeners, and also other private amateur gardeners for the natural pollination





of fruit trees. Thanks to this, harvests have improved considerably.

The “Am Kienberg” allotment garden site actively supports the activities of the NABU (the German federation for the protection of nature), in its survey of the diversity of birds in the area.

The use of peat for gardening has been stopped. Educational nature trails, aromatic herb gardens and a number of nesting boxes have been set up along the allotment garden’s central walkways. And humans have not been forgotten: you can rest on one of the numerous benches installed all over the park.



The allotment garden association’s development is, in many ways, exemplary.

# The allotment association Gubbängen in Stockholm (S) received the diploma for ecological gardening



*Britta Gussander from Gubbängen*

The Swedish Allotment Federation has an environmental certification program that our member allotment associations can choose to follow. The environmental certification program gives the allotment associations a tool, an educational guide for environmental work. The program focuses on sustainable / organic gardening, but also includes other environmental aspects such as transportation, materials, energy etc.

There are more than 30 allotment associations that have become certified since the program started in the early 2000s. The environmental certification is constructed so that the allotment association can achieve certifications on 4 different levels; basic / mandatory, bronze, silver and gold. To become qualified, all allotment owners in the association need to fulfill the requirements needed, such as no use of chemical fertilization. To reach the basic / mandatory level can be a process over 2-5 years. Then the association can improve its work and fulfill more requirements and reach the next level and so on. A certification is valid for 3 years, then the association need to re-apply for the same or the next level to maintain their certification.

So far, only two associations have reached the Gold-level; Björkhagen and Gubbängen in Stockholm. The former received a diploma for their environmental work from the Office International a number of years ago. Now the federation applied for a diploma for the Allotment association Gub-

bängen for their environmental work over so many years. The diploma was given to the association in Copenhagen on 27th August 2017.

Gubbängen started their environmental work in 2001, right when the Swedish Federation's environmental certification program started. They reached the basic level in 2006, and after passing through the bronze and silver levels, they reached gold in 2015.

This means that they fulfill a number of requirements, such as: every allotment holder has his own compost. They use neither pesticides nor chemical fertilizers. The association has a gardening advisor (trained in the Swedish Allotment Federation's course for advisors), and a study organizer. Half of the allotment gardeners use crop rotation. The association has a meadow that is maintained by using a scythe and a lot of traditional plants, bird's houses and bee hives. There is no electricity in the area and the machines use environmental fuel.

# The allotment association “Pepper & Pumpkin” in Stockholm (S) received the diploma for social activities



*Lena Israelsson and Tao Karlsson from Pepper & Pumpkin*

This diploma values a network of allotment holders in Stockholm called “Pepper & Pumpkin”, for their great work in bringing allotment holders together and organizing inspiring activities to the benefit of not only allotment holders, but also to the general public, politicians and the allotment garden movement.

Pepper & Pumpkin started in 2007-2008 when the allotment leases in Stockholm were being renegotiated and the city wanted to change many of the terms to the worse. This caused a group of allotment holders to get together to organize a harvest market in 2008 where allotment holders from all over Stockholm sold vegetables and flowers. There were also a number of other activities such as a café, a scarecrow competition and a show with music and singing. A number of allotment holders with roots in other countries, talked about the vegetables they grew and how they used them. This was the starting point of the “the Allotment Chefs”, today a well-known group that participates every year in the Swedish Allotment Federation’s stand at the big Garden Fair in Stockholm.

The aim of the harvest market was to alert politicians about the importance of allotment areas and that the allotment garden movement in Stockholm is strong. The Harvest festival was a suc-

cess and so was their mission, as the terms of the lease contracts were not changed in any dramatic way in the end.

Until 2015 Pepper & Pumpkin had a Harvest festival every year, in different locations as this event kept growing in popularity. During this time the network expanded as more and more allotment holders, but also other urban gardeners joined. The market had the same concept with a mix of harvest market and different activities related to gardening.

Last year they choose to organize an activity in the spring instead, a large garden market / garage sale where the visitors could buy garden furniture, tools, pots, plants, seed, food and even garden gnomes. Even though it rained that day, lots of visitors came and everything was sold out within three hours.

Every year in February Pepper & Pumpkin also organizes what they







call “Fröruset”, the Seed race in English. During this event allotment holders and other gardeners swap seeds and exchange gardening knowledge. There is always a number of lectures related to seeds and gardening. This year a woman talked about a call for collecting seeds for Syria and about gardening in refugee camps.



Pepper & Pumpkin has also had activities such as “Test allotment life”, where they encourage allotment associations to open up to the neighbourhood and to invite people to try allotment gardening.

Through all of these activities they have brought allotment holders from

various allotment associations together and they have marketed allotment gardens and allotment gardening to the general public.

Lena Israelsson, author and garden journalist, and Monika Langlet are two of the founders and front figures of Pepper & Pumpkin.

# History of the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux 1926 – 2016

5th part

**Malou Weirich, secretary general of the International Office**

## From 1947 until today

### 2) Internal development

Since its foundation the International Office has functioned under the leadership of its president. The main mission, however, has been assumed by the secretary general. The latter has been an element of stability and continuity, especially after 1947, when the international presidents changed every two years.

The executive board, unifying all the affiliated members, met several times a year. This executive board complied with all the obligations that are required of an association / federation i. e. the adoption of the activity report, the financial report, the draft budget etc. The executive board was the body, which today is called general assembly. The misleading term of the "executive board" existing between 1927 and 1993 caused some problems and led to the temporary disaffiliation of the Danish federation.

In 1988 a first amendment of the statutes took place. A bureau was created consisting of the international president, his predecessor (past president) and the vice-president. The aim was to guarantee a certain continuity and to cooperate more efficiently with the general secretariat.

In order to be able to realise its manifold missions and to take up contacts with the international organisations, a fundamental amendment of the statutes was adopted in 1993 changing

the "de facto" association into a non for profit organisation. The Office bodies were renamed and their functions described in great detail. The Office was registered with the Registry of firms in Luxembourg.

In 1999 the statutes were once more amended in order to take certain realities into consideration. From 2002 onwards, the congresses were only to be organised every third year and so all the related articles had to be changed (for example the term of the mandate of the international president). The number of the members of the executive board was increased from four to five.

On the grounds that the congresses were only to take place every third year one had to add a study session to the organisation of the seminars. So alternatively had to be organised a congress followed by a seminar and then a study session.

The federations always tried to consolidate and increase their contacts with the European Union. So in 2004 another amendment of the statutes was voted. The aims of the Office were widened in order to better underline the activities of the allotment movement in the environment area and so to be able to be recognised as an environment protection organisation. Additionally, in the framework of these contacts with the European Union, it was decided to add to the name of the International Office the

term "Regroupment of European allotment garden federations".

The amendment of the statutes in 2004 also created the possibility to conclude partnership and associative agreements. Following to this an associative agreement could be signed with the Japanese allotment gardeners in 2007.

A last small amendment of the statutes was voted in 2008.

During the study session in Copenhagen in 2017 the subject concerning the future of the International Office was discussed. In order to shape the future ourselves and not to be surprised by it, many steps were proposed that should now be put into practice: better communication, increase of visibility, lobbying, conclusion 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.

In order to favour a good functioning of the international cooperation, a solidarity fund was created in 1989. The aim thereof was to enable the small federations, situated far away from Luxembourg, the meeting place of the statutory assembly, to attend this meeting.

The rules were applied in a flexible way so that the federations could also take part either in a congress, seminar or study session or that one could re-

act to specific problems. The text was adapted and reformulated and then adopted on March 6th, 2016.

Since 1988 the exchange between federations has been supported by the regular publication of a magazine "the Hyphen" in German, French and English. One has to underline that between 1936 and 1938, the Office already issued a magazine in German, French, English and Italian.

In order to allow contacts with international organisations and especially with the UNESCO, Malou Weirich was appointed substitute secretary general in 1980. After her designation as secretary general in 1987 contacts with the European Union and the Council of Europe were established. This cooperation will be described in a subsequent article.

The number of affiliated federations fluctuated a little bit after 1987. For a short time the Danish federation left the Office and the English federation was only represented in the Office by one single region. The Polish, Czech and Slovakian federations participated for a more or less long time in the work of the Office after their affiliation at the occasion of the congress in The Hague respectively in Dresden.

The Japanese federation became member of the International Office in 2015.

Not only internally by the discussed subjects and the amendments of its statutes, but also externally the Office had more and more to underline that it was a union of several million allotment gardeners. This happened in several different ways.

The Austrian federation offered a flag unifying in a symbolic way the flags of the different member federations on a common flag to the Office at the occasion of the international congress in Vienna in 1955. Unfortunately, after the congress in Lyon in 2005 at

the occasion of the transmission of the presidency to Poland, the Office flag was lost. In a very generous gesture the Austrian federation offered a new flag to the Office, which was presented at the occasion of the international congress in Copenhagen in 2011. One has to underline that this Office flag shows on one side an exact copy of the original flag and that on the back side appears the new Office logo. So, both the past and the future are unified on one flag in a very symbolic way.

At the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Office in Birmingham in 1976 the English federation offered the presidential chain to the Office.

Following the suggestion of the French, and then of the Austrian federation, the Office got a logo showing on one hand the main elements of the allotment movement: a tree (garden) and a house (shed) in the middle of a circle. This circle with the stars on the other hand underlines that we are a European regroupment.

One has, however, also to emphasize that the tree grows out of the circle, so documenting the possibility, for example, of opening up as far as the subjects dealt with are concerned, to grow bigger, to go beyond our limits and to accept new members. This according to the motto: "Faithful to the past and responsible for the future".

All this, however, was not sufficient.

A federation cannot develop without taking into consideration its history. So in 2001 at the occasion of its 75th anniversary the Office received a reprint of the foundation protocol offered by the German federation under president Ingo Kleist.

The German allotment museum published two brochures documenting the Office's history from 1927 until 1946 and from 1947 until 1990. A third brochure (from 1991 until today)

is in the making.

To create external signs and knowing one's history are important facts, but this is still not enough. The work of the movement has to be perceived both on an internal and external level.

In 1990, following the suggestion of the Norwegian president Anker Hansen, a European Day of the Garden was created. The aim of this celebration was to sensitise the European population, the authorities and the media to the idea that gardens are a natural living space and a stimulator for relations between people. It should also awaken the awareness of the multi-functionality of the garden.

At the end of the 1990s the Office went online. An Office homepage was created. It was several times adapted by the Austrian federation. It is regularly updated according to the saying: "Do good things and speak of them", in order to make people know what is happening in the Office and in the affiliated federations. A new step was taken in 2017 with the presence of the Office on Facebook.

In 2012 following the wish of the delegates an Internet forum for the Office was created by the Austrian federation in order to allow a more effective and quick exchange between the federations. Some federations tried without success to fill this Internet forum with life.

In 2016 at the occasion of the general assembly in Vienna it was decided to try once more to make the Internet Forum work. Thus an exchange platform for gardening advisers was added. A network of the national gardening advisers should allow, by regular exchanges, to get all the relevant information in order to give the best possible advice to all allotment gardeners.

The same aim is pursued by the publication of information brochures and



by an information flyer. The Office information brochure was published in a third edition in 2016. It is important to underline that in this third edition the presentation of the national federations takes three specific subjects into consideration i. e. which services are offered to the members? With whom do the federations cooperate in order to unify forces and to represent themselves better towards the exterior and which innovative projects are realised in order to make the movement fit for the future?

Besides the diplomas for ecological gardening and social activities, which have already been mentioned, a diploma for innovative projects was created.

Since 1994 a golden Rose can be granted to people and authorities that support the Office or the national federations in an exceptional way.

Finally at the occasion of the international congress in Utrecht in 2014 national publicity films / PowerPoint presentations were worked out in order to best document the value of the allotments towards the exterior.

Besides the statutory and external measures with PR effect, the Office also has worked out many documents and started activities underlining the values and the efforts made by the allotment gardeners in various areas.

These services offered to their members moreover have a PR effect towards the authorities and the public.

Without pretending to be exhaustive following documents can be mentioned, which were adopted additionally to congress resolutions and messages:

- Vademecum for the realisation of soil analyses on allotment gardens: a contribution to more green and a natural environment in European cities (at the occasion of a hearing in the European Parliament)
- Allotments and urban green policies
- Allotments in Europe
- Allotments and sustainable development
- Memorandum adopted by the Office for the European concept of urban development (EUREK)
- Allotments and urban environment
- Allotments and town planning (guidelines)
- The social function of allotments
- Allotments and sports
- Agenda 21 and allotments
- Memorandum at the occasion of the International Year of Water
- Memorandum for the Day of the United Nations against violence
- Memorandum for the governments, the European Union and the Council of Europe for an ideal and material support
- Suggestions for the meeting of the Head of Governments in Vienna – October 1993
- Considerations on the situation and development of the allotment movement in Europe

- Charter for the International Office du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux expressing the self-perception, its tasks and goals as a European association of allotment gardeners

Additionally, the Office took part, together with representatives from national federations, in a scientific study i. e. The Cost action: "Urban allotments in European cities". The aim of this study was to analyse all the forms of urban gardening. It had to be acknowledged that at the beginning of the study the scientists often had only little knowledge about the allotment movement. The work over four years helped to change the situation and to ban different clichés.

Of course the confrontation of ideas between the representatives of the allotment movement and the scientists allowed the allotment representatives to question themselves and so to consider positive and future orientated steps.

The conclusion of this participation is that it is necessary to cooperate in such events and the allotment movement has also in the future to regularly take part in scientific studies.

Since 2014 the Office, together with the national federations, has been taking part in the campaign against pesticides. Since 2015 the Office has been member of the platform in Luxembourg.

To be continued

# The services offered by the Luxembourgish allotment federation to its members

Martine Mergen,

president of the Luxembourgish allotment federation



Our allotment federation works in a country where the price of the land has reached a never known height. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for us to manage the available land, be it privately owned, in community gardens or on allotment sites in a best possible way. To work the ground with care and in a sustainable way is important in order to still pass on still sufficient gardening land to the following generations.

Since 1993 the allotment federation has been a state recognized environment protection organization and publishes articles on a sustainable land management in its newspaper "Gaart & Heem" (garden and home). We have numerous partner organizations in the nature conservation and organic farming area and we are also involved in the discussions about a sustainable land use.

**Our name is:** Ligue Luxembourgeoise du Coin de Terre et du Foyer (Gaart an Heem-Luxembourgish / federation for allotments and home)

**Number of members:** 20.063

**Structure:** central federation with 111 associations

**Foundation:** 1928



## We offer our members and sections:

- Courses on gardening
- A list of legal experts for consultation and lectures
- 9 issues per year our review „Gaart an Heem“ with a popular exchange market for allotment gardeners
- A yearly bi-lingual pocket booklet dealing with a specific topic of interest for the allotment gardeners in cooperation with our ministries and administrations
- We act as agents to provide insurances for allotment garden sites
- We have an interactive, flexible and very popular website [www.ctf.lu](http://www.ctf.lu)

# The allotment at Stora Sköndal (Great Beautiful Valley)

Text and Photos Ulrica Flodin Furås  
Translation Karl-Erik Finnman

After the experiences from Switzerland and the Netherlands described in the Hyphens 60 and 61 follows now an example from Sweden



They are effectively digging in the loamy soil; *turning the clods in the planting beds at the same time as they every now and then exchange a word or two with each other.*

They have been farming here since May 2016, but it isn't until now, in the autumn, that they know enough Swedish to be able to talk to each other.

**It is amazing,** exclaims Lena Israelsson. Last week when we met, was the first time they started to talk to each other. Earlier they had not been able to communicate with each other since only a few of them shared a common language. They speak Persian, Arabic, Farsi and Dari.

**They are asylum seeking** refugees that came to Sweden last autumn from dif-

ferent countries. Mahmoud Beisayah with his son Maitham and the rest of his family came from Ahvaz near the Iraqi border in Iran. Hamit and Yonis Mousavi both came from Gazny in Afghanistan, but with totally different backgrounds. Hamit was studying at the university. Yonis started farming when he was very young. Lena asks if he has called his parents and told them how he is doing right now.

*No, says Yonis, they do not have a telephone.*

He has not been able to contact them since he escaped Afghanistan, so they don't even know if he is alive. The area where he comes from does not even have street addresses.

Hamit, who has five brothers and a sister, is the oldest (among the

brood). His mother is alive but his father is dead. Now they all live at the asylum sanctuary at Great Sköndal Foundation, together with approximately 100 other refugees seeking asylum in Sweden.

**Allotments existed here before,** and the foundation had been considering putting them in use for the refugees, but it was not until this spring that the possibility arose. Lena took charge of the allotments together with Stefan Dahlén and since May they all have been meeting at the allotment at least once a week to grow vegetables. There are often six or seven people that come together each week.

**Hamit, Mahmoud, Yonis** and the other growers at the allotment have been gardening since their youth. They have great knowledge of farming, which unfortunately does not always work in the colder Swedish climate. There is a lot to learn. Lena and Stefan explain that they themselves have been learning much about farming in Afghanistan and Iran. This exchange gave them new ideas and insights. Some of the tools are also different; For example: The shovels in the Middle East have longer /taller shafts than their Swedish equivalents.

**Shovels are something** they have had to use quite a lot. The soil of the plot, they were supposed to cultivate, was covered with grass and weeds. The





efforts to remove it were heavy work, but today the beds are completed and the harvest is starting.

*Next year the soil will be much better, Lena tells them.*

They are harvesting Kale that is to be sold at the Restaurant Kalf och Hansen. Next weekend they will have a "Harvest Home" at the allotment, and they also will harvest Kale for that



occasion. Some garlic has already been planted to be ready to meet the next season's demands.

**The Growers at Great Sköndal** has become a tightly knitted bunch. Despite their differences in tongue they have become friends. To work with the soil, to sow, to harvest and to care for the cultivation is stressful, but rewarding for the mind.



Since **Koloniträdgården magazine** visited Great Sköndal in September, we have been informed that the asylum sanctuary is to be shut down.

While this article was being printed, Mahmoud and his son Maitham and the rest of the families from the sanctuary had already moved to Hallstavik.

One wonders who harvested the garlic they planted.

# The 4th federal allotment garden congress focuses on the future of the German allotment movement

Peter Paschke,

President of the German allotment federation



*The allotment gardeners met in the center of Berlin near the television tower*

On 18th and 19th May 2017 representatives from the 20 national allotment federations, politicians, representatives from the communal authorities, representatives from high schools, town planners, landscape architects

as well as students discussed the future development of the allotment movement in Germany.

It was a congress where the participants were not only there to listen to speakers, but to actively take part. In three workshops the participants could voice their opinions.

Under the topic: "the future development of the allotment movement in Germany" different subjects were discussed like for example the high demand for allotments in city centres, the rise in empty plots on sites in rural areas as well as the subject concerning the recognition of ecologically improved allotments as compensation grounds.

Many of the future challenges could be much more easily solved if the town planners and politicians would consider in this context the positive development of allotment grounds tailored to suit the real needs. Especially the debate concerning "environment equity" for all town quarters could be solved thanks to the allotment movement. Also the changing of the existing allotment sites into sites with more public green areas or changing allotment sites into allotment parks could constitute possible alternatives for the continuation of the allotment

movement. An absolute necessity for this is that the programs concerning the financial support of urban plan-



*Peter Paschke, president of the German allotment federation opened the congress*



*Representatives from the national federations and the local authorities as well as town planners etc. took part in the 4th federal congress*



*Politicians discuss the issues concerning the allotment movement*



*Oliver Wächter (center) discusses with Michael Groß (SPD), Caren Lay (DIE LINKE), Christina Kühn (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and Gitta Connemann (CDU/CSU).*

ning measures explicitly stipulate a further development of allotment sites tailored to meet the real needs. Also the federal government is focusing on the future development of the allotment movement. In the project "Changing allotments" it will react to new allotment garden formats.

Meanwhile a call for a research program has been issued. The project should end by November 2018. The re-

search project "Changing allotments-innovations for concentrated areas" should conduct a survey throughout Germany of new aspects for the allotment movement and its future development in order to meet the high demand for allotment plots. This research project is already a first result of the 4th German allotment garden congress having specifically dealt with this subject. We are curious to find out which result will be present-

ed to us by end of 2018 and how its practical transposition will take place.

We need innovative thoughts in order to develop the urban green – especially in the allotment movement.

One can broadly estimate that the 4th federal allotment congress, organised by the federal German federation, has fully reached its aims. Impulses have been generated by the participants both in the plenary session and in the three work groups, where the different subjects concerning the future development of the allotment movement were discussed and the results could be directly discussed with politicians belonging to the German parties represented in the German Parliament. With a brochure presenting the conclusions of the 4th federal allotment congress we want to continue the debates especially with the communal authorities and the planning offices in order to win them over for our concerns.



# National Quality Mark Natural Gardening in the Netherlands



The era in which allotment gardens and allotment parks in the Netherlands had the reputation of offering little in terms of biodiversity, and indeed were in fact bastions where chemical pesticides were sprayed freely and artificial fertilisers widely used, is fortunately far behind us. One of the most important reasons for the turnaround may well be the introduction in 1996 of a project entitled the National Quality Mark Natural Gardening. All the publicity this project generated has helped bring about a mentality and behaviour change among allotment gardeners, in favour of nature-friendly gardening. The cherry on the cake is that today, almost 40 allotment parks throughout the country proudly sport the National Quality Mark Natural Gardening. A further five expect to be qualified within the foreseeable future.

The National Quality Mark Natural Gardening is a project initially focused on allotment parks, but in which environmental centres and school gardens can also participate. Over a two-year period, the group in question is offered in-

tensive supervision to bring about nature-friendly layout, management and maintenance processes. The garden is not permitted to run wild, and the intention is not to create areas in which nature is offered free rein. All users must be able to continue to identify with and feel comfortable in the allotment park.

The objective is for a group of enthusiasts within the association to take the lead and, based on advice from counsellors supplied by the AVVN, to launch projects aimed at boosting the natural value of the allotment park. The art lies in encouraging as many members as possible to participate, with ideas and activities. Support and motivation are boosted by practical meetings and workshops on a whole range of potential subjects. Popular ideas include building stacked walls, creating a frog pool, willow weaving and creating nest boxes.

The advice is aimed solely at the communal green areas of the allotment park. No one is obliged to introduce natural gardening practices in their own allotment, and no one needs feel threatened.

It is however heart warming to note that as time goes by, many allotment gardeners are inspired to experiment in their own allotment with the examples they have seen in the communal green areas. We are convinced that more can be achieved on this voluntary basis than if we were to make natural gardening compulsory.

At the start of the programme, advisors from the project organisation make an initial inventory of the potential natural value of all elements in the allotment park. Attention is also focused on environmental protection and internal and external communication and education. On that basis, recommendations are issued that have to be implemented by the participating association, within a period of 2 years. At the end of the programme, a second inventory is carried out to determine whether sufficient numbers of targets have been achieved. If so, the association is awarded a Label in the form of a shield. The logo is a ladybird which depending on the results achieved has 1, 2, 3 or 4 spots. After no more than 4 years, the allotment park must be reassessed, and the outcome can lead to a rise or fall in the number of ladybird spots. It is



far more common for more spots to be awarded following re-evaluation.

The programme has been in place for 20 years, and we are delighted to observe that indigenous – sometimes threatened and protected – fauna is thriving at the participating allotment parks. This is above all thanks to the huge upsurge in the number of indigenous flowers, plants and herbs that serve as a source of food, nesting sites and shelter for animals. We have also seen a huge rise in the number of typically cultivated plants that offer added natural value. These in-

clude garden plants that supply nectar, shrubs with edible berries and pollen-producing trees.

When the project was launched, we set ourselves a number of clear objectives. First to generate – natural – added value at allotment gardens, improving their legal certainty and increasing their continued right to exist. Secondly, natural gardening strengthens the embedding of the allotment park in civil society, and improves the image of allotment gardening. Local residents recognise the park as an ideal habitat for plants and animals

and for themselves – be it for a walk in nature or for meetings aimed at nature education. Thirdly, participation in the project establishes close ties and even a sense of brotherhood within the allotment association. The members join forces in working towards a praiseworthy objective: more nature in an urban environment. That indeed leads naturally to the fourth objective: the National Quality Mark Natural Gardening is quite simply good for nature and the environment, and helps improve overall health.

# It is important to take care of the soil

Karen KENNY,

former president of the NSAGL



Our very lives depend on the soil. Almost everything we need comes from a combination of the living soil, rainfall and sunshine.

Whether we are vegan, vegetarian or omnivores most of our food originates from the soil. The animals eaten are mostly ruminants, who, of course, gain their nutrients from the plants they eat. The clothes we wear, cotton, wool, leather, silk even many man-made fibres are by-products of the soil. The houses we live in often are timber framed, have clay bricks and are plastered with gypsum etc. I could continue. Yet over the recent decades we have thoroughly abused this living entity which we owe our very existence to. So let us now ensure that we and future generations understand and care for the living soil.

The fertility of soil depends on the health, vitality and diversity of the organisms that live, grow, reproduce and die in the soil as well as through the activities of soil microbes, which can

number billions in each gram of fertile topsoil. To improve the fertility of your soil you must provide hospitable conditions for the soil organisms.

Soil health and humus are interconnected. Health is the vitality of the soil's living population and humus is the manifestation of their activities produced as they consume organic matter in the soil. Humus, a dark brown, porous, spongy, gummy substance with a pleasant 'earthy' fragrance keeps your soil healthy, easy to work and holds water and nutrients. It is this humus that gives your soil its good structure and allows your plants to grow.

Half the volume of good soil is the pore space i.e the area between each particle where air and water can penetrate. The pore space ideally contains equal volumes of air and water which cling to the surface of the soil particles. Thus the humus is vital to the structure of the soil. For no matter how many nutrients are contained in

soil, if there is not a good structure then the plants will not thrive.

It is these pore spaces that roots penetrate and access nutrients dissolved in the water taken up through the tiny root hairs.

The key to a successful balance of nutrients is to follow nature's law of growth and decay leading to recycling of nutrients and the creation of a good fertile soil through the actions of the living organisms contained in the soil. It is important to actively encourage the increase of these organisms by feeding the soil.

How? With decaying organic matter taken down by the worms into the soil to share with all the other organisms residing there.

The worms secrete the sticky gums that hold the soil particles together. Adding lots of organic matter and working the soil when it is not too wet are ways to promote and main-



tain a good soil structure. Walking or working wet soil can destroy the soil aggregates and ruin the soil structure.

Worms are the workers of the soil taking down the food for them and sharing it with all the important microscopic creatures to recycle it into available (water soluble) nutrients and humus. In so doing they also create

aeration channels and drainage channels as they go about their business. Worms will tell you how fertile your soil is. The more worms the better the soil fertility.

This is a general guidance to a healthy soil. Your soil will depend on its basic make up which you must determine and then take steps to improve the ph

and the structure.

Remember always that the key to all life is to maintain a healthy balance. It is important caring for the earth, which cares for all its creatures and enables the life of all to thrive, for we are all interdependent on the bounty of the living soil. Let us not destroy its fine balance with the greed of man.

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# Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux association sans but lucratif



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