

Resolution

of the 32nd congress of the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux a.s.b.l.

held in Lausanne from August 24th till August 26th, 2000

The subject concerning the social aspects of the allotment garden movement in Europe was at the centre of the discussions of the 32nd congress of the International Office held in Lausanne from August 24th to August 26th, 2000.

After a previous enquiry in the national organisations and intensive discussions on this subject, the plenary assembly decides to adopt the following resolution:

The allotment gardens have in most European countries assumed an important social and socio-political function.

° The changing world of employment requires more physical and psychological effort for people who need more recreation and contact with nature, which can be found in allotment gardening.

° For families with children the allotment garden offers an ideal addition to the family lodging. Especially families with many children, that can only rarely afford a holiday, find in the allotment garden an affordable recreation. The discovery of nature allows the family to experience the benefits flowing from community and solidarity.

° The ability of the allotment garden movement to stimulate integration offers to single parent families and to immigrants and foreign citizens and handicapped persons a special chance to create and pursue social contacts.

° The number of people that don't take part in the professional life is increasing steadily. People become older. The expectation of life is situated is currently an average of 75 years and is increasing. Due to this fact, the allotment garden is becoming for even more elderly people a meaningful occupation during their retirement.

° The involuntary leisure time due to unemployment and early retirement is compensated by the possibility offered to those concerned to prove their professional knowledge and skills in the associations. The recognition of their own achievements by the community contributes to safeguard the persons' self-esteem.

In a period where the state withdraws from many social functions, the allotment garden associations could assume important social missions. From this situation flows an obligation for the states to improve the basic conditions of the allotment garden movement. This social obligation corresponds to the common European heritage, the importance of which the Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe emphasised in October 1997.

Therefore the delegates of the 32nd Congress of the International Office as representatives of more than 3 million families of allotment gardeners request all decision making persons on all levels of politics and administration to take the following obligatory basic principles of the allotment garden movement into consideration in their decisions.

The Congress expects all the competent authorities at European, national, regional and

local level to support the allotment garden movement as an element of our common European heritage in those efforts.

Therefore they require:

1) Existing allotment garden sites have to be safeguarded all over Europe. Therefore they have – if this is not yet the case – to be quickly protected either by their integration in the town planning schemes or by other legal regulations, regardless of their size. In order to meet future needs, land should be allocated for the creation of new allotment sites.

2) To allow, in future, large groups of the population to rent an allotment garden, a socially acceptable rent has to be guaranteed.

3) The costs e.g. taxes, fees, and contributions etc. that have to be supported by the allotment gardeners cannot be increased, because otherwise the possibilities of financing allotment garden sites will be questioned and entire allotment garden sites risk being closed down throughout Europe.

4) Because of the outstanding socio-political function of the allotment garden movement in Europe, financial support is still essential and has to be guaranteed in future.

5) In places where there no longer exists such a support, the political forces that are assuming responsibilities, are requested to establish the necessary legal basis to guarantee this support.

Only in this way the important socio-political function of the allotment garden movement in Europe can be safeguarded for the future.

Lausanne, August 26th, 2000.

Decision on the ecological aspects of the leisure garden movement.

The allotment and leisure gardeners from the different European countries are convinced of the ecological importance of the leisure gardens. The national federations as well as the International Office have underlined this in numerous statements but have above all proved it by their practical activities.

At the occasion of the 32nd congress of the International Office in Lausanne, this subject, which is important for the future of our society, has been discussed. Following aspects have been particularly underlined during the discussions:

° The allotment and leisure garden sites are generally situated in dense urban areas. Due to this fact they are for numerous persons - allotment gardeners and citizens - a necessary place for relaxation situated at short distance. They necessitate only little mobility and contribute in this way to take care of the environment. As worthy green spaces they offer a space to survive to plants and animals and guarantee the safeguarding of species and the biological diversity. This aim is reached above all by the preference given to the use of local plants and species.

° The soil is the basis for the surviving of plants, animals and men. In order to safeguard and to improve the fertility of the soil, a sustainable gardening which is respectful of

nature is necessary. This stimulates the beneficial elements in the garden and an active soil life. Therefore an ecological gardening has to be specifically favoured and one has to renounce as much as possible to the use of chemical and synthetic fertilizers and plant protection products.

- ° A composting, that favours the natural cycles, an alternative cultivation, vigorous and healthy plants adapted to their place of plantation as well as a careful crop rotation and a plant protection that is respectful of the environment maintain the fertility of the soil and prevent the appearance of pests and illnesses.

- ° The use of good compost, that corresponds to the exact needs of the soil, maintains its fertility. Soil analyses are necessary to determine these nutrition needs of the soil. By using wood ashes and water collected from the roofs one has to take care to avoid a possible excess of concentration of polluting elements. The responsible use of water in the gardens contributes to the safeguard of the natural resources.

- ° Healthy rests of plants are not burned but composted. Collecting places and actions to bring back old chemical products support the evacuation of waste according to the applicable regulations in environment matters.

The above enumerated ecological aspects are of an important relevance for our society and are propagated among the population by the leisure garden movement. Much more far-reaching than the physical and psychical relaxation of men, they constitute the fundament of a sustainable garden use and at the same time the basis of life for the coming generations.

Lausanne, August 26th, 2000.

Decision on the town planning scheme aspects of the allotment and leisure garden movement.

All the European allotment and leisure gardeners are aware of the importance of the allotment garden movement. It consists mainly in the safeguarding of the soil as basis for a healthy nutrition, in the contribution to the maintenance and protection of the urban green as well as in the improvement of the urban climate.

This contribution of the allotment and leisure gardeners to the public welfare is unfortunately much too less considered in our society. Due to this fact among others allotment garden sites continue to be closed down in order to allow the realization of other urban projects or to be displaced at the city outskirts.

As regard to these developments, strategies conferring sustainability to our aims have to be elaborated as for example in particular:

- ° Improvement of the exchange of experiences and co-ordination of plans and projects in the area of allotment gardens.

- ° Co-operation in the area of the planning and execution of projects both with the representatives of politics and administration and same minded organizations and supporter committees.

- ° Increase of the public relation activities in order to achieve a better information and a sensitization of the public for our aims.

° Strengthening of the individual responsibility of every allotment gardener in regard to the self-determination of the allotment garden sites.

These strategies will first of all be beneficial to the protection of the existing allotment and leisure garden sites. They have to be realized on the level of the European Union, the national states and the local authorities that are competent to create by law or regulation the necessary town planning measures.

The development and protection is the mission of the local authorities. Here the co-operation of the allotment gardeners on all the levels of the planning and protection of allotment garden sites have to be requested.

The politicians of the communes have to be sensitized on their particular obligations because of the ecological and social aims of the allotment garden movement and have to be informed thereon.

This is as well true for the public on communal level. Particularly the press and other media have to be mobilized for the demands and aims of the allotment garden movement in order to influence the necessary political decisions.

Lausanne, August 26th, 2000.