

Support for the Polish allotment gardeners

During their general assembly in Zürich the European allotment gardeners decided unanimously to address an open letter to the Polish authorities in order to support their Polish colleagues in their fight to safeguard the allotments and their movement for the future

This letter was sent to:

Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of Poland

Mrs Ewa Kopacz, Speaker of the Sejm

Mr. Bogdan Borusewicz, Speaker of the Senate

Mr. Donald Tusk, Poland's, Prime Minister

Mrs Prof. Irena Lipowicz, Polish Ombudsman

Mr Slawomir Nowak, Minister of Transport, Construction and Maritime Economy

If necessary the European Union and the Council of Europe will be informed of this case





Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux a.s.b.l.

Regroupement des fédérations européennes des jardins familiaux
association sans but lucratif

August 23rd, 2012

Allotment garden legislation

Open letter to the authorities of the Republic of Poland

The International Office of Allotment and Family Gardens based in Luxembourg is an organization with 14 national allotment and leisure garden federations from the European Union along with Norway and Switzerland, with more than 3.000.000 affiliated allotments. Founded in 1926, our organization provides a platform for European cooperation and the exchange of experience, both in respect of gardening and social matters, as well as organizational and legal issues. The objective of our Association is also initiating activities serving the promotion of allotment gardening development in Europe and their preservation for future generations.

On 23rd August 2012 in Zurich at the General Assembly of the International Office, the representatives of all Member countries, after being informed on the judgment of the Polish Constitutional Court from 11th July 2012 concerning the law on family allotment gardens, have considered it necessary to address this matter to the authorities of Poland.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Polski Związek Działkowców (PZD) is a longtime member of our organization. Years of cooperation and contacts, including repeated visits in Poland during seminars and congresses organized by our Polish friends, have allowed us to familiarize ourselves with the achievements and accomplishments of the organization of the PZD. We have perceived the Polish allotment gardens as equal to those from other European countries, and the national organization of Polish gardeners as one of the better organized members of our Office. The Polish allotment representatives always emphasized that these successes have been possible thanks to the legal solutions stated in the legislation concerning allotment gardens. They have indicated that this legislation was received with satisfaction by the whole allotment community and has proven its worth in practice. The implemented legislation has fulfilled its expectations and the needs of the allotment holders by effectively regulating the functioning and development of allotment gardens. Furthermore, they have stressed the social acceptance of the legislation, as evidenced by more than 620 000 signatures collected in the gardens as a form of defending this legislation. These opinions have been fully shared by our organization. We have come to recognize the solutions from the legislation on family allotment gardens as model provisions for safeguarding the existence and development of allotment gardens, which are the fundamental objectives of our organization. Therefore with deep concern we have been following the news from the Polish gardeners about the numerous attempts to limit the rights of the allotment community, or even liquidate allotment gardens in Poland.

Lately these concerns have been particularly intensified. They were due to the anticipation of the judgment of the Constitutional Court concerning the law on family allotment gardens. Time has proven, that these concerns had not been unreasonable. The judgment in fact ends the existing model of allotment gardening in Poland. The Court has questioned the legal and organizational bases of the allotment movement, the property rights of the PZD and thus, indirectly, the rights of the families that use allotments. Finally this has forced the need to introduce new regulations by the Parliament.

The facts presented to the International indicate that various Polish public figures hold the opinion that the judgment is a basis to deprive the PZD of its property rights, and even to dissolve the organization of Polish allotment gardeners. This information has come to us with astonishment and disbelief. However, the dispossession of an independent non-governmental organization and its members, not speaking of the liquidation of such an organization, would truly be an unprecedented event.

Therefore, the International Office in Luxembourg requests the Polish authorities' action, that will establish legal solutions that could ensure a proper protection of the rights of the allotment gardeners in Poland within the framework of the Polish constitution and will respect the autonomy of their non-governmental organization from the public authorities. It is unacceptable that the Polish allotment gardeners should be burdened by the consequences of errors or legislative omissions, and their organization discriminated by reducing the right - guaranteed in the Constitution and international treaties - to self-government and autonomy from the State authorities.

Equally worrying are postulates which would result in dispossessing the Polish organization and its members of property rights, as well as depriving the allotment gardeners of their statutory rights that protect them from the effects of decisions concerning the liquidation of their gardens.

Considering that these matters cannot be left without comment, we appeal to the Polish authorities to take action as it will hinder these type of initiatives, and thus will confirm that Poland is a democratic country ruled by law, where everyone, including the allotment gardeners and their organization, can be sure that their rights will be respected by the public authorities. We are convinced that the allotment gardens in Poland and other countries of Europe are still needed. This is demonstrated by a huge interest of allotments in Germany, where they are cultivated by over one million families, as well as in Great Britain, where 100 000 people are on waiting lists for allotments. Therefore, any changes in the law concerning the allotment gardens should be carried out carefully and taking into account the voice of the gardeners, as it is much easier to destroy gardens than to rebuild them.

Hoping that our letter will inspire the Polish authorities to start a dialogue with the PZD, as representative of the Polish allotment gardeners, whose counterparts are the other national federations affiliated in the International Office in Luxembourg, we remain with our kindest regards.



C. ZIJDEVELD
President

W. WOHATSCHEK
Chairman

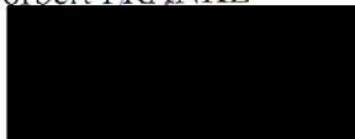
M. WEIRCH
Secretary general

PAYS	ADRESSE DE LA LIGUE	NOMS des représentants
LAND	ANSCHRIFT DER LIGA	Name der Vertreter
COUNTRY	ADRESS OF THE SOCIETY	Name of the representative

Allemagne
 Deutschland
 Germany

Platanenallee 37

Norbert FRANKE



Angleterre
 England
 England

O'Dell House
 Hunters Road
 CORBY, Northants NN17 5JE

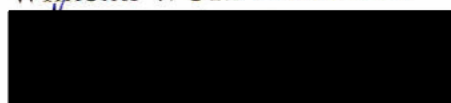
Allan REES



Autriche
 Österreich
 Austria

Simon-Wiesenthal-Gasse 2
 1020 WIEN

Wilhelm WOHATSCHEK



Belgique
 Belgien
 Belgium

49, rue des Crênées
 B - 4210 OTEPPE

Jean-Pierre SARAY

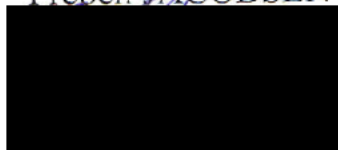
By Proxy N. Guesquière



Danemark
 Dänemark
 Denmark

Frederikssundsvej 304A
 DK - 2700 BRONSHOJ

Preben JACOBSEN



Finlande
 Finnland
 Finland

Pengerkatu 9 B 39
 00530 HELSINKI

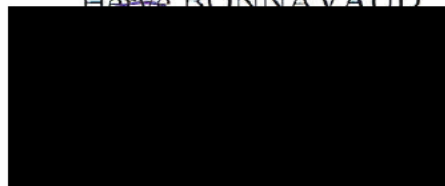
Risto AALTONEN

Absent

France
 Frankreich
 France

12, rue Félix Faure
 75015 PARIS

Hervé RONNAVAUD



Hollande
Holland
Netherlands

Vogelvlinderweg 50
3544 NJ UTRECHT

Chris ZIJDEVELD

Luxembourg
Luxemburg
Luxembourg

rue de Bonnevoie 90
1260 LUXEMBOURG

Jean KIEFFER

Norvège
Norwegen
Norway

Torggata 10
0181 OSLO

John Ove TOLLESHAUG
Absent

Pologne
Polen
Poland

ul. Bobrowiecka 1
00-728 WARSZAWA

Eugeniusz KONDRACKI

Slovaquie
Slowakei
Slovakia

Havlickova 34
817 02 BRATISLAVA

Ing. Eduard JAKUBEK
Absent

Suède
Schweden
Sweden

Åsögatan 149
116 32 STOCKHOLM

Lars OSCARSON
By Proxy P. Jacobsen

Suisse
Schweiz
Switzerland

Sturzeneggstr. 23
9015 St. GALLEN

Walter SCHAFFNER