



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

Charter

Adopted in Utrecht on August 30th, 2014



20 rue de Bragançe, L-1255 LUXEMBOURG

WE EXIST FOR A GOOD REASON

Summary

The representatives of the International Office of Allotment and Leisure Garden societies (international federation of allotment gardens), unifying 3 million allotment garden families in Europe, have unanimously adopted the following charter during their 37th International Congress held in Utrecht from August 28th till August 30th 2014:

The first allotment gardens were created in Europe in the middle of the 19th century and our international movement was born in Luxembourg on October 3rd 1926.

Our movement provides a plot to over 3 million families in the 14 European member countries.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the allotment and leisure gardens assume several essential functions in our societies suffering from the crises:

- Allotment gardens offer an indispensable food supply to the poorest
- They are healthy recreation areas for modest families. Gardening is a healthy physical activity.
- Gardening helps people fight the stress of urban life and old people to fight depression.
- Allotment gardens offer the citizens of all ages, particularly the youngest, a space for the discovery of nature, where they can learn to cultivate healthy organic fruit and vegetables
- Allotment gardens allow the integration of immigrants
- Adapted plots are created for elderly people with reduced mobility and for disabled people
- Allotment and leisure garden sites, open to the population, are the green lungs of our towns
- Allotment gardens contribute to the protection and the development of biodiversity. In allotment gardens the species of fauna and flora are more numerous than elsewhere in urban and peri-urban areas
- Our allotment gardeners respect and protect the environment
- They locally consume the produce of their gardens, thus participating in the reduction of our carbon footprint
- The associative structures in the gardens enable many volunteers to acquire a citizen education and to take part in the life of the city
- Allotment garden sites are part of the policies on urban and territorial development

Our gardens, open to all, have a national and European perspective. Therefore, we ask the national authorities, as well as the European Union, to recognize the efforts of our movement and to support and favour the protection and creation of allotment and leisure gardens in our countries in order to respond to the increasing demand. The waiting lists are longer and longer every year : they are directly related to the number of people that live in an urban environment where nature is scarce.

Text of the Charter

Introduction

This charter expresses the self-perception, tasks and goals of the *Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux a.s.b.l.* (hereafter the *Office International*) as a European association of allotment gardeners. It is based on the experience of its member states, whilst also looking towards the future.

We lobby for the notion of a future-proof allotment garden movement, and this is the scale on which we evaluate our activities. We consider our main mission to be the continued development of the allotment garden movement in Europe and the protection of its social status in the 21st century. At the same time, we want to support the model development of corresponding or similar associations in other countries.

Representing the interests of European allotment gardeners is at the heart of our work.



Photo: Poland

Our association

In Europe, the development of a structured allotment garden movement began in the middle of the 19th century. The demand for an association that brought together the different national federations was met on the 3rd of October 1926 with the creation of the *Office International des Jardins Ouvriers* with headquarters in Luxembourg. The general secretary is still there today. By 1931, 13 national federations were already members of the *Office International*. World War II interrupted its work. In 1947, it was reconstituted. Currently, there are 14 member associations.

The allotment garden movement includes more than three million allotment plots. So, more than 10 million people can get involved in gardening. These numerous sites of allotment gardens are open to the public.

Our values

The allotment garden movement in Europe has been tied to social life for more than 100 years. It has survived the turbulence of the 20th century and has stood the test of time.

These same social aspects and ideals of the allotment garden holders form the basic structure for its existence. The social ties and financial circumstances of the people involved have fought off numerous attempts by landowners to convert allotment garden areas into profitable use, and they have contributed to the social recognition that exists today. Allotment gardens are, for many reasons, indispensable in modern life.

The allotment garden movement offers space for humans and for nature. It creates free space to be able to adapt to new ways of life, different life plans and human beings' individual choices caused by changing demographics. There, everyone can integrate themselves, develop themselves and blossom. The integration factors of gardens in general, and allotment gardens in particular, are a great asset.

Allotment gardens are a component of European culture, particularly the culture of gardens and leisure. With their features of physical activity in the open air, production of healthy garden food, chance for active relaxation and educational potential close to nature, they contribute significantly to a way of life that is physically and psychologically healthy.



Photo: Finland

Leisure gardening opens up unlimited opportunities for creativity, plays an educational role for the young and old and supports physical, psychological and moral wellbeing. Collective spirit and togetherness unite us.

“Allotment gardens provide a significant contribution to improve the quality of life!”

We see ourselves as an important part of European gardening culture and we have specific skills for public green spaces. Through our work, we make a significant contribution to the sustainable and global principals of Agenda 21.

With regards to climate change, the green oases of allotment garden areas also contribute to maintaining a healthy urban environment for mankind.

Our tasks and goals

Our tasks and goals contribute to put into practice the model of the sustainable European city. This model aims to closely connect habitat, work and leisure, to maintain cultural heritage and to create more human conditions of life. With our activities, we want to contribute to sustainable urban development.



Photo: The Netherlands

The social, environmental and town planning aspects of the allotment garden association are very important to us. We commit to making them be respected through community policy.

At the heart of our work is creating legal conditions to secure existing allotment garden areas and the creation of new garden sites in accordance with the needs of all member states. Garden sites must not bear the status of reserve building sites. Instead they should be integrated into town planning as part of public green spaces.

We want to extend, deepen and promote the contribution that we have already made to communication between generations both inside and outside of families, to integrate people from different social and ethnic groups and denominations.



Photo: Switzerland

We take into account the impact of the social evolution taking place and the changing needs of usage that result from it. We respond to changing demographics by offering new types of garden and ways of using them. The landscape of allotment gardens will be designed more colourfully, both literally and figuratively.

Our actions serve to protect the environment and nature and to preserve the landscape. When it comes to flora, the diversity of species that have typically existed in our allotment garden areas so far will be preserved and increased.

This in turn creates favourable conditions for a rich urban fauna.

Allotment gardens, with their unique diversity of plants, contribute more and more to preserving ancient species and therefore genetic sources too.



Photo: United Kingdom

Our goal is a gardening culture in accordance with environmental/biological principles. For that reason, we are going to extend professional advice for our associations/groups and make it accessible to other amateur gardeners too.

For children and teenagers, allotment gardeners are increasingly becoming places to learn about and be aware of nature, together with teaching about the environment. Through close collaboration with the world of education, this feature will grow in importance.



Photo: Germany

For the elderly and disabled, allotment gardens are places of social integration and thoughtful leisure for themselves, and act as voluntary work for the community.

Documented work archived for nearly 90 years helps maintain the traditions of the member countries and other people who are interested.

They document the importance of the allotment garden movement as a cultural institution while at the same time giving suggestions for work belonging to all levels of association right up to the allotment garden associations.



Photo: Austria



Photo: Luxembourg

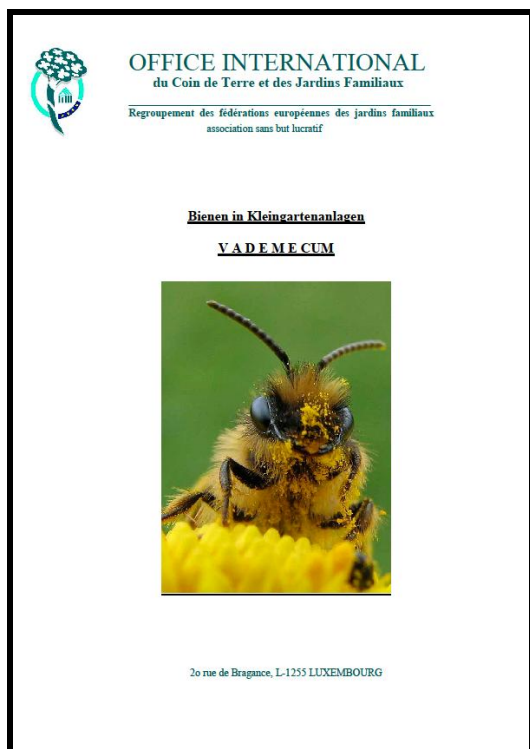
Our work in public relations

Our contacts who go beyond borders enjoy sharing experiences and are a mine of information in the interests of developing the future of the allotment garden movement, not only in Europe but on other continents too. This is fully in line with the trend of the international evolution of urban agriculture.

It is only as well informed allotment gardeners that we can develop and increase the sense of “us” as the element that brings us together with common interests beyond national borders. This goal is equally supported by the publications in our magazine *Trait d’Union* and which are also available online. In this way, they are available to all of the associations and groups. In addition to associations’ news, there is information about topics of agricultural and environmental politics in the European Union.

We increasingly use the internet as a modern representation of the *Office International*, as well as a place for up to date news from the national associations.

Putting in place an internal platform as a discussion forum to create a communal place allows ideas to be shared quickly and directly.



Information Brochure

We publish brochures to make people aware of our innovative projects and to present the European allotment garden movement. They are examples for other associations and groups, and also for our own development in public, particularly in the world of politics and civil service of all levels of organization involved.

Our seminars, study sessions and congresses offer a place to discuss current affairs coming from the national federations' work and problems linked to the evolution of the European allotment garden movement.

Publications geared towards these topics have an internal and external effect. Congress resolutions addressed to governments have proven many times to be an effective way to support the federations that have found themselves in existential problems for legal reasons.

Presenting awards for particularly pertinent projects in the area of "social activities" and "gardening that respects nature" as well as the "Rose d'Or" attracts a lot of interest from the national federations. The European Gardening Day also does an effective PR job in the media.



Photo: Belgium

Our vision

Recognition of the social, town planning and environmental significance of the allotment garden movement has grown across the whole of society. The outcome of this is that corresponding protection legislation has been granted in all countries. This protects the existence of allotment gardens and also ensures that the poorer classes of society have access to them.



Photo: Sweden

On the back of the current social significance and the recognition that the allotment garden movement has gained, it is growing in number within Europe and also outside of it. It is working together with the trend of Urban Gardening. This also means that it adapts more and more to the social development conditions in the countries that form part of the organization.

The numerical growth of the allotment garden movement in other countries makes an increasing difference that is outwardly visible. Its social, town planning and environmental value is growing at the same rate across all of the countries. National recognition also has repercussions on international organizations.

The allotment garden federations collaborate more and more with other organizations in the leisure gardening world, as well as with organizations that protect nature and the environment. In this way, their political potential is growing. The opening of allotment garden areas as an integral part of public green spaces and hence part of town planning increases the political weight of the associations and groups in the community.

Our specific skills in the leisure gardening arena mean that we are in demand as discussion partners.



Photo: France

The national associations are flexible to the social development processes in their country and develop suitable offers in the form of types and management of gardens. This builds ties for future generations and ensures the sustainability of the allotment garden movement.

The federations in general have a positive image. They are seen from the outside and from the inside to be open, innovative, tolerant, social and engaging on the environmental front, working towards health and conviviality.



Photo: Denmark

Awareness of nature and environmental training for all participants, especially children and teenagers, win in the allotment garden associations an ever larger place and increased recognition in the national education world. An “educational gardening” lesson exists in the school curriculum of most member states.

Achieving joint goals in projects in the social and environmental spheres leads to action for the allotment garden movement in all countries and wins the tangible support of public institutions and other sponsors.



Photo: Norway

