



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**

Dear allotment gardeners

“It is amazing what you can do, if you just have the courage to try”.

You may be wondering why I am writing this sentence at the beginning of this article at the start of this new year.

The national federations and the Office, i.e. the whole allotment movement, are facing great challenges, both internally and externally, in order to properly shape the future. The considerations have already started to respond to our new environment. Courage and farsightedness are necessary.



Internally, we must increasingly become a service organisation for our members. Our magazines should be modernised, wherever necessary. Not only information from our associations, but also examples of good practice from home and abroad, as well as subjects as for example ecological gardening, permaculture, climate change, water protection etc. should be dealt with. A reactive homepage, a good facebook site and the use of other social media will further carry our suggestions inward and outward. An optimal networking with other allotment organisations and the conclusion of strategic partnerships will support our efforts and help us to make us more visible.

Additionally, we have to train our associations and members and give them the necessary assistance in their garden and in the associative life: specialist gardening advice, seminars concerning the application for financial support, club management, accounting, conflict solutions etc. These are just a few examples of our commitment towards the individual allotment gardeners and associations.

Also externally, in a new environment, we have to position ourselves differently.

Today, the new forms of urban gardening are enormously praised by people and politicians and the allotments, part of this urban gardening, are often forgotten. Our many years of experience and our continuous contribution in the social and environmental areas are not sufficiently perceived. Other “green organisations” often try vocally and without any consideration to push us aside.

Furthermore, there is on one hand a lack of land to create more plots in urban areas, while on the other hand we find vacancies in rural areas.

In order to counteract this tendency we have to be better perceived. People, other organisations and authorities need to understand what we stand for, today and tomorrow. We have to underline our advantages, our services to society, our experience and know-how. We have to work out a vision for our movement, a vision that will enable us to make

the movement, wherever necessary, more efficient, to promote and protect it. A pioneering spirit is needed.

The members have to understand what we do; they have to be taken on board. This vision, this common goal, must then unite the members and motivate them to work together with their boards for the development and the taking into consideration of our concerns.

We need progress: we have to innovate and to find solutions to the new challenges.

On the one hand, we have to reduce the plot size to shorten the waiting lists, to take into account the problem of lack of time of the working people and their lack of horticultural knowledge. On the other hand, we have to carry out projects on empty plots, involve partners and work out with the authorities, wherever necessary, an allotment development scheme and find solutions acceptable for all

In these reflexions and actions we can/must consider the statement of Bill BRADLEY: "Ambition is the way to success, perseverance is the necessary instrument".

I wish you good health for 2019 as well as courage, ambition, pioneering spirit, optimism and perseverance, in order to consolidate and develop our movement.

Malou WEIRICH

Secretary General of the International Office du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux