

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux/ European Federation of Allotment Gardens

The Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux is a European non-profit making group of national allotment and leisure garden federations with more than 3.000.000 affiliated leisure gardeners and leisure garden families in 14 European countries.

Practice

The Federation includes allotment garden associations from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland.

Through exchange of ideas and experiences, common activities and guidelines, the Office supports the national federations and co-ordinates their activities in the areas of:

- the creation of leisure garden sites;
- the protection of nature and environment;
- the promotion of sustainable development in accordance with the recommendations of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992;
- awareness raising of children and young people to respect nature;
- the support of socially excluded persons by putting garden plots at their disposal;
- the integration of handicapped and elderly people in our society by gardening and associated activities;
- the promotion of family gardens, as well as gardens for unemployed, pensioners.

Through its contacts with the European Council, the European Parliament and the Commission of the European Union, the Federation contributes to enhancing awareness and increasing knowledge on the important contributions that leisure gardens may make to improving the quality of life in urban areas; as well as lobbies for legally securing the gardens and the respective land areas in the city.

The Federation also supports- where possible- national and international projects, organises study visits and events and supports relevant publication on leisure and allotment gardens.

Type of Urban Agriculture practiced

All associated federations have their own activities but principally focus on the promotion of leisure and allotment gardens for purposes of social inclusion, leisure and recreation and the production of (ecological) food for home consumption. Target groups include communities, families, children and young people, the working and unemployed, migrants, disabled and senior citizens.

The leisure and allotment gardens are promoted for:

- Improving the urban environment through the reduction of noise, capturing dust, the establishment of green areas and more open spaces;
- The conservation of biotopes and species;
- Offering a low-cost leisure and recreational opportunity that allows people to re-establish contact with nature and offer children an alternative for often non-existing playgrounds;
- Offering opportunities for environmental education;
- Social inclusion and establishing contact with other inhabitants in the area;
- Their supply of fresh vegetables at low costs;
- Offering an occupation for those without jobs or being retired.

Challenges and future perspectives

During the international congress of allotment and family gardens held in August 2008 in Krakow, Poland, it was acknowledged that there is a need to further develop allotment gardens in Europe. A Resolution on the Future of Allotment gardens in Europe was drafted and approved that highlights the need for:

- Protecting the gardens by law and including them in municipal land use and zoning policies
- Developing government policies in support of allotment gardening

- Promoting allotment gardening through internet, press and television to achieve broader social support
- Strengthening the linkages between the Federation and the EU, as well as with city authorities in the partner countries
- Improving the functioning and management of allotment gardens by developing new gardens and modernising existing ones.

See further http://www.jardins-familiaux.org/pdf/resolution_engl.pdf.

UA and the urban food crisis

The Federation does believe that allotment gardening can help addressing the consequences of the food and economic crisis. In fact, a study made in Belgium in 1998– the data of which are currently updated – documents that one can save approximately 400 € by cultivating 100 square meters of garden. The importance of this contribution of course varies from country to country and family to family. In addition to this, the allotment gardens do not only stimulate people's health through physical exercise but also provide healthy food. The vegetables and fruit are cultivated without use of chemical products, they are very tasty, and are not stored for longer periods of time, nor transported over long distances.

This contribution to food security and healthy diets, in addition to contributions made by the gardens in terms of environmental improvement, greening the city, increasing opportunities for social contacts, are often not sufficiently acknowledged by city authorities. The European Federation supports the national federations in lobbying and fighting for the preservation of existing gardens and the expansion to new gardens.

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References

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