



Fédération Internationale des Jardins Familiaux a.s.b.l.

association sans but lucratif

Regroupement des fédérations européennes des jardins familiaux
Statut participatif auprès du Conseil de l'Europe
Statut d'observateur auprès de l'UNEA

1926-2021
95 ans

Dear allotment gardeners

It is with mixed emotion that I address you today at the end of the year for the 35th and also for the last time. Since 1981 I have had the honour, but also the sometimes difficult task, of serving our beautiful and valuable international organisation, first as Deputy Secretary General, then as Secretary General.

"He who jumps into cold water dives into a sea of opportunity" (Finnish proverb).

This is what the founders of our organisation did by creating a movement whose values are even more relevant today than ever. Their successors have continued to develop the movement and adapt it to ever-changing challenges.

In 1988, we adapted the statutes, which had remained nearly unchanged since 1926, established a non-profit association, created all the conditions for a cooperation with international organisations, and further modernised the statutes, for the last time in 2022.

Since 1988 we have been able to successfully publish several issues of the Hyphen every year. The 77 issues are both a link between all the members and a tool for our external representation.

We were able to establish contacts with the EU, respectively get granted membership in international organisations: Europa Nostra, participative status with the Council of Europe, observer status at the UNEA.

Finally, the Japanese allotment gardeners could become members of our organisation, and contacts now also exist with the allotment gardeners from Ireland.

In the last 40 years, as in every life, there also have been less positive events. It is unfortunate that we could not permanently count the allotment gardeners from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic as members.

The application for membership in UNESCO was not successful and the cooperation with the EU received a big setback after the Maastricht treaties.

Regrettably, after several attempts, we also could not permanently inscribe the European Day of the Garden in the calendar of our organisation.

All the positive things could only be achieved with the generous support of the Luxembourgish government, especially the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment and other ministries. Not to be forgotten for their valuable support are Luxembourgish Members of Parliament and Luxembourgish representatives at International Organisations.

No less important was the support and good cooperation with all the members and the so often technical, respectively financial support from some federations. Dear members, any support, however small, was very much appreciated.

To all, at whatever level, a very heartfelt thank you for your valuable help and support. Now we have to continue on the same path, or adapt it, if necessary.

Today, it is hardly possible to lead our large organisation alone and on a voluntary basis, with few material means, and to tackle the new challenges of the future. We now need a new set-up and perhaps also a certain professionalisation.

More financial means are needed to do more lobbying and to achieve more visibility, which will be even more necessary in the future. Not only statements, but also active participation in international events and workshops at international organisations, as well as technical input in this framework will be necessary. The cooperation with science (e.g. Cost and Researchgate) should be continued and, if necessary, deepened. The decision taken at the occasion of our study session in Stockholm to carry out a project under the Erasmus programme is a step in the right direction.

According to the motto: "We are Urban Gardening" we should not close ourselves to new forms of gardening, but integrate them, as far as possible, and place ourselves at the forefront of an expanded, multifaceted movement. The new realities in the cities and the new desires of the authorities and the citizens should not be overlooked.

Our member federations are facing great challenges. Of course, these vary from country to country and require national solutions. Nevertheless, perhaps we should listen more to these problems and see if they exist elsewhere and how they were solved there. A discussion of these problems may bring up more useful ideas. Discussions and exchanges among members in our meetings will remain essential in the future. However, the new media, I am thinking of organising webinars, online discussions, can also be an additional means to help to deepen and broaden our cooperation.

"Success comes when you do what you love" said Albert EINSTEIN. You all love our national and international movement. Consequently, I am convinced that all of you together will master the new situation after June 30, 2023, take the necessary steps to keep evolving, respectively adjusting and let all members actively participate. Success will surely come.

Don't wait too long. "Opportunities are like sunrises, those who wait too long miss them."

In conclusion I wish you only the very best for 2023, good health, much success in your allotment garden, your association and national federation, as well as the necessary foresight to position our International Federation well for the future and to be able to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2026 with full dynamism.

I will not forget the many years in our movement and your support and cooperation. Thank you very much for every word and every helpful hand.

Ad multos annos Fédération Internationale des Jardins Familiaux and good luck to all the national federations.

Malou WEIRICH
Secretary General