

Welcoming Note

The European Landscape Contractors Association may look back onto a long and successful job. During this time the ELCA has developed into a strong association of 74,000 companies and 330,000 staff members.

Since its foundation the association has been supporting the exchange of young landscaping gardeners all over Europe. With almost 350 participating companies from 22 countries, of which 12 are outside Europe, this has been a flagship project, which is an example for the integration of Europe.

Topics like the reduction of bureaucracy, the prevention of distortion of competition due to European harmonisation, standards and legal standards or the clarification of problems in existing European laws and guidelines have been in the foreground of our lobby work.

In Europe the ELCA contributes in making politics generally better, more practicable and very often more understandable. In doing so the associations of the landscape gardeners in Europe sees itself as service provider. For this purpose the landscape gardeners have designed a well-working network registering every positive feedback.

On the European level the ELCA would like to get more support regarding the research into green environmental topics. The effects of green areas on the well-being and the productivity of people are to be researched. On the one hand the results of the research are to show direct effects on the economy, among them the gardening and landscaping industry. On the other hand findings on indirect economical effects are to be expected as well – e.g. on the relief of the health system, lower environmental loads and environmental catastrophes (floods) and not at least on less loss of plants due to better adapted vegetation.

The ELCA does not only initiate research studies but also concentrates on the pragmatic support of the companies. In this connection the support of European public relations, training and further education, supporting of young gardeners and the expert analysis of European laws, especially with regard to the environment as well as of the European rules and standards must be mentioned.

The ELCA regularly participates in so-called consultation-processes of the EU. Since the ELCA is of the opinion that the purpose of such consultations i.e. triggering a wide spread discussion with all those involved in the industry as well as determining possible measures of improving the efficiency of the domestic market – are reasonable measures of influencing of events. At present for example consultations concerning the topic of "VAT" and "Public placing of orders" are being prepared.

The green profession is no longer afraid of competition. Just the opposite. The industry of gardening, landscaping and building of sport grounds supports more competition and market economy. And we also want that this competition of efficiency is not being distorted. This is just why the ELCA demands the same taxation of landscape gardeners and farmers or producing gardening companies.

The ELCA wants the European Union to increasingly plan for research activities all about green in its "8. EU-Research frame programme 2014 – 2020" and to provide sufficient funds. The ELCA is of the opinion that it is important and decisive to get well founded facts on the positive effects of green on the environment – including change of climate – and on people's health.

Apart from other industries the industry of gardening and landscaping also depends on such research results. The experts for building with green can by now provide important contributions to a resources-conserving, environmental-friendly and competitive economy. These are just the areas the European Union wants to promote in the respective focus of its Europe 2020-concept. The important point will be to improve the chances of application-oriented projects.

There are still research gaps concerning the effects of plants and trees on the environment. The assumed connections must be researched more profoundly and proof must be provided. This is just what working fields of the gardening and landscaping industry depend on to be able to provide solutions. Therefore research into environmental questions must be increased, e.g. to allow us to clearly answer questions concerning the change of climate, the interactions between biosphere and human health, concerning the maintaining of biodiversity as well as a of sustainable city development and green design.

There still is considerable demand for basic and application-oriented research to better understand the benefits of green as well as to evaluate the mechanisms of plants and their efficiency potential in order to provide the responsible persons of politics and economy with sound decision guidance.

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