

International Green Care Activities

IGGT goes Europe

Spring is already making its presence felt in many places, and many things that have been developing in secret are now coming to light. But it's not only in nature that we can observe growth and transformation.

The International Society for Garden Therapy (IGGT), an association of organizations and individuals in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, which are dedicated to the teaching, promotion and dissemination of garden and landscape therapy, has continued to develop.

While it was previously limited to the three countries mentioned above, there has been some discussion about opening it up or establishing a Europe-wide network for some time.

Garden therapists from different countries increasingly expressed the need for cross-border exchange, for networking and the desire to feel part of a "green community".

Following this idea, regular Zoom conferences with interested representatives took place until 2021 from garden therapy institutions from different countries such as Belgium, Great Britain, Italy and Luxembourg. In the further course people and institutions from the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Romania, Sweden, and Finland joined in. These virtual meetings offered the participants the opportunity to introduce themselves, garden therapy projects and fields of work from their countries and to exchange knowledge.

As the discussion progressed, the idea of joining together to form an "IGGT Europe" emerged. This would make it possible to work on topics jointly, to support each other and leverage emerging synergies. The IGGT International Section should act as a "connecting hand" in this process.

The first step was to understand the needs, ideas and wishes as well as the priorities of the different countries interested, Organizations and institutions were identified. A questionnaire was subsequently developed and sent to all participants in November 2021. The questionnaires were then evaluated,. A personal meeting to present the results and discuss the next steps was unfortunately canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. In May 2023, following the International Grünberg Garden Therapy Days, a first meeting could finally take place on site, which allowed for mutual personal acquaintance and the presentation of the questionnaire results. In lively discussions, various possibilities the possibilities for future collaboration were examined. And the next steps were considered. As a result, a so-called "working circle" was established. Last year, contributors from Belgium, England, Spain, Italy, France, Germany and Switzerland actively participated in this volunteer working group. All participants formally agreed on flat structures, teamwork, and a rotating chair and moderation of the virtual working meetings, which are scheduled to take place every two months.for internal communication, IGGT set up a Dropbox, where, for example, the documentation of the working meetings is stored for the participants. For those countries who are not part of the "Working Circle," virtual meetings have been planned to facilitate exchange and provide information on the progress of the Working Circle.

The most important result of the questionnaire was the question about core competencies (CC). The first task of the working group was therefore that each of the actively participating countries develops the CCs according to the respective continuing education curricula and make it available to the other members of the working group for information. The further, still ongoing work involves the evaluation and review of joint, cross-country CCs, which should serve as a basis for further work. This is a very complex and time-consuming task, as curricula vary greatly from country to country and the learning content is diverse. For the future, the section "IGGT International" is keen to work together with the other sections of the IGGT in order to – in the long term – achieve common, to achieve cross-country quality standards in various fields of garden and landscape therapy.

A special feature, not only in terms of the occasion but also in the speed with which the project was implemented worldwide, is World Therapeutic Horticulture Day (WTHD), which was first launched on May 18, 2023, and is now celebrated annually. It shows that the desire to make garden and landscape therapy as a scientifically based and sustainable therapeutic approach more widely known and to appreciate it as such is very widespread. Many members of the Working Circle took part in the campaign and motivated their members to draw attention to this day, for example on social networks such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, etc., using hashtags or publications, newspaper articles, etc. Campaigns are also planned for this year. For more information, please visit www.....

Another global occasion for collaboration was the 50th anniversary of the AHTA (American Horticultural Therapy Association) in October 2023. The Working Circle participated with a video clip in which members presented the "IGGT Europe" project. The initiative for this European alliance was warmly welcomed by the AHTA.

IGGT International Society for Garden Therapy

The work of the International Society for Garden Therapy (IGGT) is carried out by its sections. The work of each section is organized and represented by a person elected by the general assembly for a term of three years, who is also a member of the executive committee by virtue of their office.

Sections

- Registration, accreditation, quality assurance

Here, quality guidelines are developed and updated for the registration of garden therapists according to IGGT, as well as for the recognition of events and further training measures.

- Concepts

The aim of this section is to develop the IGGT concept, to clarify the meaning of the term "garden therapy" and to describe the objectives, possible measures and other important points.

- Use of plants in garden therapy.

This section deals with systematizing and evaluating the use of many plants in therapy and making this available to garden therapists as a working basis via the GarThePedia database. The criteria for the certification of therapy gardens are currently being examined in more detail.

- International

The aim is to establish a transnational network of individuals, organizations, and institutions involved in garden and landscape therapy, to develop core competencies and quality standards that are recognized throughout Europe, to exchange knowledge, to work together on specific topics, and to exploit synergies.

Marina Raffaella Cerea is an integrative art and creativity therapist and integrative garden and landscape therapist. She combines these two methods in her work with children and young people in her own practice. As a lecturer in garden and landscape therapy, she is involved in the further training of garden and landscape therapists and offers supervision for people in this professional group. She is on the advisory board of the German Society for Horticulture and Therapy (GGuT) and a board member of the International Society for Garden Therapy (IGGT), International Section.

Jean-Théodore Bieri is a Swiss horticultural engineer. He first worked with people with mental disabilities and then in green space management. After 15 years on the management board of the City of Geneva, he specialized in therapeutic gardens in France and Zurich and has been promoting garden therapy in Western Switzerland as a freelancer since 2022. He is on the board of the Swiss Society for Garden Therapy and Garden Pedagogy (SGGTA) and the International Society for Garden Therapy (IGGT), International Section.

Translated with DeepL.com (free version)