

Europe Region of the International
Co-operative Alliance

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EU highlights co-operative contributions to growth and jobs

On 23 April Cooperatives Europe opened the European Co-operative Week with the conference ‘Co-operative contributions to the EU 2020 strategy’, organized in collaboration with the EU Commission. The conference was aimed to highlight the social and economic importance of co-operatives.

In opening the conference a speech prepared by Antonio Tajani, Vice President of the EU Commission, responsible for Industry & Entrepreneurship was read by his spokesperson. “At a time when Europe and our economy is striving for economic and employment growth” he stated, “we need now more than ever businesses which care about people’s needs, and therefore in particular we need co-operative businesses.”

Sven Giegold, Member of the EU Parliament stated “We aim to get a wider recognition and integration of the co-operative business model in Europe. The specificities of co-operative enterprises must be taken into account when we are looking at financial legislation. It is not about giving a privilege to them, it is about recognizing their social and economic contribution”.

Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Social and Economic Committee, launched a message to the European Institutions: “both EU and national policies”, said Nilsson, “should create a level playing field allowing social entrepreneurship and co-operatives to compete with other forms of enterprises without giving up their aims and working methods”.

During the conference the different stakeholders discussed how the regulation on the European Co-operative Society (SCE from its latin name ‘Societas Cooperativa Europaea’) could be improved. The European Commission is currently consulting European stakeholders on this issue.

Notes to the editors

Cooperatives Europe – the Europe region of the International Co-operative Alliance – is the European cross-sectoral organization representing co-operative enterprises. On behalf of its 90 member co-operative organisations from 34 European countries across all

business sectors it promotes the co-operative business model in Europe. Its members represent 123 million individual member co-operators owning 160.000 co-operative enterprises and providing jobs to 5.4 million individual citizens – a force for economic growth and social change.

A co-operative enterprise is a group of people acting together to meet the common needs and aspirations of its members, sharing ownership and making decisions democratically. Co-operatives have members – not shareholders – that take decisions democratically. Whether the members are employees, producers or customers, they are everyday people who have an equal say in what the business does and share in the profits.

International Year of Co-operatives - The United Nations has declared 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives, encouraging all member states and relevant stakeholders to take advantage of it to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of co-operatives.

European Co-operative Week (23-27 April 2012) is the main event organized at European level during the International Year. The Co-operative Week aims to get a wide recognition and integration of the co-operative business model into EU strategies. An event organized by the different European co-operative organizations at European level will animate each day of the week. All European co-operative sectors will participate in the week: banking, agriculture, housing, retail & consumers as well as industry & services. More information can be found here: <http://www.coopseurope.coop/2012-coops-year/co-operative-week>

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