

Europe Region of the International
Co-operative Alliance

Co-operatives House Europe
Avenue Milcamps 105
BE – 1030 Brussels

Tel. +32 2 743 10 33
Web. www.coopseurope.coop

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Co-operative conference in Podgorica calls for the adoption of a new co-operative legal framework in Montenegro

On 3rd July 2012 Cooperatives Europe, COSV, the Union of Co-operatives of Montenegro and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development hosted the joint conference ‘The Case for Gateway Co-operatives in Montenegro and the Balkans’.

The event was organized in the framework of the EU funded project developing co-operative enterprises in Montenegro. The conference took stock of the achieved results of this one-year project, in particular in developing a modern co-operative law. In the afternoon co-operative representatives from 8 Balkan countries as well as Turkey discussed the key challenges and opportunities of co-operatives in the Balkan region.

Tarzan Milosevic, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in Montenegro expressed his support for this co-operative project and its activities. “Co-operative structures allow people with different skills and resources to come together in order to make their economic activity sustainable and to overcome common obstacles.”

Nicola Bertolini, Head of Operations Section at the EU Delegation to Montenegro, called for the implementation of the new co-operative legal framework in the country as developed by the project partners and approved by the strategic table. Bertolini stressed that “the provision of an adequate legal framework will allow the creation of new co-operative enterprises in the rural development sector as well as the transformation of the old co-operatives currently operating under the law for non-governmental organisations.”

Dr. Hans-Jürgen Schaffland, legal expert from DGRV, Germany and Klaus Niederlander, Director of Cooperatives Europe, stressed that after 4 years of non-action on passing a modern co-operative law, it is time for action. Co-operatives need to be recognized as enterprises as anywhere else in the European Union and be assured a level playing field with other forms of enterprises, such as limited companies.

Notes to the editors

Cooperatives Europe is the biggest membership organization in Europe promoting the co-operative business model. Cooperatives Europe represents a force for economic growth and social change of 123 million member co-operators owning 160,000 co-operative enterprises and giving jobs to 5.4 million European citizens.

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.

The United Nations proclaimed 2012 International Year of Co-operatives. This is an acknowledgment by the international community that co-operatives drive the economy, respond to social challenge, are resilient to the global economic crisis and are successful businesses that create sustainable jobs in all sectors. Member States, the United Nations and all relevant stakeholders are encouraged to take advantage of the IYC to promote co-operatives and raise awareness of their contribution to social and economic development and promote the formation and growth of co-operatives.

COSV is a voluntary organization, non-profitmaking, involved in international solidarity since 1968. For the last 40 years COSV has been working on international development co-operation in Africa, South America, Middle East and the Balkans. COSV is partner of Cooperatives Europe in the project aiming to enhance co-operative development in Montenegro. More information on www.cosv.org.

Contacts

Mirko Nodari
Communications Officer
m.nodari@coopseurope.coop

Marc Noel
Co-operative Development Manager
m.noel@coopseurope.coop

www.coopseurope.coop