September 18, 2012

Press Communiqué – for immediate release

* EU Commission recognizes cooperative enterprises as a Civil Society actor
* On September 12, 2012 the European Commission released the communication ‘The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in External relations’.

The communication defines Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as a wide range of actors, with different roles and mandates, including membership-based, cause-based and service oriented organisations, and among them cooperative enterprises. This new approach embraces new actors and opens up to consultation tables on CSO policies to cooperative actors, as well as the possibilities of cooperation with the EU Institutions on this field.

The communication recognizes CSOs’ specific contribution to an inclusive and sustainable growth: “Association of cooperatives […] are particularly active in promoting entrepreneurship and job creations by mobilizing grassroots communities, delivering services and stimulating income generating activities for the poor and marginalized”. Further, it is stated that “the EU will support CSO initiatives and partnerships, which combine social and economic ambitions”. The communication continues emphasizing that “particular attention should be given to job creation and entrepreneurship responsive to community needs”.

Klaus Niederländer, director of Cooperatives Europe, commented: “This latest communication of the EU recognizes the crucial role of cooperatives in development through job creation and the provision of social services. It also demonstrates that cooperatives are enterprises and civil society organizations at the same time.”

* **Notes to the editors**
* **Cooperatives Europe** is the European cross-sectoral organization representing cooperative enterprises. On behalf of its 90 member organizations from 34 European countries across all business sectors it promotes the cooperative business model in Euorpe. Its members represent 123 million individual member cooperators owning 160,000 cooperative enterprises and providing 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.

**The United Nations proclaimed 2012 International Year of Cooperatives**. This is an acknowledgment by the international community that cooperatives 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 cooperatives and raise awareness of their contribution to social and economic development and promote the formation and growth of co-operatives.

To download the communication, please [click here](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF).

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