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European Parliament hearings of Commissioners-designate  
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## **Cooperatives Europe suggestions related to the promotion of cooperative enterprises by the new Commission**

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Question to First Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** (Better Regulation, Inter-institutional Relations, Rule of Law & Charter of Fundamental Rights), to Vice-President **Jyrki Katainen** (Jobs, Growth, Investment & Competitiveness) and to Commissioner-designate **Elzbieta Bienkowska** (Internal market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs)

The European Commission recently released the Entrepreneurship 2020 action plan, which invites policy makers to respect the plurality of business forms. However, this risks remaining only on paper as is not reflected in any action described in the document.

A business environment, which enables different ways of doing business to grow and develop, is an essential feature Europe's future economy. This is even recognised in the founding treaty of the European Union (art. 54). Yet too often European entrepreneurship policies adopt a 'one-size fits all' approach, focusing only on the shareholding company as the leading business model. Cooperatives and other forms of self-organised businesses are then confronted with policies and programmes, which do not take their specific business structures and requirements into account.

**Question:**

**How do you intend supporting the development of a business environment in the EU that enables different types of enterprises to grow and flourish? What specific measures will you envisage to grant a level-playing field between the different forms of businesses, including cooperative, mutual, family or social enterprises?**

**Question to Vice-President [Jyrki Katainen](#) (Jobs, Growth, Investment & Competitiveness), to Commissioner-designate [Tibor Navracsics](#) (Education, Culture, Youth & Citizenship) and to Commissioner-designate [Marianne Thyssen](#) (Employment, Social Affairs, Skills & Labour Mobility)**

In November 2012, the European Commission published the communication 'Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for better Socio-Economic Outcomes'. It recognises entrepreneurial education and training as one of three key areas identified for immediate intervention by the European Commission's Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan.

However, entrepreneurial education in EU member states is lacking in secondary and tertiary education, in particular with regard to informing students sufficiently about the different business models and practices suitable for new ventures. With younger people increasingly interested in socially responsible businesses, young entrepreneurs in Europe would benefit from greater knowledge about cooperatives and other innovative business models.

**Question:**

**What is your view on how a greater emphasis on promoting entrepreneurial education in the EU will contribute towards achieving the productivity, innovation and quality-focused growth in Europe? What can the EU do to promote a new entrepreneurship culture for younger people taking into account their different aspirations and economic and social concerns?**

## Question to Vice-President **Alenka Bratusek** (Energy Union) and Commissioner-designate **Miguel Arias Cañete** (Climate Action & Energy)

The liberalisation of the EU energy market has led to new realities in Europe with new market players on the supply as well as on the demand side. The increased use of new renewable energy sources has also led to increased decentralisation of energy production, which was mainly driven by the EU citizens through thousands of local and regional initiatives of renewable energy buying groups, community power initiatives and cooperatives, often in partnership with local and regional authorities and energy utilities.

However, the EU is still heavily dependant on importing fossil fuels (worth more than 1bn Euros a day), often from politically risky regions. This has significant negative effects on energy security & energy prices, not even mentioning undermining the need for shifting towards renewable energy sources.

### Question:

**What role do you see for decentralized renewable energy suppliers and distributors in the future, in particular those owned by local and regional councils and citizens? How can the EU support this citizen drive towards greater energy autonomy relying on local energy sources?**

## Questions to Commissioner-designate Neven Mimica (International Cooperation & Development)

In May 2014, the European Commission published the communication ‘Strengthening the Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries’. Cooperatives and other participatory business models are considered key to providing decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods.

However, reality has shown that especially larger and non-participatory businesses are profiting from support measures towards the private sector in development, which minimizes the benefits for the local communities.

### Question:

**What measures do you intend to put in place in development policies to support participatory business models such as cooperatives, that aim to provide jobs and inclusive solutions to local communities?**

The previous Commissioner put great value on the dialogue between institutions, governments and Civil Society Organisations, in which cooperative enterprises are taking part. The Policy Forum on Development was set up to formalise this dialogue.

### Question:

**How do you intend to reinforce the dialogue with Civil Society organisations and increase their support via appropriate programs?**