

PRESS RELEASE

Cooperative Vision for a Sustainable and Competitive Europe: Priorities for the 2024-2029 EU Term

Brussels, 5 November 2024 - Key leaders from the European Parliament and the cooperative ecosystem gathered at the European Parliament to discuss the role of cooperatives in building a sustainable, competitive, and inclusive Europe. The event, titled “Cooperative Vision for a Sustainable and Competitive Europe: Priorities for the 2024-2029 EU term” was hosted by MEP **Irene Tinagli (S&D)** and was co-organised by **CECOP and Cooperatives Europe** with support from **REScoop, EACB, Euro Coop, and COGECA**.

Throughout the event, cooperative representatives from the agri-food and forestry, retail, banking, industry, services, and renewable energy sectors presented their priorities for the new legislative term, emphasising how cooperatives are essential to addressing Europe's socio-economic challenges.

Giuseppe Guerini, President of CECOP, opened the discussions, stating:

“The EU can be inclusive, having a development model linked to the centrality of people. The EU must not only think about competitiveness but also attractiveness for people. Guaranteeing a Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs is the first step to

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guarantee a strong political commitment for the implementation of the European Social Economy Action Plan. Industrial cooperatives are a key component of European competitiveness that is often underestimated while our contribution to strengthen the European model of sustainable development is crucial”

Among the cooperative movement’s key priorities, the necessity of accelerating the implementation of the Social Economy Action Plan and renewing the Social Economy Intergroup in the European Parliament emerged as urgent. This intergroup plays a vital role in elevating the voices of the cooperative movement and provides a platform to advocate for inclusive, sustainable and competitive economic policies.

“The social economy in Europe is a growing and essential sector, contributing to both economic resilience and social cohesion. It still needs strong support to overcome financial barriers, legal obstacles, and lack of institutional recognition, and this is where parliamentary intervention plays a critical role,” declared **MEP Irene Tinagli**.

Another key priority is the importance of building an EU legal framework adapted to cooperative specificities and allowing them to operate properly across Europe without compromising the positive externalities they have created over the years. An aspect that was explored in the two panel sessions that followed.

The **first panel** focused on the vision of the **Agri-food, Forestry, Retail, and Banking sectors**, with the participation of **Elli Tsiforou, Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca, Todor Ivanov, Secretary General of Euro Coop and Marco Mancino, Director Prudential Affairs at EACB**. The panellists continued the discussion on the sector-specific approaches for addressing challenges, such as sustainable supply chains, fair financing mechanisms, and social inclusion. Speakers all agreed on the need for greater policy coherence and better access to funds and laid out their specific sectors’ needs.

The sectoral representatives were joined by **MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP)** and **MEP Stefano Bonaccini (S&D)**, both elected in constituencies where cooperatives are major drivers for their economic, social and environmental development. Mr Dorfmann said:

"The widening gap between the wealthy and the poor, and the growing disparity between urban centres and disadvantaged areas, presents a pressing challenge. A modern approach to the social economy is crucial to address these inequalities, and cooperatives offer a powerful tool to tackle the economic, environmental, and social issues we face."

MEP Bonaccini emphasised the importance of cooperatives in his region, Emilia-Romagna and said:

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“Together with our coops, we must act to improve the climate and defend jobs. The digital transition is essential for this. The current EU legislature is key to reinforce cooperatives' role and this needs to be reflected on the EU pluriannual financial framework.”

Panel two covered the **Industry, Services, and Renewable energy sectors**, focusing the discussions on cooperatives' role in innovation and green energy transitions, emphasising cooperative solutions that support both environmental and economic resilience.

The debate was opened with a message from **MEP Maravillas Abadía Jover (EPP)**, who confirmed the need for stronger recognition and support for cooperatives around flexible funding and legal recognition.

“EU should support tailored financial instruments that promote self-sufficiency and long-term sustainability through InvestEU or the European Social Fund+, which could help the expansion of cooperatives without creating a dependency on public funds. In addition, we can promote specific loans and guarantees that encourage the creation of cooperatives, especially among young people and in emerging sectors,” said MEP Maravillas Abadía Jover.

Diana Dovgan, Secretary-General of CECOP, and **Josh Roberts, Senior Policy Officer of REScoop** reiterated the need for cooperatives to be recognised as important market actors in the green and digital transition and to be supported with clear legal frameworks and policies that enable their growth and impact.

Diana Dovgan noted:

“Quality jobs must be a priority for the EU Commission. We need a sustainable and resilient re-industrialisation strategy, and a vision of innovation for the benefit all. Investments are needed, especially for traditional industries to cope with the twin transition, and cooperatives should not be overlooked. Social investments are key to guarantee social cohesion. State aid rules must be extended and the social role of cooperatives should be recognised.”

Katia De Luca, Vice-President of Cooperatives Europe, closed the event, re-emphasising the need for increased recognition of cooperatives in Europe. She stressed the necessity of continuing working together at all levels to *“identify dedicated political spaces, get some reciprocal commitments.”* She continued:

“The role of the Parliament is strategic in our view of Europe and the cooperative movement is looking for the EP's support and recognition, we are looking for MEPs who know about the cooperative model and are supportive and we hope to create a network of allies in the Parliament for this next political term.”

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She reflected on the collective vision set forth by the cooperative sectors and the importance of EU policy alignment with cooperative-led strategies for a competitive, sustainable future.

CECOP and Cooperatives Europe extend their appreciation for the support of all partners as well as speakers, and attendees for their participation in shaping this strategic dialogue. With this event, we hope to move toward a closer group of MEPs within the Parliament who actively champion cooperative solutions. These coop supporters can deepen cooperatives' integration into EU policy discussions, emphasising their unique potential to address socio-economic challenges in alignment with EU sustainability and resilience objectives. Together we can give impetus to a stronger cooperative movement and a resilient European Union through cooperative action.

Images of the event are available [here](#).

More on each sector's priorities for the upcoming term:

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