



A Cooperative Future for Europe

Cooperatives Europe is the voice of cooperative enterprises in Europe.

We represent 140 million individual member cooperators co-owning 176,000 innovative and competitive cooperative enterprises across a range of sectors¹ and providing jobs for 4.7 million European citizens.

Closer to people

We call on the European institutions and political leaders across Europe more widely to embrace a new model of wealth creation: a Cooperative Economy that is rooted in the values and participation of European citizens. In contrast to a development trajectory which cedes leadership to investors and financial markets, our call is for a participatory platform for entrepreneurship and innovation that brings the European project closer to the people, from the people to the people and with the people.

Cooperative enterprises reinforce European values

Although solidarity still exists, it's being eroded, notably by inequalities, the Eurozone crisis and political instabilities. To renew values of solidarity requires a Europe that is closer to the people, with an economic model that widens participation and not fragmentation. Cooperatives, through their democratic and participatory governance's structure, offer a proven way to disperse ownership and enterprise in a more inclusive economy. It is those countries in Europe that have higher levels of cooperative values in their society that have seen higher levels of recent economic performance.

Cooperative enterprises are a European success story

Cooperatives are a significant business success story in Europe, contributing to the diversity of economic and social entrepreneurship and the resilience of the economy. And yet, they are rarely recognized as an enterprise model unique in responding to social issues, while trading at scale in competitive markets. Cooperatives, and the wider social economy, are a vital economic component of the European social pillar. To harness its potential, it is not enough to relegate cooperatives into policy silos that do not fully fit its business features (small business, social business, sustainable business), while the leading policy agenda marginalizes its contribution by focusing on support for investor-led enterprise and lone rather than team-based entrepreneurs.

Cooperative enterprises as drivers towards sustainable development

As people-centered enterprises, European cooperatives are in a primary position to support the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 agenda at the European level. They work towards the interest of all their members and communities. They boost the local economy and production, engage young people, support the integration of migrants, promote gender equality and wider social responsibility and adopt sustainable, long-term business practices. The better development of the social dimension of the European Union, as expressed in the European Pillar of Social Rights, can be advanced with policies that promote the role of cooperatives, in particular social cohesion and the inclusion of citizens most at risk of poverty and exclusion, delivering on sustainability is the core of the cooperative business model.

A Cooperative Call for Action

As innovative enterprises, cooperatives have a rich portfolio of innovation and practice that offers opportunities for policy action across all sectors of the economy: from culture, housing and farming to banking and the new collaborative economy. At a strategic level, there are seven interlocking actions



that are critical decisions, where consensus and action is required in order to unlock the potential for a wider cooperative economy across Europe.

1. A recognition at European and member state level of the principle of diversity of enterprises and of business ownership, including the contribution made by member-owned firms, family-owned firms and cooperative and mutual banks and insurers, the introduction of a **Business Diversity Test** in impact assessment for all new EU business policy and regulation, from banking to consumer protection, to ensure a level playing field for all forms of enterprise.
2. **Asset-based Investment**, with a recognition of the value of social, cooperative and public housing and local energy communities as an investment priority for the European Fund for Strategic Investment, or a new financing instrument to widen access to smaller projects or pooled initiatives through the European Investment Bank.
3. Coordinated action to advance an **Energy Transition** in Europe, from polluting, centralized, utility-owned energy production from imported fossil and nuclear fuels to a more decentralized energy production based on clean, local renewable energy sources, plus effective energy efficiency, with the option opened in every member state for renewable energy cooperatives to support this.
4. A commitment by member states to ensure adequate financing for **Sustainable Food and Farming** under the multiannual financing framework in line with an action plan promised by the EU Commission for May 2018 for an ambitious and innovative Common Agricultural Policy for the future, together with balanced trade deals to support the competitiveness and security of European food.
5. The development of an **Inclusive Industrial Policy** relevant to all regions of the EU that: builds economic cooperation through supply chains; promotes low-carbon activity through a move towards a circular economy and sustainable consumption in sectors such as retail; promotes key skills for strategic sectors such as agriculture in which agri-cooperatives play a distinctive role in the EU, and across sectors, such as skills of cooperation in the context of new technology; accelerates the use of shared ownership, through transfers to workers at the point of business succession – a key tool for sustaining businesses in European territories; and recognizes the potential for the evolution of ‘platform cooperatives’ offering shared production in the sharing economy.
6. A rapid and coordinated response to the changing patterns of work and technology, including the emerging shift from employee to self-employed labour, by encouraging member states to adopt an adequate legislative **Framework for Self-Employed and Freelancer Cooperatives**.
7. A commitment to leadership on **Global Development Cooperation** in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with specific reference to the contribution of cooperative enterprise in supporting sustainable livelihoods around the world.

ⁱ Housing Europe (European Federation of Public, Cooperative & Social Housing), Cecop (The European Confederation of Cooperatives and worker-owned enterprises active in industry and services), Cogeca (European agri-cooperatives), EACB (European Association of Cooperative Banks), Euro Coop (European Community of Consumer Cooperatives), EUSP (European Union of Social Pharmacies), REScoop (European federation of renewable energy cooperatives).