



European Elections toolkit



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Introduction

As we approach the European Elections in 2024, the significance of our collective participation and advocacy has never been more crucial. The elections offer an important opportunity for us, the cooperative movement, to voice our aspirations, concerns, and visions for a more inclusive, sustainable, and democratic Europe. Cooperatives and cooperators across the continent stand to influence the direction of the European Union (EU) in the coming years.

The cooperative model, with its democratic governance, collective ownership, and economic resilience, offers a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing Europe today. From tackling climate change and social exclusion to promoting workers' empowerment, cooperatives have a vital role to play in shaping European policies and practices.

This toolkit is designed to empower our members, from grassroots cooperatives to national and sectoral organizations, to actively engage in the European Elections. It serves as a guide to understanding the role of the European Parliament (EP), the importance of each vote and contains concrete steps on how to take an active part with candidates and the wider public.

Our goal is to ensure that the cooperative voice is heard loud and clear in the corridors of power. Let this toolkit be your roadmap to engaging with the 2024 European Elections !

Why Your Vote Matters

The European Parliament (EP) is the only directly elected body within the European Union (EU), giving it a unique mandate to reflect the diverse voices and interests of citizens across member states. For the cooperative movement, engagement in the European Elections is a strategic imperative.

The impact of the European Parliament on cooperatives

The legislations emanating from the EP have far-reaching implications for cooperatives in every sector—from agriculture and energy to banking and housing. Legislation on issues such as social inclusion, digital transformation, and economic resilience directly influences the operational landscape and regulatory framework within which cooperatives operate.

The power of your vote

Your vote in the European Elections is a lever of influence: by voting, you can help shape the policies that will affect the cooperative sector for years to come. It is an opportunity to endorse candidates and parties that recognize the value of cooperatives and are committed to create an environment for them to thrive. It is about setting priorities but also showing solidarity. Voting means showing your commitment towards the cooperative model and joining forces with millions of cooperators across Europe to ensure that our collective vision for a fair, sustainable, and cooperative Europe is reflected in future policies.

Let your vote be a voice for the cooperative movement and a vote to defend the principles of democracy and participation at the heart of the European project. Your vote matters.

Understanding the European Parliament

Understanding the European Parliament: role and powers

The European Parliament (EP) is one of the key legislative bodies of the European Union (EU), playing a crucial role in shaping EU policies and legislation. It works alongside the European Commission and the Council of the European Union to create and approve laws that impact every aspect of life in the EU, including the economy, environment, social policy, and more. The European Parliament (EP) helps make EU laws, decides on its budget, and checks other EU bodies. [Read more](#)

Major political groups in the European Parliament

The European Parliament is home to several political groups, each representing a spectrum of political ideologies. There are currently 7 political groups: European People's Party (EPP), Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe (RE), Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA), Identity and Democracy (ID), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), The Left in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (GUE/NGL).



Understanding the positions of these political groups can help identify potential allies among MEPs and allow cooperatives to more effectively advocate for policies that support their model or address their specific needs.

The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

The European Parliament (EP) will have a total of [720 MEPs](#) in the upcoming term, elected directly by citizens through national lists. Candidates therefore run for national political parties but once elected, they will join their affiliated EU-wide political groups and (most) will sit in one of the 7 political groups in the European Parliament abovementioned. MEPs, central to the EU's legislative endeavors, operate through specialised committees such as those focusing on economic affairs, environmental policy, and international trade. These committees play a critical role in evaluating, amending, and determining the Parliament's position on legislative matters, aligning MEPs' work with their expertise and advocacy areas.

Targeting MEPs

Given the fluid dynamics of EP elections, where not all current MEPs are guaranteed re-election, it's vital for advocacy groups like ours to engage with local parties and institutions early. This helps identify candidate MEPs who are likely to support the cooperative movement's agenda. Understanding the committee system is essential for pinpointing current MEPs with interests in areas pertinent to cooperatives and the social economy, thereby optimising advocacy efforts.

What does the cooperative movement ask?

The cooperative movement shares a collective vision for Europe which is articulated in the overarching manifesto "Cooperative Blueprint for Europe". This manifesto highlights transversal topics crucial to all if not most cooperatives, setting the stage for a unified approach to shaping EU policies that reflect cooperative values and priorities.

- Decent work and citizen's empowerment: Unleash the potential of cooperative enterprises for decent work and citizen's empowerment. We must rethink traditional businesses and promote models that allow democracy at work, fairer working conditions and better representation of citizens.
- Competitiveness and resilience: Highlighting the importance of supporting the competitiveness and resilience of cooperatives by ensuring they are recognized equally in legislation, with specific attention to reporting obligations, taxation, access to finance, and public procurement.
- Social rights and economic inclusion: Underlining the European Pillar of Social Rights as a political priority, with a commitment to implementing the Social Economy Action Plan

until 2030, showcasing the cooperative movement's dedication to social inclusion and economic justice.

- Youth and entrepreneurship: Emphasizing the need to further invest in youth entrepreneurship within the cooperative sector. This involves a strong focus on developing skills and adapting educational curricula to meet the needs of the social economy and support the twin transitions of digitalization and sustainability.
- Sustainable development and democracy: Advocating for cooperatives as drivers for democracy and sustainable development, especially in the context of the European Neighborhood Policy and EU External Action, ensuring that cooperatives contribute to building the social and economic fabric of countries, including candidate countries and regions like Ukraine.
- Cooperative network in the European Parliament: Proposing the establishment of a Cooperative Network within the European Parliament to raise awareness about cooperatives and promote the cooperative business model among legislators, enhancing the movement's influence and advocacy capacity.

You can find more explanation on our key priorities [here](#).

We also acknowledge the diversity of the movement with individual sectors having their own specific needs and policy aspirations. These are detailed in a separate sectorial manifesto “Europe’s Sectorial Cooperative Agenda,” curated by Cooperatives Europe. The document serves as a bridge, aligning sector-specific goals with broader objectives of the movement, ensuring every cooperative’s voice is represented at the EU level.

Of course all sectors individually have a comprehensive manifesto that can be found on their website(s).

How to Engage with the Elections

There are several concrete actions that you can take during the campaign, according to your time and availability:

1. Share the campaign manifesto on your social media and website as well as with your members and partners. Volunteer to translate it in your own language if it is not available!
2. Develop your own messages! Get inspired by our manifesto and create your own message and materials (policy briefs, papers, infographics, etc.) addressed to candidates and political parties. It should be clear and concise, outlining what the cooperative movement stands for, its benefits, and the specific actions or support you

seek. To make your case stronger and more memorable, support your message with evidence and success stories.

3. Develop clear and informative advocacy materials such as policy briefs, papers, and infographics for MEPs to reference and share. Organizing training sessions or workshops for cooperatives on engaging with MEPs can also enhance the effectiveness of your advocacy efforts.
4. Engage with your local candidates through multiple channels:
 - a. Conduct research on current MEPs or candidates. Focus on understanding their areas of interest, how they have voted on issues in the past, and their memberships in various parliamentary committees. Look for MEPs that are likely to have a vested interest in your cause and send personalised emails or letters to your candidates and national political parties. Share the manifesto and your organisation's demands, ask them about their engagement towards the cooperative movement and highlight how it can result in mutual benefits.
 - b. Attend political debates in your region or city or request meetings to ask all your questions to your local candidates.
 - c. Organise cooperative-focused events during the campaign and invite candidates to provide them with firsthand experience of your work.
 - d. Collaborate with Allies. Building a coalition with organisations that share similar goals can amplify your message. Working together presents a united front that is harder for elected officials to ignore. Connect with Cooperatives Europe for additional support, resources, and networking opportunities to strengthen your advocacy efforts. If you wish to expand your network and leverage our contacts, please contact us at info@coopseurope.coop.
 - e. Follow-up and maintain relationships, even after the elections. Maintaining a relationship with future or current MEPs requires consistent communication and continuous dialogue. Keep them updated on the cooperative movement's achievements, provide feedback on policy developments and don't stop after the elections.

You...Yes You... Go vote!

Your vote is the foundation of our collective strength. It's essential, which is why we urge you to ensure you're prepared to vote before inspiring others to do the same. Your vote truly makes a difference. And we recognize that as a cooperator, you're already well-versed in the democratic process. ❤️

Preparing yourself

First, verify your eligibility to vote in the European Elections, as registration requirements vary across EU member states. This includes checking deadlines for registration, which can differ from one country to another. It's essential to do this well in advance to avoid missing out on your opportunity to vote due to administrative reasons.

Gain a thorough understanding of how voting works in your country. This includes knowing where your local polling station is located, the hours it will be open on election day, and what kind of identification or documentation you need to bring with you. Voting procedures can have nuances, such as provisions for early voting or absentee ballots, which can be particularly important for those unable to vote in person on the day.



Click me to find the voting system for each country is explained here.

When deciding whom to vote for, consider MEP candidates who have demonstrated support for cooperatives and the principles of the social economy. These are candidates who recognize the value of cooperatives in fostering sustainable development, social inclusion, and economic resilience across Europe. Their track record might include advocating for policies that benefit cooperatives, participating in cooperative-related events, or collaborating with cooperative organisations. **If you are unsure about this, contact your national cooperative federation or contact the MEP or their team yourself.**



[Click here to download and edit our email templates.](#)

Joint letters

There are other ways cooperators can actively participate in shaping EU policies. One effective way to do this is through drafting joint letters, where multiple cooperatives come together to address MEP candidates or sitting MEPs. These letters serve as a unified call to action, urging policymakers to consider and support cooperative-friendly initiatives. By presenting a collective front, cooperatives can emphasize the significance and widespread support for their concerns, making a stronger impact than individual appeals might.

Create Your Campaign or Join ours

Engage with our campaign by using our hashtags and drawing inspiration from our manifesto to discuss the elections. We're targeting two key audiences: individual voters and the broader community of organizations and cooperatives that can drive impactful change. Our goal is twofold: to motivate individuals to vote for candidates supportive of cooperative values, and to inspire cooperatives to engage in election discourse, urging their members to vote and to collectively approach local political representatives with our shared concerns and priorities.

Tailoring the Cooperative Election Message

Understand local contexts

Every community has its unique challenges and opportunities. Tailoring your message means understanding these nuances and framing how cooperatives can address local issues, be it through promoting sustainable agriculture in rural areas or supporting affordable housing in urban settings. Think about the themes that are important to your region right now and jump on that to increase engagement.

Highlight local success stories

Share specific examples of how cooperatives have positively impacted your community. Success stories resonate more when they reflect familiar settings and issues, making the cooperative model relatable and appealing.

Engage local leaders and members

Involve local cooperative leaders and members in crafting and disseminating the campaign message. Their firsthand experiences and testimonials can add authenticity and depth to your campaign.

Social Media Tips

Be engaging (and authentic)

Sharing compelling stories and examples of cooperative impact showcases the cooperative difference and encourages community engagement and discussion online.

Be informative

Providing facts and figures can substantiate the broader impact of cooperatives, persuading undecided voters and informing public discourse.

Be visual

Visual content like images, videos, and infographics are more likely to be shared, increasing the visibility of your message.

Be consistent

Social media rewards those who plan and those who are consistent. Especially for platforms like Threads and Twitter, it is recommended to plan your content types. You will reach more people.

Hashtag Strategy:

- Unified message: Consistent hashtags unify conversations across platforms, making it easier for supporters to follow and engage with campaign updates.
- Increased visibility: Hashtags increase the visibility of your posts beyond your immediate followers, reaching a wider audience interested in the European Elections or cooperative movements.
- Engagement and tracking: They allow you to track the reach and engagement of your campaign, understanding which messages resonate most with your audience.
- Cross-promotion: Encouraging the use of specific hashtags helps in cross-promoting events, stories, and key messages across various cooperative groups and supporters' networks.
- Encouraging hashtag use: To encourage widespread use of campaign hashtags, include them in all official communications, social media posts, and promotional materials. Highlight the importance of these hashtags in amplifying the collective voice of the cooperative movement and influencing the broader European political landscape.

What hashtag can you use? At the European level, we will focus on the following hashtags:

- **#CoopsForEurope**: The primary hashtag for the campaign, tying all conversations together.
- **#EE24 #UseYourVote** Official EU hashtags of the elections
- **#Coopsupporters**: Hashtags for MEPs that support the coop movement
- Other relevant hashtags: **#WeAreCoops #CoopsBuildABetterWorld #EU2024**

Include some of these in your posts. But be sure to jump on what's popular at the time!

Lastly, do not forget to tag us and your national apex in your campaign messages for Twitter: @coopseurope for LinkedIn and Facebook: @Cooperatives Europe.

Resources

We will help you with your campaign. Check out our documents:

- [Use our email templates to reach out to an MEP](#)

- [Use our email signature banners.](#)
- [Use our banner](#)
- [Use our infographic](#)

Other resources:

- Find the official page of the European Parliament for multipliers to promote the elections. This site has resources and toolkits in the framework of the elections.
<https://together.eu/>

Do you need support? Do you have a specific question? Reach out to us by clicking this button:

[Send us a message](#)