

President's Inauguration Address



As the newly elected President of Euro Coop, I am grateful for the confidence placed in me by this election. It is a great honor for me. I look forward to working with my colleagues from the Presidency, Board and Secretariat to promote the interests of consumer cooperatives in Europe. Our shared objectives remain intensifying inter-cooperation and reinforcing the representation at European level of the specificities of our business model and the cooperative values. Cooperatives build a better world and it is our ambition to inspire even more people with our idea.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my predecessor, Massimo Bongiovanni, who served as President of Euro Coop since 2016. His excellent work is a good guideline for my activity.

Even though our membership represents organisations from countries beyond the EU, 2019 will have a considerable focus on EU affairs.

The European Union will vote for a new Parliament on 26 May 2019. The Euro Coop Board adopted consumer cooperatives' key policy messages imbedded in the Association's EU Elections Strategy which shall be used to engage MEP candidates prior and following their election. The four key areas are: 1) establishing a common EU food policy; 2) implementing a full Circular Economy; 3) attaining Coop-friendly policies, and 4) fostering a fair business environment.

Of course, everyone's eyes are on Brexit. It is still unclear how and when, or if at all, United Kingdom will leave the EU. Whatever the outcome, we appeal to those responsible to do everything they can to ensure that consumers in Britain do not experience the feared supply shortages. Adhering to members' needs is within the core mission of consumer cooperatives, for which they need a stable and predictable policy and business environment. Moreover, it is of paramount importance that Brexit does not negatively impact the close friendship with our colleagues in the British consumer cooperatives. The Euro Coop leadership vouches to maintain our cherished relationship.

These ties are also based on the fact that British consumer cooperatives were pioneers of the movement. This year marks the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Rochdale Pioneers. Whilst the pioneers did not invent the cooperative form, they succeeded in establishing it as a mainstream business model and for this their deeds are worthy of special recognition. They accomplished in times of great need, based on special values and prudent

financial planning, to provide their members with food of high and safe quality at fair prices. With their corporate philosophy of cooperative social responsibility, they have inspired people in Europe and around the world to follow suit and shape the movement we know today.

It is now our task to further develop this philosophy in modern time so as to address consumer-members' needs and to inspire people to recognize the cooperative model as the most preferred solution for their economic, social and cultural interests.

I am very much looking forward to this work.

With cooperative greetings,

Mathias Fiedler
President
