



Activity Report 2015

euro **COOP**
European Community of Consumer Cooperatives

About Euro Coop

President's Foreword

Introduction

Our work with you this year

Membership and
Governance

Who is Who

2 

4 

7 

9 

17 

18 



ABOUT EURO COOP

Euro Coop's Secretariat is based in Brussels.

Euro Coop was established in **1957**, making it the **first European co-operative association** (and one of the first Non-Governmental Organisations) recognised by the **European Commission**. However, our members have been in business for over 100 years.

Its representative role is to **promote** and **uphold** the **structure** and **ethics** of the **consumer co-operative enterprise** at the **European** level.

This activity is achieved in particular by its **direct participation** in the fora of the **EU institutions**, its collaboration with **Cooperatives Europe** and the other **co-operative associations** active at EU level, and its successful networking and **alliance-building** with like-minded (retail) associations and **NGOs**.



Consumer Co-operatives: Responsible Businesses

While our members engage in a wide array of economic activities – from manufacturing to tourism, the one main common business among them is retail. Today, our members operate 36,000 stores across Europe. These points of sale range from the local shop - often the last remaining store for the community in certain remote regions of Europe, to the modern hypermarket or department store in metropolitan areas.

On the retail market, consumer co-operatives are a major force. Our members combine a total annual turnover of more than €76 billion. If all COOP stores were one retail chain, they would rank #1 in Europe. Five of our members are market leaders in their respective countries.¹

Stemming from their values, consumer co-operatives have a strong focus on social responsibility. While emphasis is placed on satisfying members' interests, needs, and expectations, consumer co-operatives favour a sustainable approach towards production and distribution operations, thus taking into account the sustainable development of local communities, environmental concerns, and the health and safety of consumers at large.

Euro Coop members believe in stable employment and their workforce has been rising throughout the years. Currently, they employ 500,000 people across Europe. Special attention is attributed to each employee's personal development, training and involvement within the organisation.

¹ Italy, Finland, Denmark, Slovakia, Estonia



President's Foreword

Dear fellow co-operators,

It is an honour and my pleasure to welcome you to the brand new identity of the annual Euro Coop Activity Report with the first ever President's Foreword!

2015 saw a difficult transition with some tough decisions taken to reduce the administrative costs of the Association. These decisions will allow Euro Coop to focus its activities on its policy work and facilitating members to share best practices.

Another important shift forward for Euro Coop was its closer alignment and deepening ties with other international co-operative associations – particularly Cooperatives Europe. This relationship has flourished and we shall soon reap the fruits by relocating the Secretariat in a new joint-office. I would like to extend my thanks to the General Assembly for supporting the decision of the Board to recruit young people to the Secretariat. It is noteworthy that this transition within Euro Coop was led by a young team of professionals with an average age of 30.

While Euro Coop's primary focus falls within the field of policy pertaining to our members' activities, the majority of our members have echoed the need to engage in business collaboration. The first step is to identify these common issues and I am pleased that a CEO meeting was held in conjunction with the 2015 General Assembly, hosted by ANCC/Coop at "The Supermarket of the Future" in EXPO Milan. Albeit a long way away, the CEO meeting provided a significant leap forward in mapping the potential for business initiatives amongst members. There is a whole horizon to explore and I am confident that we will get there together.

Every success starts out with a challenge and I believe Euro Coop needs to devote more time and commitment to bringing members in the centre of the EU policy process. The competitive advantage of our Association lies precisely in its ability to bridge the gap between EU and our national members, as well as to facilitate their collaboration on issues related to the consumer co-operative identity and model.

Euro Coop is not bound to the borders of the European Union, so another challenge for the future is that of recruitment of new members. Last but not least, the Secretariat intends to diversify the Association's income by securing EU funds, where this would allow members to collaborate on common issues. However, this will not detract from the main focus of Euro Coop's policy work.

On behalf of the Presidency, I take this opportunity to reiterate our optimism and continued commitment to create an Association that is valued by its members and which fosters an environment where members can share ideas on the future issues facing consumer co-operatives.

With co-operative greetings,

Duncan Bowdler
President





Our Main Objectives

Euro Coop represents its members' interests towards the EU institutions;

Euro Coop informs its members about EU policies and initiatives relevant to their activities;

Euro Coop defends a responsible and people-first approach to entrepreneurship at EU level;

Euro Coop provides a forum for the exchange of information and co-ordination of members' interests;

Through its members, Euro Coop implements policies and initiatives to further the International Co-operative Alliance Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade;

Through its members, Euro Coop implements policies and initiatives to engage and develop tomorrow's leaders, thereby showing a clear responsibility towards young people across Europe.



Introduction

Key achievements this year

2015 saw the **rebuilding** the Secretariat's shape and form in order to obtain the necessary capacity and expertise required for carrying out the Association's primary mission: **strategic representation of the European consumer co-operative movement within the EU policy process**. This transformation saw a key budgetary achievement in optimizing 40% of the Association's costs, with a further 15% in the middle of 2016 with the relocation of the Headquarters – a process initiated in 2015.

The period between May and October offered Euro Coop and its members unparalleled opportunities for collaboration with international decision-makers such as the European Commission and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) within the **EXPO 2015**, of which **Coop Italy** had secured a historic partnership as the Premium Food Partner. Euro Coop worked with the European Commission to explore the theme of food security and to debate the future of retail within Coop Italy's **"The Supermarket of the Future"** onsite.

In Brussels, the voice of consumer co-operatives was extended within the **European Parliament** as **joint efforts with Cooperatives Europe** saw successful events being held there on the themes of international development and energy. Moreover, Euro Coop invested much efforts in maintaining its **"golden-middle position"** by deepening its ties with the other European retail associations, but also regularly collaborating and exchanging knowledge with like-minded international non-governmental associations, leaders in **fair trade, climate action, environmental-protection, and consumer rights**. Euro Coop members registered key steps towards business collaboration by laying the foundations for discussions on issues such as e-commerce, market strategy, and branding. The Secretariat shall facilitate the further development of these processes with the aim of creating more value for consumer co-operative members around Europe.

Way forward

Staying true to our paramount mission, the Secretariat shall explore further ways of creating more benefits from Euro Coop membership. The key achievements within 2015 shall serve as a basis for Euro Coop's stronger position in Brussels. The Secretariat's new strength aims at making consumer co-operatives an even better partner of the EU institutions on issues of central importance to our members, such as food safety, consumer rights, sustainability, and youth.

Strategic representation of the co-operative business model will also entail successful alliances with all actors and stakeholders who work towards a change in the way the system functions, by upholding fairness, solidarity and transparency in Europe's economy.

The wider co-operative movement in Europe needs to achieve greater consolidation and correlation in its EU advocacy efforts, so Euro Coop shall explore greater interaction with the other co-operative sectors and our joint leader – Cooperatives Europe. The potential in widening our Association's membership will be continually explored, as this will create a richer pool of knowledge and expertise within Euro Coop. Finally, as an integral part of the global co-operative family, Euro Coop, through its members' activities, will further look towards making the Co-operative Decade a reality by contributing to the goals set out in the ICA Blueprint.



Our Work With You This Year

Fostering co-operative relationships

Co-operation among co-operatives is one of the seven co-operative principles and, as such, it stays at the core of Euro Coop's mission and operations.

Throughout 2015, Euro Coop has performed **several visits to its members' associations** in occasion of working groups (WGs), statutory or bilateral meetings. Among the many highlights, there are the **official visits** carried out in **Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy** and **Germany**, which were specifically aimed at getting a more thorough knowledge of the work carried out by members' associations in those countries and refining members' wishes and expectations towards Euro Coop. Also, Euro Coop welcomed twice during the year a delegation of the **Finnish S-Group's Educational Centre "Jollas Institute"**, illustrating in those occasions the functioning of the Secretariat and how interactions among members work.

Besides that, **three Co-operative Distinctiveness Working Groups** were held in 2015: the first hosted by the Co-operative Group UK, the second by Coop Italy on occasion of EXPO Milan 2015 and a third one by the Secretariat in Brussels. The meetings proved to be excellent tools to exchange information and best practices among the members as well as to define Euro Coop's positions vis-à-vis the EU dossiers of competence of the WG.

Euro Coop continued to foster **good relationships and an open dialogue with all co-operative organisations operating in Brussels**, and first and foremost with **Cooperatives Europe**, being it the top representative body for co-operative associations at EU level. In this respect, it continued the work in the **development and energy policy working groups** led by Cooperatives Europe and ensured participation and input in the **European Union Coordination Committee (EUCC)**. The collaboration with Cooperatives Europe also led to the organization of a **high-level conference on the contribution of co-operatives to international development**, which was held on the premises of the European Parliament, as well as to establishing a **landmark agreement for sharing resources in communications services**.



As far as co-operation with the **International Co-operative Alliance** is concerned, Euro Coop has looked to provide expertise on consumer co-operatives in Europe through its presence in Consumer Co-operatives Worldwide (CCW), the global sectoral organization of ICA. Furthermore, a joint Euro Coop-CCW report is in the pipeline, which shall present in detail the specific national activities which contribute to the goals set out in the ICA Blueprint. Furthermore, Euro Coop will look at implementing within its membership the extended Global Co-operative Marketing Campaign, which was presented by the ICA in November 2015.

Representing a different business model in retail

The Supermarket of the Future – Future Food District – is an innovative space that tackles fundamental issues linked to food, shopping and sustainability. The concept originated from an idea of a student of the Italian co-operative school ‘Scuola Coop’ and was eventually developed for Coop Italy by the innovation and design firm “Carlo Ratti Associates”. Displayed over a 2,500 square-meter total area within the EXPO 2015, the project attracted 1.76 million visitors during the 6 month exposition.

Consumer co-operatives are retailers which are led and owned by their consumer members. This specificity puts Euro Coop in a very peculiar position when it comes to representation at EU level since it implies playing a delicate yet exciting role of advocating for an entrepreneurial model which constitutes a viable economic and at the same time sustainable and people-centered-way of doing business.

In 2015, the main showcase for consumer co-operatives and the business model they embody was certainly the **world exposition “EXPO 2015”**, which was held in Milan (Italy) between May and October 2015. Euro Coop’s Italian member – Coop Italy – was the Premium Food Partner, thereby allowing Euro Coop to organize several meetings and events within their premises installed at the fair. Among the many highlights, Euro Coop was present at the **opening ceremony** of EXPO 2015 together with the top representatives from ANCC/Coop Italy and organized there its **General Assembly** and a high-level **CEO meeting**, aimed at creating a leading-edge exchange on business-related matters.

Finally, Euro Coop organized at EXPO a **high-level EU conference on food waste**, which featured the presence of several Euro Coop members, representatives from the academia, from the Italian and European Parliament as well as from the European Commission. All EXPO-related events were coupled with visits to the avant-garde and

The Supply Chain Initiative (SCI) is a joint initiative launched by 8 EU level associations. They represent the food and drink industry (FoodDrinkEurope), the branded goods manufacturers (AIM), the retail sector (the European Retail Round Table (ERRT), EuroCommerce, Euro Coop and Independent Retail Europe), SMEs (UEAPME), and agricultural traders (CELCAA).

worldwide known “**The Supermarket of the Future**”, whose concept originated from an idea of a student of the Italian co-operative school “**Scuola Coop**” and was eventually developed for Coop Italy by the innovation and design firm “Carlo Ratti Associates”.

On the Brussels scene, Euro Coop continued its engagement in the **Supply Chain Initiative (SCI)** by maintaining its top-level position within the Initiative’s Governance Group, which provides the overall management of the SCI. This has provided a framework of protection against unfair trading practices to all consumer co-operatives who have signed up to the Initiative, which is open to all Euro Coop members to sign up voluntarily and free of charge. Furthermore, Euro Coop’s presence in the SCI has provided a direct platform for communication with the European Commission in presenting the positive contribution of consumer co-operatives in eliminating UTPs in Europe’s supply chain for foods and drinks.

Besides this, Euro Coop continues to be a well-recognized actor by the **Brussels-based NGO scene**, thereby confirming its strategic positioning between stakeholders representing public and private interests at EU level. In 2015, it participated in high-level meetings organized by IFOAM (the EU representation of organic agriculture movements) with the **Cabinet of the Commissioner for Agriculture Mr. Hogan** and with the **Cabinet of the Commissioner for Research Mr. Moedas** and co-organised together with several environmental NGOs the event: “**Feeding Europe while reducing pesticide dependency**”, organized in the premises of the European Parliament.

As far as fair trade relations along the food supply chain are concerned, Euro Coop also kept continuous contacts with the **Fair Trade Advocacy Office** and participated in the business forum: “**Supply Cha!nge in the European Food Chains**”, held in Milan and organized by several social and environmental Brussels-based NGOs. In that occasion, Euro Coop could once again feature before the NGO scene the specificities of a people-centred business model.

Last but not least, Euro Coop kept its active participation within the informal network of Directors of International NGOs (DINGO), which aims at exchange of expertise and information on common management and advocacy issues.

Putting sustainability at the core of EU policy

Sustainability is at the core of consumer co-operatives' action and thus of Euro Coop's activities. The conference **"Tackling Food Waste: A Consumer Co-operative Standpoint"** held at EXPO 2015 in Milan mentioned in the previous chapter was one of the main achievements of the year as far as showcasing consumer co-operatives' actions in fostering sustainability is concerned. **Food waste** remained one of the key topics explored by Euro Coop during the year in the realm of food sustainability, also thanks to the Euro Coop's participation in the EU-funded project **"EU-FUSIONS"**, whose objective is to achieve a more resource efficient Europe by significantly reducing food waste.

Euro Coop then participated in **several EU-funded projects** as an expert to bring forward the consumer co-operative point of view in the topics of sustainability of long versus short food supply chains and of future scenarios in food security.

Many were the **conferences** in which Euro Coop participated as a speaker in 2015: just to name a few, it took the stage in the cinema sessions organized by the **United Nations in Brussels**, at the annual **European "Juice Summit"** in Antwerp, at the **"Joint Dialogue on Plastic Bags"** organized by the German Environmental Aid as well as in the debate **"Europe Wide Views on Sustainable Consumption"** organised in the framework of the EU-funded project **"PACITA"**.

Euro Coop also organized **three Sustainability Policy Working Groups**, one in Brussels, one in Copenhagen hosted by Coop Denmark and a final one at EXPO Milan 2015 hosted by Coop Italy. **Packaging and food waste, circular economy, organic farming** and **sustainable consumption and production** in general were at the core of the discussions for the three sessions. The meeting in Copenhagen was coupled with **visits to several Coop Denmark's Supermarkets** as well as the avant-garde **"MAD Cooperativet"** (see section below) whereas the one at EXPO Milan 2015 with a visit to the **"The Supermarket of the Future"** (see above for details). The Sustainability Policy Working Group also issued a reply to the European Commission's consultations on **Circular Economy** as well as on **Ecolabel for Fishery and Aquaculture products**. A further highlight of the year is the signing-up to the third phase of the **European Retailers' Environmental Programme (REAP)**, an initiative co-chaired by the **European Commission** and **European retailers** aimed at bringing forward the sustainability agenda in the retail sector. The new phase is set to last for further three years.

In 2015, Euro Coop has also started participation in the **"European Parliament Sustainable Food Systems Group"**, co-chaired by Bart Staes MEP and Sirpa Pietikäinen

MEP and supported by 62 cross-party MEPs. The Group's Vision is to **bring forward a sustainable change** in the European **food system** for the sake of **protecting both health and the environment**. On the same topic, Euro Coop joined **a call for action issued by the NGO "WWF"** and joined by several other Brussels-based NGOs to **urge the European Commission to act on food sustainability** especially after the Juncker Commission decided to discontinue the work done by its predecessor in this field.

Last but not least, Euro Coop maintained its attendance in the **Civil Dialogue Groups** organized by the European Commission on **Environment and Climate Change** as well as on **Organic Agriculture**.

Promoting healthy and safe food

The promotion of healthy and safe food is one of the top priorities for consumer co-operatives across Europe and therefore of Euro Coop's policy work. The **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)** - a trade agreement in the process of being negotiated between the European Union and the United State – and its impact on the EU food policy has been one of the main focus for the year as far as this area of work is concerned.

Euro Coop participated in several events organised by the European Commission on TTIP throughout the year and in one of them it took the floor to present its concerns about **Geographical Indications (GIs)** and the need for those to be protected especially for the sake of honesty towards the consumer and solidarity towards small and local producers. It also liaised on a permanent basis with Brussels-based NGOs to put forward its position with particular emphasis on the upholding of the **precautionary principle** in the negotiations.

Another highlight of the year was the meeting with the **Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Mr. Vytenis Andriukaitis**, in the course of which Euro Coop could speak about the need for the European Commission to provide **accurate and comprehensive food information to consumers**, also highlighting the role that **own-brands** can play in this respect, act on the **obesity epidemic** and as well as on the **food waste challenge**

“MAD Cooperativet” (Food Co-operative) store in the **Copenhagen Central Station**. The store, which is the only one of its kind in the country, is a Coop show-case aimed at convincing Danes to eat good quality food at an honest price. The store is also often used for cooking shows broadcasted on the Danish TV.

(see the section above).

The Food Policy Working Group met once in 2015 in Copenhagen, hosted by Coop Denmark. At the core of the discussions were **TTIP, origin labelling, official controls and the EXPO 2015**. The meeting was also the occasion to pay a visit to Coop Denmark’s new flagship **“MAD Cooperativet”**.

During the year, relationships with the **European Food Safety Agency (EFSA)** were constantly maintained especially through participation in the EFSA’s **Stakeholders Consultative Platform** and technical meetings whereas at European Commission’s level, Euro Coop kept on participating and provide input into the work of the **EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health** as well as in the **Civil Dialogue Group on Quality and Promotion of agricultural products**. Other items including **traceability, indication of the country of origin or place of provenance of foods, nutrient profiles, reformulation, animal health and welfare and nanotechnologies** were constantly monitored by the Euro Coop Secretariat in order to inform its members on any legislative development occurring at EU level with respect to those topics.

Advocating for consumer rights

Consumer Co-operatives are owned and strategically led by consumers, it is thus only natural that advocating for consumers’ rights underpins all Euro Coop’s policy work in all areas in which it is active. Throughout 2015, Euro Coop has defended the specificity of the consumer co-operative model when it comes to live up to the **5th Co-operative Principle**, which states that co-operatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operative.

All events in which Euro Coop was invited to speak saw a specific section dedicated to the **importance of consumers’ rights, the need for consumers to be informed, educated and not misled in any manner**. The lobbying action dealing with the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)** was particularly characterized by the upholding of a strong consumer rights’ focus, also through a co-ordinated lobbying action with other Brussels-based NGOs. TTIP was also one of the main topics

monitored in the framework of the **Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD)**, of which it is a long-standing member.”

Another highlight of the year includes the Euro Coop’s active participation in the **Multi-stakeholder Dialogue of Environmental Claims** organised by the European Commission Directorate-General (DG) for Justice and Consumers and aimed at filling a gap as far as legislation on misleading green claims is concerned.

Besides this, Euro Coop started a very intense and fruitful co-operation with DG Justice and Consumers in the framework of the EXPO 2015’s event: **“Tackling Food Waste: the Consumer Co-operative Standpoint”** (please see above for details), which peaked with the high-level participation in the event of the EC Director for Consumer Policy Ms. Despina Spanou.

Euro Coop also participated in the **European Consumer Summit**, which in 2015 was dedicated to the theme “Shaping the Consumer Policy of the Future” and continued its attendance in the **European Consumer Consultative Group (ECCG)**, i.e. in the Commission’s main forum to consult national and European consumer organisations.



Membership and Governance

Statutory meetings

Euro Coop held two Board meetings – April in Paris, France hosted by potential member **Fédération Nationale des Coopératives de Consommateurs (FNCC)** and November in Plsen, Czech Republic, hosted by member **Union of Czech and Moravian Consumer Co-operatives**. The General Assembly was hosted by **ANCC/Coop Italy** in June in Milan at the EXPO 2015 site. The traditional thematic seminars, which are organized in conjunction with Statutory meetings were based on the themes of the co-operative difference (General Assembly) and co-operative governance (November Board). Euro Coop participated in the Cooperatives Europe workshop on local consumer co-operatives (bio-coop in France), as the April Board was held in conjunction with the **Cooperatives Europe General Assembly** in Paris.

Changes in membership

The Cypriot membership to Euro Coop officially changed in 2015. Existing member Esel-Spolp Ltd. proposed to be replaced by fellow co-operative organization **Comarine Ltd.**, as it no longer had the required capacity to be fully engaged in international level. Established in 1967 as the transport and tourism branch of the Cypriot co-operative movement, Comarine Ltd. is a consumer co-operative looking to be fully engaged in the international co-operative movement. Active in the field of **shipping and tourism** (hotel management), Comarine is exploring the possibility to initiate conventional or online retail, in collaboration with other Euro Coop members. Furthermore, it could be the spark which required igniting the discussions within Euro Coop in the field of co-operative tourism, as nearly **one-half of the members engage in tourism** in one way or another. Further changes to the Euro Coop membership are unfortunate, as Coop Portugal has ceased its participation within the Association due to structural reform on national level.



Who is Who

General Assembly & Board

President

Duncan Bowdler, The Co-operative Group (UK)

Vice Presidents

Juhani Ilmola, SOK (FI)

Enrico Migliavacca, ANCC/COOP (IT)

Petar Stefanov, Ph.D., Central Cooperative Union (BG)

Delegates

Pavlos Aristidou, ESEL-SPOLP Ltd / Andreas Koumis, Comarine Ltd. (CY)

Mikel Larrea Azpeitia, Eroski / Félix Martín, Hispacoop (ES)

Fred Bosch, Coop Nederland (NL)

Kjetil Bull / Geir Jostein Dyngeseth, Coop Norge SA (NO)

Ioan Crişan, CENTROCOOP (RO)

Gabriel Csollár, COOP Jednota (SK)

Eli Gonen / Ofer Feinstein, Coop Israel (ISR)

Mathias Fiedler, ZdK (DE)

Illia Gorokhovskiy, UKOOPSPILKA (UKR)

Lukáš Němčík, UCMCC Coop Czech (CZ)

Benedikte Kaalund, Coop Denmark (DK)

Tommy Ohlström, KF (SE)

Skúli Skúlason, KSK Coop Iceland (IS)

Dr. Zoltán Zs. Szöke, AFEOSZ Coop Federation (HU)

Jaanus Vihand, Coop Estonia (EE)

Working Group Members

Food Policy Working Group

Chair: Lea Rankinen, SOK (FI)
Louise König, KF (SE)
Krasimir Ignatov, Central Cooperative Union (BG)
Vittorio Ramazza, ANCC/ COOP (IT)
Thomas Roland, Coop Denmark (DK)
Alison Scowen, The Co-operative Group (UK)
Einav Mordoch, Coop Israel (ISR)

Sustainability Policy Working Group

Chair: Duncan Bowdler, The Co-operative Group (UK)
Gotzone Artabe Larraskitu, Eroski (ES)
Yvonne Van Asselt, Coop Netherlands (NL)
Nevena Bukova, Central Cooperative Union (BG)
Carmela Favarulo, ANCC/COOP (IT)
Signe D. Frese, Coop Denmark (DK)
Juhani Ilmola, SOK (FI)
Yaron Kaplan, Coop Israel (IL)
Louise König, KF (SE)
Knut Lutnæs, Coop Norge SA (NO)

Co-operative Distinctiveness Working Group

Chair: Russell Gill, The Co-operative Group (UK)
Riccardo Bagni, ANCC/COOP (IT)
Farnoush Bejnoud, ZdK (DE)
Kjetil Bull, Coop Norge SA (NO)
Elisheva Chen, Coop Israel (IL)
Teodora Kuzmanova, Central Cooperative Union (BG)
Félix Martín, Hispacoop (ES)
Helena Raininko, SOK (FI)
Hans Stapel, Coop Netherlands (NL)

Members

Bulgaria



Cyprus



Czech Republic



Denmark



Estonia



Finland



Germany



Hungary



Iceland



Israel



Italy



Spain



Netherlands



Sweden



Norway



Ukraine



Romania



United Kingdom



Slovakia



Printed in June 2016 on recycled paper.

Reproduction is permitted provided an appropriate reference is made to the source.

Find us on:



Euro Coop



EuroCoopTeam

Euro Coop

The European Community of Consumer Co-operatives

Rue du Trône 4
B-1000 Brussels

www.eurocoop.coop