

Activity Report 2013





About Euro Coop

Euro Coop is the European Community of Consumer Co-operatives, whose members are the national organisations of consumer co-operatives in 20 European countries. Created in 1957, Euro Coop today represents over 4,500 local and regional co-operatives, the members of which amount to more than 30 million consumers across Europe. Primarily active in food retail, consumer co-operatives are enterprises owned by consumer-members. Their overall turnover amounts to € 75 billion, with 36,000 points of sale. European consumer co-operatives employ more than 450,000 people.

Euro Coop

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Todor Ivanov Secretary-General Euro Coop

2013 was a special year, not only in that it followed the historic for the global co-operative family 2012 – United Nations International Year of Co-operatives (IYC), but in that much expectation and responsibility fell upon it in terms of the future. It was the year which had to plant the seeds of what is to become the Co-operative Decade – the roadmap to turn the co-operative business model into the most rapidly growing and people-preferred form of enterprise by 2020.

The achievement of this "2020 Vision" requires the full mobilization of the global cooperative movement. Euro Coop has begun facilitating members exchange within our working groups on each of the five topics of the Blueprint, with the aim to produce a report on the contribution of consumer co-operatives in Europe to the goals of the Blueprint and thus, to making the Co-operative Decade a reality. The advocacy work towards the EU institutions done by Euro Coop remained central to lobbying for a favourable legal framework for consumer co-operatives in Europe.

In other areas, Euro Coop maintained a strong European representation by closely following and participating in the policy developments of topics of interest to our members' activities, namely: food, sustainability, enterprises, and consumer polices.

One of the main issues in the political agenda in Brussels relevant to co-operatives was the ground-breaking Fostering Co-operatives Working Group within DG Enterprise. Set-up and led by the European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, the WG set out to identify the key challenges and priorities for co-operatives in Europe and emphasize their contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy.

All this made 2013 a very exciting year for Euro Coop and the following pages will further outline the main activities carried out to serve our national consumer co-operative member organizations. We invite you to visit our website (www.eurocoop.coop) for more detailed information on these and other topics, but also, please, do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat, as we are always at your disposal.

On behalf of the Secretariat, I would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Rodrigo Gouveia for the years of excellent service to the European consumer co-operative movement as Secretary General of Euro Coop and we wish him much success in his new challenges within the global co-operative family.

With co-operative greetings,

Todor Ivanov

Secretary-General

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European Representation

Food Policy



Throughout 2013, Euro Coop maintained its contribution to the European food policy and legislation process by representing the interests of its members towards the EU institutions and facilitating member exchange of relevant information and best practices.

Health and Nutrition

As member of the European Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, Euro Coop attended the four regular meetings (each of which dedicated to specific sessions on labelling and consumer information; marketing and advertising; lifestyle; and reformulation). Euro Coop compiled and published a 2013 edition of the report "Talking Obesity – Consumer cooperatives leading the way" as a formal commitment to all members of the Platform. The report gathers Euro Coop members' initiatives to combat obesity and is accompanied by a database. Both are available on the Euro Coop website.

Furthermore, Euro Coop stepped in the debate on the effectiveness of fiscal measures on unhealthy products through the publication of a position paper and the attendance to ad-hoc meetings.

Our engagement in promoting our members' commitment to tackle the obesity epidemic was also demonstrated by Euro Coop's attendance to the World Health Organisation Ministerial Conference on obesity which took place in Vienna in July.

In the context of healthy and sustainable diet, Euro Coop was also involved in "Live Well for Life", a European project on identifying common EU food diets which are both healthy and sustainable. Euro Coop attended the annual workshop and gave its contribution to the debate also through bi-lateral meetings. Euro Coop also took part in the consultation on the Fruit and Milk Scheme conducted by DG AGRI and kept close links with NGOs working on the field. For more information on Euro Coop's activities in the sustainable food area, please visit the Sustainability section.

Food Safety

Consumer co-operatives believe in the provision of safe, quality, sustainable and affordable foods and therefore, the current political debates around these issues are crucial to our members. Euro Coop was re-approved as one of the member organizations of the European Food Safety Agency Stakeholder Consultative Platform. Through this forum's plenary meetings Euro Coop had access to the Agency's latest opinions and gained insights on the risk assessment procedures at European level. Through our collaboration with a network of NGO's, Euro Coop was able to monitor the independence of the work carried out by the Agency.

Euro Coop also actively participated in DG SANCO Advisory Group on the Food Chain, Animal and Plant Health. Besides attending the plenary sessions, where cross cutting issues were discussed, such as GMOs and official controls, Euro Coop participated in the work of thematic Working Groups on origin labelling, food waste, and food losses.

Food Quality and Agriculture

Euro Coop attended on a regular basis DG AGRI Working Group on Quality of Agriculture Production, providing inputs to the discussion and updating Euro Coop's members on issues such as the indication of origin, local farming, labelling schemes for traditional and quality products.

In the context of the adoption of the new Common Agriculture Policy, Euro Coop kept active in cooperation with like-minded organizations and was invited to deliver a speech in a key conference in Dublin, Ireland.

Information to Consumers

A very important part of the European policy of food is related to the provision of information to consumers. Euro Coop continued to follow this debate given its implications not only for consumer empowerment but also for retail operations (e.g. labelling).

Expo 2015

In 2013, following the nomination of Coop Italy as the Official Food Partner, and given the centrality of its topic for Euro Coop members, Euro Coop started to follow the preparation of the World International Expo, which will take place in Milan from May to October 2015 and will focus on food security, food safety, food quality, and food sustainability. Euro Coop met with the Brussels representative of Expo and started a close dialogue with DG SANCO on the issue, identifying areas of common interest for joint initiatives, which could promote the engagement of consumer cooperatives in the field of consumer education, health and nutrition, quality products and food waste.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

Euro Coop started monitoring the impact that the EU-US agreement could have on European standards for food safety and quality. It attended relevant conferences and started building alliances with like-minded organizations.

Animal Health and Welfare

The legislative and political developments on animal health and welfare were another key topic Euro Coop focused on. For its commitment and that of its members, Euro Coop was invited to present its members' experience in welfare of laying hens and broiler chickens at a DG SANCO training in Edinburgh, Scotland. Euro Coop strengthened relationships with European and international animal welfare organisations, monitoring together issues such as animal transport, consumer information and animal cloning.

Food Policy Working Group (FPWG)

Euro Coop's FPWG discussed the relevant issues of food policy and facilitated members' exchange. Following the new terms of reference approved by the Euro Coop Board at the end of 2012, the FPWG adopted a new working plan and nominated a new chair, Ms Lea Rankinen from SOK (Finland). The FPWG met twice in 2013, in London, hosted by The Co-operative Group; and in Brussels, hosted by Euro Coop Secretariat. Thanks to these meetings, the report on Obesity could be successfully updated; Euro Coop could build common positions on crucial issues such as origin labelling, official controls and sustainable foods.

Enterprise Policy



The two central issues of Euro Coop's engagement in the Enterprise policy in 2013 were the "Fostering Cooperatives' Potential to Generate Smart Growth" Working Group and the better functioning of the food supply chain.

"Fostering Cooperatives' Potential to Generate Smart Growth" **Working Group**

The "Fostering Cooperatives' Potential to Generate Smart Growth" Working Group was launched in 2013 by the Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship Antonio Tajani, as a part of DG Enterprise's contribution to the EU 2020 Agenda. The WG held two out of the three planned thematic meetings in 2013 to discuss issues of particular interest to co-operatives: "Identifying necessary support for cooperatives", and "Co-operative entrepreneurship and education". Euro Coop participated in both WGs together with several other members of Cooperatives Europe to monitor and contribute the developments, which should provide input for conclusions, onto which to establish an EU Co-operative Roadmap in 2014 for the next European Commission, as envisaged by Vice-President Tajani.

High Level Forum for the Better Functioning of the Food Supply Chain

The debate about the better functioning of the food supply chain was initiated by the European Commission some years ago and focuses on the commercial relations between businesses in the food chain and the competitiveness of the different sectors, with the ultimate aim of identifying and eliminating the unfair practices. Euro Coop joined this process at the very beginning and throughout 2013 continued to participate in the discussions within the High Level Forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain, where the primary focus was on the implementation of the principles of good practice.

Euro Coop also continued its commitment as a member of the High Level Forum's Sherpa Group and its B2B commercial relations platform. On all levels, Euro Coop represented and defended the interests of co-operative retail in the process of establishing a voluntary framework for the implementation of the principles of good practice in the food supply chain. This Voluntary Framework was constructed, presented and approved by the European Commission in 2013. The main aim of the Framework is to display the willingness of the stakeholders in the food supply chain to abide to voluntary commitments as an alternative to an EU binding regulation. Euro Coop had a leading role to play in this crucial process as we chaired the meetings of the Governance Group of the B2B platform, which consists of representatives of the 7 European sectoral associations pioneering the Framework.

Food Sustainability Stakeholder Dialogue

Several members of the High Level Forum, together with other stakeholders of the food supply chain, large and small businesses, trade unions and NGOs, drafted a paper on food sustainability. The aim of the document is to set out a common understanding of food sustainability and feed into the forthcoming European Commission's Communication on the Sustainability of the Food Systems. Euro Coop was actively involved in the preparation of this document by being on the restricted working group in charge of its drafting.

European Retail Action Plan

The Retail Action Plan is closely linked to the B2B issue and thus Euro Coop kept a close eye on the evolution of the political debate around it. We held bilateral meetings with key high-level EU officials and MEPs and in the same time strengthened the links with other retailer organizations on common points. Furthermore, we were active in the debate at the EP level, contributing to the report by MEP De Jong and ensured strong representation of consumer cooperatives' interests in the retail sector.

Other issues dealt by Euro Coop in this policy area included: Corporate Social Responsibility, entrepreneurship policy, EU2020 strategy and social economy.

Sustainability Policy



Sustainability is one of the founding values on which co-operatives in general and consumer co-operatives in particular base their operations and strategy. As in past years, Euro Coop continued in 2013 to follow the main political developments occurring at EU level in this field and encouraged members' input and exchange of information and best practices with the aim of shaping our advocacy strategy. The main activity areas were:

Energy and Climate Change

2013 saw the publication of the fourth annual report "Consumer Co-operatives and Climate Change: taking the challenge forward", which reviews the main achievements of consumer co-operatives in a variety of fields, spacing from sustainable consumption and production (SCP), to energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, waste management, consumer information and education and more. Since 2012, the report includes a broader perspective through the best practices of Consumer Co-operatives Worldwide (CCW) members so as to testify to the urgency of tackling climate change on a global scale.

Policy-wise, Euro Coop issued two position papers, the first concerning the EU debate about the 2030 framework for climate and energy policies and the second about the European Commission's proposal for a regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-Gases).

Finally, we continued to work closely within the Cooperatives Europe WG on energy, where positions about EU energy policies are co-ordinated with the wider Cooperatives Europe member base.

Sustainable Consumption and Production

Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) continued to be one of the pillars of the Euro Coop's activity in the sustainability agenda, especially as far as sustainable foods and

the Retail Forum are concerned. Regarding sustainable foods, Euro Coop participated in the European Commission's consultation on the sustainability of the food systems, on which we put forward a comprehensive position based on the three dimensions of sustainability — economic, environmental and social. The engagement in this area also inspired the Euro Coop workshop "Tasting the Difference: the consumer co-operative way to sustainable food", held on 26 November, where consumer co-operatives, EU institution representatives, NGOs, academia and other stakeholders of the food supply chain met and exchanged views and information. Within the framework of the Retail Forum, Euro Coop maintained its active membership by attending its meetings and the Annual Event, dedicated to the issue of packaging and food waste.

Lastly, Euro Coop started to participate in the Stakeholder Dialogue on Food Sustainability, an initiative born under the umbrella of the High Level Forum for a Better Functioning Supply Chain which grouped a variety of stakeholders of the food supply chain as well as trade unions and NGOs. (Please see the Enterprise Policy section for more details).

Waste - Packaging waste and optimisation, food waste

Waste reduction, optimisation and management are core aspects of sustainability and strictly relate to SCP policies. Waste for consumer co-operatives mainly refers to packaging waste and optimisation and to food waste. As far as packaging waste and optimisation is concerned, the debate at EU level was mainly centered on the issue of plastic waste and of single use plastic bags. Euro Coop was actively involved into this debate and put forward a position paper highlighting the importance of a correct implementation of the waste hierarchy, as well as the need for more far-reaching education and raising awareness activities about the impacts of plastic waste on the environment.

Regarding food waste, Euro Coop published an ad-hoc position paper on it which identified strategies and set out recommendations to EU decision makers aimed at its reduction. Furthermore, we became a member of the EU project for food waste prevention "EU FUSIONS", which aims to harmonise food waste monitoring, lower food waste through social innovations, and develop guidelines for a common Food Waste Policy for EU-28.

Further to that, Euro Coop managed to feature its members' best practices in countering food waste in an official webpage of the European Commission, thereby marking a key achievement in our lobbying strategy. Lastly, we launched the Euro Coop project "EFFORTS", which prompts consumer co-operatives to take on concrete steps in reducing food waste. The project is set to run for 2 years and among its key deliverables are three guidance documents on tackling food waste along the supply chain, in-store, and at consumer and post-consumer level.

Development policies

As a part of the social dimension of sustainability, Euro Coop pays a lot of attention to development policies. We issued a position paper in the realm of the newly-established UN Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting the importance of a debate at international level on public goods. We also continued to work within the Cooperatives Europe Development Platform, in the framework of which the conference "Cooperatives & Fair Trade: Making Supply Chains work for Small Producers" was held. The event took place on 5 June at the European Parliament and saw the participation of Coop

Italy through Vladimiro Adelmi, Brand Manager for the Fair Trade ("Solidal") and Green ("Vivi Verde") product lines.

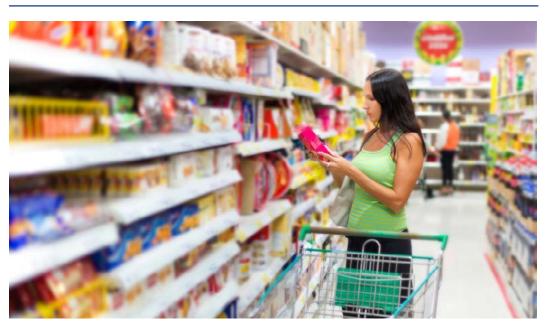
Sustainable fishing

2013 marked the final year of work of the Alliance for a Common Fisheries Policy Reform, which Euro Coop formed together with WWF, the fish processing industry, Eurocommerce and the European Chefs Association. The co-operation in this framework proved to be an effective lobbying tool and the participating associations confirmed the mutual willingness to work again together also on other policy areas so to achieve a greater impact before the EU institutions.

Sustainability Policy Working Group (SPWG)

The SPWG met three times and discussed topics from the debate at EU level, but also themes such as organic farming – on which a position paper was produced, GMOs, and chemicals, with particular reference to endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and bisphenol-A. Next to the policy discussions, the SPWG provided, as usual, a forum for its members to exchange best practices and key information on the broader sustainability field.

Consumer Policy



In retail, consumer co-operatives embody the perfect balance between owners and clients, since they are owned and democratically-controlled by their members, who are in the same time their consumers. These consumer-members are the backbone, spirit and mind of consumer co-operatives, as the people who run the cooperatives are the same people whose interests and needs the cooperative tries to meet. In that sense, the consumer focus is strongly echoed throughout Euro Coop's work in the various policy areas we cover.

As regards specific consumer policy, Euro Coop's main activities were:

European Consumer Consultative Group (ECCG)

The ECCG is the European Commission's main forum to consult national and European consumer organizations. Euro Coop maintained its membership within the forum and attended the three meetings (February, June and October) and the annual Consumer Summit in March. The Secretariat followed closely the wide spectrum of topics discussed and provided input to the ones relevant to consumer co-operatives, such as the issue of vulnerability and consumer rights, product safety, and enforcement of EU consumer legislation.

Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD)

Euro Coop maintained its membership within the TACD and continued to follow closely the development of consumer policies that affect both sides of EU – US trade relations. The main priorities for Euro Coop in this Dialogue format concern food policy issues and sustainability. In particular, 2013 saw the inclusion in the TACD agenda of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Package (TTIP), which rapidly became an issue of particular concern for EU and US consumers, owing to its broad-ranging implications. More details about this are included in the food policy section of this report.

Other issues regarding consumer policy included: Energy and consumers, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, participation in the consumer summit, consumers and vulnerability.

Membership and Governance



Statutory meetings

Euro Coop held two Board meetings and an annual General Assembly in 2013. The Board meetings were held in March and November in Brussels, while the General Assembly was held in June in Sofia, and hosted by the Bulgarian member – Central Cooperative Union.

Membership

The observer status membership of Coop Israel to Euro Coop was approved by the General Assembly in June. In November, the full membership status of KSK – Federation of Iceland Cooperatives was approved by the Board. The ratification of this decision shall be voted by the General Assembly at its annual meeting in June 2014.

Social responsibility

Euro Coop, as a responsible and respected representative of the co-operative movement, contributes to co-operatives' impressive record of social responsibility, concentrating on people, products, environment and democratic principles.

People

People are the backbone of co-operatives and at Euro Coop we value our employees. The Secretariat preserved the sense of unity and belonging, while maintaining a productive and friendly working environment throughout 2013. All administrative actions were in strict coherence to the Belgian labour-related regulations on safety, health, employment, and social rights.

Products

Being staunch supporters of environmental protection, the Secretariat constantly looks at possibilities to go the green way. Our purchases reflect this, as we privilege environmentally-friendly products for in-office use, including organic foods (e.g. catering for meetings, Fair Trade tea), eco-labelled detergents, and recycled paper. The Secretariat has progressively shifted towards suppliers of recycled materials for our promotional activities - pens, printed materials, etc.

Environment

In 2013, in line with our agreement with Belgian NGO CompenCO2, we continued our strong commitment in decreasing carbon emissions from all the travelling of the Secretariat, including being conscious about our international work travels.

Furthermore, the Euro Coop office maintains its recycling commitment of separated garbage disposal of paper, plastic and glass. The Secretariat is energy-conscious and has installed electronic equipment with the highest category of energy-saving and our policy at the work place is to switch off any electronic appliances when not in use.

Democracy

Euro Coop, as an international organization of co-operative organizations, incorporates the co-operative principles and values in its governance structure and practice. The principles of "one member, one vote" and voluntary membership are reflected across our association's management – Board and General Assembly, and our internal expert bodies - the Working Groups.

Communications

Publications

Newsletter

In 2013, Euro Coop continued its well-established practice of informing its members and external partners of the latest developments within the European consumer co-operative family in terms of member activities and Euro Coop advocacy activities. Twelve monthly editions of the Euro Coop Flash newsletter were produced, and made available in English and Italian. We shifted from PDF newsletters to e-mail newsletters, thereby saving considerable editing time.

Policy-focused publications

Euro Coop continued to follow closely the policy developments in the areas of food, enterprise, sustainability, and consumer issues. We communicated the consumer co-operatives' position on these matters through the wide variety of our position papers, reports, speeches, letters and press releases produced throughout the year. All these documents are available on the Euro Coop website: www.eurocoop.coop

Memorandum for the EU Elections 2014

In May 2014, all of Europe will turn towards the EU elections, which shall come up with a new European Commission and new European Parliament for the next 5 years. Undeniably, this is the single most important event of the year, as it will shape all aspect of European life for the next several years. That is why the Board of Euro Coop decided in November 2013 that it is critical to bring the consumer co-operative agenda and policy asks to the forefront of the future EU decision-makers. The Secretariat was authorized to produce an EU Memorandum with the consumer co-operatives' needs and expectations from the future EU institutions.

Communications Service

Communications Strategy 2014

With more resources in the communications sector, Euro Coop produced a strategy with all communications activities planned for 2014. This communications strategy outlines the priorities in reaching out to Euro Coop's key target audience and partners, which include national member organizations, European and global co-operative organizations, and the Brussels community – the EU institutions, relevant European sectoral organizations; and others.

Website

Euro Coop always strives to offer an attractive and informative experience to all visitors of our website, and therefore we aim at having maximum content in multiple languages: English, French, and Italian. Members used their private login information to access restricted content, such as the Euro Coop Flash newsletter, meeting documents and reports.

Conferences and workshops

In 2013, Euro Coop organised the following conferences and workshops:

- "Consumer co-operatives and innovation: Meeting EU2020 goals through new products and services" - March, Brussels, Belgium;
- European Conference "Consumer Cooperatives on the Forefront of Store Design and Management" - June, Sofia, Bulgaria;
- Workshop "Tasting the Difference: the consumer co-operative way to sustainable food" - November, Brussels, Belgium.

Shared resources and staff

Euro Coop embarked on a new mission of collaboration by establishing a shared communications service with the International Co-operative Alliance. In a true sense of co-operation, a Communications Director and Officer are employed to work for both associations, with the expenses shared between both organisations. The agreement is a case-specific solution to provide the Alliance and Euro Coop with needed professional support and resources, required for the communications team to deliver professional grade services. These include, among others, a media database subscription and professional communications materials production software.

Euro Coop in the media

In 2013, Euro Coop received press coverage from national media, European press outlets and industry-specific publications regarding its publications, initiatives, and conferences (Euro Coop-organized and our participation in others such).



Who's Who

General Assembly and Board

President

Duncan Bowdler, The Co-operative Group (UK)

Vice Presidents

Enrico Migliavacca, ANCC/COOP (IT)

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

Juhani Ilmola, SOK (FI)

Delegates

Odd Rune Andersen, Coop Norge SA (NO)

Pavlos Aristidou, ESEL-SPOLP Ltd (CY)

Mikel Larrea Azpeitia, Hispacoop (ES)

Fred Bosch, Coop Nederland (NL)

Ioan Crisan, CENTROCOOP (RO)

Gabriel Csollar, COOP Jednota (SK)

Mathias Fiedler, ZdK (DE)

Vladislav Goncharenko, UKOOPSPILKA, (UKR)

Zdeneck Juracka, SCMSD (CZ)

Benedikte Kaalund, Coop Denmark (DK)

Janek Lepp, ETK (EE)

Tommy Ohlström, KF (SE)

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

Jerónimo Teixeira, FENACOOP (PT)

Ofer Feinstein, Coop Israel (ISR)

Working Group Members

Food Policy Working Group

Chair: Lea Rankinen, SOK (FI) (elected October 2013)

Claudio Mazzini, Coop Italia (IT)

Anna-Lena Dahlberg, Coop Sweden (SE)

Alison Scowen, The Co-operative Group (UK)

Krasimir Ignatov, Central Cooperative Union (BG)

Joan Preisler, Coop Denmark (DK)

Thomas Roland, Coop Denmark (DK)

Ariel Parush, Coop Israel (ISR)

Sustainability Policy Working Group

Chair: Duncan Bowdler, The Co-operative Group (UK)

Gotzone Artabe Larraskitu, Eroski (ES)

Louise König, KF (SE)

Nevena Bukova, Central Cooperative Union (BG)

Signe D. Frese, Coop Denmark (DK)

Juhani Ilmola, SOK (FI)

Knut Lutnæs, Coop Norge SA (NO)

Claudio Toso, ANCC/COOP (IT)

Edna Malali, Coop Israel (ISR)

Co-operative Identity 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)

Staffan Eklund, KF (SE)

Felix Martin, Hispacoop (ES)

Helena Raininko, SOK (FI)

Teodora Kuzmanova, Central Cooperative Union (BG)



Member Organisations

Bulgaria

Cyprus

Czech Republic

Denmark

Estonia



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Germany

Hungary

Iceland

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Italy

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Slovak Republic

Spain

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The co-operative