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NEWS FROM ROEP

☆ **European Executive**

The European Executive Committee met in Geneva on 14 June to discuss ICA Finances, and in particular the principles of redistributing ICA's income from membership fees to the regions, the ICA Board Task Force report, greater European cohesion and the joint ICA-ILO workshop in St Petersburg on the implementation of ILO Recommendation 193 on 29-30 October.

ICA Director General, Iain Macdonald, and Finance Manager, Guy Malacrida, attended the meeting and presented the first two items which were followed by a lively discussion. It was proposed that the regions should be more involved in their budgets to allow them to implement their respective priorities.

☆ **European Council**

The European Council meeting in Oslo on 1 September focused on improving European cohesion. Members voiced the need for a strong European identity. They approved a Common Plan of Action with the CCACE, the Co-ordinating Committee of European Co-operative Associations and generally welcomed the idea of establishing a common platform for European co-operatives, which would allow them to speak with one voice vis à vis the European Commission. The proposal was also submitted to the CCACE at its meeting of 22 September.

The next meeting of the European Council will be held in Brussels on 6 November. It will focus on ICA Europe's budget and work plan for 2004.

☆ **ILO-ICA Europe joint workshop**

"Interaction between the State and co-operative organisations in the implementation of ILO Recommendation 193 on the promotion of co-operatives" is the title of a workshop jointly organised by ICA, ILO and Centrosojuz, Russia. The event will take place in St Petersburg on 29-30 October under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS). It shall bring together government representatives, parliamentarians and co-operatives from CIS countries.

The programme includes presentations on co-operative legislative development in the CIS and an overview of government policy. Working group sessions will discuss these issues further and also examine the problematic of how to fight poverty through co-operatives by implementing their social tasks. A study visit to consumer co-operatives is also foreseen.

Two further events are planned for 2004 to cover the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. The first of these will be held in Budapest in March and will focus on the accession countries.





☆ **New members**

At its June and September meetings, the ICA Board approved the applications for membership of the Croatian Association of Co-operatives, the Auditing Union of Housing Co-operatives (Poland), the National Auditing Union of Co-operative Banks (Poland), the Confederation of Portuguese Co-operatives (Confecoop) and Konsumverband, Germany. A new members' reception was held at the General Assembly in Oslo to welcome those who have joined ICA since the last General Assembly in Seoul, Korea in 2001.

☆ **A potential member**

The President of the Albanian Association of Co-operatives, Dr Miti Koçi, visited the Regional Office in August. He presented his organisation and expressed the interest of Albanian co-operatives in becoming more involved in the international co-operative movement by joining ICA.

The Albanian Association of Co-operatives, which includes the Union of Agrarian Co-operators, is an NGO set up in 1991 with the aim of protecting the interests and rights of the rural co-operative members, ensuring a favourable legislative environment for co-operatives as well as promoting environmental protection and sustainable agricultural development.

The activities of the Association include the organisation of seminars and workshops on best practice in well established co-operative movements. It also provides technical assistance on the setting up and running of co-operatives in agriculture, fishing, animal-breeding and bee-keeping.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

☆ **Finland**

In a bid to improve competitiveness, Osuusliike Elanto and the Helsinki Co-operative Society have merged to form the Helsinki Co-operative Society Elanto. The new co-operative company will have a strong market position, with a comprehensive network of locations in the greater Helsinki area and the Uusimaa Region, thereby bringing greater services and benefits to members.

The Helsinki Co-operative Society Elanto will have 140 retail locations and 114 restaurants as well as hotel operations. A number of other services run by the HOK and Elanto will also be retained. It will form part of the Finnish Co-operative Wholesale Society, SOK, a central organisation in the Finnish Consumer Co-operative Association, FCCA, which is member of ICA.

The company hopes to be able to commence operations at the beginning of 2004, pending approval of the competition authorities.

☆ **Germany**

GDK (Gesamtverband Deutscher Konsumgenossenschaften), an apex organisation set up in 2000 by the former Eastern and Western consumer co-operative federations has been dissolved. Konsumverband eG, representing 22 co-operative societies with 700.000 individuals (located in the former East Germany), was adopted as a new member in its place.

☆ **Italy**

As part of the European City of Culture and International Co-operative Day celebrations, Legacoop is organising a conference on the Culture of Development, Globalisation and Co-operative Enterprises in Genoa on 2-3 July 2004.

The programme includes sessions on The Co-operative Movement and Culture in the Era of Globalisation; Business Culture and the Respect of Human Rights; The Co-operative Movement



and the New Europe; Enlarging and Creating an Environment for Co-operative Development in Europe; The Support of the United Nations in developing and promoting Co-operatives; The European Constitution and the Role of the Social Partners in the New Europe; Globalisation, Co-operation and Local Needs; Projects to Fight Against Poverty and Knowledge plus Business Skills in the Co-operative Enterprise.

For more information contact Stefania Marcone at s.marcone@legacoop.it



Portugal

The National Federation of Consumer Co-operatives, FENACCOOP, will celebrate its 25th anniversary later this year. Since its establishment, significant improvements have occurred in the retail business run by consumer co-operatives. Further development and modernisation are however necessary in order to fully exploit the potential of the co-operative sector and maximise its contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. A four-year development strategy will be the main feature of the 8th National Congress of Consumer Co-operatives to be held on 14-15 November.



Spain

The “Confederación Empresarial Española de la Economía Social” (CEPES), an ICA associate member, has published a bilingual report (Spanish /English) on the Social Economy in Spain. The report notably contains sections on local development, training, social cohesion, disability, employment, and the standing legislation on the different legal forms in the social economy, as well as an overview of the situation in the EU and Latin America. Information on CEPES members and a directory of national, European and Latin American social economy organisations are also included.

For more information contact CEPES: info@cepes.es, fax: +34 91 448 73 93, www.cepes.es



United Kingdom

Co-operative Legislation

A Co-operatives and Community Benefit Societies Bill was adopted in the UK which shall help place co-operative societies on a level playing field with companies and greatly facilitate efficient governance. The Bill contains a number of key provisions including one on asset lock for community benefit societies, including housing associations, childcare facilities and social clubs. This shall prevent de-mutualisation to strip assets rendering societies much more secure and ensuring that the co-operative structure is better suited to the running of public services. It also establishes the important role of Community benefit societies in local economies, ensuring that assets built up of many generations can only be transferred to other organisations with a similar commitment to serving the community.

UK Co-operative Forum

Co-operatives^{UK} is organising a co-operative forum in Cardiff on 24-25 October on the theme “Securing the future: Co-operative approaches to the sustainability agenda”. The conference will explore key areas of the sustainability agenda and showcase examples of co-operatives and people working together in co-operation contributing to a sustainable economy. Areas to be addressed include waste and recycling, business, climate change and energy, food production, food and globalism, financial sustainability, housing and community buy-outs.

For further information contact Julie Boyers at Julie.bowers@cooperatives.uk.coop



Social accountability training programme

The Co-operative College is running an English language training programme on social accountability from 8-12 December 2003 in Manchester. The programme assists participants improve their knowledge of English through distinct themes and study examples of best practice in the co-operative movement in the UK. It is targeted at managers with an intermediate knowledge of English. Further details are available from Jenny de Villiers at jenny@co-op.ac.uk or www.co-op.ac.uk

NEWS FROM SECTORS



Housing

The need for widespread dissemination and application of the principle of sustainable development in relation to housing is a reality and one of the EU's priorities in its 5th Framework Programme for Research and Development. Under Key Action 4 "City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage", the European Commission has selected a project proposal on Sustainable Housing in Europe submitted by Federabitazione, a Confcooperative sectoral federation for housing co-ops, and coordinated by Federabitazione Europe in partnership with leading universities (Oporto and Athens), public and private research centres and several social housing organisations from Italy, France, Portugal and Denmark.

The project seeks to assess and demonstrate the feasibility of sustainable housing based on 726 sustainable dwelling pilot projects.

According to EU target values for 2010, the architectural/energy design aims at decreasing primary energy consumption (>20%), water wastes in buildings (>25%), use of primary raw material (>10%), to recycle the construction waste up to 90% and to reduce the best practice life-cycle cost of the construction process (>20%). Particular attention will be paid to health and safety during the construction phases to decrease accidents on construction sites (>25%).



Consumers

100 participants attended the CCI (Consumer Co-operatives International) seminar in Oslo on 1 September under the theme "The co-operative response to international competitors and international suppliers". In addition to speakers from the consumer co-operative organisations in Japan (Promoting Solidarity of Consumer Co-operative Business), Singapore (Our response to competition) and Canada (Global Co-operation: The Purchasing Opportunity), representatives from Europe addressed the following topics: The co-operative renaissance in the UK, Czech consumer co-operatives in an increasingly globalised economy and Coop's actions and proposals for a socially responsible supply chain (Italy). The presentations are available on the CCI web site at <http://www.coop.org/cci/>



Insurance

ICMIF is organising a conference on the theme "Vivre notre différence" in Paris on 15-18 October 2003. The event showcases what makes co-operatives different from other forms of insurers and what they do better. High level speakers have been invited from around the globe to present current experiences and look at future opportunities and challenges. Day one of the conference concentrates on answering the question "What makes us different", with sessions on investment and reinsurance, financing expansions and capital solutions. Day two focuses on best practices in technology, product innovation, customer service and claims under the heading "What does this difference mean in practice?" whilst day three, "How can we stay different", looks ahead at new opportunities and corporate social responsibility.



For further information and the conference programme contact icmif@icmif.org, fax: +44 161 929 51 63.

NEWS FROM ICA



ICA General Assembly

Nearly 800 delegates from 80 countries gathered in Oslo, Norway from 30 August–5 September 2003 for ICA's General Assembly to discuss the role and contribution of co-operatives to democratic, social and economic development throughout the world under the slogan "Co-operatives - business the democratic way".

Hosted jointly by the Norwegian Federations of Consumers, Agricultural and Housing Co-operatives, the Assembly was a considerable success highlighting the role co-operative enterprise can play in alleviating poverty through self-help.

At the opening ceremony, Norwegian Prime Minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik, complemented the Co-operative Movement on its contribution to the development of the welfare states in his country, emphasising that co-operative values and principles are indispensable to both nations and individuals.

In his address, ILO Director General, Juan Somavia, highlighted the role of co-operatives in job creation and enterprise development. He looked forward to an even closer relationship between ILO and the international co-operative movement, particularly as regards the promotion of Recommendation 193 which calls on governments to encourage the growth of co-operative enterprise.

Interventions were also made by Roberto Rodrigues, Minister of Agriculture in Brazil and former ICA President, on the co-operative renaissance and the Norwegian Minister of International Development, Hilde Frafjord Johnson, who emphasised Norway's proud tradition in using "Co-operatives as a tool for poverty reduction and enterprise development".

ICA Europe presented two reports. The first by the Regional Director on ICA Europe's role in facilitating development assistance for both European co-operatives and those in other regions through its contacts with the European institutions. The second presented by Nina Jarlbäck, chairperson of KF Board, on the successful operations of Coop Norden.

During the statutory business ICA Vice President Dame Pauline Green presented a report on the restructuring of ICA. This report was based on the activities and recommendations of the Task Force set up by the ICA Board. It proposed changes to the ICA Rules and Standing orders such as the re-naming of the "specialised organisations" to "sectoral organisations" and the introduction of sectoral membership.

Partial elections were held following the retirement of some members. A European representative, Mr. Pál Bartus, President of Co-op Hungary, was elected to the ICA Board.

The next ICA General Assembly will be held in 2005 in Cartagena, Colombia.

Presentations are available on ICA's website at <http://www.ica.coop/ica/ica/icaevents/ga2003/index.html>



Youth Conference

70 young co-operators from around the world were present in Oslo for a two-day International Co-operative Youth Conference. Delegates discussed ways in which they could be more involved in the co-operative movement and shared ideas and best practice on how to raise awareness about young people concerns within their organisations back home. "The co-operative principles of equality, non-discrimination and solidarity are shared by numerous young people all around the world, even though they may not be part of any co-operative organisation. The co-operative world has huge potential if it reaches out to different groups with the co-operative values. Through co-operatives another world is possible - and we want to be a part of that change!" – emphasised young co-operators in a statement submitted to the General Assembly.

The next steps are to elect a Youth representative to the ICA Board and establish priorities for further activities co-ordinated by the Youth Network.

The Youth Statement can be found on ICA's website at <http://www.ica.coop/ica/ica/icaevents/ga2003/youth-statement-oslo.doc>

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS



The Statute for a European Co-operative Society (ESC)

The Statute for a European Co-operative Society was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 22 July and published in the Official Journal (OJ) of the European Union on 18 August. The European Parliament (EP) had adopted the text but disputed its legal basis. It has two months to contest the legislation before the European Court of Justice, counting from three days following publication in the OJ. The Legal Affairs Committee remains combative but would have to obtain the signature of the President or approval of the EP Plenary to pursue its action. The Statute should enter into force by 2006, allowing three years for transposition and implementation by the Member States.



Communication on Co-operatives

The Communication was sent for inter-service consultation within the European Commission. Comments were mainly received from DG Competition. The text is currently being amended and is expected to be adopted later this year.



Euro-Med Youth Platform

More than 100 Youth organisations from EU and Mediterranean partner countries gathered in Malta from 17-21 September to discuss the role of the new Euro-Med Youth Platform (EMYP) which was launched under the Euro-Med Youth Programme.

The platform aims at bringing young people and organisations together in an environment of tolerance and mutual understanding, facilitating networking of organisations, exchanging good practices and developing new projects. The EMYP will contribute to the development of civil society, democracy and active citizenship of young people.

Over 500 organisations from all over the Euro-Mediterranean have already joined the Platform and a database has been created to facilitate the setting up of projects and networks.

For further information please contact Giovanni Buttigieg on giovanni@euromedp.org or visit <http://www.euromedp.org>



Consultation on the difficulties of doing e-business

The European Commission has launched a consultation on the barriers that enterprises still encounter when using electronic commerce and other electronic business applications. These could, for instance, be related to divergent national provisions for electronic invoicing or arise from a different treatment of on-line and off-line businesses. It is particularly interested in knowing of practical examples of what has gone wrong and reasons for not doing business on-line.

Interested parties have until 7 November to respond. A questionnaire can be found on <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/consultations/index.en.htm>. A summary of replies will be published in January 2004.

General comments on the existing legal frameworks for e-business in the European Union and accession countries should be sent to entr-ict-e-business-law@cec.eu.int

On the basis of the feedback, the European Commission shall assess where further progress is necessary to establish a more favorable environment for e-business in Europe.



EU's interventions at its external borders

The European Commission has presented proposals to improve the EU's interventions at its external borders following enlargement. The objective is to improve co-operation with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean through better co-ordination of existing Community support instruments, namely INTERREG, PHARE-TACIS-Cross Border Co-operation, CARDS and MEDA. These would be brought together with the launch of "Neighbourhood programmes" in 2004. The programme would initially run from 2004-2006 with an estimated budget of 955 million euro.

In its follow up proposal "Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument", the Commission identifies four key objectives for future cross border co-operation:

Promoting economic and social development;

Working together to address common challenges, in fields such as environment, public health and the fight against organised crime;

Ensuring efficient and secure borders;

Promoting local, "people to people" type actions



Eurostat Yearbook

Eurostat has published its 2003 Yearbook on European Statistics for the period 1991 to 2001. The document takes the form of a wide ranging statistical guide, providing a good understanding of the major economic and social developments in the EU over that period. It includes information on the EU and the 15 Member States, the eurozone and the principle economic partners of the EU wherever the data is comparable. A section is also devoted to the EU Candidate Countries. Other chapters of interest include "People in Europe", devoted to social aspects such as population, health, education, work and households, "Economy and Ecology" and "Entrepreneurial Activities" which focuses on specific sectors such as business, agriculture, science and technology.

More information can be found on the Eurostat website at:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat>



Strengthened representation with the Council of Europe

The INGO (International Non-Governmental Organisations) Plenary unanimously adopted two opinions at an extraordinary meeting on 25 June. The first related to a Resolution on the



participatory status of international NGOs with the Council of Europe, the second to a Resolution on partnership between the Council of Europe and national NGOs.

The Council of Europe is currently the only European body to grant INGOs observer status. The adoption of the resolutions further strengthens this privileged link, providing the opportunity to feed into debates and have a real impact on decisions taken.

At the meeting of the North-South grouping prior to the plenary session, delegates discussed fair trade. It was agreed to set up an informal working group to take the issue forward.



Campaign against review of International Accounting Standards 32 and 39

The decision on the revision of IAS 32 and 39 has been deferred by the Accounting Regulatory Body of the EU until March 2004. ICA Europe President, Dame Pauline Green is appealing to members to engage in the campaign against amendments which would imply that members' funds are identified as debts, underlining the huge impact that this would have on the balance sheets of co-operatives. The new IAS do not only affect financial co-operatives. ICA member organisations around the world should lobby their governments against the amendments.

PEOPLE

Former European Council member Dr Hans-Detlef Wülker retired on 1 September. He was replaced by Dr Carl-Friedrich Leuschner, new Chief Executive Officer of DGRV, Germany.

- * Petar Stefanov, former Vice-President has been elected as the new President of the Central Co-operative Union, CCU, Bulgaria. He succeeds Pancho Ivanov.

Petr Brožek was re-elected for a third term in office as the President of the Union of Czech and Moravian Consumer Co-operatives.

Vit Vanicek was elected President of the Board of the Union of Czech and Moravian Housing Co-operatives. He replaces Dr. Ivan Prikryl who does not continue any of his former positions with ICA.

Daniel Pavel has been elected as President of the Slovak Union of Producer Co-operatives and Chair of the Board. Mr Pavel, who is currently Vice-President within the organisation, will take up his new functions on 11 October 2003. He takes over from Marian Rybar, member of ICA European Council, who shall be retiring after 35 years of service.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

All member organisations are kindly requested to send us any relevant information they want to share with other members. Please send correspondence to ICA Europe at the address below. Deadline for receiving contributions for the next issue is 10 December.

HOW TO CONTACT US

For more details on any of the topics mentioned in the Bulletin please write to:

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