

CCI Sub-Committee on Co-operative Identity and Values

At the 10th of April the Sub-committee had a Working group meeting, where the following issues were debated:

1. Do consumer co-operatives depend on their members as customers?
What is the difference between consumer – member and consumer – non members?

On basis of a presentation by Vice-president, Mr. Martin Katriak Coop Jednota Slovakia the Working group participants find that it was an important issue to deal with.

- How to secure that the members are loyal to their own societies
 - How to utilize the different experience from the member organisations – the level of members share of turnover differs from about 10% to about 60%
 - The member organisations should exchange information to identify and promote best practice on this issue
 - The goal should be that at least half the turnover should come from the members
2. What are the differences of consumer co-operative societies and their competitors (private and international retail chains) on co-operative societies from the competition point of view?

On basis of a presentation by Vice-president, Mr. Martin Katriak, Coop Jednota Slovakia the Working groups participants noted that the advantages of consumer cooperation's as

- Knowledge of environment and consumer
- Basically appropriate arrangement of countryside and city stores
- Members of co-operatives as potential/sure/buyers
- The unique co-operative identity

The disadvantage of consumer co-operatives noted was:

- Relatively slowly exercitation of necessary measures/integration, logistic and distribution, information system, high costs of some activities/
- Relatively worse financial background for investments
- “dead” property
- “disfavour” of political governance in some countries

The Working group decided to focus on:

- How can consumer co-operation's do more to underline the advantages and make them more visible to members and consumers
- How can consumer co-operatives limit the disadvantages for example using some of the same management methods as the private enterprise chains to obtain the goal set up for running the consumer co-operatives daily operations?

3. Co-operative property and co-operatives being immanent in modern economic system.

Mrs. N.N. Salovikk, Head of the Economic Theory Department of Moscow University of Consumer Co-operation's made a presentation about this issue, which gave the Working group an opportunity to gain insight in the theoretical work about the economic nature of co-operatives.

4. Ethical trade focussing on questions of selling under cost-price, un-ethical market competition in field of trade.

On basis of an introduction from General Secretary Dr. Zoltan Szoke, Hungary, the Working group had a discussion on and exchange of the legislation on these issues in the different countries.

- Asking Eurocoop to look into the upcoming EU-legislation on the subject For the moment there is no legislation, but it is discussed in connection to the commission's proposal concerning "A Sales Promotion Registration"

5. The Working group decided to deal with fair trade
 - Fair trade in connection with new EU-legislation (consumer rights)
 - How the consumer organisations can support selling fair trade products as Max Havelaar

Working plan:

- a. Summary from the Working group meeting
- b. Exchange of information and support
- c. In Oslo in connection with the CCI-meeting evaluate and discuss the future of the meeting group of Co-operative identity and values, including merge with the Working group on Best Practice.

Ann-Buch Joergensen
Chair of the Sub-committee