NEWS RELEASE

Cooperative banks exchange views on competitiveness and financial sector priorities at 59th EACB General Assembly

Vienna, 19/06/2026 – Executives and senior bankers from cooperative banking institutions gathered in Vienna for the **59th General Assembly of the European Association of Co-operative Banks (EACB)**, kindly hosted by the **Austrian Raiffeisen Federation (ÖRV)**. The meeting featured a high-level exchange with **Harald Waiglein**, Director General for Economic Policy and Financial Markets at the Austrian Ministry of Finance and Chair of the EU Financial Services Committee (FSC), alongside discussions on key regulatory, economic and strategic developments affecting the cooperative banking sector.

EACB President **Priscille Szeradzki** stated: *"Today's discussions reaffirmed the urgency of ensuring that Europe's policy framework supports both competitiveness and resilience. For cooperative banks, meaningful simplification and greater consistency across regulation and supervision are instrumental in fully unlocking the contribution of our sector in serving households, SMEs and local communities.*"

Apart from the election of the EACB Board and internal auditors, the exchange focused on policy issues currently shaping the European financial sector. Members discussed the growth of digital assets with Kasper Peters, Chief Strategy Officer and Financial Services Leader at Deloitte. They also exchanged views on new initiatives in the regulatory landscape, notably the review of reporting frameworks and recent consultations launched by the European Banking Authority (EBA) and the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA).

The European Commission's simplification agenda featured as a prominent topic, including efforts towards a simpler, clearer and more proportionate regulatory framework. Members highlighted the importance of reducing the regulatory burden while preserving financial stability, ensuring that regulation addresses risks while remaining supportive of Europe's diverse banking landscape.

Johannes Rehulka, Secretary General of the Austrian Raiffeisen Federation (ÖRV), commented: "*As host of this General Assembly, we were pleased to welcome cooperative banking leaders to Vienna. Today's exchanges demonstrated the value of effective cross-border cooperation enabling cooperative banks to continue supporting local economies through periods of change and uncertainty*."

Nina Schindler, EACB CEO, said: "*Thank you to the Austrian Raiffeisen Federation and to Johannes Rehulka for hosting the General Assembly round in Vienna. The strong member bank presence reaffirmed the weight of cooperative banking in the broader economic system. With the impetus of its newly elected leadership, the EACB is well placed to champion the voice of the sector in the European legislative debate*."

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About the EACB:
The European Association of Co-operative Banks (EACB) is the voice of the cooperative banks in Europe. It represents, promotes and defends the common interests of its 29 member institutions and of cooperative banks in general. Cooperative banks form decentralised networks which are subject to banking as well as cooperative legislation. Democracy, transparency and proximity are the three key characteristics of the cooperative banks' business model. With 2,400 locally operating banks and 36,500 outlets cooperative banks are widely represented throughout the enlarged European Union, playing a major role in the financial and economic system. They have a long

tradition in serving 228 million customers, mainly consumers, retailers and communities. The cooperative banks in Europe represent 91 million members and 737,000 employees and have a total average market share of about 20%.
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