
World Cooperative Congress information sheet

Notes to Editors

What is a cooperative?

About the International Cooperative Alliance

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- Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.
- Cooperatives bring people together in a democratic and equal way. Whether the members are the customers, employees, users or residents, cooperatives are democratically managed by the 'one member, one vote' rule. Members share equal voting rights regardless of the amount of capital they put into the enterprise.
- Cooperatives share [internationally agreed principles](#) and act together to build a better world through cooperation. Putting fairness, equality and social justice at the heart of the enterprise, cooperatives around the world are allowing people to work together to create sustainable enterprises that generate long-term jobs and prosperity.
- Cooperatives allow people to take control of their economic future and, because they are not owned by shareholders, the economic and social benefits of their activity stay in the communities where they are established. Profits generated are either reinvested in the enterprise or returned to the members.
- Read the Statement on the Cooperative Identity which contains the definition of a cooperative, the values of cooperatives, and the seven cooperative principles [here](#).

About the International Cooperative Alliance

- The International Cooperative Alliance is a non-profit international association established in 1895 to advance the cooperative social enterprise model. The International Cooperative Alliance is the voice for cooperatives worldwide, representing more than 310 cooperative federations and organisations across 109 countries.
- 12% of people in the world are cooperators. Through its membership, the International Cooperative Alliance represents 1.2 billion people from any of the 2.94 million cooperatives

worldwide. The largest 300 cooperatives in the world have combined annual revenues of 2.16 trillion USD (2015) and 280 million people around the world (10% of the employed population) secure their livelihoods in cooperatives, either through direct employment or by organizing through a cooperative.

- The International Cooperative Alliance works with global and regional governments and organisations to create the legislative environments that allow cooperatives to form and grow. Towards media and the public, the International Cooperative Alliance promotes the importance of people-centred cooperatives' values-based business model.
- Operating from a global office in Brussels, Belgium, the International Cooperative Alliance is organised with four Regional Offices (Europe, Africa, Americas, and Asia-Pacific), and eight Sectoral Organisations (Banking, Agriculture, Fisheries, Insurance, Health, Housing, Consumer Cooperatives and service and industry cooperatives)
- Further information can be found at ica.coop/en/international-cooperative-alliance

About the World Cooperative Congress

- The International Cooperative Alliance organises World Cooperative Congresses every 5-10 years to bring together the global cooperative movement. The 33rd Congress is taking place as a hybrid event, hosted in Seoul, Republic of Korea, and also online.
- The theme for the 33rd World Cooperative Congress is “Deepening Our Cooperative Identity”, looking at how this can help the world “Rebuild Better Together”, addressing challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, sustainable development, peace and equality. The Cooperative Identity is defined by the International Cooperative Alliance within its Statement on the Cooperative Identity.
- Using the current global crisis as a framework, discussions will aim to deepen the cooperative identity by **examining** its values, **strengthening** its actions, **committing to** its principles and **living** its achievements.
- Further information can be found at icaworldcoopcongress.coop