

ICA EUROPE BULLETIN



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Welcome to the first edition of our news Bulletin for 2004! We have great things planned this year on the Communication front, including a revamp of this publication. One of our major objectives is to provide you with more information about what ICA Europe is doing on your behalf. Another is to increase inter-member communication, one of the key benefits of ICA membership.

In this edition you will discover our new feature section, which will head our Bulletin in future. This month naturally gives pride of place to the European Commission's recent Communication on Co-operatives.

Future editions will also include a section presenting co-operatives in the European region, with the spotlight initially on the new EU accession States, as well as all our regular reports.

We would welcome comments on both content and style of our publications and activities as well as your input.

The ICA Europe Team





SPECIAL FEATURE

Commission Communication on Co-operatives

The European Commission adopted its *Communication on the Promotion of Co-operative Societies* on 23 February 2004. This forms the second pillar of a strategy geared specifically towards the promotion of co-operatives, following on from the European Co-operative Statute (SCE) adopted last July.

The Communication reflects the outcome of an extensive consultation process launched in 2002, which ICA actively contributed to alongside the CCACE. The document provides a positive assessment of the future role of co-operatives in an enlarged Europe. It is underpinned by the belief that the potential of co-operatives has not been fully utilized and that their image should be improved at national and European levels.

The Commission sees co-operatives an excellent example of a company type which can simultaneously address entrepreneurial and social objectives in a mutually reinforcing way. As such co-operatives are said to have an important role as vehicles for the implementation of many community objectives in fields such as employment, social policy, and agriculture. The Commission thus favours their presence in various Community programmes and policies being further exploited and promoted.

Concretely, the Communication sets out an ambitious programme of action for the period 2004-2008, establishing what the Commission, Member States and co-operatives themselves can do to better exploit their business potential. Three key areas are identified:

- The promotion of the greater use of co-operatives across Europe by improving the visibility, characteristics and understanding of the sector
- The further improvement of co-operative legislation in Europe
- The maintenance and improvement of co-operatives' place and contribution to the community objectives.

Under these, 12 specific recommendations for action are proposed, covering legislation and government policy, working with co-operative representative organisations, employment creation, regional development, financial instruments, statistical collection, business support, education and training.

The Communication represents an important addition to a range of instruments now available to secure a positive environment for co-operative development and establish a level playing field with other forms of enterprise. The others include the SCE, ILO Recommendation 193 and the UN Guidelines.

The document can be found on DG Enterprise's site at :

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/coop/index.htm>



NEWS FROM ROEP

☆ **Executive committee meetings**

ICA Europe's Executive Committee met in Brussels on 3 December to prepare the European budget proposal to the ICA Board and on 22 January to take stock of the decisions taken and discuss future priorities.

The possibility of setting up a Brussels representation is being looked into following endorsement by the ICA Board last December.

☆ **“Co-operatives in Europe” project**

Building on earlier discussions, the “Co-operatives in Europe” working group has produced a Protocol of Agreement and Common Action Plan. This was presented at the CCACE meeting of 27 January attended by the European Officer and the External Advisor. The ICA Europe-CCACE Working Group met again in February to flesh out the work programme and establish immediate priorities for action. Work should be able to get underway following approval by the CCACE, which meets in Brussels on 23 March and ICA's European Council of 31 March.

☆ **European Development Task Force**

ICA's European Development Task Force will meet in Budapest on the morning of 31 March. This advisory body will receive reports on ICA's global development activities, including its proposed poverty campaign. Members will also be informed about plans to strengthen European Cohesion through the “Co-operatives in Europe” project and will review ICA Europe's Development strategy. A joint session with the European Council will be held in the afternoon.

ICA Europe has also been liaising with the Development Director to discuss a better integration of ICA European members in the ICA Development programme. The new strategy foresees a two pronged approach, focusing both on assistance to existing co-operatives and promoting new co-operatives within Europe and on adding value to ICA's global development through the poverty campaign and resource mobilisation.

☆ **ICA-ILO Conferences on implementation of ILO Recommendation 193**

Following a successful ICA-ILO conference in St. Petersburg last December, the representatives of the ILO Moscow office came to Geneva to discuss joint follow-up actions. The concluding Resolution, containing a series of recommendations to the legislative and executive institutions of the CIS countries, CIS Parliamentary Assembly, the ILO and the ICA, has been sent to the key decision-makers in the CIS.

The Resolution, along with the presentations of the conference which have been translated into English, are available from ICA Europe at icaeurope@ica.coop.

ICA Europe has been working closely with Co-op Hungary and the ILO on the organisation of the second conference on the implementation of ILO Recommendation 193, which targets EU acceding countries. The event is being held in Budapest on 1-2 April.



Guest speakers include Mr. Péter Kiss, Minister in the Prime Minister's Cabinet, Ms. Petra Ulshoefer, Director of the ILO's Sub-regional Office in Budapest and Mr. Francesco Ianniello, Head of the Co-operative Unit within DG Enterprise of the European Commission.

A series of case studies from the participant countries will follow the presentation of a discussion paper on the conference theme "ILO Recommendation 193 in practice - co-operative values and principles in national legislation".

The conference will be preceded by a Commemorative session on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the ICA Congress held in Budapest, 1904.

☆ **Regional Assembly for Europe**

Preparations for the next Regional Assembly for Europe which takes place in Warsaw on 23-24 September are well underway. The European Council is expected to agree the title and workshop themes at their meeting on 31 March. The draft programme along with background information and the registration form will be sent out early April.

☆ **Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference**

ICA Europe prepared a presentation for the 7th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference which took place in New Delhi on 2-5 February on the theme "Co-operative Legislation – The European Experience". Copies are available from ICA Europe at icaeurope@ica.coop

NEWS FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

☆ **Italy**

Confcooperative held its Congress in Rome on 17-18 March 2004. This was a particularly important meeting as elections were held to renew its governing bodies. Some 650 delegates attended, representing over 18,000 member co-operatives. The meeting was opened with a report from Confcooperative President Luigi Marino. National and European representatives from public bodies and the political and social world were also present.

Amongst the guest speakers, ICA Europe President, Dame Pauline Green, took the floor on "ICA Europe and the meaning of action and representation of a political organisation in Europe".

☆ **Serbia & Montenegro**

On 12 March ICA President Ivano Barberini attended the 110th anniversary of the first agricultural co-operative in Serbia at the invitation of the Co-operative Union of Serbia. During his visit Mr. Barberini met the Minister of Agriculture and Water Management who expressed her support for co-operatives.



The share of agriculture in the national economy exceeds 20%. With privatization, farmers currently control 90% of the agricultural production operating 1.12 million farms and 120 co-operatives. The Law on co-operative farms of 1996 provides a framework for their operation, however it requires revision.

Serbian co-operatives were among the founding organisations of ICA. The Co-operative Union of Serbia recently split from the national apex organisation, the former Co-operative Union of Yugoslavia, and has expressed the wish to become an ICA member in its own right.

☆ **Finland**

ICA President Ivano Barberini attended the celebration of the Finnish Co-operative Union's, SOK, centenary anniversary on 20 March. The President of Finland, Ms. Tarja Halonen, was guest speaker at this event which took place in the Finnish National Opera.

ICA member SOK Corporation reported a net turnover of 3.112 million Euro, up 3.8% on the previous year. For the third consecutive year, over 100,000 new members joined the S Group. This nationwide organisation regroups the SOK Corporation and co-operative societies involved in grocery and consumer goods trade, restaurant business and fuel trade, along with hotel business and agricultural trade. It is a successful customer-oriented business model which fully satisfies the needs of its customer-owners, the members. The co-operative share in retail sales represented 82% last year of which SOK Corporation accounted for 18%.

Finland is one of the most co-operative countries in the world with almost half its population being a member of one or more co-operatives.

NEWS FROM THE SECTORS

☆ **Housing**

The Board of ICA Housing met on 19 January in Geneva. The Chair, Jens Heiser, announced his intention to retire in 2004, one year before the end of the term of office. The Board nominated Mike Doyle of the US Co-operative Housing Federation as his successor on an interim basis until the next elections in 2005. The main item for discussion was a report from the UN Economic Commission for Europe's Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network (HUMAN). Members agreed to investigate the possibility of establishing a closer working relationship between ICA Housing and HUMAN.

☆ **Annual meeting of SOs**

The sectoral organisations held their annual meeting with the ICA President and Secretary General in Geneva in February. The meeting focused mainly on the decision of the Board on the need for greater co-ordination of all ICA sectoral organisations and the improvement of collaboration amongst them. Mr. Dettileux, President of Crédit Coopératif and GNC, France, was appointed as the sectoral liaison person at the ICA Board meeting last December. This also decided on annual



meetings with the sectoral organisations and agreed that they should be financially self-sufficient and responsible for their own administration.



Tourism

ICA President Ivano Barberini has been invited as guest speaker at the next BITS (Bureau International du Tourism Social) Congress, which will be held in Blankenberge, Belgium, from 28 to 30 April. The chair of ICA's Tourism Sectoral Organisation TICA, Maurizio Davolio, who is a member of the BITS Board, will also attend.

The Congress offers a rich programme around the themes of support for holidays, solidarity in tourism, the evolution of social tourism, European policies and work policies in the field of tourism. Participants include the WTO, UNESCO, the EU and the CES (the European Confederation of Unions), as well as government representatives from Europe and the Americas.

The BITS Congress will also see the setting up of BITS Africa with the initial participation of organisations from Mali, Cameroon, Ghana, Tunisia and Morocco.

For more information contact Maurizio Davolio at mdavo@tin.it

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS



Entrepreneurship Action Plan

Following the debate launched by the Green Paper on Entrepreneurship last spring, the Commission has now published an Action Plan based on the extensive feedback received. The Action Plan establishes a framework of five strategic priority areas setting out Europe's agenda for entrepreneurship in the years to come. The Action Plan outlines a series of key actions related to five strategic areas. High on the agenda are fostering entrepreneurial mindsets among young people, reducing the stigma of failure, providing support for women and ethnic minorities, reducing the complexity of complying with tax laws and facilitating business transfers.

The document is available on the Commission's website at http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/action_plan.htm

More information from ICA Europe on the Action Plan will follow.



New Enterprise Programme

DG Enterprise of the European Commission is organising a stakeholder consultation on its proposed new Enterprise Programme.

At present, the Community implements a Multi-annual Programme (MAP) for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, and in particular for small and medium-sized enterprises. This Programme will expire by the 31st December 2005.



The Commission plans to present to the Council and the European Parliament a proposal for a successor programme to the MAP in 2004. For this purpose a consultation document has been prepared by DG Enterprise with input from other relevant services of the Commission. It presents the possible elements for a Support Programme for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Competitiveness which would run from 2006 to 2010. The consultation document also presents an initial assessment of the likely impacts if the MAP was continued in its current form or if it was discontinued.

Stakeholders have until 10 May 2004 to present their views for the possible successor programme. More information and the questionnaire are available on:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/spec/index.htm

ICA Europe will be consulting its members in view of co-ordinating a possible response with the CCACE.



Promoting cohesion in an enlarged Europe

The European Commission has presented its third report on economic and social cohesion. It covers the period 2007-2013 and sets out the European Commission's vision for EU policy to reduce disparities and to promote greater economic, social and territorial cohesion in an enlarged Europe. The report contains concrete recommendations in terms of using resources with the aim of reducing economic differences between Member States and regions, to accelerate growth and promote more sustainable development. It initiates a debate on the future of the EU's cohesion policy both within and outside the European institutions.

Under the proposals for the Union's future budget, a package of 336 billion euros was allocated to cohesion policy.

The report is available on the European Commission's website at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion3/cohesion3_en.htm



Commissioners from acceding countries

The new Commissioners from the acceding countries and their respective shadow portfolios have been announced as:

Cyprus: Mr. Markos Kyprianou, Budget

Czech Republic: Mr. Miloš Kuzvart, Health and Consumer Protection

Estonia: Mr. Siim Kallas, Economic and Monetary Affairs

Hungary, Mr. Péter Balázs, Regional Policy and Institutional Reform

Latvia: Ms. Sandra Kalniete, Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development

Lithuania: Ms. Dalia Grybauskaite, Education and Culture

Malta: Mr. Joe Borg, Development and Humanitarian Aid

Poland: Ms. Danuta Hübner, Trade

Slovakia: Mr. Ján Figel, Enterprise and Information Society

Slovenia: Mr. Janez Potocnik, Enlargement



They will take up their positions on 1 May until the appointment of the new Commission in November. Whilst the new Commissioners have been twinned with colleagues from the current Member States, they will be full Members of the College and will play a full and active role in the decision making process.



Social Dimension of Globalisation

The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation presented a 168 page report to the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 24 February calling for the building of a fair and inclusive globalisation to be made a worldwide priority.

The report finds that there are deep-seated and persistent imbalances in the current workings of the global economy, which are ethically unacceptable and politically unsustainable. It advocates an urgent rethink of current policies and institutions of global governance.

The Commission developed its conclusions and recommendations after wide consultation. It proposes a series of coordinated measures across a broad front to improve governance and accountability at both national and international levels. These include fairer rules for international trade, a minimum level of social protection in the global economy; and new efforts to mobilize international resources to raise capabilities and meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Commission argues that a fair globalisation also depends on better national governance in all countries, and maps out the priorities for national, local and regional policies which can empower people to participate effectively in the opportunities of globalisation.

The report will be discussed by the ILO's Governing Body in March, and followed up at the International Labour Conference in June. It will also be submitted to Heads of State and Government, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the heads of the main international organisations, as well as other intergovernmental bodies, and to the key non-state actors of the global community. Each will be invited to debate the recommendations and consider appropriate follow-up action in their own spheres of responsibility and institutional competencies.

NEWS FROM ICA



International Accounting Standards (IAS)

Concern over the impact of IAS 32 was the main topic of discussion at the European Parliament's (EP) Social Economy Intergroup in Strasbourg on 14 January attended by the European Officer. In follow up to an exchange of views with the EP's rapporteur Lord Inglewood, a joint letter was circulated to key MEPs and the President of the European Commission, Mr. Prodi, along with Commissioners Liikanen and Bolkestein, alerting them to the problems that co-operatives and mutuals would face if the standard is adopted.

This message was reinforced with an appeal on behalf of the Co-operative Movement from ICA Europe President, Dame Pauline Green. Members gave further resonance to these concerns by targeting national contacts. Letters were notably



sent to key contacts by the President of Confcooperative Luigi Marino and Mr Jean Claude Detillieux, President of the GNC and ICA Board Member.

Following a meeting with the Commission, ICA Europe obtained that reference was included in the Communication on Co-operatives to the need to ensure that accounting standards take into account the specificities of co-operatives relating to the structure of capital and evaluation of assets.

☆ **ILO-ICA Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

On 10 February the International Labour Office (ILO) and the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) signed an agreement to implement a Common Co-operative Agenda aimed at creating decent jobs and reducing poverty.

The MoU, signed by ICA President Ivano Barberini, and Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, strengthens the historical partnership between the two organisations and will enhance efforts to develop joint programmes and projects for promoting co-operatives worldwide.

The Common Co-operative Agenda covers the implementation of Recommendation 193 at the national level. It will also seek to address the UN Millennium Development Goals, including the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, improving maternal health and reducing child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability and the development of global partnerships for development.

The agreement provides a good basis for ICA Europe's collaboration with the ILO in the organisation of the joint conferences on ILO Recommendation 193 (see above).

☆ **ICA launches Weekly Digest**

ICA's Communications Manager Garry Cronan has launched a new communication tool aimed at providing members with a brief weekly update on the activities that ICA is undertaking on their behalf. This two way information gateway also offers a platform for members to exchange information about significant developments within their organisations.

The Weekly Digest is available on the ICA website at www.ica.coop Contributions can be sent to cronan@ica.coop

PUBLICATIONS

☆ **Co-operative Governance**

The Co-operative Group, UK, will shortly publish research providing some insights into what motivates people to participate in the governance of their co-operative. The study was carried out as part of Stirling University's Mutual research programme, in partnership with the UK Co-operative College, Co-operatives UK and funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council. If you are interested in making



comments on the draft of a longer paper that the authors have also produced on this research, please contact Johnston Birchall at johnston.birchall@stir.ac.uk.

☆ **Co-operative societies as part of a system of integrated worker participation**
The Spanish research institute EZAI has produced a study with the support of the European Commission on “The economic system of co-operative societies: determining and applying co-operative results. The effect on worker-members”. For more information contact ezai@mcc.es

☆ **Co-operative development agencies**
The Belgian Higher Institute for Labour Studies has carried out a study on the role that Northern co-operatives play in supporting their colleagues in the South. The study, entitled “Development co-operation: How Co-operatives Cope. A survey of major co-operative development agencies” was presented at a workshop organised by the Belgian Cera Foundation (www.cerafoundation.be) in Brussels on 1 March.

For more information, contact Patrick Develtere, one of the study’s authors at patrick.develtere@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be

EVENTS

26-30 April	English Through Co-operation – Co-operative College language training programme, Manchester (UK), www.co-op.ac.uk
28-30 April	BITS Congress, Blankenberge (BE), mdavo@tin.it
13-15 May	Second Congress and 25 th Anniversary of the Workers’ Co-operatives, Social Co-operatives and Participative Enterprises and 33 rd Congress of the “Confédération Générale des SCOP”, Nantes (FR), cecop@cecop.coop
17-23 May	Co-operative College “Finance & Co-operatives” International Forum & Co-operative Congress, UK, www.co-op.ac.uk
2-3 July	“The Culture of development, globalisation, co-operative Enterprise”, Legacoop International Conference, Genoa, Italy s.marcone@legacoop.it
27-28 Sept.	CIRIEC Congress, Lyon (FR): The response of the Public, Social and Co-operative Economy to the expectations of Society: Basic rights, social needs, solvent demands, ciriec-france@wanadoo.fr
28-29 October	Second Social Economy Conference for CEECs, Krakow (PL) Social Entrepreneurship & Economic Efficiency krakow2004@cecop.coop



PEOPLE

- ☆ It is with sadness that we note the passing of Jacques Moreau on 8 January 2004. Former ICA Board Member, President of the Groupe Crédit Coopératif and the GNC, France, Mr Moreau will be remembered throughout the co-operative world as a significant European co-operative leader, author and thinker.
- ☆ ICA Europe Board Member Galina Kisseleva received the Order of Honour from Russian President Vladimir Putin on 8 March, International Women's Day. This special honour recognises Ms Kisseleva's contribution to Centrosojuz and the wider international co-operative movement.
- ☆ Mr Petar Stefanov, Chairman of Central Co-operative Union, Bulgaria and an Executive member of Consumer Co-op International (CCI) was recently presented with a national award for services to the economic development of his country.
- ☆ The Presidium of the General Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives in the European Union (COGECA) has elected Mr Eduardo Baamonde of the Confederación de Cooperativas Agrarias de España as its new President for the period 2004-2006.
- ☆ Ben Reid has been elected as the new Chair of Co-operatives UK. Chief Executive of West Midlands Co-op, Mr Reid succeeds Bob Burlton, who takes over as Chair of the Co-operative Group in May.
- ☆ Natasha Proutskova, in charge of international relations within Centrosojuz, will retire on 31 March. ICA Europe warmly thanks Natasha for her efficient collaboration and support over the years and wishes her a happy retirement.



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 1 June.

HOW TO CONTACT US

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

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