



Weekly Digest

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Editorial

Welcome to the twenty sixth issue of the Weekly Digest. This extended edition is devoted entirely to the recent ICA European Regional Assembly, Board meeting and related activities in Warsaw. Occasions such as these are very important for the ICA and its members. They are the forum for the exercise of members' democratic rights in the running and future direction of the ICA. They are also a meeting place for members to exchange ideas and practices on how best to manage their co-ops.

In coming weeks we will also carry reports on ICA regional assemblies in Africa, the Americas and in the Asia Pacific region. As usual we would welcome your comments on the newsletter. Remember, it's your ICA so let's hear from you!

Higher Visibility for Co-operatives in Europe

Increasingly the visibility of co-operatives in Europe is one of the main outcomes of ICA Europe's Regional Assembly, held in Warsaw on 23-24 September 2004. (See story page 2)



The Regional Assembly provided an opportunity for members of the ICA's European Council to meet with leaders of the Polish government and give support to the local movement. During their meeting with the President he indicated he would personally introduce a new co-operative bill on behalf of the Polish movement. (Pictured above are ICA Europe Council members at the Presidential Palace. Including from left Gabriella Sozanski, Jerzy Jankowski, President NCC, Ivano Barberini, Dame Pauline Green, Aleksander Kwasniewski, President of Poland, Jolanta Szymanek-Deresz, Minister in President Cabinet, Alfred Domagalski, Chairman, General Assembly of NCC.

Members Endorse “Co-operatives in Europe”

This Regional Assembly marked the tenth anniversary of ICA Europe as a separate region. It was not however, a time for looking back, but rather towards a new future.

Delegates endorsed the strategy of a joint platform of activities for ICA Europe with the Co-ordinating Committee of European Co-operative Associations (CCACE). The platform known as *Co-operatives in Europe* is already making an impression.

The key message to come out of the Regional Assembly was the need to increase our visibility with governments and European institutions. ICA Europe’s President, Dame Pauline Green reinforced this message throughout the conference. *Co-operatives in Europe* was the first step in achieving this objective she said.

The Regional Assembly also for the first time included a series of ten workshops on a wide range of co-operative topics. Delegates could attend up to five of these which proved very popular. Also for the first time a conference evaluation form was circulated to gain a better insight into member interest and needs. Both of these changes will be further developed and refined to ensure that members gain the maximum benefit from attending such events. The next ICA Europe Regional Assembly will be held in Manchester, UK in 2006.

(The photo above shows from left Gabriella Sozanski, Dame Pauline Green and ICA Europe’s Vice President Anne Santamäki, during a working section of the assembly).



Workshops Address Key Issues of Concern

The ten workshop sessions provided an opportunity to explore in detail topics of interest to members. Mention will only be made of two which focused on the issue of increasing the profile of co-operatives in Europe.



Two workshops focused ways of increasing co-operatives visibility with government and the European Commission. The main message to come out of these workshops was that all the representative co-operative organisations in Europe

need to work together to ensure that a common message is delivered on the importance of co-operative enterprises. Ray Collins from ICA Europe stressed this in his workshop as did Agnès Mathis, from CCACE in hers. *Photos Ray*

Collins and Agnès Mathis.



Thanks to Polish Hosts

The ICA would like to express its gratitude and thanks to the Polish co-operative movement and in particular to the leaders and officials from the National Co-operative Council (NCC) for their help in organising the large number of events during the week. In particular we would like to thank Jerzy Jankowski, President, NCC, Alfred Domagalski, Chair of General Assembly, NCC and Adam Piechowski, NCC (*pictured*) for all their help.

As editor I would also like to thank Stefan Zajaczkowski, editor of the Polish co-operative journal, Rainbow for his assistance and support. The Polish co-operative media was one of the impressive features of the week of events in Warsaw.



ICA Communications Committee elects new Chair

The newly reconstituted ICA Communications Committee (ICACC) met for the first time in Warsaw on Wednesday 22 September 2004. The new chair of the ICACC is Caroline Naett, (*pictured opposite*) Secretary General, Groupement National de la Coopération (GNC) in France.

Other members of the ICACC executive include Graham Mitchell, Co-operatives UK, Daniele Scaglione, Confcooperative, Italy, Suzanne Henderson, ACCORD, Australia, Purushothaman Nair, ICA ROAP, India and retiring chair of the ICACC Poul Dines, Editor, Samvirk, Denmark. Garry Cronan, ICA Communications Manager is secretary of the ICACC. *See photo below, which shows, Iain Macdonald, ICA Director-General who attend ICACC meeting next to Garry Cronan).*



Suzanne Henderson presented the results of a survey of ICACC members into communications priorities. The results indicate that co-operative communicators believe the most effective means of communications are websites and printed media, followed by conferences, newsletters and email. The survey results provided the starting point for the ICACC consideration of its priorities and workplan.

The initial focus of the ICACC will be providing increased interactivity for the ICA website and online activities. Also, over the next few months the ICACC will be identifying key co-operative communications messages nationally or sectorally which are working and could be extended globally. The survey described above will be extended to all ICA members, and others to test these messages and also identify current member needs and priorities. This will be carried out in early 2005. The results will help the ICACC develop a global communications strategy for the ICA. Contact Garry Cronan cronan@ica.coop

“Walking the Talk” – theme of Communications Forum

The first of what is hoped to be a regular annual series of *Communications Forums* was held in Warsaw on 22 September 2004. The idea of “walking the talk” or marketing the co-operative difference was highlighted in a presentation by Peter Couchman, Director for Communications and Member Service, [Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Co-operative](#), UK. Peter’s presentation was one among a number which highlighted how the co-operative message needs to be based on a real co-operative difference, not just words. All the presentations will be shortly available on the ICA website.

ICA encourages young co-operators

Young co-operators attending the ICA Regional Assembly had a unique opportunity to talk with senior ICA officials. ICA President, Ivano Barberini, Director-General, Iain Macdonald and ICA Europe’s President, Dame Pauline Green all took time out to speak about the importance of young people to the future of the global co-operative movement.

The ICA is committed to increasing the role and profile of young people in the international movement. The first ever youth representative, Jo Bibby-Scullion has been attending and participating in ICA Board meetings. Jo also chaired a special workshop session of the main Regional Assembly on *Young entrepreneurs engaging in co-operatives*. She expressed delight that the ICA President should take the time to talk with young people about the importance of the global co-operative movement. “His passion and commitment to co-operatives and the way they can help address some of the key issues of employment, poverty and development is quite inspiring” she said. Contact Jo Bibby-Scullion s0347030@sms.ed.ac.uk



Market Concentration Identified as Key Issue at Agricultural Seminar

“Internationally, we need more aggressive lobbying actions to create pro co-operative policies” said Jack Wilkinson, President of the [International Federation of Agricultural Producers](#) (IFAP). He was speaking at the joint International Agricultural Co-operative Organization (ICAO)/IFAP meeting which was part of the series of events in Warsaw. ICAO is one of the ICA’s nine global sectoral organisations. IFAP is a member along with the ICA and others in the [Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives](#), (COPAC). *Photo shows from right Won Churll-Hee, President, ICAO, and Jack Wilkinson, President, IFAP.*



Mr Wilkinson pointed out the negative impacts of industry concentrations by a few multinationals both in upstream and downstream markets. His words were echoed by Fabienne Derrien, IFAP’s Policy Officer on Co-operatives, also a speaker at the agricultural forum, who said “one of the most pressing issues faced by farmers across the globe are the increasingly competitive international markets, the high concentration in the agriculture and food sector and the decline in the number of family farms. IFAP



thinks that having well-organised structures are one of the keys to gain power, and co-operatives have a major part to play in this framework. Co-ops should put

forward a long-term agricultural policy to defend producers' interests, regardless of the government in power. If co-operatives are to negotiate legislation to support farmers, they should prepare sound, concrete and achievable proposals for governments’ use”.

Marcus Borgstrom, former President of the European Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives (COGECA) introduced some successful examples of trans-national co-operatives in Scandinavia. However in general, according to the COGECA’s position paper, co-operatives’ action have been often challenged by competition policy.

Ivano Barberini, ICA President who also addressed the joint forum called for stronger collaboration between the ICA, ILO and IFAP. Jack Wilkinson supported this call and suggested joint research to address these issues. In summarizing the discussions, Keun-Won Lyu, Secretary General, ICAO concluded that co-operatives are not isolated entities, but directly affected by national and international movements and therefore ICA, ICAO, ILO and IFAP should collaborate more.

Consumer Co-operative Seminar also considers power of Multinationals



The ICA’s sectoral organisation for consumer co-operatives, Consumer Co-op International (CCI) also held an executive meeting and open seminar in Warsaw. The seminar was chaired by CCI President Giuseppe Fabretti from Associazione Nazionale Cooperative di Consumatori, Italy (*photo*). Mr Fabretti indicated that the Consumer Co-operative Seminar had two key objectives. Firstly, to examine and learn from best practice how to manage consumer co-operatives in the increasingly competitive marketplace they operate in. “This is not easy” he said. “Co-operatives are local organisations operating in local markets, but competing against multinational chains. One response is to offer more to members. Examples of member loyalty cards and similar schemes were discussed at the seminar.” .../5

The second objective of the seminar, Mr Fabretti said was to consider what co-ops could do together at European and global levels to win the battle against the multinational retailers. “We need more in-depth discussion and study of how we can work together” he said. “How can we co-operate globally but not lose our local roots and connection?” One way was for local co-operatives to merge across borders and become larger – the experience of Co-op Norden was detailed by Ebbe Lundgaard, Chair of Co-op Norden at the seminar. Other issues discussed included, examples of co-operatives promoting fair trade, e-commerce for co-ops, and sustainable procurement strategies. *(Photo shows Lars Hillbom, former ICA Europe President discussing loyalty cards in Swedish consumer co-ops)*



ICA Housing has a new President



ICA Housing has a new President. Mike Doyle from the Co-operative Housing Federation (CHF) in the USA, *photo left*, has replaced long time President, Jens Heiser, *(photo right)* who retired at the Warsaw meeting.

Jens Heiser has spent a lifetime in the German co-operative housing sector and has made an important contribution to advancing the cause of co-operative housing at a global level during his period as ICA Housing President.

The Role of Housing Co-operatives in an enlarged Europe

One of the most popular seminars in Warsaw was organised by ICA Housing. Its topic was the role of housing co-operatives in an enlarged Europe. A number of case studies from the new EU countries were featured including, Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic States. An interesting discussion took place on new and innovative financing mechanisms for housing co-operatives. Delegates also participated in a study tour of housing co-operatives in Warsaw.

Other Sectoral and European Meetings

Several other ICA thematic committees and sectoral organisations met in Warsaw during the week. These included a Board meeting of the International Health Co-operative Organisation (IHCO), a meeting of the executive of the ICA Gender Equality Committee, a meeting of the executive of the ICA HRD Committee and a meeting and seminar of the International Co-operative Banking Association, (ICBA). Reports on a number of these meetings and seminars will be carried in future issues of the *Weekly Digest*.

ICA Board Meets

Last but not least the ICA Board met in Warsaw on 19-20 September. It was the first of the series of meetings in Warsaw and the second Board meeting of the year. The main items included consideration of the ICA new multi-annual (three year) work plans and budgets and a detailed analysis and discussion of membership. The Board also heard reports from the ICA President and Director-General on their recent efforts to increase the profile of the ICA throughout the world. Reports were also received on development and communications, including details of the soon to be launched new ICA website. The Board also heard a report from Carlos Palacino on the planning for the ICA General Assembly in Cartagena, Colombia in September 2005. The next Board meeting will be in Kenya on 10/11 December 2004. *(Photo shows ICA Vice President, Carlos Palacino with ICA Deputy DG Maria Elena Chávez Hertig during a coffee break at the Board meeting)*



Copies of the Weekly Digest are archived on the ICA's website www.ica.coop