

ICA EUROPE BULLETIN



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NEWS FROM ROEP

☆ European Council Meeting

The European Council met in Brussels on 28 September. The meeting was hosted by Febecoop and P&V Assurances, two member organisations of ICA. Council members expressed their concern about the global financial situation of the ICA and suggested setting up a working group to discuss thoroughly the future of ICA Europe. The working group will submit a discussion paper with proposals to the next meeting of the European Council, which will be held in Prague on 22 March 2002.

☆ Development Task Force meeting

The Development Task Force held a meeting in Paris on 17 September hosted by Crédit Mutuel. Several projects were discussed, including a proposal from Vilnius Co-operative College, Lithuania on setting up a Young Enterprise Development Centre and a pilot programme organised by the UK Co-operative College "Improving Your English Through Co-operation".

☆ Fourth ICA European Development Workshop

The Workshop, entitled "Strength of co-operative identity in a globalised economy" hosted by KF and co-organised by KF Project Center in Stockholm on 26-27 November was a great success. More than 50 participants representing various co-operative sectors in 17 countries attended the workshop. After the opening remarks of Lars Hillbom, ICA Europe President, Mr. Börje Fors, acting CEO of KF, welcomed participants and gave a historic overview of Nordic co-operation. The three sessions covered the themes of "Membership relations", "Increased integration as a survival strategy for co-operatives" and "The implications of European legislation on co-operative development in the CEECs". The presentations are available on the ICA Europe web site: <http://www.coop.org/europe/4thdevworkshop>

As an immediate follow-up, a meeting will be organised on one of the main themes of the Stockholm Workshop on membership relations. The Co-operative Group of the UK has invited all European member organisations of ICA interested in exchanging experiences on "active ownership" to the meeting organised in Manchester late February or early March 2002. More information will follow soon.

*WE WISH YOU ALL A MERRY
CHRISTMAS AND A VERY HAPPY
NEW YEAR*





☆ New member

The Estonian Co-operative Association, regrouping 15 central co-operatives and associations and 45 co-operative societies with 40,000 members, was adopted as a new member of ICA at the ICA Board meeting in Seoul. As an apex organisation, it represents several sectors, such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, consumers, health and credit

☆ New publication

The presentations of the ICA Europe-ICAO Joint Workshop "Promotion of rural development through agricultural co-operatives in CEECs" held in Budapest on 17-20 June have been printed and sent to participants as well as to members of ICAO and ICA. For further copies please contact ROEP at icaeurope@coop.org

Regional Assembly, Lisbon, October 2002

Please remember to mark the dates of the Regional Assembly for Europe in your diary. Elections to the European Council will take place at the Assembly.

- Regional Assembly, 10-11 October
- European Council, 9 October (14:00)
- Specialised bodies, 8-9 October
- ICA Board, 11 October (16:00) and 12 October all day

NEWS FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

☆ Romania

At the Congress of the Romanian Consumer Co-operatives held on 15 November 2001 Dr Nicolae Gavrilă was elected president of CENTROCOOP. Born in the district of Alba in 1957, his career in the co-operative movement started in 1978. He was president of the Alba Territorial Federation of Consumer Co-operatives. Dr Gavrilă holds a degree in economic sciences and a Ph.D. Mr. George Gavrilescu was re-elected vice-president of CENTROCOOP.

☆ Sweden

KF, Skandia and Telia are launching a new bank. **Coop Bank** will offer essential financial services with competitive terms. The bank's main channel of distribution will be the Internet, however deposits and withdrawals can be made in the various supermarkets and hypermarkets belonging to the co-operative group. The goal is for Coop Bank to quickly become one of Sweden's leading banks.

For the first time in KF's (**Kooperativ Förbundet**) history a woman has been elected chairperson. Nina Jarlbäck will take up her office on 1 January 2002 upon the retirement of Göran Axell. She has been a member of the KF Board since 1995 and vice chairperson of KF since June 2000.



Born in Denmark she moved to Sweden when she was 10 years old and settled in Eskilstuna, where she started her co-operative career in Domus, the co-operative department store. She will leave her position in the local government of Eskilstuna. Ms. Jarlbäck is a member of the Board of Folksam, Riksbyggen and Coop Norden AB as well as chair of the big consumer co-operative society, Svea.

KF Project Center has a new web page in English. The address is: <http://www.kfprojectcenter.se>

☆ United Kingdom

At the **Special Congress of the Co-op Union** held in Manchester on 24 November a merger was agreed between the Co-operative Union and ICOM, the Industrial Common Ownership Movement. For the first time two important wings of the Movement, workers and consumers have a single voice. The fact that a third body, the United Kingdom Co-operative Council, now shares offices with the Co-operative Union, means that producer co-operatives, credit unions, housing co-ops and all the other members of the co-operative family are moving closer and closer together.

Delegates at the Congress also agreed on the recommendations of the Co-operative Commission. Among others the proposal to establish a national co-operative foundation to be called "Co-operative Action" was also approved. The aim of the foundation is to develop, support and research innovative ideas, which provide co-ops or self-help solutions to community problems. The Co-operative Action will be launched at the Social Enterprise Summit Meeting to be held next February. The remaining 28 recommendations of the Commission's Report out of the 60 will be discussed at the next Congress of the Co-operative Union in Belfast, May 2002.

"The Co-operative Family **Credit Union** is bouncing along nicely since its launch in 1998 and we now service over 1,200 members, making us one of the fastest-growing credit unions in the country." – said President Chris Smith. The Manchester-based credit union set up to assist employees and pensioners of the Co-operative Group, CIS, Co-op Bank and Co-op Union has now loaned out over 1 million pounds to members.

However, with families of employees and pensioners also eligible to join, the credit union has an estimated potential membership of around 25,000 in Greater Manchester, so there is plenty of room for further expansion.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

☆ Progress Reports

In its yearly report adopted on 13 November, the European Commission underlines the substantial progress made by all candidate countries towards meeting the accession criteria for EU membership. However, the Commission also calls for further efforts to ensure the proper implementation and enforcement of the European Union's rules and standards (the 'acquis communautaire') before accession. To this end, the Commission will set out an action plan to help candidate countries reinforce their administrative and judicial capacity. The negotiations will continue to be based on the same principles that have been followed so far, in particular according to the merits of each country. The negotiations will proceed in line with the 'road map' and the timetable endorsed by the European Council, which foresee conclusion of the negotiations with the best prepared countries by the end of 2002.



The full country reports and the overall evaluation report are available at:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm./enlargement/report2001/index.htm>

On the two economic criteria - existence of a functioning market economy, and the capacity to withstand competitive pressure and market forces within the Union - the conclusion is as follows:

- Cyprus and Malta have confirmed that they are functioning market economies and should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces in the Union.
- Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia are functioning market economies. There are substantial economic differences among these countries, but provided they continue with a number of measures detailed in each specific regular report, they should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the near term.
- Bulgaria is close to being a functioning market economy. Provided it continues implementing reforms and intensifies the reform effort to remove persistent difficulties, it should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term.
- Romania does not yet meet either criteria but has, for the first time, made decisive progress towards this objective.
- Turkey has been unable to make further progress towards achieving a functioning market economy. Considerable parts of its economy are, however, already competing in the EU market, under the framework of the customs union.

☆ **White Paper on Co-operatives**

In his speech delivered at the European Social Economy Conference held in Ghent, Belgium, on 14 November, Erkki Liikanen, Member of the European Commission said:

"This year, with the drafting of a paper on "Co-operatives in Enterprise Europe", we have already taken a big step in improving our knowledge and understanding of the co-operative sector. The paper provides an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages inherent in the co-operative form of enterprise. It also considers the potential contribution of co-operatives to European policies and what the Commission and the Member States can do to optimise these contributions.

The paper makes it very clear that co-operatives have an important place in an economy. They are enterprises that are capable of surviving and succeeding in a competitive environment without special advantages. Co-operatives nevertheless need a regulatory environment that takes account of their specific characteristics.

We want to be absolutely sure that the paper reflects the real concerns and priorities of the co-operative sectors. I am therefore very pleased to announce to you today that between the end of this month and February the Commission will use this paper as the basis of a full consultation exercise. It will be available soon on the DG Enterprise website and I urge you to react to it.

We will organise a hearing in February 2002 with experts from the co-operative sector to ensure that when the paper is published (perhaps in the form of a Commission Communication) it forms a sound basis for our future actions. We do not intend to leave this document in a filing cabinet. We will follow up its recommendations in close contact with the officials of the Member States that have a responsibility for the regulation and development of the co-operative sector."



Reminder

The draft paper of the Commission will be sent to all members in Europe for comments. This will be the first official document of the European Commission on co-operatives. Both the 15 Member States of the EU and the CEECs will be affected. Therefore your input is extremely important. Please send your comments to ICA Europe at the address below as soon as possible.

☆ **European Co-operative Statute**

At the same Social Economy Conference Mr. Liikanen made the following statement:

"The Belgian Presidency has made good progress this year in trying to achieve agreement between the Member States on the draft text of the European Co-operative Statute. We will continue to work with the Spanish Presidency to make sure that this statute is a practical tool for the transnational activities of co-operatives. A tool that respects their specific characteristics and enables them to compete on a level playing field with investor-driven companies.

As soon as the Co-operative Statute is adopted, we must also be ready to make sure that the other Commission proposals, for a European Association and a European Mutual, follow on quickly."

NEWS FROM ICA

☆ **Successful General Assembly in Korea**

European organisations participated in great numbers at the ICA General Assembly. Out of the total of 682 registered participants, 200 were Europeans (121 delegates) from 23 countries. Most of the specialised organisations held statutory meetings or seminars and took an active part in the Business Forums.

Mr. Ivano Barberini, President of Legacoop, Italy was elected President of ICA after Mr. Roberto Rodrigues resigned. The newly elected Board met briefly in Seoul and set up a Task Force to look into the future of ICA. Its task will be to restructure, reform and improve the efficiency of the work of ICA in its entirety, to review its financial, organisational and subscription frameworks and relationships between the global and regional offices. Its members, Ivano Barberini, Osseynou Dieng, Pauline Green, Yehuda Paz, Glenn Tully and K-J. Fogelström will meet in Geneva on 30 November. On 1 December a Board meeting will be held in Geneva, to decide on the priorities, work plan and budget for 2002.

The General Assembly proceedings will be printed in the next issue of the Review of International Co-operation. The DG report, the motions adopted at the statutory meeting and the papers presented at the Business Forums are available on the ICA web site:

<http://www.coop.org/ica/ica/icaevents/ga2001/index.html>

☆ **Staff changes**

As a consequence of the Motion adopted by the General Assembly in Seoul on the financial situation of ICA and the decision to cut costs by 10 per cent, some measures have been taken to restructure Head Office.



Mats Ahnlund, Membership Director, will leave ICA on 31 January 2002. His responsibilities will be handed over to Gabriella Sozánski who will continue to be the Regional Director for Europe. ICA Europe's activities will be more integrated in the ICA global activities in order to take best advantage of the resources available. Planning to define next year's focus areas, the workplan and the allocation of the budget for the priority activities is currently in process.

Fanja Rasolomanana, IT Manager and co-ordinator of youth activities will also leave ICA on 31 January 2002. Pascale Blyth, ICA Europe Programme Officer will be the new webmaster of ICA. A Communications Director will be recruited.

☆ **Dot.coop**

An agreement between ICA, NCBA and DotCooperation LLC was signed on 13 November 2001, which sets out the partnership role of ICA in the management and development of the new top level domain name .coop. An official signing ceremony will be held on 5 December in Rochdale.

On 21 November, DCLLC completed its agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, ICANN. Press releases will soon follow, on the one hand to announce the global launch of .coop on 30 January 2002 and on the other the possibility for registered .coop domain owners of having their new .coop web site go live. For more details check the web site of .coop at <http://www.cooperative.org>

☆ **Research**

Akira Kurimoto succeeds Roger Spear as Chair of the Research Committee of the ICA. This was agreed at their recent meeting in Seoul, Korea, held in conjunction with the ICA General Assembly.

The next Research Conference will be held from 9-12 May 2002 in Naousa, Thessaloniki, Greece under the title "Local Society and Global Economy: The Role of Co-operatives." This Conference will be hosted by the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of West Macedonia, Greece.

For further information, please contact Yohanan Stryjan, chairman of the European section of the Research Committee at Yohanan.Stryjan@sh.se or visit the following web sites: <http://kastoria.teikoz.gr/ICA2002> or <http://www.coop.org/ica/ica/sb/research.html>

NEWS FROM UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

☆ **UN Guidelines on co-operatives**

On 24 October 2001, the United Nations Third Committee of the General Assembly unanimously agreed to put forward a draft resolution, which will bring official recognition by the UN "Guidelines aimed at creating a support environment for the development of cooperatives".

Internationally recognized guidelines to assist governments in adopting enabling policies for co-operative development and growth are expected to be passed by the UN General Assembly before the end of this year.



This official recognition marks the end of a long process of consultation and lobbying by the co-operative movement. The guidelines were drafted by representatives of the co-operative movement and submitted to the UN through the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives (COPAC). Co-operatives will find the guidelines extremely useful in approaching government to negotiate changes in existing laws and administrative practices.

For more information go to: <http://www.copacgva.org/guidelines-progress.htm>

☆ **International Federation of Agricultural Producers - IFAP**

At the World Farmers Congress held in Hannover in May 2000, IFAP decided to create a Young Farmers Committee. The Secretariat has been involved in elaborating a programme for young farmers and setting up an international network. If you are interested in joining the network please send your contact details and information on your activities to Nora Ourabah, economist, secretary for IFAP Young Farmers Committee, NoraOURABAH@ifap.org

The first session of IFAP Committee on Young Farmers will take place in Cairo, Egypt on 27-28 May 2002. The First IFAP World Congress of Young Farmers has been scheduled for June 2003 in Paris. It will be organised jointly with CNJA, the French Organisation of Young Farmers and CEJA, the European Young Farmers Organisation.

☆ **ILO**

Co-operatives in the ILO is the title of the new web page set up by the Co-op Branch. Its address is: http://oracle02.ilo.org/empent/empent.portal?p_lang=EN&p_prog=C

☆ **Council of Europe**

The second joint NGO/Parliamentarians' Conference entitled "Citizenship, solidarity: what sort of Europe do we want?" held in Strasbourg on 6-7 November 2001 adopted a Declaration. It confirmed the vital role of NGOs in European society as an indispensable element of democracy and invited both the Parliamentary Assembly and the NGOs enjoying consultative status with the Council of Europe to intensify co-operation, by improving their access to the work of the Parliamentary Committees. Participants of the Conference expressed the wish that the Committee of Ministers' Resolution (93)38 on relations between the Council of Europe and international NGOs be revised in order to reflect the present partnership between international NGOs and the Council of Europe (CoE).

In conjunction with the above Conference, NGO representatives from Central and Eastern Europe were invited to make a working visit to the CoE. ICA was also entitled to suggest candidates and thus one co-operative delegate could be included in the group of 30 representatives.

You will find more information on the NGO activities within the Council of Europe at: <http://www.ngo.coe.int>



HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

All member organisations are 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 15 February 2002.

HOW TO CONTACT US

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

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