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Governments should enable co-operative shelter to grow



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To help the co-operative sector have a greater impact in shelter development, governments need to provide the necessary enabling environment: appropriate legislation, [more...](#)

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ICA members support youth network

To date, 21 members have replied favourably to the recent letter signed by ICA President, Roberto Rodrigues in support of an ICA youth network to share experiences on youth issues.

This is an excellent starting point, given the quality of the information contained in these replies.

ICA members are active in providing education to primary and secondary school pupils and also provide special seminars to university students or young professionals in co-operative organisations. Children enrolled in school co-operatives receive education on co-operative values and principles and are trained in leadership. They are encouraged to set-up activities using the co-operative models. Co-operatives in the region sponsor these activities on an on-going basis.

ICA members continue to give opportunities for internship and employment to young people, encourage the creation of co-operative organisations run by young people and give continued education to young co-operative leaders.

Participation at different levels of decision-making is still an emerging concept for the co-operative movement. Some co-operative organisations are encouraging small groups of young people to act as advisory boards to the co-operative board.

Co-operatives who send their information on youth and show interest in participating in the ICA youth network will help shape the ICA youth policies and strategies.

A directory of the co-operative organisations engaged in supporting youth issues and co-operative organisations run by young people, with a summary of their activities, has been prepared and will be circulated to the ICA youth network. This directory will be updated on an on-going basis as and when replies are received. The first issue will be available for the up-coming ICA Board meeting in Rome, 18-20 April.

We encourage you to send any information you have on youth activities and manifest your interest in taking part in the ICA youth network in order to be included in this directory.

[Fanja Rasolomanana](#)

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European researchers to explore social capital

The ICA European research conference will be held in conjunction with the 7th European Conference on Social Economy, in Gävle, Sweden, 7-9 June. The theme of both is “The Social Capital of the Future” – how co-operatives and social enterprise may be used as a resource in European policies to give citizens influence and responsibility.

The ICA event will give participants the opportunity to explore, within the broader context of issues facing the social economy in Europe, the specific role of co-operatives and social enterprise in society. Here is a selection of topics to be discussed:

- The identity of co-operatives and social enterprise
- New social enterprises
- Social economy and women
- Social economy and leadership
- Social entrepreneurship
- The transformation of co-operatives in Eastern Europe
- Growth and dynamics in the social economy
- Legislation

Findings may help social enterprises to cope with their environment and develop relationships with their different stakeholders in society.

For further information on the ICA European research conference, please visit <http://www.coop.org/ica/ica/icacreurope2001.html>

[Roger Spear](#)

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In a community with a struggling economy people pool capital in a co-operative venture fund

The BCA Investment Co-operative Investment Fund has raised over half a million dollars in its most recent campaign, with some 160 individuals purchasing shares in the fund this year.

The fund's mission is to develop a capital pool to be invested in business within Cape Breton and Northern Nova Scotia communities in Canada. In a strategy adapted to non-metropolitan areas with a resource-based economy in decline as a result of outmigration, the primary target for the offering was Cape Breton Island.

"We are delighted with the response of the Cape Breton community to our investment fund," says Dr Charles MacDonald, campaign chairman. "The board members and volunteers did a remarkable job in a short time. In prosperous cities it is often said that people in high unemployment areas have a tendency to depend on government. The BCA phenomenon indicates something different – that people are willing to put up their own money to create jobs and a future for their own community."

The BCA Investment Co-operative, an ethical investment fund, was launched just over a year ago, and now has 300 shareholders and nearly \$1.5 million for direct investment in Cape Breton. The fund is an offshoot of BCA Holdings, incorporated in the early 1990s by a group of community-minded Cape Breton businessmen and professionals who were convinced that investment in the community by local people is the key to development of the Island.

The BCA group has no permanent staff and relies on a strong contingent of volunteers.

"If you're looking for information on venture financing, community economic development financing, or information on the BCA complex of companies, you've come to the right place." (Extract from the BCA website)

[Greg MacLeod](#)
<http://www.ced.ns.ca/bca>

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Japanese co-operatives strengthen sanchoku

Delivering the freshest food with confidence

Of the total food sales by co-operatives in Japan, 400 billion yen or close to 20% is now attributed to sanchoku, that is, direct transaction with producers, the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) has announced.

As direct purchase from agricultural producers is expanding within the conventional supermarket sector, says JCCU, many co-operatives in Japan are strengthening direct transaction with producers as a part of their plan to reinforce their perishable divisions.

To support their drive to "deliver the freshest food with confidence," JCCU organised the 17th Annual National Sanchoku Conference in Tokyo. More than 175 people, including co-operative members and others related to co-operative business, attended the conference.

Two main reports were presented: one on standards and the other on logistics of the direct transaction business. The first discussed, in addition to minimum requirements, the need for co-operatives to establish a method to trace all produce with multi-faceted member participation. The second called for clarifying the characteristics of logistics to improve the quality and freshness of the directly transacted produce, and the need to restructure the distribution system.

There was also an exchange of information about how to revitalise fallow land and support farmers, and the mechanism to promote improved production by producers.

Principles of sanchoku are:

- To identify the location and producers.
- To specify the method of production and fertilisation.
- To clarify how to have a meaningful exchange between co-op members and producers.

Standards of sanchoku are:

- To promote multi-faceted member participation based on members' demands and requests.
- To make the location of the produce and the method of production clear.
- To establish a verification system by keeping records of spot checks and all analysis.
- To establish a partnership based on self-sufficiency and equality with producers in order to promote self-sustaining production and protect the environment.
- To implement sustainable production and environment-friendly activities.



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A third major co-operative in Japan offers internet shopping

Shutoken Co-op has become the first co-operative in the Kanto (Tokyo and environs) area and the third in Japan to offer internet shopping to its members. Co-op Kobe and Miyagi Co-op launched internet businesses last year.

Shutoken is a union of 13 individual consumer co-operatives in Tokyo and six neighbouring prefectures. Two of these, Do Co-op and Yuai Co-op, have started offering merchandise for all storeless businesses (i.e., joint purchase and individual home delivery service) from their website.

As of 1 February, the two co-operatives had 1,500 members registered as internet customers. By the end of May they aim to have 10% of the entire membership of 54,000 as online shoppers. Members, who would place orders once a week through non-store operations, now have the convenience of placing orders 24 hours a day. The internet also gives them the advantage of checking and tracking the status of their orders themselves.

Catalogue merchandise of co-operatives is normally offered only through the joint purchase delivery system.

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Bikini Day

Peace rally in Japan renews resolve to ban nuclear weapons

In what was termed the first peace gathering of the new millennium, 200 representatives from 25 co-operatives gathered in Shizuoka - on South Honshu in central Japan - to mark Bikini Day on 1 March. It was on that day in 1954 that the USA tested the hydrogen bomb in Bikini, an atoll in North Pacific in the Marshall Islands, also the site of atomic bomb tests in 1946. (And yes, the very brief two-piece bathing suit is named after Bikini).

Co-op Shizuoka and the Japanese Consumers Co-operative Union (JCCU) organise this annual Peace Assembly to enable members to recall the first hydrogen bomb test and the incident of Daigo Fukuryu-Marū, a fishing boat named Fifth Lucky Dragon, which happened to be near Rongerik Island where the ashes fell that day. Base port of the Daigo Fukuryu-Marū was Yaizu City in the Shizuoka Prefecture.

This incident when reported provoked a movement to ban nuclear and atomic bombs throughout Japan. In August 1955, the first world conference to ban nuclear weapons was held.

This year the rally began with a concert for the Chernobyl Children by the Ukrainian singer Natalia Mihailovna, who now lives in Tokyo. Then there was testimony by sailors on the Daigo Fukuryu-Marū and a recap of the investigation of Rongerik Island. Each co-operative gave a report on its peace activities. Participants also discussed how nuclear weapons have affected their lives and looked for ways to abolish these weapons.

Says a release from JCCU: "The Japanese will never forget the effect of nuclear weapons and we will continue the peace movement to make the new century on earth one without nuclear weapons."

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Co-operative movement in Norway opposes proposed law to ban new credit associations

Co-operative organisations in Norway have reacted strongly against a suggestion in the Banking Law Commission's draft legislation on financial undertakings that the establishment of new credit associations be forbidden.

The Commission, appointed by the Norwegian government, proposes that existing credit associations be allowed to continue, whereas new associations should no longer be permitted. The reasons given are mainly two: that the Commission does not see much need for establishing new associations, given the scope and structure of the capital market; and that the right to establish non-stock (mutual) institutions largely covers the needs that the association, as a form of organising credit and savings, is designed to meet.

Political deliberations of the draft are expected to start late this year or the beginning of 2002. Should the proposed ban on new credit associations become part of a new law, there will in fact remain only one credit association in Norway – Landkreditt, serving mainly farmers and business activities related to agriculture and rural areas.

The co-operative movement in Norway has begun to lobby against the proposed ban. Co-operative organisations in agriculture, consumer, housing and fishing - with a joint forum in the Norwegian Standing Committee on Co-operative Affairs - have in their comments on the draft legislation stressed the freedom of organisation. This freedom, they point out, also comprises the right to choose the most appropriate form of organisation, according to the interests and needs of the participants in question and to the tasks to be accomplished, regardless of the sector of economy or type of activity.

The co-operative organisations will closely follow the political debate on the issue, and are prepared to take action for further information and discussion with policymakers and other participants in the political process to come, says May Woldsnes, secretary of the Norwegian Standing Committee on Co-operative Affairs. She adds: "Any comments, suggestions or advice concerning legal framework for credit associations, as experienced by co-operatives in other countries, are most welcome! Please contact me by e-mail mw@norgesvel.no

[May Woldsnes](#)

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Seminar to focus on role of co-operatives in furthering consumer education in Europe

A joint seminar of Eurocoop and Kooperativa Förbundet (KF), to be held in Malmö, Sweden, 25-27 April, will spotlight consumer co-operatives' contribution to consumer education in Europe and how crossborder co-operation among co-operatives may enhance it.

Consumer education is an integral part of the European Union's consumer policy, and consumer co-operatives have a unique role to play in helping consumers acquire the skills, attitudes and knowledge for making appropriate choices, says Mats Ahnlund, secretary of the ICA specialized organization CCI (Consumer Co-op International) "Today these aims must also be achieved with a higher degree of crossborder co-operation among co-operatives."

Why Malmö in April? The choice, according to the hosts, had to do with:

- lining up the consumers' point of view on European consumer co-operatives' future tasks;
- the Swedish government's presidency of the EU started in January 2001;
- the European Ministers of Internal Market and Consumer Tasks will meet in the neighbouring city of Lund at the same time

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ILO studies impact of gender policies in three countries

The International Labour Office (ILO) has initiated a series of studies to identify and document good practices in co-operatives which demonstrate the positive economic and social impact that equal opportunity policies and practices have had on co-operatives in the Philippines, Norway and Italy.

The studies, undertaken by the ILO COOPNET Programme together with the InFocus Programme on Small Enterprise Development (SEED), view "successful business" and the measurement of economic success from the perspective of co-operatives, characterised by their dual nature as both businesses and associations of people.

Co-operatives today realise, and the ICA Gender Strategy notes, that addressing gender equality issues is not only a moral obligation in line with co-operative principles and values but also makes good economic sense. "Co-operatives are recognising the enormous potential that the steadily growing number of highly qualified and competent women in the labour force represent. They are also becoming increasingly aware of the fact that specific gender policies and practices can improve their market share by broadening their membership and customer base and improving their image and credibility", says Anne-Brit Nippierd of the ILO Co-operative Branch.

In the Philippines the ILO study covers six co-operative societies, analysing through concrete data the impact that women in leadership positions have had on their organisations' economic and social results. The six societies are all located in Cebu and affiliated to the National Confederation of Co-operatives (NATCCO), an ICA member organisation.

In Norway the studies are being carried out in the consumer and dairy co-operative sectors and, like the Philippine study, will illustrate how women in leadership make a difference. Member and employee satisfaction, loyalty, motivation and improvement in work environment as well as productivity and profitability, are being examined and assessed over a period of six months.

In Italy, ICA member Legacoop has carried out a preliminary study of 3,000 societies across the country and six of these will be examined more closely. The selected six represent different types of co-operatives: industrial (producing clothes), social (providing services to children), workers' productive (involved in the restoration and management of archaeological sites and museums) and service (active in eco-tourism).

Findings from the studies will be discussed in a technical workshop organised by Legacoop in September 2001, in which ICA will also participate. Good practice guidelines will be developed as well as strategies for future action. The findings are expected to be of interest not only to co-operative organisations and businesses around the world but also to similar enterprises concerned with the promotion of gender equality.

Excerpt from CoopNet Update
[Anne-Brit Nippierd](#)



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