

International Workshop on Cooperative Law and Public Policy

Law, cooperative identity, and sustainable development

13h30 – 17h30 CET

|

23 August 2025

Hybrid – Hosted from the Juraj Dobrila University in Pula, Croatia

Information Note

Introduction

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) serves as the global custodian of the “cooperative identity”, grounded in the values and principles articulated in the ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity, adopted by the ICA General Assembly in Manchester, United Kingdom, in 1995. Entrusted by its member organizations and the broader cooperative movement, the ICA bears the institutional responsibility to preserve and advance the cooperative identity, ensuring its meaningful reflection in national and international legal frameworks.

The designation of 2025 as the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives (IYC), following the inaugural proclamation in 2012 declared in 2009, signals a renewed affirmation by the international community of the vital role cooperative enterprises play in achieving inclusive, democratic, and sustainable development. It underscores a collective reliance on the cooperative model as an instrument for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fostering resilient economies in shaping the post SDG agenda. In pursuit of this mandate, the ICA and its regional offices have undertaken a seminal global research initiative co-funded by the European Union: The **Legal Framework Analysis (LFA)**. Conducted during 2017-2021, this project represents the most comprehensive comparative study of cooperative legislation to date. Between 2017 and 2021, the ICA published 80 national reports and 4 regional reports, systematically analyzing the general and sector-specific legal environments affecting cooperatives worldwide. Commencing in 2025, the ICA will inaugurate the second phase of the Legal Framework Analysis. This iteration seeks to expand the geographical scope of the research and to deepen the analytical focus by producing global thematic reports, including those dedicated to particular types of cooperatives and evolving legal challenges.

Within the framework of its Financial Partnership with the European Union, the ICA is convening an **International Workshop on Cooperative Law** to provide a platform for dialogue among legal scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and emerging professionals on contemporary legal and policy issues affecting cooperatives at the national, regional, and international levels. The Workshop will immediately precede the 2025 **Cooperative Law Summer School**, co-organized by the ICA and the St. Mary's University Canada, aimed at cultivating the next generation of cooperative legal experts.

International Law and Cooperatives

In international law and policy, the cooperative identity occupies a distinct normative space. It is a codified expression of the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and economic democracy that underpin several international declarations and resolutions. Among these, the UN Resolution A/RES/64/136 on cooperatives in social development declaring 2025 as the IYC, the 2002 ILO Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation (No. 193), and the 2001 UN Draft Guidelines aimed at



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Creating a Supportive Environment for the Development of Cooperatives collectively affirm that cooperatives merit a differentiated legal and regulatory approach, one that reflects their people-centered character and social function. Cooperative law is not merely a technical legal instrument; it is the principal legal expression of cooperative identity. The existence of legal frameworks that differentiate cooperatives from investor-owned and other types of firms, protect member control, embed value-based governance, and allow for diverse cooperative forms (worker, producer, consumer, financial, multi-stakeholder) is essential to the survival and flourishing of cooperatives in economies. Where legal regimes fail to align with cooperative identity, cooperatives risk dilution, being mischaracterized, over-regulated, or legally invisible. As such, cooperative law serves as both a safeguard and an enabler. It protects the uniqueness of the cooperative form and enables its application in new and evolving contexts, including the digital economy, platform work, ecological transitions, and care services.

The Legal Framework Analysis (LFA): Building Legal Intelligence Across Borders

As the ICA prepares to launch the second edition of the LFA (LFA 2.0) in September 2025, it recognizes the necessity of reviewing and refining where necessary, both the substantive content and methodology of the research. In this regard, and to celebrate the theory and practice of cooperative law, the ICA will host a landmark International Workshop on Cooperative Law, as one of the foundational steps in shaping the next phase of this initiative.

Objectives of the Workshop

The International Workshop aims to convene lawyers and professionals from related disciplines from across jurisdictions to:

1. Exchange knowledge and comparative perspectives on cooperative legal regimes at national, regional, and international levels;
2. Identify persistent and emerging legal challenges affecting the formation, governance, financing of activities, and transformation of cooperative enterprises;
3. Critically review and update the existing LFA questionnaire and research methodology, incorporating lessons learned and new legal developments, including digitalization, transnational cooperative activity, and social and solidarity economy (SSE) frameworks;
4. Reaffirm the normative role of cooperative law in safeguarding cooperative identity and supporting inclusive and sustainable economies;
5. Foster intergenerational dialogue and capacity-building by engaging legal scholars, practitioners, students, and young professionals in cooperative legal discourse.

Expected Outcomes

As a result of this convening and the Summer School, the ICA expects to achieve:

- A shared diagnostic of the **core legal issues** currently affecting cooperatives in various jurisdictions;
- Strengthened capacity within ICA offices and partner organizations to lead or support the upcoming research;
- Proposals to refine the methodology for LFA 2.0 and preparation for its launch in September 2025.

In convening this International Workshop, the ICA renews its commitment to advancing cooperative law as a pillar of democratic economic governance. As the global movement prepares to observe the

2025 UN International Year of Cooperatives, it does so with a recognition that cooperative identity must be defended not only in policy, but also in law.

Provisional Programme

| Time | Event |
|---------------|---|
| 12h00 – 13h15 | Networking Lunch |
| 13h15 – 13h30 | Assembling in the meeting room Online participants welcomed |
| 13h30 – 14h15 | <p><u>Opening Session</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome by ICA Global Office (5') - Welcome by Saint Mary's University (5') - Message by Juraj Dobrila University (10') <p><u>Key Thematic Messages</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hagen Henry, Chair ICA Cooperative Law Committee (10') - Cynthia Giagnocavo, Chair ICA Cooperative Research Committee (5') - Monica Viviana Tepfer, ITUC Legal Unit (10') |
| 14h15 – 15h20 | <p><u>What did we find in LFA (2017-2021) -</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speakers from ICA Regions present the main findings of the regional LFA reports (15' each) - Q/A |
| 15h20 – 15h40 | Short Break |
| 15h40-16h20 | <p>Presenting key developments in the field of cooperative law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harmonization of Laws in Africa - 20 years of SCE Regulation - Harmonization of Laws in the Americas - Reviewing cooperative legislation in the South Pacific |
| 16h20-17h05 | <p><u>What can we do better in LFA (2025-2028)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderated Discussions among experts and the house on the questions and methodology |
| 17h05-17h30 | <p><u>Closing session</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Symposium on Cooperative Law at the Peace Palace to mark United Nations IYC 2025 - 5th International Forum on Cooperative Law, Moshi, Tanzania - LFA 2.0 – Get involved! - <u>Closing remarks</u> |



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If You Haven't Yet Registered for the Event, please do so before August 20 Using this Link

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sv/mN1yjSY/PulaWorkshop2025>

