



International
Co-operative
Alliance

YOUNG PEOPLE AND COOPERATIVES: A PERFECT MATCH?

Global thematic research report

#coops4dev



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As 2020 marked the ICA's 125th year, we are inspired and strengthened by the rich historical knowledge and traditions of cooperation. However, even today, young people are almost invisible in this space, and in new times of economic and social upheaval, it is crucial that youth are at the heart of a renewed and resilient cooperative movement.

This report presents the results of a collaborative research project on the theme of cooperatives and youth, developed by the ICA and its four regional offices under the ICA-EU Partnership for international cooperative development (#coops4dev🌍). Expertise and external support have been provided by the Co-operative College (UK) and valuable contributions made by members of the ICA Youth Network and its regional counterparts.

This report aims to determine how the cooperative movement can better support and engage with young people. The research aims to provide clear insights on the key challenges facing youth today, from the perspective of young people themselves. In addition, it focuses on if and how cooperatives can work to address these challenges. Based on 420 responses from young people in 20 countries, it provides a global snapshot of young people's views and opinions from within and outside the cooperative movement.

The work is structured into five main chapters, referred to as the five 'E's: employment, education, (in)equalities, engagement and entrepreneurship. Each chapter was developed based upon the direct input of young people and highlights interesting examples and insights into youth cooperation. It is clear that priorities for young people include the pursuit of decent work opportunities, quality and accessible education, economic and social inclusion, as well as inclusive participation in civic and political life. Young people note that much of this is currently jeopardised by multi-dimensional forms of poverty, inequities and pressures of our current global economic system, as well as unsustainable practices that lead to unprecedented levels of environmental destruction and degradation. Cooperatives, as people centred and democratic enterprises, can and should play a greater role in a transition towards a more sustainable way of life.

It is already clear that existing youth engagement and support from the cooperative movement needs to be improved. Potential action can be taken in a number of areas, which are further developed within the report.

The main areas identified include but are not limited to:

- improving knowledge of cooperatives amongst young people
- boosting the image of cooperatives and communicating it effectively
- developing genuine youth orientated structures within cooperatives
- building genuine democratic and inclusive cultures of cooperation
- promoting decent work opportunities for young people through cooperatives
- facilitating cooperative entrepreneurship through adequate enabling environments
- building and strengthening constructive partnerships to achieve common objectives

The five chapters, which can be read together or as stand-alone pieces, assess the survey results to establish how the cooperative movement, often in collaborative partnerships with other organisations, can do more to help young people address the challenges affecting them. The work has the overarching goal of improving engagement between young people and cooperatives and providing actionable conclusions and recommendations, which are located in the latter sections of the report.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- ADEA.** Association for the Development of Education in Africa
- APES.** Actors for a Solidarity Economy
- ASEAN.** Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- CICOPA.** International Organisation of Cooperatives in Industry and Services
- CISE.** Santander International Entrepreneurship Centre
- CJPPAB.** Cooperative of Young Professional Producers of Organic Pineapple
- COPAC.** Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives
- CSO.** Civil Society Organisation
- CTOP.** Togolese Coordination of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations
- CUDECOOP.** Uruguay Confederation of Cooperative Entities
- EU.** European Union
- EURICSE.** European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises
- FAIEJ.** Fund for Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship
- FAO.** Food and Agriculture Organization
- FARC.** Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces
- GCE.** Global Cooperative Entrepreneurs
- GDP.** Gross Domestic Product
- GEM.** Global Education Monitoring
- GYF.** Global Youth Forum
- HLPF.** High-Level Political Forum
- ICA.** International Cooperative Alliance
- ILO.** International Labour Organization
- INACOOOP.** National Institute of Cooperatives of Uruguay
- LMPC.** Lamac Multi-Purpose Cooperative
- MIEM.** Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining of Uruguay
- NEET.** Not in Education, Employment or Training
- NGO.** Non-Governmental Organisation
- OECD.** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- SACCOS.** Savings and Credit Cooperatives
- SDGs.** Sustainable Development Goals
- UCA.** Uganda Cooperative Alliance
- UGM.** Gajah Mada University
- UK.** United Kingdom
- ULCCS.** Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society
- UN.** United Nations
- UNDESA.** United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- UNESCO.** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- VNR.** Voluntary National Review
- WFTO.** World Fair Trade Organization

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FOREWORDS FROM PARTNERS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

“At the International Labour Organization (ILO) we welcome this research report on young people and cooperatives. The report covers a range of issues central to youth development from employment, education and entrepreneurship to civic engagement and participation. Its findings and recommendations are aligned with the areas of work of the ILO on improving knowledge on cooperatives amongst young people while boosting the cooperative image and communicating it effectively. It also addresses ways coops can better integrate youth through a series of measures including through partnerships and an enabling environment.”

Simel Esim, Programme Manager (Senior Technical Specialist)
Enterprises Department of the International Labour Office, ILO COOP

“The publication of ‘Young people and cooperatives: a perfect match?’ under the ICA-EU Partnership could not have been more timely. Now more than ever, we must support youth entrepreneurship in response to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the deeper and more devastating threats posed by climate change and inequalities. Equity and inclusion, alongside sustainability and resilience, must lie at the heart of every new business that is born today, and cooperatives have shown us that such harmony can be a successful experience of millions of people worldwide. The Impact Hub network counts several cooperatives among its 100+ Impact Hubs and remains committed to supporting cooperativism as an invaluable model to grow the New Economy, a model that younger generations continue to be inspired by and adopt.”

Alberto Masetti-Zannini, Global Development Director
Impact Hub Network

“This report is extremely valuable for young people, cooperative leaders and policy-makers alike because it is based on the perspective of young people themselves. It eloquently shows why including young people in cooperatives is a ‘win-win’ for both the cooperative movement and young people in addressing many of the key challenges we are facing today.”

Jan Mayrhofer, Senior Policy Officer, Sustainable Development
European Youth Forum

“The empowerment of young people is key in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of Fairtrade cooperatives and family agriculture. Fairtrade, through its Producer Networks, is committed to promote policies, strategies and interventions that enable the youth to develop their entrepreneurial and managerial skills in order to create new economic opportunities for their cooperatives and communities. We very much welcome the report published by the ICA-EU Partnership, which provides very useful insights on how the engagement between cooperatives and youth might be further improved as well as inspiring real cases studies of cooperatives from around the world.”

Dario Soto-Abril, Global Chief Executive Officer
Fairtrade International

“Innovation, resilience and opportunity – these are the central features of cooperatives. To create youth employment, the world needs proliferation of models of business that stand with communities left behind. In a world where poverty is entrenched and inequality spirals, corporations are channelling wealth to billionaires while failing to invest in communities. Alongside Fair Trade Enterprises and others in the social economy, cooperatives are the shining alternative. Naturally embedded in their communities, they are geared to spread wealth and opportunity far and wide. As the pioneers of economic democracy, they are needed now more than ever.”

Erinch Sahan, Chief Executive
World Fair Trade Organization

“The situation young people are facing is dramatic. The global impact of the socio-economic crisis caused by the pandemic had a disproportionate effect on young people, in Europe and worldwide. As always, the highest costs of the emergency and the recovery will be borne by the future generation and it is necessary to deploy any possible effort to come up with sustainable and innovative solutions in the fields of employment, education, social inclusion, entrepreneurship, and development. Cooperatives have a key role to play in this process and the research produced under the ICA-EU partnership provides indispensable information, data and quality analysis to better focus advocacy and policy-making in the field of youth.”

Brando Benifei, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, Co-Chair of the Youth Platform and MEP
European Parliament

“As a global leader of Lifeskills and Financial Education for children and young people and as a strategic partner of ICA-AP, Aflatoun International greatly appreciates the insights of the global thematic research report entitled ‘Young people and cooperatives: a perfect match?’ by the ICA-EU Partnership. Aflatoun International has a long-standing cooperation with cooperatives, providing capacity building to young cooperators to support financial education and entrepreneurship. The findings of this research highlight the importance of triggering an entrepreneurial spirit at an early age, reaffirming the significance of key partnerships with actors that can enable youth with 21st century skills.”

Mr. Lucky F. Lumingkewas, Asia Programme Manager
Aflatoun International

“The ‘Young people and cooperatives: a perfect match?’ report under the ICA-EU Partnership is a welcome contribution to exploration of cooperative enterprise as a vehicle to address social and economic needs of young people. When presented with the option, youth are attracted to cooperative enterprises as values based, self-help organizations. The report sheds light on the gaps in knowledge and support needed to take full advantage of this synergy.”

Dr. Sonja Novkovic, Chair, ICA Committee on Cooperative Research (ICA-CCR), Professor of Economics and Academic Director
International Centre for Co-operative Management, Saint Mary's University, Canada

“I welcome with great pleasure the release of this research report, prepared by the ICA-EU Partnership on young people and cooperatives. The work is very timely and provides precise recommendations on key issues that affect young people, at a time when COVID-19 renders youth extremely vulnerable. The pandemic has revealed the devastating impact of our current trajectory on humans and nature, particularly in rural areas, where agroforestry is an important tool to counter the impacts of climate change, highlighted in the report as a key challenge for young people. The study and its recommendations point the way towards a new and inclusive approach to engage young people through the cooperative movement and is a valuable contribution to achieving Agenda 2030. The cooperative movement has demonstrated that it can support and engage young people as they contribute towards more progressive and inclusive societies.”

Ms. Celina Butali, Regional Gender Children and Youth Advisor
Vi Agroforestry/Vi-Skogen, Regional Office for East Africa

FOREWORDS FROM THE ICA YOUTH NETWORK AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

“ICA-Africa Youth Network welcomes this timely research on the challenges facing a youth demographic that continues to grow exponentially across the globe. Youth are a valuable asset to cooperatives and investing in them brings tremendous social and economic benefits. Such changes present a great opportunity for an increased workforce, consumption markets, technological progress and economic growth. In Africa however, this is not yet the case, as the youth demographic has not been fully engaged in cooperatives to yield their social and economic benefits. It is crucial that cooperatives now engage fully with young people in cooperative development, and this research is a step towards greater youth engagement in the cooperative movement in Africa. The cooperative movement must restructure our organisations to better interact and engage with young people. For our goals and plans to be holistic and sustainable, they should be diversified and youth inclusive. We call for adequate policy responses to address the gaps highlighted in the report.”

Hilda A. Ojall, Vice President, Africa

“Cooperatives of the Americas acknowledges the results of the global thematic research on youth as a necessary effort routed in reality which seeks to understand important dynamics within the cooperative sector. With the successful participation of the #coops4dev partnership, it has been possible to further understand the needs of youth that complement and build upon previous studies carried out in the Americas. For more than ten years, the Regional Youth Committee has had a voice and a vote in the regional Board, advocating for the creation and implementation of youth policies, strengthening youth networks, and promoting the cooperative model as a real option for entrepreneurship, all of which reaffirms its role to spread the cooperative voice. We strongly believe that our movement has to be refreshed, and a new cooperative speech for the present and next generations must be created, giving young people the opportunity to co-create it by bringing forth their experience and vision.”

Angélica Soberanes, Vice President, Americas

“This new research brings interesting content on youth and cooperatives, including inputs from young cooperators in the Asia-Pacific region. Moving forward to improve youth engagement within the cooperative movement, new knowledge and research is needed to enhance the cooperative way of life, particularly as we witness the dawn of a new era and unprecedented new challenges for youth, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The research stirs a hope of reviving and initiating a new cooperative engagement effort for the next generation. This work can be a reference point for further youth cooperative development in the Asia-Pacific Region, and a corresponding increase in youth cooperative entrepreneurship is crucial to increase the prevalence of the cooperative model and also to work towards the sustainable development of the communities in which they are based.”

Ahsan Ali Thakur, Vice President, and Alireza Banaeifar, Asia-Pacific

“The cooperative model has been present in Europe for a long time, the UK being the birthplace of the first modern cooperative with the Rochdale Pioneers. If we look back at history, the cooperative model, involving, and even lead by youth, has been a main tool to shape the social reality we live in today. In different regions, the cooperative movement enabled social well-being even to the level of covering gaps left by states. Nowadays, the movement remains strong, especially in specific highly cooperativised regions, but as in many other areas of society, there is a need for generational transition. But as we look at youth as developers of new realities, as we listen to the global calls for alternatives to the extractive capitalistic models, as we listen to the values of the new generation, their aspirations, concerns, dreams and also their fears, we realise the alignment these claims have with the cooperative values. The SDGs and the 2030 agenda, the concerns for social justice, dignified jobs, employment and personal and social development as well as the concern for local communities, show us that once again, the cooperative model needs to step up and be at the forefront of the social and economic revolution of Europe. Now more than ever, and again led by the new generation, the cooperative model can be an answer.”

Ana Aguirre, Vice President, Europe

“For too long youth empowerment has been a distant goal for the global cooperative movement: long present in the mind and discourses of our leaders but rarely translated into concrete actions. Things have been changing since the 2010s, for a good reason. The more challenges the world is facing, the more the cooperative model appears as one of the most relevant ones. It is not just about rejuvenating the cooperative movement, it is first and foremost about helping new generations gather the power to act. Youth inclusion has often been seen only as a problem for the future, when it is a solution for the present. By launching more activities in the field of youth, such as the preparation and publication of this study, the ICA gives opportunities to all decision makers to see the incredible potential of social change that can emerge from the encounter between youth aspirations and the cooperative approach. This work is also an invitation to maintain our efforts as it brings to light the long way there is still to go to mainstream the cooperative model amongst young people and their organisations.”

Sébastien Chaillou, President, ICA Youth Network

FOREWORDS FROM THE DIRECTORS

“The issue of how to promote youth inclusion and participation has been a key existential condition for the cooperative movement since its birth two centuries ago: indeed, without inter-generational transmission, cooperatives would die out within one generation. In this particularly critical juncture in world history, with its increasing economic, social and environmental challenges, further intensified in the incoming post-pandemic world, it is even more fundamental to face this issue as a top priority, as reflected in the new ICA Strategic Plan for the 2020-2030 period: characteristically, this new cooperative decade began with an unprecedented global meeting on cooperative youth entrepreneurship, the Global Youth Forum, in February 2020 in Kuching, Malaysia.

Within this context, the present study is particularly welcome, being very complete in its various angles of analysis, and combining both strengths and weaknesses, drawing a realistic and critical picture of reality, with a large series of direct testimonies. This study is a mind-opener, and its conclusions and recommendations provide essential food for thought to us all within the cooperative movement on how to promote youth cooperatives, youth employment and participation in cooperatives, as well as education on cooperatives.”

Bruno Roelants, Director General, International Cooperative Alliance

“Young people are the ones who were just entering the job market as the pandemic spread and were already struggling to strengthen their position within their company. Young people are also, after the elderly, the most affected ones amid the pandemic. But they also are the ones who can turn this crisis into an opportunity to really change the way we work, act, and think. This study «Young people and cooperatives: a perfect match?» carried out by the ICA and its Regional Offices under the ICA-EU Partnership shows the barriers that young people from 20 countries have identified to enter the job market. It also shows how they “feel” or experience the cooperative model as an opportunity to create a job, a professional profile or a service centre providing solutions to the individual problems and needs of their members.

For Cooperatives of the Americas, youth is one of the pillars for the development of cooperatives: our Regional Office has always supported and invested in youth, via its Regional Youth Committee and specific initiatives, including the CoopHackathon and the José Antonio Chávez Prize for Young Cooperators. The contributions that young people gave to this study are brilliant and reflect the spirit of cooperatives: self-help and self-responsibility, which are inspiring in this time amid the pandemic.”

Danilo Salerno, Regional Director, Cooperatives of the Americas

“I am extremely proud of the efforts that has gone into this publication by the various ICA regional offices, the young respondents and our partners. This work further reiterates the importance of young people and their contributions to the cooperative movement. Globally, it is imperative for us to keep building our youth so that they can start leading both now and in the future.

ICA-Africa is committed to bridging the gap between young people and their engagement in the cooperative movement. We will continue our support to young people through capacity-building initiatives and targeted actions of empowerment. As a movement, this publication is beneficial to us because our work is influenced by research and a number of best practice case studies; to better serve our members. This will also feed into our work on policy, advocacy, and other operational activities.”

Dr. Chiyoge B. Sifa, Regional Director, ICA-Africa

“Today, more than ever, young people around the world are looking to meaningful projects and jobs which put sustainability, community and equality at the centre of their ethos. As this research demonstrates, the cooperative model can be the perfect match for young voices to shape the world around them.

It also reminds us, that the mainstreaming of the cooperative model remains a challenge. To address this, effective partnerships between the cooperative movement and educational institutions, as well as youth organisations, must be central to raise the knowledge of the model among youth. The first steps have already been laid out (see projects such as CoopStarter 2.0, Coop4Edu, GCE), yet as the research suggests, an enabling environment and collaboration with public institutions, particularly the European institutions in the case of Cooperatives Europe, will provide a much needed push for a real transformation. This report is thus a key to unlock the cooperatives’ potential to empower youth worldwide.”

Agnès Mathis, Director, Cooperatives Europe

“I am delighted to see the publication of the report, “Young People and Cooperatives: A Perfect Match? This is very topical given the anxiety young people are facing about their future in light of the pandemic. Youth play a critical role given their sheer numbers and the central role they will play in all walks of life. Cooperative principles of openness, democracy, ownership, concern for community, economic and social well-being, resonate with what youth want. But there is a gap in reaching out and getting them engaged. This research helps in bridging the gap by reaching out directly to the young, within and outside cooperatives, understanding their issues, gaining their insight into how the cooperative movement can respond. The report addresses the 5 important Es -employment, education, (in)equalities, engagement and entrepreneurship which can match youth and cooperatives. I would like to thank youth from across all the regions, especially those from Asia-Pacific for taking part in this research and to the ICA-EU Research team from across all regions for focusing on this important area of work and providing the way forward.”

Mr. Balasubramanian (Balu) Iyer, Regional Director, ICAAsia-Pacific

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was jointly designed and implemented by all the ICA offices including ICA, Cooperatives Europe, Cooperatives of the Americas, ICA-Africa and ICA Asia-Pacific.

ICA members, ICA's global and regional youth networks and committees, civil society organisations, and several individuals from cooperative and non-cooperative networks in all four regions were contacted to reach out to young respondents from within and outside the cooperative movement. We are extremely grateful to each of them for generously connecting us with potential respondents. We would like to thank all young respondents wholeheartedly who spared their valuable time to participate in the survey and provided us their important insights into the issues and challenges of young people and their views on cooperatives.

The final report presented here would not have been possible without the support of the ICA Youth Network, its members and regional representatives, who gave critical feedback on chapters and the conclusions and recommendations. We would also like to thank all of the colleagues within the ICA-EU Partnership's Coordination Unit and ICA Regional Offices who have provided their support and valuable input during the completion of this research.

We would like to acknowledge the invaluable support and inputs of Marc Noël, Georgia Papoutsis, Laura Aguilon and Inés Seguí. In addition, valuable input was made by Bruno Roelants and Gretchen Hacquard of the ICA, as well as Sébastien Chaillou, Ana Aguirre, Ahsan Ali Thakur, Alireza Banaeifar, Angélica Soberanes, Hilda Odjall, Koffi Kobenan Maurice, Tatiana Pardo Peñuela, and Andrea Sangiorgi of the ICA Youth Network. We would also like to thank Arielle Romenteau for her role in the design and implementation of the research.

In the end, we would like to extend a special acknowledgement to the Co-operative College, Manchester, UK for its crucial support and collaboration throughout, as well as their role in reviewing and editing the final report.

Global thematic
youth research



INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Created in 1895, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) is the global representative organisation of cooperative enterprises across all sectors, counting 317 members from 112 countries (November 2020). The ICA unites a significant part of today's cooperative development activities through the work of its national member federations active in development implementation and through the coordination work by its regional offices. The ICA has grown into an important global organisation promoting the cooperative model around the world, safeguarding the cooperative identity and protecting and promoting the cooperative values and principles.

ICA-EU Partnership

This report sits within the scope of the knowledge-building activities undertaken within the partnership for international development signed between the ICA and the European Commission in 2016, to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to promote international development worldwide, with a number of activities based on advocacy, visibility, capacity building, and research. The development of knowledge on a number of thematic trends on cooperatives, including on the topic of youth, is a strategic priority of the ICA.

Why young people and cooperatives?

The research aims to provide insights on the key challenges young people are facing today, if and how cooperatives can help to address them, and how the engagement between cooperatives and youth might be improved. When identifying key focus areas for research in the regions of Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe, youth remains an important theme for all ICA offices and their members. Wide-ranging commonalities across regions, both on the challenges and opportunities regarding youth and cooperative development, make it an ideal subject for research with a global scope.

According to the United Nations, close to **90%** of today's young people live in developing countries, counting for a significant proportion of population.¹ The ICA can help to link together different organisations involved in youth cooperation, whilst reaching out to external partners outside of the cooperative family, such as civil society organisations, local authorities, and youth organisations.

A second framework is the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 and situating the present research within a number of relevant thematic and strategic priorities, notably on decent work and quality education. Although there is no specific SDG explicitly committed to young people, accepting that cooperatives already have an important role to play in sustainable development makes the SDGs an important framework for this research.

¹ Further information on the links between Youth and the SDGs can be found [here](#). This statistic is also held by UNICEF (2012) which states that nearly 90% of adolescents live in developing countries. See United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2012). Progress for Children A report card on adolescents, Number 10, April 2012.

Objectives of the research

The research has interrelated objectives and concentrates on a few core focus areas, divided into themed chapters. Together, each of these key focus areas aims to produce actionable conclusions and recommendations that can feed into global, regional and local policy and advocacy activities, as well as to build on existing knowledge generated on the topic of youth.²

OBJECTIVE 1

To provide clear insights on the key challenges facing young people, from the perspective of youth themselves.

In addition, it focuses on if and how cooperatives can help to address those challenges. The ambition is that by learning more about the realities of young people in the countries covered, cooperatives and their representative organisations can provide higher quality assistance to their young members on the issues affecting them, for instance on the topics of decent work and employment, youth inclusion and youth orientated governance, or education and training.

OBJECTIVE 2

To improve cooperatives' support to young people.

The research therefore aims to isolate the ways in which the cooperative movement can better support and engage with young people. In improving the engagement and level of support between young people and cooperatives, the research investigates how the interactions between cooperatives and youth can be strengthened. It does this by taking into direct consideration the ideas and input of young people and analysing the potential role of cooperatives to tackle them.

OBJECTIVE 3

To provide key conclusions and recommendations that can feed into global policy, advocacy and operational activities. The research will be a useful resource for key cooperative stakeholders, decision-makers, young cooperators, and interested persons. By reaching out to diverse external stakeholders, we also aim to demonstrate the benefits of the cooperative model for those less familiar with its potential for young people.

ICA activities on youth

A number of youth-related actions are ongoing within the ICA-EU Partnership, as supported by other actors and ICA thematic committees, notably the ICA Youth Network. The ICA formed the Youth Network in 2003 to give advice, help and representation to the cooperative youth movement. The network works with cooperatives around the world to help them develop strategies to promote youth employment - to give young people better jobs, and to make sure that cooperatives employ them, keep them in work, and give them the chance to progress.

It is also working to improve legal and administrative requirements for cooperatives, ensuring better working conditions, education and training and access to social protection and rights at work. Networks of young cooperators have been active in different ICA regions, developing tools and implementing projects aiming to address emerging needs and aspirations expressed by new generations of cooperators.³

² Further information on ICA Youth Activities is available at <https://www.ica.coop/en/youth-network> See also <https://gyf20.coop/>

³ CJDES & Cooperatives Europe (2016). Youth for #Coop, *Cooperating Beyond Borders*, Brussels.

Looking more closely at practitioner activities, the topic of cooperative youth entrepreneurship has taken centre stage, illustrated by the Global Youth Forum, which took place in February 2020 in Kuching, Malaysia, led by the ICA-EU partnership, which brought together young entrepreneurs and professionals from around the world to take part in training sessions to improve their skills and knowledge. At this forum, a youth agenda for advocacy was adopted, setting out a shared vision for young cooperators. This research can support and build upon this vision.



Methodology

For the first time, this research has been a collaboration, designed and conducted jointly by all ICA offices, including ICA Global, Cooperatives Europe, ICA-Africa, Cooperatives of the Americas, and ICA Asia-Pacific, with the research conducted at a decentralised level by each regional office. A practitioner's approach to the research provided the chance to complement scholarly work on the topic of youth and cooperatives with an operational mandate linked to policy and advocacy activities.

The research was completed with primary and secondary research methods, as well as quantitative and qualitative analysis. A mixed methods approach provided an opportunity to make comparative observations on regional results, that aims to identify wider trends regarding cooperatives and young people.

The research was conducted in two main stages; first through a period of secondary research on the existing literature, conducted simultaneously with the development of harmonised methodological tools; secondly through a period of primary data collection, with the use of surveys. To support certain case studies, short semi-structured interviews were also conducted with respondents to strengthen the results where necessary. Data analysis at the national level was conducted

The 5 'E's

E mployment

E ducation

E qualities

E ngagement

E ntrepreneurship

and combined with quantitative analysis at the global level, which in collaboration with the ICA's four regional offices and the UK Co-operative College, has been developed into chapters.

The five chapters analysing and assessing the results of the study are organised here into a final global report. The themes of each chapter are based on the most prominent findings, and include employment, education, (in)equalities, engagement, and entrepreneurship. Naturally, there can be overlap between these categories, but each chapter serves as a stand-alone piece, approaching the issue of youth and cooperatives through a different lens. Together, these categories are referred to as the five 'E's.

Scope

The research uses the age range of 18-35 years old as a definition of youth, a range used by the ICA Youth Network, and commonly accepted in a number of studies and countries.⁴ An extended definition beyond the existing 18-24 range (the UN and ILO standard) allows the research to capture a more realistic definition of global and regional differences between countries surveyed, of transitions from education to work, alongside the development and incubation of cooperative enterprises by young entrepreneurs.

In order to identify respondents for the study, the research surveyed two categories of young people. This included respondents within the cooperative movement (young cooperators, those already involved with cooperatives) and respondents outside of it (students, young professionals, youth leaders, those less familiar with the cooperative model).⁵ The primary reason for having two main groups was to provide further comparative insights into how the cooperative movement can better support young people, including youth with less or little familiarity with the cooperative model. Two common surveys for data collection were employed for this purpose in the three official languages of the ICA (English, Spanish and French), with an English copy available in the annex of the report.

in each ICA region, five countries were surveyed

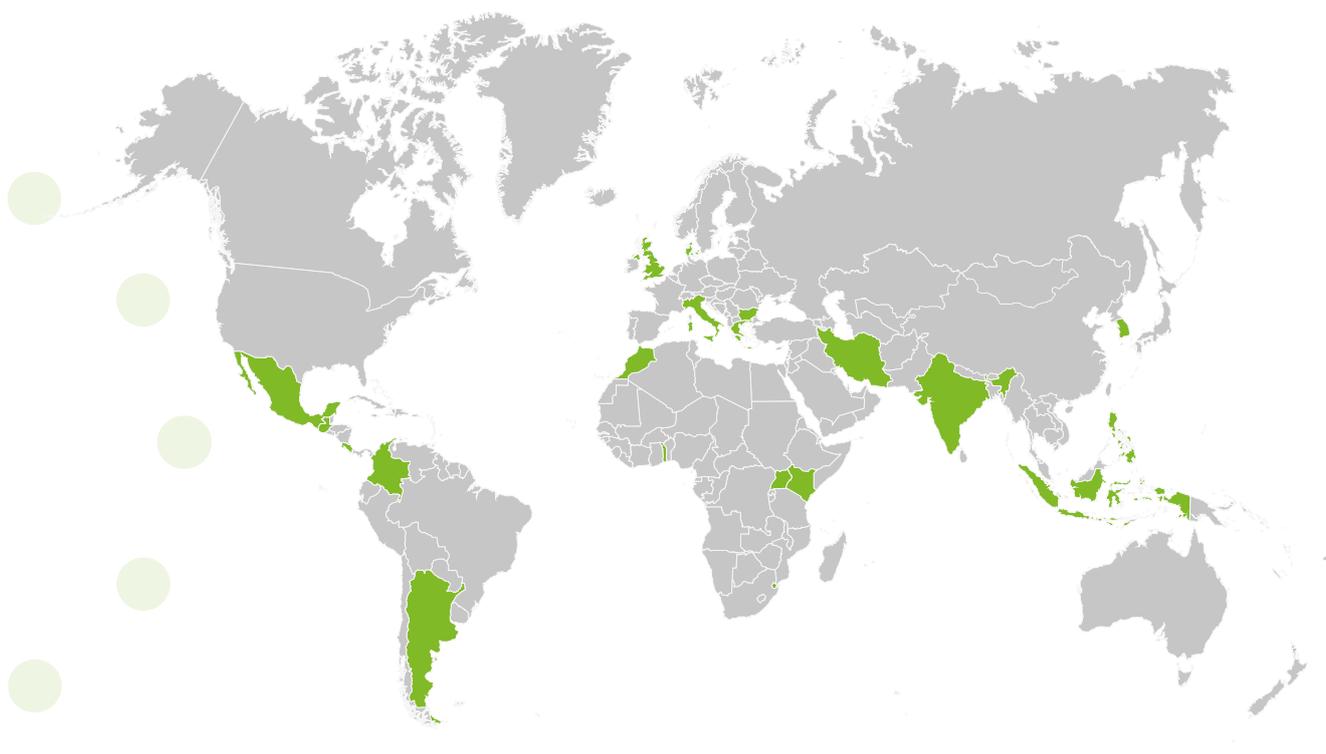
In each ICA region, five countries were surveyed. Various channels of distribution with member and partner organisations were employed, to reach relevant youth networks and cooperative youth in the different countries surveyed. These network structures, which we aim to strengthen through this research, act as an effective relay of information between young people and cooperative stakeholders.

⁴ See the ICA Youth Network [Constitution](#), Article III on Membership, or for example, see the broader definition given in the African Union's [African Youth Charter](#) where "youth" means "every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years", pg.3.

⁵ Where those within the cooperative movement are quoted, the work refers to 'young cooperators'. Where youth outside of the cooperative movement are mentioned, the report refers to 'young respondents'.

The graphic below displays the countries covered. In total 420 responses were collected and analysed for this report, covering 20 countries across four ICA regions.

ICA Region	ICA Africa	ICA Asia-Pacific
Countries surveyed	Eswatini, Kenya, Morocco, Togo, Uganda	India, Indonesia, Iran, Philippines, Republic of Korea,
ICA Region	Cooperatives of the Americas	Cooperatives Europe
Countries surveyed	Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico	Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece, Italy, United Kingdom



Graphic 1: Countries surveyed

Limitations

It is important to note here a number of limitations for the study. There is already a substantial and growing body of literature on the topic of youth and cooperatives explored below, to which this study, covering 20 countries across 4 regions, aims to make an additional and modest contribution. However, the study is not exhaustive in coverage, and several avenues for further research remain.⁶

A number of operational challenges in data collection were encountered, due to the global scope of the study, which included linguistic challenges to reach young people in different countries, as well as challenges reaching out to certain categories of young people, for example the more vulnerable, difficult to reach, or isolated. In cases where the response rate was impacted, we have endeavoured to address this

⁶ Ideas for future research on cooperatives chosen by young people are displayed on page 46.

with additional follow-ups with young respondents. The overall results presented here provide an important comparative picture and insights on the topic of youth and cooperative development.

At the time of writing, new challenges have also been emerging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the research was conducted prior to this global pandemic, it is very important to acknowledge how the severity of events will shape the future for young people. COVID-19 has laid bare the fragility of our existing economic and social systems. To be resilient to future crises, we need systems that are capable of meeting the needs of today's young people, and cooperatives and collective approaches will become more important than ever. Efforts have been made to recognise this changing landscape in the report.



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During the planning phases, a number of key success factors were identified, such as clear and precise definitions for the questionnaire, the horizontal and harmonised methodological process, and a criterion for reaching young respondents in each group. The global report is the first thematic research report developed in a harmonised collaboration with the four regional offices of the ICA under the ICA-EU Partnership, providing excellent opportunities for learning and collaboration. It is therefore an exercise in the co-production of knowledge, putting young people at the forefront of the work.

In order to outline the theoretical underpinnings of the research in detail, the next section of the report discusses the core of how cooperatives can better support youth, assessing a number of contextual challenges identified in the literature review.

Global thematic
youth research



LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to data collection, a comprehensive literature review was conducted in order to build upon existing contributions. The results of this literature review provide a foundational basis to contextualise the research and identify the challenges and relevant themes for young people and cooperatives.

Context

It is already largely documented that young people today are facing a number of complex challenges which have significant impacts on both themselves and on wider society.⁷ When looking at the existing documentation on the topic across all ICA regions, **unemployment** and **underemployment** were repeatedly identified as major challenges.⁸ The dilemma is encapsulated by the infamous circular example of the 'experience trap', within which a young person must acquire existing experience to find employment, yet without any experience at the outset, is unable to find a job. For those that are able to find work, they may suffer from in-work poverty or poor working conditions, including low pay and low productivity.⁹

Compounded by economic shifts, notably austerity politics and policy interventions in financialised liberal market economies in recent years, the labour market suffers from increased volatility.¹⁰ For young people, a declining relative value in tertiary education has emerged as a result of underemployment, worsened by a large skills gap between the needs of employers and young people's qualifications.¹¹ For those without a tertiary education, these effects are felt in the increasing proportion

of graduates who compete for non-graduate jobs.¹² Further, increased demographic changes, such as an expanding youth population or a higher distribution of young people in the general population, can cause high competition for work in urban areas. In rural areas, a distinct lack of opportunity for youth persists, which can encourage out migration and a corresponding slowdown of economic activity.¹³ With high competition for jobs, young people can experience reduced access to land, a lack of quality education or vocational training, restricted access to credit or services and low levels of financial resources. In some countries and regions, limited access to digital services and the internet also hinders opportunities to find employment.¹⁴

for young people, a declining relative value in tertiary education has emerged as a result of underemployment

In addition, a number of macro-societal issues also stand out, such as general social and political instability, as well as crime and exploitation, including the risks of radicalisation and even militarisation in countries where conventional livelihoods are severely impeded or in countries affected by conflict.¹⁵ Worldwide, it is clear that young people experience social exclusion and discrimination, including on issues surrounding governance and public policy.¹⁶ A lack of social capital or the existence of intergenerational inequa-

⁷ A number of existing sources reviewed for the purpose of this report include work from the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), OECD, FAO, European Youth Forum, among others.

⁸ *International Cooperative Youth Statement 2012*, Presented at the United Nations during the Closing Ceremonies of the International Year of Cooperatives, November 20, 2012

⁹ ILO (2012) *A better future for young people: What cooperatives can offer*, Information Note

¹⁰ A manifesto from the Young Leaders Cooperative Summit in 2014 makes a distinct reference to the youth cooperative movement as an anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal movement. It is also intended to be routed within social movements that are part of a transformation to a more social and sustainable society.

¹¹ According to the *World Bank*, many young people do not obtain relevant foundational skills for employment.

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Employment_rates_of_recent_graduates

¹³ FAO (2012) *Youth: the future of agricultural cooperatives*, Briefing Paper.

¹⁴ Terassi, E. (2018) *Global Study on Youth Cooperative Entrepreneurship*, CICOPA.

¹⁵ See Africa Renewal, 'Youth dividend or ticking time bomb?' Special Edition on Youth, 2017.

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>

lities mean that the ability of youth to shape the consensus or the policy responses to these wider issues, and more importantly, the issues directly affecting them, is hindered or prevented.¹⁷

When discussing the challenges facing young people, it is also manifest that young women are at a greater disadvantage than young men, as international organisations such as the ILO have noted.¹⁸ In particular, the literature demonstrates that higher proportions of women are not in education, employment or training (NEET), up to **75%** in a number of countries, for instance in the Americas region.¹⁹ This makes the inclusion of gender as a thematic lens of analysis an important priority when conceptualising the challenges of young people.

At the time of writing and as discussed above, new challenges have also been emerging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the research was

conducted prior to this global pandemic, it is very important to acknowledge how it will come to shape the future for young people, the new economic challenges, as well as new social, health and mental health impacts, and the impact on the cooperative movement itself. Whilst it is too early to truly determine the full impact of the global pandemic, it is clear that many of the existing challenges discussed in this research have become amplified in the new context of insecurity facing young people, at the very least.

When considered overall, these pressures on young people result in a great sense of disempowerment and disengagement with and from societies and communities at large. Given the current global context and the multiple narratives of crisis that engulf young people today, how might we begin to alleviate these issues?

What role for cooperatives?

This study assesses the role of cooperatives and its relevance to these challenges. Going beyond this, what in particular could the cooperative model be able to offer, that can be documented with further research? This section addresses the theoretical linkages between cooperatives and youth, drawing upon the existing literature and outlining both the challenges and opportunities in this area.

The cooperative enterprise model, specifically the cooperative values and principles, provides a theoretical framework to address the challenges facing young people. At first glance, at the very root, is the definition provided by the ICA, which defines a cooperative as:

“

*an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.*²⁰

”

¹⁷ For an overview of further challenges, see ILO (2015). *Cooperatives and the World of Work No. 4: Rediscovering cooperatives: young people finding work the cooperative way*, ILO COOP Cooperatives and the World of Work series.

¹⁸ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/enhanced/WCMS_598674/lang-en/index.htm

¹⁹ OCDE/CEPAL/CAF (2016). *Perspectivas económicas de América Latina 2017: Juventud, competencias y emprendimiento*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

²⁰ See The Statement on the Cooperative Identity, available here <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>

An implicit component is that cooperatives have the potential to meet the specific and evolving needs of their members. Whilst not specifically alluding to youth in this case, the people-centred approach of cooperatives makes them well suited in helping to address the ongoing issues facing young people, particularly within a fast moving and changing world of work.²¹ In terms of starting and joining cooperatives, voluntary and open membership, a key cooperative principle, ensures that young people are not prohibited from becoming members. The democratic and horizontal nature of cooperative governance that operates through the principle of 'one-member one-vote' ensures that young members can further influence the governance of the cooperative. However, it is important to recognise that these theoretical opportunities may not always be achieved in practice, as discussed later in this section.

In addition, young people have a further specific mention within Cooperative Principle 5 on **Education, Training and Information**, which states that cooperatives:

“ *inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.*²² ”

Fundamentally, this is about the empowerment and capacity building of members. If cooperation requires autonomy, it proves crucial for a cooperative to empower its members, and work on the basis of power-with rather than power-over its members.²³

Further, the participation of young people in decision-making processes in cooperatives is reflected by cooperative values such as **democracy** and principles such as **autonomy** and **concern for community**. The cooperative principle of '**concern for community**' is clearly relevant as it suggests that cooperatives have a tangible relation to the communities in which they are based, both in the present and in the future.²⁴ Not only do cooperatives arise from meeting genuine needs, but surplus and benefits stay within



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and are reinvested by the community. This benefits the young people who form part of these communities, for as future adults, an emphasis on the sustainable development of communities for the longer term proves particularly important.

Going beyond these immediate theoretical relations, a number of existing studies have already been conducted across different regions with a focus on cooperatives and young people, covering important themes such as cooperative entrepreneurship and gender, and looking at the various ways in which cooperatives may support and alleviate challenges for young people. The discussion within the existing literature is analysed below, looking at opportunities and benefits, as well as the challenges.

²¹ CJDES & Cooperatives Europe (2016).

²² See the ICA's Principle 5 here <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>

²³ Michael Johnson (2012). The Cooperative Principles, the Common Good, and Solidarity. Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue 12. <http://geo.coop/>

²⁴ Hoyt, A. (1996). *And then there were seven: Cooperative Principles Updated*, Cooperative Grocer, University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives.

²⁵ TBC

²⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/stories/6-top-benefits-hiring-young-talent>

²⁷ Hartley, S. (2011). A New Space for a New Generation: The Rise of Co-operatives Amongst Young People in Africa, The Co-operative College, pg.39.

Opportunities

One key area of analysis consists of examining the opportunities for youth participation within cooperatives. Young people bring a much-needed boost of energy and dynamism into cooperative enterprises and conventional businesses, including:

- new skills²⁵
- enhanced creativity, innovation and problem solving²⁶
- a rise in entrepreneurial thinking²⁷
- new working patterns²⁸
- a different attitude to risk²⁹

For example, some of the most innovative work at present is in emerging platform cooperatives, a technologically advanced field of cooperative entrepreneurship which is often developed by young entrepreneurs.³⁰ If we accept the ideas of reconceptualising work as organisational innovation,³¹ young people may have an extremely important role to play in driving progressive change at different levels of an enterprise structure.

On the one hand, youth can certainly bring the benefits listed above to cooperatives, as well as have a positive impact on cooperative governance, through increased participation and activism. For cooperatives able to implement some horizontal governance mechanisms within their structures, youth participation can lead to the greater likelihood of youth friendly policies.³² In addition, many studies pointed to the benefits of partnerships and working together. This mirrors the value of cooperation and a collaborative approach to working that can bring direct and indirect benefits to enterprises as well as to wider society, in line with the aforementioned principle of concern for community.³³

There are multiple potential social and economic benefits of the cooperative model. It is clear that a central facet of this comes from work and employment, since cooperatives can provide members with:

- jobs and new opportunities
- decent working conditions
- new skills³⁴
- security of employment

Going further, cooperatives are increasingly recognised as drivers not only of decent work and therefore economic growth, but also sustainable development, due to the presence of:

- democratic and participatory decision-making
- inclusion of underrepresented or underprivileged groups
- equitable distribution of economic surplus³⁵
- concern for community

In addition, with reference to social skills and behavioural economics, cooperatives can act as 'schools for democracy', providing a valuable real-world example of democratic and participatory collaboration.³⁶ This helps young people further develop their social skills and confidence through working collaboratively with others within an entrepreneurial approach. At the same time, considering that the original cooperative movements came from the perspective of self-help in times of economic hardship, young people facing economic and social challenges may also be further supported in exploring cooperative values of self-help and self-responsibility.

At a more practical level, cooperatives can also provide a number of valuable services or products to young people, such as education or vocational training. Though it is not always the case, cooperatives are designed to meet a diversified set of member needs, often going beyond the profit generation of conventional businesses, to meet particularly prevalent social, economic or environmental objectives.³⁷

²⁸ European Youth Forum (2016). *Social Inclusion and Young People Excluding Youth: A Threat to Our Future*. Brussels.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ CICOPA News, *How can cooperatives in the platform economy shape the future of work?* March 2018.

³¹ Roelants, B. Hyungsik Eum, Simel Esim, Sonja Novkovic, Walteri Katajamäki, *Cooperatives and the World of Work*, Routledge, 2019.

³² FAO (2016). pg. 2

³³ CJDES & Cooperatives Europe (2016).

³⁴ ILO (2015) World of Work No. 4.

³⁵ For more information on the links between cooperatives and the SDGs please visit: <https://www.ica.coop/en/sustainable-development-goals>

³⁶ Atxabal Rada, Alberto (2014). Democracia y jóvenes, una aproximación desde las cooperativas. REVESCO. Revista de Estudios Cooperativos (116). pp. 57-76.

³⁷ The increasing popularity of cooperative supermarkets as an alternative to food conglomerates, or the provision of social support for freelancers such as Smart Coop in Belgium or COOPANAME in France, where freelancers share common services, such as accountancy, legal advice, support for the development of entrepreneurial activities, common work space and utilities, represent two good examples.

Challenges and obstacles

When thinking about cooperative principles of democratic member participation and voluntary open membership, it may be expected that cooperatives ensure the increased participation of young people or greater youth involvement, leading to a corresponding increase in youth-centred governance or perhaps a greater awareness of the benefits of cooperation among young people. However, the initial secondary research demonstrated that there were a number of reasons why this was not necessarily the case.

The following bullet points set out the main reasons highlighted for this:

- many studies cite that perceptions of cooperatives are a central barrier. This refers to both young people's perceptions of cooperatives, but also that cooperatives often fail to actively engage with young people³⁸
- a lack of inclusion or effective dialogue mechanisms between and among young people and other cooperative members
- a lack of flexibility and adaptability to introduce youth friendly structures³⁹
- negative connotations such as corruption or state collusion, an old or outdated model, a model which is not profitable, or just generally unattractive to young people who have ambitious plans and ideas for enterprises and activities⁴⁰
- a lack of knowledge on the cooperative model, including its specific benefits and unique features, for instance, on the knowledge of the cooperative values and principles as safeguarded by the ICA⁴¹

This is an issue that is also replicated through the absence of a cooperative representation on national education curricula in many countries, as suggested by other studies, such as those carried out by the ILO.⁴² A major gap seems to exist in this regard, considering that the cooperative model receives scant attention in the university disciplines of business and economics compared to the stock company or for-profit shareholder corporation. This is despite its numerous benefits, for example as a resilient model to economic crisis, a form of self-help, or a tool to redress 'market failures' in meeting previously unmet needs.⁴³

Moreover, the reviewed literature highlighted how the main challenges faced by cooperatives in general remain present and are perhaps amplified for young cooperative members or cooperatives run by young people.⁴⁴ They also can exacerbate operational issues.⁴⁵ These include:

- access to capital
- competition with traditional businesses
- access to markets
- enabling environments and regulation
- lack of resources, technical support or information and knowledge sharing
- isolation from cooperative networks and support structures

³⁸ CJDES & Cooperatives Europe (2016).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ For example, see R.M. Mwangi (2017). Youth Engagement with Co-operatives in Kenya, Research Paper, KCA University.

⁴² ILO (2015). *Cooperatives and the World of Work No. 4: Rediscovering*

cooperatives: young people finding work the cooperative way, ILO COOP Cooperatives and the World of Work series.

⁴³ Ger J.H. van der Sangen, 'How to Regulate Cooperatives in the EU?', *The Dovenschmidt Quarterly*, 2014, pp. 131-146.

Even before this stage, barriers persist for young people entering into cooperatives, such as the provision of a minimum share capital, which also epitomise the wider generational issues at play, notably a lack of participation and representation, but also general perceptions of young people. Young people in cooperatives can face vertical mobility and representation barriers, with older generations perceiving young people as competition, or as lacking in commitment.⁴⁶

In finding common ground between the different views of members, it is also important to acknowledge that whilst youth leadership needs to be actively fostered, such mechanisms for participation must co-exist alongside the equality and solidarity shown to all members within a cooperative, in line with the cooperative values and principles.

**young people in cooperatives
can face vertical mobility and
representation barriers, with
older generations perceiving
young people as competition,
or as lacking in commitment.**

However, the research must also look beyond these existing benefits and challenges if the cooperative movement is to strengthen its responses to the difficulties experienced by youth. The secondary review of literature has identified several starting points for further exploration.

The following five chapters, known as the five 'E's and developed by research staff in the four regional offices of the ICA, explore the survey results and identify how cooperatives can better support and engage young people, in line with sustainable development and Agenda 2030.

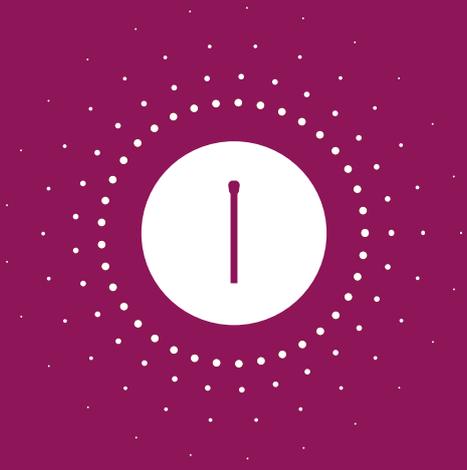
⁴⁴ ILO (2015). *Cooperatives and the World of Work No. 4: Rediscovering cooperatives: young people finding work the cooperative way*, ILO COOP Cooperatives and the World of Work series.

⁴⁵ European Youth Forum (2014) *Money Grows on Trees: Youth organisations setting up cooperatives* Brussels, pg. 12.

⁴⁶ *International Cooperative Youth Statement 2012*, Presented at the United Nations during the Closing Ceremonies of the International Year of Cooperatives, November 20, 2012.

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chapter



EMPLOYMENT

Introduction

The challenge of work, in particular the availability of decent work that is humane, secure, meaningful, devoid of exploitation and respects our planet and communities is paramount in today's world. This chapter aims to assess what cooperatives can contribute to address the current challenges in the world of work.

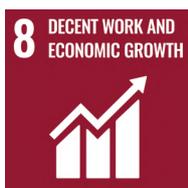
Decent work, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO):



Involves opportunities for work that are productive and deliver a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.⁴⁷



GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



UNDESA's World Youth Report estimates that up to 71 million young people are unemployed, with many millions more in precarious or informal work. ILO estimates that 156 million youth in low and middle-income countries are living in poverty and a lack of formal employment is pushing youth into the informal sector. The Sustainable Development Goal 8 Report indicates that addressing this challenge will require the creation of 470 million jobs globally before 2030, to provide suitable employment for emerging populations.

Young or old, the need for jobs in the future will require countries all around the world to come up with creative solutions to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.⁴⁸ Achieving inclusivity means youth should be equipped with the necessary skills and access to job markets that can absorb them into the labour force. When provided with the opportunity and the right resources, young people can therefore be a strong positive force in contributing to sustainable economic development and more stable societies.

However, many of the young people surveyed in this study experience social exclusion and discrimination, including within governance structures and public policy. These challenges are even more extreme for marginalised groups, which include but are not limited

to: young women; those living in humanitarian and conflict settings; young people with disabilities; migrant youth; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth.

The unemployment and underemployment of youth is multidimensional and impacts other SDGs such as ending poverty (SDG 1), reducing inequalities (SDG 10) and the pursuit of quality education (SDG 4). Further, unemployment contributes towards other societal issues, preventing young people from making successful transitions to adulthood. SDG 8 related interventions will play a vital role in ending all forms of poverty, reducing inequalities and tackling social exclusion.

⁴⁷ ILO Topics 'Decent Work' available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>

⁴⁸ See UN SDGs 'Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all' <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/> Accessed 02/06/2020.

Cooperatives can offer a solution to young people in their search for decent work. They are recognised worldwide as actors in the implementation of the SDGs, which includes quality employment.⁴⁹ They are also mentioned in the ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) as a transitional actor. The commitment of cooperatives to decent work is also stated in the ILO Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193) on the Promotion of Cooperatives, which provides an impetus for national governments to adopt policies that provide an enabling environment for cooperatives.⁵⁰

Youth (un)employment

When analysing the findings from the study, the most prominent employment-related issues young people noted, included but were not limited to;

- unemployment
- underemployment
- poor job quality and security
- in-work rights, wages and benefits
- difficulties in social and economic integration
- a lack of access to required resources (finance, housing)
- poverty

more than 60% of all young people surveyed reported an employment related challenge

All of these obstacles remain for young people in their attempt to secure and retain decent work, especially when compared with older age groups. According to the ILO, the global youth unemployment rate stood at **13%**, three times higher than the **4.3%** for all adults.⁵¹ Beyond the figures for unemployment, one-third of young people worldwide is currently designated as not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

For those in work, the income of one third of young people falls below national poverty lines. Of the 1.8 billion young people in the world today, one in four young people cannot find jobs paying more than \$1.25 per day, the international threshold of extreme poverty.⁵² Young people who are marginalised or affected by poverty face

⁴⁹ UN Resolution A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

⁵⁰ CICOPA, Cooperatives and Employment Second Global Report (2017) Contribution of cooperatives to decent work in the changing world of work, p.15.

⁵¹ ILO (2018) *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018* International Labour Office, Geneva.

⁵² S4YE (Goldin, N. & M. Hobson with P. Glick, M. Lundberg, S. Puerto). 2015. "Toward Solutions for Youth Employment: A Baseline for 2015." Solutions for Youth Employment, Washington D.C

challenges that require them to balance multiple commitments, such as education, their social and economic commitments, or family responsibilities. These factors effectively work to reinforce poverty and taken together, they prevent many young people from contributing in a meaningful way to economies and societies that need them.

For the young people surveyed in this study, the graphic below displays the top 5 challenges reported by young people as the most important for them.

Challenges	Frequency
Employment	261
Education	71
Health (Mental)	12
Poverty	11
Climate change	11

Table 1.1 Top 5 challenges reported by young people

Challenges surrounding employment were mentioned in overwhelming proportions by over **60%** of the young people answering the surveys. Of 420 responses, words related to employment (employment, unemployment, work, jobs, opportunities) were mentioned 261 times, more than any other issue.⁵³ Job security, low wages, personal and professional development opportunities, or maintaining formal work, are all identified as additional barriers for decent work.

All of these challenges are also echoed by cooperative youth outside of this study, such as young people who attended the Global Youth Forum on Cooperative Entrepreneurship, who state that an important objective is ‘promotion of economic models that aim to end precarity and enable fair remuneration and decent work which conform with democratic processes.’⁵⁴ Although nearly two thirds of the respondents surveyed can relate to the challenges

of employment, it is evident that young people in developing economies face an employment situation that is very different from that of youth in developed economies. An important distinction within this chapter can therefore be made between the informal and formal economy that separates these two categories.⁵⁵ An informal economy is the part of any economy that is neither regulated nor monitored by any form of government. It stands in contrast to the formal economy, which is regulated and taxed by government. The concept applied initially to self-employment in small unregistered enterprises, however it has been expanded to include wage employment in unprotected jobs.⁵⁶

⁵³ Survey respondents mentioned more than one challenge; therefore, the frequency table is not directly proportional to the number of young people surveyed.

⁵⁴ Youth Agenda for Advocacy, ICA Global Youth Forum on Cooperative Entrepreneurship, Kuching, February 2020.

⁵⁵ Informal and formal economies will exist and interact to some degree in

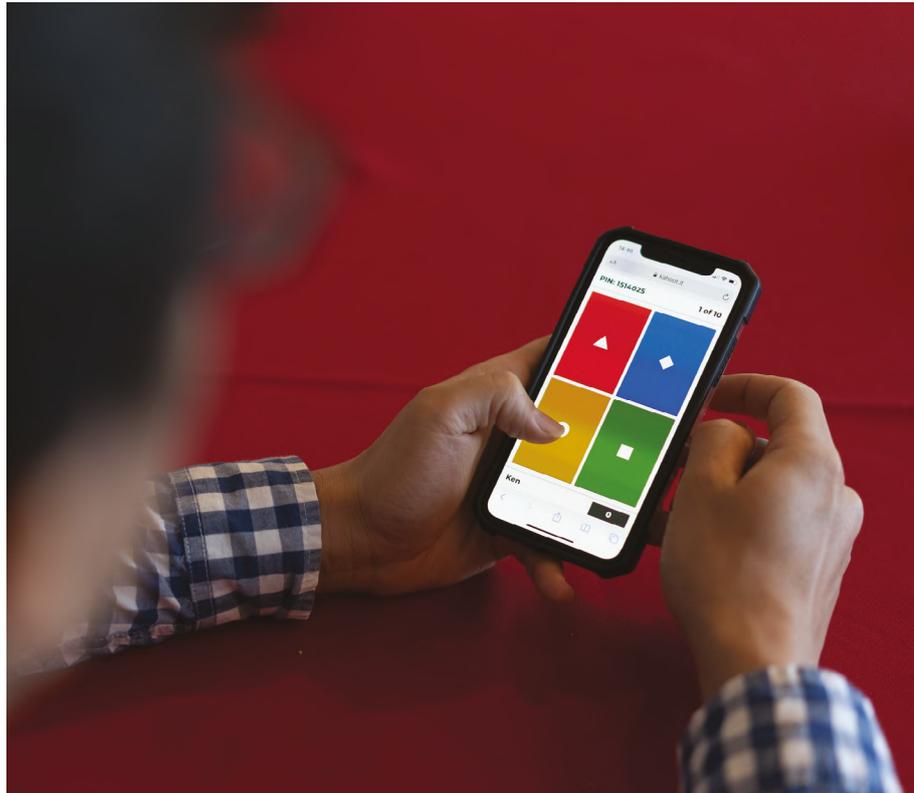
both developing and developed countries. They are distinct here in relation to the role that cooperatives can play in supporting young people in different settings.

⁵⁶ See <https://www.wiego.org/informal-economy>

Unemployment

For young people involved with cooperatives, and also for those who were less familiar with the cooperative movement, unemployment is identified as the biggest challenge, yet a number of different factors are contributing to this across regions. The common employment-related challenges facing young people in each region are examined further below.

In the African region, young people in Eswatini identified lack of start-up capital, entrepreneurship skills and capacity building as the main issues that contribute to the unemployment crisis. In Morocco and Togo, weak socio-economic integration and a lack of access to finance or market assistance are some of challenges young people face in order to gain meaningful employment. In Uganda, young people are typically excluded from accessing financial services due to barriers both on the supply and demand sides. On the demand side, because of strict requirements for young people to access finance, young farmers are prevented from opening bank accounts or accessing credit. On the supply side, there is a lack of incentives for banks to create products for less fortunate clients.⁵⁷



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Similar to youth in Africa, in the Americas, market integration is also one of the main problems young people face. In Guatemala, the young cooperators surveyed noted that limited employment opportunities exist, especially for those who have just completed their studies. Within the unemployment rate of **2.8%** (El Periódico, 2019), the vast majority of the unemployed are young people who fail to access the available employment opportunities because of their limited professional experience. A young respondent from Costa Rica articulated;

“ *The lack of employment opportunities and application of leadership and high professional and personal competence are the main barriers we face today.* ”

⁵⁷ Alexandra Löwe, Susan Njambi-Szlapka and Sanyu Phiona, ODI, 'Youth associations and cooperatives: getting young people into work' Report, October 2019.

In the Asia-Pacific region, although the countries surveyed have lower rates of youth unemployment, young people still note that finding work is among the biggest challenges.⁵⁸ Young people in countries such as India, Iran and the Republic of Korea note unemployment, the quality and security of jobs and economic independence and autonomy as the main problems affecting them. For example, India's unemployment rate stands at **6.1%** (its highest in four decades) and half of India's population is under the age of 25.⁵⁹ A lack of adequate jobs and a mismatch of skills between young people and the available jobs poses a serious challenge for the future, due to demographic shifts, ageing populations, tax revenues and pressure on systems of social welfare.⁶⁰ In the Philippines, poverty is also noted by young respondents as one of the challenges that stands out.

in Europe, finding decent and meaningful work, persistently low salaries and lack of autonomy and influence over working environments were noted as key challenges for young people in this region.

In Europe, finding decent and meaningful work, persistently low salaries and lack of autonomy and influence over working environments were noted as key challenges for young people in this region. For young people in Italy, the most prevalent challenges, in nearly half of all cases, concerned issues and difficulties on the topic of work (particularly prospects and conditions), and more specifically, finding employment. Italy's youth unemployment rate is currently **33%** and the country also

has one of the highest rate of NEETs in the eurozone.⁶¹ This is also the case in Greece, where youth unemployment stood at **39.6%** in the first quarter of 2019, one of the highest rates of youth unemployment on the continent.⁶²

⁵⁸ The ODI estimate it at 10.5%, 11.1% and 10.8% respectively for 2017.

⁵⁹ The Wire, *Why India Should Worry About Its Educated, but Unemployed Youth*, 25 February 2019

⁶⁰ S4YE (Goldin, N. & M. Hobson with P. Glick, M. Lundberg, S. Puerto). 2015. "Toward Solutions for Youth Employment: A Baseline for 2015." Solutions for Youth Employment, Washington D.C.

⁶¹ Romei, V. March 2019, Financial Times *Youth unemployment in Italy rises to second highest in eurozone*, Accessed 19/06/2020.

⁶² Eurostat News release, Euro indicators, July 2019, *Euro area unemployment at 7.5%* Accessed 19/06/2020.

Challenges linked to employment

Unemployment is not the only issue young people face, but also underemployment, which peaks at just over half of youth in the labour force in low income countries.⁶³ According to the UN, underemployed individuals are defined as those who are earning below-market wages for their skill set, who are highly skilled but working in low-skill jobs, and part-time workers who would prefer full-time work but are unable to find it.⁶⁴ Large numbers of youth, particularly in the developing world, find themselves in in-work poverty, able to find employment but living on incomes that are below the poverty line.

Even when work can be found, it is clear that much more needs to be done to improve the working conditions of young people.

Within this category, other challenges identified by the young people surveyed include socio-economic integration, poor access to finance and a lack of adequate and affordable housing. Further, youth also noted a lack of collective bargaining power, social skills, job satisfaction, workers' rights & benefits, and in work and out-of-work poverty as significant challenges to be addressed.

Gender and employment: a snapshot

International organisations such as the ILO note that the underlying aggregate trends in the labour market are also gendered.⁶⁵ They note that “women are less likely to participate in the labour market, facing a global gender gap in participation of over 26 percentage points, and are less likely to find a job when they do participate.”⁶⁶

The gender employment gap is also reflected within other countries surveyed in this study, such as in Bulgaria, where the employment gap for women is significantly above the EU average for the 20-29 age group, suggesting a lack of adequate progress towards the goal of gender equality (SDG 5).⁶⁷ Cooperatives and other sustainable and inclusive business models can be one way to address this gap, with research by WFTO in 2019 demonstrating that a woman working for a Fair Trade Organisation is four times more likely to achieve leadership positions or join a board than a woman working for a conventional business.⁶⁸

It is clear from the responses that many young people find it difficult integrating into the socio-economic fabric and acquiring employment that has the potential to facilitate successful transitions from youth to young adulthood. In the Asia-Pacific region, Iran was a strong example of where the lack of affordable and good quality housing is most acute for young people and those on average or below average incomes.⁶⁹ The impacts of poor housing are well documented and can influence health and social outcomes.⁷⁰

Respondents in Asia-Pacific also shared that underemployment is affecting them, as the jobs that they do manage to obtain often don't utilise all their skills, education, or availability to work. This has multidimensional impacts, such as in Indonesia, where the incentive to pursue tertiary degrees appears low because unemployment rates are reported to be the highest amongst university-educated Indonesians.⁷¹

⁶³ Africa Development Bank Group, Jobs for Youth in Africa: Catalyzing youth opportunity across Africa

⁶⁴ World Youth Report: Youth And The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, United Nations, New York, 2018

⁶⁵ For a discussion of these dynamics see S4YE (Goldin, N. & M. Hobson with P. Glick, M. Lundberg, S. Puerto). 2015. "Toward Solutions for Youth Employment: A Baseline for 2015." Solutions for Youth Employment, Washington D.C, Chapter 5.

⁶⁶ ILO (2018) World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018 International Labour Office, Geneva.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ WFTO, International Women's Day 2019, WFTO Europe, [Business Models that Empower Women Insights and Inspiration from Fair Trade Enterprises](#), Report No. 2 (February 2019)

⁶⁹ Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi (2007) Youth Housing Conditions in Tehran: Profiles and Challenges, Journal of Social Sciences, 15:2, 153-160, DOI: [10.1080/09718923.2007.11892577](#)

⁷⁰ Bonnefoy WHO Regional Office, Europe 'Inadequate housing and health: an overview' Int. J. Environment and Pollution, Vol. 30, Nos. 3/4, 2007.

⁷¹ Dragana Borenovic Dilas, Christopher Mackie, Ying Huang and Stefan Trines, WENR, [Education in Indonesia](#), March 21, 2019

Solutions by and for youth

The challenges above bring a sense of urgency to create opportunities for young people that can lead to positive development impacts and outcomes. Young people were asked to suggest solutions to tackling these challenges.

Solutions suggested by young respondents include but are not limited to:

- the formation of cooperatives, in particular worker cooperatives
- increased (cooperative) entrepreneurship
- increased access to vocational training
- development of skills through cooperative work, education and training
- increasing access to global information and technology
- increasing access to capital including financial assistance for self-employment

This section assesses the potential of cooperative contributions, before looking at wider solutions suggested by youth in the informal and the formal economy.

A cooperative solution?

Respondents from all regions noted the cooperative sector was a form of association of people who are capable of helping young people overcome different challenges. At the global level, **93%** of cooperative youth surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that cooperatives have the capacity to help youth overcome and meet the challenges mentioned. For those who strongly agreed, the figure was highest in the Americas (**88%**), and lowest in Europe (**49%**). One young cooperator from Eswatini mentioned:

“ Cooperatives encourage teamwork which has proven to be the best method in recent times. As the African proverb states that ‘if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together’...”

”

This reflects existing and established work on cooperatives, which puts forward the model as one that can stand the test of time, is more efficient and effective than conventional investor-owned firms and provides additional resilience against economic crisis.⁷²

In the Asia-Pacific region, **96%** of young cooperators surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that cooperatives are a viable model to help youth to overcome and meet the various challenges that they experience. In Indonesia, for instance, the respondents believe that cooperatives can offer youth the opportunity to work in a cooperative manner, pool financial resources, knowledge, and experience for a mutual

⁷² Co-operatives in a Post-Growth Era, Creating Co-operative Economics, Edited by Sonja Novkovic, J. Tom Webb, Fernwood Publishing, September 2014

problem or a cause, and that cooperatives can facilitate self-employment among youth. For example, cooperative youths in Iran note that cooperatives can facilitate the opportunity to work collaboratively or for self-employment to enhance business competency. The idea of consensus and a sense of responsibility and ownership are other important characteristics that have been attributed to the feasibility of a cooperative model as a potential solution for youth unemployment in this region.

“ I think the key is about the ownership and the consensus system. If young people do realise that they can be the owner of something, then the decision will also be considered for their favour. This is some kind of change the youth need, a change that is determined by themselves, the youth. ”

Young cooperator, Philippines

Young respondents in the Republic of Korea noted that cooperatives can give youth a chance to collaborate and work together. They also hold the social aspect of the cooperative model in high regard. It was noted that cooperatives are a people-centered business model and have the potential to change the social and inter-personal make-up of society for the better.

Young people already involved with cooperatives are enthusiastic and in tune with the particular characteristics and benefits of the cooperative business model. In the Americas, Argentina's cooperative youth advocate for the creation of more youth cooperatives,

“ Cooperatives are great at recognising and implementing fair practices. I feel it would be perfect if cooperatives worked with young people in their local community and helped them build the skills that they will need in work and family life. ”

Young cooperator, United Kingdom

“ Cooperatives can create a sustainable social structure based on the principles of mutual respect and solidarity. They can address critical problems such as unemployment, food security and even regional imbalances to an extent. ”

Young cooperator, Republic of Korea

which may contribute to the provision of post-education opportunities, diminishing the risk of unemployment for teenagers who finish secondary school. Young respondents also stated that the cooperative model would help the inclusion of young people at work, providing them with necessary tools to enter the labour market.

Despite high unemployment statistics, **91%** of those surveyed in Italy indicated that the cooperative model has a strong potential to help youth to overcome and meet various challenges. Youth respondents from Denmark and the United Kingdom also highlighted cooperative solutions such as the founding of worker or consumer cooperatives. Other respondents noted how worker cooperatives could provide more autonomy for young people in order to have more control over their working lives. Previous research in Europe has demonstrated correlations between the creation of worker cooperatives in areas with higher unemployment rates, as well as wage levels, population growth and the emergence of a strong cooperative culture.⁷³

73% of respondents from Africa strongly agree that cooperatives are a viable model to help youth to overcome and meet the challenges they experience. Cooperatives have been promoted as a way to provide youth with access and opportunities that transcend socio-economic

⁷³ Díaz-Foncea, M., Marcuello, C. Spatial patterns in new firm formation: are cooperatives different?. Small Bus Econ 44, 171–187 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-014-9581-5>.

status, rural-urban divides, and gender and age groups. Young people in this region suggested that cooperatives can offer a viable platform where young people can test their skills, with the hope of developing themselves professionally and as entrepreneurs.

Overall, it is evident that for young people, cooperatives (of all typologies) across all four regions are a viable solution that can also have an impact upon wider communities. The cooperative model can develop the community and uplift people out of poverty and into meaningful employment. In the informal economy, cooperatives can bring much-needed forms of organising for disenfranchised workers to come together around their collective challenges. They can provide additional support systems in places where social protections are weak or non-existent.

Youth surveyed recognise the value of participating in a group, such as a cooperative, with many suggesting that as cooperatives directly address the needs of their members, youth-orientated cooperatives can work directly to protect youth interests. It is also believed that as members of the cooperative, young people can receive many opportunities and benefits from being a part of the cooperative which will help them overcome their challenges.

Specifically, the surveys demonstrated that cooperatives can benefit young people in the following ways:

- opportunity to work collectively
- democratic decision making⁷⁴
- pooling financial resources
- pooling knowledge and skills
- provision of employment opportunities
- provision of social protections and benefits
- new and alternative models of ownership
- collective bargaining power and market access

jobs created in a cooperative tend to be longer term and can in some cases be more resilient than startups or micro businesses

“ A group of young people can form a cooperative related to food, arts or services. Once their business starts growing, they can hire other jobless young people and address their challenges. ”

Young cooperator, Indonesia

Cooperatives can offer youth the possibility to pool their financial resources, knowledge, and experience for a mutual problem or cause and facilitate self-employment among youth. The idea of consensus and a sense of responsibility and ownership are other important characteristics that have been attributed to the feasibility of a cooperative model as a potential solution for youth unemployment. Jobs created in a cooperative tend to be longer term and can in some cases be more resilient than startups or micro businesses.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ It is important to recognise that democratic decision making operates differently according to the specific context of the cooperative. For example, in worker owned cooperatives and in cooperatives without worker owners, this can operate differently.

⁷⁵ Virginie Pérotin (2015) What do we really know about worker co-operatives? Report, Cooperatives UK.

Workers should benefit from these forms of shared ownership, collective bargaining power, and the possibility to develop new skills as well as new and innovative enterprise activities. However, it is important to recognise that challenges remain, and gaining the wide range of skills that are required for self-organisation, as well as nurturing a democratic and cooperative culture, or accountancy and marketing skills, can be challenging in an existing context of precarity. In addition, for youth who may be looking for a shorter-term commitment, the long-term durability of a cooperative may act as a brake or a deterrent to joining, as they would like the flexibility to work and change jobs easily.

“

...The cooperative model can provide a good working environment and decent salaries... but it could do more through the provision of providing education and jobs, professional experience, and social benefits to young people.

”

Young cooperators, Indonesia

Beyond cooperatives

Cooperatives have great potential, although many of the challenges of employment may not be served by cooperatives alone. In order to explore how cooperatives can properly address these challenges, they must also work in partnership with other actors, and work for wider changes in society and the economy. This section assesses the input of young people on these important questions.

For those respondents surveyed who were less familiar with the cooperative movement, economic development and work still remain the biggest challenges. Although the knowledge and awareness of cooperatives among this group is lower, at the global level, **64%** of non-cooperative youth surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that cooperatives have the capacity to help youth to overcome and meet the challenges mentioned. Youth surveyed in countries such as India, Italy, Argentina, the UK, Costa Rica and Republic of Korea all noted that cooperatives provide potential opportunities for them. Young respondents noted wider solutions to their challenges, explored below.

Within the Asia-Pacific region, young people in India suggest that improvements to the education system are needed. Along with theoretical knowledge, vocational training that provides hands-on experience of doing things and preparing people for the workplace is required. Providing opportunities for lifelong learning and education to acquire new skills orientated towards employability and work-related skills is a reoccurring theme across regions. Specifically, respondents from India noted that there is a general need to overhaul the present education system with an urgent focus on employability.

In the Americas, the theme of education for employability is also reflected, with young people noting that universities and educational institutes could address their employment related challenges. This is due to their purpose of training young people with the necessary qualities that the labour market requires to meet the needs of present-day employers. They consider that government agencies and the private sector have the necessary characteristics to contribute to improved youth orientated policies. They note that relevant stakeholders should provide opportunities to acquire new work-related skills that help youth prepare for the world of work and transition through young adulthood.

In Europe, high up on the list of priorities respondents suggest structural economic and political changes. A rise in wages and better education and training opportunities are also particularly important to young

a rise in wages and better education and training opportunities are particularly important to young people, as well as having agency over one's work

people, as well as better availability of jobs. Cooperative youth in the United Kingdom place a strong emphasis on a redefinition and development of a new economic paradigm, with an emphasis on education in order to achieve it. The act of having agency over one's work is a recurring theme, not only from respondents in the United Kingdom, but also in other countries from this region. Non-cooperators in the UK also suggested that there should be more youth centres and increased support to transition into working life.

To counter the trend of unemployment, cooperative youth in Greece noted that greater public investment is needed, primarily to create new jobs in key sectors of the economy. Further, they also noted respect for labour rights needed to be strengthened, in response to reforms in labour law introduced as conditions following the financial crisis. In order to strengthen in-work rights, young people should consider trade union membership, which increases their collective bargaining power.

In the formal economy, early retirement and knowledge transfer between generations can be considered as a way to get more young people into work. A reduction in working time, which may improve productivity in cooperatives and in other enterprises, as well as work sharing and rotation, equal pay, and sociocratic approaches to decision making, are also

relevant policy proposals. Combined with the implementation of ideas such as universal basic services and guaranteed minimum income, these proposals could ensure that young people are supported, resilient to crisis, and able to make a meaningful contribution to our societies and economies.

In the African region, in Uganda, respondents stated that the improvement of the investment sector and the provision of finance to young people could help them create their own employment. Youth respondents from Morocco and Kenya believe that educational reform and improving the current hostile environment for entrepreneurship will help solve unemployment and other challenges faced by young people.

In all four regions, youth noted that wide-ranging structural changes are required to meet the challenges and needs they are facing. Reflecting on how this can be done requires thinking about a re-definition of work, and about new ways of conceptualising the relationship between capital and labour, as well as that between the employer and the employee. Through this lens, wider solutions to young people's challenges as suggested by youth include, but are not limited to:

- reform of educational systems
- better education opportunities
- adequate pay and remuneration
- strengthening labour law
- access to finance for entrepreneurship
- trade union membership
- adequate programmes to support young people
- increased public investment

Overall, young respondents both within and outside the cooperative movement were of the opinion that the cooperative model could help youth to overcome and meet their challenges and issues. Cooperative movements promote collaboration and are seen as an important actor with a focus on improving the living conditions of members and the population around them, as well as an efficient, equitable and fair economic model, which seeks people's economic and social development. However, it is also clear that they will not solve all young people's challenges in isolation, and it is clear that multi-stakeholder partnerships between different actors are increasingly relevant. Although no silver bullet across different contexts and countries exists, there was consensus amongst the young people surveyed that a greater availability of decent work and entrepreneurial opportunities is needed.



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Cooperative employment already concerns at least 279.4 million people across the globe, or nearly **10%** of the world's employed population, including around 16 million cooperative employees and 11.1 million worker-members.⁷⁶ However, respondents both within and outside the cooperative movement indicated that cooperatives need to be much more visible as an alternative in the provision of employment opportunities. The next section looks at clear examples of cooperative contributions in this area highlighted by young people.

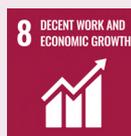
⁷⁶ CICOPA, Cooperatives and Employment Second Global Report (2017) Contribution of cooperatives to decent work in the changing world of work, p.12

Case studies: employment

Each of the countries surveyed listed key examples of active and successful cooperative organisations that have been able to engage young members and provide a source of solidarity and economic stability. These are displayed below.

Case Study	The Cooperative of Young Professional Producers of Organic Pineapple (CJPPAB)
Organisations	Coopermondo, CTOP, the Confederation of Agricultural Producers and the Ministry of Development, with support of the Fund for Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship (FAIEJ)
Typology	Producer
Location	Africa Region, Togo
Sector	Agriculture

Links to SDGs



The Cooperative of Young Professional Producers of Organic Pineapple (CJPPAB) is one of the cooperatives created from the Coopermondo-Confcooperative projects and a key example of cooperative activities in Togo for young people. CJPPAB has 1,018 young members, of which 367 are women, and together produces a special type of pineapple called *pain de sucre* (sugar bread) destined for the Italian market. The cooperation between the cooperative movements in Togo and Italy has allowed young people to not only ex-

change experiences but has resulted in new market opportunities for the Togolese farmers. The members produce 10,000 tonnes of pineapple in a year and use only organic farming practices without any application of chemicals. Assistance and training were provided by Coopermondo, the international development cooperation association of the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives, and the project received funding from six Italian cooperative banks and Federcasse, the apex organisation for cooperative banks in Italy.



Credit: Coopermondo

Case Study BIOME (Viome, Vio.me, and VIOME) Youth Solidarity Initiative

Typology Worker Cooperative

Location Europe, Greece, Thessaloniki

Sector Industry, Pharmaceutical

Links to SDGs



BIOME (also known as Viome, Vio.me, and VIOME), a cooperative and solidarity enterprise in Thessaloniki, Greece is a great example of how cooperatives can be a driver of sustainable employment through job creation that allows individuals to work for a common purpose and for shared interests. Workers and local community members took over the factory and managed it through a participatory process. Although the majority of workers are older adults, BIOME has been engaged with young people with the creation of a network by young people and students in solidarity with the cooperative. The young people are engaged in order to support the cooperative's products, help with distribution and fundraising, but also to promote the idea of self-management to the student community within the city of Thessaloniki. As one young respondent engaged in the Youth Network mentioned:

“For me the coop model is for everyone who wants to experience a more inclusive working environment and a more democratic one. Cooperatives are the way to experience that, there is nothing compared to it. It was a big change working inside this environment, I learned a lot from the colleagues but also from the procedures, which help in other parts of life. Young people should take that opportunity to build something.”

Young respondents noted that BIOME aims for equality among working relations, regardless of age or seniority. People are shown respect from day one and there have been many discussions within BIOME on how to get more young people involved in the cooperative. Through the solidarity network, BIOME has also sought to build relationships with young people through engagement with universities and to share knowledge gained through the experiences of collective occupation of the factory. They also seek to build relationships with cultural groups composed of young people, musicians, artists and theatrical performers.



Credit: BIOME

Another good example is APES-Togo, an associative agency that promotes cooperative entrepreneurship and aims to improve the economy and social development of Togo through the cooperative model. Its work is linked to the UN SDGs for 2030. By promoting the development of cooperatives in accordance with the principles and values of the ICA, APES-Togo hopes that it will draw the attention of cooperative youth entrepreneurship programmes in the country. In 2018, it launched a financial cooperative society dedicated to supporting its cooperative members with savings, particularly in supporting the financing of youth cooperative societies and job creation.

“ **One of the characteristics of cooperatives is the skills they provide to young people to insert them into the world of cooperative entrepreneurship.** ”

Young cooperators, Argentina

Another example is found in the Americas. Cooperativa Sancor Seguros from Sunchales, Argentina, founded in 1945, provides personal and heritage insurance services in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay. In order to strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit of young people and train them appropriately, Cooperativa Sancor Seguros awards scholarships to a certain number of young people to follow the career of University Technician in Cooperative and Mutual Management, as well as the opportunity of professional internships within the cooperative to acquire basic professional experience. In this way, the cooperative allows a number of young people to access quality education that under normal conditions would not have been possible and at the same time it provides young people with the spaces to begin to apply their acquired knowledge and skills.

Conclusion: employment

The phrase, “living the future today” derives from the word ‘Litsafa’ after an active cooperative in Eswatini called the Litsafa SACCO. The cooperative, which was established in 2007, was inspired by the fact that as young people, the future is influenced by how we live our lives today. In its first six years of existence, Litsafa, through the disbursement of loans, was able to empower 104 of its members to venture into small business, procure liabilities and assets as well as further their studies. These stories of cooperation should go on to inspire new generations of cooperators to tackle the challenges of work.

For young people, the issues of unemployment, underemployment and poor job quality have proven to be persistent and daunting, with nearly two thirds of all respondents highlighting it as the biggest challenge. Many young people find it difficult integrating into the socio-economic fabric of their countries and acquiring gainful employment, which impacts negatively on their strong desire for independence.

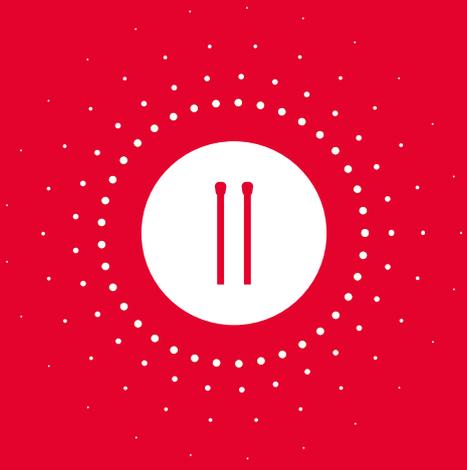
The main reflections on youth and employment are highlighted below:

- barriers to decent work are not unique to particular regions but are common to young people across all regions, with employment identified as young people’s biggest challenge
- several connected challenges are reported, including underemployment, poor job quality and security, a lack of resources and limited social and economic integration
- solutions to these challenges require action within the formal and the informal economy and should involve cooperatives, working in multi-stakeholder partnerships with other actors
- overall, a majority of young respondents suggest that the cooperative model could help young people to overcome and meet their challenges and issues
- the main benefits of the cooperative model for young people are opportunities to work collectively and democratically, the pooling of knowledge and resources, provision of opportunities and the collective benefits of membership
- respondents both within and outside the cooperative movement indicate that cooperatives need to be much more visible as an alternative in the provision of employment opportunities
- there is a need to advocate for policies and programmes to support young people, as well as ensuring the proper implementation of existing programmes and activities. This should be combined with improved access to finance for young people
- more work is needed to improve working conditions for young people. Work needs to be fairly remunerated and working for no or inadequate pay should be addressed, through enforceable legal protections for young people in the workplace

It is important to remember that as the Rochdale Pioneers did not wait to come together to challenge the exploitative conditions that were imposed upon them through industrialisation, the work benefits enjoyed today have been gained through collective organising, cooperation and solidarity between workers and across different groups within society. Young people in cooperation are a source of leadership for the ongoing challenges around the future of work.

Global thematic
youth research

chapter



EDUCATION

Introduction

It was for the first time in 2019 that SDG 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) was reviewed by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the apex institution for global SDG follow-up and review. A report on 'Meeting commitments: are countries on track to achieve SDG 4?' launched during the 2019 HLPF shows that, "on current trends, barely 6 in 10 young people will be completing secondary school by 2030. While in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, fewer students will be achieving minimum proficiency in reading at the end of primary school." It is worth noting that, by the time education became a point of discussion and reporting for countries in 2019, about one-third of the time to achieve SDGs had already passed.⁷⁹

It is generally accepted that education is key to progress, development and sustainability of any aspect of human civilisation. It is not merely a process that facilitates acquiring knowledge, skills, beliefs and values; it is a linchpin that guarantees growth and continuity. Failing to obtain

adequate, quality, affordable and useful education will not only create roadblocks to successful accomplishment of other SDGs, but also risks future progression beyond the 2030 deadline.

In the context of this study, education is an important theme; as many would agree that one rarely learns about cooperative organisations or societies in mainstream formal education. Even though cooperatives are recognised as important actors for the implementation of 2030 agenda,⁸⁰ general and specialised knowledge about the model is limited to the few and not really reaching the many. Through this study, which seeks to bridge gaps between cooperatives and youth, education⁸¹ has appeared as one of the important reasons for the existence of these gaps and also a useful tool to overcome this shortfall. This study also makes apparent that there are four critical ways to potentially ensure the growth and continuity of the cooperative movement worldwide, as well as address burgeoning education-based challenges faced by youth. These include:

- public awareness about cooperatives
- basic education on the model and values of cooperation
- specialised education in cooperative business management and operations
- practical experience in running and managing cooperative businesses

This chapter focuses on major findings from the study, comprising common education-based challenges faced by youth, proposed solutions, the role of cooperatives, interesting examples of how cooperatives are reaching out to young people through education and recommendations for cooperatives to create lasting impact on youth through education.

⁷⁹ UNESCO (2019). Beyond commitments – How countries implement SDG 4. Paris, UNESCO.

⁸⁰ ILO (n.d.). Cooperatives and the Sustainable Development Goals: A contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ILO.

⁸¹ The term 'education' is used in a broad sense. It includes, formal and informal education on cooperatives; skill-based trainings to run cooperatives; and general positive awareness about cooperatives.

Education, education everywhere and not a job to pick

Records from the Voluntary National Review (VNR) report presented at the HLPF show that countries have started placing special focus on education as a catalyst to develop societies and nation building.⁸² However, despite these emerging trends, there are plenty of challenges within the space of education. To start with, the 2019 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report by UNESCO notes that:

- roughly US\$ 4.7 Trillion is spent annually on education by governments, households and donors worldwide⁸³
- “about **65%** of the annual spending on education (US\$3 Trillion) occurs in high-income countries while only **0.5%** (US\$22 Billion) is spent in low income countries, even though the two have a roughly equal number of school-age children”⁸⁴
- on average, households globally are footing about one-fifth of the bill for education

While imbalances in global budgetary allocations and capacity for education spending are severe, an important question to reflect upon is whether the current education that is imparted worldwide is adequate, affordable, useful and inclusive? The section below outlines some of the most pressing education-based challenges faced by young people today, as reported by the study respondents in each region.

Africa

In the African region, the following points emerged from the study:

- a lack of quality education to increase competitive knowledge and skill enhancement is a major concern for youth
- in Kenya, the respondents noted that there is a need for education systems to focus less on academic credentials and more on valuable and practical knowledge that can help address youth unemployment
- for those who are employed, inadequate work knowledge and limited soft skills, such as those related to proposal writing and networking are reported as key concerns
- the need for training on practical know-how at work and how to scale-up businesses was also expressed by respondents from Morocco and Eswatini

Senior representatives of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) throw critical light on the question ‘what does a quality education mean for African youth?’. It is explained that access to basic education as a key step towards community development has been a focus of the majority of African countries between 2009-2019. However, the main challenge is to improve the quality of education.⁸⁵ As one young respondent from Togo noted:

“

Youth in Togo need more customised vocational trainings in order to become competitive in the labour market.

”

Young respondent, Togo

⁸² UNESCO (2019). Beyond commitments – How countries implement SDG 4. Paris, UNESCO.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Nsengiyumva, A and Cupis D. S. (2019). What does a quality education mean for African youth? Global Partnership for Education.

Americas

In the Americas region, the following points were noted:

- access to good quality and affordable tertiary education is one of the main challenges faced by young people
- in Colombia, respondents highlighted the difficulties faced by youth in choosing between private and public universities. While private universities offer the latest and demand-based education, they are expensive compared to public education. Public universities however, though affordable, do not match up to the current market demands
- young respondents have noted that due to these gaps, young people in Colombia are confronted with three major problems - limited options that offer quality tertiary education; limited access to quality tertiary education due to high tuition costs; and high financial debts for those who do opt for private tertiary education
- young people in Costa Rica have reported that the main problem regarding education is that the curriculum of professional courses is not revised and updated as per the emerging demands of recruiting companies
- they have also noted that there is a need for continuous training for those who are already working, to match up to increasing market demands

As a result, the average percentage of young Colombians with a higher education degree remains low. According to a young respondent from Colombia:

“ Many young people cannot access university education because of a lack of financial resources. While the private universities are very expensive, the public ones have limited seats. ”

Young respondent, Colombia

In Guatemala, education is also a pressing issue for the majority of young people. Only **40.7%** of the economically active population have access to primary school education, only **7.3%** of 17 million population have access to tertiary education and **0.5%** have access to graduate degrees.⁸⁶ This seriously complicates the country's position in attracting investment from forei-

gn companies which can potentially create an enabling environment for skilled jobs. Similar challenges can be seen in relation to expensive private education, such as outdated courses and curricula and low investment in public education, as reported by young respondents from Argentina and Mexico.

⁸⁶ Orozco M. and Valdivia M. (2017). Educational challenges in Guatemala and consequences on human capital and development. The Dialogue.

Europe

In the European region, the following points emerged:

- as compared to other regions, less education-based challenges were reported by young people in Europe, although challenges related to employment were reported that were linked to inadequate education systems
- in Bulgaria, many noted the lack of opportunities and failures of the education system. Large challenges for the education and training system evidently do remain, such as the provision of high quality and all-inclusive education and addressing school to work transitions in a successful way⁸⁷
- youth in Denmark identified the education system as one of the issues that needs attention
- in the United Kingdom (UK), young people emphasised education as a way to tackle these challenges

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access to good education and funding for education in early life could help reduce income inequality and economic instability

They specifically noted that access to good education and funding for education in early life could help reduce income inequality and economic instability. Although education is not directly reported as a challenge in the UK, such suggestions point towards the structural issues that may exist in the education system in the country.

⁸⁷ European Commission (2019). Country report Bulgaria. Brussels, European Commission

Asia-Pacific

In Asia-Pacific, a diverse set of problems related to education were cited by respondents. These include a disparity in education levels, a lack of adequate skills to match job requirements, and limited access to quality education, especially tertiary and public education.

More specifically:

- respondents from India noted that young people lack adequate skillsets that match job requirements as well as opportunities to nurture their skills
- those in Iran also mentioned that there is a mismatch between education in schools and the labour market
- lack of quality education at tertiary level and lack of quality public education were common problems noted by young people in the Philippines and Republic of Korea
- in Indonesia, one of the pressing challenges that young people are grappling with is disparity in education levels

Indonesia is also said to have much lower literacy levels than other Southeast Asian nations. An analysis by the World Bank shows that the level of tertiary education is also very low in the country. Only **9%** of Indonesians above the age of 25 are said to have attained a bachelor's degree in 2016. This stands as the lowest of all the member states of the association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN). Moreover, the incentive to pursue tertiary degrees also appears low.⁸⁸

Solutions

Education has become a central priority for most of the countries in the world and is now part of many national development plans. With a focus on leaving no one behind, many countries have come up with special and innovative programmes that cater to diverse needs from early childhood education, secondary and tertiary education, to technical and vocational skills.⁸⁹ Many of these programmes cut across myriad vulnerabilities associated with gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, language, and migration and displacement status.⁹⁰

In countries where this study was conducted, interesting initiatives have also been taken up to fuse education goals with national development plans and policies. In Colombia, for example, the National Decennial Education Plan for 2016-26 focuses on collaboration between the private

sector, academia and civil society. Togo is laying emphasis on vocational training to transform the agriculture sector. Countries such as India and Republic of Korea are also focusing on adult education. For example, the Fourth Master Plan for Lifelong Learning in Republic of Korea offers paid leave to support self-motivated lifelong learning, including for the employed, and establishes a lifelong learning center for people with disabilities and improves open online courses.⁹¹

The majority of young people surveyed in this study believed that besides heavy public investment, there is a need to overhaul the education system in their countries, upgrade its quality and make it relevant. The section below outlines views of young respondents on what can be done to improve the status quo.

⁸⁸ Dilas B. D et al (2019). Education in Indonesia. WENR.

⁸⁹ UNESCO (2019). Beyond commitments – How countries implement SDG 4. Paris, UNESCO.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Actors within the cooperative movement

Young people within the cooperative movement expressed several solutions to address the issues within their education systems.

- respondents from Eswatini expressed that cooperatives should be more involved in early education stages through schools (#SDG target 4.A)
- for young adults, training on cooperative business and entrepreneurship is another possible solution, proposed by youth from Togo (#SDG target 4.4)
- young people who are working, especially in cooperatives, credit the cooperative model with mechanisms that facilitate sharing of knowledge between members to help address skill and knowledge gaps at work⁹²
- young people in Colombia have also suggested that cooperatives could utilise education funds to support professional education of its members' and staff's children with the objective of engaging with youth, promoting cooperatives to them, and encouraging them to join or form cooperatives in the future (#SDG target 4.3). They also go on to suggest that cooperatives should pitch for designing curricula that meet the demands of the current cooperative sector.
- young respondents in Guatemala suggest that cooperatives could focus on training youth on how to secure jobs and manage finances and taxes (#SDG 4.4)

To address the larger problems faced by youth today vis-à-vis unemployment and jobs that stem from education, cooperatives can step in as a potential actor, according to respondents from within the cooperative movement in Europe.

- in the UK, it was noted that cooperative business should be taught as part of higher education programmes (#SDG 4.4 and 4.7)
- respondents from Greece, on the other hand, suggested that there should be programmes and workshops that could educate young people about cooperatives
- they also proposed that cooperatives should work in tandem with educational institutions such as schools and universities to raise awareness about cooperatives from an early age

“ Cooperatives need more presence in schools and universities, including in careers departments, to illustrate their role in relation to the creation of good work that meets the desires and needs of young people. ”

Young cooperator, United Kingdom

Respondents from Asia-Pacific also reported that cooperatives can potentially address challenges that result from inadequate education.

- **70%** of the young respondents from Indonesia were of the opinion that the cooperative model can moderately help youth to overcome and meet their challenges and needs
- this is because, they noted, that through forming or joining a cooperative, young people with similar vision can come together and contribute as per their abilities, thereby also benefitting themselves
- in the Philippines, respondents noted that because cooperatives are community owned, decision-making in cooperatives seems to be participatory in nature, which may attract young people

⁹² For example, the Kigayaza Youth Cooperative in Uganda is helping over 100 young farmer members to improve farming methods and gain knowledge, such as more effective crop management, through regular consultations, exposure visits, training and meetings with other farmers.

Actors outside the cooperative movement

For those less familiar with the cooperative movement, several points related to education are noted:

- findings from the study show that there is a huge global demand for good public education that is free or affordable, relevant, and competitive
- most of the respondents have stressed the task of educational actors and government to play an active role in addressing education-based challenges
- access to affordable, quality public education and re-vamping of curricula are proposed as the most common solutions by young respondents from all regions

findings from the study show that there is a huge global demand for good public education that is free or affordable, relevant, and competitive

A number of country specific findings in each region were reported:

- in Guatemala, respondents have proposed that education up to secondary level be made free and compulsory so as to develop human capacity and capital
- similarly, in Africa, heavy investment in quality and practical education has been viewed as fundamental to improve prevailing problems linked to education
- young people from Uganda suggested that capacity-building exercises which include business development and management skills can potentially reduce knowledge gaps at work
- young cooperators from Denmark, Italy and Greece suggested that improved investment in education and training is required to develop young peoples' capacities and skills
- respondents from the UK suggested an increase in funding opportunities to pursue education
- moreover, respondents from the UK have proposed that there should be a focus on increasing support to young people to transition smoothly from school to work. They also proposed establishing youth centres to prepare young people for work
- young respondents from outside the cooperative movement in Italy noted that updating existing curricula is also important
- in other countries, such as Republic of Korea and Iran, it was also suggested that there be more investment in public education to improve its quality
- in Colombia, young people noted that arrangements should be made to allow students to study and work with companies at the same time
- they proposed that companies and universities should be in agreement to let students work part-time, gain professional experience and be able to fund their education through the income that they earn from working
- respondents from India suggested that vocational training should accompany theoretical education to provide hands-on practical experience which will help young people become employable

Cooperatives and principle 5: education, training and information

Where there is learning, there is growth. Education, training and information is in the DNA of cooperatives as it is the fifth core principle of cooperatives, safeguarded by the ICA. In one of its briefs on the contribution of cooperatives to SDG 4, the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) underlines that cooperatives contribute to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

**education, training
and information
is in the DNA of
cooperatives**

“

As member-owned, value-driven enterprises, cooperatives have always put education at the core of their guiding principles. Cooperatives directly provide or facilitate access to education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and workers, as well as the members of larger communities so they can contribute effectively to the development of the cooperatives and communities.

These can range from affordable early childhood care and education, and primary and secondary education for members' children; technical, vocational and tertiary education for youth; and skills training for youth and adults. In many countries, cooperatives of people in the vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and indigenous and tribal peoples have been instrumental in providing them with literacy training and employment or life skills training and promoting inclusive and equitable education.⁹³

”

⁹³ ILO (n.d.). Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030- Cooperative contributions to SDG 4. ILO.

Case studies: education

The findings from the study show distinct examples of how cooperatives are benefiting youth through different means related to education.

Name	YOUCOOPE
Organisations	Co-operatives College, UK, European Commission, University of Cantabria, EURICSE
Location	Europe, Various countries
Sector	Cooperative Entrepreneurship
Links to SDGs	

YOUCOOPE⁹⁴ is a European project that aims to encourage educational institutions to include the cooperative model in their curricula and to promote it among young students and entrepreneurs. The project involves designing of innovative training modules with resources, methodologies and tools for educators to integrate cooperative entrepreneurship concepts, skills and real experiences in classrooms of ten institutional partners, such as Co-operative College UK, University of Cantabria, European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (EURICSE), and others. These resources also encourage the edu-

cators to seek the collaboration of existing cooperatives from their local context, to both gain awareness but also to facilitate school-to-work transition and real experiences.

The project is led by Santander International Entrepreneurship Centre (CISE) and with a support budget of more than €230,000 (£207,000) and co-financing from the European Commission. Building on the success of the previous ECOOPE European project, the scheme will see a focus on blended-learning and implementation of the train the trainer methodology.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Youcoope (n.d.).

⁹⁵ Cooperative News, Miles Hadfield 'Europe-wide project to teach co-operation to the next generation' 29 May 2020

In Asia-Pacific, awareness about the cooperative model and hands-on experience in operating and managing a cooperative business is also learnt through a variety of cooperatives that are based in educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities. They are mostly found in housing, consumer,

multi-purpose and credit sectors. In this region, there are many examples of such cooperatives. Two of them from Indonesia are highlighted below.

Name	Kopma UGM
Organisations	University of Gadjah Mada (UGM)
Location	Asia-Pacific Region, Indonesia
Sector	Education

Links to SDGs



Established in 1982, Kopma UGM is a student-run multi-purpose cooperative based at the University of Gadjah Mada (UGM), in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It has over 800 student members and is engaged in various business activities on campus such as

retail, printing of clothes, a café, souvenir shop and courier services. The students also receive active mentorship from their lecturers on improving the management of the cooperative, scaling up of business activities and advice on legal matters.



Credit: Kopma UGM

Name

KOPINDO

Location

Asia-Pacific Region, Indonesia

Sector

Education

Links to SDGs



Established in 1981, KOPINDO is a secondary level youth cooperative in Indonesia started by universities, students, and Islamic boarding school cooperatives. It has 75 member cooperatives and serves them

by helping access funds and other resource networks in the country and abroad. Its main activities include capacity and knowledge building services through training, workshops, study tours and internships.

Currently, KOPINDO is also working on modernising the image of cooperatives through popular methods like Vox Pop and digital platforms.



Credit: KOPINDO

Optimistic futures?

Cooperatives, youth and education

In this study, one key area of analysis is to examine the challenges and obstacles to youth participation within cooperatives. Youth perceptions of cooperatives appears to be a central barrier. This refers to both perceptions of young people about cooperatives, but also a lack of active youth engagement on the part of cooperatives. Our study has identified that lack of knowledge about the cooperative model, including on its specific benefits and unique features, for instance, on the knowledge of the cooperative values and principles as safe-

guarded by the ICA, is quite common and prominent among youth.

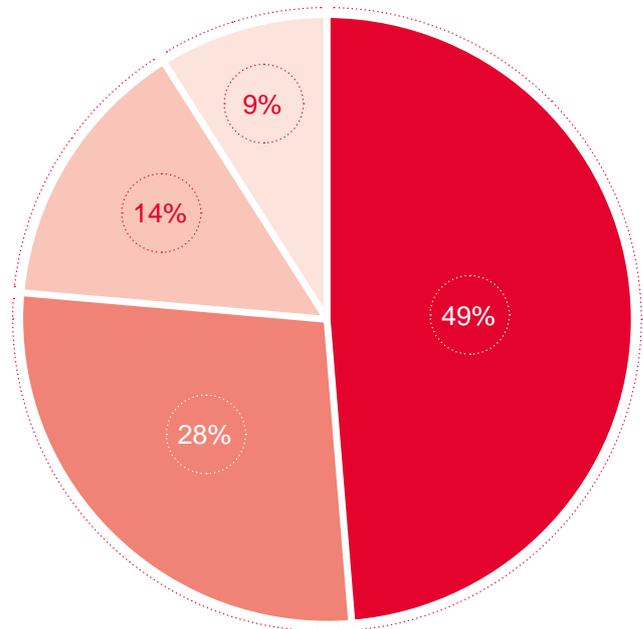
The section below throws light on various knowledge gaps pertaining to cooperatives that exist among young respondents. This is followed by a few solutions offered by young respondents on how these gaps can be addressed, thereby demonstrating the potential to open up engagement opportunities with youth through education.

Gaps acknowledged by youth

While cooperatives can seem to address education-based challenges, there are two other major issues surrounding education and knowledge that the study has brought to light.

First, most of the young respondents, especially from outside the cooperative movement, have reported a lack of awareness about cooperatives. Graph 2.1 gives a breakdown at the global level for those outside of the cooperative movement.

Do you have any knowledge of the cooperative business model?



- very little
- well / rather well
- not at all
- to a great extent

Graph 2.1: Do you have any knowledge of the cooperative business model?

When investigating at country level, in Uganda for example, where the cooperative movement is almost a century old and is present across sectors, one young person stated that:

“*...cooperatives are increasingly becoming a popular business model in Uganda and with government interventions, there is a growing trend in cooperative registration and diversification.*⁹⁶”

Young respondent, Uganda

However, only **14%** of those surveyed in Uganda suggested that they know about the cooperative business model to a great extent. Similarly, cooperatives contribute to almost **40%** of the GDP in Kenya,⁹⁷ but **50%** of those surveyed outside the cooperative movement were not even aware of any concrete cases of good practices from cooperatives in Kenya.

knowledge of the cooperative model may be limited to young people who can afford tertiary education

Young people in Argentina stated that while they did learn about cooperatives in schools, there is less knowledge on how to form cooperatives and about local cooperative businesses. Only **30%** of the young people surveyed from outside the cooperative movement reported knowing very much about the cooperative model.

Respondents from outside the cooperative movement in Europe also expressed limited awareness about the cooperative model. In Italy, it was noted that those who have knowledge about cooperatives usually found out through university education. This way, knowledge of the cooperative model may be limited to those young people who can afford tertiary education, but not those who have less access to educational opportunities. Similarly, in Greece, **65%** of those surveyed from outside the cooperative movement suggested that they know very little about the cooperative business model, and of those, it is mostly through the internet or through formal university or extra-curricular education.

“*The cooperative model needs a well-developed educational system in every country, which is not possible right now. Many countries simply do not have the educational systems to overcome these challenging conditions.*”

Young respondent, Greece

⁹⁶ Nakakande K. (2016). How the co-operative movement is very much alive in Uganda. New Vision.

⁹⁷ Co-operative Housing International (n.d.) The cooperative movement in Kenya. Co-operative Housing International.

In India and Iran, only **30%** and **25%** respectively of respondents outside the cooperative movement report having any knowledge regarding the cooperative business model. In India, these young respondents reported having acquired some knowledge on cooperatives by either working in the NGO sector or by coming across popular cooperative brands in the market, such as Amul.⁹⁸ This highlights a significant lack of awareness and knowledge about cooperatives and their benefits in the Asia-Pacific region.

A young cooperator from Indonesia stated that it was necessary to “instill the spirit of cooperativism in youth so that they can be independent.” This message stresses the need to reach out to more and more children and young adults so that a new generation of cooperators can take over the existing movement and help grow it further in times to come. Of all respon-

dents outside the cooperative movement, **83%** said they would like to know more about the cooperative model. This figure was highest in the region of the Americas, where **93%** said they would like to know more about the cooperative model.

The second issue is related to educating and upskilling young people who are already within the cooperative movement. Capacity building of youth on operations and management of cooperative businesses has also been reported to be limited within the movement. Respondents from Morocco noted that young people are quick to learn and discover new markets and business, meaning they must be given opportunities to develop professional skills through adequate training and mentorship within cooperatives to help the business grow, as well as develop future leadership.

Suggestions by youth

Young respondents provided a few suggestions on how to bridge the gaps between youth and cooperatives. These are as follows:

- respondents from Kenya suggested that to break the traditional image of cooperatives as being for the old and old-fashioned, they should be given mentorship opportunities at undergraduate and graduate levels as well as encouraging young people to practice savings through SACCOS⁹⁹
- in Morocco, young respondents expressed that adequate information and knowledge about cooperative laws is also important
- all respondents from outside the cooperative movement in Uganda noted that they would like to know more about the cooperative model, with suggestions such as through campus-workshops, trainings, and social media
- in Italy and Bulgaria, **85%** and **81%** of young people noted that they would like to know more about cooperatives, demonstrating a clear need for better education and training on the cooperative model, both inside and outside of educational institutions
- Colombian respondents suggested that social media and youth networks could also possibly help in reaching out to young people
- respondents from Indonesia highlighted mainstreaming education about cooperatives (formal education), sharing success stories and re-branding cooperative products to attract more young people
- those within the cooperative movement feel that generational gaps within cooperatives can be reduced if skill development programmes and training on various operational and management aspects of cooperatives are conducted for youth
- cooperatives can also mentor youth and help them start their own cooperatives. In Iran, for example, a few cooperators reported that their organisation Pishgaman has startup accelerator programmes for young cooperators
- as in ICA Asia-Pacific, other regions of ICA could form a thematic committee on education to promote cooperatives in educational institutions (school and university cooperatives) and formal education on cooperatives so that young people can become aware about cooperatives and get hands-on experience in operating cooperatives from an early age

⁹⁸ Amul is an Indian dairy cooperative society, based at Anand in the Indian state of Gujarat.

⁹⁹ Savings and credit cooperatives

Better knowledge on cooperatives will not emerge without future research on the topic of cooperatives. At the Global Youth Forum 2020, a session was held with young cooperative entrepreneurs on research and knowledge building activities under the ICA-EU Partnership. The table below shows the main answers of young people on the most important topics for future research on cooperatives, grouped into different categories. It demonstrates the wide-ranging possibilities for future education and research work within the field, with suggestions provided and driven by young people.¹⁰⁰

Topic	Youth Research Focus
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment in cooperatives • How cooperatives create jobs • Country studies on worker cooperatives • Cooperatives in the informal economy
Politics and sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour unions, trade unions and cooperatives • Cooperatives and government relations • Migration and cooperatives • Climate change and cooperatives • Post-growth and cooperatives • Cooperatives and local community relations • Cooperatives and market systems • Cooperatives and gender equality
Awareness of cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved awareness of cooperatives • Marketability of cooperatives • Lack of cooperative news in mainstream media • Youth interest and knowledge of the cooperative model for young people
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating cooperative education • Digital learning via cooperatives and traditional educational forms • Digital literacy gaps and cooperatives • Cooperative education compared with traditional educational models • Cooperative education programmes for rural areas
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering democracy in cooperatives • Developing and maintaining democratic decision-making processes in cooperatives • Starting and implementing cooperative governance practices • Balancing scale, cooperative governance and the interests of members • How to start a cooperative
Finance and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative capital • Facilitating transfers of capital to cooperatives (assets transfers, worker buyout) • Fintech and cooperatives

Table 2.2. What are young people's chosen future topics for cooperative research? coops4dev research session, GYF 2020

¹⁰⁰ The session at the Global Youth Forum can be found at <https://gyf20.coop/sessions/coops4dev%F0%9F%8C%8D-research-and-knowledge-building-and-the-ica-eu-partnership/>

Conclusion: education

This chapter has focused on major findings from the study comprising of common education-based challenges faced by young people, proposed solutions, the role of cooperatives, interesting examples of how cooperatives are reaching out to young people through education, and recommendations for cooperatives to create lasting youth impact through education. Access to adequate, affordable, useful and inclusive education is the most pressing educational challenge for young people today. However, this challenge needs to be looked at within the larger context of the meaningful results that come about through effective education, such as decent employment.

The other focus of the chapter shows that cooperatives seem to have the potential to address some of the burgeoning educational challenges. But is this potential being exercised optimally? A significant lack of awareness about the model itself throws light on various opportunities that can be harnessed by the cooperative movement to engage with youth through education. A systematic, long-term approach that tackles immediate and pressing problems of youth vis-à-vis inadequate education levels, insufficient skills and knowledge at work, lack of awareness about the cooperative model or how to establish cooperatives, should be the primary focus.

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Global thematic
youth research

chapter



INEQUALITIES

Introduction

Cooperatives are theoretically well-placed to reduce inequalities and promote inclusive economic development through their position as democratic, people-centred, member-owned and value-based enterprises. The internationally agreed¹⁰¹ cooperative values of equality and equity mean that all members have equal voting rights as well as access to the products and services offered by their cooperatives, in addition to a fair and equitable share of profits or surpluses. As such, cooperatives clearly have the potential to help achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the aim to 'leave no one behind'.¹⁰²

GOAL 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Aims to reduce inequalities within and among countries. Inequalities based on income, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, religion and opportunity continue to persist across the world, within and among countries, threatening long-term social and economic development, harming poverty reduction and destroying people's sense of fulfilment and self-worth. To reduce inequalities, policies should be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalised populations.

Previous research has shown that the cooperative sector is generally smaller in societies characterised by large inequalities and where power is held in the hands of a few. Further, income inequality is significantly and negatively correlated with cooperative performance.¹⁰³ Despite this, when observing wider global trends, inequality is a worsening phenomenon. In 2018, just 26 people owned the same as the 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the gross economic inequalities of income, further issues of technological and environmental inequalities, such as climate change impacts or access to education, are increasingly recognised as global challenges.

This chapter aims to examine the challenges and opportunities for cooperatives in terms of attracting younger members from outside the movement and in being relevant and appealing to the young people who are already cooperative members, in terms of representation, participation and inclusion. In many of the countries that formed part of this research, young people identified that it is difficult for them to either find jobs or engage in their own socio-economic activities, and they feel excluded from the labour market and wider society due to their perceived lower status as young people. Young people also experienced inequalities within the governance, representative and decision-making structures of cooperatives. This research aimed to uncover whether cooperatives offer a more accessible and equitable platform for young people to both enter the labour market and to shape and influence the development of the cooperative landscape.

¹⁰¹ International Cooperative Alliance, 'Guidance Notes to the Co-operative Principles', 2015

¹⁰² United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), UN DESA 'Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2016

¹⁰³ Groeneveld, H. (2016). Doing Co-operative Business Report Methodology and exploratory application for 33 countries, ICA and TIAS Report, TIAS School for Business and Society at Tilburg University.

¹⁰⁴ Lawson et. al (2019). Public Good or Private Wealth? Oxfam Briefing Paper, January 2019. Pg. 6.

Youth awareness of cooperatives

As described in the introductory section of this report, some young people do not perceive the existing cooperative movement to be an attractive option with viable employment opportunities, citing that it has neither engaged with young people nor positively portrayed the benefits of being in a cooperative.¹⁰⁵ One of the issues highlighted is that awareness of the variety of forms of cooperation is low, which means that young people only associate cooperation with large organisations such as national consumer cooperatives. However, what is of more concern is the low level of awareness among young people that cooperatives could provide a possible employment or business start-up option, partly due to the absence of cooperatives from mainstream business or entrepreneurship courses.

“**Joining cooperatives would help the youth to have better access to resources and business development services.**”

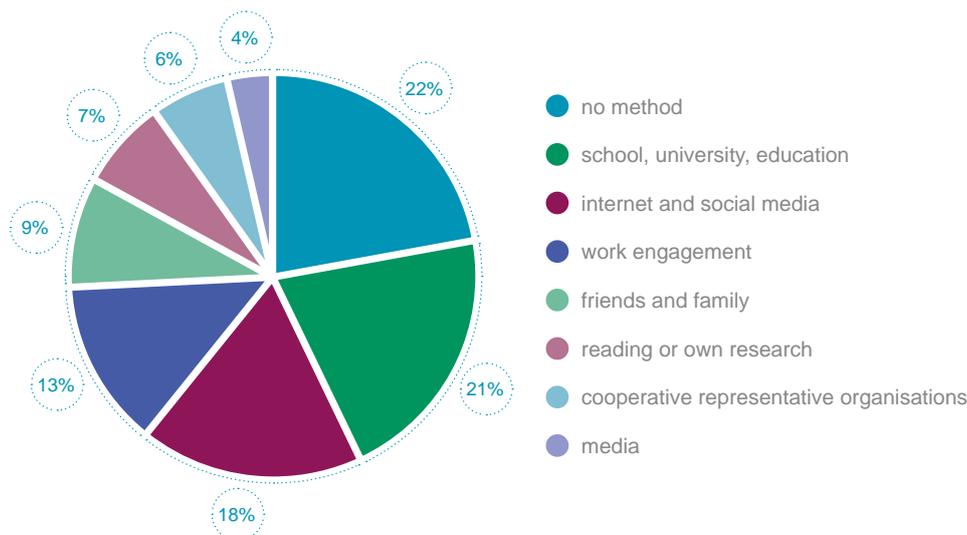
Young respondents, Uganda

Respondents in India reported a hesitance on the part of cooperatives to reach out and involve young people, and this was reflected in the fact that only **30%** of young respondents from outside of the cooperative sector were aware of the cooperative business model. Even though this figure was significantly higher in Indonesia at **60%**, young people were thought to be less aware and keen to join or form cooperatives due to their archaic way of functioning, observing that the movement “needs different mechanisms to influence and attract youth.” In the Philippines, a mere **10%** of respondents from outside the sector knew about cooperatives, a figure that rose to **25%** in Iran and **33%** in Republic of Korea, showing that the cooperative sector across the region needs to develop stronger and more youth-focused brand messages.

Respondents from outside of the cooperative movement in Italy knew little or nothing about cooperative business models, reinforcing the evidence from previous research that cooperatives need to be included in business and enterprise education programmes. In Denmark and the UK this was considerably higher at **40%** and **45%** respectively, but this information came mostly through online sources and word of mouth rather than formal education. In Greece two thirds of respondents outside the cooperative movement stated they knew very little about the cooperative business model, and in Bulgaria this figure increased to **71%**. At the global level, the infographic below contains the most common methods for youth outside of the cooperative movement to learn about cooperatives, for the 20 countries surveyed.

¹⁰⁵ CJDES & Cooperatives Europe (2016). Youth for #Coop: [Cooperating Beyond Borders](#)

How do young people outside the cooperative movement learn about cooperatives?



Graph 3.1: How do young people outside of the cooperative movement learn about cooperatives?

The data from the Americas region shows a similar trend. In Argentina, less than a third of young people outside the movement stated that they knew much about the cooperative sector or business model, and this figure fell to **10%** in Colombia. The picture in the Africa region was mixed, with only **14%** of those respondents outside the cooperative movement in Uganda, **33%** in Morocco and **35%** of those in Togo stating they knew about the cooperative business model. In Eswatini, only **40%** of young people outside of the mo-

vement were aware of cooperatives. This was not to say that these respondents did not see the potential of cooperatives and they were keen to find out more, however it is evident that the need to develop better mechanisms to reach young people is an ongoing issue across all regions. In Kenya, half of respondents outside the movement were aware of cooperatives, and this was attributed to the fact that cooperatives play an important role both socially and economically in the country, particularly savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs).¹⁰⁶

Key insights on youth awareness of cooperatives

All of the evidence cited above demonstrates that the cooperative business model is not currently reaching its full potential to combat inequalities, particularly as it highlighted that:

- cooperatives need to employ different mechanisms to influence and attract young people and develop stronger and more youth-focused brand messages
- there is a hesitance in some parts of the cooperative movement to reach out and involve young people
- the numbers of young people who are unaware of the cooperative enterprise option are those who are more likely to come from vulnerable groups with less access to information
- many young people in this research who were aware of cooperatives had access to online information or had spent longer in education

¹⁰⁶ Mwangi, Irene & Wanjau, Kenneth. (2013). The Role of SACCO in Growth of Youth Entrepreneurship in Kenya: A Case of Nairobi County. Greener Journal of Business and Management Studies. 3. 113-118. 10.15580/GJBMS.2013.3.021913477.

Youth perceptions of the benefits of cooperation

The introductory section of this report described how some young people perceive the mainstream cooperative movement to be outdated, traditionalist and lacking the ability to innovate and challenge the dominant economic system. Moreover, cooperative governance processes are sometimes perceived by young people to be time-consuming, restrictive and tiresome, as well as elitist and open to corruption. In addition, a lack of clarity about how cooperatives perform in comparison to other actors in the social and solidarity economy can lead young people to perceive it as too corporate and conservative.

“ Cooperatives only suit the old and people who have money, there are no policies advocating for the youths to be given a place in their cooperatives. ”

Young cooperator, Kenya

There was evidence from across all four regions that young people feel they are still considered too immature and lacking the right experience to be integrated into the governance structures of cooperatives. Further, as the decision-making is mainly dominated by older people, young people feel disenfranchised and disengaged from participating in cooperative business.

In Uganda, less than half (44%) of the young people surveyed in the movement agreed that cooperatives have effective processes or mechanisms that help young people to engage with the movement, attributing this to lack of potential for them to engage in leadership positions. Despite this observation, respondents stated that cooperatives have the potential to help young people overcome significant inequalities as well as structural and psychological barriers. In Togo, young people commented that the sense of freedom and openness created by the cooperative values and principles helps young people to feel included and able to realise their potential by giving them access to the means of production, training and collaboration with other cooperatives.

In Kenya, young people reported that the rules, policies and procedures guiding the running of cooperatives do not give them enough space to bring in innovative ideas, which has a knock-on impact on the strength of the cooperative model and may discourage young people from joining or starting a cooperative. However, they recognised that cooperatives were beneficial in terms of overcoming inequalities by helping young people to develop a 'savings culture' and build networks.

Half of the respondents from within the cooperative movement in Morocco agreed that cooperatives can help young people overcome challenges by providing unity, lowering the initial cost of investment in their enterprise and helping them to develop their commercial activities. However, it was also recognised that it is necessary to simplify or adapt the cooperative model to be better suited to the way that young people want to conduct business, as they suggested that to succeed in a cooperative requires a lot of will and perseverance. In Eswatini, respondents recognised that working with others was more effective than working alone and that cooperatives had wider community benefits, also adding that the benefits to cooperatives of involving young people were ensuring cooperative sustainability, growing and improving business skills, as well as helping to empower each other. Young people hugely dominate the population demographics of Eswatini, like many African countries. This is often in sharp contrast to their constrained participation in, and exclusion from, social and financial activities, including cooperatives and entrepreneurship.

“ The youth are not equally involved because the elders are in control, or the activities aren't tailor-made to suit young people. ”

Young cooperator, Eswatini



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In Iran, respondents recognised the potential for cooperatives to help young people to pool resources, knowledge and experience to overcome challenges and meet their need for employment. In Republic of Korea, despite the fact that cooperatives are a less common form of enterprise in the country, all respondents recognised the value in giving young people the opportunity to collaborate and work together. However, respondents also stated that one of the main reasons for limited participation and integration of young people in cooperatives is the lack of opportunities for, and willingness to enable, young people to take up leadership positions.

cooperatives were beneficial for young people to be able to solve challenges both individually and collectively, offering employment, decent income, training and collective bargaining power

In the Philippines, all of the respondents agreed that cooperatives are inclusive and flexible in terms of offering potential to young people to overcome the challenges they face in terms of unemployment and poverty. This was also the case in Indonesia, where cooperatives are perceived to offer benefits to young people to tackle common issues such as unemployment and a lack of formal education/qualifica-

tions, despite cooperatives also being perceived as 'driven by and for the old.' Respondents in India too agreed fully that cooperatives were beneficial for young people to be able to solve challenges both individually and collectively, offering employment, decent income, training and collective bargaining power.

In Denmark, all respondents from inside the movement agreed that the cooperative model is beneficial for helping young people overcome challenges such as youth unemployment. However, outside the movement young people weren't quite so emphatic, with only **40%** suggesting that the model is beneficial, suggesting that young people outside the movement aren't so clear about the benefits. This is nevertheless encouraging that young people within the movement are fully in agreement that cooperatives are beneficial for young people, indicating they must have had a good experience themselves.

The majority of UK respondents cited the potential for youth empowerment and control over work were attractive qualities of cooperatives in helping young people, but they also recognise that this would depend on the type and size of cooperative in question, as well as its ability to be self-critical.

**the cooperative model
is an efficient, equitable
and fair economic
model**

In Bulgaria, respondents perceived that the main benefit of cooperatives in helping young people overcome inequalities was in helping them gain access to a fair share of the benefits emerging from an enterprise's activities. This was seen as a good way to overcome corruption, one of the key challenges identified by young people in Bulgaria, by providing an alternative way of conducting business through internationally agreed values and principles.

Respondents in Italy cited the principle of democratic member participation as a key way that cooperatives have the potential to give power to young people so they can be active in decision-making processes. In Greece, young people recognised that cooperatives provide both an opportunity to work together with others to overcome challenges such as unemployment, and they encourage genuine participation and inclusive work environments.

The perception of benefits for young people in the cooperative movement was strong in the Americas. In Guatemala, **84%** of respondents consider the cooperative sector has the potential to help young people overcome the different challenges faced by young Guatemalans because the cooperative model is an efficient, equitable and fair economic model focused on improving members and communities' living conditions, as well as their economic and social development.

In Argentina, **86%** of respondents commented that cooperatives can help young people overcome the different challenges they face in the volatile Argentine economy, particularly due to the values and principles which promote the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the community. In Costa Rica, this rose to **91%** of respondents who consider the cooperative sector has the potential to play a role in helping young people overcome the different challenges they face as it encourages people to work together for the common good, using values and principles to achieve the SDGs. In Colombia **94%** of those surveyed think the cooperative movement can help younger people

overcome challenges in the country, especially now the Colombian Government and the FARC¹⁰⁷ have reached a peace accord, citing that the cooperative sector has always contributed economically, socially and ideologically to the education and professional development of young people. Likewise, young people identify the cooperative sector as a movement that seeks to promote the common good, diminish inequalities and provide equitable development for the country due to the democratic principle of one member one vote.

¹⁰⁷ The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a Colombian Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group, was founded by Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas in 1964.

Key insights on youth perception of the benefits of cooperation

This section demonstrated that young people perceive that there are many benefits in joining or setting up cooperatives, such as:

- helping young people overcome youth unemployment and poverty
- giving access to resources, training and education
- encouraging people to work together for the common good
- promoting environmental sustainability
- helping to achieve the SDGs and equitable development
- developing inclusive work environments and collective decision-making
- encouraging inclusivity through democratic member participation
- providing social and economic development of young people through activities such as collective bargaining, developing a 'savings culture' and building networks
- overcoming inequalities by giving fair access to the benefits of the enterprise's activities

It is also clear from respondents' comments that many feel the cooperative movement has a lot to gain in terms of benefits from involving more young people, as they:

- bring innovation and new ideas
- have knowledge of new and emerging markets
- ensure cooperative sustainability through leadership succession
- contribute to growing and improving business skills within the cooperative

However, young people also identified barriers to entry, such as:

- low economic status or access to finances
- low opinion of social status connected to age and perceived inexperience
- rigid and inflexible structures that mean they feel stifled by traditional ways of working
- decision-making continues to be dominated by older people



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This section also illustrated that in a number of countries the perceptions of benefits is generally higher among young people inside than outside the cooperative movement. The following sections of this chapter will give additional reflections and insights on how these benefits may be further developed and disseminated to a wider potential audience.

Perception of youth integration in cooperatives

In the introduction, it was suggested that one reason that young cooperative members find it difficult to progress to board level is that they are either perceived by older members as competition or as not knowledgeable or experienced enough to be fully committed. For example, respondents in Indonesia reported that young people who are involved in established coo-

peratives can struggle to cope with the level of interference from elders who are not willing to give up traditional ways of working. In the survey carried out for this research, there was a significant difference between countries in terms of how youth integration in cooperatives was perceived.

Question	Why do you think cooperatives lack the disposition to engage young people into their structure?
Main Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generational differences • youth's capability is underestimated • lack of opportunities for young people • lack of youth in leadership positions • top down management by older people • resistance to change within organisations • poor organisation and structure • lack of information and visibility

Table 3.2: Why do you think cooperatives lack the disposition to engage young people into their structure?

In some countries there is a favourable picture. For example, in India **50%** of the respondents from within the cooperative movement suggested that young people are well integrated in cooperatives, however they did note a hesitance of the movement to reach out to young people, and that better outreach could improve this figure.

In Denmark, the majority of cooperators surveyed suggest that cooperatives do have the disposition to engage young people into their structures and that participation and integration of young people is well promoted among cooperatives. However, to be more effective, Danish respondents also added that more information, input and financial resources were required to increase youth engagement.

In both Iran and Mexico, **80%** of the respondents also thought that participation and integration of young people is well promoted among cooperatives, a figure that rose to **90%** in Guatemala. This figure is still high at **65%** in Costa Rica and **75%** in both Argentina and Colombia, which suggests the approaches of cooperatives in Latin America are worthy of closer examination from the perspective of successfully integrating young people into cooperative structures. However, this is not without its challenges as young people still identify that there is resistance to change from older members around accepting younger opinions and allowing them to take part in decision-making, despite the fact that the younger population sets current and future trends in economic markets.

In the Philippines, over two thirds of respondents agreed that youth integration is well promoted in cooperatives; however, respondents stated that they need to do considerably more than merely paying lip-service to young people's needs and concerns and further, older people need to make way for younger people in decision-making and leadership. This made respondents reflect that there is a lack of genuine will on the part of existing cooperatives to mainstream younger people into their structures, mainly focusing on one-off activities rather than longer term strategic capacity building and leadership development of young people.

Respondents in Indonesia were almost unanimous in recognising the potential for cooperatives to integrate young people, but only **40%** reflected that this was well promoted in practice, suggesting that cooperatives need to get better at addressing youth priorities as well as better at involving them at an operational level. Similarly, in Morocco, whilst **71%** of respondents from within the cooperative movement think the participation and integration of young people is well promoted among cooperatives, **43%** of respondents stated that the cooperatives they were associated with do not have internal structures to specifically engage with youth. This was attributed to the fact that cooperatives often do not have the capacity to help young people due to a lack of financial resources and experience of youth engagement.

there is a lack of genuine will on the part of existing cooperatives to mainstream younger people into their structures

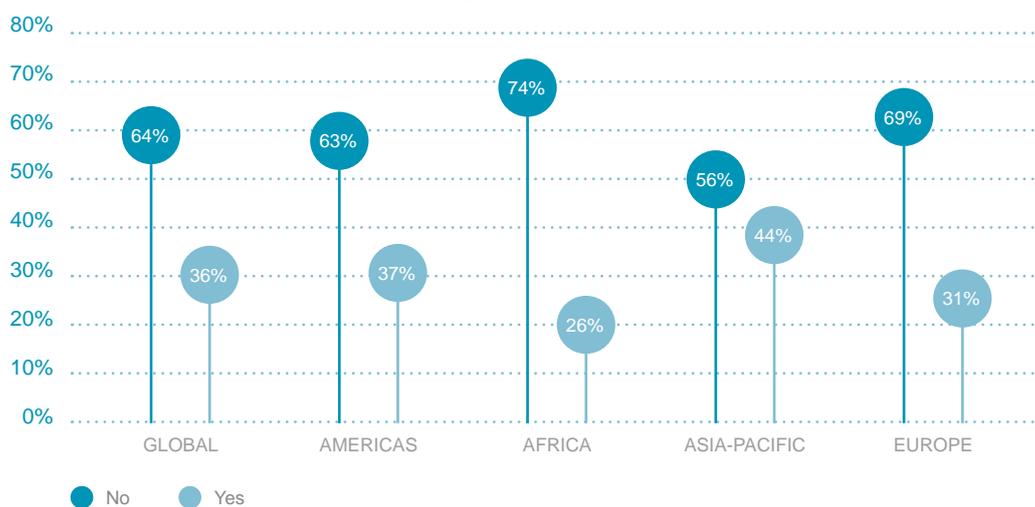
In both the UK and Italy, just one fifth (**20%**) suggested that the participation of young people is well integrated in cooperatives, a similar figure to Greece where only **25%** of those surveyed suggest that the participation and integration of young people is well promoted among cooperatives. In Bulgaria, those within the cooperative movement suggested that cooperatives do have the capacity and the will to help young people overcome their challenges, but the participation and integration of young people within cooperatives does not live up to this aspiration. This shows a significant gap between the potential of the cooperative model and the current reality in youth governance structures, which is also clearly reflected in other countries surveyed in the European region. In Republic of Korea the vast majority of respondents stated that cooperatives lack both the will and capacity to better integrate young people into their structures, partly due to the perceived cost of joining cooperatives on the part of the young people themselves, as they reported joining cooperatives is a significant investment they are unable to afford.

There is a different picture again in Africa, as despite the theoretical benefits of the cooperative model, it is clear that there is room for improvement in terms of the engagement and support on offer to young people in cooperatives. For example, in Togo only **17%** of respondents suggested that the participation of youth is well integrated in cooperatives. **89%** of respondents in Uganda and **67%** of those surveyed in Kenya do not think the participation and integration of young people is well promoted.

Further, in Uganda respondents commented that the cooperative movement needs to rethink strategies to keep the youthful population within its movement by tailor making products for them. In Eswatini, only **20%** of respondents from within the cooperative movement think that young people's participation and integration in cooperatives is well supported, commenting that more young people need to be brought together to generate a wider range of business ideas. Moreover, it is clear that

engagement and support to young people in cooperatives can be further improved, as **60%** of respondents stated that their cooperative does not have an internal youth engagement process. Respondents also asserted that ensuring better youth participation in cooperatives is the key to promoting teamwork, ensuring unity and keeping young people within the movement; they also pointed out that elders are often reluctant to work hand in hand with young people or allow them to take charge.

Do you think the participation and integration of young people is well promoted among cooperatives?



Graph 3.2: Do you think the participation and integration of young people is well promoted among cooperatives?

Key insights on perception of youth integration in cooperatives

This section illustrated that there are inconsistencies in the performance of cooperatives successfully integrating young people into the organisation, with respondents commenting that:

- even where cooperatives were achieving some levels of youth integration, there was still a perceived resistance by older members
- in some instances, there appeared to be a lack of will to increase youth participation
- not enough resources were being put into better youth integration
- there appeared to be few incentives to make youth integration more effective in practice
- many cooperatives were not very effective at youth integration, and this had a significant impact on young people's sense of participation and inclusion
- internal structures need updating to better engage with young people, both as a means to attract new members and to better work with existing younger members
- it is important to create a space at the table for young people's concerns, skills and ideas

The points above illustrate that longer-term strategies and more resources are needed to bridge the gap between the potential and actual performance of cooperatives and enable them to develop better systems and processes to build youth integration into everyday operations.

Prevalence of youth structures in cooperatives

Cooperative youth networks can be a useful tool to facilitate connections between young cooperators from around the world, where they can share experiences and ideas, increase their knowledge about the global cooperative movement as well as bringing a youth perspective to wider discussions. For these networks to be effective, it has been recognised that it is important to have broad youth representation from different countries and sectors within the cooperative movement, which also means having a pool of young cooperators active in their own organisations from which to recruit members. One way to achieve this is to have a youth network or body in cooperatives that ensures young people are represented on decision-making and leadership structures, not only for the purposes of inclusion and for a sense of ownership, but also to ensure strategic business continuity. The table below shows the results for the percentage of

young cooperators with a youth network in their region. It is important to note that Asia-Pacific, where the highest proportion of young people have a youth network, also has the highest reported levels of participation and integration in Graph 3.2 above. The relationship also holds for Europe and Africa, which have less youth networks than other regions.

Does your cooperative have a youth network?	Yes
Asia-Pacific	70%
Americas	64%
Africa	58%
Europe	34%
Global	58%

Table 3.3: Regional results - does your cooperative have a youth network?

In Greece, regarding youth networks, just **40%** of those surveyed within the cooperative movement stated that the cooperative they were associated had a youth structure. However, internal structures to specifically engage with youth were lacking, as were presence and participation within other civil society youth networks, which may be considered as one effective way to engage with young people.

In Italy, over **55%** of young people within the cooperative movement stated that they were part of a cooperative youth network, although there was some difficulty articulating how effective these networks are in increasing youth voice. In the UK, respondents commented that cooperative traditions were perceived to

be rigid and the lack of diversity reflected in the top management of cooperatives meant they did not appeal. Further, one respondent noted that whilst cooperatives can have an innovative or start-up nature, many cooperatives do not always seek to involve youth but rather aim to help youth, which stifles true engagement by being paternalistic rather than participatory.

In Denmark it was identified there was a lack of space for meaningful dialogue with young people to improve the processes and mechanisms to enable young people to engage with the cooperative movement and that this could be addressed through cooperative social auditing to meet the needs of younger members. Bulgarian respondents reported that dedicated youth governance structures within Bulgarian cooperatives were lacking, and that again there was a gap between the theory of inclusivity and the on the ground reality.

In Togo, young people stated that support to young people in cooperatives is unsatisfactory despite their opinion on the significant benefits of involving youth within cooperatives such as energy, innovation, commitment, willingness to contribute to the development of their cooperatives, as well as a source of 'new blood'.

“ Cooperatives must conduct their own self-assessment, and work to create favourable conditions for young people to take an interest in the coop model.

Young cooperator, Togo

”

In Kenya, although **56%** of those surveyed within the cooperative movement stated that the cooperative they were associated with had a youth network, they also feel that they are not given enough space within cooperatives to bring in innovative ideas due to rules, policies and procedures guiding the running of the organisations. In Uganda, two thirds of respondents stated that their cooperatives had a youth network, but that these needed strengthening to be more effective in capacity building and promoting leadership opportunities to young people. In Morocco, even though **60%** of those surveyed within the cooperative movement stated that the cooperative they were associated with had a youth network, they still struggled

to occupy positions of responsibility within their cooperatives and noted a lack of information related to rules and by-laws. Respondents considered that these issues have an impact on the strength of the cooperative model and may discourage young people from joining or starting a cooperative. In Eswatini, whilst **80%** of respondents stated there was a youth network in their cooperative, they also remarked that the dialogue and mechanisms for effective youth inclusion are lacking. They attributed this to a lack of resources, capacity and supportive environments; the knock-on effect of this is that young people may perceive the cooperative model as weak and be reluctant to set up or join a cooperative.

dialogue and mechanisms for effective youth inclusion are lacking

There is a mixed picture in the Americas region, with **40%** of young people in Guatemala stating they were part of a cooperative youth network. In Argentina, this figure rises to **55%**, identifying the need for governing bodies to take into consideration the opinion of young people and evidencing the fact that the Argentine cooperative sector has prioritised youth integration to ensure cooperative sustainability. This is especially important because managers are frequently older people who may not understand or accept changes in trends influenced by younger consumers, which puts business continuity at risk due to an outdated portfolio of goods and services. The figures for young people who were part of a cooperative youth network jumps to **75%** in Colombia and **82%** in Costa Rica, but these young people also reflected that cooperatives should create opportunities for more youth participation within their commissions and administrative boards to allow a greater commitment and sense of belonging of young people towards the cooperative.

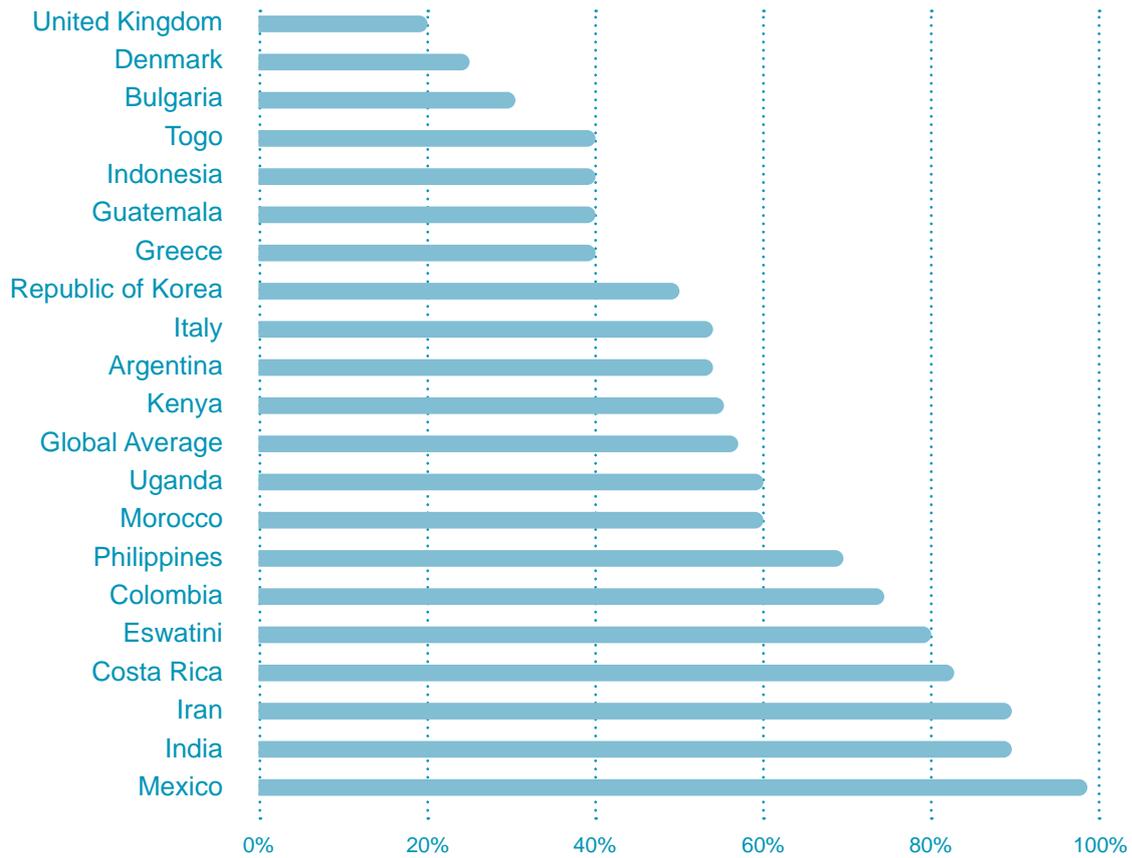
“ Let the elders know that young people can also hold important positions and make good decisions. ”

Young cooperator, Costa Rica

In the Philippines, **70%** of respondents from the cooperative movement noted that their cooperatives have a youth network, most of which comprise of laboratory cooperatives.¹⁰⁸ Despite this, respondents complained that there is a common perception by the elders/decision-makers that young people lack the knowledge and the capability to undertake decision making roles and that activities for youth are an add-on expense and not real investment. In Iran there was limited information about the existence of youth networks and a general sentiment that cooperatives are reluctant to involve young people.

¹⁰⁸ A laboratory cooperative is designed to serve as a training ground for young members to prepare them for membership in regular cooperatives, focused on teaching the values of thrift and saving, cooperative values and principles, financial discipline, business and leadership skills as well as social and cultural values, financial education, ecological awareness and sustainable development.

Does your cooperative have a youth network? ● Yes



Graph 3.4: Country results - does your cooperative have a youth network?

In Indonesia, **40%** of the surveyed respondents were part of a youth cooperative network in their respective local areas, but only half of them believed that the cooperative movement has effective processes or mechanisms that can help to engage young people. This was partly due to the perception that the cooperative movement is very old-fashioned in the way that it operates and that this needs to change to both attract more young people and engage them at an operational level.

In India it was acknowledged that whilst more work is needed to improve youth involvement in and with cooperatives, and whilst **85%** stated that they have youth network, a few initiatives do exist and **40%** of the young people surveyed stated that their cooperatives engage with youth at some level. Half of the Republic of Korean respondents from within the cooperative movement stated that their organisation

has a youth network, but **77%** of these respondents also noted that there wasn't an internal structure within their cooperatives to engage with young people. Moreover, only **44%** of the Republic of Korean respondents noted that the cooperative movement in general has effective processes or mechanisms to help young people engage with the movement.

Key insights on prevalence of youth networks in cooperatives

This section demonstrated that there appears to be lots of opportunities for younger cooperative members to take part in cooperative youth networks; however, it is important to bear in mind the following points:

- the existence of these networks may be perceived as 'adequate' by the cooperatives as their token concession to including youth
- other necessary changes are required to further integrate young people into the actual operations of the cooperative
- more efforts need to be made to create new youth networks where they don't already exist
- greater internal visibility, power and influence needs to be given to both new and existing youth networks
- additional external visibility needs to be given to the youth networks to move away from perceptions that cooperatives are dominated by the older generation and to attract new generations of young people
- more work needs to be done so that these youth networks lay the groundwork to create a meaningful route into leadership and form part of the succession planning for the cooperative and giving young people a stronger sense of ownership of their cooperatives

Intergenerational inequalities arising from research

Some common themes emerged from the research around issues perceived as intergenerational barriers by young people as well as possible solutions to increase youth participation and inclusion. The following sections outline and reflect on some of these and also some of the suggestions offered by the young respondents taking part in this study.

Restricted opportunities for youth ambitions and leadership

Many young people commented on the difficulties of both influencing the business and operational functions of cooperatives as well as gaining representation in governance structures, decision-making and leadership positions. This was coupled by a general sense that cooperatives do not respond to the needs and priorities of young people, as well as the challenges they face, such as climate change, new technology, digital marketing and e-commerce, and that cooperatives must make more effort to understand the concerns and aspirations of young people so as to better address them. In addition, there was an observed need for greater diversity of top management more general-

ly in the cooperative sector, for example in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. Much of this frustration on the part of young people arises from the perception of cooperatives as being too rigid, traditional, old fashioned and dominated by the 'older guard' who appear reluctant to concede ground to the younger generation, despite young people's eagerness to participate. Moreover, young people were keen to stress that they have lots of potentially valuable input, as well as energy and enthusiasm; they have innovative ideas to develop products and services, are more aware of prospective new markets and are invaluable for succession planning and ensuring sustainability of the sector.

Financial barriers to entry

Connected to the previous point on intergenerational barriers is the fact that many younger people come up against other seemingly insurmountable barriers to gain access to or wield influence in cooperatives. Some cooperatives require members to commit to minimum share capital, and joining cooperatives is sometimes perceived as a huge investment. This is also connected to ability to access credit or financial support, as there are fewer options for young people who generally haven't got an asset base against which to secure loans. Further, this lack of asset base can negatively affect the ability of young people to interact with the cooperative, particularly in the case of agri-

cultural cooperatives where ownership of, or access to, land is the main determinant of how much can be produced and processed, therefore affecting the level of returns. Older people, particularly male heads of household, are more likely to have access to the assets and control the means of production, with younger family or community members lagging behind. To counter this, some respondents noted that cooperatives have the ability to offer additional strength to less asset-rich individuals by providing collective bargaining to help to address wealth inequalities.

IT and digital exclusion

Respondents taking part in this research suggested that there is a need for cooperatives to adapt to the digitised world in many different ways in order to better engage young people. This is not only in terms of getting the message about cooperatives out to young people, but also operationally in how the business is run, such as using digital marketing and e-commerce as well as in creating platform cooperatives that use innovative technologies. Young people taking part in this research expressed frustration in the older generation's lack of uptake of new technologies, and again this reflects the idea of the cooperative movement as being outdated and dominated by older people and brings up the conflicts between different generations. This is potentially a two-way issue, as many older people may feel intimidated by the thought of adapting to new technologies,¹⁰⁹ even where these can be demonstrated to bring multiple benefits such as IT innovations and reduction in administrative workload.

there is a need for cooperatives to adapt to the digitised world to better engage young people

Many young people commented that social media is the best way to engage with young people, with Facebook and Twitter amongst the most prevalent and popular platforms. However, there are serious caveats to be borne in mind when considering digital inclusivity in terms of accessibility, which may be differentiated by many intersecting inequalities such as literacy, educational level, age and income levels.

¹⁰⁹ Science Daily, Lancaster University, [Why some older people are rejecting digital technologies](#), March 2018.

Case studies: inequalities

This section provides examples of cooperatives that aim to tackle inequalities by working with young people in a wholistic way.

Name	Youth Planet Laboratory Cooperative
Organisation	Lamac Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LMPC)
Location	Asia-Pacific Region, Philippines
Sector	Youth entrepreneurship, education and agriculture

Links to SDGs



Young people in the Philippines are exposed to cooperatives from an early age through the model of laboratory cooperatives, whereby a youth cooperative is affiliated to a registered cooperative which acts as a 'guardian'. One such guardian cooperative is Lamac Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LMPC), whose leaders believe that youth empowerment is essential for national development. In 2004, LMPC created the Youth Planet Laboratory Cooperative with two types of membership; school and community-based membership for youth aged between 7 – 17 years. Today, it has 24,959 youth members from 42 branches and 25 partner schools with a combined savings amounting to Php 28,902,110 (EUR 514,309). It has seven major components which serve as a blueprint in giving services to young members:

Aflatoun - provides life-long learning to young members through a balanced social and financial education. It empowers children to believe in themselves, know their rights and responsibilities, understand and practice saving and spending, and start their own enterprise.

Capability Building - through capacity building, the programme aims to develop the talent and skills of young members and help them earn extra money from a talent fee that goes into their savings account.

CYP Performing Arts - it enhances the talent and skills of young members in performing arts like singing, acting, and dancing.

CYP Production House - nurtures the ability of every member to organise activities or events like Coop Fiesta, pageants, short films, documentations, team building trainings and camps.

HUB - provides hands on training to young people through youth-led business enterprises. Today, Lamac MPC Youth Planet Laboratory Cooperative manages garment production, digital printing, soap making, recycled paper making and candle production.

Gender Equality - gender sensitivity training is conducted for young members.

Sustainable Agricultural Education Program for Youth - it aims to develop empowered and competent young farmers with business skills.



CYP production house. Credit: LMPC



Leadership and financial education camp by Aflatoun. Credit: LMPC

Name Uganda Housing Cooperative Union (UHOCU)

Affiliated organisations We Effect

Location Uganda, Kampala, Mukono, Buikwe, Mbale, Tororo, Gulu, Bundibugyo, Luwero and Wakiso

Sector Housing

Links to SDGs



Formed in 2013, UHOCU is an apex body for primary housing cooperatives in Uganda. Its mission is to facilitate and advocate for its membership to achieve the right to decent housing and a healthy living environment.

UHOCU's main focus is on the socio-economically disadvantaged groups within local communities; including men, women, children and young people. Specifically, it also integrates youth participation and gender equality in primary housing cooperatives by empowerment through leadership skills, project management, as well as ensuring equal representation on leadership committees. With a membership of 32 primary housing cooperatives consisting of 1320 individuals, over **50%** of members are women. To ensure gender equality at a practical level, there are also gender representatives in every housing cooperative.

The Promoting Equality and Capacity Development in Housing Cooperatives (PECH-HC) project, funded by We Effect and running from 2018-2022, focuses on achieving equality, primarily by empowering both young people and women. It aims to improve their income levels through income generating activities and investments, as well as enhancing their capacity to design, plan and build their own houses.

Through PECH-HC, UHOCU intends to include poor rural communities in developing housing that utilises local affordable materials. The cooperative housing model is ideal for pooling resources, reducing construction costs and providing decent housing for members, through self-help and pooling building materials, labour and expertise. Since the introduction of the project, UHOCU's area of operation has increased from 5 to 9 local districts. These include Kampala, Mukono, Buikwe, Mbale, Tororo, Gulu, Bundibugyo, Luwero and Wakiso.¹¹⁰



Credit: UHOCU

¹¹⁰ For more information see <https://uhocu.org/about-us/>

Conclusion: inequalities

Some common themes emerged from the research around issues perceived as barriers by young people as well as possible solutions to increase youth participation and inclusion. Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that whilst there are many ways in which cooperatives have the theoretical capacity to help younger people overcome inequalities, this research highlighted that there are still many obstacles that need to be confronted and addressed to ensure this theory is translated into practice, as detailed below.

What cooperatives offer to tackle inequalities

- some respondents noted that cooperatives offer collective bargaining power, collective working opportunities and the possibility to pool resources to less asset-rich individuals to help address wealth inequalities
- young people observed that cooperatives have the potential to help young people overcome youth unemployment and poverty connected to the high youth demographic, as well as tackle corruption
- through the principle of one member one vote, cooperatives offer the opportunity to young people to take part in democratic structures and encourage inclusivity through democratic member participation
- cooperatives help young people overcome inequalities by giving fair access to the benefits of the enterprise's activities as well as resources they may not otherwise be able to access
- cooperatives give young people access to training and education opportunities that they may not otherwise be able to access, particularly beneficial to those in marginalised groups who may have had limited access to formal education

Issues affecting cooperatives' ability to tackle inequalities

- respondents reflected that there is a lack of genuine will on the part of existing cooperatives to mainstream younger people into their structures, mainly focusing on one-off activities rather than longer term strategic capacity building and leadership development of young people
- lack of better intergenerational working made young people feel it is difficult for them to gain access to governance and decision-making, also citing financial barriers and out-dated inflexible ways of working that stifle innovation and technological development
- sometimes there is a significant gap between the potential benefits of the cooperative model and the current reality in youth governance structures
- the numbers of young people who are aware of the cooperative option of enterprise is lower in vulnerable groups who have less access to information due to the fact that many have less access to online information or secondary-higher education
- if youth networks are the cooperatives' sole concession to 'doing youth' and not fully integrated into the cooperatives' governance structures, then this does little to facilitate inclusivity

Key insights and suggested actions on how cooperatives can better tackle inequalities:

- the numbers of young people who are aware of the cooperative option are those who are more likely to come from vulnerable groups who have less access to information. This illustrates the need to reach out more widely using a variety of different location-appropriate methods, with a focus on social media and using the communication platforms that are best suited to the target demographic, to ensure more young people can join or start cooperatives
- the benefits of cooperatives need to be better communicated using accessible and engaging language, youth-focused brand messages and by mapping them against young people's interests and priorities in a way that makes them relevant and appealing, this includes better adapting to the digitised world
- holding events and consultations with younger people to give them the space to meet other young people to discuss ideas and gather their feedback is imperative, however, as one young person stated in this research, this has to be more than simply paying lip-service to the young people who take part
- this research showed that there has to be genuine commitment to including young people's ideas both at operational and strategic level to avoid the sentiment that cooperatives are merely 'helping' young people whilst not allowing them to fully participate or influence decision-making
- the research showed that reported levels of participation and integration are higher in regions where more cooperators belong to youth networks. This suggests that the creation of youth networks where they do not already exist may improve levels of youth participation and integration
- creating youth networks that give young people a sense of ownership of their cooperative is important to give them the opportunity to feel fully invested in and contributing to its success, as well as providing important innovations, youthful energy and a pool of experienced and committed future leaders

Global thematic
youth research

chapter

IV



ENGAGEMENT AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Introduction

As cooperators, we often think hard about how we can engage young people in better and more effective ways. This chapter, which is based on real input of young people, explores the survey results and offers analysis to address the topic of civic participation and engagement in cooperatives.

The chapter first looks at cooperative culture as a route to more effective youth engagement, exploring how culture can resonate with youth in encouraging democratic participation, and arguing that a cooperative culture can be as important as structure in improving the inclusion of young people.

Second, it discusses the main motivators for encouraging youth to join cooperatives, as well as the benefits that can accrue through better youth involvement in cooperatives. Here, it is clear the advantages of cooperative membership, cooperative values and the possibility to practice different ways of working is attractive to young people. Young people are often keen to make a positive societal impact and a contribution to their communities and view cooperatives as a potential alternative, although they do not always live up to expectations.

The third part, a key aspect of civic engagement, is how cooperatives and cooperative youth networks can engage with other stakeholders and the meaningful inclusion of young people in wider decision-making processes. Here it explores multi-stakeholder partnerships, as well as which actors are most relevant to young people in tackling their challenges and the participation of cooperatives and young people in civil society networks.

Finally, the latter sections explore some of the main routes of youth engagement identified, including common problems experienced by youth, and how cooperatives might act to solve them. This includes a look at the role of technology and the different platforms that are most relevant for young people, as well as additional suggestions, by youth and for youth, for improved youth engagement.

Cooperative culture

“

...the whole idea of cooperatives focuses on the greater good, something greater than one person. That stimulates both personal sense of meaning but can also meet and solve the world's many challenges...

Young respondent, Denmark

”

Culture or structure?

The survey data demonstrates that culture is an important part of what it means to be a cooperator. By culture, we mean to look more closely at the agreed ideas, customs, practices or behaviours of a group of people, as well as the values that are embedded within these elements.¹¹¹ The information gathered suggests that putting a greater focus on cooperative culture can be a successful route to youth engagement. As Peter Drucker, the Austrian-Hungarian management theorist famously stated, “culture eats strategy for breakfast”. More recently, cooperators have adapted this management philosophy to look more closely at how cooperative culture and its accompanying methods can help an organisation to thrive.¹¹²

responses suggested that a strong democratic structure should be in place, but it might also be paired with a strong cooperative culture

When thinking about youth engagement, we often look at structure to guide how we can better involve youth, setting up a youth network here, including a young person in a board or a committee there, in the belief that it is an effective way to guarantee participation and inclusion of youth. Although this is a positive step, we argue that this is not enough. These steps must take place within a wider plan for the inclusivity of youth. Responses suggested that a strong democratic structure should be in place, but it might also be paired with a strong cooperative culture, linked to a commitment to cooperative values and principles, those such as equity and solidarity. Although structure is important, we

often hear about organisations with a cooperative structure that continue to pursue capitalist agendas or goals that maximise private gain rather than the common or collective good. How cooperative culture is built is an additional question, whether it might be constructed through educational initiatives or practiced in the everyday workings of a cooperative.¹¹³

¹¹¹ For definitions and discussions of culture more widely, see Jahoda, Gustav. (2002). *Critical reflections on some recent definitions of 'culture'*. Culture & Psychology. 18. 1-15. 10.1177/1354067X12446229.

¹¹² Sion Whellens, 'How to generate and nurture a strong co-operative culture', Kate Whittle and Nathan Brown, Coop News, July 2014. The topic was also explored more recently at the ICA's Global Forum on Cooperative Entrepreneurship, 2020.

¹¹³ Intergenerational exchanges, fair pay, mentoring and opportunities and routes to leadership positions are a few ideas that youth suggested in this study.

How culture resonates with youth

Responses suggested that cooperative culture resonates with young people, particularly when it comes to their working lives, but also in terms of civic participation, purpose, responsibility, and the feeling of coming together in a collective fashion to tackle problems and challenges. This sentiment was reflected in different ways across the 20 countries within the study, but it is one overarching theme that came through very clearly.

“

I believe community-based culture and innovative spirit can help promote the participation and integration of youth.

Young cooperators, India

”

For example, in the African region (Togo), respondents mentioned the values of freedom and openness that cooperatives promote is a basis for attracting young people. Respondents were convinced that cooperatives can be a tool to solve problems that one person alone may not be able to solve, for example in the provision of goods and services. In the European region, in Italy, young people were particularly attracted by the values of democracy, and the way cooperatives encourage real participation. Young people in the United Kingdom are attracted by the empowerment and control over their working lives that a cooperative could offer, as well as the sense of being part of a wider community.

In the Americas region, in Mexico, young people noted that cooperatives can create a much stronger sense of identity than privately-owned enterprises. The ability to work together with other like-minded individuals and the opportunity to learn important skills such as working with others to solve problems and democratic decision making, is also considered a strong asset of cooperatives. In Colombia, young people explained they hold a belief that the cooperative sector is linked to pursuit of the common good, as well as sustainable development.

By contrast, in the Asia-Pacific region (India), a culture of growth and prosperity was noted as very important. Although societal purpose was more prominent in some countries (Denmark, United Kingdom, Togo, Colombia), many young people believe that cooperatives are not a viable economic option and are difficult and bureaucratic to set up (India, Costa Rica, Bulgaria, Kenya). Failing to present cooperatives as a lucrative model to younger audiences, especially as an alternative with opportunities for professional and monetary growth, was identified as an important issue.

With regard to building a stronger cooperative culture, in Guatemala young cooperators suggested that cooperation works because it focuses on continuous improvement, both at the business and social level, providing more opportunities for professional growth for cooperative workers and meeting the needs of the community, be it at the level of public services, finance, consumption, or transport. Whilst social purpose is a strong factor, it is evident that professional development, self-help and economic independence is also significant to young people.

One overarching theme is the multi-dimensional approach to values within a cooperative, for example to incorporate social and environmental concerns (including climate change), and to go beyond the profit-making of the investor owned firm. This gives young people reasons to feel empowered while participating in cooperatives. Many young people genuinely perceive cooperative membership as a way in which different values can be espoused and balanced within an enterprise structure.



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“ Being a coop member can be an emancipatory process, whereby young people understand their civic responsibility and power.

Young cooperator, United Kingdom

”

In other countries, cooperatives are more intertwined with the local culture. For example, in Kenya it was noted by youth that cooperatives, notably SACCOs, are a big part of Kenyan culture, both economically and socially. How cooperatives are interpreted within a wider cultural and social context therefore plays a role in the way that young people come to perceive cooperatives, and this is a factor that varies significantly across countries surveyed, despite these main themes noted above.

However, respondents in other countries were less convinced. In Denmark, respondents suggested that cooperatives are not aligned with the individualism that characterises most people's lives today, and that this contributes to a lack of participation or interest in collective organising. If cooperatives are out of step with a youth culture that is driven by consumer interests and a lack of community participation, cooperatives can be perceived by young people as uncool, traditional, linked with familial or religious values, and generally out of touch.

Key highlights from cooperative culture suggest that the multiple social and economic values reflected in cooperative approaches are important to young people, with the wider context defining which of these (social, economic) is more important. Cooperatives might focus on one at the expense of the other, where it is very clear from young people that multiplicity is valued very highly, as well as developing actions and outreach in line with the cooperative principle of concern for community. Further, we find that culture can be as important as structure in striving for better youth engagement. A strong democratic and inclusive structure, paired with a strong culture of cooperation in the everyday norms, symbols and behaviours of cooperative enterprise, is a positive step forward in the pursuit of improved youth engagement.

the multiple social and economic values reflected in cooperative approaches are important to young people

Motivations to join a cooperative

Building on culture, the survey also assessed young people's motivations for joining a cooperative. The growth of cooperatives by gaining new members is a dominant part of youth engagement, ensuring that new members can join a cooperative, remain active, as well as contribute to a sustainable transfer of knowledge as older cooperators retire. Assessing these motivations can give insights on how we can increase the participation of youth in cooperatives, including those who signaled that they are less familiar with the cooperative model.

“ **The cooperative movement is the alternative. In the Philippines, cooperatives play a fair game when it comes to political, religious and cultural beliefs. It is owned by the people and that makes it unique, especially its governance.** ”

Young cooperator, Philippines

Many young people in the countries surveyed had strong reasons and motivations to explain why they would join a cooperative. For some, such as in Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas, this was due to the cooperative model being viewed as a real alternative to a conventional type of business.

Further, there were strong work-related and pedagogical motivations for joining a cooperative. As a young person in the Philippines, other clear reasons highlighted for joining a cooperative include the opportunity to become financially literate, to create social impact and derive a sense of purpose and work satisfaction. Additionally, opportunities for free expression, to es-

tablish a network and build connections in the cooperative movement, as well as to be in the company of compassionate and like-minded colleagues. In Korea, it was to have a voice within the organisation; to learn how an open society works; to be associated with a business that promotes ethical production, decent work, and fair remuneration.

“

It's a unique way of working and this helped develop me as a person, no doubt.

Young cooperator, United Kingdom

”

In some cases, such as in Asia-Pacific and Africa, joining a cooperative is attractive because of the benefits and incentives offered by the cooperative. These can be multiple; in some sectors such as agriculture, there are major benefits for smallholders in the case of collective bargaining agreements, the sourcing of goods and services such as machinery, or bulk buying. In Iran, the most influential reasons for young people to join a cooperative are due to the collec-

tive benefits, international exposure, and opportunity to develop life skills. In Uganda, the main motivations revolved around employment, financial benefits, as well as the ability to save money and do business with limited capital. Further, cooperatives help in the provision of training and organising exchange visits. In Morocco, a key driver was a chance to engage in entrepreneurship, access to information, independence and integration into society.

“

Youth cooperatives can help to solve unemployment because it's moulding more job creators rather than job seekers. Instead of looking for employment with your skills, you'll look for projects with the skills to do business.

Young cooperator, Kenya

”

It is clear from the above that societal impact is a recurring theme. Young people in the UK noted a fair, social working environment, working in a team, and a wider societal purpose or impact. In Togo, participants stated that the quest for freedom, the desire to realise oneself and to integrate economically are reasons to join a cooperative. In India, it was noted that it allows young people to think and work for the community, giving them a sense of satisfaction and impact of their work. In the Americas (Costa Rica), young people identified that characteristics such as commitment, leadership, growth potential and mutual benefit are the main reasons why young people join and remain active

in a cooperative over time. In Denmark, there were strong value-based motivations for joining a cooperative, rather than economic reasons such as employment opportunities, cooperatives are seen as a good opportunity to part of a community and a collective, a route for those wanting to make the world better.

Personal and professional development was therefore a recurring theme that resonated with many respondents, who have a desire to do something for their communities and to have a purpose or social im-

pact. When aware of cooperative enterprise models in general, they may see a cooperative as one way to realise this. For others, cooperative membership brings benefits that simply might not be obtained in another form of enterprise, for example, member distribution of economic surplus, or the strength of networks between members and other actors. The visual graphic below depicts the most common words that emerged when respondents were asked about young people's motivations for joining a cooperative.



Graphic 4.1: What for you are the most influencing factors/reasons for young people to join a cooperative?

Youth benefits

As also discussed in the earlier review of secondary literature, young people also highlighted several factors that they can bring into cooperatives and other types of enterprise. Without delving into detail, for most, having young people around is a breath of fresh air and a source of new ideas and innovation. There were many similarities across the four ICA regions in this category. For example, potential benefits of involving youth within cooperatives identified by respondents in European countries are passion, new knowledge, provocation, new ideas, new energy, and hope.

“ Young people find new answers to ‘old’ issues. To see the challenges with ‘new’ eyes. ”

Young respondent, Denmark



many young people seek societal purpose and impact, which was an overarching theme as a motivator

In the African region, many noted the youthful spirit as something very important. In Morocco, respondents highlighted youthfulness of spirit, integration of new methods and technologies, modern product presentation, digital marketing and e-commerce. They felt that young people can participate in a transformation of their society. Ugandan respondents highlighted that they could engage in income generation and bring in different ideas, working together in teams. Young people provide a more energetic and enthusiastic work force and come up with new innovations and knowledge to use technology, another key topic explored in this chapter.

“ Young people are energetic, vibrant and willing to try new things and new products. They are also willing to take risks and query issues. ”

Young cooperator, Kenya

Overall, when cooperatives appeal to youth they appear primarily to be motivating in four main ways. Firstly, youth view cooperatives as an alternative to conventional models of organisation. Communicating to young people that cooperatives are and can be a real alternative to the for-profit shareholder model is critical. Second, the cooperative way of working with all that it involves, as well as the opportunity to learn something new, is a clear motivator. Thirdly, the economic benefits that being a member offers has a great appeal to young people.

Finally, many young people seek societal purpose and impact, which was an overarching theme as a motivator. The numerous benefits of having young people within cooperatives and teams more generally only strengthens the case for greater youth engagement among the cooperative movement.

Partnerships

Cooperatives can already look to culture and to attracting new members as routes to better and more effective youth engagement. Another key area highlighted is the development of networks and relationships happening outside of a cooperative, what these networks and partnerships can do to strengthen youth engagement, as well which actors are best suited to respond to the challenges faced by young people.

Cooperatives are rooted in both a political and institutional context with which they interact and within that context, young people should have an important role to play in shaping these interactions. Partnerships is a theme strongly linked to SDG 17, examined in the box below.

SDG 17 Partnerships



Our challenges are global challenges and genuine partnerships and cooperation between different actors, such as governments, civil society, international institutions and the private sector are needed to overcome them. SDG 17 encourages global partnerships for sustainable development. The goal highlights equitable trade flows, global macroeconomic stability and the need to mobilise financial resources for developing countries from international sources as well as domestic capacity. Despite progress, technological inequalities, unequal trade and wealth flows between nations and a digital divide still persist, whilst overseas development assistance is actually declining in many countries. The High-Level Political Forum has a central role in the follow-up and review of SDG 17, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) at the global level.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Multi-stakeholder partnerships¹¹⁴ refer to organisations from different societal sectors working together to combine their resources and competencies in order to achieve shared objectives. When asked about global partnerships for social, environmental and economic problems, **77%** of youth not currently involved with cooperatives believe that young people have an important part to play in tackling these global challenges and more specifically that they can make a political contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals through civic engagement and participation.

Fostering partnerships with multiple actors is important to young people in several of the countries surveyed, particularly in Europe, and in African countries, such as Kenya. Young cooperators in Denmark noted specifically that they are interested in working together with other cooperators from different countries, suggesting that cross border cooperation between youth movements would also be a beneficial step.

¹¹⁴ PEP and the Partnering Initiative [An introduction to multi-stakeholder partnerships](#) Briefing document for the GPEDC High Level Meeting, November 2016

As mentioned in the introductory section of this report, the ICA Youth Network is one existing international platform for young cooperators from different countries to connect with each other. The network also conducts activities linked to contemporary issues at the global level, such as the Go Green Campaign, which links young people from the cooperative movement from different countries to contribute towards SDG 13 on Climate Action. Another interesting country-specific example can be found in Republic of Korea, where N Dolphin - a volunteer organisation by Nonghyup Bank was established to help rural society as well as educate young people about the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation there.

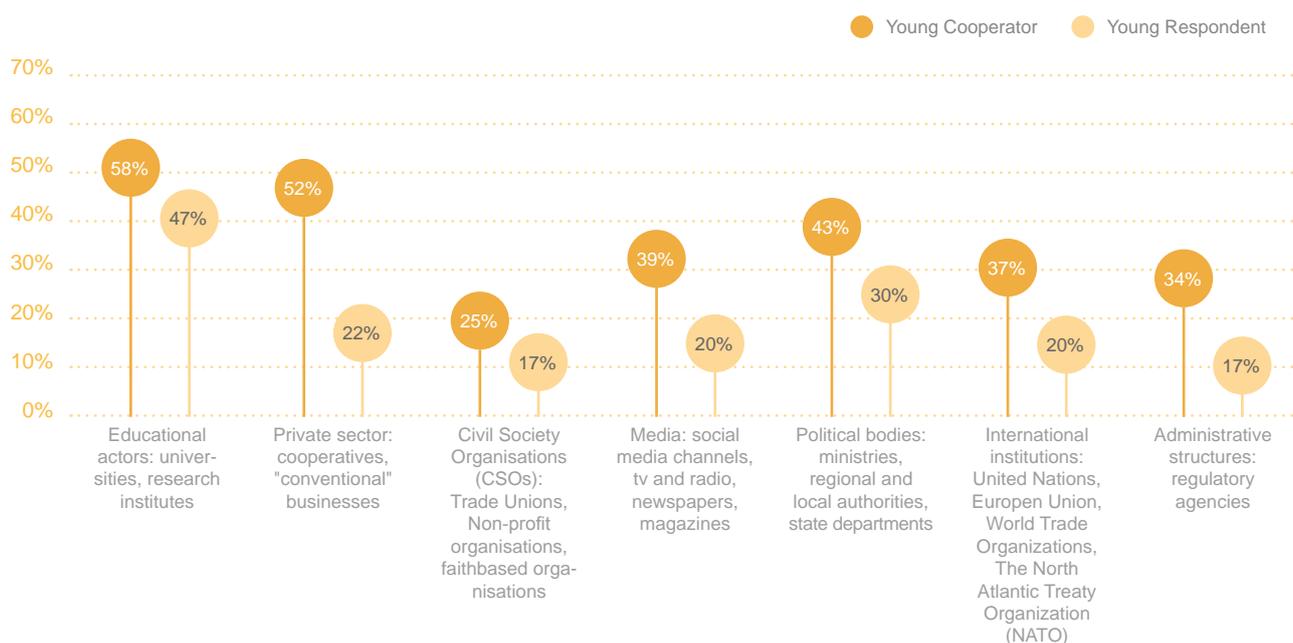
Encouragingly, **57%** of respondents across all regions also noted that their organisation had been or was involved in an international or regional youth meeting. One specific idea noted by young people is to introduce cooperative training to other interested civil society leaders. As civil society actors stand to change society and the cooperative forms one important tool for change, cooperation between these different groups can strengthen alliances between the cooperative movement and youth platforms for different social issues, such as climate change, anti-racist movements and gender equality. International youth networks are therefore an important activity for cooperatives to focus on building or becoming more involved with.

Relevant actors for young people

The survey asked respondents who the most important actors were to tackle the challenges that youth were facing. The results have been aggregated below both for young people within and outside the cooperative movement, at the global level. This provides an insight into the different actors that young people perceive to be the most or the least significant, and sheds light on the different stakeholders that could seek to engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships with cooperatives and young cooperative members.

The graph below displays the percentages of respondents who identified which actors were most important for them.

Which actors do you find most relevant to meet your challenges?

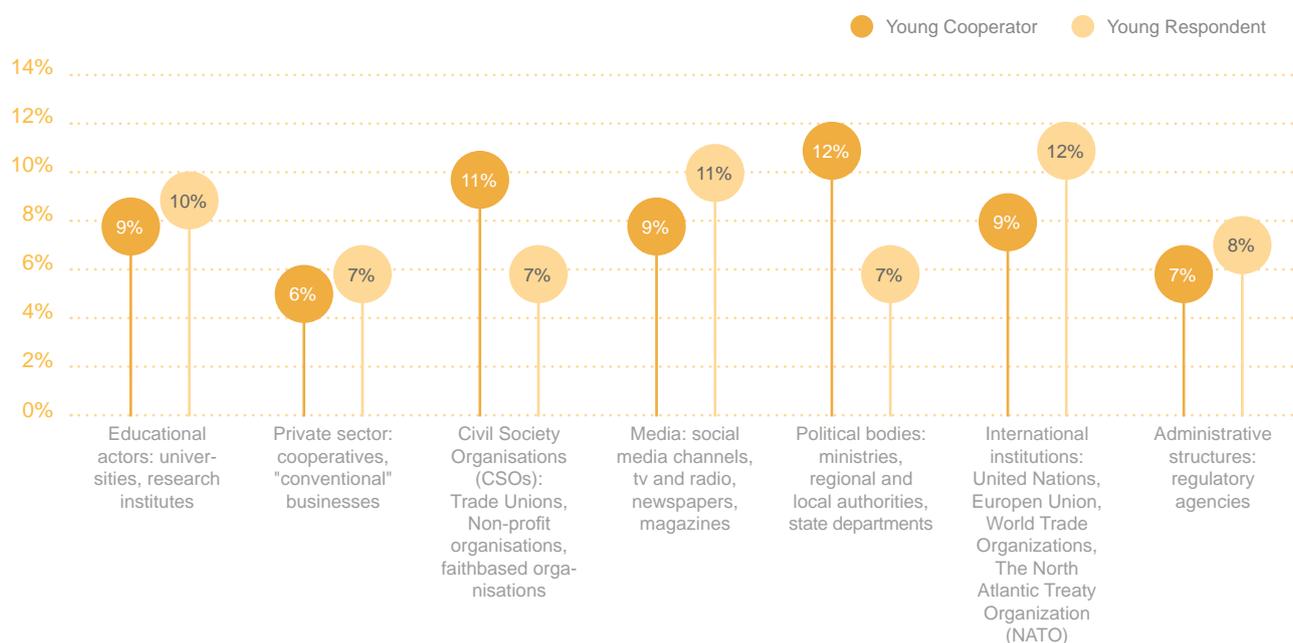


Graph 4.2: Which actors do you find most relevant to meet your challenges?

A closer look suggests educational institutions are the most important actors for both young cooperators and young respondents. Interestingly, for young people, political bodies have a lower rating, and civil society organisations do not score well for young people in either category. An interesting point is a difference in perceptions on the effectiveness of private sector organisations, with a significant proportion of young people within the cooperative movement selecting these actors as important compared with young people currently outside the cooperative movement.

When highlighting the least important actors, political bodies and agencies and international institutions were the most frequently mentioned, with the highest percentage of respondents suggesting that they were the least important actors to address the challenges young people face. In other responses, a low level of trust in these actors was prevalent among youth in some countries, including in Europe and the Americas. Interestingly, the smallest percentage in either category was private sector actors, including cooperatives, with many young people suggesting they are 'somewhat important'. Although these two trends are present, the low overall range in this category means that is difficult to draw a clear conclusion on the least relevant actors.

Which actors do you find least relevant to meet your challenges?



Graph 4.3: Which actors do you find least relevant to meet your challenges?

Media and cooperation

Media, both traditional forms and non-traditional, including social media channels, TV and radio, newspapers, and magazines surveyed above, are considered more important for youth within the cooperative movement than for those outside of the cooperative movement. This was a feature that varied across individual countries and regions. In Bulgaria for example, respondents identify the media as having a more prominent role in solving some of the challenges than other actors. Participants noted that this is due to the positive image of cooperatives that is consistently communicated by cooperative representative organisations.

In Europe, **42%** of people surveyed suggested that the media would be the least important actor to address the challenges identified by young people, with just **26%** saying it was one of the most important. In Asia-Pacific (Iran), it was stated that young people are generally less aware of cooperatives, therefore advertising or publicity through media channels would help. In India, participants noted that it would also help to read more about cooperatives from mainstream sources and to engage in cooperative related discussions in open forums. For other countries, cooperatives also have a media presence, though respondents also noted that portrayals in the media are not always positive, highlighting an interesting topic for further research.

Civil society participation

From the infographics above, it's clear that civil society actors were given a low level of relevance for young people. Of all young people surveyed who were already engaged in the cooperative movement, only half (50%) said that they participate in another civil society network or initiative focused on youth. However, in some countries, many participants stated that civil society networks are important. In Togo, most of the respondents (83%) reported that their cooperatives have been participating in other civil society youth networks, which may be considered as one effective way to engage with young people. In some countries, such as in Uganda and Republic of Korea, presence and participation in other civil society youth networks was minimal. In order to improve engagement with young people and wider engagement in community initiatives more generally, this is a factor that could be considered to have an impact.

a strong emphasis was made on the need for greater participation and the development of social activities

In some regions and countries, for example Denmark and in Greece, it was also noted that young people should be involved in politics. A strong emphasis was made on the need for greater participation and the development of social activities, for example the involvement of young people in politics, both locally and nationally. In Argentina, youth stated that they are interested in the formation of councils of young advisers, their constant learning process in higher education, and involvement in social projects. Despite this, in both individual countries such as Argentina and overall, young people rate civil society organisations as the least important.

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Overall, the data demonstrates that educational actors are the most relevant actor for young people in terms of providing them with the tools needed to meet their challenges. This was followed by the private sector and then closely followed by political bodies, in which young people place a low level of trust in several countries, such as Greece, and several countries surveyed in the Americas. Another strong trend from this analysis is that in the eyes of youth, no single actor is singularly placed to meet the challenges of youth, indicating that multi-stakeholder partnerships are certainly required for different actors to combine expertise and resources in order to support young people.

Case studies: engagement and civic participation

Notwithstanding these differences among countries, some encouraging cases of community action exist. In India, the box below shows how cooperatives are engaging with youth through social responsibility and social service.

Name	MAPLE Project
Organisations	Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS)
Location	Asia- Pacific Region, India
Sector	Education and training

Links to SDGs



One example of youth engagement through social responsibility is of Madappally School Academic Project for Learning and Empowerment (MAPLE) that seeks to develop skills and provide education to young people. It is a three-year project by the Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society in Kerala that aims to convert five Madappally Schools as Centres of Excellence as part of the society's educational initiative UL Education. The project aims at skill enhancement for students in areas like language proficiency, English communication, Science, Mathematics, Commerce, Business Studies, and vocational subjects. At the same time, it also seeks to promote awareness on cooperatives among youth and community.

Focus areas of the project include:

1. Special training in communication skills
2. Research oriented remedial training for students who are performing badly in Mathematics
3. Training for various competitive exams
4. Anti-drug awareness programmes and activities
5. Clean and green campus initiatives
6. Training in volleyball, table tennis and Kalari (martial art)
7. Initiatives for understanding the aptitude and interest of students and guiding them to select appropriate courses
8. Programmes for familiarising students in programming and future technologies
9. Developing basic ICT infrastructure



Credit: MAPLE Project

Name Nueva Generación (New Generation)

Organisations Cooциque

Location Americas Region, Costa Rica

Sector Education

Links to SDGs



Nueva Generación is a programme of Cooциque R.L. that encourages leadership and financial training for approximately 17,000 children and adolescents throughout the country.

During its 32 years of activity this young person's cooperative has achieved many well-known successes, one such example being that it motivated Infocoop and the Ministry of Public Education to become more engaged in cooperative education, with projects and financial management developed by associated students. In addition, it also helped to create the Annual Entrepreneurship Fair "Expojo-ven", where a large percentage of the projects are cooperative.

Many of Cooциque's training graduates have gone on to become successful leaders in their cooperatives, either as directors, members, collaborators or young cooperators, who use their training to mentor others.



Credit: Nueva Generación

Youth engagement

The final section of this chapter on civic engagement and participation looks at the different problems and avenues of youth engagement, in particular the platforms of interest for engaging young people, the role of technology, and the different methods for engagement and ideas suggested by young people.

76% of youth already engaged in the cooperative movement think that cooperatives have the disposition to engage young people into their structure, with 19% suggesting that they do not, and a further 5% unsure. Despite more than three quarters agreeing with the potential of cooperatives to engage youth in their structures, 58% of young people said that the participation and integration of young people is not well promoted among cooperatives, with only 36% agreeing that it is. This is a large qualitative gap in the cooperative sector achieving its full potential. For those who suggested that participation and integration is indeed well integrated, across regions the figures were highest in Asia-Pacific, where 44% of people stated it was, with 39% in the Americas. In Europe, the figure was 31% and just 29% of people stated that youth are well integrated in Africa. These statistics already demonstrate the real need for cooperatives to engage more effectively and in a genuine manner with young people.

When asked if the cooperative movement in general has effective processes or mechanisms that help young people to engage with the movement, 47% of young cooperators said yes. The picture was uneven across regions, in the Americas, this figure was at 60%, whereas in Europe, it was just 14%.

What is going wrong? Several young people cited why they thought engagement was insufficient, and key reasons included a few core factors noted here, with a variety of responses grouped into four main areas.

The first common problem is a lack of knowledge. Many young people simply feel that people just don't know about cooperatives, how they operate, or there is a lack of awareness in general, as well as the fact that cooperatives don't communicate well, or communicate frequently enough in the right settings and context to young people.

“ ...they need to have more of a presence in the curriculum and in career centres. They also could do more to challenge the perceived necessity and inevitability of capitalism including competition, growth and hierarchical structures...”

Young cooperator, United Kingdom ”

A second set of points identified by young people relates to the poor integration of youth within cooperative structures. A topic discussed in the chapter on inequalities, many noted structural issues of participation that went unaddressed, but also the 'old' nature of many practices within cooperatives. This is a point that is linked to the earlier discussions of cooperative culture, that youth feel they need to have a place to be heard. As one respondent lamented:

“ Cooperatives are more interested in their profit rather than the youth problem. Unskilled and lacking knowledge, young people do not help their profit. High entry barriers also hinder the participation of young people, as money invested is the first step in joining the cooperative. However, most of the investments are too expensive for the younger generation. That is why cooperatives are insufficiently fostering the participation and integration of young people.”

Young cooperator, Republic of Korea ”

“ It’s also a social problem, in the past most of the young people were trained in political participation by society, there was high participation in associations, student political groups, public assembly etc... now us, as cooperatives, we need to train our workers in group power, to make them experience the pleasure of deciding together...”

Young cooperators, Italy

”

If the second can be described as a lack of will to integrate young people, the third relates to a lack of resources to make any serious youth engagement a reality. Many cooperatives don’t have a structured way of engaging with youth, or lack the capacity and the resources to do so, a point often repeated by those responding:

Finally, for those that are already engaged within the movement, another important point is a lack of opportunities and for progression within the cooperative sector. Youth consistently noted a lack of job or employment opportunities, as well as retention and a lack motivated youth who wish to stay in the cooperative sector.

“ Youth programmes are limited to savings or culture and the arts; no leadership training in preparation for careers in the cooperative that is open to everyone.”

Young cooperators, Indonesia

”

“ Young employees and members mostly view the cooperative as a stepping-stone for other opportunities outside of the sector, such as banks and other institutions...”

Young cooperators, Indonesia

”

The four areas, here referred to in brief as knowledge, integration, capacity and opportunity, are evidently points of focus for those organisations who seek to improve youth engagement. Regarding the first, technology and platforms is one way that youth identified to tackle these challenges.

Technology and cooperation

Respondents of the study were clear that one route to improve youth engagement in cooperatives is with technology, most notably in Asia-Pacific and in Africa. Although technology and rapid amounts of information appear ubiquitous to many, it is important to note that access is still unequal and remains so in many countries. In lower income countries, **85%** of households are still not connected to the internet,¹¹⁵ and half of all households worldwide don’t have access.¹¹⁶ This demonstrates that there is still a very long way to go to provide equal technological access and benefits to the world’s population, and its use will not reach all young people, particularly vulnerable youth or those experiencing poverty or social exclusion.

In Asia-Pacific (Indonesia), respondents noted the use of modern technology, as well as the new-age branding of cooperative products and services, as one important way that cooperatives can engage with young people. In Iran, respondents suggested that cooperatives should organise and deliver activities of greater interest to youth, and specifically those related to information technology. In Uganda, young people suggested that cooperatives involved in production are failing to create products that resonate with a new generation who are technologically skilled.

¹¹⁵ 2018 HLPF Review of SDGs implementation: SDG 17 –Strengthen the means of implementation and the global partnership for sustainable development, [Background Notes](#)

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

In the Americas, technology was an important issue noted by **28%** of respondents across the surveys. Youth in Argentina noted the strength in the use of technological tools and that they can be used to counteract the effect of social and economic conditions, for example in improved governance and information sharing. In Europe, the trend was less prevalent; however, many respondents also noted that it was important to integrate technology into governance structures, as well as its importance more generally. The need for a general focus on modernisation beyond technology alone was a topic noted in Asia-Pacific and in Africa. As a respondent in Europe notes:



Cooperatives must become «cool», not just something that comes from the eighties... we must explain that working in a coop is better because the community is more important than just the power and the money... and we must explain that coops are great also for new jobs, like technology, software, and the sharing economy.

Young cooperators, Italy



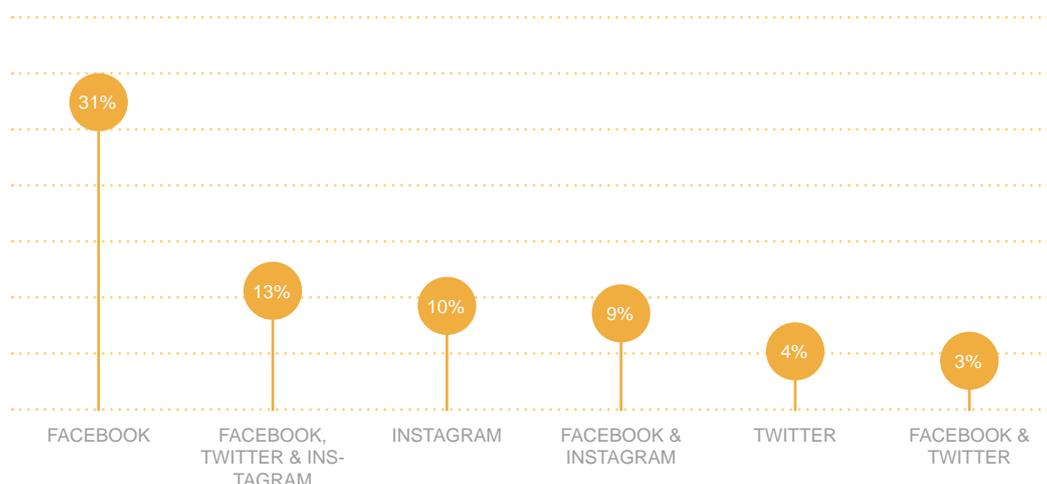
Platforms

Linked to technology and a direct method of youth engagement, the study also looked at which platforms were most relevant to young people. Across both those within the cooperative movement and those outside, there were very similar results. Within the cooperative movement, Facebook remains a clear leader, mentioned at least once by **60%** of respondents, followed by Instagram (**38%**) and Twitter (**23%**). Just **17%** of respondents noted that all three platforms were relevant. There was no strong trend from our surveys suggesting that Instagram is better to reach out to younger audiences, those selecting only Instagram (**10%**) had a mean age of 25, below the average age of 28 years.

This picture is repeated for those outside the cooperative movement, who note Facebook (**54%** at least once) followed by Instagram (**27%**) and Twitter (**18%**) out of all respondents in that category. Only **10%** of respondents noted that all three platforms are relevant to them, a slightly lower figure than in the cooperative category.

This analysis suggests that a Facebook presence is almost mandatory for those seeking to reach out to young people, as **31%** of respondents in both categories suggested it as the only platform to engage with youth, which is unsurprising as it has almost 2.45 billion monthly active users (Statista 2020). Twitter is less popular with young people according to these results, although vital for most organisations for timely news content and often favoured by many professional organisations. Very few young people overall (**4%**) use Twitter as a sole platform, but rather combine it with other platforms, most commonly Facebook and Instagram. Instagram is another platform that should be considered for many to engage with youth, due to its rising popularity in both categories, and one less commonly used by cooperatives or other professional organisations. Although not shown here in these statistics, video sharing sites including YouTube were also mentioned by a majority of youth in both categories.

% all respondents: which platforms to engage with young people?



Graph 4.4: Which platforms are most suitable for youth engagement?

Methods for engagement

Apart from the examples listed above, what other methods do young people suggest are the best way to engage them?

In line with the discussion on platforms, social media is an overwhelming favourite method of youth both within and outside the movement, hence the inclusion of a more detailed breakdown and discussion above on this. Despite this, many young people also seek events and activities to provide more local and targeted youth engagement.

In Europe, many respondents stated that local presence is equally important and that they would like to see more young people involved through local activities. In other regions, for example in Asia-Pacific, it was commonly observed that cooperatives must reach out to such young people, through events and activities, including to those who are not associated with cooperatives. They also noted it was important to understand the emerging needs of young people and how cooperatives can address those needs. Further, young people said that cooperatives can hold participatory initiatives that encourage young people to explore for themselves and identify their interests and potential. Initiatives identified include seminars, training, scholarships and exchange programmes for young people.

Other suggestions from young people to better engage with youth are noted in the list below. Many young people suggested that these could be undertaken in partnership with other actors, notably educational institutes, but also through partnerships with political bodies, who can offer support for youth cooperative development programmes through capacity building or active public communications. Ideas for improved youth engagement included:

- education and training
- intergenerational exchanges
- fair remuneration
- youth in leadership positions
- ambassadors and mentoring programmes
- promotional events and campaigns
- cooperative trainings for youth civil society leaders

cooperatives can hold participatory initiatives that encourage young people to explore for themselves and identify their interests and potential

Overall, highlights from youth engagement include the main issues experienced by young people, in particular low knowledge, poor integration, a lack of capacity and shortage of opportunities. Each of these require different solutions, yet the role of the media and technology, when the relevant social media platforms are used and the right messages are delivered, could bring improvements, both to knowledge and the capacity to engage with young people in the most effective ways. The development of partnerships with other actors, of which educational institutes are greatly favoured by young people, are also of relevance in developing and delivering on the ground activities aimed at youth engagement.

Conclusion: engagement and civic participation

This chapter has explored the topic of civic participation and youth engagement across four topics in the preceding sections. It has discussed cooperative culture, motivations to join cooperatives, partnerships and relevant actors, and youth engagement, including platforms. Out of these themes, a few final reflections are worthy of mention and reiteration.

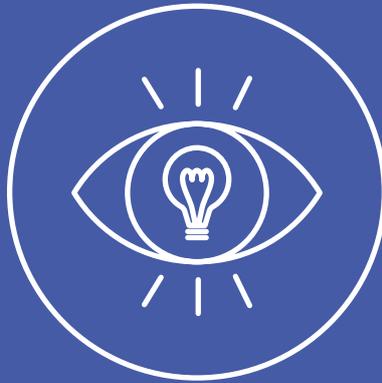
- multiple factors (social, economic, political, environmental) are valued very highly by youth, as well as participating in and developing actions in line with the cooperative principle of concern for community
- culture can be as important as structure in striving for better youth engagement and an inclusive structure, without the culture, can be less effective in engaging youth
- a strong democratic and inclusive structure paired with a strong culture of cooperation can be a positive step forward for improved youth engagement
- many young people view cooperatives as an alternative to conventional models of organisation
- the cooperative way of working with all that it involves, the benefits it brings, as well as an opportunity for youth to have social purpose and impact, is an overarching motivator for young people
- the numerous benefits of involving young people within cooperatives and teams more generally strengthens the case for greater youth engagement in the cooperative movement and both elements should be communicated in louder and more effective ways
- regarding partnerships, responses demonstrate that educational actors are the most important actor for young people in terms of providing them with the tools needed to meet their challenges. This was followed by the private sector (including cooperatives) and by political bodies.
- no single actor is placed to meet the challenges of youth on its own. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are therefore needed to tackle the challenges facing young people.
- the primary recurring issues identified by youth include low knowledge, poor integration, a lack of capacity and lack of opportunity



Youth engagement is a complex topic, yet the primary recurring issues require different and potentially radical solutions both at the level of enterprise and at the level of society. The role of both conventional technological routes of engagement and on the ground outreach, when the relevant social media platforms are used and the right messages are delivered, could bring improvements, both to knowledge and the capacity to engage with young people in the most effective ways. Although there is no single straight and effective route to encouraging greater participation and integration of youth, both within and outside of cooperative structures, this chapter has attempted to address some of those challenges following analysis of the data collected in this study.

Global thematic
youth research

chapter



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Introduction

Due to globalisation, people's consumption habits are more varied than ever before. Fashions and trends and how they are shaped will generally determine those enterprises that will succeed economically and those that will not. For these reasons, we live in times when innovation is the greatest tool to survive in an increasingly insatiable market.¹¹⁷

Enterprises that do not adapt and change provide market opportunities for new organisations that come to fill gaps in people's needs, either with totally innovative products and services or with a variable that distinguishes them from their competitors.¹¹⁸ Adapting and innovating are therefore central to entrepreneurial activity, be it cooperative entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, or more traditional forms of business development.

The majority of young people worldwide do not engage in entrepreneurship, instead choosing to serve as employees of established companies.¹¹⁹ It is also recognised that many young people undertake entrepreneurial activities out of necessity, rather than choice, due to a lack of formal employment opportunities, poverty or social and economic exclusion. This issue has become more pronounced in recent months; with the ILO reporting that one in six young people aged 18–29 (**17.4%**) have stopped working since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²⁰ Therefore, it is important to recognise a distinction between young people choosing to become entrepreneurs and those who are forced to undertake informal economic activities that move in the direction of social and cooperative entrepreneurship.¹²¹

many young people undertake entrepreneurial activities out of necessity, rather than choice

Addressing these topics and issues, this chapter provides an overview of the survey results related to entrepreneurship, highlighting the main reasons why young people are drawn to cooperative entrepreneurship and the emerging role it can play in sustainable development. In addition, the chapter provides a discussion of the main challenges young people face when conducting cooperative entrepreneurship and how it might be possible to tackle these challenges, through adequate enabling environments, digitalisation, and activities by cooperatives and their representative organisations. It concludes by presenting initiatives from the cooperative sector and a number of key points that highlight the role that cooperatives can play in developing entrepreneurship opportunities for youth.

Concepts in cooperative entrepreneurship

Presenting a rough conceptual overview of the various forms of entrepreneurship can demonstrate the nature of cooperative entrepreneurship and where it stands in relation to other forms. The graphic below presents three typologies of entrepreneurship and details some essential defining elements of each type. It is not intended as an exhaustive or definitive exercise, rather aiming to orientate and provide a map to compare cooperative entrepreneurship in relation to other common types of entrepreneurial activity.

¹¹⁷ Correia, F; Erfuth, P & Bryhn, J. (2018). The 2030 Agenda: The roadmap to Globalization. Available at:

https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2018/wp156_2018.pdf, p. 14, 23 & 27.

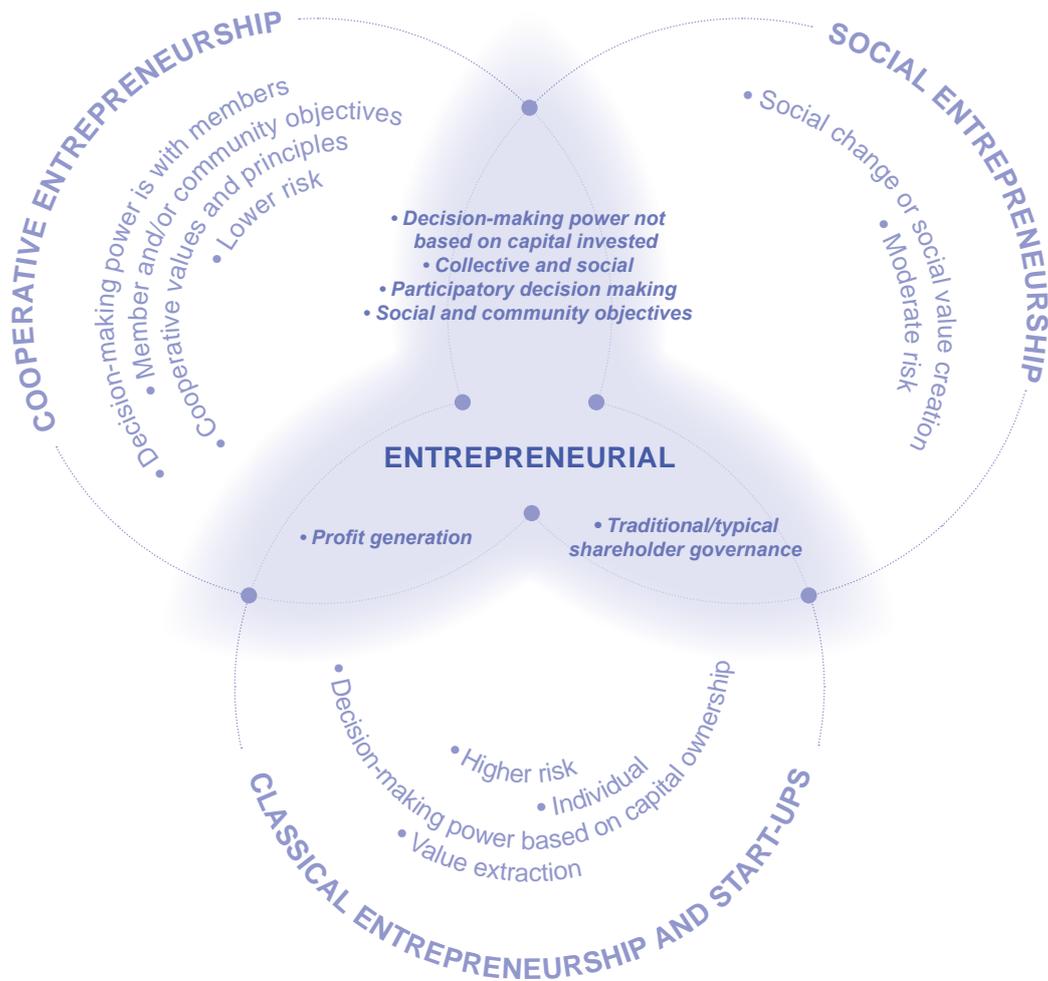
¹¹⁸ Sidhu, I & Deletraz, P. (2015). Effect of comfort zone on entrepreneurship potential, innovation culture and career satisfaction, p. 2, 9.

¹¹⁹ OECD, LEED & European Commission. (2014). Summary report of a policy development seminar organised by the OECD and the European Commission, Brussels, 22nd-23rd September 2014. Available at:

<https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/SummaryReportSeminarYouthEntrepreneurshipRev.pdf>, p. 3.

¹²⁰ ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fourth edition Updated estimates and analysis, 27 May 2020.

¹²¹ Fairlie, R & Fossen, F. (2017) Opportunity versus Necessity Entrepreneurship: Two Components of Business Creation. Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Available at: <https://siepr.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/17-014.pdf>, p. 4-10.



Graphic 5.1: Features of cooperative entrepreneurship

This graphic above highlights possible variations, overlaps, and debates surrounding entrepreneurship and its relevance for young people. Often interventions related to entrepreneurship focus upon young people’s individual skills and capabilities, suggesting that youth must take initiative, be adaptable, accept risk, have self-confidence, focus on results, and be competitive rather than cooperative.¹²² These approaches, however, may fail to take into consideration the structural inequalities and neoliberal beliefs that are reinforced by entrepreneurial language and which make successful outcomes for those affected by these issues less likely.¹²³

Cooperative entrepreneurship can therefore seek to challenge some of these norms around profit seeking and individualist cultures, incorporating a more collective mindset in decision making processes and objectives. Further, it can also carry lower relative levels of risk for young people, who may have fewer resources to realise their innovative ideas by themselves. This point was reflected in the survey responses, where young people noted the collective nature of cooperatives for tackling common challenges through cooperatives.

“ The youth aspirations are more individualistic and may, at most, be limited to a small group. The cooperative model doesn’t seem to resonate with the solutions for an individual’s education, employment, or start-up aspirations. ”

Young respondent, India

¹²² Fernández-Herrería, A., & Martínez-Rodríguez, F. M. (2016). Deconstructing the neoliberal “Entrepreneurial Self”: A critical perspective derived from a global “biophilic consciousness.” *Policy Futures in Education*, 14(3), p.316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210316631709>

¹²³ See Chapter 2 Neo/liberal Governmentality and Citizen Subjectivities in DeJaeghere, J. (2017). *Educating Entrepreneurial Citizens*.

Cooperative entrepreneurship and the SDGs

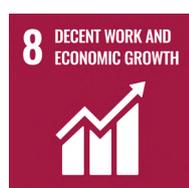
Given the centrality of social and community objectives to cooperative entrepreneurship, the SDGs provide an existing framework in which cooperatives and other social economy actors can make an important contribution. SDGs interrelate with each other and seek to address the global challenges that we face today such as poverty, inequality, climate change and

environmental degradation. Faced with so many challenges, the social and entrepreneurial ideas of young people can and do contribute to meeting them.¹²⁴

Certain SDGs are highlighted here due to their specific relation to entrepreneurship, and these are set out below:



In order to achieve this goal, economic growth must be inclusive to create sustainable jobs and promote equality. Entrepreneurship should be promoted across the entire population, with special emphasis on people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Links to entrepreneurship can be found among the indicators of SDG 1, including indicators 1.2, 1.4 and 1. a.



To achieve sustainable economic development, societies must foster the necessary conditions to create and access quality jobs, stimulating the economy without damaging the environment and sufficient job opportunities for the working age population, ensuring decent working conditions.¹²⁵ Promoting entrepreneurship to the young population using models of sustainable economic and social development will create better paid jobs where the human factor is valued and workers are perceived as a strong asset.¹²⁶



Technological progress is considered a path to achieve the SDGs, such as more efficient use of resources and energy efficiency. Innovation and infrastructure can generate employment and income and play a key role in the promotion of new technologies, facilitating more sustainable international trade patterns and improved efficiency of resources.¹²⁷ Cooperatives, which are member owned and rooted within communities, can play an important role through the pooling of resources for infrastructure investments, for example in agriculture (irrigation, agricultural inputs) or energy (power generators, solar panels, supply grids) which can improve members' access to goods or services.¹²⁸

Entrepreneurship can therefore be considered as one important tool for sustainable development to be promoted by the wide range of actors and partners working towards the achievement of the SDGs. As so much remains to be achieved since the introduction of the SDGs in 2015, the different government agencies, international organisations, private sector actors and educational actors must promote the development of innovative ideas that can

move us beyond 'business as usual'. Cooperatives, which have a distinctive enterprise structure, can be viewed as sitting at the intersection of entrepreneurship and sustainable development, making them an ideal business model for the pursuit of meaningful social and economic activities, and a unique enterprise model for young people.

¹²⁴ United Nations. (2015) Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 8 Target 8.3. Available at:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

¹²⁵ United Nations (2015).

¹²⁶ United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth. Available at:

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-8-decent-work-and-economic-growth.html>

¹²⁷ United Nations (2015).

¹²⁸ http://www.copac.coop/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/COPAC_Transform-Brief_SDG09.pdf

Young people and cooperative entrepreneurship

For many young people surveyed, a core attraction of the cooperative model comes from the combined elements of strong business guided by values and principles and social impact. Actors such as UNDESA have recently termed this a 'unique combination' of the cooperative approach, noting that social entrepreneurship was born out of the cooperative movement in the nineteenth century.¹²⁹ The importance of the economic and business elements in cooperative entrepreneurship is echoed by young people. One respondent noted:

“ In my opinion, the cooperative model should be connected with a strong business model. Many young people want to be together for the inherent value, but without business, the group can't survive much longer than [any other] major group.

Young cooperator, Indonesia

”

The benefits of engaging in entrepreneurship under the cooperative model are not only cited by young people already active in cooperatives, but also by international organisations, who highlight the specific viability of cooperatives in formalising the informal economy. As just one example, a recent study by UN-DESA on youth social entrepreneurship stated:

“ The parallels between social entrepreneurship and the cooperative movement are encouraging, particularly given the success of the latter, as the way in which cooperatives function and generate an impact on individual members can provide insight into the types of support young social entrepreneurs should receive. A key role of cooperatives is supporting the formalization of the informal economy. Cooperatives have played an important part in supporting precarious workers by giving them the ability to organize and secure recognition of their rights; this has been especially critical for women and youth, as both are overrepresented in the informal economy.¹³⁰

”

Resonating with the above, more than **65%** of young cooperative members surveyed in this study indicated that values and principles are the most important feature of cooperatives that make them well suited to meeting the challenges young people are facing. This reflects that cooperatives are valued by young people as enterprises that are well-placed not only to create prosperity and long-term jobs, but to do so by also focusing on wider goals such as sustainability, equity and equality.

“ Cooperative principles are the foundation of sustainable development and offer the ability for young people to realise their potential.

Young cooperator, Togo

”

¹²⁹ Voinea, A. How to drive youth social entrepreneurship, Cooperative News, 8 September 2020 Available at: <https://www.thenews.coop/150135/topic/development/how-to-drive-youth-social-entrepreneurship/>

¹³⁰ United Nations. (2020). World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda. Available at: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-](https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf)

Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf, p. 76.

Beyond the suitability of the cooperative model for entrepreneurship and the cooperative values and principles, when analysing the survey results, the main reasons why young people said they were attracted to cooperative entrepreneurship included:

- multiple values incorporated (economic, social and environmental)
- equality between members
- democratic decision-making
- education and training
- skill development
- cooperation among cooperatives
- autonomy and freedom
- innovation

In Africa and Asia-Pacific, young people stated that the cooperative model is a viable model to meet their challenges and **26%** of young cooperators surveyed in this study mention the importance of cooperative entrepreneurship. Young people note that it is a form of association that allows all members to have the same weight in decision-making processes regardless of the capital invested.

These respondents further highlight the sense of community that is fostered by being part of a cooperative and are encouraged that the main goal is not personal enrichment but common objectives or the well-being of the environment in which the cooperative develops. As one respondent noted:

“ *Our model encourages personal and collective creation of value; others encourage personal greed and value extraction just for oneself. To cooperate implies an ecological view that overcomes selfishness and focuses on taking care of others and the common good.* ”

Young cooperator, Italy

The analysis demonstrated that **38%** of young cooperators who responded in the Americas and Europe focused on the benefits of cooperatives in terms of education and skills training, that could allow them to access better quality jobs. They also cited the principle of cooperation among cooperatives to learn from good and bad experiences of other cooperatives and the economic benefits of cooperation among cooperatives, which allows economies of scale through bulk buying and expanding the number of target customers. The ability to innovate, both through the provision of services but also through experimenting with different modes of social organisation within a cooperative, is also considered a strong asset.

“ **The cooperative business model is a social entrepreneurship model; it's not just solving one man's problem but the majority problem. If given powers, the distribution of resources will be easy because no one has the mandate over the resources. It is for a society of agreement.** ”

Young cooperator, Kenya

As mentioned above, young people surveyed point out that the commitment of cooperatives to the social, economic and environmental well-being of people and the community around them is one of the main reasons young entrepreneurs choose to engage in the cooperative model, as cooperation should prioritise the common good above the individual. Further, the most frequently cited factor among all the young people surveyed was the ability to have a voice within the deliberations and also a vote in decision-making processes, regardless of race, religion, economic power, or educational level.

“ **Knowing that no matter how many shares I have, if I am the president’s son or if I am a small farmer, that my vote counts the same as any other is the differential factor of cooperatives.** ”

Young cooperators, Guatemala



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As well as democracy, young people noted the sense of autonomy and freedom that comes from pursuing innovative business ideas or setting up their own cooperative. In Togo, respondents noted that there is a desire to take their destiny into their own hands, organise themselves and work together to find common solutions to problems. In many contexts, cooperative entrepreneurship can be a solution to problems that traditional providers of services (the state and private companies) are unable or unwilling to solve, such as the provision of energy or information technology services in remote areas, or support and protection in the informal economy.

Cooperatives can seek to do more, however. In Colombia, respondents noted that the cooperative sector should work further to position itself as a viable model of entrepreneurship, which will allow them to develop their life projects while generating sustainable economic development in their local communities. While they do believe that the cooperative model could help in overcoming the challenges they face, it is not the most visible option for young people.

Respondents also highlighted that creation of cooperative incubators to generate an entrepreneurial spirit in the minds of young people from an early age will be beneficial.¹³¹ In the Philippines, for example, young people expect cooperative leaders to play a mentorship role to guide and support aspiring young entrepreneurs to set up their own cooperatives. Cooperatives must therefore promote the cooperative model more intensively and make it more attractive to youth, with a specific focus on practising and learning about cooperative entrepreneurship.

When considering entrepreneurship, a useful indicator discussed further in Chapter 4 is to look at the most relevant actors identified by young people to meet their challenges. Here the results focus on the private sector, with the table below showing the importance of private sector actors for each group of young people surveyed (which includes cooperatives and cooperative entrepreneurs).

Region	% Young cooperators reporting private sector actors as 'Most important'	% Young respondents reporting private sector actors as 'Most important'
Global	58%	27%
Africa	83%	61%
Asia-Pacific	54%	26%
Europe	23%	20%
Americas	67%	16%

Table 5.2: The importance of the private sector across regions

In every region, young cooperators gave a substantially greater importance to private sector actors when compared with those outside of the cooperative movement. In all regions except for Europe, more than twice as many young cooperators cited private actors as 'most important' compared with young respondents from outside the cooperative movement. It is also interesting to note that in the region of Africa, private sector actors are considered more important than any other region, both by young cooperators and those outside of the cooperative movement. According to the ILO, **85.5%** of employment in the region is in the informal economy, which may explain the lower ratings of importance for actors with traditionally higher proportions of formal employment (government or educational actors for example).¹³²

Although the driving forces behind this are not well understood, this is an interesting comparison between regions, providing insight into young people's views on the importance of cooperative entrepreneurship. With such varying views among young people, a number of challenges were also noted, which are explored below.

¹³¹ For more information on cooperative incubators, see Liz Enoch, How co-op accelerators and incubators are supercharging a worker-owned economy, Shareable, 19 July 2019.

¹³² Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture (third edition) / International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2018, p.13.

Challenges for cooperative entrepreneurship

Although many young people were convinced of the opportunities and benefits of cooperative entrepreneurship, there are various obstacles and challenges identified by young people to be able to take advantage of them. The main challenges noted by young people surveyed included:

- a lack of professional experience or knowledge
- low levels of support from state institutions
- bureaucratic barriers to entry
- a lack of seed capital and investment
- a poor enabling environment

paperwork and bureaucracy to start an enterprise is overly cumbersome and hinders efficient or innovative business development

Challenges are further pronounced for vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, where a lack of education or availability of financial resources results in lower participation in entrepreneurship within these groups.¹³³

Young participants in this study made it clear that they do not feel that the state education programmes of each country are instilling enough motivation in young people to develop their own ideas and take them to local, regional, national and international markets. Rather, they stated that paperwork and bureaucracy to start an enterprise is overly cumbersome and hinders efficient or innovative business development. Capital requirements, registration and audit practices, taxation, or minimum number of members to form a cooperative are just some of the elements that have an impact. In some countries surveyed, such as in Greece, it was noted that a bureaucratic simplification of procedures for cooperative entrepreneurs is required. Another young person in Indonesia stated:

“ Big developed companies, universities and regional or national bodies of the government should take a step forward and promote cooperative entrepreneurship though education, financial help and by decreasing the bureaucracy to create a company. ”

Young cooperator, Indonesia

From analysing the surveys conducted, it is evident that young people consider that the state together with public institutions must promote and incentivise the creation of new enterprises made up of young people, in which they can develop their own ideas with enough support in administration, finances, marketing, technology, or productivity. This was reported in Iran and Indonesia in the Asia-Pacific region, Togo and Uganda in Africa, Bulgaria and Greece in Europe, and Guatemala and Mexico in the Americas.

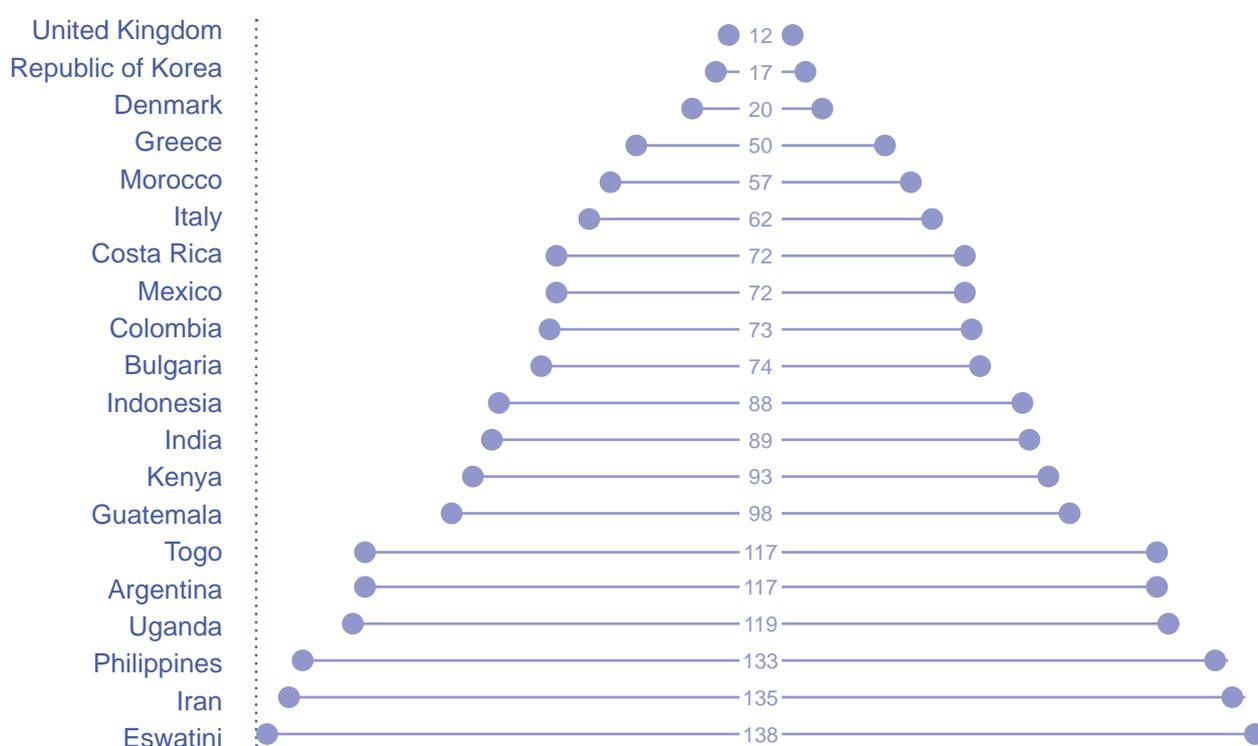
¹³³ United Nations (2015).

The graph below displays average scores for the 20 countries surveyed in the study to establish a comparative overview of young people's perceptions regarding business formation. The average score is calculated using three rankings. Firstly, a ranking of "Starting a Business", which measures the number of procedures, time, cost and paid-in minimum capital requirement for a small-to-medium-size limited liability company to start up and formally operate in each economy's largest business city.¹³⁴ Secondly, a ranking of "Global Competitiveness", which assesses the ability of countries to provide high levels of prosperity to their

citizens;¹³⁵ and thirdly; a rank of "Ease of Doing Business" where a high ease of doing business ranking means the regulatory environment is more conducive to starting and operating a local business.¹³⁶

Whilst this illustration is only indicative, the average score can provide a means to compare the levels of challenge faced by young people undertaking cooperative enterprise. Countries are displayed below from the friendliest to the least friendly, according to the average score of the measures.

Starting and running a business in countries surveyed: average scores



Graph 5.3: Starting and running a business in countries surveyed: average scores

The graph above suggests there is a wide range of discrepancy between countries studied in terms of their relative support for entrepreneurship more generally. Although this exercise does not provide specific indicators for cooperative entrepreneurship, it is reasonable to argue that cooperative entrepreneurship can be more challenging than traditional business activities, due to the reasons discussed above. It is therefore clear that in many of the coun-

tries surveyed, significant room for improvement exists in order to facilitate further cooperative entrepreneurship, and to ensure a sufficient enabling environment for young people. Governments and public institutions of the countries surveyed therefore need to take action to better facilitate the creation of new enterprises and cooperatives, as proposed by the young participants in this study.

¹³⁴ The World Bank. (2019). Starting a Business. Rankings. Available at: <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/data/exploretopics/starting-a-business>

¹³⁵ Schwab, K. (Ed.) World Economic Forum (2019) Insight Report, Global Competitiveness Report. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

¹³⁶ The World Bank. (2019). Ease of Doing Business. Rankings. Available at: <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>

Solutions

Given the discrepancies between the interest in entrepreneurship (specifically cooperative entrepreneurship) and the actual numbers of young people who take part in cooperative entrepreneurship or become successful entrepreneurs, the challenges faced by young people in this field are numerous.¹³⁷

The study also shed light on young people's ideas on how this situation can be alleviated, which focused on three key areas:

- an enabling environment for cooperatives
- digitalisation
- education and training activities by cooperatives and cooperative representative organisations

Enabling environments

It is evident from the points discussed above that young people think that governments and public institutions need to take action to facilitate the creation of new enterprises, with a specific focus on cooperative enterprises and sustainable development. For this to become a reality and to facilitate successful and effective youth entrepreneurship, an enabling environment is a priority. A significant proportion of young people surveyed in this study call for adequate legal frameworks that provide the right conditions for cooperative start-ups.

Young cooperative members from Europe and Asia-Pacific pointed to the favourable tax treatment of cooperatives as an opportunity to compete fairly with other types of business organisations, as well as to invest more in education, protection of the environment, health and infrastructure within the community. Certain countries even have specific cooperative legislation that requires a certain percentage of the profits or surplus to be invested in these areas, when other types of association do not mandate a similar community investment.¹³⁸

The Legal Frameworks Analysis (LFA) research of cooperative legislation completed in over 62 ICA member countries by the ICA-EU Partnership has found that the enabling environment for cooperatives varies hugely across different countries and regions, with a range of different scenarios for tax treatment. In some regions, such as in the Americas, cooperatives have gradually but steadily lost the preferential treatment that they used to have in tax status.¹³⁹

young people call for adequate legal frameworks that provide the right conditions for cooperatives

¹³⁷ In the European region Terrasi (2018) highlights a large gap between the rhetorical discussion of entrepreneurship for young people and the small proportion of actual young entrepreneurs.

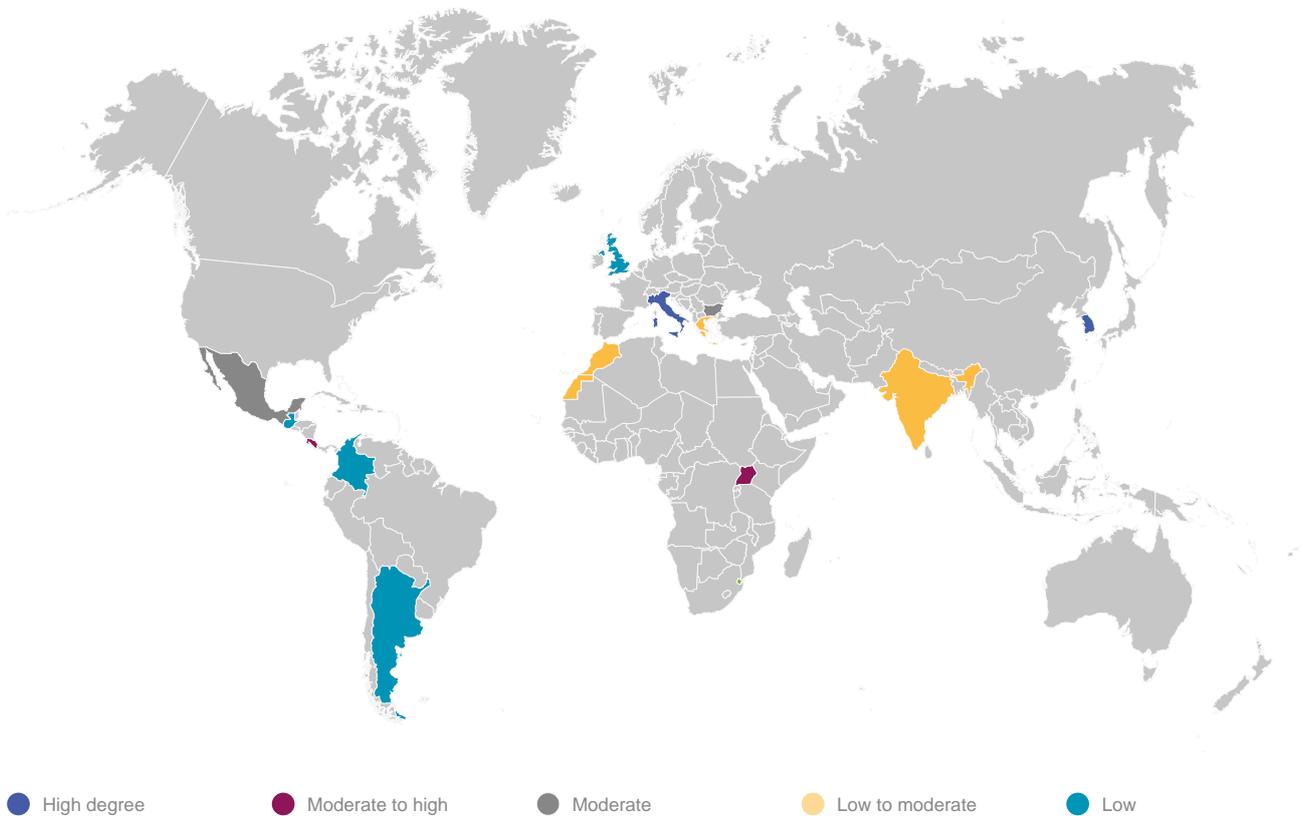
¹³⁸ Countries with such regulation include Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Uruguay.

¹³⁹ The results of the legal framework analysis research can be viewed at <https://coops4dev.coop/en/world>

At the same time, young people surveyed outside the cooperative sector point to a lower tax burden on the cooperative model of enterprise as one of the reasons to start a project as a cooperative. The table below displays the degree of cooperative friendliness for half of the countries surveyed, where the LFA research has already been completed. Interestingly, there is a small but general degree of convergence with the graph presented above, with the notable exceptions of Uganda, Greece and Morocco.

It is therefore evident that the specific enabling environment for cooperatives can have a huge impact on the success of cooperative entrepreneurs and the general growth of the movement, and efforts must therefore be made to work towards an improved enabling environment for cooperative enterprises.

Cooperative friendliness of the legal frameworks in countries surveyed



Graphic 5.4: Cooperative friendliness of the legal frameworks in countries surveyed

Cooperatives and digitalisation

A further solution discussed by young people concerns digitalisation. Increasing digitalisation in the world of work will have significant impacts, including more teleworking, more independent work, changes to rural and urban divides, sub-contracting and greater isolation for workers.¹⁴⁰ Changes in the technological landscape are happening at an accelerated pace, with the recent COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating these existing trends and acting as a catalyst for a new era in the world of work.

With regard to digitalisation, young people surveyed noted that:

- cooperatives need to adapt to new digital realities and harness the benefits of digital tools
- digital education and training are necessary for members
- cooperatives should work towards addressing the digital divide to reduce existing inequalities
- youth interests should be targeted in particular, as young people bring a natural understanding of the digital landscape to their enterprise

Building on these points, new inequalities emerge through what is termed 'the digital divide'. Not all individuals or cooperatives across countries have the same resources at their disposal. Many are still without access to internet. The 'platform economy' or 'platform capitalism' is continuing to reproduce existing inequalities and extracting value from individuals who work to support it, often through the externalisation of labour.¹⁴¹ Support for cooperatives is needed, either through information or financing for setting up digital processes, for generally shifting work towards an online environment, or for providing services and products online.

Cooperatives may also find that digitalisation will pay dividends in key areas and it remains one of the most exciting areas for change within the cooperative movement. The most notable examples are platform cooperatives, such as online commerce, taxi or delivery cooperatives, photography and web development cooperatives, who seek to democratise the online space and reach a previously scattered community of people. On the other hand, consumer cooperatives witness the emerging importance of blockchain technology for their supply chains or database activities.¹⁴²

“ Cooperatives must be updated, evolve in their approach and give young people the opportunity to flourish. The world is changing, the world is being digitised. Cooperatives must adapt. ”

Young cooperator, Indonesia

cooperatives seek to democratise the online space

Such technology could have radical implications for how cooperative enterprises organise in the future, as well as for action on sustainable development and transparency of the value chain. For platforms, many smaller cooperatives who work in the digital sphere seek to promote data autonomy and protect members from the excesses of the existing platform economy.¹⁴³

Many young people noted that not only can youth provide knowledge and natural skill to navigate the digital sphere, but also that digital tools can be harnessed for cooperation. As one respondent outside of the cooperative movement noted:

“ The spirit and culture of cooperation (gotong royong) in Indonesia today can be harnessed to cooperate through a variety of digital platforms such as social crowdfunding, social enterprise, and varieties of p2p platforms that can support the sharing economy. ”

Young respondent, Indonesia

¹⁴⁰ Eurofound and the International Labour Office (2017), Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, and the International Labour Office, Geneva.

¹⁴¹ Hauben (ed.), H., Lenaerts, K. and Waeyaert, W., The platform economy and precarious work, Publication for the committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life

Policies, European Parliament, Luxembourg, 2020.

¹⁴² Harvey, R. 'Could blockchain technology put co-ops at the front of the digital revolution?' Coop News, 1 November 2016

¹⁴³ A good example is a Danish youth cooperative working towards data privacy is named Velkommen til data.coop <https://data.coop/>

Actions by cooperative organisations

A third area to support young entrepreneurs focuses on actions by cooperatives and cooperative representative organisations. The ICA, with the support of its Regions and Sectoral Organisations, has intensively promoted the cooperative model as the form of entrepreneurship that ensures a sustainable environment for future generations at the economic, social and environmental levels. More recently, these efforts have been enhanced by the ICA-EU Partnership with the creation of the Global Cooperative Entrepreneurs programme (GCE).¹⁴⁴

The GCE is an experimental mentoring programme aiming at providing support to youth ambassadors interested in setting up a cooperative. The programme builds on a 3-step methodology of mobilising youth to collectively meet community needs by setting up cooperatives.¹⁴⁵ Framed within the ICA-EU Partnership, GCE is inspired by Cooperatives Europe's CoopStarter 2.0 Erasmus+ funded project. The GCE programme is being implemented in 8 countries worldwide, in Colombia, India, Indonesia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Poland and Sweden. By wor-

king with mentors from both cooperative and youth organisations, the programme aims to strengthen these types of partnerships and stimulate youth cooperative entrepreneurship at the national, regional, and global levels.

Likewise, under the ICA-EU Partnership, the first edition of the Global Youth Forum: Cooperative Entrepreneurship 2020 (GYF20) took place, being the ideal setting for young GCE ambassadors to learn how to set up a cooperative through participation in interactive training sessions given by instructors from around the world. In addition, this event offered participants the chance to talk with young GCE ambassadors from other regions of the world, and with other participants of the forum who shared a clear interest in the cooperative model as a form of business to face current challenges.¹⁴⁶

The next section presents other ongoing examples of cooperative entrepreneurship highlighted within the survey results.



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¹⁴⁴ ICA Newsroom, December 2019, Regional trainings of Youth Ambassadors to promote cooperative entrepreneurship, Available at <https://www.ica.coop/en/newsroom/news/regional-trainings-youth-ambassadors-promote-cooperative-entrepreneurship> Accessed 13 July 2020.

¹⁴⁵ For more information on the GCE programme see <https://edu4all.coop/gce/> and <https://coopseurope.coop/resources/news/global-cooperative-entrepre->

[neurs-become-youth-ambassador](#)

¹⁴⁶ ICA Newsroom, February 2020 'The global GCE community closes ties and meets at the GYF20' Available at <https://www.ica.coop/en/newsroom/news/global-gce-community-closes-ties-and-meets-gyf20> Accessed 13 July 2020

Case studies: entrepreneurship

Although Uruguay is not a country covered in this study, a young cooperative member from Argentina, highlighted a case study of an initiative known as Incubacoop (Cooperative Incubator) in Uruguay as something that ought to be set up in other countries. The respondent was a member of a cooperative that had been set up under this initiative.

Incubacoop was designed to encourage the creation of new cooperatives in strategic fields, and new initiatives in areas that are focused on innovation and knowledge. It seeks to promote the development of Uruguayan cooperatives in sectors that they have not traditionally engaged in before.¹⁴⁷

Name	Incubacoop
Organisations	Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM), the National Institute of Cooperatives (INACOOOP), Uruguayan Confederation of Cooperative Entities (CUDECOOP)
Location	Americas, Uruguay
Sector	Entrepreneurship

Incubacoop was started because Uruguay identified that the cooperative sector was lagging behind in terms of innovations in tools and incentives to create a culture of cooperative start-ups in a variety of sectors. That is why the authorities of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM), the National Institute of Cooperatives (INACOOOP) together with the Uruguayan Confederation of Cooperative Entities (CUDECOOP) began a process of design and implementation of these types of initiatives for mapping and incubating cooperative enterprises.

Incubacoop takes into account that supporting business ideas to become viable cooperatives requires a significant effort and resources. Therefore, the initiatives selected by Incubacoop are chosen based on various characteristics, prioritising proposals that are based in growth sectors, such as software design, information and communication technologies, digital design, audiovisuals,

biotechnology, tourism, transportation and logistics, construction, renewable energies, health and education.

Incubacoop's activities are essentially based on 4 stages:

1. Sensitisation: Evaluation of the group's potential as a future cooperative.
2. Pre-incubation: Identification and evaluation of ideas and definition of the project profile.
3. Incubation: Project development and implementation.
4. De-incubation: Consolidation of the project in time.

In 2019 Incubacoop successfully supported 6 cooperative entrepreneurship ideas in their process of establishing themselves as cooperative companies.

147 See Incubacoop website at <https://www.incubacoop.org.uy/incubacoop/>

Name	Youth Co-operative Action
Organisations	Co-operative College, UK
Location	Europe, United Kingdom
Sector	Cooperative Entrepreneurship/social action

Links to SDGs



The Youth Co-operative Action (YCA) programme started in 2018 bringing social action and cooperation together to tackle the experiences of loneliness of young care leavers and those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) across the UK.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to loneliness during the transition to independent adulthood. As such, the programme was designed to up-skill young people, enabling them to play a continuing positive impact in their community. Furthermore, the young people's social action focuses not just on combating their own loneliness, or future loneliness, but actively addresses the loneliness of their peers and those in their community.

Through adaptively teaching the co-operative principles of self-help, self-responsibility, equality, equity and solidarity this project engages and empowers young people to tackle problems they identify by forming a "social action co-operative".

Young people also examine their experiences of loneliness through "community reporting", visiting co-operatives and social action projects, in turn learning about co-operatives and developing new skills. Once problems had been identified they used their new skills to take collective action.

The YCA programme is guided by, and has integrated, the key principles of youth social action:

Youth-led – Young people collectively decide upon their social action, it is entirely group led. For example, through the development of an on-line youth series, the young people develop sessions of interest to them and deliver them when they feel confident.

Socially impactful – The young people learn about social issues and are introduced to a range of community organisations and individuals to inform them of the needs in society. The young people then reflect upon this and developing social action as a means to address some of these issues.

Challenging – The YCA programme ensures that the themes challenge young people's thinking and ensure they are challenged when developing sessions, discussing a range of topics and when conducting their social action.

Progression – YCA introduces young people to speakers who provide a range of progression routes or support services to assist them. YCA has an activity bank for each location which the young people are provided with and they are offered membership to the Co-operative College to participate in further activities and join our youth steering group.

Reflective – Each YCA session allows for reflection, the young people create reflection postcards and activities to allow for reflection throughout. They also reflect using the evaluation tools which are embedded into the project.

Embedded – YCA develops the skills, knowledge, connections and behaviours which are embedded within them to make change as they go forward into their adult lives.



Credit: Incubacoop



Credit: The Co-operative College

Conclusion: entrepreneurship

At a global level, both young people who are part of the cooperative movement and those outside of it agree that the cooperative model is one of the best options for engaging in entrepreneurship. It offers a unique combination of cooperative values and principles and social impact, to bring to life an innovative idea that can incorporate democracy and member ownership, whilst lowering levels of individual risk. However, one major issue that remains is how to encourage more youth cooperative entrepreneurship. Many young people consider entrepreneurship, but not all are aware of or familiar with cooperatives, or with how to start a cooperative enterprise.

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Cooperatives are not yet considered a main entrepreneurship route, but more work is needed to ensure that the potential benefits are communicated in educational institutes and career services. For successful and effective youth entrepreneurship, an enabling environment is key. Respondents called for adequate legal frameworks that provide the right conditions for cooperative start-ups. A significant number of young people surveyed suggest that there should be adequate government support for such an environment, as well as support from universities, private companies and international organisations to develop their innovative ideas. In many countries surveyed, young people believe that the current environments do not favour the creation of new enterprises, and a number of practical challenges remain.

Embracing technological tools and methods, both for more effective governance and communications, will also be critical. Work should also take place to ensure that cooperative approaches are developed for new and emerging fields of activity, including platforms, and that the cooperative model can remain at the forefront of these new fields.

Overall, the main concluding highlights from the chapter are the following:

- for many young people surveyed, a core attraction of the cooperative model comes from the combined elements of strong business guided by values and principles and social impact
- young people surveyed consider cooperatives as a viable potential model for youth entrepreneurship, but it is not their primary option
- cooperatives must promote the cooperative model more intensively and make it attractive to youth, with a specific focus on cooperative entrepreneurship
- governments and public institutions need to take action to facilitate the creation of new enterprises, with a specific focus on cooperative enterprises and sustainable development
- for successful and effective youth entrepreneurship, an enabling environment is key. Youth call for adequate legal frameworks that provide the right conditions for cooperative start-ups
- education on cooperative entrepreneurship should be improved. Cooperatives can be a benefit to youth in terms of education and skills training, that might allow them to access better quality jobs
- digitalisation will be crucial for cooperatives to remain innovative and relevant to young people in the future
- cooperatives sit at the intersection of entrepreneurship and sustainable development, making them an ideal business model for the pursuit of meaningful social and economic activities, which is a key motivator for young people

digitalisation will be crucial for cooperatives to remain innovative and relevant to young people in the future



CONCLUSIONS

This report aims to provide clear insights on the key challenges faced by young people, from the perspective of young people themselves. In addition, it focuses on if and how cooperatives can help to solve these challenges. The research therefore aims to determine the ways in which the cooperative movement can better support and engage with young people. The aim of this section is to provide key conclusions and recommendations that can feed into global policy, advocacy and operational activities of the ICA and the global cooperative movement.

Employment

The challenge of work, in particular the availability of decent work that is humane, secure, meaningful, devoid of exploitation, and respects our planet and communities, is paramount. In this category, the main takeaways include:

- over **60%** of all young people surveyed noted that employment is the biggest challenge
- even when work can be found, much can be done to improve the existing working conditions of young people
- cooperatives, where they implement decent and democratic work practices, are one main way to achieve this, but they are not doing enough in their current form

These sentiments are echoed by the young people who attended the 2020 Global Youth Forum on Cooperative Entrepreneurship, who stated that an important objective is the 'promotion of economic models that aim to end precarity and enable fair remuneration and decent work which conform with democratic processes'.¹⁴⁸

Thinking about a redefinition of work will require thinking about new ways of conceptualising the relationship between capital and labour, as well as that between the employer and the employee. There is also a distinction to be made between the informal economy, which makes up a significant part of employment in a number of countries featured in this study, and the formal (but often precarious) economy that is more common in other countries in the study.¹⁴⁹ These two fields, with different yet interlinked sets of problems, require different solutions.

In the **informal economy**:

- cooperatives can bring much-needed forms of organising for disenfranchised workers to come together around their collective challenges
- cooperatives can provide a support system where social protections are weak or even non-existent
- cooperatives can provide workers with different forms of shared ownership and collective bargaining
- cooperatives offer the possibility to develop new forms of skills as well as new and innovative enterprise activities that respect the environment and the communities in which cooperatives are situated
- the formation of cooperatives in these conditions also has several challenges that should be addressed. Gaining the wide range of skills that are required for self-organisation, as well as nurturing a democratic and cooperative culture, or accountancy and marketing skills, can be challenging in an existing context of precarity¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Youth Agenda for Advocacy, Global Youth Forum on Cooperative Entrepreneurship, Kuching February 2020.

¹⁴⁹ An informal economy is the part of any economy that is neither regulated nor monitored by any form of government. It stands in contrast to the formal economy, regulated and taxed by government. The concept applied initially to self-employment in small unregistered enterprises, however it has been

expanded to include wage employment in unprotected jobs. See <https://www.wiego.org/informal-economy>

¹⁵⁰ Precarity is a sociological term referring to the spread of contingent work and insecure employment within the labour market. The term is also used to refer to the subjective condition of those who experience insecure work.

In the **formal economy**, where the relationship between employers and labour is regulated and entrenched, a different set of solutions are required to help young people:

- work needs to be fairly remunerated and working for no or inadequate pay should be addressed through enforceable legal protections for young people in the workplace
- early retirement and knowledge transfer between generations can be contemplated as a way to get more young people into work
- a reduction in working time, which may improve productivity in cooperatives and in other enterprises, as well as work sharing and rotation, equal pay, and sociocratic approaches to decision making, are also relevant policy proposals
- a wider cooperative economy can be combined with the implementation of ideas such as universal basic services and guaranteed minimum income to support workers
- where possible, young people should also consider joining and becoming active in trade unions and labour organisations that can protect and defend their in-work rights

These proposals could ensure that young people are supported, resilient to crisis, and able to make a meaningful contribution to our societies and economies. It is important to remember that, as the Rochdale Pioneers came together to challenge the exploitative conditions that were imposed upon them through industrialisation, the work benefits enjoyed today have been gained through collective organising, cooperation and solidarity between workers and across different groups within society. Young people in cooperation are a source of leadership for the ongoing challenges around the future of work.

Education

Two central conclusions in the context of education are to be reiterated. Both conclusions show that education is, following employment, a significant challenge that is central to young people's responses throughout this study.

- improving the knowledge about cooperatives would be a huge source of added value for both young people and the cooperative movement
- young people are striving to reimagine educational systems, and view educational actors as the most relevant actors to solve their challenges

In regard to the latter, a number of important points are of note:

- access to adequate, affordable, useful and inclusive education is highlighted as the most pressing educational challenge for young people today, behind employment related challenges
- where education is not affordable, the de-commodification of learning is urgently required, ensuring access to free education
- reforming education systems towards more inclusive, democratic and interactive models is needed
- reform requires work on setting up communities of practice, investments in both formal and informal local education channels and cooperative schools, and the development of actual cooperative praxis, all of which can contribute to furthering a common cooperative identity

future knowledge production should be undertaken in an inclusive, accessible and democratic manner, sensitive and responsive to inequities of gender, race and class

Young people also note that:

- affordable and accessible education should continue to be available throughout their lives
- they require both life skill development and a lifelong learning framework that can guarantee the sustainable transfer of knowledge. The storage and distribution, as well as how that knowledge is produced, is also important
- future knowledge production should be undertaken in an inclusive, accessible and democratic manner, sensitive and responsive to inequities of gender, race and class
- digital cooperative platforms for education is one solution proposed, as young people cite the role of technology as a factor that is very important to them

Within the educational field:

- cooperative schools and colleges need strengthening, to take cooperation beyond what has been termed an 'exotic' field of study¹⁵¹
- young people demonstrate exceptional willingness and desire to learn new skills, but further education on the cooperative movement and its history is also very relevant

- work should be undertaken to further define what a coherent field of 'cooperative studies' would look like, with a diversified curriculum including relevant and up to date material
- young people should be actively involved in the design, implementation and dissemination of skills development programmes and cooperative training, to ensure that education is relevant, inclusive and geared towards youth needs
- finding new examples of cooperation that inspire and speak clearly to young people, that are applicable to their daily challenges, will be of benefit in improving youth engagement
- the movement urgently needs to remedy the lack of knowledge that a majority of young people currently have on the cooperative model
- knowledge is linked to image and communications, and how cooperatives communicate, which can be tackled through effective youth engagement
- the cooperative model should aim to be present in all educational institution curricula at all levels
- the diversification of business and economics courses in these institutions is critical, to counter the over reliance on neo-classical economic education
- multi-stakeholder partnerships and cooperation between ICA and international institutions including the ILO, UNDESA, UNESCO, among others, universities and educational institutes, as well as government, is required to make this a reality
- the ICA can consider the creation of a cooperative committee on education, with transversal youth representation through regional youth committees, to develop and contribute to the various cooperative education activities described above

¹⁵¹ Munkner, H. (2020) 'Legal Framework Analysis National Report: Germany', Cooperatives Europe, ICA-EU Partnership

Inequalities

This research has demonstrated that whilst there are many ways in which cooperatives have the theoretical capacity to help younger people overcome inequalities, there are still many obstacles that need to be confronted to ensure this theory is translated into practice, where ongoing obstacles are having a detrimental impact on young people's inclusion in cooperatives and in wider society.

True equality between citizens has to emerge as a joint result of institutions, combined with a collective effort and awareness that equality is in our common interest. It will also emerge from new understandings of the inequalities and class divides present in our society, focused on ownership models and wealth, which are updated and applicable to modern times. Many of these new inequalities have strong links to the topics of employment and education.

a lack of good intergenerational working made young people feel it is difficult for them to gain access to governance and decision-making

Cooperatives can play a role in reducing inequalities that continue to persist, but it is important to question if they are doing enough. Within cooperatives and cooperative culture and structures, there remains much to be done. Main reflections from this topic include:

- respondents reflected that there is a lack of genuine will on the part of existing cooperatives to mainstream younger people into their structures
- cooperatives mainly focusing on one-off activities rather than longer term strategic capacity building and leadership development of young people
- a lack of good intergenerational working made young people feel it is difficult for them to gain access to governance and decision-making, also citing financial barriers and out-dated inflexible ways of working that stifle innovation and technological development
- there is a significant gap between the potential benefits of the cooperative model and the current reality found in youth governance structures
- reported levels of participation and integration are higher in regions where more cooperators belong to youth networks. This suggests that the creation of youth networks where they do not already exist may improve levels of youth participation and integration
- if youth networks are the cooperatives' sole concession to 'doing youth' and not fully integrated into the cooperatives' governance structures, then this does little to facilitate inclusivity

This research showed that in order to tackle inequalities, there needs to be genuine commitment to including young people's ideas both at operational and strategic level. This can avoid the sentiment that cooperatives are merely 'helping' young people whilst not allowing them to fully participate or influence decision-making. Creating youth networks that give young people a sense of ownership of their cooperative is important to give them the opportunity to feel fully invested in and contributing to its success, as well as providing important innovations, youthful energy and a pool of experienced and committed future leaders.

Engagement



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Following integration of young people into cooperative structures, effective engagement and participation are some of the most important topics for young people in cooperatives. Further, how cooperatives and young people are active towards the citizens and institutions around them, how they cooperate and participate with other actors, is also highly relevant. Building on the ideas of young people who aim to build new linkages with social and environmental movements and for the inclusion of cooperatives in political spaces and decision-making structures,¹⁵² cooperatives should actively seek to engage in the community around them, linked to ICA's Principle 7 of concern for community.

With regard to partnerships with international organisations, such as the UN, national governments or cooperative development ministries, a better level of engagement and proactive dialogue to achieve this is needed. External actors can also better support cooperatives through the provision of technical and financial support. These partnerships can not only support the cooperative movement's ability to offer solutions to young people, but also can facilitate synergies with external organisations focused on or led by youth.

¹⁵² Youth Agenda for Advocacy, Global Youth Forum on Cooperative Entrepreneurship, Kuching February 2020.

The research has demonstrated that the following four areas are all preventing young people from being more engaged and active in cooperatives. They include:

- low knowledge of cooperatives
- poor integration into the cooperative movement
- a lack of capacity
- limited opportunities in cooperatives

Each of these problems have different solutions explored below:

- a lack of knowledge must partly be countered through effective messaging, where cooperatives should therefore also seek to outwardly communicate on cooperative values and principles and start conversations with others
- the role of both conventional technological routes of engagement and on the ground outreach, when the relevant social media platforms are used and the right messages are delivered, could bring improvements, both to knowledge and the capacity to engage with young people in the most effective ways
- motivations for joining a cooperative are multiple, with responses showing that many young people view cooperatives as an alternative to conventional models of organisation
- young people are motivated by the cooperative way of working, the benefits it brings, as well as an opportunity for youth to have social purpose and impact
- cooperatives need to act to build alliances with other social and political movements that resonate and are aligned with the values of cooperatives, and all that they stand for. Similarly, cooperatives can provide activities or training linked to civil society, or collaborate with actors already engaging on issues of social and political solidarity
- those engaged in cooperatives at the local level can join other local platforms, coalitions or campaigns in which cooperative values of education and a more sustainable economy can be voiced, in collaboration with civil society groups
- within cooperatives, culture can be as important as structure in striving for better youth engagement and that an inclusive structure, without the culture, can be less effective in engaging youth



However, not all cooperatives are transformative, and this research has shown that many continue to function in ways that are not aligned with social progress and sustainability. Young people surveyed within this study clearly seek transformative change and search for meaningful opportunities to be involved. A strong democratic and inclusive structure, paired with a strong culture of cooperation, is certainly something cooperatives should strive towards. Working to build cooperative culture can ensure that cooperatives become more aligned with youth expectations and their drive for transformative action.

Entrepreneurship



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cooperatives are not yet considered a main entrepreneurship route, but more work is needed to ensure that the potential benefits are communicated

Youth entrepreneurship can be a powerful force for change. The research has shown that this is definitely one route for young people through the use of the cooperative model. It offers a way to pursue new and existing enterprise ideas that incorporate democracy and member ownership, whilst lowering levels of individual risk. A major issue that remains is how to encourage more youth cooperative entrepreneurship. A number of reflections are worthy of note:

- many young people consider entrepreneurship, but not all are aware or familiar with cooperatives, or with how to start a cooperative enterprise
- young people seek opportunities for cooperative entrepreneurship when they have real potential to become both economically viable and independent enterprises
- cooperatives are not yet considered a main entrepreneurship route, but more work is needed to ensure that the potential benefits are communicated in educational institutes and career services, including new research on cooperative entrepreneurship
- for successful and effective youth entrepreneurship, an enabling environment is key. Both respondents of the research and participants of the GYF 2020 called for adequate legal frameworks that provide the right conditions for cooperative start-ups
- a significant number of respondents cite that there should be adequate government support for the enterprise environment, as well as support from universities, private companies and international organisations to develop innovative ideas
- young people believe that the current enterprise environment does not favour the creation of new enterprises, including cooperatives, and that access to capital is the most significant related challenge
- cooperatives should embrace technological tools and methods, both for more effective governance and communications, where possible, to tackle the digital divide
- work should also take place to ensure that cooperative approaches are developed for new and emerging fields of activity, including platforms, and that the cooperative model can remain at the forefront of these new fields

Recommendations

Each of the five thematic chapters highlight interrelated points for different stakeholders. The recommendations below, elaborated by the team carrying out this research and supported by the ICA Youth Network, are directed towards cooperatives and cooperative leaders, their representative organisations and young cooperators and young people, who are the primary focus of this research. Other key external stakeholders, such as governments, international ins-

titutions, CSOs, educational institutes, private sector actors, will all have an important role to play in setting the right conditions to properly support young people. They are therefore most effectively implemented when all partners can take them into account.

1

IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE

Support education and knowledge building on cooperatives

The successful formation and adequate management of cooperatives by young people requires education and training on cooperatives and their values and principles. Cooperative education should be an indispensable part of young people's educative experience, because improved education leads to better action. Young people are more likely to become engaged and involved with the cooperative movement if they have knowledge of cooperatives.

For this reason, education on cooperatives should start from childhood, and be part of lifelong learning. In wider society, the cooperative movement should work in partnership with young people and external actors towards the inclusion of cooperatives in the curricula at all ages and at all levels. Knowledge should be produced in a democratic and inclusive manner and made accessible to all.

2

BOOST IMAGE

Communicate the benefits of cooperatives more effectively

To encourage more young people, the benefits of cooperatives need to be better communicated using accessible and engaging language, with youth-focused messaging that reflects young people's interests and priorities in a way that makes them relevant and appealing. Technology should be utilised, acknowledging and

addressing the digital divide, with cooperatives using the methods most likely to reach out to youth effectively in their different contexts. Cooperatives should also be engaged with the wider society and communities, opening dialogue on the benefits of cooperation.

3

DEVELOP STRUCTURE

Build genuine youth orientated cooperative structures

Cooperative managers should be aware and proactive towards youth participation and inclusion. Cooperatives and their representative organisations need a strong democratic and inclusive structure, which can be achieved by closing the gap between equality and the current reality in youth governance structures.

This means a genuine commitment to including young people's ideas both at operational and strategic level. Young people should have ample opportunities to work, learn and gain skills in cooperative workplaces. Where they do not already exist, youth networks and junior departments should be established.

4

BUILD CULTURE

Nurture a real culture of cooperation

The building of strong cooperative structures must be paired with a strong culture of cooperation, linked to a commitment to the cooperative values, including equity and solidarity, and the cooperative principles. A cooperative culture can be further fostered through genuine democratic and bottom up decision making, by introducing managerial transparency and proactive communication.

Cooperatives can also be social spaces and places for recreation, with events and consultations providing opportunities to discuss ideas. Young people care deeply about making a positive change in society and multiple values (social, economic, political, environmental) are strongly valued. This positivity should be recognised and put to work through cooperation.

5

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

Work constructively with other organisations to achieve common objectives

In the fields of employment, education and entrepreneurship, cooperatives will need to build strong relationships with relevant actors, including social and environmental movements, in order to make progress in these areas and create the effective conditions for youth to succeed. Partnerships with external actors including international

institutions and organisations, CSOs, and local authorities can be a relevant source of technical and financial support for capacity building, as well as providing further opportunities that young people can benefit from. Action should be localised wherever it is possible.

6

PROMOTE DECENT WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Move towards progressive visions for youth employment

Cooperatives can provide a potential solution to the problems of youth employment, providing an enterprise form and support system for disenfranchised workers to come together over collective challenges. Cooperatives and cooperative representative organisations should work to support and promote youth cooperatives and youth inclusion into cooperatives, providing the necessary technical and organisational support, in line with the principle of coope-

ration among cooperatives. Work for young people must be fairly remunerated and working for no or inadequate pay should be addressed through enforceable legal protections for young people in the workplace. The introduction of other policy proposals that move towards a future of decent work, such as a reduction in working time and universal basic income, should be considered and put into a formal policy framework.

7

ADVANCE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Work to create an enabling environment for cooperatives and youth cooperative entrepreneurship

Youth cooperative entrepreneurship needs a specific enabling environment that supports cooperative development. This enabling environment stems from supportive legal frameworks, which should be developed and implemented effectively in accordance with cooperative values and principles and through consultation with cooperative movements and youth cooperative movements. More advocacy is needed to ensure that cooperatives can become a main entrepreneurship route, with the potential

benefits clearly communicated in educational institutions and careers services. New partnerships should be fostered in the field of youth entrepreneurship with external actors. Technology and digitalisation, including platforms, should be a central part of the solution, with further work conducted on platform cooperatives and technological approaches to cooperation. Necessary steps should be taken to ensure that young people have access to capital for innovative cooperative entrepreneurship ideas.

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Annex

#COOPS4DEV YOUTH SURVEY – STAKEHOLDERS OUTSIDE THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

DESCRIPTION:

Thank you in advance for your interest in the global thematic research on Youth. This initiative was produced within the partnership for international development signed between the European Commission and the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), which aims to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to promote international development.

This study investigates how cooperatives can benefit young people, and seeks to highlight ways to enhance the inclusion, opportunities and empowerment offered by cooperatives to young people – especially by considering and amplifying the views of youth on this topic. It also addresses issues that are relevant for youth both inside and outside the cooperative movement, with results seeking to outline good practices and solutions to empower youth worldwide.

The research is in line with particular projects and activities carried out by ICA members, and it also fits within the EU's strategic priorities and the Agenda 2030, in particular under SDGs 4 & 8, which outline commitments on quality education and decent work for young people.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. We truly value the information you have provided; your responses ensure the continued strength of the cooperative movement and contribute to youth empowerment worldwide.

DATA PROTECTION

We take data protection and confidentiality issues very seriously. Data and individual contact information that you supply to us in this survey will be used for the stated research purposes and may be used to contact you for to deliver our newsletters, important press releases, invitations to events, information and networking within the co-operative movement. We will not sell your information. We will not share your personal information with anyone outside of the International Co-operative Alliance structures and partners. By completing the survey, you understand and accept the data protection policy of the International Co-operative Alliance and consent to your information being used as per the policy. For further information on how your information is used, how we maintain the security of your information, and your rights, please visit <https://www.ica.coop/en/privacy-cookies> or email dataprotection@ica.coop.

Q1. Person who is filling in the questionnaire:

Name (optional):

Gender (Female, Male, prefer not to say, Other):

Age*:

Email / Contact email of the organisation
(if applicable) *:

Phone number (please include prefix/country code):

Occupation:

Country*:

Q2. In your opinion, what are the key challenges and needs faced by youth in your country?

Q3. What solutions would you suggest in order to help young people overcome and meet the challenges and needs mentioned?

Q4. Which actors do you think would be the most relevant to address the challenges and needs mentioned above?

From the following list, please choose the options that you consider most relevant and rate them by order of importance, with 1 as the most important to you and 4 as the least important to you

1. Educational actors: universities, research institutes,
2. Private sector: cooperatives, "conventional" businesses....
3. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Trade Unions, Non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations...
4. Media: social media channels, tv and radio, newspapers, magazines
5. Political bodies: ministries, regional and local authorities, state departments
6. International institutions: United Nations, European Union, World Trade Organizations, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
7. Administrative structures: regulatory agencies,
8. Others: _____

Q5. Do you have any knowledge regarding the cooperative business model?

1. Not at all
2. Very little
3. Well/rather well
4. To a great extent

Q6. How did you learn about it? (Only if Q5= 2, 3 or 4)

Q7. To the best of your knowledge, do you think the cooperative model can help youth to overcome and meet the challenges and needs you mentioned in Q2? (Only if Q5= 2, 3 and 4)

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q8. Why do you think the cooperative model cannot/only moderately/can help youth to overcome and meet the challenges and needs mentioned? (Cannot Only if Q7=1 and 2; Only moderately only if Q7=3; Can only if Q7=4 and 5)

Q9. Do you have any suggestions of how cooperatives can engage more with young people's challenges and issues? (Only if Q7= 1 and 2 and 3)

Q10. Could you please mention some key elements and success factors that make the cooperative model being active elements in tackling young people's challenges and issues? (Only if Q7= 4 and 5)

Q11. Do you know any concrete cases of good practices of cooperatives supporting youth in your country?

1. Yes
Description: country, organisation, details on the initiative, achievements, etc

Attach documents
Links

2. No

Q12. What successful elements from the case/s you mentioned would you consider as useful sources of inspiration for cooperatives to support youth at a national and/or international level? (Only if Q11= 1)

Q13. Would you like to know more about the cooperative model? (Only if Q5= 1 and 2)

1. Yes
2. No

Q14. How would you best like to engage with cooperatives? Please specify. (Only if Q13=1)

Q15. Which channels would you suggest being used in order to engage with the youth?

1. Social media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube
2. Online tools: Websites, Apps, online newsletters, webinars
3. Written materials: Reports, papers
4. Advocacy campaigns
5. Conferences and events (including festival, contests, etc.)
6. "Traditional" media: Radio, TV micro-programmes, etc.
7. Others: _____

Q16. In your opinion, what are the opportunities/benefits brought by youth at the social, economic and/or political level in your country (for instance their contribution to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, etc.)?

Q17. Would these opportunities/benefits help key social, economic and political actors to improve their performances and strengths?

1. Yes
2. No

Q18. Could you please let us know how the benefits brought by youth can help key social, economic and political actors to improve their performances and strengths? (Only if Q17= 1)

Q19. If you have any further comments, please provide them in the box below:

Q20. Before finishing this questionnaire, please find some information that may help you to know more about the cooperative business model below: **(Only if Q13=1 and 2)**

#COOPS4DEV YOUTH SURVEY – STAKEHOLDERS OUTSIDE THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Q1. Person who is filling in the questionnaire:

Name (optional):

Gender (Female, Male, prefer not to say, Other):

Age*:

Email / Contact email of the organisation
(if applicable) *:

Phone number (please include prefix/country code):

Occupation:

Country*:

Q2. In your opinion, what are the key challenges and needs faced by youth in your country?

Q3. What solutions would you suggest in order to help young people overcome and meet the challenges and needs mentioned?

Q4. Which actors do you think would be the most relevant to address the challenges and needs mentioned above?

From the following list, please choose the options that you consider most relevant and rate them by order of importance, with 1 as the most important to you and 4 as the least important to you

1. Educational actors: universities, research institutes,
2. Private sector: cooperatives, “conventional” businesses....
3. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Trade Unions, Non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations...
4. Media: social media channels, tv and radio, newspapers, magazines
5. Political bodies: ministries, regional and local authorities, state departments
6. International institutions: United Nations, European Union, World Trade Organizations, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
7. Administrative structures: regulatory agencies,
8. Others: _____

Q5. Do you think the cooperative model can help youth to overcome and meet the challenges and needs mentioned?

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q6. Why do you think the cooperative model cannot/ only moderately/can help youth to overcome and meet the challenges and needs mentioned? (Cannot Only if Q5=1 and 2; Only moderately only if Q5=3; Can only if Q5=4 and 5)

Q7. Do you have any suggestions of how cooperatives can engage more with young people’s challenges and issues? (Only if Q5= 1 and 2 and 3)

Q8. Could you please mention some key elements and success factors that, according to your experience, make the cooperative model being successful in tackling young people’s challenges and issues? (Only if Q5= 4 and 5)

Q9. Do you think cooperatives have the disposition to engage young people into their structure?

- 1. Rather yes
- 2. Rather no

Q10. Why do you think cooperatives lack the disposition to engage young people into their structure? (Only if Q9=2)

Q11. Do cooperatives have the capacity and the will to help youth overcome their challenges?

- 1. Rather yes
- 2. Rather no

Q12. Could you please mention a few elements that cooperatives are missing in order to have the capacity to help youth? (Only if Q11=2)

Q13. Could you please mention a few strong assets that give cooperatives the capacity to help youth? (Only if Q11= 1)

Q14. Do you think the participation and integration of young people is well promoted among cooperatives?

- 1. Rather yes
- 2. Rather no

Q15. Could you please name a few elements that cooperatives can use to promote the participation and integration of youth (in their own structures and/or in society in general)? (Only if Q14=1)

Q16. Could you please let us know why in your opinion cooperatives are rather not, or insufficiently, fostering the participation and integration of young people? (Only if Q14=2)

Q17. What are for you the most influencing factors/reasons for young people to join a cooperative?

Q18. In your opinion, what are the opportunities/benefits brought by youth to your country?

Q19. In your opinion, what are the opportunities/benefits brought by youth in cooperatives?

PART 2: INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION/COOPERATIVE

Q20. Does your cooperative have a youth network?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q21. Could you please give us more details about the structure of your youth network? (If Q20=1)

Q22. Does your cooperative have another internal structure to engage with young people? (If Q20=2)

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q23. Could you please present the key elements of that structure, and success factors and challenges in ensuring its effectiveness? (Only if Q22=1)

Q24. Does your coop participate in another civil society network or initiative focused on youth?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q25. Could you please give us more details about the structure and functioning of this youth network? (Only if Q24=1)

Q26. Do you think the cooperative movement in general has effective processes/mechanisms that helps young people to engage with the movement? Please include here any additional comments

- 1. Rather yes
- 2. Rather no

Q27. Could you please give more details regarding the cooperative processes/mechanisms that you mentioned in your previous answer? (Only if Q26 = 1)

Q28. Are you aware of any challenges and needs that the young people involved in the cooperative movement are facing?

- 1. Yes (Please mention them)
- 2. No

Q29. Are you aware of any challenges and needs that the young people members of your organization are facing?

- 1. Yes (Please mention them)
- 2. No

Q30. Is there a special training and/or project for youth managed or supported by your organization?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q31. Could you give us more details regarding the training and/or project that your cooperative is organizing for youth? (Only if Q30=1) For instance: is it organised jointly with other cooperatives? Or in collaboration with non-cooperative actors, e.g. from Civil Society Organisations, Local Authorities, etc.?

Q32. Is your organization involved, or has it been involved, in an international or regional youth meeting/conference?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q33. Could you please let us know which ones and offer us more information related to the meeting/conference? (Only if Q32 is = 1) More details and additional information if applicable - e.g. key elements, objectives of the conference, reasons for participating, learnings, success factors, improvement points...

Q34. If you have any further comments, please provide them in the box below.

This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the International Co-operative Alliance and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 27 European countries. In 1957, the signature of the Treaties of Rome marked the will of the six founding countries to create a common economic space. Since then, first the Community and then the European Union has continued to enlarge and welcome new countries as members. The Union has developed into a huge single market with the euro as its common currency.

What began as a purely economic union has evolved into an organisation spanning all areas, from development aid to environmental policy. Thanks to the abolition of border controls between EU countries, it is now possible for people to travel freely within most of the EU. It has also become much easier to live and work in another EU country.

The five main institutions of the European Union are the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors.

The European Union is a major player in international cooperation and development aid. It is also the world's largest humanitarian aid donor. The primary aim of the EU's own development policy, agreed in November 2000, is the eradication of poverty.

