

CONCEPT NOTE

ICA - Mondiacult2022 Side-Event (Hybrid)

Cooperatives are Key Stakeholders in advancing SDGs through Culture and the Creative Sector

26 September 2022 | 13h00– 17h00 CET | [Registration Link](#)

Hosted simultaneously at KOP, Smart Belgium, Rue Coenraets 72, 1060 Saint-Gilles, Belgium, and the Office of the Cooperatives of the Americas, Casa 85N, ubicada en Vía 104 y calle 72, San José, Costa Rica.

Meeting “cultural needs and aspirations” of members, is a key purpose of cooperatives which are present worldwide in countless communities, diverse backgrounds & geographies. Cooperatives are defined in International Law as associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.¹ The movement includes 1.2 billion members and 3 million enterprises. The *voice and values of cooperatives* must find a presence in the context of UNESCO’s efforts in achieving sustainable development, especially at Mondiacult 2022 – UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, which is being organized after a gap of 25 years. UNESCO’s pursuit of inclusive and multi-stakeholder engagement on sustainable development through various processes such as the Mondiacult conference, can further be strengthened with the introduction and inclusion of our ideas and practices of cooperation, which through *membership* in cooperative enterprises operational in nearly all UN Member States, involve 1/7th of humanity.

Following the recommendations of the 33rd World Cooperative Congress session on Cooperative Culture and Safeguarding Cultural Heritage, ICA in partnership with several cooperative institutions and enterprises will organize a side-event to position cooperatives at Mondiacult as a tangible option and tested instruments which can advance sustainable development of our communities and economies. The side-event will focus on the cooperative enterprise type and its relationship with three inter-linked sub-themes namely, *Safeguarding Cultural Heritage; Organizing workers and professionals in the Creative Sector; Education as the key for a better world.*

The idea and practice of organizing shared interests into cooperatives was successfully inscribed in the Representative List of UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016. This does immeasurably strengthen a movement which is rooted in the early 18th century, and which today contributes significantly to the GDP of many countries and the overall well-being of people and their communities. The 2016 UNESCO inscription of the cooperative idea and practice results inter alia from the landmark achievement of Mondiacult 1982 which reframed the concept of culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group, combining culture encompassed ways of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions, and beliefs. Examples of UNESCO inscriptions of cultural heritage which mention cooperatives include the culture of Jeju Haenyeo, Korea (Rep. of); Ala-Kiyiz and Shyrdak, Kyrgyz Republic; Traditional art of Shital Pati weaving, Bangladesh; Artisanal concerning pinta’o hat, Panama; Argan, practices concerning the argan tree, Morocco; Røros Cooperative Systems, Norway; Robert Owen Collection of 3000 manuscript letters, among others. In addition, cooperatives in some countries are known to safeguarding museums and curating museums to safeguarding cooperative culture, archaeological sites, promote sustainable tourism, ethical journalism, legitimate interests of artists, etc. These countless ideas contribute to advancing sustainable development of

¹ ILO Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation (No. 193) of 2002

communities through, among other things, democratic participation, equity, and education. In terms of the most recent high-level documents related to cooperatives, SSEs and Sustainable Development, the 2021 Report of the UN Secretary General on Cooperatives in Social Development and the 2022 ILO Office Report on Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy, acknowledge the recognition accorded to the cooperative idea as cultural heritage which is protected by the UNESCO 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in protecting cooperatives. Furthermore, the Resolution 75/262 of March 3, 2021 of the UN General Assembly supports the marking of the International Day of Argania and mentions cooperatives therein.

The Decade of Action to deliver the Global Goals started with multiple crises related to global health and international peace & human rights. Stakeholders are looking for resilient responses as well as for long term and internationally sustainable solutions. Among the worst hit during the crises are workers in the creative sector who are often neglected and historically always subject to the patronage of the wealthy. Cooperatives of creative workers and in the media, have known to accord Decent Work to artists and freelancers, and continue to safeguard artistic interests, freedom, and choice. The side-event offers an opportunity to highlight for the international community engaged on cultural policies, the status, and the potential of development of cooperatives in the creative economy.

Cooperatives have since the beginning, accorded immense value to *Education* of members, staff and others, as a central character of the cooperative enterprise, and this is established by the fact *Education* has continued to be a guiding principle since the practices of the early cooperators until today! Mondiacult 2022 offers a unique and timely platform for stakeholders to share experiences & knowledge about sustainable solutions guided by the cooperative principle of Education, Training and Information², and entrenched in diversity, equity and inclusion of all.

With the aforementioned inter-linked themes, the basis for which will be addressed first scientifically through the keynote address in the beginning of the event, and with cooperatives' incomparable-international history, ICA and its partners through this side-event, aspire to position cooperatives as an *enterprise form which promotes sustainable development by striving for the benefit and safety of their communities*, as it did during various crises such as the World Wars, the Great Depression of 1931, the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, and can contribute significantly to the dialogue on culture as a common good, offering partnerships for achieving sustainable development in the nearest future. With this side event, the ICA, on behalf of the national and supranational movements it represents, *wants to restart a path of institutional collaboration with UNESCO*. Cooperatives, as part of the diverse private sector, with local roots and global outreach, are a valuable and trustworthy partner, that can build "bridges" of dialogue, mutual respect, and exchanges in jointly promoting culture and creativity to attain sustainable development and lasting peace. At the same time, the side-event will promote the role 'culture' can play in revitalising cooperative democracy and promoting education, both central tenets of the *cooperative-identity*.

² Education, Training and Information (Principle 5) Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation. <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>