

Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for Cooperatives

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 with a target date for achieving them by 2030. In adopting the outcome document 'The Future We Want', heads of states and governments declared that "We recognize that people are at the center of sustainable development and in this regard, we strive for a world that is just, equitable and inclusive, and we commit to work together to promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection and thereby to benefit all".² Compared with the Millennium Development Goals that targeted mainly developing countries, the SDGs expect active contribution from both developing and developed countries and include a global call to action for the private sector, changing business attitudes towards new sustainability practices, technologies, and business models.³ The SDG framework, through its focus on matters beyond financial performance, offered a unique opportunity for organizations, such as cooperatives, to make visible their synergies with sustainability values as well as the contributions to economic, social, environmental, institutional and peacebuilding dimensions of sustainable development (Beishenaly&Eum, 2021; Beishenaly&Sivakumaran, 2021).

The focus on sustainability has also offered an opportunity to reflect on existing corporate practices that challenge democracy and environmental issues.⁴ Rampant inequalities, poverty, and climate issues intensify the need for these alternative forms of organizing, such as cooperatives and social enterprises.⁵ Despite the fact that corporations dominate the global economy, the majority of local economic activity is led by different organizational structures that are distinct from the profit-maximizing corporation in many ways.⁶ They pursue multiple economic and social goals, serve local needs, can function with limited resources and encourage democratic decision-making.⁷ In many countries, SSEs are recognized as important contributors to global policy objectives as they support a large spectrum of social and economic development areas, including job creation, inclusiveness, equal opportunities, sustainability and civic participation and new ways of doing business.⁸ Being embedded in

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² United Nations (2012) The future we want, UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/288, paragraph 6, [online], http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E, Accessed 10 August 2022;

³ Sachs, J. D. (2012). From millennium development goals to sustainable development goals. *The Lancet*, 379(9832), 2206–2211;

⁴ Battilana, J., Yen, J., Ferreras, I., & Ramarajan, L. (2022). Democratizing Work: Redistributing power in organizations for a democratic and sustainable future. *Organization Theory*, 3(1);

⁵ Mair, J. and Rathert, N. (2021) 'Alternative organizing with social purpose: revisiting institutional analysis of market-based activity', *Socio-Economic Review*, 19(2);

⁶ Luyckx, J., Schneider, A., & Kourula, A. (2022). *Learning from Alternatives: Analyzing Alternative Ways of Organizing as Starting Points for Improving the Corporation* (pp. 209–231);

⁷ Idem.

⁸ European Commission (2020) *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Comparative synthesis report*. Authors: Borzaga C. et al., Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at <https://europa.eu/!Qq64ny>;

local contexts, they create social and economic values, contribute to sustainable development, and drive social change and innovations.⁹

In preparation of the upcoming 10-year anniversary of the International Year of Cooperatives in July 2022 and with reference to the General Assembly resolution A/RES/74/119 of 10 January 2020 "Cooperatives in Social Development", the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) has initiated a study on policies, initiatives, strategies and best practices implemented to support cooperatives. Based on the analysis of policies and actions that governments and UN agencies have implemented in different parts of the world to support cooperatives' development, this study focuses on developing a comprehensive ecosystem approach for cooperatives. This ecosystem approach allows structuring and comparing international experiences and best practices of policy support for cooperative entrepreneurship. Although cooperatives' particularities require a more in-depth examination of contextual factors, the ecosystem framework offers a general perspective that can be adapted to different contexts and institutional configurations.

The study also highlights the need for a larger-scale research on the ecosystem of cooperatives' development to compare what is similar and what is different in policies and practices that aim at supporting cooperatives. The study is organized as follows: first we discuss existing policies and practices aimed at supporting cooperatives; second, we briefly present the methodological approach; third, we review the literature on the entrepreneurial ecosystems to further the understanding how the framework could be adapted for cooperatives; fourth, we present the results of the study that allows analyzing and structuring the broad-ranging practices and policies of support to cooperatives in different regions of the world; finally, the study presents with policy recommendations for the UN agencies and the member-states regarding the adoption and further support of cooperatives.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF SUPPORT TO COOPERATIVES

Growing policy recognition of cooperatives

Cooperatives increasingly gain policy recognition on the international level: Ban Ki-Moon, the United Nations Secretary-General, recognized in 2015 that cooperatives play an 'invaluable role' in the international community's roll-out of sustainable development goals.¹⁰ The role of cooperatives was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/74/119 and in the Report of the UN Secretary-General on "Cooperatives in Social Development" in 2019. Cooperatives are also part of the recent regional policies launched in Europe, such as the EU Social Economy Action Plan (2021) and the OECD Global Action "Promoting Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems", funded by the European Union's Foreign Partnership Instrument that will cover more than 30 countries over a period of three years.¹¹ Several initiatives bring together UN and other organizations to activate platforms for

⁹ Dufays, F. (2016). Embeddedness as a facilitator of sustainable entrepreneurship. In *Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation*, ed. Nicolopoulou K. et al., Routledge.; Mair, J., & Martí, I. (2006). Social entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction, and delight. *Journal of World Business*, 41(1);

¹⁰ ICA (2015) UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon marks the International Day of Co-operatives with an appeal for all to recommit to the co-operative model, International Cooperative Alliance website information published on 8 July 2015, <https://www.ica.coop/en/newsroom/news/secretary-general-ban-ki-moon-marks-international-day-co-operatives-appeal-all>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

¹¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) website information on Social Economy: <https://www.oecd.org/fr/cfe/leed/social-economy.htm#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20OECD%20launched,a%20period%20of%20three%20years>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

policy dialogue at the international level, such as the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE).

The UN agencies support cooperatives also through their practices, programmes and project activities. The AGRI3 Fund, with USD 1 billion to promote sustainable agriculture and climate, initiated by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and Rabobank, supported by the World Bank and other partners, demonstrate the scale and potential of cooperatives to promote public and private partnerships to foster sustainable practices, including forest protection and improving rural livelihoods¹². Recently the World Bank launched the Center of Excellence (CoE) on Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs)¹³ to support CFI regulations and supervision, among others. The UN World Food Programme supported the women farmer cooperative in Cameroon in 2021 with the support of the Korean government.¹⁴ The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has close interaction with producer organizations (POs) and cooperatives that are recognized as important partners for FAO to achieve its mandate of ending hunger.¹⁵ The ILO's work on the promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation No. 193 (2002) is ongoing in many countries, along with many initiatives launched to build and expand knowledge on cooperatives and SSE organizations. The UNDESA, the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) are actively engaged in the research and support policies on cooperatives.¹⁶

In 2022, the ILO 110th International Labour Conference in its Resolution and Conclusions concerning decent work and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) recognized cooperatives as part of the SSE.¹⁷ The SSE includes enterprises, organizations, and other entities that serve the collective and/or general interest and run their activities based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, democratic and/or participatory governance, autonomy and independence, and the primacy of people and social purpose over the capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits as well as assets. Cooperatives share many commonalities with SSE organizations as both combine social and economic objectives and promote people-centred values and principles. However, cooperatives also display features that are specific to them: as member-owned and democratically governed organizations; they serve the interests of their member communities. Cooperative entrepreneurship often involves a large community of people that are also represented by vulnerable communities. They commit to and promote the International Cooperative Alliance principles and values and represent organizations that are deeply integrated into the economic and historical contexts of different countries.

Cooperative practices across the world

¹² Agri3Fund website information: <https://agri3.com/about/>, Last accessed on 10 August 2022;

¹³ World Bank website on Center of Excellence (CoE) on Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs): <https://collaboration.worldbank.org/content/sites/collaboration-for-development/en/groups/cooperative-financial-institutions.html>;

¹⁴ World Food Programme (2021) Cameroon: Women's cooperatives create 'family' bonds amid crisis, 19 March 2021, by Atem R. and Ndaka G. <https://www.wfp.org/stories/cameroon-women-hunger-family-cooperatives-resilience-development-un-world-food-programme>;

¹⁵ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) website on Cooperatives and Producer Organizations, https://www.fao.org/partnerships/cooperatives/documents/en/?page=2&ipp=5&tx_dynalist_pi1%5Bpar%5D=YToxOntzOjE6IkwiO3M6MToiNSI7fQ%3D%3D, Last accessed on 10 August 2022;

¹⁶ United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) website on Social and Solidarity Economy organisations: <https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/>, Last accessed on 10 August 2022;

¹⁷ ILO (2022) [Resolution concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy](#), International Labour Conference 110th Session, 2022, Accessed 10 August 2022;

A cooperative is defined as “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”¹⁸ Today cooperatives represent millions of members all over the world.¹⁹ In 2019, the largest 300 cooperatives and mutuals reported a total turnover of US\$2.2 billion.²⁰ Cooperatives employ 252.2 million people, the vast majority being self-employed and agricultural producers.²¹

Cooperatives represent complex organizational structures present in different economic sectors, able to function under different political systems demonstrating the resilience of their business model to external shocks and societal change. In Turkey, 84,000 cooperatives cover over 25 different sectors and represent 8.1 million members.²² In Brazil, 2,800 co-operatives with 11.5 million members employ over 337,000 people.²³ In the Philippines, 27,000 cooperatives with 14 million members also strive for people, planet, prosperity and peace²⁴, while in Rwanda, 43 per cent of the population are members of cooperatives.²⁵ Agricultural cooperatives represent more than 90 per cent of the processing and marketing industries in Denmark²⁶; they have a market share of 97 per cent in milk and 80 per cent in meat in Finland²⁷ and dominate the agricultural and food industries of many countries.²⁸ Similarly, cooperative banks have an average market share in Europe of about 20 per cent, with 704.5 thousands of employees, 88 million members, and 223.5 million customers across 2,754 banks.²⁹ The World Council of Credit Unions reports significant growth in its affiliated savings and credit cooperatives between 2005 and 2019.³⁰ There are 86,451 credit unions that hold over three trillions US dollars of assets with 375 million members mostly from low-income categories in 118 countries. The International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF) reports that the global market share held by mutual and cooperative insurers rose from 24 per cent in 2007 to 26.7 per cent in 2017, while their premium income grew by 30 per cent during

¹⁸ ICA. (1995). *Statement on Cooperative Identity*. International Cooperative Alliance.

<https://www.gdrc.org/icm/coop-principles.html> ;

¹⁹ ICA&Euricse. (2021). *World Cooperative Monitor: Exploring the cooperative economy*. ICA & Euricse, [online];

²⁰ Idem.

²¹ CICOPA. (2017). *Cooperatives and Employment, Second Global Report*, Author: Hyung-sik Eum, <https://www.cicopa.coop/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Cooperatives-and-Employment-Second-Global-Report-2017.pdf> ;

²² ICA (2015) Co-operatives are contributing to the world of work, Website information published on 30 November 2015, <https://www.ica.coop/en/media/news/co-operatives-are-contributing-world-work>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

²³ ICA (2015) Brazilian co-operatives set out institutional agenda for 2015, Website information published on 20 April 2015, <https://www.ica.coop/fr/node/11370>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

²⁴ Cooperative Development Authority of the Philippines (2017) Annual Report 2017, https://cda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CDA_AR2017.pdf;

²⁵ Coop News (2019) Cooperatives in Rwanda: an overview, 15 October 2019, <https://www.thenews.coop/143127/sector/credit-unions/cooperatives-in-rwanda-an-overview/>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

²⁶ Statistics Denmark (n.d.) Agricultural statistics in Denmark, presentation, <https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/SingleFiles/GetArchiveFile.aspx?fi=899679455&fo=0&ext=jordan>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

²⁷ Pellervo Coop Center (n.d.) Cooperation in Finland, <https://pellervo.fi/en/english/cooperation-finland/>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

²⁸ ICA&Euricse. (2021). *World Cooperative Monitor: Exploring the cooperative economy*. ICA & Euricse;

²⁹ EACB (2021) Annual Report 2021, European Association of Cooperative Banks, EACB, Brussels;

³⁰ WOCCU. (2020). *Statistical Report 2020*. World Council of Credit Unions. https://www.woccu.org/documents/2020_Statistical_Report ;

the same period³¹. ICMIF has 1.16 million employees, 922 million members/policyholders and US\$8.9 trillion in total assets.

There is a vast body of research on cooperatives that shows that they contribute to all dimensions of sustainable development: agricultural cooperatives are important actors in international value chains allowing small-scale producers to increase their income levels, improve their livelihoods and gain from trade.³² Cooperatives also uphold climate and environmental objectives as they have the capacity to scale up sustainable production and consumption practices through their member communities.³³ For example, housing cooperatives in Sweden have been awarded for their sustainable practices that contributed to lowering climatic impact and resource efficiency, among others.³⁴ In many countries, cooperatives advance women to leadership roles through democratic participation in decision-making. Women entrepreneurs establish their cooperative that allows them to tackle the issues of gender inequality in the context of strong patriarchal culture.³⁵

However, despite the fact that cooperatives are increasingly recognized as important economic and social actors at a policy level, they still face challenges that prevent them from becoming full-fledged development actors and enterprises with a well-defined ecosystem that is necessary for their growth. In many parts of the world, there is still a lack of data, evidence and understanding of the actual and potential contribution of cooperatives to development objectives. Cooperatives often face legal uncertainty because of inconsistent application of international legislation, a multitude of national laws, absence of a level playing field that would allow them to compete with investor-oriented firms without giving up their social and cultural orientation.³⁶ Cooperatives' development is a complex process and depends on a combination of factors such as law and policy, but also finance, education, networks, infrastructure and others. Often these factors are treated as separate elements in the policy-making process, which prevent considering the complexity and inter-connectedness of the elements that shape an enabling environment for cooperatives.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the policies and practices aimed at the implementation of the General Assembly resolution A/RES/74/119 of 10 January 2020 on

³¹ ICMIF. (2019). *Global Mutual Market Share* (No. 10). International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation. <https://www.icmif.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MMS-ENG-1.pdf> ;

³² ICA (2020) Cooperatives are international trade actors: an interview with the International Trade Centre, International Cooperative Alliance Website information published on 11.12.2020, <https://www.ica.coop/en/newsroom/news/cooperatives-are-international-trade-actors-interview-international-trade-centre>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

³³ ICA (2020) Cooperatives in Asia and the Pacific are fighting climate change, International Cooperative Alliance Website information published on 19.06.2020, <https://www.ica.coop/en/newsroom/news/cooperatives-asia-and-pacific-are-fighting-climate-change>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

³⁴ ICA (2020) How Swedish housing cooperatives are championing sustainability, International Cooperative Alliance Website information published on 27.02.2020, <https://www.ica.coop/en/newsroom/news/how-swedish-housing-cooperatives-are-championing-sustainability>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

³⁵ Cinar, K., Akyuz, S., Ugur-Cinar, M., & Onculer-Yayalar, E. (2021). Faces and Phases of Women's Empowerment: The Case of Women's Cooperatives in Turkey. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 28(3), 778–805;

³⁶ Karakas, C. (2019). *Cooperatives: Characteristics, activities, status, challenges* (Briefing PE 635.541 – February 2019). European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2019\)635541](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2019)635541);

cooperatives in social development. The questionnaire was sent by UNDESA to the UN agencies and member states regarding policies, initiatives, strategies and best practices in the following areas: (1) activities implemented during the International Year of Cooperatives in 2012; (2) policy and regulatory environment for cooperatives; (3) capacity building for cooperatives; (4) education and promotion of cooperative values and principles; (5) plans for further promotion of the development of cooperatives. Twelve responses were received: two from the UN agencies (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); International Labour Office (ILO); and ten from the Member-states – Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Mongolia, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Timor-Leste, Zimbabwe. The analysis also includes the information provided by the ECLAS on Uruguay, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Costa Rica. Although data is collected from countries in which cooperatives occupy a significant place in the economies, and therefore can bias the analysis by presenting the cases with active support to cooperatives; the objective of this study was not to have a full picture of existing practices, but to shed light on policies, strategies and best practices and analyze them within the cooperative ecosystem framework.

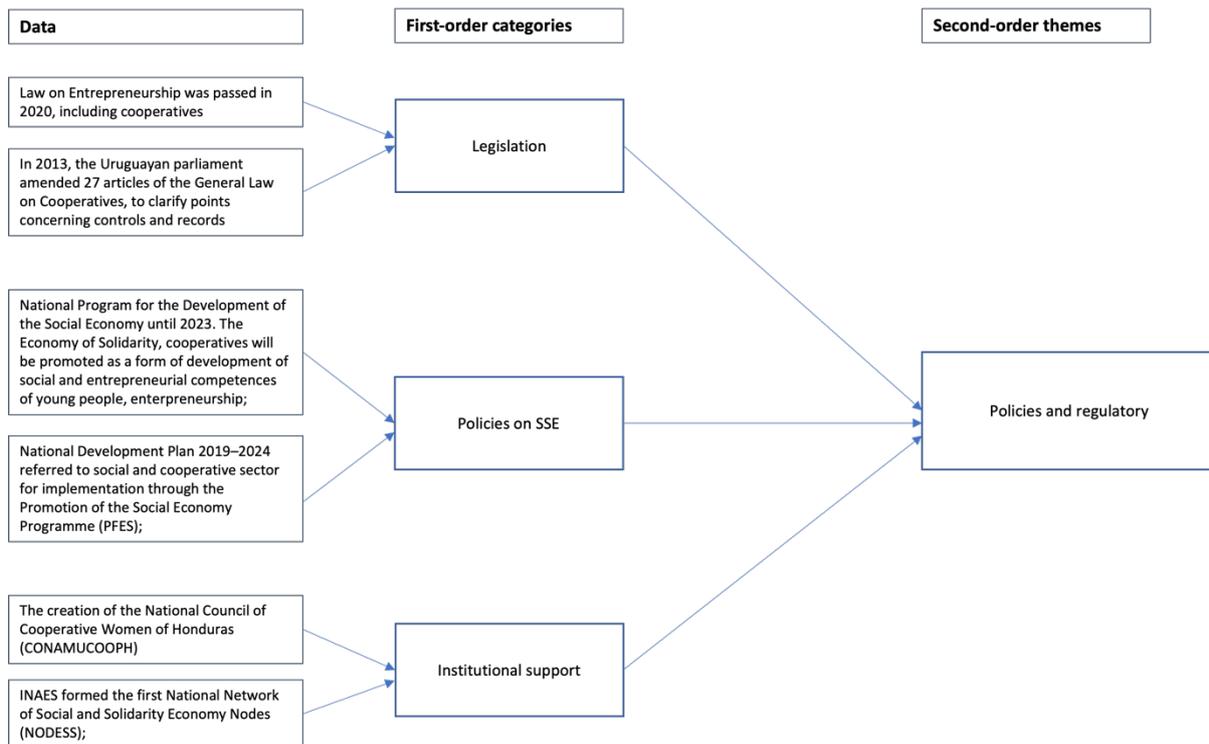
We used policy analysis as a research method, which is a powerful tool to understand the use of research evidence in policymaking and generate an understanding of policy decision and situate them in their context.³⁷ We notably focused on the framing strategy of policy analysis to know what conceptual framework exists through which broad-ranging cooperative policies and practices are can be discussed, described and understood. Obtained results were therefore analyzed using the entrepreneurial ecosystems framework that allows identifying external and contextual attributes that condition the growth and development of an enterprise.³⁸ We used thematic analysis methodological tool that allowed us to identify common patterns in respondents' answers and compare them with the EE elements. Thematic analysis is a powerful yet flexible method for analyzing qualitative data and searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns.³⁹ Obtained rich data from government agencies and the UN agencies were analyzed using NVIVO software in order to identify patterns and create first-order categories and organize them around second-order themes that were informed by the research on EE frameworks.

Figure 1. Example of the coding process

³⁷ Browne, J., Coffey, B., Cook, K., Meiklejohn, S., & Palermo, C. (2019). A guide to policy analysis as a research method. *Health Promot Int.* Oct 1, 34(5). <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/day052>. PMID: 30101276.

³⁸ Isenberg, D., & Onyemah, V. (2016). Fostering Scaleup Ecosystems for Regional Economic Growth. *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization*, 11(1–2), 60–79;

³⁹ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association;



The responses show that there is no ‘one-fits-all’ approach to developing an enabling environment for cooperatives, yet, an ecosystem approach allows gaining a broader perspective of what is needed to develop and support cooperatives.

However, despite the fact that cooperatives are increasingly recognized as important economic and social actors at a policy level, they still face challenges that prevent them from becoming full-fledged development actors and enterprises with a well-defined ecosystem that is necessary for their growth. In many parts of the world, there is still a lack of data, evidence and understanding of the actual and potential contribution of cooperatives to development objectives. Cooperatives often face legal uncertainty because of inconsistent application of international legislation, a multitude of national laws, absence of a level playing field that would allow them to compete with investor-oriented firms without giving up their social and cultural orientation.⁴⁰ Cooperatives’ development is a complex process and depends on a combination of factors such as law and policy, but also finance, education, networks, infrastructure and others. Often these factors are treated as separate elements in the policy-making process, which prevent considering the complexity and inter-connectedness of the elements that shape an enabling environment for cooperatives.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS FOR COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES

Cooperatives dominate many sectors and represent heavyweights in many countries of the world. However, there is a ‘general lack of recognition and awareness of cooperatives as

⁴⁰ Karakas, C. (2019). *Cooperatives: Characteristics, activities, status, challenges* (Briefing PE 635.541 – February 2019). European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2019\)635541](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2019)635541);

economic institutions both amongst policymakers and public at large'.⁴¹ Cooperatives and public policy represent an under-explored area, which undermines understanding of cooperative development successes and barriers.⁴² Indeed, without adequate policy support, cooperatives can face issues such as inadequate legal frameworks and regulations, lack of funding adapted to the needs of cooperatives, knowledge of the cooperative business model, skills to work and manage cooperative organizations, and absence of support and extension systems. The ILO report on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) entities also emphasizes the importance of public policies and shows that the key policy interventions directly linked to SSE include services and resources associated with financing, preferential procurement, training, marketing and research & development.⁴³

Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (EE) are the set of interconnected actors, organizations, institutions and processes that coalesce to connect, mediate and govern the performance within the local environment.⁴⁴ Mason and Brown (2014) propose four aspects of the entrepreneurial ecosystem that can be targeted by policymakers: (1) entrepreneurial actors within ecosystems; (2) entrepreneurial resource providers (government, finance providers); (3) entrepreneurial connectors within ecosystems such as clubs and associations; (4) entrepreneurial orientation with ecosystems including perceptions and culture. There can be different configurations of the ecosystem as it depends on the social and economic context surrounding the entrepreneurial process. The World Economic Forum (2014), for example, suggests viewing the EE as based on eight EE Elements: (1) accessible markets; (2) human capital/workforce; (3) funding and finance; (4) support systems/mentors; (5) government & regulatory framework; (6) education & training; (7) major universities as catalysts; and (8) cultural support.⁴⁵ The World Economic Forum launched a survey in 2014 that allowed it to examine these EE Elements and found that there are substantially more similarities than differences in the issues facing entrepreneurs around the globe. Stam and Spigel (2016) suggest envisioning the ecosystem as a causal interaction, in which framework and systemic conditions represent the EE elements and lead to outputs and outcomes represented by entrepreneurial activity and their value creations.⁴⁶ Spigel (2017) categorizes the EE elements according to material, social and cultural aspects, in which ecosystems represent multiple overlapping sets of attributes and institutions that encourage entrepreneurial activity.⁴⁷

While early research on EEs focused on Western developed countries, recent studies have examined the situation in developing countries that are affected by a range of specific factors, such as underdeveloped institutions, missing key stakeholders, unavailability of basic business support, unclear and inconsistent policies, scarcity of financial resources, lack of

⁴¹ Iyer B. (n.d.). What impact cooperatives are making in Asia to sustainable social, economic and environmental development? <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/2014/coopsegm/lyer.pdf>, Accessed 10 August 2022;

⁴² Adeler, M. C. (2014). Enabling Policy Environments for Co-operative Development: A Comparative Experience. *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques*, 40, S50–S59.;

⁴³ Utting, P. (2017). *Public Policies for Social and Solidarity Economy. Assessing Progress in Seven Countries*. International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva ;

⁴⁴ Mason, C., & Brown, R. (2014). Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Growth Oriented Entrepreneurship. *Paper Prepared for the Workshop Organised by OECD LEED Programme and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs on Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Growth Oriented Entrepreneurship*;

⁴⁵ World Economic Forum. (2014). *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Around the Globe and Early-Stage Company Growth Dynamics*. World Economic Forum;

⁴⁶ Stam, E., & Spigel, B. (2016). *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems* (Working Paper No. 16–13). Utrecht School of Economics;

⁴⁷ Spigel, B. (2017). The Relational Organization of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 41(1), 49–72;

human capital, disjointed infrastructure, inhibiting culture, and personalized networks.⁴⁸ The predominance of informal economies often equates entrepreneurship with self-employment and small-scale businesses. There might also be sectoral differences: for example, the ecosystems in the agricultural sector are characterized by difficult access to resources and a lack of appropriate infrastructure and markets, in which networking and community leaders play a critical role.⁴⁹

The ecosystem approach has been largely in use for understanding the ecosystem for regional entrepreneurship⁵⁰ and for emerging entrepreneurship.⁵¹ Although each ecosystem has its specific elements, the entrepreneurial ecosystem for cooperatives differs from the ecosystems that have high-growth orientation and promote competition and profit-making. Roundy (2017) argues that multiple logic organizations, such as hybrids, are influenced by two dominant institutional logics: entrepreneurial-market and community.⁵² It is, therefore, necessary to understand the particularities of the ecosystem for alternative types of enterprises in order to strategize how and through what mechanisms they can be empowered at the policy level and bring greater benefit to their communities.

A recent mapping of the European Commission (2020) has applied the framework to analyze social enterprises' ecosystem in Europe and identified that they have four dimensions: the capacity to self-organize, resources, visibility and recognition, research, education and skills development.⁵³ The report confirms the importance of the ecosystem approach for policy-level decision-making. The Democracy at Work Institute of the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives developed in 2016 the Cooperative Growth Ecosystem framework⁵⁴ that has eleven elements: (1) skills and capacity; (2) financing; (3) technical assistance (4) growth-oriented co-op developers that are the essential elements that represent the building blocks for cooperative development. Furthermore, (5) business supports; (6) connection to market; (7) policy; (8) advocacy partnerships represent important elements that encourage growth. Finally, environmental elements legitimize and popularize worker cooperatives through (9) values-driven businesses; (10) attitudes and culture; (11) cooperative education. The report highlights the role of actors in the financial sector (i.e. financial institutions, credit unions, investors, foundations), public sector (i.e. governments, policymakers, small business development centers), non-profit sector (i.e. college, universities, faith-based organizations) and private sector (secondary cooperatives, professional associations, etc.).

Adapting the framework to the context of developing countries, Beishenaly & Dufays (2021) identify that in Kyrgyzstan, the key attributes of an ecosystem are the policy, knowledge,

⁴⁸ Cao, Z., & Shi, X. (2020). A systematic literature review of entrepreneurial ecosystems in advanced and emerging economies. *Small Business Economics*;

⁴⁹ Miles, M. P., & Morrison, M. (2020). An effectual leadership perspective for developing rural entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Small Business Economics*, 54(4), 933–949;

⁵⁰ McKague, K., Wardley, L. J., & Saunders, C. (2021). *Nova Scotia's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: A Global Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Report* (p. 44). Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) & Cape Breton University;

⁵¹ OECD website information and reports:

<https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/localentrepreneurshipecosystemsandemergingindustries.htm>, Last accessed on 10 August 2022;

⁵² Roundy, P. T. (2017). Hybrid organizations and the logics of entrepreneurial ecosystems. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 13(4), 1221–1237;

⁵³ EU. (2020). *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe – Comparative synthesis report*. European Commission, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020.;

⁵⁴ Hoover, M., & Abell, H. (2016). *The Cooperative Growth Ecosystem. Inclusive Economic Development in Action*. Democracy at Work Institute;

market environment, culture, networks and partnerships.⁵⁵ They also emphasize the importance of lead actors such as cooperatives and their unions, governments and international donor organizations. Often cooperatives' development challenges are oversimplified and reduced to a single element of the EE while developing cooperatives require grasping the complexity of factors and also integrating the international organizations as actors in cooperatives' development as they play a crucially important role in allowing to build knowledge and capacity, connect with cooperatives in other countries, mitigate over-dependence from the state and strengthen their 'entrepreneurial' dimension.

The ecosystem framework emphasizes the importance of evidence-based policy-making but also the fact that the policies have to adopt a holistic approach to identify whether and how to intervene and monitor over time the effectiveness of such interventions.⁵⁶ In many countries, cooperative development has been pursued by cooperatives and their federations with little or no state support and proved to be successful. However, today, in the context of increased institutional complexity, it becomes vital for cooperatives that governments and other stakeholders support the creation of an enabling environment and level the playing field for cooperatives. The recent wave of demutualization confirms the challenges of member-owned enterprises and the importance of policy support for maintaining institutions that play an important social and economic role for local communities. While in countries with a well-established cooperative sector, there can be a better understanding of cooperative institutions, in developing countries, especially those where cooperatives represent a new phenomenon, an ecosystem approach to cooperatives' development appears to be particularly important.

The EE framework offers a comprehensive framework and a structured approach for understanding and building appropriate policy approaches to the development of entrepreneurship, especially relevant in the context of developing countries. It also allows learning from best practices and analyzing what is common in supporting cooperatives in different country contexts.

COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM ELEMENTS

The analysis allowed to obtain a general framework of cooperative ecosystems for cooperatives represented by key elements such as : (i) legislation, policy and institutions, (ii) education, information and capacity building; (iii) cooperative culture; (iv) funding and finance; (v) networks and partnerships. This framework allows the UN agencies and the member states to identify policies and practices are implemented in each of the ecosystem areas and compare with other regional experiences. The configuration of the ecosystems may change depending on the context, but the framework serves as a general basis for the analysis of existing situation.

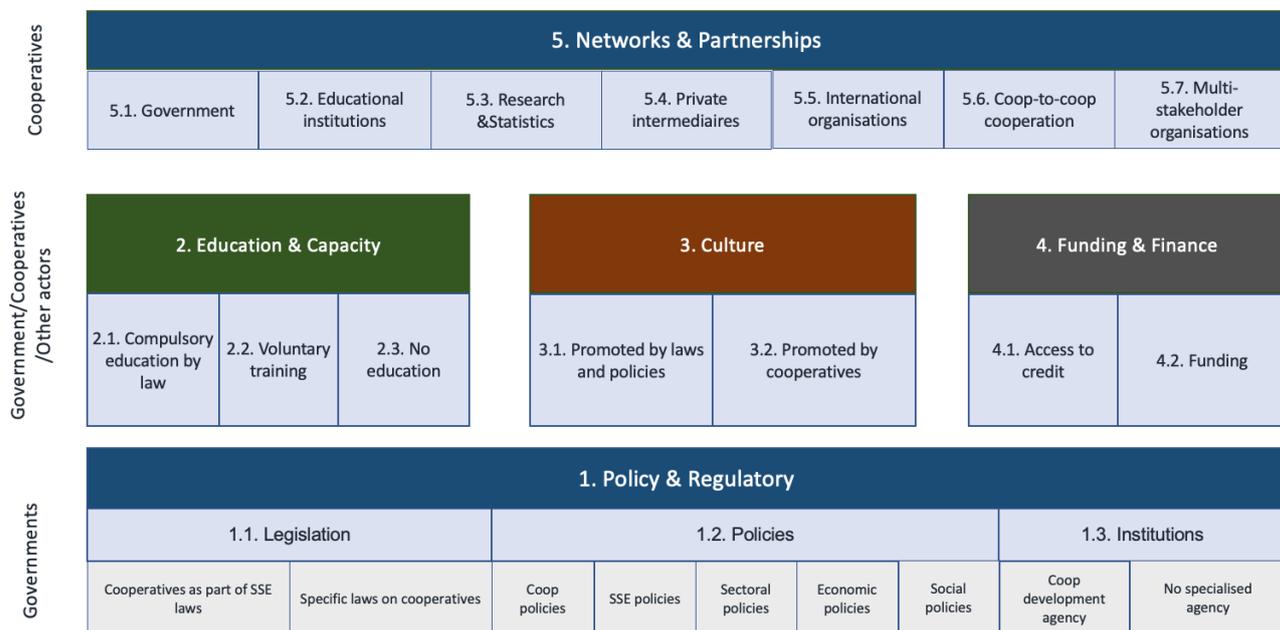
Figure 2. Cooperative Ecosystem

⁵⁵ Beishenaly, N., & Dufays, F. (2021). Development of agricultural cooperatives in Kyrgyzstan: Who are the lead actors? *Central Asian Journal of Water Research*, 7(2);

⁵⁶ Mason, C., & Brown, R. (2014). Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Growth Oriented Entrepreneurship. *Paper Prepared for the Workshop Organised by OECD LEED Programme and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs on Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Growth Oriented Entrepreneurship*;

Lead actors

Cooperative Ecosystem Elements



This study allowed also to identify the key lead actors of cooperative ecosystems. They are logically represented by government agencies within the EE element 1 on legislation, policies and institutional support; while cooperatives dominate partnership and network building activities although orchestrated partnerships can be set up as well. As for the elements 2,3 and 4 on education, culture and funding, the country experiences vary: on the one side of the spectrum there are policies and practices that rely on cooperatives' initiatives, while on the other side, government plays an important role.

EE Element 1: Legislation, policies and institutions of support to cooperatives

- Legislation on cooperatives

The analysis of the best practices of cooperative legislation shows that there is a wide variety of tools for legal support for cooperatives. A recent trend in legislating cooperatives is viewing cooperatives as part of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). These recent developments impact cooperatives' legislation and policies: the table below shows that experiences vary from country to country: some countries have laws for cooperatives but no laws for the social and solidarity economy; other countries consider cooperatives as part of SSE, and there are also countries with a general framework laws for the social and solidarity economy and specific laws on cooperatives.

Table 1. Legislation of cooperatives

Legislation

Countries in which cooperatives are also part of SSE/social economy and entrepreneurship laws	Ecuador: Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy; Law on Entrepreneurship and Innovation (2020); Mexico: Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy; Portugal: Framework Law on Social Economy No. 30/2013 of 8 May; Uruguay: Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy (2019) *Colombia: Law on Entrepreneurship;
Countries with legislation on cooperatives	Honduras : Honduran Cooperatives Law; Mongolia: Law On Cooperatives; Mexico: Law To Regulate The Activities Of Savings And Loan Cooperative Societies (LRASCAP); Peru: General Law Of Cooperatives; Philippines: Republic Act (RA) No. 10744, Known As “The Credit Surety Fund (CSF) Cooperative Act Of 2015”; Poland: Act Of 27 April 2006 On Social Cooperatives; Portugal: Decree-Law “Cooperativa Na Hora” No. 54/2017 Of 2 June; Timor-Leste: Decree On Cooperatives Number 16/2004; Zimbabwe: Cooperative Societies Act Chapter 24:05; *Uruguay: General Law On Cooperatives; *Chile: General Law on Cooperatives;

*Information from the ECLAC questionnaire

Cooperatives as part of the social and solidarity economy. ECLAC reports that in Latin America, since 2012, several important legal reforms have contributed to the expansion and strengthening of the cooperative sector and social and solidarity economy. In some countries, cooperative laws were part of the social and solidarity economy laws that focused on the policies in the social sector in line with the country’s national development priorities, for example, in Mexico, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Columbia. In **Mexico**, the Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy was adopted in 2012 following the constitutional reform in 1983 that recognized that the social sector had a distinct contribution to national economic development in addition to the public and private sectors. In **Ecuador**, the solidarity economy was one of the strategic lines of action in the National Plan for Living Well 2013–2017. In **Uruguay**, Law 18.407 on the Cooperative System was passed in 2008 and the Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy in 2019. In **Colombia**, one of the goals of the National Development Plan 2018–2022, which became law in 2019, is fostering solidarity sector enterprises as a modern social policy tool to promote empowerment and the economic and social autonomy of communities.

In Europe, **Portugal** has implemented several initiatives to encourage the development of cooperatives as important actors in social sectors, which included the Framework Law No. 30/2013 on Social Economy that defined the social economy guiding principles and established satellite accounts to promote statistical data collection and analysis on SSE. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 73-A/2014 has established the Portugal Social Innovation initiative to develop social investment in social economy entities, including cooperatives. Portugal has been implementing many other initiatives aimed at supporting social economy entities, such as the Social Economy Support Program (2011), Social Economy Development Support Program (2010), Social Innovation Fund, Social Impact Partnership Program, and a Training Program for Social Investment. The emphasis on cooperatives’ contribution to the social sector can also be observed in **Poland**: the amendments in 2018 to the Act on social cooperatives of 27 April 2006 notably promote the social and professional reintegration of people from vulnerable communities.

Laws on cooperatives generally cover all types of cooperatives, but in some countries, there are laws that regulate specific types of cooperatives. In **Mexico**, for example, the Law on Savings and Loan Cooperative Societies (2013) regulates the activities of financial

cooperatives in line with the requirements of the broader reform of the financial sector. The focus on financial cooperatives is explained by important regulatory challenges due to growing regulatory complexity and the nature of their operations. According to **ECLAC**, the laws on cooperatives have also been reformed over the past decade, for example, in Uruguay in 2013, in Chile in 2016 and in Mexico in 2013, 2015, and 2019. The amendments were aimed at clarifying controls and records, promoting cooperative values and improving supervisory systems. ILO also reports on its support of cooperative policy development in Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Tanzania, Ghana, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Cooperative laws generally respect the ICA principles and follow the Declaration on Cooperative Identity adopted by the ICA in 1995 and ILO Recommendation No. 193 on the Promotion of Cooperatives adopted in 2002. However, there is a large diversity of the legal systems on cooperatives and significant sub-regional differences: some countries have federal-level laws as in the USA, while other countries have introduced transnational-level legislations as in Europe. The European cooperative society status was adopted in 2003 and allowed to reform of the national cooperative laws despite the fact that it had limited promotion by the EU member states. The recent ICA-EU Partnership Legal Framework Analysis provide with a detailed account of these regional differences.⁵⁷ In Africa, for example, there are both general cooperative laws and laws that regulate specific sectors in which cooperatives operate. The cooperative legislation has undergone a wave of reforms in the 1980s and 1990s; however, colonial legacies persist and challenge cooperative laws and regulatory systems with political interference, ineffective leadership and difficulties of member engagement. In Asian countries, the widespread practice is having specific laws for different types of cooperatives. In Latin America, general cooperative laws are often complemented by one or more special laws on certain types of cooperatives, mainly worker or credit cooperatives.

The heterogeneity of cooperatives is an advantage of the cooperative movement, but it also represents a challenge. Market pressures and regulatory environment on cooperatives' statuses can also lead to the demutualization and cooperative identity crisis.⁵⁸ The overall recommendations from the ICA-EU Legal Framework analysis are: (i) efficient and effective enforcement of cooperative legislation to avoid the creation of pseudo-cooperatives created to benefit from legal advantages; (ii) a level playing field where laws treat cooperatives no less favourably compared to other enterprises while being treated as a distinct type of business model; (iii) unification and harmonization of special laws provided that in some countries laws either do not foresee certain types of cooperatives or focus on one type of cooperatives, such as agricultural cooperatives that can lead to the exclusion of other sectors; (iv) updating cooperative laws provided that in many countries laws require alignment with recent changes without however engaging in frequent changing cooperative legislation that can lead to instability of cooperatives' growth and development.

- Policies to support cooperatives

There are many ways of ensuring policy support to cooperatives: policies targeting specifically cooperatives' development or, more broadly, SSE organizations that include cooperatives. There are countries that prioritize the economic role of cooperatives, considering cooperatives as part of sectoral policies aimed at developing agricultural, financial and other sectors of the economy. Other countries prioritize the social role of cooperatives attributing cooperatives an

⁵⁷ Cooperatives Europe. (2021). *ICA-EU Partnership Legal Framework Analysis Regional reports for Africa, Americas, Asia and Pacific & Europe*. Cooperatives Europe & International Co-operative Alliance. https://coops4dev.coop/en/c4dev_resources/publications;

⁵⁸ Côté, D. (2009) The cooperative organizational model in the 21st century: a new cooperative paradigm in response to the identity crisis. *International Journal of Projects*, 2, 61-84;

important role in cross-sectoral policies such as employment, social protection, education, and other policies, and addressing the needs of the marginalized communities.

Table 2. Policy areas

Policy areas	Countries & Policies
Cooperatives development policies	<p>Mongolia: Third National Program for Development of Cooperatives for 2019-2024;</p> <p>Peru: Ministerial Resolution N° 431-2016-PRODUCE to establish Multisectoral Technical Group for Cooperative Development (GTMDG);</p> <p>Philippines: Cooperative Development Plan (PCDP) 2018-2022; Philippine Cooperative Development Plan (PCDP) 2018-2022;</p> <p>Zimbabwe: Cooperative Policy (2005);</p>
Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)	<p>Ecuador: Organic Law on the People's Solidarity Economy; National Plan for Living Well 2013–2017: people's solidarity economy (ECLAC);</p> <p>Honduras: Articles 92 and 93 of the Regulations of the Honduran; Cooperatives Law on Social Balance for solidarity economy;</p> <p>Mexico: Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy (2012); Promotion of the Social Economy Programme (PFES) 2021-2024;</p> <p>Poland: National Program for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023. Economy of Solidarity;</p> <p>Portugal: Social Economy Support Program (SOCIAL INVESTE); Decree-Law No. 120/2015, of 30 June establishes a framework for the social and solidarity sector; Y.ES project by CASES with the objective of promoting the Social Economy sector;</p> <p>*Argentina: Programmes for the formation of social cooperatives;</p> <p>*Uruguay: Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy in 2019;</p> <p>*Colombia: National Development Plan 2018–2022 (became law in 2019) fostered solidarity sector enterprises;</p>
Promoting cooperative financial institutions	<p>Honduras: CONSUCOOP issued a series of regulations for the Savings and Credit sector;</p> <p>Mexico: Law to Regulate the Activities of Savings and Loan Cooperative Societies (LRASCAP);</p> <p>Peru: Creation of a Fund of Cooperative Deposit Insurance is planned by the GTMDG as a solution to problems of savings and credit cooperatives;</p> <p>Zimbabwe: Sector-Specific Legislation for Savings and Credit Cooperatives (being developed by Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development);</p>
Agricultural/fishery policies	<p>Peru: Strategic plans to strengthen capacities of 17 cooperatives and agro-industrial centers in the regions of San Martín, Huánuco, Junín, Pasco, Cusco and Amazonas; MY.COOP - PERÚ Program 2012 – 2018 for the competitiveness of agricultural cooperatives;</p> <p>Zimbabwe: The government initiated the command fishing programme as a viable tool to alleviate poverty among the rural populace;</p> <p>*Uruguay: Fishing programme initiated by the government as a viable tool to alleviate poverty among the rural populace;</p> <p>*Argentina: Programme of Critical and Direct Assistance for Family, Campesino and Indigenous Farming;</p>
Employment and inclusion policies	<p>Mongolia: Herder's Employment Promotion, Job Support, Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities, Senior Citizens' Counseling Service</p>

	<p>and Child Protector programs under Employment Promotion Fund; Youth Employment and Start-up Promotion;</p> <p>Peru: Emergency Decree N° 075-2020 allowed cooperatives to access the different government programs such as the REACTIVA PERU, FAE AGRO funds, among others;</p> <p>Portugal: Ordinance No. 52/2020, of 28 February: a support system for employment and entrepreneurship for social economy entities; Ordinance No. 174/2020, of 17 July creates the measure Emprego Interior MAIS — to support geographic mobility in the labour market;</p> <p>Philippines: CDA and the NCIP issued, pursuant RA Act No. 6939, 9520, and 8371, CDANCIP Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, series of 20181 on cooperatives by and among indigenous cultural communities; Section 2 of Executive Order (EO) No. 472 mandates CDA to promote cooperative development among persons with disabilities;</p> <p>*Argentina: Programme for the Promotion of Local Work, Ownership and Supply (PROTAAL) to promote cooperatives and associations; Programme of Critical and Direct Assistance for Family, Campesino and Indigenous Farming;</p> <p>*Chile: Inclusive Local Development Strategies Programme (EDLI);</p>
<p>Entrepreneurship enabling policies</p>	<p>Ecuador: Law on Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Policies of support to Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Artisanal Productive Units;</p> <p>Mongolia: Resolution No. 278 of 2018 "Mongolian Export" Program;</p> <p>Portugal: Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 73-A/2014, of 16 December, creates the Portugal Inovação Social (Portugal Social Innovation) to support entrepreneurship (including cooperatives); Ordinance No. 354/2015, of 13 October - creates the COOPJOVEM Program to support cooperative entrepreneurship;</p> <p>*Colombia: Law on Entrepreneurship that includes cooperatives (2020);</p> <p>*Argentina: Public policy of the Secretariat for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurs;</p>

*Information from the ECLAS questionnaire response

Policies focused on cooperatives' development: for example, in **Mongolia**, the Third National Program for Cooperative Development for 2019-2024. It pursues the goal of helping to disseminate the best practices of existing cooperatives, improving member engagement and expanding cooperation opportunities. In the **Philippines**, the government promotes cooperatives by undertaking policies that include the Updated Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 and the Philippine Cooperative Development Plan (PCDP) 2018-2022.

Policy support to cooperatives as part of SSE policies allows integration of cooperatives in SSE policies and also allows greater alignment with the country's national development plans, which determines the allocation of the budget and priorities for the government institutions. In **Ecuador**, the solidarity economy was one of the strategic components of the National Plan for Living Well 2013–2017; similarly, **Colombia** also focused on strengthening solidarity and social economy actors in its National Development Plan 2018–2022. The **Mexican** National Development Plan for 2019–2024 also identifies the development of the cooperative sector as an important milestone in the implementation of the Promotion of the Social Economy Programme (PFES). SSE policies allow protecting the rights of the members and workers of cooperatives, making them eligible for employment and social protection schemes. This was the case of Brazilian cooperatives that could contribute to and access the basic income schemes. Moreover, according to ECLAC, strengthening cooperatives and the SSE integrates them into national statistics to enable international comparison and increase visibility and support from international agencies that can make them benefit from cross-country perspectives and expertise.

Cooperatives are also frequent actors of **sectoral policies** set up, for example, for developing the financial, agricultural, housing and other sectors. In **Mongolia**, cooperatives were

supported in the framework of policies aimed at increasing the potential of cooperatives to export and strengthen the sectoral unions of cooperatives. Cooperatives were also the object of the financial reforms that took place in **Mexico** in 2014, during which the Law to Regulate the Activities of Savings and Loan Cooperative Societies was reformed, bringing positive structural change that allowed a growing trend in the number of cooperatives, branches and members. Financial sector policies often target cooperatives to ensure their compliance with the financial and prudential requirements in accordance with national and international rules and standards.

In some countries, cooperatives are also part of social policies that target **employment and inclusion**. In **Portugal**, a support system for employment and entrepreneurship + CO3SO Emprego (+ CO3SO Employment) was created by Ordinance No. 52 in 2020. The system includes cooperatives under the + CO3SO Employment Social Entrepreneurship for social economy entities. Another measure, Hinterland Employment MAIS – Support for Mobility for a Sustainable Hinterland (Ordinance No. 174/2020 of 17 July), encouraged geographic mobility in the labour market, in which cooperatives played a role in offering jobs and self-employment opportunities. Cooperatives in **Argentina** allowed facing the economic, political and social crisis of 2001, offering income and work for the disadvantaged parts of the population, notably by the creation of self-organized workers cooperatives on the basis of unprofitable and abandoned (reclaimed) companies that were acquired and run directly by workers. In 2020, **Peru** promulgated the Emergency Decree N° 075-2020 that extended that tackled management challenges in more than 2000 cooperatives with more than 2.4 million people. This Decree also allowed cooperatives to access different government programs such as the REACTIVA PERU, FAE AGRO funds, among others. In **Mongolia**, the government promoted employment for the disadvantaged and vulnerable by implementing programs under the Employment Promotion Fund that included Herder's Employment Promotion, Job Support, Employment Promotion of Persons with Disabilities, Youth Employment and Start-up Promotion, as well as Senior Citizens' Counseling Service and Child Protector programs. As of the end of 2020, these programs included 29,360 people and created 4,584 permanent, 12,259 temporary and 880 part-time jobs. Cooperatives also played an important role in the roll-out of COVID-19 policies: in Mongolia, cooperatives benefitted from the exemptions on social security contributions, corporate income tax exemption for small businesses, provision of subsidies to retain employees, soft loans to cashmere producers, easing asset classification and provisioning regulatory requirement for banks.

Cooperatives are also often part of government programmes and **policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship**. Along with the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), cooperatives are often expected to promote entrepreneurial culture. In **Colombia**, for example, the Law on Entrepreneurship in 2020 considered cooperatives eligible for programmes aimed at supporting the MSME sector. In **Mongolia**, cooperatives are part of agribusiness and export promotion strategies (Resolution No. 278 of 2018, "Mongolian Export" Program). In 2015, the **Portuguese** COOPJOVEM Program supported cooperative entrepreneurship with a focus on young people by investing in their projects, among others.

- Institutions of support

Institutional arrangements to implement policies also vary from country to country. In the **Philippines**, the Philippine Cooperative Development Plan (PCDP) 2018-2022 is implemented by the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) that supports the establishment of cooperatives by providing technical assistance in the form of capacity-building measures like mentoring, coaching, and other forms of services to cooperative leaders. Moreover, with the enactment of RA Act No. 11535, which was signed on April 9, 2021, amending the Local Government Code of 1991, the Philippines creates the position of a Cooperatives Development Officer (CDO) mandatory in all local government units. The CDOs will bridge regional cooperatives with the CDA and other national government agencies

to help them harmonize their goals with the national cooperative movement. In other countries, cooperatives are coordinated by different government agencies. For example, in **Ecuador**, the Organic Law on the People's Solidarity Economy in Ecuador (2011) established the National Institute for the People's Solidarity Economy (IEPS), reporting to the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion. There is also an inter-institutional committee with representatives from the ministries whose remit concern the key economic sectors in which actors in the people's solidarity sector operate. More recently, the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries (MPCEIP) worked on a draft Law on Entrepreneurship and Innovation (LOEI) that was published in the Official Register on February 28, 2020. Although the Law has a broad entrepreneurship scope and foresees the creation of institutions and funds to improve the business environment, it also covers issues related to enabling an environment conducive to the creation and growth of cooperatives.

Recent reforms that dealt with the cooperative sector included the creation or extension of powers of supervisory and regulatory institutions. In **Honduras**, the Cooperatives Law issued by Decree No. 65-87 in 1987 was amended in 2013, resulting in the creation of the National Supervisory Council of Cooperatives (CONSUCOOP) as the highest authority, in which the Board of Directors composed mostly of representatives of cooperatives but also by Secretaries of State. A reform of the General Law on Cooperatives in **Chile** in 2016 extended the powers of the Department of Cooperatives of the Ministry of Economy, Development, and Tourism. In 2019 in the **Philippines**, the law was adopted to reorganize and strengthen the powers of the Cooperative Development Authority. The expanded powers of the CDA authorize to issue cease and desist orders to cooperatives and other orders and notices to preserve the assets and documents of cooperatives.

EE Element 2: Education and Capacity Building

There is a wide spectrum of education and capacity-building initiatives. They are typically implemented in the areas of cooperative management, governance, working in cooperatives, decent work, values of cooperation, solidarity, mutualism, entrepreneurship, inclusion, gender equality and youth employment.

Compulsory cooperative education. In some countries, cooperative education is a legal requirement and integrated into government education policies and programs. In **Argentina**, the requirement of the National Education Law contributed to the proliferation of school cooperatives and greater engagement of youth in the cooperative movement. In **Uruguay** too, subjects on cooperatives are taught at all levels of public and private education is a legal requirement by the Cooperative System Law of 2008. The National Cooperative Institute (INACOOOP) mainstreams cooperative education in primary, secondary and tertiary education levels, implements Training the Trainers programmes, and collaborates with education institutions. These initiatives included publishing a book, "Aprendiendo a Cooperar" (Learning to Cooperate) as a tool for primary education schools throughout the country; establishing a Learning Platform (CREA), a virtual learning system and generating teaching materials and resources. In 2012, INACOOOP also launched the Programme of Support for Cooperatives Working in Formal Education (PAECECF) to call for cooperatives from all over the country to present projects that promote cooperative education. In **Costa Rica**, cooperative education at all levels is a mandatory practice required by the Basic Law on Education. Since 2002, the Institute for Cooperative Development (INFOCOOP) has implemented the National Cooperative Education Programme to promote education on cooperative values and principles as a part of the subjects in the current curricula. The Institute also manages the Fund for School, Student and Youth Cooperatives, which totalled almost 400.000 USD in 2019. A Department of Business Management and Cooperative Education (DGEEC) under the Ministry of Public Education's Vice-Ministry oversees cooperative education. The reform of Law on Cooperatives of **Honduras** (Decree No. 174-2013) makes cooperative education compulsory, while Article 8-B of the Law, Legislative Decree No. 174-2013, establish that the

Secretary of State in the Office of Education, in coordination with the Honduran Confederation of Cooperatives (C.H.C.), must develop curricular programs at the primary, secondary and higher levels. In the **Philippines**, cooperative education is being pursued as a curriculum in both elementary level and secondary educational institutions preparing for governing and managing cooperatives. Considering cooperatives as a value-based and principle-driven social enterprise, the Philippines implements various education initiatives ranging from formal education, certificate programs, immersion, apprenticeship, awards, exchange programs, and establishing a partnership with colleges and universities for the promotion and inclusion in the education system the cooperative standards for good governance and practices. **Poland** also promotes the education of young people on cooperative entrepreneurship and SSE as part of the National Program for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023.

Table 3. Cooperative education

<p>Compulsory cooperative education</p>	<p>Honduras: Article 8-B of the Honduran Cooperatives Law, Legislative Decree No. 174-2013 makes mandatory curricular programs on cooperatives at the primary, secondary and higher levels; Peru: Capacity Building 'MY.COOP - PERÚ Program' (2012-2018); Philippines: Modules on cooperatives are included in the Department of Education's Alternative Learning System; Cooperatives are integrated into the education programming including school curricula, including Pre-Registration Seminar for prospective members of a cooperatives; Timor-Leste: The State Secretary for cooperative affairs is mandated for education, training and information; *Uruguay: Program of Support for Cooperatives Working in Formal Education (PAECEF); *Argentina: National Education Law (after 2006 reform): Federal Education Council must promote the integration of cooperative and mutual organization principles and values into education and teacher training processes and must also promote school cooperatives and mutual organizations; *Costa Rica: Basic Law on Education makes teaching about cooperatives compulsory at all educational levels;</p>
<p>Other cooperative education initiatives</p>	<p>Mexico: Social Economy Workshops organised by Mexican Youth Institute (IMJUVE), the Tecnológico de Chalco and the National Pedagogical University (UPN). Training Program on Social and Solidarity Economy by the National Institute of the Social Economy (INAES); Mongolia: webinars for agricultural producers, SMEs and cooperatives, online training modules for SMEs Mongolian Youth Center and Center of Civic Education with the support of government and international organizations; Peru: MY.COOP - PERÚ Program; Poland: National Program for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023 contains educational initiatives on cooperatives; Portugal: Academia ES (2014-2016); Academia Y.ES (2020-2021); ILO: Think.COOP; My.COOP; Start.COOP;</p>

*Information from the ECLAS questionnaire response

In other countries cooperative education is not compulsory, but capacity building is a strong component of government policies and programmes. In **Mexico**, cooperative education is not yet integrated into school curricula, but the National Institute of the Social Economy (INAES) has carried out various initiatives, such as the Social Economy Workshops in 2020 for 174 people from the Mexican Youth Institute (IMJUVE), the Tecnológico de Chalco and the National Pedagogical University (UPN). INAES has developed a Training Program in Social and Solidarity Economy and has also organized 60 hours of online courses on financial education in collaboration with the National Commission for the Protection and Defense of Users of Financial Services (CONDUSEF), which had 142.955 registrations. In **Peru**, the

Capacity Building 'MY.COOP - PERÚ Program' was set up in collaboration with the ILO to improve the competitiveness of agricultural cooperatives and promotes cooperative education in four dimensions: business economics, socio-cooperative integration, and cooperative-cooperative integration. Between 2012 and 2018, 1,251 representatives (managers and workers) of 251 cooperatives from the departments of Arequipa, Ayacucho, Amazonas, Cusco, Cajamarca, Junín, Puno, San Martín, Cusco and Pasco participated in this program. In **Portugal**, a project called 'Academia ES' was implemented between 2014 and 2016 by Cooperativa António Sérgio para a Economia Social (CASES) to raise awareness and training of young people on Social Economy and to develop skills necessary for running collective social entrepreneurship projects. The three editions hosted 69 young participants and evolved into 'Academia Y.ES' project, which hosted 14 training sessions or 39 hours of training in 2020. In 2021, the University of Lisbon was also engaged in the development of a project for the creation of an online course, "Introduction to the Social Economy", to generate and disseminate knowledge on cooperative enterprise. In **Mongolia**, in 2020, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry, in collaboration with UNIDO, organized webinars for agricultural producers, SMEs and cooperatives with over 350 participants in all 21 of the country's provinces. Furthermore, with the support of the EU and EBRD, online training modules for SMEs have been developed covering 17 topics, while the Mongolian Youth Center and Center of Civic Education, with the support of international organizations, conducted an online training on "How to convert your traditional business to online" in 2021.

International organizations also support capacity-building and training on cooperatives. The **ILO**, for example, has multiple education resources that include Think.COOP training modules for potential cooperative members have been implemented in Cambodia, Myanmar, Turkey, Bolivia, Central African Republic, Madagascar, Mauritania, Comoros, the occupied Palestinian territory, Jordan, India, Timor-Leste, and Moldova. 'Start.COOP' is another initiative led by the ILO to start a cooperative in a participatory manner, while 'My. COOP' has been specifically designed for managing agricultural cooperatives and has benefitted so far to 64 countries and 154 organizations from around the world.

Although our study focused on the countries with active engagement and support of educational initiatives, in many other countries cooperatives are not part of education programmes and systems. In these countries, lack of university-level teaching translates into a deficit of structured knowledge about cooperatives with conceptual framing, their history and theoretical foundations, and undermines the regulatory and policy work but also practices of cooperative entrepreneurship.

EE Element 3: Cooperative Culture

Most of the analyzed countries have strong cooperative cultures. In **Poland**, for example, cooperative traditions have been developing for 150 years and are based on such principles as members' participation in the management, social solidarity and the inclusion of small producers in the economic system. Some countries incorporate cooperative principles and values in the bylaws, as this is the case of **Mexico**, where the recent amendments to the Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy included values of trust, self-management and social inclusion. In other countries, cooperative culture is an integral part of the education programmes on cooperatives. In **Costa Rica**, the High Council on Education promote cooperative values and principles through teaching curricula and school programme on cooperatives. Similarly, in **Argentina**, cooperative principles and values are promoted by the Federal Education Council as part of the education programmes. In **Uruguay**, students learn cooperative principles and values starting from primary school, whereas, in **Zimbabwe**, these values and principles are channelled into educational programming and school curricula by cooperative movement.

Since 2012, with the proclamation of the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) by the UN, it has become one of the important stages for reviving cooperative culture. Yearly celebrations of the Cooperative Day have launched multiple initiatives to support cooperatives, disseminate cooperative principles and values, including participatory democracy, financial education and inclusion. Within the scope of the IYC in 2012, in **Portugal**, the initiative GeraçãoCoop (CoopGeneration) was launched jointly by CASES, ANIMAR, CONFAGRI and CONFECOOP to raise awareness of the cooperative business model as an 'enhancer of participation, citizenship and entrepreneurship'. As a result, between 2012 and 2015, the initiative organized 31 thematic workshops that were held in educational institutions and other entities, involving around 1,190 participants. The COOPJOVEM Program on cooperative entrepreneurship for young people, together with building capacity and skills for agricultural cooperatives, also contributes to the development of a culture of solidarity and cooperation, which are important elements for defining professional projects and self-employment opportunities.

EE Element 4: Funding and Finance

Access to finance included mostly facilitating the access credit through collaterals, lowering the interest rates and creating special funds to finance cooperatives. Other funding and financial support tools consisted mainly in the creation of special funding schemes aimed at easing cooperative entrepreneurship.

- *Access to credit:* In **Timor-Leste**, the State Secretary for cooperative affairs ensures investments of credit capital to credit unions to allow members to benefit from low-interest rates. In **Portugal**, the Social Economy Support Program (SOCIAL INVESTE) and PADES (Social Economy Development Support Program) offer a subsidized credit line in the amount of 12.5 million euros with maximum financing in the amount of 100 thousand euros per entity. The credit line is destined for SSE actors, including cooperatives, to strengthen working capital, invest, and modernize business activities. Moreover, the National Microcredit Program, established in 2011, offers access to finance for business projects for vulnerable people, such as the unemployed or at risk of social exclusion. In **Mexico**, one of the objectives of the National Institute of the Social Economy (INAES) is to promote access to savings, credit, insurance and other financial services. In 2019, INAES distributed 830 grants to 238 savings and loan cooperatives for an amount of 264.6 million pesos, which represented 72.2 per cent of the total budget of the subsidy program. A quarter of this support was allocated to ensure the risk management of these cooperatives, provided that members of cooperatives are represented by low-income and marginalized communities. In **Peru**, the government plans the creation of a Fund for Cooperative Deposit Insurance. In **Mongolia**, the recent amendments to the law on cooperatives have defined what is a cooperative asset to allow cooperatives to present collateral for loans from commercial banks. In the **Philippines**, credit surety funds allow better access to finance for MSMEs, NGOs and cooperatives, enhancing their creditworthiness and broadening their access to the credit facilities from banks.
- *Special funding schemes:* In **Ecuador**, the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries promotes cooperatives as part of the MSME sector by making available alternative sources of financing and guarantee through seed capital fund, strengthening the national guarantee fund and linking with sources of financing such as the BanEcuador, National Financial Corporation and private banks. In **Poland**, the social orientation of cooperatives allows them to benefit from financial support from the Labor Fund and the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons. One of the main challenges of **Mongolian** cooperatives was accessing finance, and the new version of the law in 2021 foresees the creation of a fund for the development of

cooperatives. Other financial support tools included tax exemptions from value-added tax, notably for herders and farmers.

In some regions, cooperatives rely heavily on government financial support, which can question the ICA principle 4 on the autonomy and independence of cooperatives. However, there are studies that show that government support does not guarantee cooperatives' success.⁵⁹

EE Element 5: Networks and partnerships

The analysis of country experiences of cooperative development shows that networks and partnerships of cooperatives include a wide range of actors. Cooperatives engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships and also engage in bilateral collaborations with government agencies, education and research institutions, private intermediaries, international organizations and other cooperative groups and networks.

- **Government:** Partnerships with government institutions often necessitate an intermediary institution that brings together cooperative movement and government representatives. In **Honduras**, in 2021, the National Supervisory Council of Cooperatives (CONSUCOOP) and the Honduran Institute of Cooperativism (IHDECOOP) organized the first Cooperative Congress with a series of meetings between government authorities and the different representatives of the Federations together with the Honduran Confederation of Cooperatives (CHC). Collaboration with state institutions can sometimes challenge the 'autonomy' principle of cooperatives. An interesting case of framing these relations can be learnt from **Portuguese** experience, where the cooperation between the State and the SSE entities, including cooperatives, must obey the guiding principles of the Decree-Law No. 120/2015, of 30 June, which emphasizes that SSE are private institutions and delineates the aims and the areas of cooperation such as employment and vocational training, education and health, etc.
- **Education institutions:** Cooperative education can be developed in collaboration with educational institutions to run joint training programs on topics that are relevant for cooperative businesses. Our study has listed different examples of how cooperatives can establish collaboration with primary schools as in **Uruguay**, with students and universities as in **Portugal** for the creation of courses jointly with the University of Lisbon.
- **Research and Statistics:** Cooperatives increasingly realize the importance of partnerships with statistical and research institutions. In **Mexico**, cooperatives collaborate with the National Institute of Statistics and Geography and Informatics (INEGI) for the construction of a Satellite Account of the Social Economy that is designed to incorporate SSE contributions to the national economic aggregated data. Similarly, **Portugal** also established a Social Economy Satellite Account for social economy actors under the national statistical system through a collaboration between CASES and Statistics Portugal.
- **Private intermediaries:** Cooperatives establish close connections with private intermediaries for accessing markets and exports. In **Mexico**, the INAES facilitated the

⁵⁹ See, for example, Ortmann, G. F., & King, R. P. (2007). Agricultural Cooperatives I: History, Theory and Problems. *Agrekon*, 46(1), 18–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03031853.2007.9523760>;

engagement of SSE in the commercialization of products. It included the initiative that linked 69 organizations of SSE with Amazon, Mercado Libre, Mercado Solidario and Cempa Market for the sale of their products through electronic commerce.

- **International organizations:** Cooperatives closely collaborate with international organizations by implementing jointly technical cooperation programs and projects. This is the case in **Mongolia** which had implemented a few project collaborations with UNIDO, EU and EBRD to organize capacity-building sessions for cooperatives. For example, the **ILO** supported cooperatives for developing wider SSE policies, providing resources such as the Guidelines for cooperative legislation, the Story of the ILO's Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193), Promoting cooperatives: An information guide to ILO Recommendation No. 193.
- **Coop-to-coop cooperation:** Cooperatives are becoming increasingly aware of the potential of coop-to-coop cooperation at local and international levels. Locally, the national unions and associations play an important role in bridging cooperatives, exchange, peer-learning and policy advocacy: examples include the National Alliance of Cooperatives and National Association of Agricultural Cooperatives in **Mongolia** that have successfully held a series of consultation meetings/workshops at the local levels to help disseminate the best practices of existing cooperatives, expand opportunities for further cooperation and conduct monitoring of the attitude of members of cooperatives to cooperatives.
- **Multilateral collaboration networks:** There is a large variety of examples of how cooperatives can develop multilateral collaboration networks. In 2019 in **Mexico**, the first National Network of Social and Solidarity Economy Nodes (NODESS) was formed to develop territorial alliances of at least three actors: a higher education or research institution, an organization of the social sector of the economy and a local government body that aim to strengthen and promote the SSE in the territories where they are located. In the transport sector, in view of the implementation of the Mexican Aviation Cooperative Project with a purpose to define and integrate a nuclear group of actors participating in the training process for cooperatives, a multi-stakeholder network was established that included the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (SCT), the Mexican Aviation Company, the Trade Union Association of Pilots Aviators (ASPA), the National Union of Transport, Transformation, Aviation, Services and Similar Workers (SNTTTAS), the Coalition of Trusted Employees (CEC), the Association of Retirees, Workers and Former Workers of Mexican Aviation (AJTEAM), and the Trade Union Association of Aviation Flight Attendants (ASSSA). Collaboration for education can also be established through multi-stakeholder partnerships such as the one established for the **ILO** My.COOP training was built on the basis of a partnership of several organizations, including the International Training Centre of the ILO, the FAO, Agriterro, the Royal Tropical Institute and the Wageningen University and Research Centre.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study allowed to shed light on the diversity of cooperative experiences around the world from policymakers' perspectives. The study had, therefore, a clear policy focus, which allowed us to highlight a few policy recommendations based on the respondents' suggestions that are relevant for the UN agencies' and the member-states' support of cooperative movements:

1. **Supporting research on cooperative ecosystems.** A better understanding of how cooperatives serve their communities and how their experiences can be scaled up

require further investigation of cooperatives' ecosystems around the world. It is important to know how regional differences impact different ecosystem elements. The UN agencies could support generating comparative data at country level on the differences and similarities of the issues faced by cooperatives. It would allow gaining greater knowledge on how cooperative members and stakeholders evaluate the importance, the quality and the impact of different ecosystem elements on cooperatives' development, including policies and regulatory practices.

2. **Support to cooperatives as part of SSE policies and laws.** In the context of growing interest in SSE, cooperatives are hybrid organizations that combines multiple goals and institutional logic and represents alternative forms of organizing. It is therefore crucial to explore how cooperatives promote SSE, and how SSE policies impact cooperative member communities in such areas as building trust and social cohesion, achieving their environmental objectives, accessing health, education and other social services, as well as on its effects on the local culture, agriculture and fair trade, access to affordable accommodation, renewable energy, low-carbon forms of production and consumption and improved livelihood security, and others. UN agencies could further support with recognizing the role of cooperatives as part of SSE-oriented development polices at the global level.
3. **Capacity building** of cooperative members, employees, government agencies coordinating cooperatives and other stakeholders. Cooperatives' members in many countries are often represented by poor communities that lack access to education, financial literacy, and management principles, and yet, they face the need to take part in the governance of their cooperatives. Creating knowledge and awareness among different stakeholders about the important contribution that cooperatives make to economic and social, cultural and environmental development, but also on how to manage and regulate cooperatives in a way that it benefits to larger communities and contribute to employment and decent work. Capacity building could also improve institutional coordination between the government agencies mandated to support cooperatives.
4. **Deepening and widening knowledge on cooperatives.** Despite the existence of pockets of countries where cooperatives are integrated into the education systems, the ICA regularly reports on the challenges of cooperatives in collecting data and information due to lacking standardized data and statistics, resources and capacity. The deficit of structured knowledge on cooperatives hinders the perception of policymakers and society in general as part of the economic system. The ecosystem approach could not only map, but also deepen the understanding of cooperative educational processes by assessing the content and the quality of taught courses and materials. Other initiatives could include evaluating how the educational initiatives improve cooperatives' entrepreneurial and social practices. Increasing the quality and widening the channels of cooperative education by integrating them into existing business and administration programs, economics and law, development studies, and other fields could help to promote cooperative entrepreneurship.
5. **Generating information and data on cooperatives.** The absence of statistical information in many countries undermine monitoring and evaluation of cooperatives' economic contributions and social impact which disadvantage cooperatives compared to conventional enterprises. According to ECLAC, availability of universal, recurrent, systematized and comprehensive data and information on the cooperative landscape in countries is the crucial milestone of cooperatives' development. ECLAC stresses the importance of establishing systems for public information on cooperatives that could generate data and from censuses or satellite accounts on a recurrent basis. This would allow developing adapted public policies and better decision-making.

6. **Bridging and connecting different actors of cooperative development.** UN agencies are expected to bridge actors, gathering and disseminating good practices of cooperative activities and public policies directed at their support. Integration and dissemination of data, information and evidence on cooperatives could allow gaining a comparative perspective and improve cooperatives' regulation and financing, promotion. Constituents also expect assistance from the UN agencies on policies that regulate the collaborative and platform businesses, where cooperative model can play an important role. Also, there is a need for greater understanding of how cooperatives can make the best use of information and communication and digital technologies, especially in rural areas. Facilitating access to finance and grants with funding sources is also an important element, especially for cooperatives in developing countries run by marginalised and vulnerable communities.

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List of abbreviations:

EACB – European Association of Cooperative Banks

ECLAC – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

EE – Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

EU – European Union

ICA – International Cooperative Alliance

ILO – International Labour Office

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SME – Small and Medium Enterprise

SSE – Social and Solidarity Economy

UN – United Nations

UNDESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNRISD – United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

WB – World Bank

WFP – World Food Programme of the United Nations

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