Youth Committee Work Plan 2022-2026

During the last four years a lot has been accomplished in the Youth Network both at the level of work and at the ICA structural level. One of those changes was the creation of the ICA Youth Committee as a formal Thematic Committee of the ICA. The ICA Youth Network will continue for all youth cooperators to support and coordinate the activities and communications of the ICA Youth Committee. Learn more about the structures from the Rules of the ICA Youth Committee which can be referenced [here](#).

We are at a moment where despite the global circumstances to which we are not immune, we have managed to gain momentum.

The current global crisis and conflicts have shown us that there is unpredictability waiting around any corner. Yet, we have built a plan that will set the guides for this new Youth Committee to have a vision and a direction towards which we will set out efforts.

In order to generate an inclusive plan that is meaningful and inspiring for all the members we have passed a survey and the results of that survey have also been taken into account in this action plan.

Youth Visibility, belonging and representation

The Youth Committee's aim in this cycle of work is to strengthen the position of youth in the cooperative movement in general and to work for the presence and the involvement of the youth in the network and the structures of the ICA. To foster a sense of belonging and make this Youth Committee and Network a reference for cooperative youth and cooperative networks looking for youth.

In the previous cycle three different kinds of youth were identified that will continue to be relevant to this cycles' activity:

Working Youth. Young people that work in the cooperative movement but although they are potential key members of their organization and could be a great representative for the youth movement, they aren't yet engaged in the youth activity. These are very interesting because they can be supportive of their non-youth fellow cooperators that already take part in the ICA activities.

Entrepreneurs. Those who are young create cooperative ventures and work to promote this form of entrepreneurship among youth in different sectors. These are normally the ones that take most of the attention because they tick a lot of boxes when it comes to "empowerment" but they are "just" one out of three in our categories.

Potential Cooperators. Those people that believe in the cooperative principles but aren't part of the movement yet, they can become one of the two categories mentioned above. But also those that do not know about the movement just yet and that as youth committee and representatives we should work to reach and engage during these years.

In the previous cycle there was a strong activity in the mapping and identification of youth lead cooperatives worldwide and the creation of a toolkit to foster youth cooperative entrepreneurship.

In this cycle the Couth Committee plans to keep the effort but there will also be a big effort on identifying youth cooperators in existing cooperatives and in the involvement of these current and potential members in the activities of the Network.

We will also be working to strengthen the regions and the national activity to generate stronger regional platforms. There are many countries that have organizations in the ICA and yet do not have members in the Youth Committee. This cycle will also focus on incorporating young cooperators and reinforce our geographical presence. There will also be a big support to generate national level youth networks that would ensure representativity and participation and widen diversity.

This identification of youth within the current member organizations of the ICA would allow the Youth Committee to grow as well as to become stronger in the positioning, w highlighting also the power of the national and regional movements to strengthen the global network in a distributed decentralized manner when generating action, initiatives and local and regional development. Visibility, empowering and engagement of youth in organizations in every sector will encourage participation of this youth in national, regional and international structures as well as participation in panels and events, raising the voice of youth as experts and opinion generators.

The strengthening of the Committee and the empowerment of its members will generate activity and visibility for cooperative youth and youth lead initiatives leading to a revaluation of the youth contribution. Members of the Youth Committee and Network, and the organization itself, will raise their profiles in the cooperative movement and beyond.

Trends and verticals

As stated before, youth are present in every sector, but through these years we would really like to stress the work on three verticals that we think impact the whole movement on a greater scale.

Education and Training. To have more cooperatives we need entrepreneurs. To generate better projects within existing cooperatives we need intrapreneurs. In short, we need more cooperators. And these do not "pop out of nowhere". Cooperators are made and training and skill building is one of the main ways of fostering it. Many young people don't create or don't feel their coops, not because they aren't aligned with their values, but because they don't know of their existence. This is a work that we should be looking into in the next few years.

Previous projects such as *GYF20/GYF21* have proved the eagerness of the youth constituency to learn and share knowledge in different setups. This year will keep up with the work of strengthening the Network and the ability of young cooperators to learn together.

Education and training will allow connection among young cooperators which will most likely lead to peer support and empowerment. Youth connection will be encouraged and supported by the Youth Committee in order to establish long-term spaces for dialogue and sharing in informal digital spaces.

The goals will be:

- To have a physical global youth gathering for youth cooperative empowering and training, *GYF.*
- To have a youth cooperative leadership and training program to empower and train young leaders worldwide and support their engagement in cooperative organizations and structures.

Cooperative Entrepreneurship. Linked to the point above. To generate jobs and wealth, there needs to be work. This vertical has already been worked on in the previous cycle, with projects like the *Replication Project* that supported the funding and creation of 8 projects in the four regions and 1 project in two regions. More projects like this should be encouraged and the Youth Network is an excellent space to prototype potential entrepreneurial projects to set an example in the wider cooperative movement.

The goals will be:

- To generate more activity and projects related to youth leadership and empowerment within the movement. To generate a *Replication Project* program that enables new youth-lead cooperatives to succeed and be developed.
- Related to a cooperative youth leadership program, to generate an online training program in line with the already existing *Toolkit* and the Coops4Dev *Young People and Cooperatives, a Perfect Match?* report to share the knowledge in cooperatives and youth.

IT and Tech. In so many forums youth and digital are like magnets, they tend to stick to each other. Maybe it is the closeness to technology, the generational change or maybe it is just a belief. But it is very true in so many forums. During the last year, there has been a growing number of young people that have created or visualised their tech cooperative, creating an international network and developing projects together.

This is a field that will grow and will create jobs and wealth and as youth we should be part of the movement as it will not only generate revenue but shape the reality we live in and thus, the cooperative identity and model as we know it.

The goals will be:

- To generate an "expert group" that can (co)lead the dialogues and participate in the spaces generated by the ICA in relation to the various digitization and digital development topics. This group can serve as touching point for the international cooperative organizations within the ICA and beyond.
- To generate a vision and shared understanding of how the use of technology can influence cooperative identity and how cooperatives can utilise technology without losing their values and principles.