



International Cooperative
Banking Association

KU LEUVEN

CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR
COOPERATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

KCO KU Leuven- ICBA Virtual Round-table – 18 November 2021

14.00-16.00 CEST

HOW DO FINANCIAL COOPERATIVES CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Cooperatives financial institutions (CFIs) represent a diversity of institutional forms: cooperative banks, credit unions, building societies, savings and credit associations, self-help mutual credit systems and others. Their business model, enrooted in local economies and member-based governance structure, and cooperative values and principles, allowed them to become significant players in the banking sectors in all regions of the world. In Europe, cooperative banks provide access to finance [through 43,000 outlets and employ approximately 705,000 people](#). In Italy, France, Germany and the Netherlands, cooperative banks' [market share in loans ranges between 25% and 45%](#). In other parts of the world, [85,000 credit unions improve the lives and communities of 274 million members](#).

Recent developments show that financial cooperatives are the champions of sustainable development. They continue to play a significant role in promoting resilience in times of crisis ([Birchall, Ketilson, 2009](#)) and contribute to sustainable development in many ways: by committing to Sustainable Development Goals ([ICBA, 2020](#)), promoting solidarity finance ([Balkenhol, 2019](#)), engaging in green and sustainable finance and fight against climate change ([EACB, 2020](#)). Increasing pressure for sustainability reporting, therefore, represents an opportunity to make visible their cooperative difference. Still, it also represents a challenge for smaller institutions in emerging regulatory and supervisory environments.

The virtual round-table on the contributions of the CFIs to sustainable development will take place on **18 November 2021 from 14:00 to 16:00 CEST**. Please register [following this Zoom link](#).

The discussion will be opened by the welcoming speech of **Mr Bhima Subrahmanyam**, the President of the International Cooperative Banking Alliance (ICBA). It will be followed by the presentation of the preliminary results of the study on how ICBA members contribute and report on sustainable development. The meeting will bring together CFI practitioners and experts on financial cooperatives around two themes:

I. Financial cooperatives and the SDGs: what is the cooperative advantage?

Moderated by Dr Nazik Beishenaly, KU Leuven

Panelists:

- Prof. **Bernd Balkenhol**, University of Geneva, Former Director of Social Finance Unit at ILO
- **Juan Buchenau**, Senior Financial Sector Specialist, World Bank
- Prof. **Bert D'Espallier**, Professor of Financial Management, KU Leuven
- **Hans Loth**, Global Head UN Environment Partnership at Rabobank Group

II. How to make visible CFI sustainable impact at a global level?

Moderated by Dr Ruth Yeoman, Kellogg College, University of Oxford

Panelists:

- **Elisa Bevilacqua**, Head of Department Sustainable Finance at European Association of Co-operative Banks
- Prof. **Eric Lamarque**, Director Paris Sorbonne Business School, IAS
- **Gildas Poissonnier**, Director, Sustainability and Responsible Finance at Desjardins Group, Canada

This round-table discussion will allow the ICBA members to draw conclusions for the General Assembly and the World Cooperative Congress on 30 November 2021 in Seoul, South Korea.

Organizers:

The Centre of Expertise for Cooperative Entrepreneurship (KCO) is a joint initiative of the KU Leuven, Boerenbond and Cera. Since its foundation in 2016, the KCO has been striving to put cooperatives as a resilient and value-driven organizational model on the agenda of scientific research and education. To better understand the particular challenges and unprecedented potential of the cooperative model, the KCO initiates and participates in Belgian and international research projects on, among other things, the different types of cooperatives and their democratic governance, the cooperative identity, internationalization, and sustainable development. In addition, the KCO aims at knowledge transfer and exchange through teaching activities at different levels, always closely linked to the practical experience of the cooperative sector.

Website: <http://feb.kuleuven.be/drc/kco>

International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA) encompasses 51 cooperatives members from around the globe. ICBA was first established as the International Cooperative Banking Committee in 1922, and since then its activities are closely linked to the activities of the ICA. In 1984, ICBA became a full-fledged sectoral organization of the ICA, which requires from ICBA members to be directly or indirectly affiliated to the ICA. Despite being less active compared to other sectoral organizations of the ICA, however, today, there is a growing need for international representation of CFIs for strengthening their voice in the globalized world, intensify knowledge exchanges and coordinate policy and communication initiatives.

Website: <https://www.icba.coop/history.php>