



Guidelines to Member States for the Creation of a National Committee for the International Year of Cooperatives 2012

Why create a National Committee?

National Committees are essential for the effective coordination of activities and initiatives to mark any international year. No international year can be truly successful without them. National Committees will be key in ensuring that the messages for the International Year of Cooperatives at the international level are effectively conveyed to stakeholders at the national and local levels.

As outlined in ECOSOC resolution 1980/67, international years serve to further international cooperation and understanding on issues of global concern, and serve as a platform for finding solutions to these global problems. This objective cannot be accomplished unless it draws on the input of those most affected by any given problem. As such, ECOSOC resolution 1980/67 recommends that Member States lead the celebratory efforts, with any measures and activities carried out at the international level serving to complement and support their national efforts.

For the International Year of Cooperatives (**Co-opYear**) 2012, National Committees should work towards the following three main objectives which are aligned with the key objectives of the **Co-opYear**:

1. ***Increase awareness*** about cooperatives and how they function within various sectors to support and enhance socio-economic development at the national, community and individual levels;
2. ***Promote cooperative enterprise*** as a means of socio-economic empowerment for individuals and communities, and support capacity development for the growth of efficient and effective cooperatives; and
3. ***Work with stakeholders*** to provide input and support to the creation of a policy and legislative environment conducive to cooperative formation and success.

National Committees benefit from the preparatory work at the international level, including the official website and the official logo for the Year, the calendar of events and publications prepared by the United Nations.

How to organize a National Committee?

A National Committee should be an inclusive body made up of actors at the country-level, such as local governments, representatives of cooperatives and other stakeholders, relevant members of civil-society and NGOs, relevant private sector institutions, academia and the media.

Step 1: Establish a Focal Point: The first step to forming a National Committee is to establish a focal point or work desk within an already existing, related government ministry or department. Some examples of relevant ministries/departments would be those holding the portfolios of Commerce, Employment/Labour, and/or Development (Economic and or Social). Member States are encouraged to provide contact information for their focal point to the International Coordinating Committee for the year (see “How to communicate your efforts?” below).

Step 2: Identify Relevant Stakeholders: The next step is for Member States to reach out to all relevant stakeholders to promote the level of diversity and partnership necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the National Committee. As such the National Committee should ideally comprise:

- Representatives of relevant government ministries/departments;
 - o Portfolios to be considered include: Commerce, Employment/Labour, Economic and/or Social Development, Poverty Eradication, and Gender Empowerment.
- Representatives of the cooperative movement;
 - o The National Committee should aim to include input from cooperatives across all sectors. Where possible, cooperative representation on the National Committee may be best realised by working with a national membership-based organization of cooperatives, either across or within sectors.
- Relevant representation from Civil Society Organizations, specifically those addressing issues of decent work and/or poverty eradication;
- Representatives of the legal fraternity; specifically those addressing business and/or employment law;
- Representation of relevant research institutions and/or academia; specifically those focussed on development, employment and/or poverty-eradication as research themes; and
- Relevant representation of United Nations country teams.

What kinds of activities should a National Committee implement?

National Committees are encouraged to **develop, as appropriate, a plan of action containing activities and initiatives** for the year and beyond that is relevant to the needs of their communities and constituents.

1. Design and publish locally focussed outreach and promotional materials on the International Year of Cooperatives. This could include brochures, pamphlets and a National Committee website linked to the official United Nations **Co-opYear** website.
2. Prepare an agenda for national action for the **Co-opYear** and beyond.
3. Host meetings, conferences and special events on national and local priority issues related to cooperatives.
4. Develop a media campaign to raise awareness about cooperatives and their contribution to individual and community development, with a specific emphasis on electronic media.
5. Develop policy and legislative suggestions directed at creating an enabling environment for cooperatives.
6. Develop and disseminate comprehensive guidelines on cooperative formation.
7. Coordinate capacity building seminars and training aimed at developing the professionalism and effectiveness of cooperatives.
8. Establish research centres or work with existing research institutions to develop research and data on cooperatives.
9. Document events and initiatives carried out in celebration of the year.
10. Prepare an evaluation report at the end of the **Co-opYear** documenting the activities carried out, their success, impact and lessons learned.

Should national level activities focus on a specific theme?

The slogan for **Co-opYear 2012** is “**Cooperative enterprises build a better world.**” This slogan draws attention to the important role of cooperatives in promoting and advancing social and economic development. National Committees are thus encouraged to formulate thematically relevant activities, focused on the contribution of cooperatives to the achievement of the internationally agreed upon development goals, including the Millennium development Goals. This focus allows for the incorporation of a wide range of nationally and locally relevant topics and perspectives, while still contributing to the international dialogue on cooperatives, their contributions and their development.

The following list provides some suggestions of possible themes for **Co-opYear** activities:

- Cooperative enterprise and inclusive development
- Cooperatives and women: self-help, livelihood and empowerment
- Cooperatives and youth employment: reversing the crisis
- Encouraging entrepreneurship through cooperatives
- Working our way out of poverty: the cooperative business model
- Cooperatives, credit unions and affordable financial services
- Cooperatives and mutuals: providing social protection
- Cooperatives: strengthening the agricultural sector
- Cooperatives: competitive players in the world's biggest businesses
- Encouraging cooperative formation
- Tax laws and cooperative enterprise
- Cooperatives and legal recognition

How to communicate your efforts?

To ensure that the valuable efforts of your National Committee are recognized at the international level, it is important to establish a clear line of communication to the International Coordinating Committee of the International Year of Cooperatives.

You can reach the Coordinating committee through the official **Co-opYear** website at: social.un.org/coopsyear. National Committees are strongly encouraged to register their activities and events on the calendar of events at **the Co-opYear website**.

National activities that are listed on the Co-opYear’s official website can serve as models for international activities and/or similar activities by other National Committees. In addition, activities reported to the Coordinating Committee will inform global level reports on the Co-opYear.

Can National Committees use the Official Co-opYear logo?

Yes. However, National Committees are reminded that use of the **Co-opYear** logo is permitted only within the guidelines provided. In particular, **the official logo of the United Nations is not permitted for use** in **Co-opYear** activities, publications, etc. unless prior permission has been provided by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs. Guidelines on the use of the **Co-opYear** logo will be posted on the Co-opYear’s official website once approved by the UN Office of Legal Affairs.

Who funds a National Committee?

The operational budget for any National Committee should ideally come from a central government allocation.

In sourcing funds for national and local level activities National Committees should also explore resources within their membership, and/or cooperate with non-member stakeholders to secure budgetary and extra-budgetary finance. Financing could be sought from one or more of the following sources:

- Allocations from concerned ministries and public agencies;
- Funding from government and other institutions for sector-specific projects in their areas;
- Contributions from institutions represented on the National Committee (**This should not be a condition attached to their involvement in the work of the Committee**);
- Fees, where appropriate, for attendance at National Committee activities (**Such fees should not present a barrier to committee participation**); and/or
- Voluntary sponsorship from relevant organizations, including:
 - Cooperative organizations;
 - Philanthropic foundations focused on inclusive social and economic development, better business, or entrepreneurship; and
 - Private sector companies with budgets for community development initiatives, specifically those championing poverty eradication, employment generation, inclusive finance and/or gender equality and women's empowerment.

Thank you for your support of the International Year of Cooperatives 2012.