

Youth European Statement to the ICA Regional Assembly for Europe October, 2002, Lisbon (Portugal)

First of all we would like to thank:

ICA Europe, ICA Europe President Mr Lars Hillbom, ICA Regional Director Ms Gabriella Sozanski, the Portuguese Host Organization, and our own organisations, namely **the epESaJMS - Escola Profissional de Economia Social Academia José Moreira da Silva, UniNorte - União Coopertiva Polivalente da Região Norte, and FENACHE - Federação Nacional de Cooperativa de Habitação, from Portugal**, for their help and encouragement in the promotion of the 1st European Youth Conference. We also want to give a special thank you to Stefania Marcone for her constant support.

The first Youth Conference held in conjunction with the ICA Regional Assembly for Europe (Lisbon, 9 October 2002) gathered 67 delegates representing 8 countries: Portugal, Spain, UK, Italy, Croatia, Russia, Poland and Slovakia. This number is a clear statement of youth involvement in the international co-operative movement.

All presentations were made under the headings of new experiences of co-operative entrepreneurship, employment and empowerment. The presentations made by the young managers and leaders reflected the diversity, the enthusiasm and vitality of young co-operators and new co-operative experiences towards the co-operative form of enterprise.

The issues addressed are the mirror of the young leaders and co-operators' concerns in a globalizing and economically centred world. Facing unemployment and lack of opportunities, young people see the co-operative way as the best way to fulfil their dreams.

Vitor dreamt of creating a band, Amália wanted to work with digital video, Carolina wished to promote fair trade and ethic tourism, Eduardo wanted a house, Ricardo wished to become a Lifesaving professional, to them, co-operatives were the best solution.

Therefore Vitor, from Portugal, formed a Cultural Co-operative Band - **Banda Tuti - Fruti**, that now promotes concerts all around Portugal; Amália, from Italy, created a tribe for digital video that she now calls **Digital Desk**, a co-operative for new technologies ; Carolina, a Brazilian in Portugal, is involved in a fair trade co-operative, called **Mó de Vida**; Eduardo, a Portuguese from the Housing Co-operative **Casa Jovem/Guarda**, is still working for his house, Ricardo, another Portuguese, developed the first Lifesaving Cooperative in Portugal, **ASNASACOOOP** - a Lifesaving Cooperative. All of them shared their professional and day to day experience as leaders, workers and members of co-operatives.

Also co-operative and non co-operative institutions participated in this 1st Youth European Conference, emphasizing the importance of education, formation and support to the effective development of young entrepreneurship, among them ILO – International Labour

Organization, The National Auditing Union of Workers co-operatives, from Poland, The Woodcraft Folk Co-operative, from UK, the CoopFond, from Italy, INSCOOP, from Portugal.

Also young co-operators presented their web projects aiming to approach more and more non co-operative youth to the co-operative principles, in this sense our friends, Amanda and Nicole presented the Co-operative Learning Centre website and the Portuguese hosts presented their project for youth cooperative mobility, which will become part of the Youth Working Group's common objectives and co-ordinated by Academia José Moreira da Silva, in Porto.

We also want to stress the lively and constructive discussion that aroused during the day. It is expressed in the Statement of the Youth European conference that we now present.

This Conference has concluded that there is a great need for continuity of the activities of young people within the co-operative movement. It was acknowledged that there are a great many differences within Europe with different cultures that affect all co-operatives in different ways. To accommodate these many differences and tackle the lack of continuity, the conference feels that it would be beneficial to create a more structured European youth network.

Our Aim:

- To empower and involve more young people of all European countries in the co-operative movement;
- Improve communication between the young co-operators and create continuity for the movement;
- Give a solid structure to our actions.

The Method:

- We feel that establishing a European working group would be the best way to achieve our aim.

The purposes of the European working group are as follows:

- To keep in touch, create links between young co-operators and create a network;
- To establish better links with the ICA European Council and open up communications channels in both directions by permitting representatives of the European working group to have a seat as an observer or participant in all structures and activities of ICA Europe, for example Regional Assembly and different European meetings
- To have spaces for young people co-operatives, perspectives and experience, and a special focus on youth in all the regional, local and sectorial events and meetings since we believe youth is a cross cutting issue and has to be involved at all levels
- To have young people committees and groups inside national organizations
- To create and keep links with institutions, schools, universities, associations to contact young people and promote cooperation
- To provide support to young co-operators projects that involve different countries
- To highlight case studies of young people success within cooperatives

- To promote young people experience in cooperation
- To ask the European Council to support and work alongside this working group to create a four year youth strategy

The youth delegation has worked together in cooperation to produce this statement.

We ask ICA Europe to accept our proposal and views and offer us support. In return we offer the ICA fresh ideas, vitality and young entrepreneurs' initiative with our efforts to develop and create cooperation amongst the youth of today.

To achieve all these goals we urge ICA members to commit themselves to including young people in their national delegations

We are the present not only the future. We take care of the cooperative movement now and we will continue to take care of it.

Quoting President Barberini "Freedom is Responsibility" we ask you to give us the opportunity to show you our responsibility.

Thank you, in the name of the Youth European Conference.