



# ► Decent work and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE): **Focus on the Americas**

Cooperatives Unit, Enterprises Department

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## ► General Discussion on Decent Work and the SSE at the 2022 International Labour Conference

- Why a General Discussion on Decent Work and the SSE?
- What is the Office's proposed definition on the SSE for discussion?
- What is the state of the art of the SSE at the global and in the Americas?
- How can the SSE contribute to decent work and sustainable development?
- How is the SSE related to the work of the ILO constituents?
- What does the ILO do to advance the SSE?
- What are the next steps in the lead up to the general discussion?

# ► Why a General Discussion on Decent Work and the SSE?

## ► The decision

- Decision taken by the 341st Governing Body (GB) of the ILO in 2021 hold a General Discussion on “Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)”
- This is the first time that the International Labour Conference (ILC) will have a general discussion on the SSE





## ▶ The global context leading to this ILC General Discussion

- ▶ Growing attention from governments and social partners on **human-centred economic models**.
- ▶ Opportunity to shed light on the growing **diversity of enterprise models** that combine social, economic and environmental objectives.
- ▶ The SSE has gained further recognition for its role during the **global financial crises** and the recent COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ Relevance of the SSE in **building resilience** in the **post-pandemic era**.



## ▶ The expected outcomes of the ILC Committee on Decent work and the SSE

- ▶ Propose a **universal definition** of the term “social and solidarity economy”, including its associated principles and values
- ▶ **Assess the contribution of the SSE** to managing and promoting the overall support for people through the transitions they face in their working lives
- ▶ **Provide policy guidelines** for a conducive environment for the SSE
- ▶ **Provide guidance to the Office** on how to engage in promoting and advancing the SSE
- ▶ Encourage the Office to **establish and maintain partnerships** with SSE stakeholders



**What is the Office's proposed definition on the SSE for discussion?**



## ▶ The SSE is an umbrella term that covers institutional units based on values and principles

Values and principles have featured prominently in recent legislation on the SSE, based on a review of selected legislation on the SSE. Most common **values** include:

- ▶ Care for people and the planet
- ▶ Egalitarianism
- ▶ Interdependence
- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Self-governance





## ▶ A set of SSE **principles** operationalizes the set of SSE values

- ▶ Voluntary cooperation
- ▶ Social or public purpose
- ▶ Autonomy and independence
- ▶ Prohibition or limitation of profit distribution
- ▶ Democratic and participatory governance



## ► The SSE includes **organizational forms** operating in accordance with values and principles

They include:

- Cooperatives
- Mutual societies
- Associations
- Foundations
- Self-help groups
- Social enterprises



## ► Proposed **definition** based on values, principles and organizational types

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) encompasses institutional units with a **social or public purpose**, engaged in economic activities based on **voluntary cooperation, democratic and participatory governance, autonomy and independence**, whose rules prohibit or limit the distribution of profit.

SSE units may include **cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, self-help groups** and other units operating in accordance with SSE values and principles in the formal and the informal economies.



► **What is the state of art on the SSE  
at the global level and in the  
Americas?**



## ▶ A global overview of the SSE

### Traditional and new forms:

- ▶ Terminology rooted in different traditions (e.g. social economy, third sector, non-profit sector)
- ▶ Traditional forms (e.g. associations, cooperatives, mutuals) and new forms (e.g. social enterprises) and sectors

### Institutional support:

- ▶ Growing support from regional institutions (e.g. African Union, European Union, Organization of American States, Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

### Policy and legislation:

- ▶ Emerging policies and laws on the SSE
- ▶ Update of existing policies and laws of organizational forms under the SSE





### Statistics:

- ▶ Lack of internationally agreed guidelines on SSE statistics
- ▶ Few regions, countries with statistical initiatives, including by their SSE organizations (e.g. Quebec, Portugal)
- ▶ International federations (e.g. International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation, International Cooperative Alliance) gather data on the organizational forms under the SSE

## Overview of the SSE in the Americas (1)



- ▶ **Solidarity-based practices** found **before the establishment of the modern state** in the Americas
- ▶ **Indigenous peoples** have a long tradition of community-based cooperation
- ▶ The SSE has been referred to as the social/solidarity/popular economy and the social sector
- ▶ Governments are **adopting SSE policies and mainstreaming the SSE** into public policy frameworks
- ▶ Some countries (e.g. Colombia, Ecuador, Uruguay, Mexico, Honduras, province of Quebec in Canada) adopted **SSE framework laws**

 COUNTRIES WITH A NATIONAL CONSTITUTION THAT REFERS INDIRECTLY TO THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)  
 COUNTRIES WITH A NATIONAL LAW ON THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY  
 COUNTRIES WITH A DRAFT LAW ON THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN THE PROCESS OF BEING ENACTED  
 COUNTRIES WITH REGIONAL, FEDERAL OR PROVINCIAL LAWS ON THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

## ► Overview of the SSE in the Americas (2)

- **Lack of reliable and comparable statistics** on the SSE with a few exceptions such as Quebec in Canada and Mexico
- The SSE is represented in the **regional organizations** (e.g. Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Southern Common Markets)
- Active **regional networks** on the SSE (e.g. Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy in Latin America and the Caribbean, Network of Latin American Researchers of the Social and Solidarity Economy)



## SSE in the region

### Canada

- ▶ 5,812 non-financial cooperatives employ 105,000 persons and generate US\$40.7 billion annually
- ▶ Quebec has 11,000 SSE units, employing 220,000 persons and generating a turnover of 47.8 billion Canadian dollars
- ▶ Quebec has a SSE framework law

### Mexico

- ▶ 61,000 SSE units with 12 million members, including 15,000 cooperatives, 100 unions and 8 confederations
- ▶ Federal law on SSE



## SSE in the region

### Costa Rica

- ▶ Has more than 6,600 SSE units
- ▶ 21% of Costa Ricans were members of cooperatives in 2012
- ▶ Sectors: finance and insurance, commerce, industry and agriculture
- ▶ Farmer cooperatives concluded collective insurance agreements with the Costa Rican Social Security Fund
- ▶ Public policy and action plan on the SSE (2021–25)
- ▶ Establishment of a National Chamber of the Social Solidarity Economy (CANAESS)

### Jamaica

- ▶ Has 50 credit unions
- ▶ Over 50 per cent of those active in the agricultural sector are a member of agricultural cooperatives

## SSE in the region

### Argentina

- ▶ Over 80% of rural electricity run by cooperatives. servicing 7 million people
- ▶ 7,000 mutuels provide health services to over 2.5 million people, providing 40% of private health services
- ▶ Entre Rios, Mendoza and Rio Negro adopted SSE legislation
- ▶ Successful examples of transition to worker ownership following the financial crisis
- ▶ Confederation of Informal Economy Workers (CTEP) campaigns for the recognition of informal economy actors by the Government and provide insurance and education services

► **How can the SSE contribute to decent work and sustainable development?**

## ▶ Contributions of the SSE to decent work and sustainable development

- ▶ Employment and income generation
- ▶ Social protection and the provision of social services
- ▶ Rights at work
- ▶ Gender equality
- ▶ Social dialogue
- ▶ Transition to the formal economy
- ▶ Crisis prevention and recovery, and promotion of peace and resilience
- ▶ Just digital transition
- ▶ Just transition to environmental sustainability



## ▶ The SSE and employment and income generation

- ▶ The SSE generates direct and indirect employment (e.g. 11,000 SSE units in Quebec employ 220,000 persons; credit unions in the USA employed more than 315,000 people in 2021)
- ▶ SSE units participate across various stages of supply chains
- ▶ SSE units provide a wide range of services to their members, and/or in their communities that improve incomes and livelihoods (e.g. Project HOME in Philadelphia provides employment opportunities to persons experiencing chronic homelessness)
- ▶ SSE units create jobs through worker-owned enterprises (Successful examples of transition to worker ownership exist in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, and the United States, including Puerto Rico)
- ▶ Access to finance remains a challenge for SSE units



## ► The SSE, social protection and provision of social services

- The SSE facilitates access to social protection for their members (e.g. farmer cooperatives in Costa Rica concluded collective insurance agreements with the Costa Rican Social Security Fund)
- SSE units provide health and care services to their members (e.g. In Argentina, 7,000 mutuels provide health services to over 2.5 million people, providing 40 per cent of private health services)
- SSE units are established to provide health care and other care services (e.g. pharmacy cooperatives, care cooperatives, community associations)
- SSE units play a critical role for rural and informal economy workers who may face challenges accessing formal social protection system



## ▶ The SSE and rights at work

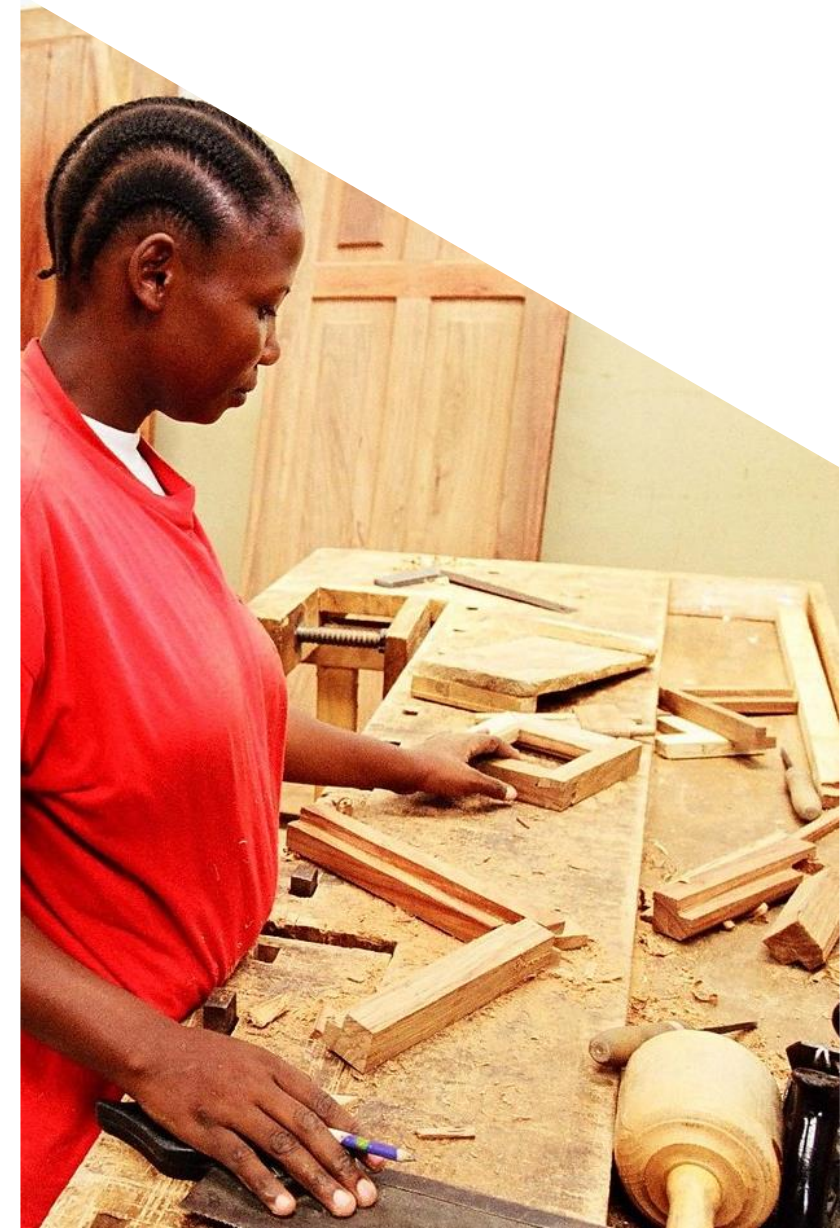
- ▶ SSE units are required to comply with international labour standards (ILS) and national labour legislation in respect of their employment relationships
- ▶ ILS refer to the SSE or organizational forms that fall under it (e.g. R. 193, R. 204, R. 205)
- ▶ The SSE promotes compliance with ILS among their members and undertake joint initiatives with other community actors to advance their rights (e.g. in Trinidad and Tobago, the National Union of Domestic Employees and its Service Workers Centre Cooperative have been advocating for national legislation to protect the labour rights of domestic workers)
- ▶ Labour laws must be applied to avoid the misuse of the organizational forms that fall under the SSE (e.g. pseudo cooperatives)





## ▶ The SSE and gender equality

- ▶ SSE units promote gender equality and advance SDG 5 by:
  - strengthening participation of women in the SSE, in membership and leadership positions
  - developing SSE units in economic sectors with higher participation of women (e.g. care economy)
  - providing affordable and accessible services for women
  - giving women the opportunity to engage in decision-making and power-sharing
- ▶ SSE units may be constrained by legal provisions, social norms and historical inequalities
- ▶ When established by and for women, SSE units can help overcome social and cultural constraints



## ► The SSE and social dialogue

- In some countries, SSE vertical structures take part in social dialogue institutions
- Representatives of SSE units can take part in cross-border social dialogue mechanisms, notably in regional integration communities





## The SSE and the transition to the formal economy

- ▶ The impact of COVID-19 has been particularly severe on the world's two billion informal workers (IW)
- ▶ Their earnings remain far below pre-pandemic levels
- ▶ Women IW are disproportionately burdened with unpaid care work within households
- ▶ Informal own-account workers can organize into SSE units to transition to the formal economy
- ▶ Vertical SSE structures of IW provide them with voice and representation
- ▶ SSE units help scale up informal economy units via:
  - Enhancing their bargaining position
  - Scaling up their activities through collective forms of entrepreneurship
  - Facilitating workers' access to social protection (e.g. the Confederation of Informal Economy Workers (CTEP) in Argentina campaigns for the recognition of informal economy actors by the Government and runs a mutual insurance scheme and educational programmes for its members)



## ► The SSE and crisis prevention and recovery, promotion of peace and resilience

- The SSE plays a role in preventing and recovering from crises caused by conflict and disaster
- SSE units were agents in addressing adverse effects of COVID-19 crisis
- SSE units support members and communities during economic downturns (e.g. Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative in Canada supports 2,000 migrant and refugee families each year to access services)
- SSE units cooperate with governments and development partners seeking to address needs of refugees and host communities
- The SSE participates in rebuilding communities in post-conflict settings (e.g. in Colombia, SSE units played a central role in post-conflict local recovery and development by contributing to efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants and build peace)





## ► The SSE and **just digital** transition

- SSE units contribute to making digital transitions fairer, by connecting businesses and customers to employees (e.g. Green Taxi Cooperative, based in Denver, is a unionized worker cooperative with a smartphone taxi-hailing service that is owned and operated by its members)
- SSE units use digital work platforms to help transform business processes with implications for the future of work
- The SSE offers a range of alternatives for workers, producers and users of digital services, including online applications that they own and control (e.g. Cataki mobile application connects waste pickers to waste generators in Sao Paulo, free of charge. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it distributed face masks and created an online crowdsourcing campaign to support waste pickers)



## ► The SSE and the **just transition to environmental sustainability**

- SSE units in agriculture, housing and energy are greening their operations and lowering their environmental footprint
- SSE units contribute to environmental sustainability by producing and selling products and services in green sectors (e.g. renewable energy, recycled materials, e-waste recycling) (e.g. In Brazil, COOPERBIO is a biodiesel cooperative bringing together 25,000 that collects biomass and produce biodiesel and ethanol using castor bean, jatropha, sunflower and other plants)
- Waste pickers in informal economy have set up a variety of SSE units, mainly in Latin America and South and Southeast Asia (e.g. Cooperative Association of Recyclers of Bogotá (ARB), a federation of 17 cooperative organizations representing around 1,800 waste pickers, negotiates with the municipality, government and the private sector)
- The SSE contributes to food networks associated with fair trade, solidarity purchasing and collective provisioning



► **How is the SSE related to the work of the ILO constituents?**



## ▶ ILO Constituents and the SSE

- ▶ The promotion of the SSE to advance decent work and sustainable development calls for **new forms of cooperation** between governments, employers, workers and societies at large
- ▶ Respecting SSE values and principles requires putting **workers' rights** and the **needs, aspirations and rights of all people** at the heart of policies and enterprise-level practices
- ▶ A **conducive environment** for the SSE can best be developed through tripartite participation and in consultation with other relevant and representative SSE organizations



## ▶ Governments

- ▶ Recognition of the SSE in **policy** and **legislation** (e.g. constitutional level, framework laws, strategies, decrees)
  - ▶ Enactment of SSE policy and legislation followed by the creation or strengthening of **government institutions** that regulate and support the SSE
  - ▶ Commitment to developing the SSE often generate **policy coherence** and **coordination** mechanisms across policy areas
  - ▶ An **environment conducive** to sustainable SSE enterprises applies to sustainable enterprises more generally
- ▶ It is important to ensure a **level playing field** for SSE units, on terms no less favourable than those accorded to other forms of enterprise and social organization



## Workers' organizations

- ▶ Workers' organizations and SSE units share **common values** and **principles, history**, and occasionally **intersecting institutions**
- ▶ Workers' organizations **have established SSE units** in retail, affordable housing, small-scale finance, mutual insurance, education and training, and employment preservation to benefit their members
- ▶ Workers' organizations and SSE units collaborate in the **informal economy**
- ▶ Workers' organizations occasionally build **alliances** with the SSE to pursue common goals

- ▶ Workers' organizations could **advise and assist workers in the SSE** to join workers' organizations, and assist their members to establish SSE units





## Employers' organizations

- ▶ SSE units and SSE vertical structures **may join existing employers' organizations**
  - ▶ Employers' organizations may **develop structures and extend services** to SSE units and their horizontal and vertical structures
  - ▶ SSE units may also **set up** their own employers' organizations
  - ▶ Vertical and horizontal structures of the SSE may be represented in **international private sector platforms** along with other employers' organizations
- ▶ Employers' organizations could consider, where appropriate, **the extension of membership** to SSE units and provide appropriate support services on the same terms and conditions applying to other members



► **What does the ILO do to advance the SSE for decent work?**

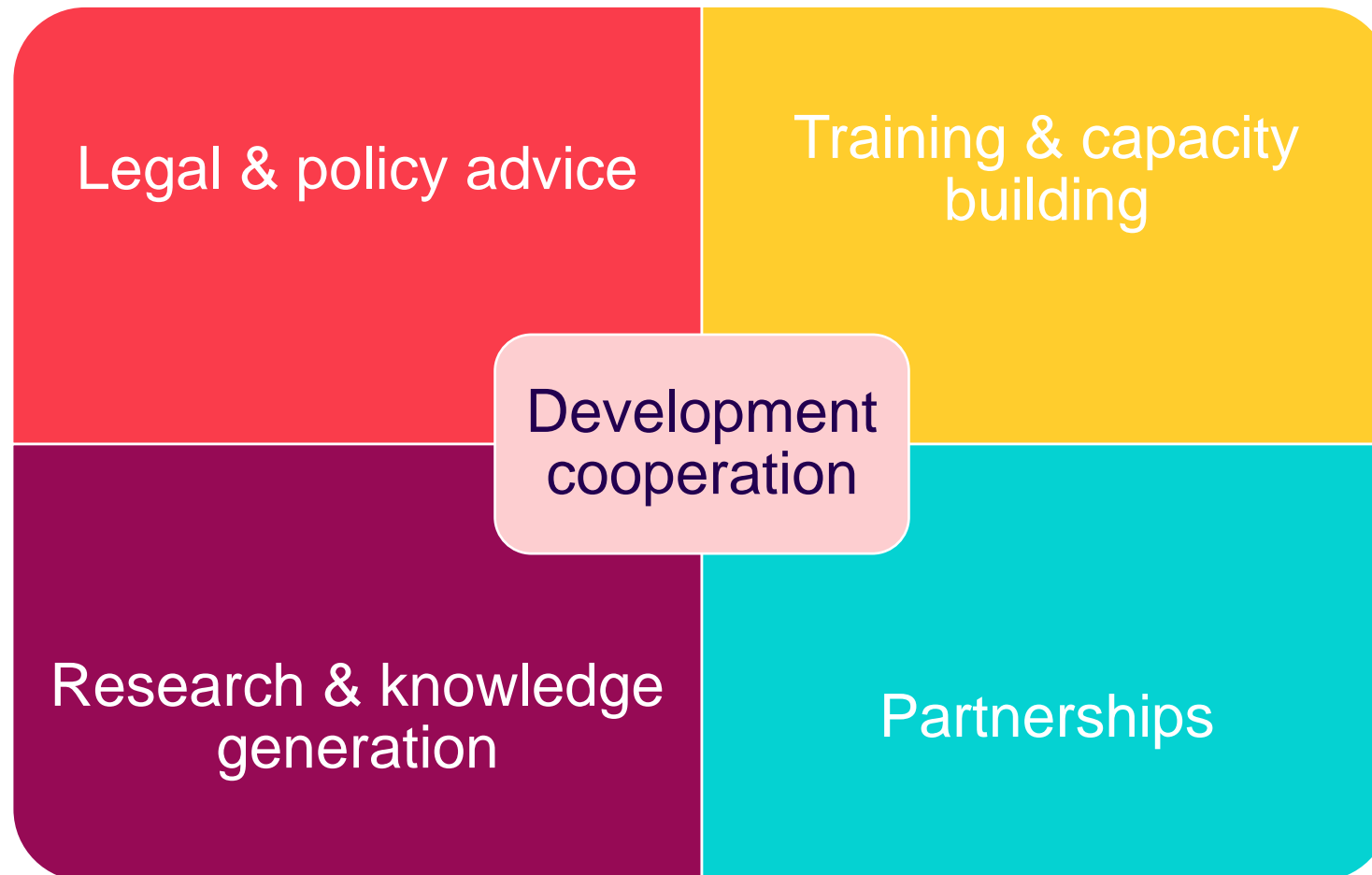


## ILO's Cooperatives Unit (ILO COOP)

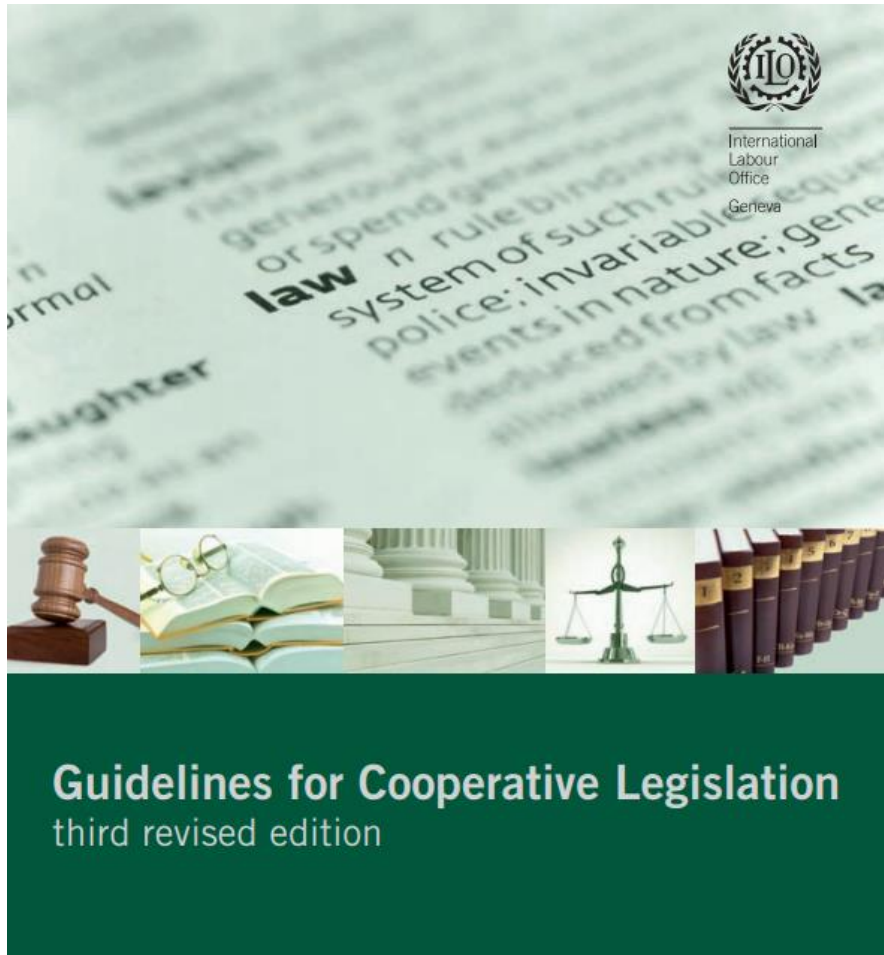
- ▶ ILO COOP was established in 1920 by a decision of its Third Governing Body
- ▶ It has worked on advancing cooperatives for over a century in responding to Constituents' requests in partnership with cooperative organizations
- ▶ In the past decade the ILO has been developing a portfolio of work on the wider SSE
- ▶ The Office uses a “one ILO” approach in incorporating SSE units into its programmes



## ► ILO Services on the SSE



## Legal and policy advice



- ▶ The ILO provides legal and policy advice based on its Recommendation on the Promotion of Cooperatives, 2002 (No. 193)
- ▶ More than 117 countries have used the recommendation and the ILO's guidelines for cooperative legislation to support the review and development of cooperative policies and laws
- ▶ The Office has been receiving requests from the Constituents in Member States to support development of SSE policies and legislation
- ▶ Recent requests for support include technical assistance in implementing SSE policies

## Research and knowledge generation

- ▶ Improving the understanding of the role of cooperatives and the wider SSE in advancing decent work and sustainable development
- ▶ Advancing the international guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives adopted at the 20<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians for harmonized and comparable data on cooperatives
- ▶ Producing research papers and briefs (e.g. child labour, forced displacement, platform economy, renewable energy, and the creative economy)
- ▶ Dissemination of knowledge through the ILO topical pages on cooperatives and the wider SSE, monthly e-newsletters, videos on cooperatives and the wider SSE on, webinars, blogs, podcasts, interviews and conferences



[Monthly newsletter >](#)



[Statistics on Cooperatives Countries in Focus series >](#)



[Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030 series >](#)



[Cooperatives and the World of Work Series >](#)



[Cooperative legislation and policy >](#)

## Some ILO publications

Public policies for the social and solidarity economy: Towards a favourable environment The case of the Brazil, Costa Rica and Nicaragua



Social and Solidarity Economy and the Future of Work



Mapping the SSE Landscape in India and Brazil through South-South and Triangular Cooperation: Gender-Based Initiatives in Social and Solidarity Economy



Social and Solidarity Economy and South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Contributions to Inclusive Sustainable Development



All publications are available at: [ilo.org/coop](http://ilo.org/coop)



## Training and capacity building - **Key** ILO tools

Our.Coop  
Activity-based training tools for those who  
want to understand, create and manage  
cooperatives



## ► Policy dialogue & knowledge platforms

- **SSE Academy**: Brings together practitioners and policymakers from around the world to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned on the SSE
- **SSE Collective Brain**: Knowledge hub of the ILO SSE Academy to facilitate exchange and cooperation beyond the face-to-face interactions during the SSE Academy



## ► Development Cooperation (DC)

The ILO's DC projects support development of SSE units in advancing decent work and sustainable development.

- Formalization of the informal economy
- Promotion of universal health coverage
- Elimination of child labour and forced labour
- Advancement of youth employment and women economic empowerment
- Creation of income-generation opportunities in conflict/disaster affected communities and promoting peace and social cohesion
- Trade facilitation

## Development cooperation: Focus on Latin and Central America

### Mexico

Collaboration with the National Institute of Social Economy to institutionalize the ILO tools on cooperative development (Think.Coop and Start.Coop)

### Bolivia

Capacity building training for over 600 participants from 20 cooperatives in the mining sector from La Paz, Potosi, Oruro, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz

### Costa Rica

Technical support to the development of the first public national policy on the SSE





## Partnerships

### UN Task Force on the SSE (UNTFSSSE)

- ▶ The ILO co-founded and currently chairs the UNTFSSSE
- ▶ 18 UN Agencies and the OECD as members and 13 civil society organizations as observers

### SSE organizations and research centers

- ▶ SSE umbrella organizations at international (e.g. GSEF, RIPESS) and national level (e.g. JCCU, Legacoop)
- ▶ Research institutions, such as: CIRIEC international; EURICSE; HIVA, EMES International

### Cooperative focused partnerships

- ▶ The ICA has a General Consultative Status at the ILO since 1919 and has an MoU signed in 2019 using the Future of Work as a framework
- ▶ The ILO is member of COPAC, a multi-stakeholder partnership between representatives of the cooperative movement

### Regional focused partnerships

- ▶ CELAC, MERCOSUR, OAS and ECLAC

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# **What are the next steps in the lead up to the general discussion?**

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## Challenges and Recommendations

- ▶ Despite the growing momentum around the SSE, significant challenges remain regarding data, legislation, support institutions and services
- ▶ A conducive environment for the SSE should be developed through tripartite participation with representative organizations of employers and workers
- ▶ Based on the conclusions of the general discussion, the Office is expected to further fine-tune its services on the SSE in support of its Constituents and in partnership with SSE organizations



## How to engage with the general discussion on Decent Work and the SSE

**Download** and read the report (available including in Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog, Sinhala and Spanish)

**Disseminate** the report and hold discussions around it in your countries

As ILO constituents or observers, **follow** the ILC general discussion in June 2022 at the ILC





# Thank you!

## For more information, see:

- ▶ [ILO topical page on cooperatives](#)
- ▶ [ILO topical page on the SSE](#)

## To stay connected:

- ▶ [Sign up for ILO's monthly enewsletter on cooperatives and the wider SSE](#)
- ▶ Follow twitter accounts on the ILO's work on cooperatives and the wider SSE ([@coopsemploy](#) and [@sseacb](#))

