

Events

COOPERATIVE LAW RELATED INTERNATIONAL EVENTS IN 2022

Hagen H e n r y

Three international events were at least to a considerable extent dedicated to cooperative law in 2022. In chronological order these events were: the European Research Conference 2022 of the International Cooperative Alliance Committee on Cooperative Research from 13 to 15 July in Athens (ICA CCR conference); the VIII Congreso Continental de Derecho Cooperativo [VIII Continental Congress on Cooperative Law], organized by the Regional Organization of the Americas of the ICA from 27 to 29 October in Asunción/Paraguay (Congreso Continental); and the Centennial Event of the International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA Centennial) from 17 to 19 November in Brussels.

The ICA CCR conference under the overall theme of “Rethinking co-operatives: from local to global and from the past to the future” further consolidated the now regular place of cooperative law in this biannual event. Already the densely stuffed pre-conference for young scholars highlighted the relevance of cooperative law and its dia-disciplinary character. The unprecedented high number of young participants throughout the conference matched the overall conference theme. It attested to the renewed interest in the cooperative idea. It reflected in the conference atmosphere and in many session themes and individual contributions: modern technologies in general, digitization & digitalization, platform arrangements, sustainable development ... to name but a few of these subjects.

Out of 29 sessions, framed by four plenaries, at least three were entirely dedicated to cooperative law (Taxation and cooperatives; Cooperative law and policy; Roundtable discussion on the proposed Model Law for Cooperatives in Greece). Another six sessions dealt partly with cooperative legal issues (Cooperatives and social economy; Cooperatives and social enterprises; Law and policies for socially responsible public procurement; Reflections on the cooperative principles and their adaptation to current social, economic and environmental demands I and II; Cooperative law, policy and politics).

No simple conclusion can be drawn from the wide array of presentations, discussions, exchanges, except the one that cooperative law is slowly finding its earned place in research. Ius Cooperativum hopes, of course, that the same level of interest will be demonstrated on the occasion of the next ICA CCR conference to be held from 10 to 13 July this year in Leuven/Belgium.

As for the Congreso Continental, it was another milestone in the history of these congresses, stretching over a period of more than half a century (see our report on the celebration of its 50th anniversary in 2019 in San José/Costa Rica in the IJCL IV). Starting with the first such congress in 1969, these events have been masterminded by Professor Dante Cracogna. This Congress was

held back-to-back with the VI Summit of the Regional Organization of the Americas of the ICA under the theme of “The cooperative identity and cooperative law post-pandemic”. Besides the subjects that have had a long tradition during these congresses, such as the “Acto cooperativo e identidad cooperativa [cooperative act and cooperative identity - “cooperative act” being the term used in many laws in the region to distinguish the relationships within cooperative organizations from commercial and civil law relationships]”, the “Realization of the 7th ICA Principle [Concern for community]” and “Regulation and supervision”, the Congress took up new developments, which the Covid 19 pandemic had given a boost, such as “Technology, democracy and cooperative governance”. The remaining three themes dealt with “Unemployment, decent work and worker cooperatives”, with “The use by cooperatives of new energy sources” and with “Innovation and new frontiers of the cooperative enterprise”.

The contributions, as well as the key notes, will soon be made available by the Regional Organization of the Americas of the ICA.

During the same week the International Academy of Comparative Law held its General Congress in Asunción. It was the second time in recent history that an event on cooperative law and on comparative law took place concomitantly in the same city. The first time this happened in 2016 in Montevideo/Uruguay where Ius Cooperativum had organized the first ever International Forum of Cooperative Law. The organization of these Fora is one of the three main activities of Ius Cooperativum.

The undersigned availed himself of the opportunity to present the work of Ius Cooperativum during a session of this General Congress to which he reported on the integration of cooperatives and cooperative law into a project by Unidroit that is to elaborate a guide on the Legal Structure of Agricultural Enterprises (LSAE). Ius Cooperativum might want to explore possibilities to join hands with the Academy and with Unidroit.

Finally, the ICBA Centennial. As the name indicates, the event was to celebrate the 100 years of this association. The Presidency of the association, under the leadership of Dr. Subrahmanyam Bhima, and the Director of Legislation of the ICA, Santosh Kumar, had organized the event in two intertwined, mutually enriching parts: a ‘Thought-leaders’ Symposium’ on the first day and a more practice-oriented second day on the ‘Future of cooperative financial institutions’. On both days cooperative law played a central role. Hardly any contribution or discussion point, which did not relate to cooperative law. Many of the contributions attested to the specificities of cooperative banks, which general cooperative laws often do adequately accommodate. Many participants were of the opinion that indeed the link between national law and the cooperative principles of the ICA and international law is worth exploring further.

Here too, the undersigned used the opportunity to add to his contributions’ information on the activities of Ius Cooperativum and to extend an invitation to join the association.