

PRESS RELEASE

First world map of cooperative cultural heritage sites unveiled

Brasília, 12 November 2025

Today, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) officially launched the Cooperative Cultural Heritage Platform and the first World Map of sites illustrating how cooperation has shaped culture, education, and livelihoods across generations. Unveiled in a ceremony at the Itamaraty Palace in Brasília — headquarters of Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an architectural masterpiece by Oscar Niemeyer — the platform marks a small yet historic step in safeguarding and celebrating the cooperative movement's living cultural legacy.

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“Cooperatives are not only enterprises; they are bearers of culture, history, and identity,” said Ariel Guarco, President of the ICA. “With this global map, we celebrate cooperation as humanity’s shared heritage—linking people and communities through solidarity and self-help.”

The inaugural 2025 edition highlights 31 founding heritage sites from 25 countries across all regions, from the birthplace of modern cooperation in Rochdale (UK) and the Monumento ao Cooperativismo in Nova Petrópolis (Brazil) to the Amul Dairy Cooperative and Verghese Kurien Museum (India), the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (USA), Moshi Co-operative University (Tanzania), and the ILO Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit (Switzerland). The map was built together with ICA Members Organisation of Brazilian Cooperatives (OCB) and National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) of India, through close collaboration with the ICA Global Office.

“These sites are living classrooms of solidarity,” said Márcio Lopes de Freitas, President of OCB. “They show that cooperation is both history and horizon a cultural force that continues to build fairer societies.”

“I am delighted to share that NCDC has partnered on the technical front in developing this global platform and website, contributing to the documentation and showcase of the timeless legacy of cooperation for the world to see,” said Pankaj Bansal (IAS) Managing Director, NCDC.

A number of high-level dignitaries attended the event, including Vanderley Tiger, Secretary of Family Farming and Agroecology; Ambassador Maria Laura de Rocha, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr Rodrigo Lima, Special Advisor to the Director's Office (UNESCO).

A Global Launch and the Beginning of a Nomination Process

The launch marks the beginning of a global nomination process through which cooperatives, federations, and communities worldwide can propose sites, institutions, and living traditions that reflect the cooperative identity.

This process will be guided by clear international criteria defined in the new [Charter on the Recognition of Cooperative Cultural Heritage Sites \(Version 1.0 - 2025\)](#). These standards ensure that each recognised site demonstrates authenticity, community participation, inclusivity, sustainability, and a continuing cooperative mission.

The ICA invites all member organisations, federations, researchers, and citizens to:

- Explore the 2025 world map of cooperative heritage;
- Review the Charter and selection criteria; and
- Nominate new sites and traditions representing cooperative culture in their countries, the process is open at <https://www.culturalheritage.coop/criteriaAndNomination> .

Recognised nominations will receive the ICA - CCH Label and be featured on the Global Map with a Statement of Recognition from the ICA. For support, contact help@culturalheritage.coop.

The Cooperative Cultural Heritage initiative is led by the [ICA Working Group on Cooperative Cultural Heritage \(CCH-WG\)](#), chaired by ICA Director General Jeroen Douglas with the mentorship of Márcio Lopes De Freitas, President of the OCB. The group brings together co-operators from Morocco, Germany, Nigeria, India, Japan, the UK, Brazil, and the United States.

Coming Soon: The Intangible Cooperative Heritage List

Building on this momentum, the ICA announced the upcoming release of the Intangible Cooperative Heritage List (foreseen in 2026)—a register of oral traditions, practices, and rituals that embody cooperative culture. This next phase will complement the physical heritage map by highlighting living traditions that carry cooperative values into the future.

The ICA's cultural work also aligns closely with its participation in UNESCO MONDIACULT 2025 held in Barcelona, where the ICA co-hosted the session [“Cooperatives in Culture for Diversity, Cultural Rights and Decent Work.”](#) The ICA reaffirmed that culture must be recognised as a pillar of sustainable development, with cooperatives as key actors in linking cultural rights and decent work.

About the ICA Cooperative Cultural Heritage Programme

The ICA Cooperative Cultural Heritage Programme is a global initiative to identify, document, and safeguard cooperative heritage worldwide—both tangible and intangible. Led by the ICA Global Office in Brussels with mentorship from OCB (Brazil) and technical partnership with NCDC (India), it seeks to integrate cooperative heritage into the global cultural and development agenda.

About the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)

Founded in 1895, the ICA is the world's largest and oldest non-governmental organisation representing cooperatives. It unites over 320 federations and organisations from 110 countries, representing more than 1 billion cooperative members worldwide. The ICA promotes cooperation as a vehicle for social inclusion, economic democracy, and sustainable development.