

Dear Members of the ICA Youth Committee,

I am honoured to submit my candidacy for the position of Member-at-Large for Europe within the ICA Youth Committee. As a current member of the Committee, I have had the privilege of experiencing firsthand the strength and value of bringing together young cooperators from different regions, sectors and backgrounds. This experience has reinforced my commitment to contributing to a more connected, inclusive and impactful global youth cooperative movement.

Over the past years, through my work at Haliéus, the NGO of Legacoop, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with cooperative organizations, ICA regional offices and local communities across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. These experiences have allowed me to understand both the diversity of cooperative realities around the world and the common aspirations shared by young people everywhere: to have their voices heard, to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, and to create sustainable opportunities for themselves and their communities.

My engagement in the cooperative movement has also grown through my role within the Executive Committee of Generazioni Lazio, the network representing young cooperators of Legacoop in the Lazio region. This experience has strengthened my understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the new generations within the cooperative sector, while allowing me to contribute to creating spaces where young members can exchange experiences, develop leadership skills and actively shape the future of cooperation. Through Generazioni Lazio, I have further deepened my commitment to ensuring that young cooperators are not only beneficiaries of the movement, but active protagonists of its evolution.

What inspires me most is witnessing how cooperation can translate values into concrete change. Whether supporting youth coffee cooperatives in Vietnam and Laos, promoting local development initiatives in Palestine, or working with artisanal fishery cooperatives across the Mediterranean, I have seen how democratic enterprises empower people to become leaders of their own development. These experiences have strengthened my belief that cooperation is not only an economic model, but a powerful tool for inclusion, resilience, social innovation and peace.

Throughout my professional journey, I have coordinated international partnerships, facilitated exchanges among cooperative organizations, organized training activities and study visits, and contributed to strengthening collaboration within the ICA network.

If elected as Member-at-Large for Europe, I would like to continue building bridges among young cooperators across regions, promoting the exchange of ideas, experiences and good practices, and ensuring that youth perspectives are meaningfully represented within international cooperative decision-making spaces. I see Europe as a region with a strong cooperative tradition and a responsibility to foster dialogue, solidarity and collaboration with young cooperators worldwide.

I believe that young people do not simply represent the future of the cooperative movement, but they are already shaping its present. However, for young cooperators to fully contribute, they need meaningful opportunities to participate, access to knowledge and networks, and the trust to take on leadership responsibilities. At a time when cooperatives are called upon to respond to major global challenges, including climate change, digital transformation, social inequalities and changing models of work, as well peace, we must ensure that young generations are empowered not only to engage in these conversations, but to lead them.

I am committed to bringing energy, openness and a collaborative spirit to the ICA Youth Committee, while continuing to learn from the richness and diversity of our global movement. It would be a privilege to actively represent European cooperative movement within the Committee and to work alongside fellow young cooperators to strengthen a cooperative movement that is innovative, inclusive and capable of responding to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

*Claudia Colabella*