Speak up Scale up

International Cooperative Alliance

ICA Communications Strategy
2026 – 2030



September 2026

Speak up Scale up

Why This Strategy Matters Now

The global system is undergoing structural transformation marked by **geopolitical fragmentation, inequality, concentration of technological power**, AI acceleration, and declining institutional trust. In this context, **the cooperative model is systemically relevant but must be articulated strategically, clearly, consistently and credibly.**

Also, the post-International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) and United Nations (UN) declaration for the IYC celebrated every decade is a multiplier of this need and movement responsibility in the current social, economic and environmental context. **In conclusion, if we do not define the narrative, others will define it for us.**

Cooperatives offer a **proven, democratic and values-based model**, yet remains poorly understood outside the movement, seen as an alternative to the mainstream economic narrative and overshadowed by dominant capitalist models.

Therefore, the **ICA has both a historic responsibility, and a strategic opportunity** to transform global economic futures.

And the cooperative movement has also a responsibility in terms of applying its principles, and more concretely *Principle 5. Education, Training, **and Information**:* "Cooperatives (…) inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of cooperation." This Communications Strategy proposes to put this principle **strategically into practice**.

The ICA Communications Strategy 2026 - 2030 positions communication as a governance instrument for **legitimacy, influence, and long-term positioning**.

Yours coopratively,



ICA Communications Committee Chair
Iñigo Albizuri



ICA Communications Director
Leire Luengo

The Five Pillars

This Communications Strategy positions communications as a **core strategic function** of the International Cooperative Alliance. It is not a technical plan about channels or content.

This strategy, is based on 5 pillars – and presented here in 10 chapters.



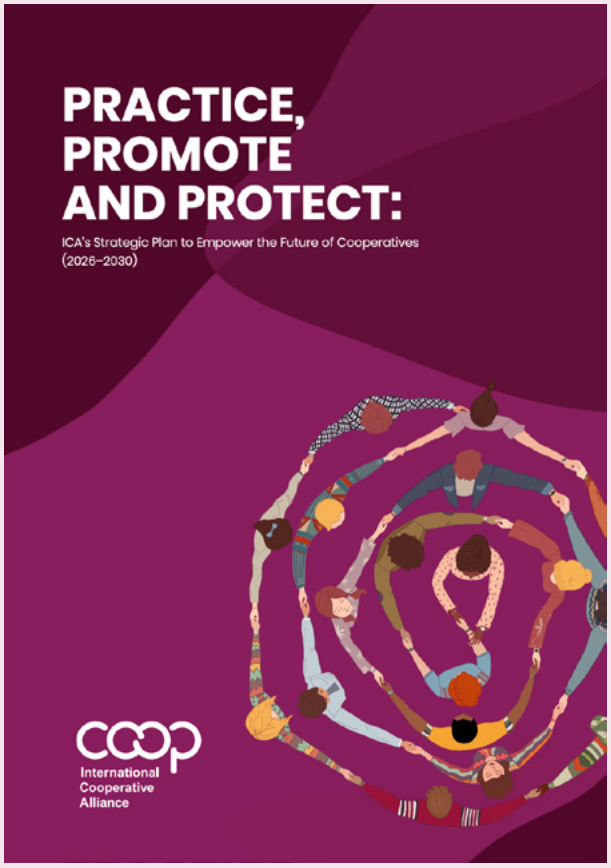
1 From Alternative to Systemic Economic Actor

2 Institutional Autonomy & Credibility

3 Winning the Cultural & Digital Space

4 Democratic Governance in the Digital Economy

5 Core Narrative



Introduction

This strategy directly supports the ICA Strategy 2026–2030: Practice, Promote, Protect.

Communications contributes to:

PRACTICE – by strengthening education, unity and intercooperation across the movement;

PROMOTE – by positioning cooperatives as systemic business actors in the market;

PROTECT – by safeguarding the Cooperative Identity and ICA's institutional credibility.

The mission (alpha) of the ICA remains to unite, represent and serve the cooperative movement worldwide. Unity across regions, cultures and sectors is our foundational responsibility. The vision (omega) is a world in which cooperatives flourish in the market, do business together, and create prosperity for their members while strengthening communities. **Communications must reflect both dimensions: identity and economic strength**.

The ICA core narrative **Cooperatives build a better world** is intentionally simple, but strategically robust. It expresses both a values-based commitment and a systemic economic proposition. It positions cooperatives not as a niche alternative, but as a credible business ecosystem capable of competing in the market while strengthening communities. As further developed in the section on winning the cultural battle, **this narrative must be carried not only through policy arguments, but through compelling human stories** that demonstrate real economic impact and social value. Influence today depends on economic credibility combined with emotional resonance.

This document also addresses institutional neutrality and reputation. The ICA engages globally, including in countries with diverse political systems and complex international dynamics. In this context, the organisation of events and the visibility of government involvement can generate reputational risk. The guiding principle is clear: the ICA is close to the cooperative movement everywhere, but not tied to governments anywhere. **Our legitimacy derives from the Cooperative Principles**, not political alignment. Communications must safeguard that independence consistently.

We have benchmarked six organisations among them are NGO's, multilateral institutions and business platforms (Section 5, from page 16) which clarifies ICA's distinct role. Several patterns emerge, among them the fact that **communications is treated as a strategic investment, not a support function.** Finally, recommendations show how communications, treated strategically, becomes a **multiplier of ICA's mission, reinforcing unity, credibility and influence**.

The strategy is the result of a series of consultations with **communications professionals** from ICA structure organisations. On 26 February a communications committee meeting was dedicated to discussing this document, animated by Communications Committee Chair Inigo Albizuri and ICA Communications Director Leire Luengo the following staff members participated:

- CCW and Eurocoop Communications Officer, Annalisa de Chirico,
- CICOPA and CECOP Communications Officer, Ilaria Battu,
- Cooperatives Europe Communications Officer, Pieter Jan Herman,
- Cooperative Housing International Coordinator, Andreea Nacu,
- Cooperatives of the Americas communications team: Patricio Suarez and Maria José Elizondo,
- ICA Africa Communications Officer, Della Waweru,
- ICA Asia Pacific Communications team, Shivali Sarna and Ayushman Madhwal,
- ICMIF Communications Manager, Alison Grant,
- IHCO Secretary General, Jose Pérez,
- DotCoop Community Development Manager, Tom Ivey.

The ICA Board discussed the **2026–2030 Communications Strategy in March 2026**, presented by Iñigo Albizuri Landazábal, emphasizing communications as a **governance-level driver** of legitimacy, influence, and cooperative identity. Debate focused on budget constraints and leveraging existing resources, and the need for **strategic coordination** across regions. Board members welcomed the document positively and agreed on prioritizing **digital platforms, coherent messaging, and global visibility**, while ensuring communications remain **proactive and integrated in strategic planning, values-driven and market-credible, and embedded in decision-making**. The Communications Committee did not receive further comments after the Board meeting. **This document was approved by the ICA Board in August 2026**.



Strategic Foundation: Mission & Vision

Mission (Alpha) – UNITY

The mission of the International Cooperative Alliance is to unite, represent and serve the cooperative movement worldwide, rooted in shared values, principles and identity.

Unity is the ICA's foundational role:

- uniting regions, sectors and cultures,
- creating a shared sense of belonging,
- enabling cooperation despite diversity.

This mission underpins all ICA communications.

Mission (Omega) – MARKET STRENGTH

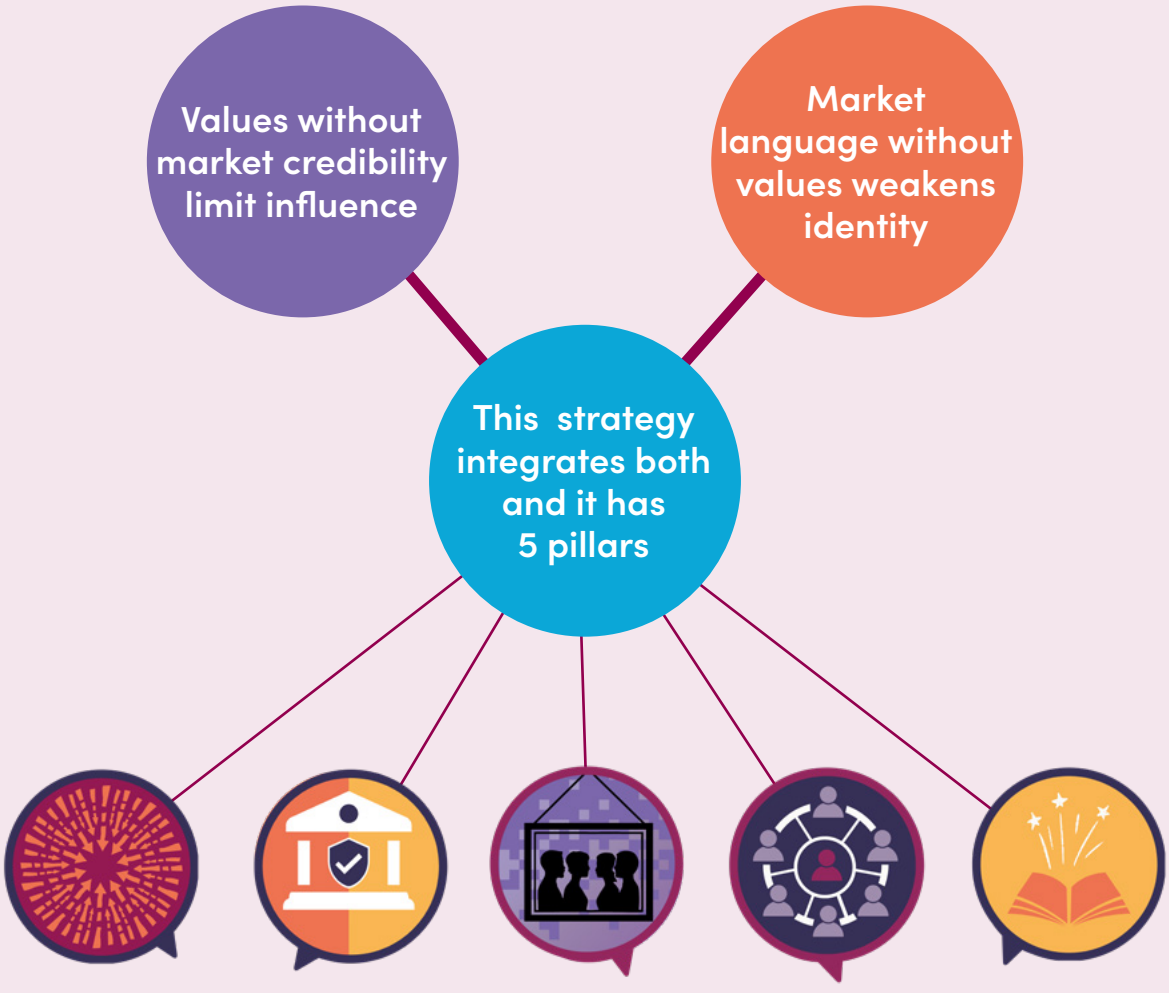
The ICA's vision is a world in which cooperatives operate strongly and successfully in the market, doing business together in a cooperative way, and creating prosperity for their members while contributing to sustainable and inclusive communities. This vision recognises that:

- markets and business are not contrary by themselves to cooperative values,
- cooperatives must be economically healthy to be socially impactful,
- policy, law and advocacy must ultimately translate into:
  - fair taxation,
  - access to public procurement,
  - enabling legislation, so that cooperatives can flourish in the market space and build a more inclusive society.

Communications must reflect this strategic direction clearly.

Conclusion: ICA communications should reflect these two pillars: our mission and our vision.

Communication integrates identity and economic credibility: values and market strength reinforce each other.





1. From Alternative to Systemic Economic Actor

Cooperatives are not an alternative model, but a systemic business ecosystem characterized by shared ownership, democratic governance, and **long-term value creation.**

FROM	TO
• Reactive communication	• Narrative leadership
• Fragmented messaging	• Global coherence with local adaptability
• "Alternative model" positioning	• Systemic economic positioning
• Values-only framing	• Integration of values + market strength
	• Democratic governance applied to emerging economic systems

This is a positioning decision.

The strategy strengthens economic language, positions intercooperation as resilience, and presents cooperative governance as competitive advantage.

Cooperatives as Systemic Business Ecosystem

We move beyond the "alternative model" narrative.

Cooperatives are:

- **Builders of resilient business ecosystems**
- **Drivers of distributed value chains**
- Practitioners of **democratic governance in enterprise**
- **Long-term value creators** embedded in communities

This strengthens policy influence and global positioning.

"Cooperation is another (different and better) way of doing business; social progress has always been done through cooperation rather than confrontation."



2. Institutional Autonomy & Credibility

Clear principle:

ICA remains close to cooperatives everywhere, tied to no government anywhere.

Communications must proactively safeguard autonomy and protect global credibility.

Legitimacy derives from the **Cooperative Principles, institutional independence, and representative mandate.**



3. Winning the Cultural & Digital Space

Influence today requires:

- **Human stories**
- **Emotional resonance**
- **Economic evidence**
- **Digital amplification**
- **Digital cooperative sovereignty**

Communications must normalize cooperatives as competitive, resilient enterprises.



4. Democratic Governance in the Digital Economy

The strategy introduces democratic governance applied to the digital economy and cooperative approaches to technological infrastructure

- **Cooperative sovereignty with digital platforms (CoopCloud)**
- **Democratically governed AI**
- **Collective data stewardship**
- **Distributed innovation networks**



5. Core Narrative

"Cooperatives build a better world."

Sub-themes include:

- **Democracy at work**
- **Resilient Business Ecosystems**
- **Inclusive Markets**
- **Community-Embedded Growth**
- **Bottom up globalisation**
- **School of Democracy**

ICA communications must position cooperatives as **serious economic actors in the market**, showing that **cooperation in business is a strength, not a weakness**.

A deeper analysis should be done to **develop a clear narrative framework and define one core message with structured sub-themes**, consistent economic language and shared storytelling guidelines. It is recommended that this framework is **applied across regions and sectors** to ensure coherence, protect neutrality, and strengthen unity and collective influence globally.

The following 10 chapters will demonstrate how unity strengthens collective influence and reinforces public recognition.

1. Purpose and Strategic Context

2. Clarifying the Scope: Communications vs. Marketing

3. Institutional Neutrality & Reputation

4. Positioning Communications as a Strategic ICA Component

5. External Benchmark: How Comparable Global Organisations Build Influence

6. Winning the Cultural Battle: From Economic Model to Human Story

7. Guidelines for Today's ICA Communications Strategy

8. Strategic Recommendations

9. Conclusion: What Success Looks Like

10. Roadmap for discussion and approval

1. Purpose and Strategic Context

A Fragmented and Uncertain Global Ecosystem

ICA's communications strategy responds to a global context characterised by:

- growing geopolitical fragmentation and polarisation,
- rising inequalities within and between countries,
- declining trust in institutions and democratic backsliding,
- artificial intelligence in the hands of a few big corporations,
- accelerating climate, environmental and social crises.

Dominant economic narratives continue to prioritise:

- short-term profit,
- concentration of power falling to deliver inclusive prosperity,
- individualism.

often at the expense of social cohesion, democracy and sustainability.

In cooperatives, we use global values from local communities: the same languages with different accents.

From Alternative Model to Systemic Business Ecosystem

Cooperatives should no longer be framed merely as an "alternative model."

They constitute a systemic business model capable of shaping entire economic ecosystems.

In contrast to:

- concentrated financial capitalism,
- dominant technology platforms,
- fragmented global value chains,

the cooperative model offers:

- distributed ownership,
- democratic governance applied to business,
- embeddedness in communities,
- long-term value creation.

This framing reinforces the concept of a cooperative business ecosystem, where enterprises:

- collaborate across sectors and regions,
- share infrastructure,
- create an integrated market presence,
- strengthen collective competitiveness.

This approach aligns with the ambition of initiatives such as CM50 and future intercooperation frameworks.

Why This Matters for ICA

In this environment:

- the cooperative model offers **proven, democratic and values-based alternatives**,
- yet remains:
  - poorly understood outside the movement,
  - Seen as an alternative to the mainstream economic narrative
  - overshadowed by dominant capitalist models.

ICA therefore has both:

- **a responsibility, and**
- **a strategic opportunity**

to transform global economic futures.

ICA communications must therefore:

- position cooperatives as **serious economic actors in the market**,
- show that cooperation in business is a strength, not a weakness.

Why a Communications Strategy Now

This strategy:

- In the context of global uncertainty described above
- aligns with the ICA 2026–2030 Strategy (Practice, Promote, Protect),
- builds on the momentum of the 2025 IYC and the UN decision to proclaim an IYC each decade,

- responds to growing global demand for:
  - economic justice,
  - democratic ownership,
  - inclusive and sustainable models.

Role of the Board

The Board is invited to:

- reflect on the communications role of the ICA
- endorse the strategic direction for ICA communications,
- confirm ICA's ambition to shape global narratives,
- Ensure this strategy is applied to the whole ICA structure
- support leadership and governance visibility.

2. Clarifying the Scope: Communications vs. Marketing

Why This Distinction Matters for ICA

The International Cooperative Alliance is a representative entity. It does not operate according to market competition or sales logic. Its legitimacy and influence derive from:

- its mandate as the global voice of cooperative enterprises,
- its representative and convening role,
- its values and long-term credibility.

It is therefore essential to distinguish **marketing** from **strategic communications**.

Marketing vs. Strategic Communications

Marketing

- Objective: promote products, services or offers
- Logic: competition, growth, conversion
- Metrics: sales, leads, brand awareness

Strategic Communications

- Objective: build legitimacy, trust, influence and alignment
- Logic: narrative, credibility, long-term positioning
- Metrics: visibility, authority, engagement, policy influence

Exemple: "Cooperatives build a better world" was the slogan for the IYC 2012 & 2025 for consistency with our core message and mission.

What This Means for the ICA

ICA communications should:

- prioritise **influence over promotion**,
- reinforce a **shared global narrative** for the cooperative movement,
- support advocacy, governance and member cohesion.

Marketing tools may be used, but only **in service of strategic communications goals**, never as an end in themselves.

Conclusion: A good communication strategy is key and it is at the core of successful advocacy, public affairs and institutional relations.

3. Institutional Neutrality & Reputation

A Complex International Context

The ICA operates in an increasingly polarised geopolitical environment. Governments across the world, including in democratic and non-democratic contexts, are experiencing:

- democratic backsliding,
- institutional instability,
- increasing political polarisation,
- reputational controversies at international level.

This environment creates heightened sensitivity around:

- the organisation of ICA events,
- the presence of ICA representatives in certain countries,
- the visibility of government involvement in cooperative gatherings.

The reputational implications extend beyond the host country. They affect the image of the entire global movement.

Core Principle

The ICA must remain:

Close to the cooperative movement everywhere, but not tied to governments anywhere.

ICA's legitimacy derives from:

- the Cooperative Principles,
- its representative mandate,
- its institutional independence.

Not from alignment with any specific government.

Events and Government Involvement

ICA events whether global, regional or thematic may involve host country governments. This is often necessary for:

- logistical support,
- political recognition,
- regulatory dialogue.

However, communications must ensure that:

- ICA is not perceived as endorsing government policies,
- ICA events are not instrumentalised for political purposes,
- cooperative identity remains clearly distinct from governmental agendas.

This applies equally across contexts including countries with:

- controversial governance practices,
- geopolitical tensions,
- or polarising domestic policies.

The same principles apply universally, including in major economies.

Values as the Guiding Light

The Statement on the Cooperative Identity must guide ICA's external engagements.

This includes:

- political neutrality,
- democratic governance,
- autonomy and independence (Principle 4),
- concern for community (Principle 7),
- cooperation among cooperatives (Principle 6).

Where tensions arise between event opportunities and reputational risks, our cooperative identity should guide.

Communications Implications

Communications strategy should:

- clearly distinguish ICA from host governments,
- emphasise that ICA represents cooperatives, not states,
- frame events as spaces for the movement, not political endorsement,
- ensure balanced and principled messaging across geopolitical contexts.

Reputation management should be proactive, not reactive.

4. Positioning Communications as a Strategic ICA Component

Communications as a Core Strategic Function

Communications is a **strategic component of ICA's overall strategy**, not a support function.

It contributes directly to:

- public awareness of what cooperatives really are
- making the cooperative mode visible,
- supporting cooperative business development and inter-cooperation,
- protecting cooperative identity,
- supporting policy influence,
- strengthening movement cohesion.

Communications must therefore:

- be involved **upstream** in strategic initiatives and understood as such by collaborators,
- be aligned with governance and advocacy priorities,
- be accountable for strategic outcomes, not only outputs

For **events and official engagements**, ICA should assess:

1. Reputational risk in the international context.
2. Potential perception of political endorsement.
3. Alignment with cooperative principles.
4. Long-term impact on ICA's credibility across regions.
5. Whether the cooperative movement remains clearly at the centre.

If necessary, mitigation measures may include:

- balanced representation,
- careful stage management,
- neutral framing in communications,
- or reconsideration of format and visibility.

Conclusion: A good communication strategy is not only important to be known by the big public but also to avoid false ideas of what cooperatives are (e.g. only small business, present only in communist context, etc.).

5. External Benchmark: How Comparable Global Organisations Build Influence

Why Benchmarking Matters

Benchmarking is not about imitation, but about understanding how other global organisations:

- build authority without commercial products,
- influence public debate and policy,
- remain visible and relevant in a crowded and polarised information space.

The organisations below operate in different sectors, but face challenges similar to ICA:

- complex global structures,
- limited resources compared to corporate actors,
- the need to mobilise emotion, credibility and legitimacy.

5.1 Greenpeace – Narrative Discipline and Issue Ownership

What Greenpeace Does Well

- Owns a limited number of clearly defined issues (climate, biodiversity, environment).
- Uses strong, emotionally resonant narratives that are easy to recognise and repeat.
- Maintains high global coherence while allowing local adaptation.
- Prioritises visibility and cultural relevance, not only institutional credibility.

Communications Characteristics

- Clear moral framing and urgency.
- Strong visual identity and consistency.
- Willingness to simplify messages without losing meaning.

Lessons for ICA

- ICA should be more disciplined in message prioritisation.
- Repetition of a small number of core ideas builds recognition and authority.
- Confidence in values-based positioning strengthens credibility rather than weakening it.
- ICA can more clearly “own” the cooperative model as a solution to global challenges.

5.2 Oxfam – Authority Through Evidence and Human Stories

What Oxfam Does Well

- Combines rigorous research and data with personal stories from the field.
- Uses flagship reports to shape global debates on inequality and justice.
- Positions itself as a trusted reference for policymakers and media.

Communications Characteristics

- Strong integration between research, advocacy and communications.
- Clear narrative framing of complex systemic issues.
- Consistent effort to translate data into human impact.

Lessons for ICA

- ICA should better leverage cooperative data, research and case studies.
- Evidence must be connected to real lives and communities.
- ICA can strengthen its authority by positioning cooperatives as systemic, scalable solutions—not exceptions or anecdotes.

5.3 Amnesty International – Movement Voice and Moral Authority

What Amnesty Does Well

- Communicates as a movement, not only as an institution.
- Mobilises members, activists and governance bodies around shared values.
- Maintains strong moral authority through consistency and credibility.

Communications Characteristics

- Clear distinction between:
  - institutional voice,
  - movement voice,
  - individual spokespersons.
- Strong visibility of leadership and governance.
- High trust built over time through principled positioning.

Lessons for ICA

ICA should more clearly articulate when it speaks:

- as an institution,
- as the collective voice of the movement.

>> Governance and leadership visibility strengthen legitimacy. ICA's strength lies in representing a global movement, not only a secretariat.

5.4 ECOSOC – Institutional Legitimacy and Multilateral Positioning

What ECOSOC Does Well

- Operates as a recognised multilateral platform within the UN system.
- Convenes diverse stakeholders: governments, civil society, private sector.
- Provides structured frameworks for dialogue and accreditation.
- Maintains institutional neutrality across geopolitical divides.

Communications Characteristics

- Formal, diplomatic and institutionally consistent tone.
- Emphasis on process legitimacy and multilateralism.
- Clear positioning within the global governance architecture.
- Visibility built through convening authority rather than emotional campaigning.

Lessons for ICA

- ICA must reinforce its legitimacy as part of the global governance ecosystem.
- Institutional neutrality enhances credibility across regions.
- Convening power is a communications asset.
- Authority can derive from structured dialogue and representation, not only advocacy.
- ICA can strengthen its positioning as a recognised actor in multilateral and intergovernmental spaces.

5.5 IOE (International Organisation of Employers) – Market Voice and Policy Advocacy

What IOE Does Well

- Represents business interests clearly and unapologetically in global policy forums.
- Uses strong economic language aligned with market realities.
- Maintains close engagement with multilateral institutions.
- Positions itself as the legitimate voice of employers globally.

Communications Characteristics

- Policy-focused and economically grounded messaging.
- Clear alignment between advocacy priorities and communications output.
- Strong integration between technical expertise and public positioning.

Lessons for ICA

- ICA should communicate more confidently in economic and market language.
- Representation of cooperative enterprises in policy debates should be framed as economic representation, not only values advocacy.
- Clear articulation of cooperatives as serious market actors strengthens credibility.
  - Economic pragmatism does not weaken values-based positioning.

5.6 World Economic Forum – Platform Builder and Agenda Shaper

What the World Economic Forum Does Well

- Creates high-visibility convening platforms that shape global agendas.
- Brings together political leaders, corporations and civil society actors.
- Controls narrative framing around global economic and technological issues.
- Builds brand authority through elite access and curated dialogue.

Communications Characteristics

- Strong visual and experiential branding.
- Clear narrative themes each year (e.g. resilience, stakeholder capitalism, AI governance).
- Emphasis on solutions, innovation and future orientation.
- Ability to position itself as indispensable to global dialogue.

Lessons for ICA

- ICA can strengthen its role as a platform builder for the cooperative business ecosystem.
- Agenda-setting is a communications function.
- Thematic coherence around events increases global visibility.
- Convening power should be framed as strategic leadership, not logistical activity.
- ICA can position itself as the reference platform for democratic business and cooperative markets.

5.7 Cross-Cutting Lessons for ICA

Across other organisations, multilateral institutions and business platforms, several patterns emerge:

Communications is treated as a **strategic investment**, not a support function.

Strong organisations:

- say fewer things,
- but say them consistently and confidently,

- align narrative, events and leadership voices.

Influence is built through:

- emotional connection (NGOs),
- institutional legitimacy (ECOSOC),
- economic credibility (IOE),
- agenda-setting and convening power (WEF),
- long-term consistency and principled positioning (Amnesty).

Cultural relevance is as important as institutional access.

Market credibility is as important as moral authority.

Neutrality and independence strengthen global trust.

Platform-building and ecosystem framing amplify strategic impact.

Strategic Clarification for the Board

This expanded benchmarking shows that the **ICA is uniquely positioned as:**

- A global movement convener.
- A platform builder for cooperative markets.
- A guide and architect of a democratic business ecosystem.
- A pragmatic idealist combining values and market strength.

6. Winning the Cultural Battle: From Economic Model to Human Story

Competing Beyond Policy and Institutions

In the context of fake news and all is permitted, we answer with authenticity and life testimonies.

The cooperative model does not only compete in:

- policy arenas,
- legal frameworks,
- institutional debates.

It also competes in the **cultural and emotional space**, where dominant capitalist narratives are:

- simple,
- emotionally powerful,
- deeply embedded through media and digital platforms.

To be influential, ICA communications must aim to win not only arguments, but **hearts, imagination and identification**.

Winning the cultural battle also means:

- normalising cooperatives as **successful businesses**,
- countering the **false opposition** between:
  - values and competitiveness,
  - solidarity and market performance.

ICA communications should show that:

- cooperatives can win in the market,
- cooperative business creates long-term value,
- economic success and community impact reinforce each other.

6.1 Telling Personal and Inspiring Stories

Evidence and policy positions are necessary but insufficient on their own.

ICA communications should:

- foreground personal stories of cooperative members, workers and communities,
- show how cooperatives
  - change lives,
  - restore dignity,
  - strengthen local economies,
  - enable democratic participation.

Storytelling should:

- inspire rather than explain,
- humanise abstract principles,
- reflect the diversity of cooperative realities worldwide.

A Positive and Aspirational Narrative

The objective is not to position cooperatives only in opposition to capitalism, but to:

- present them as a **desirable, credible and hopeful alternative**,
- offer a vision people can identify with and aspire to.

The tone: 6 key pillars:

1. Confident, Not Defensive

The cooperative model should never sound apologetic or marginal.

Tone should:

- Avoid “alternative” language.
- Avoid reactive positioning.

- Speak as a credible systemic actor.

2. Optimistic, But Serious

Hopeful - yes.

Naïve - no.

The tone should:

- Acknowledge global complexity (inequality, AI concentration, climate crisis).
- Position cooperatives as a different and better way of responding and transforming realities

3. Values-Based, But Economically Literate

The tone must integrate:

- Identity
- Market language
- Governance credibility

Avoid:

- Purely moral framing.
- Purely technical policy language.

Instead:

- "Cooperatives build resilient markets."
- "Democratic governance strengthens competitiveness."
- "Intercooperation increases economic resilience."

4. Clear and Human

ICA should avoid:

- Institutional jargon.
- Over-academic language.
- Long bureaucratic sentences.

Even when addressing multilateral actors, clarity signals authority.

Human stories should be used strategically:

- To illustrate systemic points.
- Not as sentimental add-ons.

5. Institutionally Neutral, But Principled

Given geopolitical complexity, tone must be:

- Calm.
- Independent.
- Principle-driven.

Never:

- Endorse governments implicitly.
- Sound ideological or partisan.

Instead:

- Root positioning in Cooperative Principles.
- Emphasize institutional independence.

This protects reputation across regions.

6. Digitally Native and use of trends

To reach young audiences:

- Tone must be accessible.
- Sentences shorter.
- Messages sharper.
- Visual-first thinking.
- Use trends to amplify cooperatives' voice

But ICA should not:

- Mimic influencer culture.
- Sacrifice institutional gravitas.

Conclusions: Modern multilateral voice. Not NGO activism. Not corporate marketing.

A deeper analysis should be done to develop a clear and bold narrative framework and define one core message with structured sub-themes, consistent economic language and shared storytelling guidelines. It is recommended that this framework is applied across regions and sectors to ensure coherence, protect neutrality, and strengthen unity and collective influence globally.

6.2 Strategic Use of Digital Tools and Influence

To reach beyond traditional audiences, ICA must:

- adapt to how people engage with information today,
- invest in digital storytelling and amplification.

This includes:

- stronger use of social media platforms,
- collaboration with trusted voices and influencers aligned with cooperative values,
- empowering cooperative leaders, members and youth as authentic storytellers,
- producing content designed for sharing, not only for archiving.

Digital communication should create:

- emotional connection,
- visibility at scale,
- communities of interest around cooperative ideas.

6.3 Values-Based Use of Social Media Platforms

A Values Question, Not Only a Technical One

Some major digital platforms are owned or governed by corporations whose:

- values,
- governance practices,
- or public positions

may conflict with the Cooperative Identity.

ICA's presence on such platforms is therefore not neutral and should be treated as a **strategic and ethical choice**, not an automatic one.

Strategic Options for ICA

ICA should periodically assess its use of social media platforms based on:

- alignment with cooperative values,
- contribution to strategic objectives,
- reputational and ethical risks.

Possible approaches include:

- **continued presence**, where platforms remain key for reaching priority audiences;
- **reduced or selective use**, focusing on amplification rather than full engagement;
- **strategic withdrawal**, when the platform's values or practices fundamentally contradict those of the cooperative movement.

Guiding Principles for Platform Decisions

- Values consistency over visibility at all costs
- Strategic relevance over habitual presence
- Long-term credibility over short-term reach

Any decision to use or quit a platform should:

- be transparent,
- be framed as values-based,
- be communicated clearly to members and partners.

6.4 Digital Economy & AI

The concentration of technological power and artificial intelligence in a small number of global corporations represents a structural risk for democracy and markets.

ICA communications should introduce the concept of **Cooperative Governance for the Digital Economy**

This includes:

- Cooperative digital platforms
- Shared technological infrastructure
- AI governed democratically
- Collective ownership of data
- Distributed innovation networks

This positions cooperatives not as digitally lagging actors, but as pioneers of democratic governance applied to technology and digital markets.

The ICA should also develop an AI policy to recommend in which circumstances it may be used.

7. Guidelines for Today's ICA Communications Strategy

Strategic Objectives

ICA communications should:

- unite the global cooperative movement,
- position ICA as the **global authority on cooperatives**,
- support cooperative business development and market collaboration,
- support advocacy that enables cooperatives to operate successfully in the market,
- strengthen pride, belonging and cohesion among members.

Core Narrative

Cooperatives build a better world.

This narrative:

- is simple, positive and aspirational,
- speaks to values as well as outcomes,
- is adaptable across regions, sectors and issues.

It can be expressed through multiple lenses:

- economic resilience,
- fair and inclusive markets,

- social justice,
- sustainability,
- democracy,
- community empowerment.

The core narrative “Cooperatives build a better world” can be structured around strategic sub-themes to strengthen clarity and coherence.

For example, one central theme is: Democracy At Work

In complex and polarised times, democracy must not be confined to politics. It must also be applied to business.

Democracy At Work conveys that:

- Democracy is not incompatible with global competitiveness.
- Participatory decision-making can coexist with efficiency.
- Professionalisation does not eliminate member sovereignty.

This framing helps address persistent misconceptions that cooperatives are:

- assembly-driven,
- slow,
- or organisationally disordered.

Instead, cooperative governance can be presented as a competitive advantage in volatile and uncertain markets.

Priority Audiences

- Policymakers and multilateral institutions,
- ICA members and governance bodies,
- media and opinion leaders,
- youth and emerging cooperative leaders.

Guiding Principles

- values-led and evidence-based,
- globally coherent, locally adaptable,
- human-centred and inspiring,
- credible and authoritative.

8. Strategic Recommendations

8.1 Governance, Leadership and Alignment

- Clarify the role of:
  - the Board members, President and Directors as strategic communicators (this applied to all levels of the ICA structure e.g. global, regional, sectorial etc.).

- Align communications with:
  - strategic planning,
  - governance priorities,
  - advocacy objectives.

8.2 Narrative and Positioning

- Adopt a shared and bold ICA narrative framework.
- Reduce fragmentation across regions, sectors and campaigns.
- Ensure that all major initiatives contribute to a cumulative global story.

8.3 Branding and Visual Identity: Unity Through Simplicity

Why Branding Matters for ICA

Branding is not about uniformity or control. It is about:

- recognition,
- credibility,
- reinforce unity,
- express belonging to a shared cooperative community,
- support collective visibility in the market space.
- belonging to a global movement.

Fragmented branding weakens collective visibility and impact.

The Principle: "The Minimum is the Maximum"

- A small number of non-negotiable elements:
  - ICA logo,
  - core colours,
  - basic visual rules.
- Everything else allows:
  - local adaptation,
  - sectoral expression,
  - contextual creativity.

What Unified Branding Enables

- stronger global recognition,
- clearer positioning with policymakers and partners,
- reduced duplication of effort,
- reinforced sense of collective identity.

This sits perfectly with:

- unity,
- community-building,
- emotional belonging.

A revision of the current branding guide is recommended for more consistency and tone definition: strengthening our identity internally to reinforce our global visibility.

DotCooperation as a Strategic Brand and Market Asset

DotCooperation (.coop) is a unique strategic asset of the International Cooperative Alliance.

It is not only a technical domain registry. It is:

- a global digital expression of cooperative identity,
- a trust mark in the online marketplace,
- a visible signal of belonging to the cooperative movement.

DotCooperation reinforces:

- brand coherence across regions and sectors,
- recognition in digital environments,
- the positioning of cooperatives as credible and serious market actors.

In line with the principle “the minimum is the maximum”, the use of .coop strengthens unity without restricting diversity.

The strategy should therefore:

- integrate DotCooperation more explicitly into ICA’s branding framework,
- encourage broader and more strategic uptake across the movement,
- position .coop as both a communications and market instrument.

8.4 Market & business

- **Intercooperation as Strategic Advantage**

Intercooperation should be framed not only as a moral value (Principle 6), but as a **strategic economic instrument**.

Intercooperation:

- enhances market power,
- reduces dependency on dominant actors,
- strengthens supply chains,
- increases resilience during crises.

It should be communicated as:

Intercooperation as a resilience mechanism.

This language resonates strongly with policymakers and economic stakeholders. It positions cooperation as a **structural solution** in unstable global markets.

8.5 Policy language

ICA communications should adopt economic language that resonates with policymakers and market actors. This includes framing cooperatives as:

- builders of resilient business ecosystems,
- drivers of distributed value chains,
- contributors to competitive and inclusive markets,
- enablers of democratic governance applied to enterprise.

8.6 Focus and Prioritisation

- Do less, better.
- Focus on issues and moments where ICA has global authority.
- Balance reactive communications with long-term narrative building.

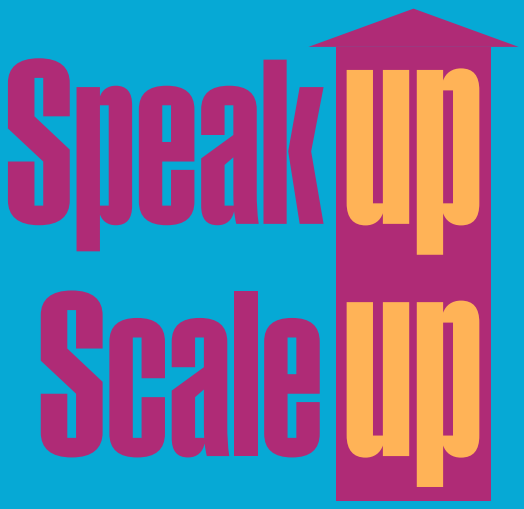
9. Conclusion: What Success Looks Like

- Communications embedded in strategic decision-making.
- ICA recognised as:
  - the global reference on cooperatives,
  - a coherent, credible and visible movement.
- Unified branding reinforcing diversity rather than erasing it.
- A strong narrative that shows, clearly and emotionally, how **cooperatives build a better world**.
- Communications clearly contribute to the **Practice, Promote and Protect ICA Strategy**.

10. Roadmap for discussion and approval

- Presentation for discussion at the ICA Board March 2026: support to the strategy and no further comments received.
- Endorsement this Communications Strategy at ICA Board meeting in August 2026: a point overwhelmingly approved by the Board members.
- Mandate the Communications Committee with the development of:
  - a multi-year communications and branding roadmap, dedicated narrative manuals and branding guides & clear indicators linked to ICA's strategic objectives.

ICA Communications Strategy
2026 – 2030



International Cooperative Alliance

The International Cooperative Alliance unites, represents and serves cooperatives worldwide.

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