



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

EDUCATION & TRAINING



Learning



Walking the talk

Branding.coop

Principle Five in Action

Before joining the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN) as Operations Lead, Nicola Huckerby worked at the International Cooperative Alliance, where she saw first-hand how cooperative enterprises build a better world.

Principle 5 of the cooperative movement is Education and Training. In March 2024, with the support of colleagues from Confcooperative, Legacoop and the Italian Cooperative Alliance Nicola organised a Study visit for members of the Network to Emilia-Romagna.

The region is world renowned because of its dense network of cooperatives, which create 30% of the region's GDP and involve 2/3rds of the population as members. Cooperatives in the region span most sectors of the economy, especially retail, agribusiness, and social services, but they also have a significant presence in financial services, insurance, transportation, and more.

During the three-day visit, delegates met the Presidents of several Italian cooperatives. They travelled around the region using the services of a transport cooperative. The delegation visited several agri-businesses, including producers of Parmigiano Reggiano and traditional Balsamic Vinegar in Modena, and Granarolo a leading producer of milk and dairy products, where delegates toured a large milk bottling facility (see picture). There was also a visit to Cantine Riunite a leader in Italian wine production.

The tour also included several social cooperatives, including Locanda Smeraldi, a social cooperative where delegates sampled a fabulous cooperative restaurant and another social cooperative for people with learning and physical disabilities, which grew and packed basil. A meeting was arranged with a representative of [Emil Banca Credito Cooperativo](#), the regional cooperative bank, who had spearheaded the development of MUG space, an



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innovative and technologically advanced smart working area, for hosting business events, meetings, conventions, workshops and training courses.



Delegates at the Granarolo milk bottling facility

On the final day, delegates met with Prof Flavio Delbono from Bologna University, who lectured on the Economics of Cooperation and gave valuable insights into the regional economy. We also met with the president and board members of [UniSalute Spa](#), the biggest player in cooperative healthcare. One of the highlights for many of those attending was the visit on the final afternoon to [Kilowatt](#), a cooperative that had been formed in a derelict urban parkland which had become a community hub for consulting, communication and education, creating jobs for local people and a wonderful oasis and place to socialise.

Learning from other network members is an important benefit of Network membership, and this visit gave elected members and officers the opportunity to see first-hand how a cooperative region operates.

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