

Youth Deal Cooperative

Post-Earthquake Recovery and Rebuilding Forum Event Report

March 2025

Post-Earthquake Recovery and Rebuilding Forum

Event Report

Participating Organizations:

- Akdeniz Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Kadın Girişimi Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi
- Defne Belediyesi
- Doğana Kadın Kooperatifi
- Expertise France
- Genç İş Bilimsel Araştırma ve Geliştirme Eğitim Kooperatifi
- Halieus - Legacoop
- Hatay Büyükşehir Belediyesi
- Hatay Deprem Dayanışması Derneği
- Hatay Üreten Eller Kadın Girişimi Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi
- Hayata Destek Derneği
- OXFAM – KEDV
- Rimmen Kadın Girişimi Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi
- Samandağ Belediyesi
- Save the Children
- Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanları Derneği
- Soteria Taş Sanatı Kadın Girişimi Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi
- Tohum Yaşam Kadın Kooperatifi
- UNFPA
- Yeniden Hatay Kadın Girişimi Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi

Event Details:

The "**Post-Earthquake Recovery and Rebuilding Forum**" was held on Thursday, February 27, 2025, at the Çekmece Community Center in Hatay, with the participation of 42 representatives from 19 different organizations, including local governments, international organizations, cooperatives, and civil society organizations.

In response to the international support call made by the Genç İşi Cooperative after the 6 February Earthquakes, Legacoop, the Italian National Cooperative Union, and its umbrella organization Halieus launched the **"Technical Assistance to Support Turkish Cooperatives Affected by the Earthquake."** The project, launched in May 2024, managed by the Halieus and implemented by the Genç İşi Cooperative, provided a range of capacity-building and technical assistance activities to cooperatives affected by the earthquake in Hatay. Additionally, a soap production area was established for the Rimmen Women's Cooperative, along with production support. The Forum was organized as the closing event of this project.

The forum provided a platform for analyzing the recovery process from a cooperative perspective, critically assessing the current conditions in the field, and outlining strategic steps for sustainable reconstruction through a participatory approach. Diverse perspectives were integrated through the contributions of various organizations operating within the ecosystem. This collaborative approach aimed to cultivate synergies, foster innovative solutions, and enhance multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Forum Content:

The forum commenced with speeches by Halieus representatives Francesca Ottolenghi and Claudia Colabella, who discussed the similarities and differences between the cooperative movements in Italy and Türkiye. They provided insights into potential long-term partnerships between the cooperative ecosystems of both countries, the legal framework for cooperatives in Italy, and their role in local development. Representatives from Rimmen Women's Cooperative, Cansel Aslan and Gizem Güzel, presented the current situation in Hatay following the earthquake and outlined the activities under the "Technical Assistance to Support Turkish Cooperatives Affected by the Earthquake," coordinated by Genç İşi Cooperative.

In the afternoon, interactive sessions were held in a forum format, moderated by Ayşe Gül Yılğör from Rimmen Women's Cooperative, and Berkin Şafak Şener and Eda Kayadibinlioğlu from Genç İşi Cooperative. These sessions engaged all participants in discussions that comprehensively addressed the recovery and rebuilding process. Under the themes of "Projects as a Form of Intervention" and "Community-Based Social and Economic Recovery through Cooperatives," representatives from various institutions shared their experiences, identified existing challenges, and collaboratively developed solutions.

The identified challenges and proposed solutions in the sessions are listed below.

Identified Challenges and Proposed Solutions:

A. Challenges

1. Barriers to Accessing Grants and Funding

- Funding mechanisms often impose rigid preconditions that fail to reflect local realities. Bureaucratic obstacles, such as minimum operational years and mandatory staffing or partners criteria, hinder newly established cooperatives from securing financial support.
- Numerous grant and funding opportunities available in the region fail to align with the actual needs and priorities of the affected communities.
- Excessive documentation and complex procedures in grant applications make the application process difficult for cooperatives.
- The recent decline in post-earthquake funding has affected municipalities and cooperatives, limiting sustainable development.

2. Institutionalization and Capacity-Building Deficiencies of Cooperatives

- Insufficient human resources and financial resources hinder the sustainability of cooperatives.
- Misallocated funds force cooperatives to purchase unnecessary equipment, resulting in idle machinery/equipment.
- Due to a lack of institutionalized business structures, cooperatives struggle with grant/project management, financial management, marketing, and sustainability.

3. Market Access and Competitive Constraints

- The lack of product differentiation strategies compels cooperatives producing similar goods to compete within limited market spaces.
- This restricted diversification hinders their ability to scale operations and access broader markets, both nationally and internationally.

4. Collaboration Barriers between Cooperatives and Local Governments

- Municipalities have rarely procurement rates from local cooperatives and often source externally, which has a negative impact on local production.
- The reluctance of some funding organizations to work with municipalities run by opposition political parties hinders development efforts in the region.

5. Inadequate Public Support Mechanisms

- Limited tax incentives and exemptions pose significant barriers to cooperative growth.
- The absence of sufficient production and storage facilities prevents cooperatives from establishing sustainable production cycles.
- Without targeted policy interventions, cooperatives remain at a competitive disadvantage compared to other enterprises.

B. Proposed Solutions

1. Restructuring Funding Mechanisms to Address Local Needs

- Funding organizations should conduct capacity, production potential and needs assessments to identify the real needs of cooperatives in the region. Funding organizations should engage in dialogue with cooperatives and tailor funding programmes to local needs.
- Grants should be provided in stages, starting with small-scale support and gradually increasing over time.

2. Strengthening Cooperatives' Institutional and Grant Management Capacity

- Training such as project management and financial management should be made compulsory in funding programmes to ensure financial sustainability.
- Cooperatives should be provided with training on financial management, marketing, business plan preparation, etc. to strengthen their institutional capacity. In addition, marketing training such as e-

commerce and social media training should be provided to develop digital sales channels.

- To ensure optimal fund utilization, diversified audit mechanisms must be established and rigorously enforced.

3. Enhancing Production Facilities and Infrastructure

- Shared production, packaging, logistics and storage facilities should be established for earthquake-affected cooperatives.
- Long-term rental assistance should be provided to cooperatives to facilitate access to production areas.

4. Enhancing Market Access and Product Diversification

- Export support and technical capacity building should be provided to enable cooperatives to access not only local but also national and international markets.
- Steps should be taken to accelerate the branding process, such as obtaining geographical indications for products, and establishing quality standards. Products produced by cooperatives need to be standardized before they can be subjected to international trade.
- Product diversification and branding strategies should be developed to increase competitiveness in the market.
- Cooperation with national and international markets for cooperative products should be established. In this regard, opportunities for solidarity between cooperatives at the international level should be explored.

5. Developing Common Policies with Local Governments and Strengthening Collaboration

- Policies should be developed to encourage municipalities to procure products from local cooperatives.
- Common procurement mechanisms should be established for bulk purchasing by municipalities and NGOs.
- Special incentives should be provided to facilitate the participation of cooperatives in public procurement processes.

6. Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation

- Partnerships with international cooperative organizations/unions should be developed for knowledge transfer and market support.
- Sustainable production and development plans should be implemented with special incentives for earthquake-affected regions.

7. Establishment of Cooperation Mechanisms among Cooperatives

- A coordination mechanism should be established among cooperatives to enhance production diversity, and common procurement and production planning should be conducted.
- Collaboration should be established with other cooperatives across Türkiye to facilitate knowledge and experience sharing.

8. Strengthening Public Support

- Cooperatives are commercial enterprises and compete with other enterprises. Social cooperatives provide employment and social inclusion opportunities for disadvantaged communities not covered by the public sector and other enterprises. Given the social benefits they provide, social cooperatives should be eligible for public incentives to strengthen their enterprise competitiveness. Particularly in earthquake-affected regions, providing public incentives for social cooperatives is not a favor but a matter of justice. In the EU, especially in Italy, there are already transparent, criteria-based, auditable, and continuous public incentive mechanisms for social cooperatives.
- Tax exemptions and SSI (social security) incentives should be provided in Türkiye to increase the competitiveness of cooperatives against other types of enterprises.
- Special incentive packages should be developed for cooperatives that lost their production facilities due to the earthquake.
- Public-private sector collaboration mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure the long-term sustainability of cooperatives.
- Low-interest credit programs should be established to facilitate cooperatives' access to bank loans.

In conclusion, this report outlines a strategic framework for leveraging cooperative models as catalysts for sustainable recovery. By fostering inclusive economic participation, enhancing institutional resilience, and promoting cross-sector collaboration, the proposed recommendations aspire to create a robust foundation for long-term regional revitalization.



Photo 1: Soap production area established for Rimmen Women's Cooperative under the "Technical Assistance to Support Turkish Cooperatives Affected by the Earthquake"



Photo 2: Participants of the "Post-Earthquake Recovery and Rebuilding Forum"