



FAQs – Registration Related

What governs the registration & regulation of co-operatives and community benefit societies?

The Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 is the main legislation under which co-operatives and community benefit societies are registered in Northern Ireland. This Northern Irish legislation was recently updated in 2016-2018 and now contains almost¹ all the new elements introduced in the UK Act in 2014. Co-operatives can also be incorporated under the Company Act (2006) with purposely adapted Articles of Association.

Why do we use the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act (NI) 1969 and not the most common Companies Act?

Although co-operatives can be incorporated as companies with adapted Articles, the above legislation for societies is closer to the spirit of what a co-operative is and make it

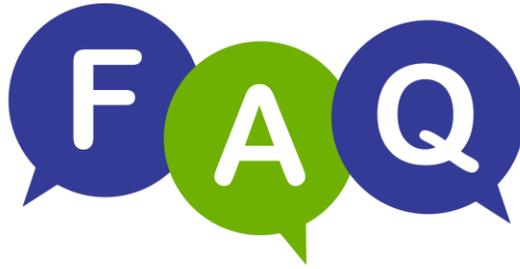
possible to legally embed in its governing documents (the Rules) the principles and values of co-operation.

How does the registration process work?

The registration of societies under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 requires a minimum of three members. The registration process is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and standardized governing documents (i.e. Model Rules) are available through sponsoring bodies such as Co-operatives UK or Plunkett Foundation. Having agreed to the Rules, the founder members sign the Rules, complete the registration documents and purchase the minimum shareholding required (usually one share at £1, although it can be more than that if a substantial amount of money needs to be raised to start up the business). A registration certificate and number will be issued by the FCA when the process is completed.

¹ For instance, the NI Act still preserve the old turnover and assets thresholds under which the

exemption from preparing audited accounts can be granted.



Why do we need model rules? Where do we find them in NI?

Model Rules are pre-written governing documents that contain all the information needed to incorporate a society according to the law and the regulator's guidelines. There are Model Rules for different types of co-operatives and if you need help to decide which type best suit your co-operative business, Co-operative Alternatives can assist you and access them from the most suitable sponsoring body.

How long does it take to register a co-operative/community benefit society with the Financial Conduct Authority? How much does it cost?

The registration process can take up to 4-6 weeks and it may cost between £150 to £600+ depending on the adjustments required to the Model Rules. If you are supported by Co-operative Alternatives and/or the Belfast

City Council Support Programme for Social Enterprises and Co-operatives, we can pay all your registration costs including the statutory fee to the FCA.

Should a co-operative/community benefit societies also submit any documentation to Companies House?

No, no additional submission to Companies House is required. The regulator of co-operative and community benefit societies is the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and all the relevant governing documents and annual returns, including Annual Statements of Accounts, relating to the co-operative and community benefit society are published on the [Mutuals Public Register \(fca.org.uk\)](http://fca.org.uk). However, the name of your society will also appear on the Companies House register with a company number and a note to forward any query to the FCA Mutual Public Register.

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