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# **Protection of the Rural Community's Right to Participate in Social Life through Cooperatives**

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## **Abstract**

Active participation of all individuals in social life is considered as a key element for today's modern democracies with respect to the aim of removing the undesirable economic and social obstacles to being a real and integral part of the society. In this regard, the cooperatives attract an intense attention to be examined on their distinctive structure, questioning whether they can be seen as a way of protecting the right to participation of the rural communities in the social life, by examining either the established and emerging approaches of the international human rights mechanisms regarding the concepts of social inclusion, solidarity economy, sustainable rural development and democracy. The interrelation between these concepts help determine the scope of the right to participate in social life including the freedoms of expression, assembly, association and as well as the rights to work, access to the information and development. Therefore, it is of great significance to have a deeper look on the content and limits of this right for the rural communities as being possibly in the centre of socio-economic inequalities and inefficacies. In this paper, firstly, the importance of the active participation of the individuals in participatory democracies and the impacts of economic and social conditions in this perspective will be revealed briefly. Secondly, the cooperative's possible impact on facilitating the ways and opportunities for the protection of rural people's right to participation in society will be analysed over the reports and recommendations of the international human rights mechanisms in the search of fundamental grounds as to the equal conditions for the rural communities. By this study, at the end, it is hoped to determine the indivisible relation between the participatory democracy, social inclusion, solidarity economy and sustainable rural development on one hand and to reveal the necessity of defining the scope and the limits of the inclusive and integrated right to participate in social life as a whole for the people living in the rural areas as they generally represent a community with lower economic facilities and limited sources within the whole society, on the other.

**Keywords:** cooperatives, right to participate, rural community, socio-economic inclusion, sustainable rural development