

Cooperatives in Industry and Services urge EU Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs to invest in reindustrialization and active inclusion in Europe

MORE JOBS AND MORE STABLE JOBS – MORE INCLUSION – MORE EQUALLY DISTRIBUTED WEALTH

Europe needs urgently to invest more in the reindustrialization of its countries and regions and in the active inclusion for all citizens, with specific attention to the most disadvantaged and its youth. Industrial and service cooperatives keep the European industrial heritage alive while innovating at the same time, provide quality and cost-effective services of general interest while being democratically managed and owned by their employees or service users. They are a suitable solution for youth entrepreneurship, especially under the very serious and unprecedented youth unemployment rate which Europe is suffering. In order to maintain their productive and inclusive mission, they need adequate public policies.

CECOP, the voice of cooperatives in Industry and Services in Europe, wishes to highlight to the EU Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs, gathered today and tomorrow at the EPSCO Council meeting, the advantages for European member states to promote those cooperatives for their job creation and preservation potential including for the most disadvantaged, their impact on local economic development, and their cost effectiveness. This applies both to the economically stronger member states and those suffering most from the ongoing crisis, like Greece, which currently holds the EU Presidency.

Through a series of surveys published at the 2012 study "[The resilience of the cooperative model](#)", we have shown that industrial and service cooperatives (under different typologies: worker, social or artisans' cooperatives) are showing more resilience to the ongoing crisis than the average businesses: they survive better and innovate, remained rooted in the local community, maintain their jobs and in many cases are creating new ones, and tend to be less indebted. Despite the crisis, worker cooperatives in Spain have grown by 32% in the third quarter of 2013, compared to the same period last year, according to data released by the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security. Besides, over 80% of the worker-members in these businesses have a steady job in Spain. Since the crisis started, many cooperatives have been established as a way to save businesses that were going to close down. In France, for instance, there have been 224 transfers of business to employees and employees' buyouts under the cooperative forms since 2008.

Cooperatives are also developing rapidly in the field of services of general interest (health, education, social services, the environment, energy production and distribution etc.) around Europe. For instance in Italy, we estimate that in 2013, 7 million persons were benefiting from social services provided by social cooperatives while they were providing around 32,000 jobs for disadvantaged persons

It is also during the crisis that cooperatives have experienced a strong revival in Greece, with many new cooperatives being established in various activities (social services, catering, water distribution etc.). This has been mirrored by the 2011 Greek Law 4019 of "Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship", under which over 100 cooperatives have already been registered. The keen interest in cooperatives we have witnessed from the Greek government and civil society, including NGOs and trade unions should be accompanied by adequate national and European policies and measures.

However, we also need to underline that a strong development of industrial and service cooperatives had already taken place before the crisis started, even though it had remained largely unnoticed. The cooperatives that have been more resilient under the crisis are also those that prepared themselves better before the crisis. Our entrepreneurial network now counts with around 50,000 enterprises in 17 EU countries, and provides comparatively stable jobs to around 1.5 million people.

The upcoming European elections, an opportunity for a Europe with more jobs, inclusion and more equally distributed wealth? Read the Manifesto of CECOP, containing the 7 priorities of cooperatives active in Industry and Services for the 2014 European Parliament elections [here](#):

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CECOP – CICOPA Europe (*European Confederation of Worker Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Social and Participative Enterprises*) groups national organisations in 17 countries which in turn affiliate over 50,000 cooperative and participative enterprises in industry and services, the vast majority being SMEs, and employing 1.5 million workers across Europe. Most of them are characterised by the fact that the employees in their majority are member-owners. Furthermore, the primary mission of several thousand cooperatives all over Europe is to provide sustainable and quality employment to the most vulnerable citizens. Today, those cooperatives provide almost 40,000 jobs to disadvantaged and marginalised workers in Europe (disabled, long-term unemployed, ex prisoners, addicts, etc). More than a thousand worker cooperatives in the CECOP network were created as business transfers to employees of conventional enterprises in crisis or without heirs.