29 September 2026

CECOP's contribution to the European Commission's call for evidence on the Quality Jobs Act

CECOP, the European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives, welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the European Commission in developing its Quality Jobs Act. CECOP represents approximately 43,000 cooperatives across Europe, being mainly worker cooperatives, social cooperatives and cooperatives of autonomous workers[1]. In turn they employ over 1.3 million people. These are democratically owned and managed enterprises that contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth by combining economic performance with social progress.

Cooperatives represented by CECOP provide quality, meaningful jobs, empowering workers via their democratic governance structure and a human-centric approach to the digital transition. Amidst the shifts taking place in the world of work due to the rise of artificial intelligence, the green transition, and the emergence of new forms of work, cooperatives provide a resilient business model, capable of swiftly responding and adapting to changes.

With the increase of non-standard work becoming increasingly prevalent, **cooperatives of autonomous workers** (freelancers, self-employed, etc) offer protection and flexibility through mutualised services. Similarly, as a response to the rising prominence of platform work, **platform cooperatives** are increasingly established. Unlike traditional capitalistic platforms, which prioritise shareholder profits, platform cooperatives offer a sustainable, human-centred alternative that allow for workers to benefit from the advantages of the platform economy while keeping a democratic oversight on the organisation of work, algorithmic management, and access and ownership of their data. Through collective entrepreneurship, cooperatives provide opportunities to transition from **the informal economy to the formal economy.**

Cooperatives also offer a solution to anticipating and managing economic change, particularly through the model of **workers' buyouts** (WBOs), that is, business transfers to the employees under the cooperative model. When businesses face succession challenges or risk closure, converting them into a worker-owned cooperative allows for the preservation of jobs, skills, and economic activity in the local area, thus fighting deindustrialisation. Moreover, businesses transferred to their employees under the cooperative model generally show high levels of viability, demonstrating their capacity to preserve productive activities over the long term. They can therefore also play a role in

[1] Worker cooperative are democratically managed enterprises owned by the workers, with the aim to create and maintain sustainable jobs, improve the quality of life of the worker-members. Social cooperatives may focus on providing social services, particularly in areas where public authorities are unable to do so or contributing to the work integration of disadvantaged and marginalised people; they can be worker-owned or characterised by the multistakeholder governance. Cooperatives of autonomous workers (freelancers, self-employed) allow peers to mutualise risks and costs and combine autonomy with flexibility and security.

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ensuring a just transition by converting a traditional business into a democratically controlled enterprise, regenerating both the business and the local economy.

As further explained in our recent publication, "Quality Jobs, the Cooperative Way", cooperatives ability to adapt to changes is a result of their inherent characteristics, such as:

> ...**democratic governance**. While democracy at work is often facilitated by social dialogue, it should not be reduced to it. Democratic governance in cooperatives, where the members actively participate in decision-making, empowers workers, allows them to have a say in decisions in their workplace, gain new skills and thus increase job satisfaction.
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> ...**commitment to training and fair job transitions**. As one of the seven cooperative principles, cooperatives are dedicated to education, training, and information. In practice, cooperative enterprises play an important role in **providing training opportunities** for their members. As reported in our 2021 statistical report, 99.35% of worker cooperatives included in our Spanish sample have developed measures to encourage the training of their employees, e.g., via providing a promotion and education fund, and 57.14% of these cooperatives provide training to workers during their working hours and cover additional costs. Similarly, according to our study, in 2018-19, social cooperatives in Italy provided an average of 520 hours of training to 26% of their human resources. Driven by their motivation to ensure the enterprise and jobs durability, cooperatives embody a **culture of lifelong learning** and skill enhancement which also contributes to ensuring that the demands of the twin digital and green transitions are met. Furthermore, work integration social cooperatives in particular are well-positioned to provide **tailored support for marginalised groups** and help them gain experience.
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> ...**human-centred management**. Worker cooperatives create and retain quality jobs, share risks and successes through solidarity mechanisms, and promote inclusion and equal opportunities including for disadvantaged groups. As inherently human-centred enterprises, they put workers' needs and long-term employment at the heart of the business decisions. However, their human dimension becomes more evident when examining their relationship with the digital transition. This can be seen in the rise of platform cooperatives, where the technology and digital infrastructure is owned, controlled and often developed by the members, i.e., the workers themselves or the users. Furthermore, as our publication on cooperatives' attitudes towards algorithmic management states, cooperatives reject the idea of algorithmic management of workers in any company, choosing instead to use technology for the benefit of the workers, not for controlling them, proving that it is possible to utilise advanced technology in an ethical way.

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Best practices

Givit (Spain): Givit is the largest delivery platform cooperative in Europe, founded in 2019 in Granada as an alternative set up by a group of workers facing precarious conditions in the delivery sector. Today, this fully self-financed cooperative is present in 17 Spanish cities and counts around 1,200 worker members, all of whom are employees registered with the General Social Security system. Their success is demonstrated by their record turnover of more than EUR 9 million in the 2024 financial year, representing a growth of 60% over the previous year. With the help of their digital platform – designed by their partner, GestCoop – they perform over 200,000 deliveries on a monthly basis. Every day, Givit processes over 25,000 data points, including kilometres travelled and delivery productivity. Givit proves that it is possible to build a successful worker-controlled platform with transparency, solidarity and democratic governance.

CoopCycle (France): CoopCycle is a cooperative federation founded in 2016, whose members are bike collectives active in the delivery sector. At a time when conventional platforms had begun to introduce algorithms to replace human managers, which had led to a deterioration in working conditions, a group of professionals decided to establish a worker-owned cooperative to respond to these trends. To compete with other platforms, they started developing an open-source code that could potentially be shared with everyone. To this end, the cooperative obtained an open-source license that hosts the software of various platform cooperatives on its server. With an increasing number of cooperatives joining this network, partners felt that sharing the same software in the form of a federation was the best choice for democratically addressing the challenges posed by algorithmic management.

We welcome the initiative to develop a Quality Jobs Act which must acknowledge that the rapidity with which changes in the world of work take place signal that the future of work is already here and policy must be adapted accordingly to protect job quality. We are particularly glad that the Quality Jobs Act will include AI and algorithmic management, as well as the just transitions. The following recommendations would ensure that the Act addresses these key concerns while future-proofing it at the same time.

1. **Ensure a human-in-control principle based on cooperatives' approach to algorithmic management**

   By developing and owning the technology collectively, ensuring transparency and accountability in how technology is used, having a democratic oversight on the organisation of work, and not allowing algorithms to control workers, cooperatives demonstrate that it is possible to adopt AI and algorithms in an ethical manner without taking humans out of the equation. Cooperatives are leading by example. For instance, the Spanish cooperative Givit developed has their own digital platform which collects data in a cooperative model, i.e., to support workers and improve work organisation, coordination, communication, and decision-making, while the French CoopCycle federation developed an open-source licence that hosts the software of various platform cooperatives on its server. Their success demonstrates that it is possible to implement human-centric alternatives to traditional algorithmic management.

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2. Mainstream the worker-ownership model throughout the Quality Jobs Act

Cooperatives uphold values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. Worker cooperatives empower worker-members, including women, low-skilled workers, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, by giving them ownership over the enterprise. Moreover, work integration social cooperatives assist in the integration of vulnerable workers into the labour market. At the same time, their lack of visibility leads to limited policy recognition and the underutilisation of their potential to contribute to inclusive labour market development. As the world of work is changing, it is all the more important to ensure that workers do not get left behind, especially vulnerable ones. To this end, the Quality Jobs Act must take into account worker-ownership as examples to follow in terms of providing future-proof, quality jobs. Member States should be encouraged to adopt legislation allowing the creation of worker-owned cooperatives, which remain difficult or are not yet adequately enabled in some Member States.

3. Provide targeted support to cooperatives to expand their training programmes to ensure a fair job transition for all

Recognising the interlinkage between quality jobs, skills training, and the just transition, the Act should provide support for training programmes. Cooperatives, operating under the seven cooperative principles, including one on education, training and information, provide opportunities to their members to enhance their skills, particularly in the context of the twin digital and green transitions. However, in order to enhance their training programmes, they require specific, targeted financial support.

4. Promote workers buyouts to achieve a just transition

Workers' buyouts (WBO), or business transfers to the employees under the cooperative model, are an effective tool to maintain knowledge, skills and jobs within the territory. As such, WBOs react to succession challenges, fight deindustrialisation and ensure the creation of quality jobs within the enterprise following the transition of a traditional business to the cooperative model, thereby contributing to a just transition.

Following the commitments in the mid-term review of the Social Economy Action Plan and the 2026 Commission Recommendation to facilitate the transfer of small and medium-sized enterprises the European Commission should promote and incentivise WBOs by:

- Making financial support available for advisory services and technical assistance for WBOs, including through a standalone European Social Fund under the next Multiannual Financial Framework

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- Maintaining the support for WBOs under the European Competitiveness Fund InvestEU programme in the next Multiannual Financial Framework
- Supporting direct financial mechanisms to aid workers investing in enterprises for a WBO
- Supporting awareness raising campaigns about WBOs
- Providing tax incentives for WBOs
- Granting preferential rights to workers to give them the best conditions for a takeover bid for an enterprise facing closure
- Encouraging financial intervention from regional authorities thereby completing workers' capital contribution and cooperative financial interventions
- Supporting cooperative organisations' capacity to increase interventions in equity and quasi-equity and create specific guarantee to support WBO

5. **Support the creation of cooperatives among autonomous workers**

Cooperatives among the self-employed, freelancers, and other autonomous workers allow non-standard workers to combine security (mutualisation of services, access to social protection, etc) and flexibility. They may provide administrative, financial/accountancy, legal services, information and training, coworking spaces, and more. The Quality Jobs Act should take into account this cooperative solution to the rise of non-standard employment often characterised by precarious work conditions and weak social protection. Member States should be encouraged to adopt legislation allowing the creation of cooperatives among autonomous workers.

6. **Ensure coherence with other EU initiatives**

To ensure its success, the Quality Jobs Act should be coherent with the Social Economy Action Plan, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Platform Work Directive, the Union of Skills, the Anti-Poverty Strategy and the upcoming Circular Economy Act.

Cooperatives are an innovative and adaptable business model that provide a long-term and workers-oriented approach. It is imperative that the Quality Jobs Act fully acknowledges and integrates them with the goal of creating future-proof, quality jobs.

CECOP is the European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives, representing approximately 43,000 cooperative enterprises, employing over 1.3 million workers, across 15 EU countries and the UK. The majority of cooperatives affiliated to CECOP's members are worker cooperatives (72%), which are democratically managed and owned by the workers, and social cooperatives (27%), whose core mission is the provision of social services and work integration of disadvantaged groups.

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