



International Organisation of
Industrial and Service Cooperatives
A Sector of the International
Co-operative Alliance

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INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

Ownership at the workplace: at least 11 million people are worker-members of their cooperative

On the International Workers' Day, CICOPA, the International organization of worker and social cooperatives active in industry, services and crafts, wishes to stress how the democratic participation and control of worker-members reinforce the **economic sustainability of the enterprise and its resilience in times of crisis**. With the recent transformation of the world economy, this is no longer a marginal model, indeed, according to the results of the study, 'Cooperatives and Employment: a global report', carried out by CICOPA, **at least 11 million people worldwide are worker-members**, namely at the same time employees and owners of their cooperative.

"Worker and social cooperatives put employees at the heart of the decision-making process. Together, they decide about the present and future of their enterprise", said the president of CICOPA, Manuel Mariscal.

The study found out that cooperative employment in general (including also employees and self-employed producers) includes a mix of **participation**, a **family-like feeling**, **strong identification** with one's enterprise, a **sense of pride** and **reputation**, a **feeling of implementing values** through one's work, while, at the same time, having a **strong awareness of the economic demands of the enterprise**, its need to be efficient and flexible; it showed that these characteristics were particularly strong in worker-members. Based on worldwide fieldwork, some indications that these qualitative components of cooperative employment tends to reinforce the economic sustainability of cooperatives were obtained.

'Cooperatives and Employment: a global report' also shows that worker members, considered as the third category of cooperative employment alongside employees (15 million) and self-employed producers (223 million), are already a significant portion of the total cooperative employment that directly concerns 250 million people in the world. It also calls for the development of multi stakeholder cooperatives, in which the staff is involved as one of the key stakeholders, like in the Mondragon group, in Italian social cooperatives, and in Quebec solidarity cooperatives, to mention a few emblematic cases.

"Considering the worsening situation of employment in the world, especially for the youth, governments cannot afford to look aside when the cooperative movement can offer a significant part of the solution", concludes Manuel Mariscal.

The full report is available [here](#)

CONTACT:

Leire Luengo – Communication Officer + 33 613 36 05 29 - leire.luengo@cicopa.coop

EDITOR'S NOTE:**What is a cooperative?**

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise based on the one person one vote principle. Among them, worker and social cooperatives are owned and controlled by the enterprise staff.

What is CICOPA?

CICOPA represents 65,000 of worker, social and artisans' cooperatives providing 3 million jobs across the world. Many of those cooperatives are worker cooperatives, namely cooperatives where the members are the staff of the enterprise, i.e., worker-members. Those enterprises are characterised by a distinctive type of labour relations, called "worker ownership", different from the one experienced by conventional employees or by the self-employed. A growing typology of cooperatives represented by CICOPA are social cooperatives, namely cooperatives whose mission is the delivery of goods or services of general interest. CICOPA currently has a total of 43 members in 38 countries. CICOPA has two regional organisations: CECOP- CICOPA Europe and CICOPA Americas.