

Thank you for inviting CICOPA to do this presentation at your conference which I am eager to follow. Straight to the point.

For my presentation allow me to briefly present CICOPA and then provide some observations on the effect of the COVID pandemic in the sector.

CICOPA is a sectoral organisation of the International Cooperative Alliance for the industry and services. We have 49 members among national federations and supportive organisations in 32 countries.

3 Types of cooperatives that CICOPA represents:

- Worker cooperatives (74%), which I don't have to explain to you: enterprises that are characterised by worker-ownership and democratic control
- Social cooperatives (17%), meaning cooperatives that pursue general interest activities and/or provide social inclusion for people coming from disadvantaged groups.
- independent workers/producers cooperatives: defined as such mainly due to the self-employed legal status of the working members.

So, to give you an insight from our sector - industry and services on the pandemic:

- No data/but different spaces of exchange – qualitative and not quantitative feedback.
- the situation differentiates a lot from one country to another, and also from one sector to another.

Starting from this last point, how have the different sectors affected by the pandemic:

Some sectors have been at the very **forefront of the crisis**: cooperatives active in the care sector and in health-related activities, mainly, social cooperatives managing hospitals, elderly residences, centers for mental health, domestic care services. Their activities not only did only increase, but they were one of the first actors to deal with this crisis, very often, taking risks for their own life. In some countries, at least this spring, some cooperatives in those sectors were still waiting for governments to pay for the work done during the emergency.

Other sectors, have also seen **an increase in their activities** because of the pandemic: in the cleaning sector, home delivery sectors, IT, and retail.

On the contrary, some other sectors **have had to stop their activity**. Like culture, education, and cooperatives in transport. With the consequential loss of financial and human resources.

And then we also see that a lot of our cooperatives have **very quickly adapted and managed to create new production areas**, for eg, in the textile sectors of cooperatives producing personal equipment that was required for sanitary reasons.

We also have some Members saying that they have witnessed new opportunities for worker and social coops. In many regions, there has been increasing attention to local and responsible consumption, opening to new market opportunities for our cooperatives.

Challenges:

Most of our cooperatives have faced **important financial problems**, mainly when it comes to cash flow. On the same line, cooperative mutualistic funds in some countries shifted their interventions – usually concerning the provision of starting capital for new cooperatives, into emergency

interventions: guaranteeing cash flow, but also providing risky loans, for example. Something they expect to last in the next years.

According to a survey the colleagues from CICOPA Americas did last year, in their own region:

Where 67% of the countries in the CICOPA Americas' region report that the **national measures for enterprises were/are not available** for worker crops.

At the same time, **new spaces for inter-cooperation were created between different sectors**. Some countries witnessed increased solidarity between sectors, new market opportunities, joint purchasing, can help coops from other sectors. Inter cooperation was very key in helping cooperatives to survive.

We have also seen in the CICOPA Americas region that spaces for **cooperation with other structures** have appeared: cooperation with local governments but also with trade unions and banks.

Something very interesting to reflect on, the synergies that we as a cooperative movement create with other movements, trade unions, NGOs, and women organizations, youth organizations... other structures with whom we are/will face similar challenges and with whom we should join our forces in order to be stronger together and seek for common solutions.

From what we could analyze at the European level we can say that unfortunately, this crisis has **exacerbated some already difficult** situations, for example, as for non-standard workers and platform workers, who usually even in normal time, are suffering from less access to social rights, fewer workers representation and etc...

Here again, many national governments' measures to protect workers from unemployment were/are not accessible for those workers. Young people are the first group represented in the non standard work, and so we also have to be very attentive to this category of workers.

to conclude:

some challenges that were there before the crisis are now even a bigger concern for our cooperatives, for example,

the digital transition, we see how much technologies and access to digital solutions were important for cooperatives to survive during this crisis.

the challenges of inequality and poverty that we know that, unfortunately, with the crisis, they will be even more exacerbated

So there is need for more collaboration, cooperation, amongst cooperatives from different sectors, different actors, different communities.

Among federations and international organisations at the world level, we need more entrepreneurial cooperation as well

this crisis teaches us once again that it can also be an opportunity for us, for cooperatives, also responsibility. The responsibility as a cooperative movement to provide solutions for people who are in need.

Worker cooperatives have always been seen as a way to secure work conditions of workers, especially during crisis time, this is our responsibility, we have to continue being aware of that, be connected to people, to the workers, and provide solutions for their decent work and decent work conditions.

Thanks for the attention and looking forward to hearing your interventions and experiences.