



# COOP VALUES

What does COOP mean?

A co-operative 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.

<http://www.cecop.coop/Values-and-Principles>

Co-operatives are based on the values of **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity**. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe also in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for other.

## Self-help

Self-help means that a cooperative is based on the ability of people to take together control of their own destiny and not mainly depend on external help. In a cooperative, members as well as the whole community the cooperative belongs to, benefit from the actions the cooperative undertakes and from the decisions that its members take. Self-help also includes the idea of mutual help among the cooperative members.

## Self-responsibility

In a cooperative, all members are called to take responsibilities and thus they need to be responsible for their actions and duties. All coop members are supposed to think not only on their individual tasks or needs, but to contribute to the members' interest and involve themselves for the whole group. At the same time, this value is the counterpart of solidarity (see below), as it calls on every member's responsibility towards the other members.



## Democracy

Cooperatives are controlled, managed and run by their members in a democratic way. Every member's suggestion is taken into account and accepted in the name of the progress and development of the co-op's services or products. Each member, regardless his/her specific contribution is fairly treated and his/her opinion is taken into account with equality of treatment towards each of the other members' opinion.

## Equality

Equality means granting people equal right to vote and participate to decisions related to the common project, regardless his/her specific contribution in terms of money and work or his/her social position and personal situation. It means also to have an access to resources and opportunities and treating them in the same way. Within a cooperative each member is granted the same rights and duties and can access the same opportunities.

## Equity

Equity means being fair and acknowledging differences in people's situations and needs, providing to each person a treatment and conditions that allow to level the playing field. Within a cooperative equality means giving people access to the proper resources and support in order to help them gaining equal and fair personal, social and economic conditions.

## Solidarity

Solidarity is the recognition that the improvement of individuals' immediate and long term needs and goals depends upon and need to be subordinated to the agreement and support of the members of the cooperative as a whole. It praises the cooperative interests and goals above the individual ones, caring especially for more disadvantaged members.