



# THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

(WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON WORKER AND SOCIAL COOPERATIVES)

## A long history

There are many records of cooperatives started out as small grassroots organisations in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Western Europe, North America and Japan. Cooperatives in industry and services have been active in Europe since the 19<sup>th</sup> century at least: the first recorded worker cooperative was established in 1833 in Paris among jewellers. However, the Rochdale Pioneers are regarded as the prototype of the modern cooperative society. In 1844, a group of 28 artisans working in the cotton mills in the town of Rochdale, in the north of England, established the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society, to provide an affordable alternative to poor-quality and adulterated food and provisions, using any surplus to benefit the community. Since then, the cooperative movement has developed and flourished across the world in all sectors of economy.

Between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, worker cooperatives spread all over the European continent, and then to the rest of the world. Social cooperatives have emerged mainly since the 1970s, responding to unmet needs, mainly in the fields of the provision of social services and work integration. In some countries, these new types of cooperatives have gradually obtained their own legal status, under different denominations, such as “social cooperative”, “social solidarity cooperative”, “social initiative cooperative”, “solidarity cooperative” and “collective interest cooperative society”, highlighting the importance of this new phenomenon within the cooperative movement.

## A wide range of activities

Today, we find a rich variety of cooperatives in industry and services active in a very diversified range of activities: IT, tourism, education services, renewable energy production, graphic design, etc. Most of them are worker cooperatives (where the members and owners are the staff of the enterprise), but there are also social cooperatives (specialised in the provision of community services) and cooperatives of self-employed producers (established to overcome precarity and iso-



lation through shared services and benefits). Together, the members of these cooperatives contribute to building a fairer Europe by bringing democracy and solidarity within the workplace.

## CECOP-CICOPA Europe since 1979

The first national federation of worker cooperatives recorded in history is the French one, established in 1884. In 1895, the [International Cooperative Alliance \(ICA\)](#) was established to represent cooperatives from all sectors worldwide, and in 1947 the ICA's dedicated body for industrial, service cooperatives [CICOPA](#), was also set up. In Europe, worker cooperatives are represented, together with all types of cooperatives active in industry and services, by [CECOP- CICOPA Europe](#), the European confederation of industrial and service cooperatives. CECOP-CICOPA Europe was founded in 1979 in Manchester, and its permanent secretariat was established in 1982 in Brussels. In the second half of the 1990s, it became a full-fledged confederation as well as the European organisation of CICOPA, thereby formally extending its geographical scope to the whole European continent. During the first half of this decade, CECOP- CICOPA Europe actively prepared the ground for the establishment of [Cooperatives Europe](#), the European organisation grouping cooperatives from all sectors, which was founded in 2006 in Manchester.

Thus, CECOP- CICOPA Europe is strongly embedded in the cooperative movement: it is the sectoral organisation of Cooperatives Europe for industry and services and the regional organisation of CICOPA for Europe, which in turn, is the sectoral organisation for industry and services of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). [Reference to the graphic illustration here?](#)

## Some figures

- the estimated number of all types of cooperatives across the world is **2.94 million**. They provide jobs to **279.4 million** people (9.46% of total world employment)
- The International Cooperative Alliance represents **2.6 million cooperatives** (all types of cooperatives) and **1,2 billion** member cooperators throughout the world
- the total number of worker cooperatives across the world is **253,274**
- the total number of social cooperatives across the world is **16,746**
- CICOPA represents **65,000** cooperatives (mostly worker and social cooperatives) employing **4 million** persons
- the number of all types of cooperatives in Europe is **221,960**
- Cooperatives Europe represents **176,000** cooperatives (all types) and **141 million** member cooperators
- Only in Europe, there are **74,532** cooperatives in industry and services



(worker cooperatives, social cooperatives and cooperatives of self-employed producers) providing jobs to more **than 2.5 million** people.

- CECOP represents **50,000** European enterprises in industry and services (worker cooperatives, social cooperatives and cooperatives of self-employed producers) employing **1.3 million workers**.

	MONDE	EUROPE
Toutes coopératives	<p><b>ACI</b></p> <p><b>2,94 millions</b> de coopératives, tous secteurs et familles confondus.</p> <p><b>279,4 millions</b> d'emplois, soit <b>9,46 %</b> de l'emploi mondial total</p>	<p><b>COOPÉRATIVES EUROPE</b></p> <p><b>176 000</b> entreprises coopératives</p> <p><b>141 millions</b> de membres</p>
Coop travail et sociales	<p><b>CICOPA</b></p> <p><b>253 274</b> coopératives de travail associé et</p> <p><b>16 746</b> coopératives sociales dans le monde</p>	<p><b>CECOP-Cicopa Europe</b></p> <p><b>50 000</b> entreprises européennes de l'industrie et des services, dont</p> <p><b>35 000</b> coopératives de travailleurs et <b>12 000</b> coopératives sociales</p>

Main Sources:

[International Cooperative Alliance](#)

[Cooperatives Europe](#)

[CICOPA Second Global Report "Cooperatives and Employment"](#)

[CICOPA Global report 2015-2016](#)

[CECOP-CICOPA Europe](#)