

COOPERATIVES AND EMPLOYMENT: a global report

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Hard copies of the report will be available throughout the Summit in English, French and Spanish at the CICOPA stand at the International Summit of Cooperatives Exhibition

THE REPORT IN BRIEF

According to the ILO, the world is suffering from unprecedented unemployment (over 200 million persons), dramatic youth unemployment, an historic level of migration and a very substantial presence of informal and precarious employment. Meanwhile, **the report estimates that cooperative employment, both full time and part time, involves at least 250 million people in the world** according to data from 74 countries covering 79% of the world's population. More than 26 million of these people work *in* cooperatives, as employees (over 15 million) or worker-members (almost 11 million), while close to 224 million producers organize their production together *within the scope of* cooperatives. The great majority of cooperative employment is to be found in the G20, where it makes up almost 12% of the entire employed population. On the basis of an analysis of data from a limited number of countries, cooperative employment appears to have remained, by and large, stable over the years and to have shown particularly strong resilience to the global crisis which flared up in 2007/2008. In spite of their still comparatively modest figures, worker cooperatives and social cooperatives have experienced a very significant surge in employment.

COOPERATIVE EMPLOYMENT
INVOLVES AT LEAST 250 MILLION
PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

A large part of **the study focuses on fieldwork we carried out in 10 selected regions** which present a high degree of diversity in terms of socio-economic environment: Gauteng (South Africa), Ahmedabad (India), Gangwon (South Korea), Kanagawa (Japan), Santa Fe (Argentina), Paraiba (Brazil), Wisconsin (United States), Quebec (Canada), the Basque Country (Spain) and Emilia-Romagna (Italy). The fieldwork confirmed the abovementioned worldwide tendencies, with some regions characterized by a much higher cooperative employment level, such as Emilia Romagna with almost 15% of the entire employed population. It also showed that working conditions (wages, other types of compensation, safety at work, social protection etc.) were generally at least as good as those found in other enterprises in comparable sectors, and were often better. In addition, it revealed that cooperative employment was generally characterized by a longer duration

and a far more balanced geographical distribution than the average and that cooperatives tended to formalize employment.

Qualitatively, the fieldwork revealed **distinctive characteristics of cooperative employment** as it is experienced by the dozens of people we interviewed, all of whom work either in, or within the scope of cooperatives with a **combination of economic rationale, a quest for efficiency, shared flexibility, a sense of participation, a family-type environment, pride and reputation, a strong sense of identity and a focus on values**. We discovered that this mix of characteristics was both a cause and a consequence of the economic sustainability of cooperatives. At the same time, we also identified a number of **serious challenges** that could weaken cooperative employment, in terms of **competition, management skills, labour standards and demographics**.

The report finally formulates a series of recommendations in the fields of employment policy and statistics, entrepreneurship, labour, education and research, as well as development, aimed at enhancing the already huge contribution made by cooperatives to overall employment in the world.

