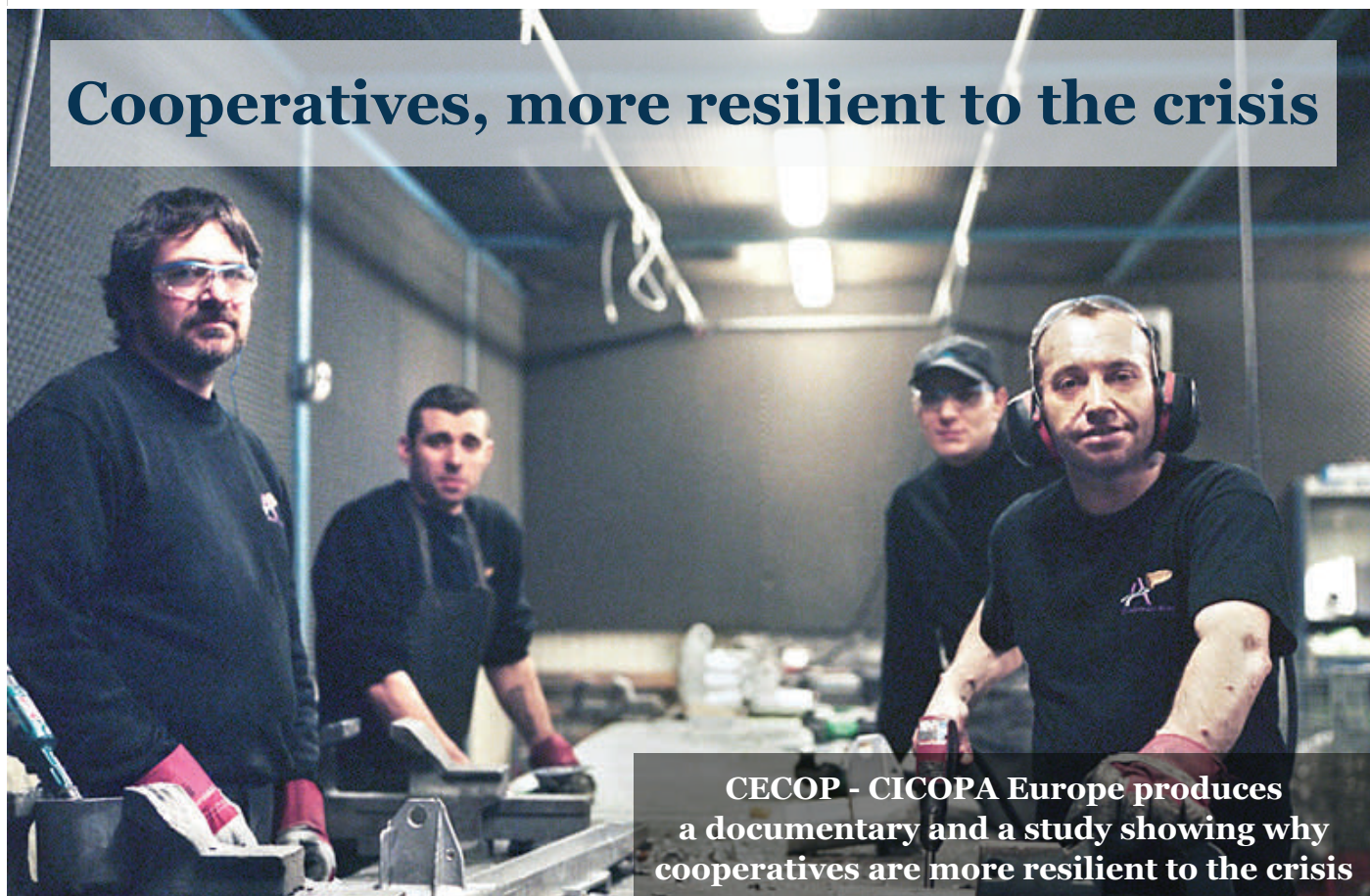


Work Together

November 2012 - Issue N° 6

The global information magazine on cooperatives and worker-owned enterprises in industry, services and crafts

Cooperatives, more resilient to the crisis



CECOP - CICOPA Europe produces a documentary and a study showing why cooperatives are more resilient to the crisis

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Editorial

The International Year of Cooperatives and the road to Marseille

By Bruno Roelants

The UN-proclaimed International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) is a golden opportunity for all cooperatives, and those in industry and services in particular, to be better recognized for what they are: enterprises controlled by the workers themselves in order to satisfy their own needs.

At the same time, the IYC is taking place amidst an epoch of financial dips and crises, with a global economy which is becoming an increasingly unpredictable horse to ride.

Amidst so much uncertainty and destruction of wealth, cooperatives have been working patiently and with a long term enterprise vision to generate and distribute wealth. The internal system of democratic checks and balances

and regular capital accumulation are a particularly timely source of inspiration for economic entities at large in the ongoing global instability and rising indebtedness at all levels. The documentary film "Together" produced by CECOP CICOPA-Europe, as well as our report "The Resilience of the Cooperative Model" (see p. 6 - 7), provide evidence and emblematic case studies of such resilience.

However, resilience has its limits: like other businesses, cooperative enterprises are dependent upon the

general situation of the economy, and require economic policies that support long-term growth. In addition, since our cooperatives have specific founding missions, such as creating sustainable jobs and economic activities for local communities, or generating services of general interest, they need to be supported by specific policies and regulations that correspond to such key missions. The brand new and hard-fought worker cooperative law in Brazil (see p 9) is a good example

of the type of regulation needed, and will hopefully be a source of inspiration for other countries.

It is to discuss these issues and provide concrete cooperative responses to the

challenges of globalization in an event that we organized in Marseille on 16th November 2012 the "Global Worker Cooperative Day" (see p 3), as the last international event under the IYC. Over one thousand of people participated actively, both representatives from the cooperative movement and persons interested in the latter, and that it will be a departure point for a substantial increase in the role of cooperatives in the globalized economy, both as direct economic actors involved in local development, and indirectly, as a source of inspiration for others.

"resilience has its limits (..) cooperative enterprises are dependent upon the general situation of the economy"

Work Together

Issue N° 6 - November 2012

"Work Together" is the magazine of the world (CICOPA) and European (CECOP) Confederation of cooperatives and worker-owned enterprises active in industry and services

CICOPA is a sectoral organisation of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).

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The editorial staff would like to thank all the members of CICOPA and CECOP CICOPA Europe for their contribution.

Edited in English, French and Spanish

Picture of the cover:
Workers of the Fonderie de l'Aisne (France)

CICOPA



INTERCONTINENTAL

International conference of worker and social cooperatives in Marseille

Leire Luengo, CICOPA

In the framework of the International Year of Cooperatives and of the Congress of the French Worker Cooperatives (Scop), the main international event for worker cooperatives and social cooperatives took place in Marseille. Hundreds of people had actively participated at the Global Worker Cooperative Day on 16th November, organized jointly by CICOPA and CG Scop.

A full day of exchanges and experiences of the diversity of the models and practices of worker cooperation across the world took place, with debates and analyses on the urgent challenges stemming from today's crises, with tested solutions in enterprise



Paul Singer, National Secretary of Solidarity Economy for the Ministry of Labor and Employment of Brazil at the conference

transfer and transformation, networking and clustering. Representatives such as Paul Singer, National Secretary of Solidarity Economy for the Ministry of Labor and Employment

of Brazil, Benoît Hamon, the French Deputy Minister for Social and Solidarity Economy underlined the role of cooperatives to find a way out of the crisis. ■

The UN highlights the role played by cooperativism in Rio+20

Luciana Siri / Leire Luengo

The final document of the Rio+20 Summit on Sustainable Development 2012, supported by more than 190 governments, recognizing the role of cooperatives in contributing to social inclusion and poverty reduction (point 70 of the conclusions). The summit was the largest in the history of the United Nations, gathering around 500 official events and 45,381 attendees, including approximately 12,000 delegates from 188 countries, more than 4,000 journalists and 10,000 NGO representatives. CICOPA Americas took part in the summit, represented by its President, Arildo Mota Lopes, who is also President of Central de Cooperativas e Empreendimentos Solidários (UNISOL).

Dame Pauline Green, President of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) stated that the reference to cooperativism in the final document is "to state in writing" a number of coincidences that have been agreed within the sector. "Members and supporters of the cooperative movement have long known that cooperatives help people to overcome poverty, promote gender equality, give back to the communities in which they are active and address ahead the attention of critical issues of sustainable development", Green declared.

Within the framework of the Rio+20 Summit, the Association des rencontres du Mont-Blanc -International

Forum of Leaders of the Social and Solidarity Economy (EMB-FIDESS) approved a resolution that calls for recognizing the "fundamental role of the organizations and enterprises of the Social And Solidarity Economy, whose principles of democratic management, personal growth, open membership, fair distribution of surpluses, attachment to the collective ownership and independence towards governments, place the human being in the center of world concerns, to create a more equitable, more interdependent and more democratic society and contribute to sustainable development, that is economically viable, socially fair and environmentally sound". ■

The conclusions of the Rio+20 are available on the following link:
<http://s.coop/wqyd>.

CICOPA contributes to the Quebec International Summit of Cooperatives 2012

CICOPA

More than 2,600 participants and personalities of the cooperative movement from 85 countries took part in the International Summit of Cooperatives held from 8th to 11th October in Quebec, and organized jointly by the Desjardins cooperative group, St Mary's University and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). Bruno Roelants, Secretary General, represented CICOPA together with Arildo Mota Lopez, Vice President of CICOPA and President of CICOPA-Americas, and Rebecca Kemble, President of CICOPA-North America.

The Summit analysed and proposed solutions to the current problems caused by the crisis and strived to consolidate the influence of the cooperative movement in the socio-economic, political and global panoramas. Therefore, the activities (round tables, conferences and workshops, including preparatory conferences) were focused on the economic, financial, social and environmental challenges cooperatives have to face. It included a specialized forum on worker cooperatives, with concrete cases from Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Italy and the United States being presented. In addition, a pre-event conference of worker cooperatives was organised on 8th October by the "Réseau de la coopération du travail" in Quebec, on the topic: "What are the main components of an optimal governance model for worker cooperatives?"

CICOPA Secretary General Bruno Roelants participated in the plenary round table "Cooperatives and mutuals, a distinctive and effective business model – an alternative to the prevailing business model", together with representatives from McKinsey and PriceWaterhouseCoopers, as well as the International Labour Organisation



CICOPA Secretary General Bruno Roelants speech at the Quebec International Summit of Cooperatives

(ILO) and EURICSE. He shared the results of the surveys conducted for four years by CICOPA and CECOP-CICOPA Europe on the resilience of cooperatives to the crisis, and presented a critical view to a study presented on the same topic by McKinsey from the point of view of conventional businesses.

Bruno Roelants also appeared in CICOPA's name at the pre-Summit academic conference Imagine 2012 as commentator to Claudia Sanchez Bajo's presentation "Is the Debt Trap Avoidable". This presentation, like the others at the Imagine 2012 conference, contributed to challenging the conventional vision of "growth", from an economic (debt, instability of the system), social (inequality) and environmental (energy, climate etc) points of view, suggesting that cooperatives could strongly contribute to solving these critical global problems. These warnings were eventually relayed at the Summit itself and echoed by keynote speakers such as Jacques Attali, Riccardo Petrella and Nouriel Roubini. It was decided that the Quebec Summit would turn into a regular biannual event, with the next session in 2014. ■

Co-operatives United : global appointment in Manchester

CICOPA

Co-operatives United is an international festival of events and exhibitions taking place in Manchester, UK, to mark the close of the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives 2012 that will be held from 31st October to 2nd November.

The documentary: "Together. How cooperatives show resilience to the crisis", produced by CECOP-CICOPA Europe, will be screened on 1st November followed by a debate.

CICOPA and its members from different countries were also present at the exhibition area. Thousands of participants visited and participated in the event. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), Co-operatives UK and the Co-operative Group, are jointly organizing the events bringing together cooperatives from all around the world. ■

A melody of cooperation around the world

Hazel Corcoran, CWCF

CICOPA launches a musical project that calls anyone to participate with songs in any language that transmit messages about cooperative work or cooperation. The songs selected will be available in a disc. The "world music project" seeks the promotion of the international cooperative principles, through the common language of music. This is another initiative of CICOPA in the framework of the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives. A CICOPA selection committee will choose the songs that will be part of the disc. To submit a song, please send the intention to submit by December 31st, 2012: Hazel Corcoran, hazel@canadianworker.coop. ■

EUROPE

Laszlo Andor: “the promotion of cooperatives could be one of the fundamental elements to find a path out of the crisis”

Diana Dovgan, CECOP-CICOPA Europe

Laszlo Andor, the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, published an article dedicated exclusively to cooperatives in the Hungarian newspaper *Népszava*. In his text, the Commissioner calls for a clear support for cooperatives and states that "without their recognition by the State and without support for cooperatives, increasing economic growth and job creation would be impossible. The promotion of cooperatives could be one of the fundamental elements to find a path out of the crisis".

The Commissioner also mentioned the success of the MONDRAGON Cooperative Group and the European Fair of Social Enterprises and Cooperatives of Persons with Disabilities in Bulgaria. He says that cooperatives have "advantages that can be seen more clearly during long economic and financial crises". He emphasizes the established history of the cooperative movement in Central and



Laszlo Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Eastern Europe and expresses the hope that "misunderstandings and prejudices are disappearing, and that the concept and practice of the cooperative movement, based on voluntary and democratic decision-making, can be restarted".

Andor opened the first European Fair of Social Enterprises and Coopera-

tives for People with Disabilities, co-organised in March by CECOP - CICOPA Europe and the National Union of Worker and Production Cooperatives of Bulgaria. ■

Read the original article appeared in the newspaper *Népszava* (7-07-2012): <http://s.coop/ql5c>.

A step forward for the cooperative modernization in Montenegro

CECOP-CICOPA Europe

The conference ‘The Case for Gateway Cooperatives in Montenegro and the Balkans’ held in Podgorica this summer took stock of the achieved results of a one-year European project, in particular by developing a new modern cooperative law. Cooperative representatives from 8 Balkan countries as well as Turkey discussed the key challenges and opportunities of cooperatives in the Balkan region.

The EU co-funded project “Introduction of social economy and reha-

bilitation of the cooperative system supporting Rural Development in Montenegro” was launched in September 2011 and has been implemented by Cooperatives Europe and the Italian organization COSV with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Union of Cooperatives of Montenegro. The project encompasses the will and needs expressed by different Montenegrin institutions and bodies to support the legislative process for the harmonisation of the cooperative laws

already existing. CECOP took also part in the project with the aim to provide its expertise for an adequate legal framework for social cooperatives but also to suggest initiatives in favor of cooperative development in tourism and service sectors as well as craft cooperatives.

An agricultural law should be adopted soon by the Montenegrin authorities. A political will was expressed to proceed rapidly with the adoption of a general law on cooperatives, followed by a law for social cooperatives. ■

Cooperatives: showing its resilience

Leire Luengo, CECOP-CICOPA Europe

Full version of the documentary *Together* available on line and DVD

The full version of the documentary *Together* is already available! You can watch it on the website: www.together-thedocumentary.coop. This is a low definition file, you can also purchase the DVD. The film shows the resilience of cooperatives to the crisis through testimonies of staff of four European cooperative stories located in France, Poland, Italy and Spain. The documentary is available in English and French. Italian and Spanish versions of the documentary will be available by the beginning of November.

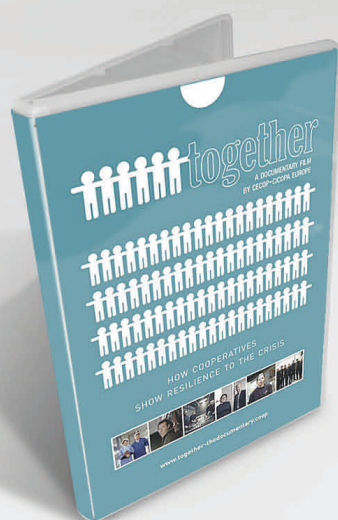
The film is based on various studies conducted by CECOP, but especially on the results of its study "The resilience of the cooperative model", presented recently. The research identifies the mechanisms which reinforce the resilience. There are many reasons to explain it. Firstly, the fact that worker-members, as co-owners of their businesses, share the respon-

sibility and the management and put the strategies in place in the short and the long term; which give the priority to the safeguarding of their jobs and continuous innovation. Among these strategies we can name the temporary reduction of salaries, technological investment, adaptations for the market, use of financial reserves, etc.

The report bases itself on an analysis of quantitative data, however principally in France and in Spain (the countries where the statistics on worker cooperatives and social cooperatives are the most reliable) and indicate that in these countries these enterprises have known a lower number of closures and of job losses than the average. This study equally presents a few concrete examples illustrating the strategies put in place by cooperatives to allow them to react more quickly and efficiently.

The film in depth

From February to April 2012, CECOP and m30m, a Spanish film production cooperative, filmed four different cooperative stories: a mineral water factory in Poland founded more than 60 years ago (Muszynianka), a French company in crisis acquired by its workers and transformed into a worker cooperative (Fonderie de l'Aisne), a consortium of social cooperatives in Milan providing labour inclusion to disadvantaged people and social services to thousands of citizens, and an industrial cooperative group which is one of Spain's main business groups (MONDRAGON Corporation). Through testimonies of the staff of those enterprises who also own and control them, the documentary shows how they face the crisis in order to preserve jobs, local skills and economic activities.



TECHNICAL DATA

Year: 2012

Country: Belgium/Spain

Running time: 39 min.

Audio format: English, French, Italian and Spanish

Genre: Documentary - Producer: CECOP-CICOPA Europe

Managing producer: Leire Luengo

Production company: m30m

Director: Ana Sánchez

Scriptwriters: Bruno Roelants, Olivier Biron, Leire Luengo, Ana Sánchez

Director of Photography: José Luis Fernández



to the crisis that is straining Europe

CECOP presents a picture exhibition at the European Parliament

In the framework of the International Year of cooperatives, CECOP presented the picture exhibition “Through their eyes” at the European Parliament. The exhibition had the support of the member of European Parliament Marie-Christine Vergiat, (GUE/NGL).

All the pictures have been taken by the photographer Lydie Nesvadba who captured a unique perspective through the eyes of the workers of those cooperatives. The collection shows the activities in the four cooperatives filmed in the documentary “Together. How cooperatives show

resilience to the crisis”. The pictures show a business vision focused on people, the central approach shared by all cooperatives.

You can find more information about the photographer here: <http://www.lydienesvadba.com>.



Pictures by Lydie Nesvadba: Clockwise from top to left: Marie Claude Rondeau (Fonderie de l'Aisne), Emilia Krynicka (Muszynianka), Iván Gallego (CIDIA Automotive, MONDRAGON Corporation), Danobat (MONDRAGON Corporation), Coop. Soc. Simone de Beauvoir Onlus (Consorzio SIS) and Slim Ben Gouta (Fonderie de l'Aisne).

A different museum

*Elsa Brander and Lykke Pedersen,
Kooperationen*

Imagine a museum where the most precious possession is not a painting by Van Gogh or an art installation by Ai Weiwei but a 100-year-old packed lunch wrapped in an old newspaper from 1886. Such a museum actually exists. It is the Danish co-operative Workers' Museum in Copenhagen, situated in a building which is recognised as the very first listed Workers' Assembly Hall in the world.

When you enter the museum, located in the very heart of Copenhagen, you will soon discover that the Workers' Museum is far from a typical hushed and awe-inspiring museum with only a few other visitors. The museum has a vibrant ambiance and is full of visitors of all ages who come to learn more about how life was when their grandparents were young or even more importantly they come to learn more about the 150 years of Danish and European workers' history.

The museum does not tell the traditional story of land and glory or the rise and fall of kings of the past. Instead it recreates the part of history which other museums do not put on display; the story of how the Danish workers lived and how they were organised. This is what makes the museum so popular, especially among the young visitors.

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF COOPERATIVES 2012

To mark the International Year of Cooperatives 2012, Henning Grelle, a historian at the Danish co-operative Workers' Museum, is working on a book about the history of the Danish



cooperative movement. The book will be published in November 2012 and it is intended to bring to light the very important fact that the cooperative model of enterprise is still alive and kicking in Denmark.

By publishing the book, the co-operative Workers' Museum hopes to raise public awareness of the key role the Danish cooperatives play in the structure and dynamism of society and the labour market. Further it hopes to generate attention to the cooperative model of enterprise among politicians and make them realise that it is essential if you want sustainable businesses and successful economic solutions.

By the way, the packed lunch was actually found and handed over to the Workers' Museum in 1986 by a group of historians who were renovating a glass cabinet which had belonged to King Frederik IV in Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen. It had simply been left behind the cabinet by workers in 1886. The packed lunch is now on display at the Danish co-operative Workers' Museum where it is a symbol of the history of worker cooperation as it is old and simple but in no way forgotten! ■

More information at:
<http://www.arbejdernuseet.dk/>.

Hamon highlights the resilience of cooperatives to the crisis

CECOP-CICOPA Europe

Benoît Hamon, the French Deputy Minister for Social and Solidarity Economy, participated at the European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup. In his speech he highlighted the cooperatives resilience to the crisis "even when they are present in highly competitive markets"; because, as he mentioned, cooperatives are oriented toward long-term objectives and can rely on their own resources. But the crisis is not the only aspect that can put enterprises at risk, as Hamon reported; between 50.000 and 200.000 jobs are lost each year in France due to the closure of "healthy" enterprises (family businesses without heirs etc). The minister has underlined that the transfer of those enterprises to its workers under the co-operative form could not only save those jobs but also maintain them in the long-term. The Minister plans to adapt the existing French law on worker cooperatives in order to facilitate worker's buy outs. ■

More gender equality in European worker cooperatives

"There is more gender equality in worker cooperatives in France, Italy or Spain than in other kind of enterprises". This conclusion can be made because of the results of the enquiry done by 6 CECOP – CICOPA Europe members from Spain, France and Italy, involved in the European Project "Active Women in SMEs". In those three countries the organizations have summarized the opinion of 133 women. They have arrived at a series of conclusions that permit one to say that the women in worker cooperatives have better quality work, which influences their personal and family life. The portrait of a woman working in this kind of enterprise is related to the service sector; she has a university degree, is around 41 years old, is married and has two children. Practically all the women interviewed consider that in their cooperative, members receive equal salary for an equal workload, and that there are educational opportunities so they can reach to the highest responsibilities positions. ■

SOUTH AMERICA

New law for worker cooperatives in Brazil

Daniel Bernal, CICOPA

The worker cooperatives in Brazil have a new law that promises an optimistic panorama for the sector. The new legislation is the result of many years of work carried out by Brazilian worker cooperatives. The legal project was approved on 19th July by the President, Dilma Rousseff, after being approved unanimously by the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies on 27th June.

This law establishes a clear regulation on the operation and administrative procedures for worker cooperatives. It is also intended to overcome previous legal problems, such as the creation of pseudo cooperatives, as well as ensuring the rights of the cooperative workers. So that, it is good news for the Brazilian worker cooperatives, CICOPA and its members Central de Cooperativas e Empreendimentos Solidários (UNISOL) and Organização das Cooperativas Brasileiras



Chamber of Deputies of Brazil

(OCB) during the United Nations International Year of Cooperative 2012.

It is the product of nine years of work developed by the Brazilian worker cooperative movement. CICOPA has given its support for the creation of

this new legal framework; and the drafting of the legal text has been based on the CICOPA World Declaration on Worker Cooperatives. Please click here to access the CICOPA World Declaration on Worker Cooperatives: <http://s.coop/tda8>. ■

Southern cooperatives in action

Luciana Siri, CICOPA Mercosur

The International Year of Cooperatives finds the regional movement of worker cooperatives working harder than ever, with an important process of decentralization and regionalization such as the creation of CICOPA Americas in November 2011 and the creation in October of CICOPA Mercosur that groups the cooperative organisations from Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

The first anniversary of CICOPA Mercosur coincides with the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) and this is the reason why; because the member organisations have pre-

pared an ambitious work plan, being aware of the great opportunity to declare more strongly its objectives and actions. Some of the planned activities imply the strengthening of several inter-cooperative initiatives at local, national and regional level and in different sectors such as agricultural business, recycling, textile industry, production of agricultural equipment, telecommunication industry, metal-working, health and social services, among others.

CICOPA Mercosur is developing some training and exchange programmes, such as the construction cooperatives meeting celebrated in

March in Sao Paulo (Brazil); the international metallurgic cooperatives meeting in April in Buenos Aires (Argentina); and the training programmes that the metallurgic and the textile cooperative sectors of the region carried out during the middle of the year in the Argentinian capital city. In turn, each organization has planned several national activities such as the National Congress of UNISOL, a member of CICOPA in Brazil, to be held on 7th and 9th November, which will bring thousands of cooperatives from the country, in addition to the 50th Anniversary of the Federation of Production Cooperatives of Uruguay in December. ■

NORTH AMERICA

Federal Government of Canada cuts a program that provided support to cooperatives

Hazel Corcoran, CWCF

The Federal Government of Canada has recently decided to discontinue the funding for of the Cooperative Development Initiative, which is a program that has provided financial support for new and emerging cooperatives since 2003. Furthermore, the Rural and Cooperatives Secretariat, the government office that administers programs related to cooperatives, will be significantly reduced in size, from 94 to 15 civil servants.

Despite that fact that 2012 in the

United Nations International Year of Cooperatives, Canadian Worker Cooperative Federation reports that the government is terminating "an inexpensive program that benefits hundreds of communities across the country. More than 9,000 cooperatives throughout Canada will be further harmed by deep cuts to the Rural and Cooperatives Secretariat, an organisation that liaises between the sector and the government".

For more information, please read the statement issued by the Canadian Cooperative Association here. ■

Hazel Corcoran receives the award of the Second Degree of the Order of the Canadian Cooperativism and Mutualism

CICOPA

Hazel Corcoran received the award of the Second Degree of the Order of the Canadian Cooperativism and Mutualism Merit, the highest honor in the francophone cooperative world in Canada. She is the first person from the worker cooperative movement to receive this award.

Based in Calgary since 1992, Hazel is a point of reference in the cooperative world in Alberta and across Canada. Actively involved in the cooperative sector for twenty years, she is the Executive Director of the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation (CWCF) which is a member of CICOPA.

"The world today is looking for the



co-op movement, because we help to build an economy based on hope and love. We will never fully find our strength unless we are united as a movement, across space, different sectors and generations", said Hazel Corcoran in her speech. ■

400 people gathered in Boston for a Worker Cooperative Conference

CICOPA-North America

The United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) gathered nearly 400 attendees from the worker cooperative sector and external groups interested in the cooperative movement. Numerous sessions and workshops were held to share participants' experiences and they explored possibilities for cooperatives, worker ownership and workplace democracy over three days. During those activities, several international speakers from CICOPA members participated, such as in the session "Lessons for Growth from around the World", where Bruno Roelants (CICOPA Secretary General) and Hiroshi Shimamura (Japanese Union of Worker Cooperatives) took the floor discussing elements of successful cooperative movement-building. José Orbaiceta (President of the Federation of Worker Cooperatives of the Argentinean Republic, FECOOTRA) also participated via Skype video conference speaking about the principled approach to growing the Argentinian worker cooperative movement.

As CICOPA-North America is the newly launched branch of CICOPA, which now includes 2 of the 3 worker cooperative federations in Quebec, the CWCF, USFWC and the Mexican Confederation of Cooperative of Diverse Activities (CNC); leaders from CICOPA-North America held a discussion: "Building a Cooperative 'Ecosystem' in North America". There was a remarkable presence of Spanish-speaking cooperators who are based in the United States. This fact underlined the possibility to form a committee of the USFWC of Spanish-speaking worker cooperatives and also a plan from CICOPA North America to strengthen the relations between Hispanic cooperatives in Canada, United States and Latin America. ■

ASIA

New law on cooperatives in South Korea will take effect in December

Hyungsik Eum, KASEE

A new law on cooperatives in South Korea will be in effective from 1st December. The Ministry of Strategy and Finance is in charge of the new legislation and a special team for cooperatives is being created in the ministry in order to prepare the different legal documents and policies for promoting cooperatives. This team will be transformed into the “Department of Cooperatives” once the law be effective.

Although there is no explicit mention of worker cooperatives, the decree - that will be published in October will define them indirectly by allowing worker members to become board members according to the specific composition of the membership structure. While in the law it is forbidden that workers have seats in the board of the cooperative, the draft of this decree defines several exceptions. Among the exceptions, if two thirds of cooperative members are workers, and if non-member workers are less than one third of all workers, cooperatives can have board members composed of worker members. The CICOPA World Declaration and sup-



Parliament of South Korea

port from CICOPA members played an important role in introducing this concept of worker cooperatives. “Social cooperative” which are clearly defined in the law, also will be able to have board members representing worker members thanks to the same clause of the decree.

CONTEXT

In South Korea, because of sectorally fragmented legislation on cooperatives, there were few opportunities for newly emerging cooperatives such as worker cooperative, social cooperative and mutual aid organisations which have appeared in response to

people’s new needs. In order to change this situation, the framework law on cooperatives was initiated by ‘Solidarity for Framework law on cooperatives’ composed of cooperative movement organisations and various citizens’ associations in 2011.

KASEE, Korean member of CICOPA is working with other concerned organizations to create new federal organization of worker cooperatives and social cooperatives by the new law. It also organizes training programmes and information sessions for affiliated enterprises in order to help transforming them into cooperatives. ■

Building a Community Hub in the Quake-hit Area in Japan

Yoshiko Yamada, JWCU

Although media rarely covers the current situation in Japan, there are over 340.000 people still living as evacuees. A member of JWCU, the Japan Workers’ Cooperative Union, located in Miyagi Prefecture, one of the regions heavily touched by the quake, is now working hard to develop a project called “Forest for Eve-

ryone” to rebuild the quake-hit area. The project will consist of a business hub including a job training site, a welfare service agency, a reforestation center and a training camp for sports teams; a renewable energy hub that will concentrate itself in the production of bio-diesel fuel and wind-power energy, and a community hub includ-

ing a community hall, a farmer’s market and a park. In order to cover the estimated cost of 1 billion yen (over 10 billion euros), the members will not only use disaster-related subsidies but also raise their own funds, calling for cooperation and financial contributions from supporters within the community and across the country. ■

AFRICA

Extending horizons and opportunities through worker cooperatives in Uganda

Daniel Bernal, CICOPA

As many youths in Uganda face the unemployment crisis, the youths in Bwongera, in the South West of the country, have a different story to tell. They have managed to create jobs for themselves. They have formed a worker cooperative to construct fish ponds for farmers.

The group consists of 40 members that started in August 2009, when two of them were part of a cooperative group that was sponsored to attend a course in fish farming, in view of a growing importance for fish for

domestic consumption and export. The two youths who attended the course decided to train other youths who had been engaged in the construction of ponds without any formal skills. The youths continued to operate as individuals and were hired by the farmers on a casual-labour basis.

They have also identified other related activities that have increased their income: one is brick-making. It came to the attention of the group that the clay soil, which was being removed during the pond construction was very good for making

bricks. Brick-making has become an even bigger income source than the original project of digging ponds. In addition, the fact that they are a cooperative has made it easier for the local authorities to reach them with government programmes such as youth Entrepreneurship funds.

So, the whole range of opportunities has opened up for the youth groups because of them working together. This is creating tremendous opportunities for self-employment and the generation of income. ■

Worker Cooperatives and Food Sovereignty in South Africa

Andrew Bennie, COPAC

As is the case across the world, hunger is a persistent problem for many poor, especially urban, households in South Africa. However, the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) is working with a few cooperatives and communities in some townships around Johannesburg to actively work towards solutions to the prob-

lem of hunger. This involves an approach that seeks to connect the idea and practice of food sovereignty with the development of food producing worker cooperatives.

The principles of the worker cooperatives, defined by democratic management and worker control, as well as its orientation to community benefit, can potentially provide an important

institutional design through which to democratise the production of food, provide healthy and affordable food to households and communities, and job creation.

This is the approach that is in the early stages of being put into practice in the poor township of Ivory Park, where a local food sovereignty strategy has been developed, involving existing small farming cooperatives, bakeries, and the process of establishing new food producing worker cooperatives, to farm and produce nutritious and affordable food in sustainable and democratic ways. ■



TOGETHER:
the new documentary produced
by CECOP- CICOPA Europe
on the resilience of the cooperative model

The film is available to watch on line and the DVD can be purchased here: <http://www.together-thedocumentary.coop>