

Press release: 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

A future of Europe that cares for the real economy, sustainable development and social justice

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*“Cooperatives are a real driver of change and one of the few systems that, in today’s world, can provide opportunities for growth and the empowerment of people”, says Giuseppe Guerini
President of CECOP*

As the European Union is celebrating 60 years, cooperatives in industry and services wish to call on the need for a new Europe that again cares for the real economy, sustainable development and social justice. Over the years cooperatives have demonstrated their ability to weather successive crises and to protect jobs, whilst at the same time being one of the few forms of companies which still able to offer investment opportunities and growth for young people. “Cooperatives are the most appropriate way of organizing economic activities and jobs that can then redistribute wealth while producing it; in other words, they are enterprises that limit the growth of inequalities and promote social cohesion”, says Giuseppe Guerini, President of CECOP.

In a context when an increasingly competitive and globalized market makes the life of all businesses which rely on the real economy and have a high labor content, difficult. The challenges European economy is facing are made even more complex by the prevailing political and cultural context in which the economy and politics are increasingly conditioned by the depersonalized financial culture. Work and the production of goods are subordinate to the frantic search for income and profits, whilst the economic capital of the business, rather than being a factor of production, has become "liquid", exchanged in a continuous flow that needs to generate money, even when it does not create goods.

Cooperatives represent a safeguard for the principle of economic democracy: they are platforms for the real economy. "They could be considered as a form of protection which makes it possible to save the market economy from the financial intoxication that is generating a series of crises, in particular in the services, production and craft work sectors", indicates Giuseppe Guerini. "It is important to underline that without cooperatives, the goals of the EU 2020 program for a more sustainable, smart and inclusive growth will remain largely incomplete".

Labour and the re-industrialization of the productive economy

CECOP wishes to focus great attention on the issue of labor and, regarding production, to think of a re-industrialization of the productive economy that is based on the ability to aggregate cooperative enterprises in a social economy design that ties the producers of values, services, goods to a development model and helps them to build alliances. A model where the real economy becomes a common good alternative to financialization which is plundering the territories and local economies.

"It certainly may seem unrealistic and utopian to imagine that worker cooperatives could, by themselves, re-industrialize Europe and combat unemployment, but it is essential that someone 'dreams of a Europe' that once again cares for the real economy, sustainable development and

social justice", insists Giuseppe Guerini. "We are convinced that if you can dream of something, doing it together is the way to achieve it. This is why I think that cooperatives will lead us to the real economy".

"There is a need for an ecological and social business plan that recreates the conditions to give a future to work, repositioning it at the core of economic development policies. Placing cooperatives firmly on the European agenda is part of this design that we in CECOP want to help building", concludes Giuseppe Guerini.

Read the full interview to Giuseppe Guerini [here](#)

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CECOP – CICOPA Europe (European Confederation of Worker Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Social and Participative Enterprises) groups national organisations in 15 countries which in turn affiliate over 50.000 cooperative and participative enterprises in industry and services, the vast majority being SMEs, and employing 1.4 million workers across Europe. Most of them are characterised by the fact that the employees in their majority are members-owners, while some of them are second-degree enterprises for SMEs. Furthermore, around 4.000 of those enterprises are specialised in the reintegration of disadvantaged and marginalised workers (disabled, long-term unemployed, ex prisoners, addicts, etc).