

PRESS RELEASE European Tourism Day // 01-12-2014

Cooperatives active in tourism, boosting local wealth and social cohesion through sustainable jobs and activities

On the European Tourism Day, CECOP, the European confederation of cooperatives active in industry and services wishes to stress the socio-economic development power of more than 8,000 enterprises (18% of our network) active in tourism-related activities. What makes their contribution so special? Worker and social cooperatives belonging to the CECOP network, as participative and democratic enterprises rooted in the territory, have a strong community embeddedness and a proven capacity to contribute to local wealth and social cohesion through sustainable jobs and activities.

According to Eurostat, one in seven businesses in the European Union falls under the umbrella of tourism, representing 29% of persons employed in the services sector. Tourism today represents a high potential of development for the European Economy. The contribution of cooperatives to the sustainable growth of this sector seems to be even more relevant if we think that it is particularly important when it comes to offering job opportunities to young people. Studies such as the recent report from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) , states that tourism employs "a higher proportion of women and young people than is represented in the workforce as a whole".

Furthermore, it "holds real opportunities for job creation to address the youth unemployment problems faced by countries across the world".

"Cooperatives and local wealth are directly co-related. Tourism, being one of the top economic sectors in Europe, in terms of share of GDP, growth and employment, and one in which many of our cooperatives are involved, is a central strategic topic for CECOP, and even more so considering the potential that this sector has for youth employment", pointed out the President of CECOP, Luca Dal Pozzo, at the occasion of the online guide of the European Route of Cooperative Culture event launch. Recognising the value of local resources and local democracy, also in the countryside, is a specific ingredient of the contribution of cooperative tourism.

With the purpose of promoting local development through sustainable tourism, CECOP is coordinating Cooproute, the European Route of Cooperative Culture. This project co-financed by the European Commission is creating a transnational itinerary in the field of cultural and industrial tourism. The route gathers cooperative enterprises preserving traditional local skills and products and developing material and immaterial cultural heritage in Europe, in addition to those sites dedicated to the memory of cooperatives (such as the Rochdale Museum in the UK).

These destinations can be discovered through the online guide at www.cooproutecoop.com which was launched on 29th October. This dynamic tool is dedicated to all those who are interested in sustainable and innovative tourism experiences while learning about the business model and cooperative culture throughout Europe. To date, more than 80 sites have joined the European Route of Cooperative Culture and they are based in 10 different European countries. Most are based in Italy where the idea of the project emerged, but also in Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Estonia and Ireland. Many of those taking part are social cooperatives integrating vulnerable groups through work, and a large part of participants provide accommodation, food and cultural related services.

CONTACT:

Leire Luengo – Communication Officer + 32 2 543 10 36 - leire.luengo@cecop.coop

CECOP – CICOPA Europe (European Confederation of Worker Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Social and Participative Enterprises) groups national organisations in 16 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. More than a thousand worker cooperatives in the CECOP network were created as business transfers to employees of conventional enterprises in crisis or without heirs. Furthermore, around 4.000 of the enterprises of our network are specialised in the reintegration of disadvantaged and marginalised workers (disabled, long-term unemployed, ex prisoners, addicts, etc).