



International Organisation of
Industrial and Service Cooperatives
A Sector of the International
Co-operative Alliance

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Declaration on migrants and refugees

CICOPA expresses its commitment to fight for equal access for immigrants and refugees to services and work opportunities provided by cooperatives

CICOPA, the international organization of worker and social cooperatives active in industry, services and craft, is presenting a Declaration on Migrants and Refugees. Through this text, the organization reiterates the fact that cooperatives of this type “contribute to a decent and dignified life and to the social and economic integration of refugees and migrants in various parts of the world”.

“According to the United Nations, the number of international migrants increased by 41% over the last 15 years, from 173 million in 2000 to 244 million in 2015; the UN also point out that the main reasons for migrating include conflict, poverty, inequality and lack of decent jobs, and that the distinction between countries of origin, transit and destination is becoming increasingly obsolete”, the Declaration underlines.

It also mentions that, according to the UNHCR, the number of refugees reached about 15.1 million people in mid-2015, up from 10.5 million in 2012, which represents an increase of 40% in only 3 years, the vast majority being hosted by low or middle income countries. And this situation will probably worsen in the next few years.

“Europe in particular”, CICOPA’s text continues, “is facing the gravest migration and humanitarian crisis since World War II, bringing into light its own paradoxes and inability to apply its constituent values such as solidarity, respect for human dignity and liberty”.

In the Declaration, CICOPA shows its concerns about this situation and expresses its commitment to “fight for an equal access to services and work opportunities provided by cooperatives, allowing for a decent life and increased opportunities for the entrepreneurial projects to be initiated by workers and producers in the migrant and refugee communities around the world”.

The organization recalls that “industrial and service cooperatives are the natural allies of international organizations, regional organizations and national governments in carrying out inclusive policies that provide basic services and socio-economic inclusion for migrants and refugees”.

They are, for example, “used as a tool by migrants and refugees themselves for developing entrepreneurship initiatives together with other members of the community, thus increasing autonomy, solidarity and human development while at the same time contributing to a sustainable

economy both globally and locally (...). Cooperative entrepreneurship is a valuable tool to maximize the developmental benefits represented by migrants and refugees for the host countries in terms of human resources, competences and skills”.

The text concludes by saying that, “cooperatives are based on the principle of equality, whereby all human beings are equal in rights and remain at the heart of all policy concerns. This is why cooperatives in industry and services commit themselves to fight against the discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion faced by refugees and migrants all around the globe”.

Some of the many examples of the cooperatives’ commitment to the inclusion of immigrants and refugees can be seen in the latest issue of CICOPA’s e-magazine [Work Together](#).

To read the full Declaration, [click here](#).

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EDITOR’S NOTE:

What is a cooperative?

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise based on the one person one vote principle. Among them, worker and social cooperatives are owned and controlled by the enterprise staff.

What is CICOPA?

CICOPA represents 65,000 of worker, social and artisans’ cooperatives providing 3 million jobs across the world. Many of those cooperatives are worker cooperatives, namely cooperatives where the members are the staff of the enterprise, i.e., worker-members. Those enterprises are characterised by a distinctive type of labour relations, called “worker ownership”, different from the one experienced by conventional employees or by the self-employed. A growing typology of cooperatives represented by CICOPA are social cooperatives, namely cooperatives whose mission is the delivery of goods or services of general interest. CICOPA currently has a total of 43 members in 38 countries. CICOPA has two regional organisations: CECOP- CICOPA Europe and CICOPA Americas.