

The response of European co-operatives to the economic recession

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The current economic crisis has forced governments to consider new economic and social measures, while the European Commission and social agents, including co-operatives, agree to the need for urgent and coordinated action within the EU to supplement and support actions in individual member states.

In light of this challenge, representatives of the European co-operative movement met in Sofia, Bulgaria,

on 22 and 23 June, with a specific objective: to highlight the strengths of co-operative enterprises which, even in a period of crisis, offer a democratic system and an innovative dimension. The truth is that co-operatives are the engine behind a movement for sustainable and just development. Their merits were officially recognised by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Durao Barroso, in a letter sent

to the co-president of Co-operatives Europe.

The Sofia conference, which was given the theme of "the response of European co-operatives to the economic recession", served to highlight the unity and cooperation among trade unions, social enterprises and co-operatives. It also showcased best practice in maintaining employment and avoiding an increase in social inequality, promoting dialogue and cooperation among social interlocutors.

The President of the IHCO and Vice-President of the Espriu Foundation, José Carlos Guisado, made the most of his involvement at the event by meeting up with Alain Coheur, President of Social Economy Europe and with Bruno Roelants, Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Industrial, Artisanal and Service Producers' Co-operatives (CICOPA).

The conference ended with the presentation of a manifesto addressed to the institutions of the European Union setting out the main themes discussed during the event.



Pauline Green, Co-President of Cooperatives Europe, at the opening of the conference in Sofia