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# DEMOGRAPHICS AND IMPACT OF COOPERATIVES IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Rakel Vázquez

Jabier Retegi


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With almost 20 years of experience and knowledge, Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness (Deusto Foundation) is a leading research centre in Europe in regional competitiveness. Its mission is to promote competitiveness at the service of inclusive and sustainable wellbeing in the Basque Country. To this end, the institute works on a daily basis on transformative research projects with local and international stakeholders and provides rigorous analysis for decision making.

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## Executive summary

This work provides as accurate a picture as possible of the cooperative reality in the Basque Country. To this end, information has been compiled and integrated from various sources that provide partial information from their particular perspective, such as the Basque Country Register of Cooperatives, Eustat (Directory of Economic Activities-DIRAE and request for customised statistical information), Konfekoop and private databases (e.g. SABI-Infoma).

According to the information available from Eustat-DIRAE, the number of cooperatives in the Basque Country as of 1 January 2023, reached 1,848 companies, representing a growth of 16.4% compared to 2015 and 6.7% compared to the situation immediately prior to the pandemic in 2020<sup>1</sup>. Cooperatives have increased their representation in the Basque Country's business sector from 1.00 % in 2015 to 1.28 % in 2023. The average size of cooperatives (29.91 employees) is clearly higher than the average size of companies in the Basque Country (6.20 employees). As of 1 January 2023, cooperatives in the Basque Country employed 55,268 people, of whom 28,476 were men and 26,792 were women. Thus, cooperatives in the Basque Country account for 5.95% of total employment.

A segmented analysis of cooperatives according to different variables (types of cooperatives, geographical and sectoral distribution) highlights the following aspects:

- The strong presence of worker cooperatives is a characteristic feature of cooperatives in the Basque Country.
- Gipuzkoa is the Historical Territory with the highest number of cooperatives.
- The importance of the capitals of the Historical Territories in relation to the concentration of cooperatives is clear.
- Service and construction cooperatives represent 65.42% and 16.94% of the total number of cooperatives, respectively.
- The distribution of employment across the different sectors varies across the historical territories. In Araba, for example, the education sector is where cooperatives account for the highest number of jobs. In Bizkaia, it is the services sector, and in Gipuzkoa, it is the machinery and equipment manufacturing sector.
- Beyond the worker-membership status, Basque cooperatives as a whole mobilize around 1,512,576 members (users, consumers, etc.).

An analysis of the registrations and de-registrations of cooperative companies shows that cooperatives have demonstrated resilience during the periods analyzed and a strong capacity for renewal.

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<sup>1</sup> By cross-referencing the information available in the various data sources mentioned above and applying criteria for considering cooperatives as "active" (e.g. housing cooperatives), it can be stated that there are a total of 2,576 active cooperatives in the Basque Country.



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