

Workshop on Membership and Governance 05.05.23

Notes by Julian Manley

The meeting was convened to reach an agreement on Governance and membership. It's not possible to discuss one without the other because as a union-coop we are committed to the membership democratically participating in the governance of the PCEC.

Present: John, Julian, Mick, Janet, Dave

Apologies: Andy, Cilla

1. Governance

Various governance structures were discussed, based around the Mondragon system as a starting point. Most of the discussion was an interesting debate around the place and role of the unions and how union representation would fit in to the governance system. There was also some debate around the difference between a 'Governing Council' and a 'Management Council'. It was agreed that:

- Strategic decisions would be decided upon by the General Assembly of members, 1 member 1 vote. This would normally take place once a year.
- The Assembly will also vote in member representatives from their own number to sit on the Governing Council and the Union Committee. Council and Committee members are all members of the PCEC (ie not appointed from outside the organisation).
- The role of the Union Committee is wider than the role of a union in a capitalist shareholder company, where the union typically defends workers' rights and supports conflict resolution. We are assuming that the governance structure of the PCEC will not create the conflicts and problems that are typical of a shareholder company, precisely because there are no shareholders and there are no hierarchies: the PCEC is run by members for members. Therefore, although the Union Committee may also exercise its typical role if issues do arise, the principal role of the Union Committee is to ensure that cooperative principles, and in particular the functioning of participatory democracy within the PCEC, are transparently and authentically followed. Meetings 4 times a year (and more where needed)
- The role of the Governing Council is to ensure that the mandates of the General Assembly are actioned. These members are not expected to oversee the day-to-day activities of the PCEC, but rather to appoint workers to do so. For example, typically as an educational establishment, the PCEC would have a Principal or Director appointed in a paid position to run the daily affairs of the PCEC. Other paid positions would similarly be appointed by the Governing Council. These paid worker posts would be greatly encouraged to become members themselves (although the cooperative principle rejects the idea of obligation in this respect). These positions do not come with hierarchies: for example, the Principal or Director is to report to the Governing Council who ultimately report back to the Assembly (not vice versa).

2. Membership and donations

The discussion centred around membership fees and subscriptions (with some confusion about the meaning of subscription in this context). The one-off fee is the membership fee. The 'subscription' is a monthly payment that confers the validity of the member's participatory vote. It also provides a source of regular income for the PCEC. It was agreed as follows:

- That the single one-off membership fee would be a nominal £1 for all members.
- That the 'subscription' payment would be £1 a month for all individual members (with the possibility of reducing this to £0 in cases of hardship)
- There will be opportunities for members to increase their monthly subscriptions (eg £2, £3, £5, £7, £10), and also opportunities for members to provide donations on a sporadic and random basis.
- That to be a member is only open to individuals.
- Interested organisations and groups who support the PCEC are encouraged to give donations (but these are not attached to any form of voting rights).