



MAPPING: KEY FIGURES

NATIONAL REPORT: POLAND

ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP



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I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This report is part of a Mapping exercise launched by the International Cooperative Alliance and its regional offices, within the framework of a partnership signed with the European Commission for the period 2016-2020. The programme aims to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to promote international development. Other research projects led within this partnership include a worldwide Legal Frameworks Analysis, and several thematic researches on themes of significance for cooperatives.

Responding to challenges and existing knowledge gaps facing the cooperative movement, this research seeks to provide exhaustive information on cooperatives worldwide. This is achieved through a process jointly conducted by the ICA and its four regional offices – Cooperatives of the Americas, Cooperatives Europe, ICA Africa, and ICA Asia-Pacific – using a common methodology. Each office collected the input of ICA members present in the countries within its geographic area, by using the same questionnaire, and completing it with relevant national statistics, in order to obtain an accurate picture of the national situation. Mapping out cooperatives in each country provides a more precise picture of the cooperative context at national and regional levels, enhances the movement's visibility, networking, partnerships opportunities, as well as advocacy, and empowers cooperators by providing them tools for positive change.

Within this framework, the present report showcases information about the cooperative landscape in Poland.

i. Historical background

Poland's cooperative movement has origins predating the Rochdale Pioneers of 1844. One early identified example founded in 1816 was the Hrubieszów Society for Self-support of Farmers in Difficult Situations (*Hrubieszowskie Towarzystwo Rolnicze Ratowania Się Wspólnie w Nieszczęściach*).¹ The first Polish cooperatives were predominantly in the agricultural, consumer and housing sectors.² In common with other European countries, cooperatives emerged as a response to the problems facing workers at the time.³

The years leading up to Polish independence led to some important moments for the Polish cooperative movement. Members of the progressive intelligentsia set up the Cooperative Society (*Towarzystwo Kooperatystów*) in 1906, while the Union of Consumer Cooperatives of the Polish Republic (*Spółem*) was set up in 1911.⁴ Originally set up as a local cooperative union in Warsaw in 1911, *Spółem* transformed into a national organisation following Poland's independence in 1918 and became the largest cooperative union in the country during the interwar period (between 1918 and 1939).⁵ Notable founders of *Spółem* included Edward Abramowski, cofounder of the

¹ P. Piechowski, 'Wartości i zasady spółdzielcze a społeczeństwo obywatelskie i gospodarka społeczna', *Ekonomia Społeczna*, 1, 2013, p. 36.

² A. Ciepielewska-Kowalik, B. Pielniński, M. Starnawska and A. Szymańska, "Social Enterprise in Poland: Institutional and Historical Context", ICSEM Working Papers, No. 11, Liege: The International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) Project, 2015, p. 11

³ Ibid.

⁴ A. Bilewicz, 'Embeddedness Without Structure? An Attempt at a Polanyian Analysis of the Polish Consumer-Cooperative Movement', Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers, Working Paper no. 185, 2017, p. 6

⁵ Ibid.

Polish Socialist Party (PPS), as well as Stanisław Wojciechowski who would go on to become President of the Second Polish Republic between 1922 and 1926.⁶

The Polish cooperative movement suffered during the Second World War, with Ciepielewska-Kowalik et al succinctly noting that “*World War II pushed cooperatives underground.*”⁷ Following the war, and until 1989, cooperatives in the Communist Polish People’s Republic would exist under a planned economy, used as a vehicle for economic policy in sectors such as food supply, agriculture and housing.⁸ The central administration defined the areas of activity cooperatives could operate in, their aims and how these should be achieved. This inevitably led to a loss of cooperative autonomy in Poland, disconnecting them from cooperative identity and principles.⁹

Following the arrival of democracy and economic liberalisation in the 1990s, the reputation of cooperatives suffered following years of subordination to the state and they suffered a decline, with many becoming privatised or operating as pseudo-cooperatives.¹⁰

In more recent years, however, a renewed interest in cooperativism in Poland has emerged, responding to contemporary challenges such as social exclusion of groups such as former employees of collective farms, minorities and people with disabilities as a result of market liberalisation.¹¹ The role of cooperatives here can most clearly be identified in the Social Cooperatives Act 2006, amended in 2009.¹² Social cooperatives have since been identified as playing a major role in the modern Polish social economy.¹³

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ciepielewska-Kowalik et al, supra at 2, p. 11

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bilewicz, at supra 3, pp 9-10

¹¹ C. Brandeleer, ‘Social Economy in Poland’, Pour la solidarité, Collection Working Paper, 2013, p. 5

¹² Ibid, p. 8

¹³ Ibid.

ii. Public national statistics

For a more comprehensive picture of the cooperative movement in Poland, the present section provides key data from the country's public registers as a useful background context to the ICA members' data showcased in Section II of the report.

The data presented here stems mostly from *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* or Statistics Poland (GUS), the International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy (CIRIEC) statistics published in the European Economic and Social Committee's 2017 report 'Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy of the European Union',¹⁴ and also the Cooperatives Europe report "The Power of Cooperation: Cooperatives Europe Key Figures 2014-2015".¹⁵ Where 2019 statistics are not available, public national statistics from 2015 are provided, the most recent year available.

NUMBER OF COOPERATIVES:

Data from GUS shows that Poland had 11 472 cooperative organisations in the year 2019.¹⁶ According to GUS there were a total of 4 509 916 enterprises in Poland, in the same year, meaning registered cooperatives made up 0.25% of the total enterprises in the country.¹⁷

EMPLOYMENT:

According to GUS, there were 16 467 000 people employed in Poland in 2019.¹⁸ No reliable estimate for the number of people employed by cooperatives is available for 2019. GUS states that 16 280 000 people were employed in Poland in 2015,¹⁹ and data from CIRIEC for the same year provides a figure of 235 000 people employed by Polish cooperatives,²⁰ suggesting that at least 1.44% of the employed population are employed by the cooperative sector in Poland.

COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP:

No reliable estimates on cooperative membership for 2019 are available. Data from Cooperatives Europe had 7 976 600 members of cooperative organisations in 2015.²¹ From Poland's population of 38 479 000 in the same year²², these figures mean that approximately 21% of Polish people were members of a cooperative in 2015.²³

PRODUCTION VALUE:

In 2015, the overall GVA of Poland stood at 159 527 million Zloty according to data from GUS.²⁴ According to exchange rate data from InforEuro for the same year, this was equivalent to 385.33 billion euros. Figures from Cooperatives Europe in 2015 show cooperatives in Poland had an

¹⁴ CIRIEC-International, 'Recent evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union', EESC (2017)

¹⁵ Cooperatives Europe 'The power of cooperation: Cooperatives Europe Key Figures 2014-2015', Report (2015)

¹⁶ GUS 'Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski', Warsaw 2020, p. 410

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Op cit, GUS 2020, p. 122.

¹⁹ GUS, 'Rocznik Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej', Warsaw 2016, p. 238

²⁰ Op cit. CIRIEC, p. 89

²¹ Cooperatives Europe (2015). For a comparatively lower estimate, data from CIRIEC shows Poland had 6 346 000 members of cooperative organisations in 2015.

²² GUS 2016, at supra 18, p. 206

²³ Individuals may be a member of more than one cooperative.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 700

annual turnover of 14.5 billion euros. Although these figures are not directly comparable, they demonstrate the significant contribution of Poland's cooperative sector to overall economic activity.

iii. Research methodology

The aim of the mapping research is to collect and make publicly available reliable and up-to-date data to understand what the cooperative movement represents in the targeted country. With this view, the data detailed in the present report has been collected using the methodology detailed below.

The methodological tools include a questionnaire used to collect the data, which was distributed online to the members, as well as a methodological note provided for further guidance. They were built jointly with all ICA regional offices with the support of external experts from the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (Euricse) and are applied in a harmonised way in all the target countries.

The classifications used in the research are consistent with the internal system used within the ICA movement (e.g. on membership status and types of cooperative organisations) and with standards increasingly adopted in recent studies and by international organisations like the ILO – e.g. using international classifications of economic activities such as the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) rev. 4, which ensures the comparability of statistics both nationally and internationally, as well as with statistics on other forms of enterprises.

Regarding the target organisations, considering that a worldwide survey has very challenging goals, and while the value of directly collecting data from non-member cooperatives must be recognised, the present Mapping exercise targets cooperative organisations that are members of the ICA.

Furthermore, in order to complete the ICA members' data, the decision was taken to also look at external sources, to provide additional and more exhaustive cooperative statistics for the country. As a result, the data is collected following two strategies contemporaneously: 1) collecting statistics already available in the country; 2) carrying out a survey targeting ICA cooperative members.

In Poland the Mapping questionnaire was distributed to and completed by NCC, an ICA member organisation in the country. After some additional follow-up and clarifications from the member, the figures provided were compiled to be presented in the next section.

II. KEY FIGURES

This section presents the results of the data collection directed by ICA members. It is different from the general estimates for the country provided in the introduction which provided a figure of 11 472 cooperatives in the year 2019. The data collected by ICA members for the same year amounts to 8 917 cooperatives which is a coverage of approximately **78%** of the total number of cooperatives in Poland.

Poland counts 5 ICA member organisations.

- **The Auditing Union of Housing Co-operatives *Związek Rzewizyjny Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowych RP*** is a full ICA member²⁵, whose purpose is to provide housing assistance to affiliated cooperatives.
- **The National Association of Co-operative Savings and Credit Unions / *Krajowa Spółdzielcza Kasa Oszczędnościowo-Kredytowa (NACSCU)*** is a full ICA member whose purpose is to represent and assist member credit unions in their statutory activity, support mutual cooperation in order to assure sustainable development, and to represent credit unions against public authorities.
- **National Auditing Union of Workers' Co-operatives / *Związek Iustracyjny Spółdzielni Pracy (NAUWC)*** is a full ICA member and a voluntary and self-governing organisation, which associates labour cooperatives and other cooperative organisations in Poland. NAUWC conducts statutory and legal activities in various fields.
- **The National Co-operative Council / *Krajowa Rada Spółdzielcza (NCC)*** is a full ICA member and the apex organization of the cooperatives of all sectors in Poland. It represents Polish cooperative movement in the country and abroad, initiates and gives its opinion on legislation concerning cooperatives, conducts training and educational activities, consultancy and advising, auditing, conducts cooperative development projects.
- **The National Supervision Union of Spolem Consumer Co-operatives (SPOLEM)** is a full ICA member and the national federation of consumer cooperatives. The purpose of SPOLEM is to assist and facilitate the realisation of the statutory duties of their affiliated cooperatives and inspire cooperation among cooperatives for their development and integration

The National Co-operative Council is active in the following sectors:

- Real estate activities
- Agriculture and food industry
- Human health and social work activities
- Wholesale and retail trade
- Banking

²⁵ This category covers members with voting rights – as opposed to associate members (which can include for instance governmental agencies).

- Industry
- Construction
- Transport
- Accommodation and food service activities
- Administrative and support service activities
- Other services

iv. ICA member data

The data collected was provided by NCC for the year **2019**. While a significant portion of the questionnaire was completed, data could not be provided for the following variables:

- Sectoral data
- Gender and youth data for organisations within NCC membership
- Economic and employee data, with the exception of cooperative banks and credit unions

v. General overview

The present section provides an overview of the ICA membership data for Poland. It is displayed in several categories and with the support of graphs, for clarity purposes.

Category	Total
Number of cooperatives	8 917
Number of memberships	8 049 347
Number of employees	200 000

NCC represents **8 917** cooperatives in the country, with a total number of memberships²⁶ of **8 049 347**, and an estimated **200 000** employees.²⁷ **32 389** employees²⁸ were reported in the financial

²⁶ Defined in the Mapping methodology as: the number of persons who initially signed the application for registration and those admitted in accordance with the cooperatives' bylaws and who currently participate in the organization in accordance with the cooperatives' bylaws.

²⁷ This figure is an estimate provided by the contributing member organisation for 2020. In 2019, data was only available in the financial sector.

²⁸ Employees are defined as: all those workers who hold the type of job defined as paid employment jobs.

sector.²⁹ While no economic data was available for all member organisations at the national level, some data on types of cooperatives represented could be provided and is broken down below.

vi. Typology Overview

The typologies used below correspond to the categories by the International Labour Office Department of Statistics' *'Guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives'*.³⁰

A general overview is provided in the chart below:

	Number of cooperatives	Number of memberships
User cooperatives	5 230	7 670 597
Producer cooperatives³¹	1 841	354 323
Worker cooperatives³²	1 846	24 427
Total	8 917	8 049 347

vii. Sector overview

The table on page 9 corresponds to publicly available 2019 data from NCC in the document *'National Cooperative Council Of Poland: Profile'*.³³ As sectoral data was not directly available, an effort has been made to align sectoral data from available sources. Since the data below is from 2019, the total number of cooperatives differs slightly from the figures provided in the table in section vi, above. The data has been reclassified in line with categories used in the ISIC rev. 4. to classify the economic activities carried out by the organisations concerned.

²⁹ This covers cooperative banks and credit unions. A detailed breakdown for employees in financial cooperatives is available, see section xii below.

³⁰ International Labour Office, Department of Statistics, *'Guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives'*, 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 10-19 October 2018, ICLS/20/2018/Guidelines, pp. 3-4

³¹ Includes agricultural production cooperatives, cooperative agricultural producers' groups, agricultural services cooperatives, dairy cooperatives, horticultural/beekeepers' cooperatives and artisan cooperatives.

³² Includes workers' cooperatives, social cooperatives, disabled/visually impaired persons' cooperatives and folk/artisanal cooperatives

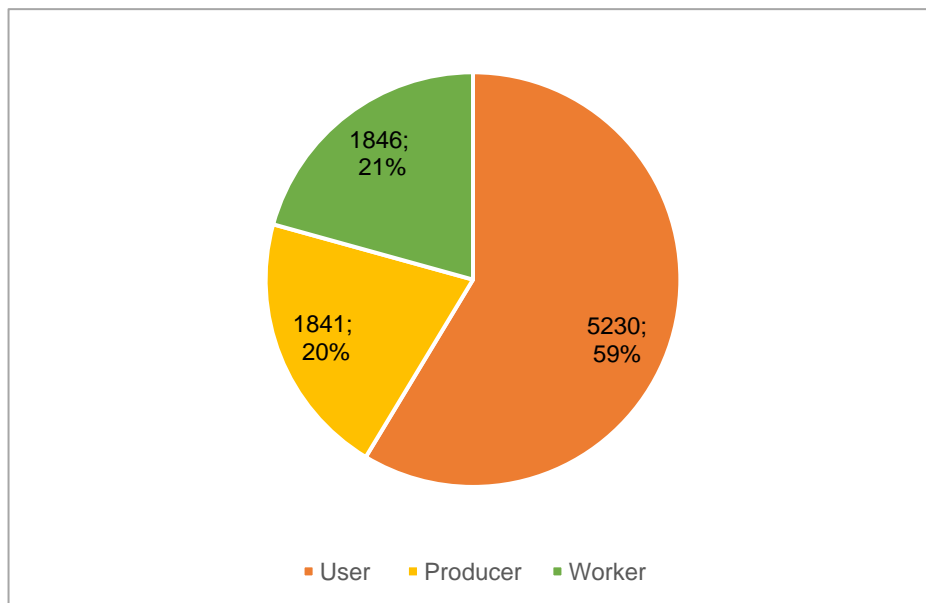
³³ NCC, *'National Cooperative Council of Poland: profile'*, ICBA, p.1., 2020.

	Cooperative activity	No. of cooperatives	Members	Total cooperatives	Total members
Real estate activities	Housing cooperatives	3 457	5 105 656	3 457	5 105 656
Agriculture and food industry	Cooperative agricultural producers' groups	664	3 534	1 767	352 120
	Agricultural production cooperatives	578	17 019		
	"Farmers' circles" cooperatives	360	15 017		
	Dairy cooperatives	124	315 349		
	Horticultural/Beekeepers' cooperatives	41	1 201		
Human health and social work activities	Social cooperatives	1 160	7 308	1 298	13 915
	Disabled or visually impaired persons cooperatives	138	6 607		
Wholesale and retail trade	"Społem" or consumer cooperatives	291	53 059	1 264	183 203
	Self-help community cooperatives (retail, marketing or supplying, processing etc.)	973	130 144		
Banking	Cooperative banks	541	990 197	566	2 381 738
	Cooperative credit and saving unions	25	1 391 541		
Industry	Worker cooperatives (industrial, services etc)	495	10 011	495	10 011
Other services	Craft cooperatives	108	2 203	115	2 704
	Folk artisanal cooperatives or 'Cepelia'	7	501		
Totals		8 962	8 049 347	8 962	8 049 347

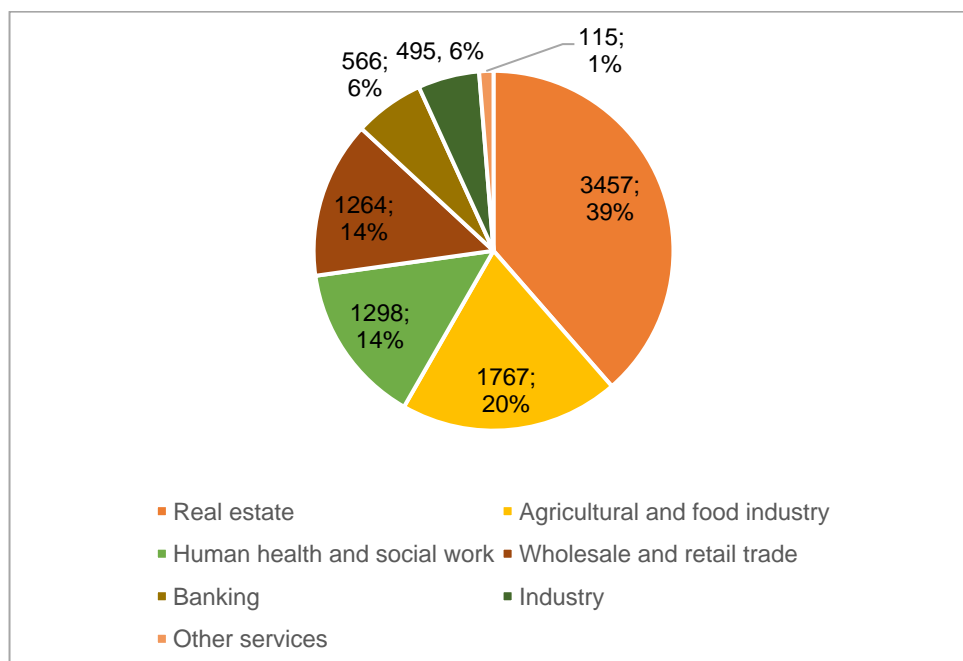
III. GRAPHS

Specific variables are also detailed in the graphs below, when sectorial data was available.

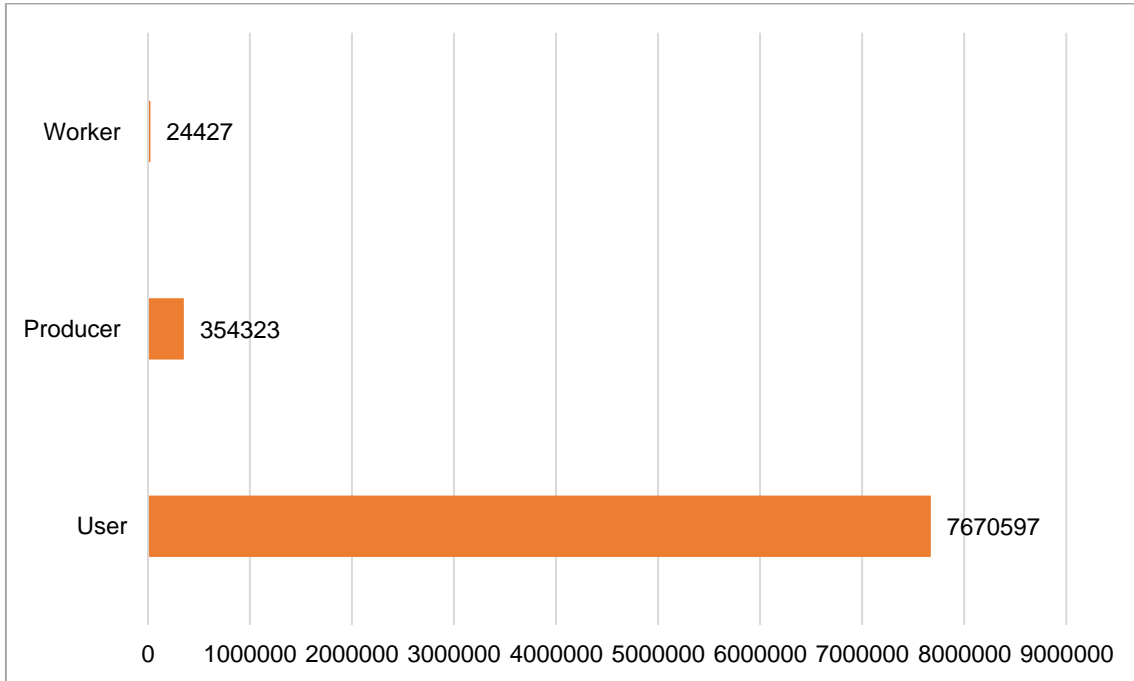
viii. Number of cooperatives by typology



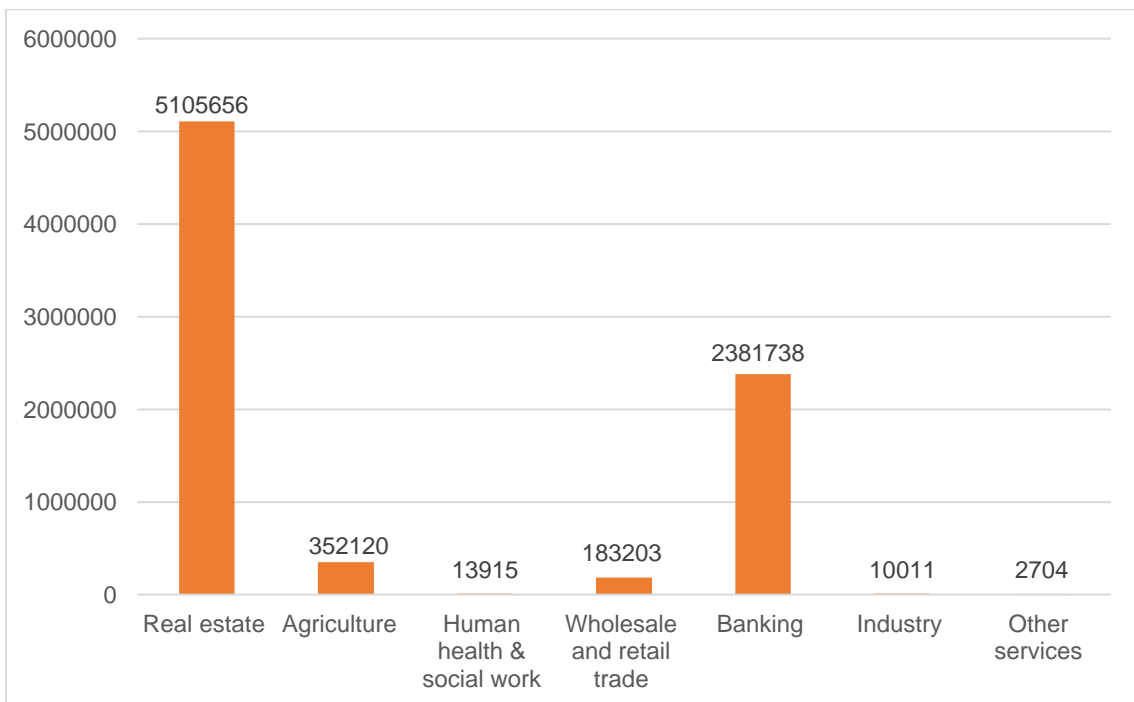
ix. Number of cooperatives by sector



x. Number of memberships by typology

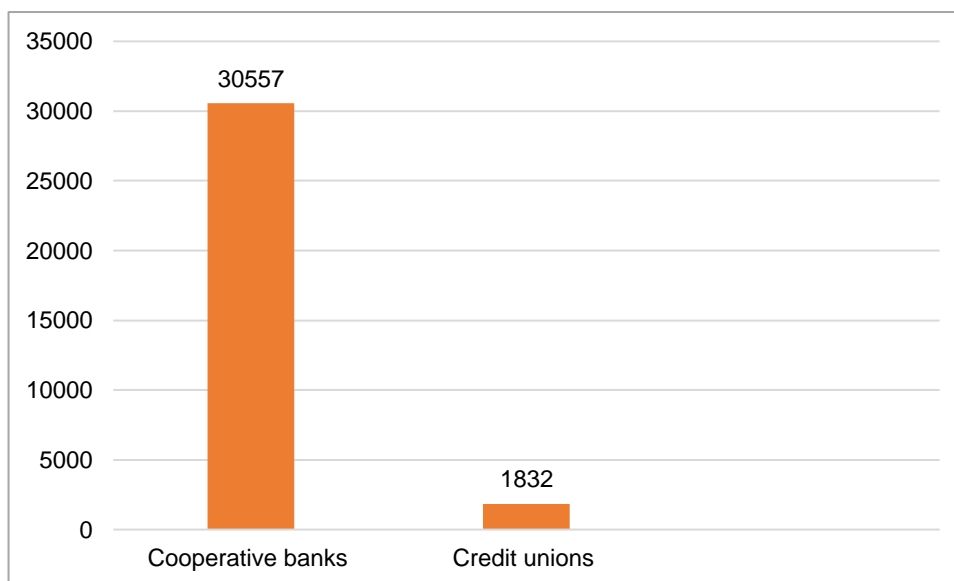


xi. Number of memberships by sector

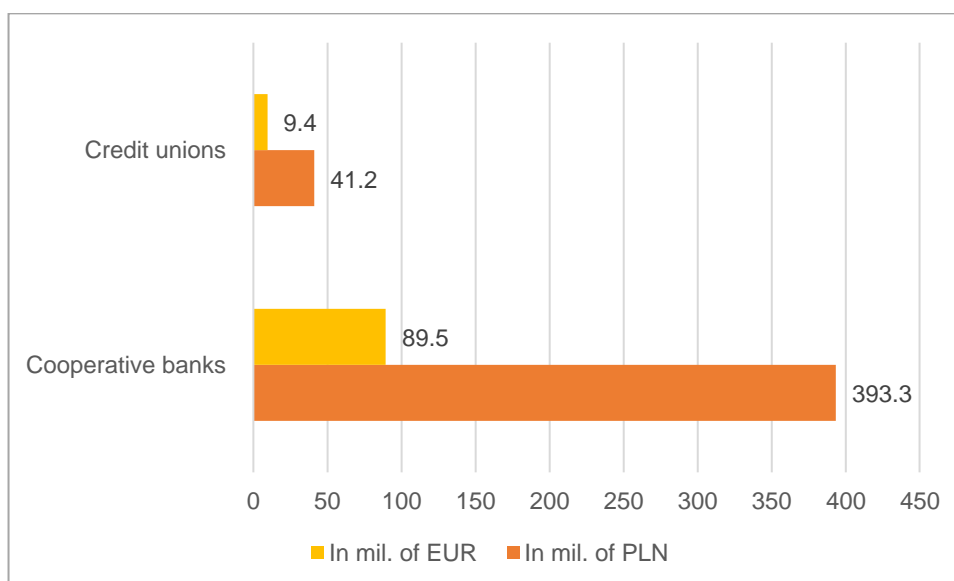


xii. Number of employees by type of financial cooperative

Detailed employee data was only available for the financial sector. The graph below shows employees for cooperative banks and credit unions represented by NCC, with 32 389 employees.



xiii. Net financial result of financial cooperatives in PLN and EUR



IV. ANNEXES

Sources and contacts are listed below.

Sources

Publications by statistical bodies:

- CIRIEC-International, (2017), 'Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union', EESC (2017)
- The power of Cooperation -Cooperatives Europe Key Figures 2015, Cooperatives Europe, Brussels
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- GUS 'Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski', Warsaw 2020
- International Labour Office, Department of Statistics, 'Guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives', 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 10-19 October 2018, ICLS/20/2018/Guidelines

Other sources:

- Bilewicz A, 'Embeddedness Without Structure? An Attempt at a Polanyian Analysis of the Polish Consumer-Cooperative Movement', Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers, Working Paper no. 185, 2017
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Contacts

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Updated: October 2020

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