



MAPPING: KEY FIGURES

NATIONAL REPORT: UNITED KINGDOM

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 (ICA) 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 the United Kingdom (UK).

i. Historical background

Although cooperatives in the UK were already in existence by 1844,¹ the cooperative movement in the country is inextricably linked to the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Co-operative Society. Set up in 1844, in the midst of the industrial revolution, its founders suffered periodic unemployment, low pay, and poor working conditions, and were also dependent on exploitative merchants who would charge high prices for goods.²

The Rochdale Pioneers were motivated to cooperate against these forces of widespread poverty, but also influenced by contemporary social movements such as Owenism and Chartism.³ This early cooperative did not define the cooperative principles as we know them today,⁴ but were significant in defining that the cooperative be operated purely for service, as opposed to direct profit⁵, as well as enshrining open and voluntary membership.⁶ The Rochdale Pioneers thus became and continue to be symbolic of the modern cooperative movement.

A first legal framework regulating English cooperatives emerged in 1852, the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, which followed years of lobbying to meet the needs of worker and

¹ ICA, 'Our History', available at: <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/history-cooperative-movement>

² B. Fairbairn, 'The Meaning of Rochdale: The Rochdale Pioneers and the Co-operative Principles', Centre for the Studies of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, Occasional Papers Series, 1994, p. 2

³ Ibid, p. 4

⁴ See generally, Fairbairn, op. cit., at supra 2

⁵ M. Conover, 'The Rochdale Principles in American Co-Operative Associations', The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 12, No. 1, Part 1, 1959, University of Utah, p. 111

⁶ Ibid, p. 7

consumer cooperatives.⁷ The law was considered instrumental for the growth of the cooperative movement. As a result, sustainable cooperatives proliferated across the country, and by the 1860s, 380 cooperatives were sending returns to the Registrar of Friendly Societies.⁸

As a result of this growth, a number of cooperatives in the North of England joined forces to form the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS), in 1863, with the Scottish CWS forming in 1868.⁹ The aim of the CWS was to supply member cooperatives with goods, by taking advantage of economies of scale. Ambitions for a national organisation, intended to hold the cooperative movement together and emphasise the important role that cooperatives could play in society at large, resulted in the establishment of the Co-operative Union set in 1870.¹⁰

The UK was also the birthplace of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), which was founded in London during the 1st Cooperative Congress in 1895.¹¹ The ICA's purpose was to provide information, define and defend the cooperative principles and develop international trade. It was notably one of the only international organisations to survive both the First and Second World Wars.

The British cooperative movement, including the CWS, experienced a decline in the post-war period and during the latter half of the 20th Century, with the movement becoming less competitive in the face of changes to consumer habits.¹² British consumer cooperatives failed to adapt to the rise of self-service retail and the growing dominance of innovate food retailers.¹³ The CWS did find some success in banking, with the CWS Bank changing its name to Co-operative Bank in 1974, becoming the first clearing bank in the UK to open in over 40 years.¹⁴

The British cooperative movement experienced a “renaissance” around 2000. Building on previous ethical policies, including a boycott of South African produce during the Apartheid years, the CWS worked with the Fairtrade Foundation to introduce the Fairtrade Mark in 1992.¹⁵ The CWS merged with the CRS in 2001 to become the Co-operative Group, and with a modernised strategy, its annual turnover increased from £4.6 billion in 2000 to nearly £13.7 billion in 2010.¹⁶

In 2001, the Co-operative Union also merged with the Industrial Common Ownership Movement in 2001, to become Co-operatives UK.¹⁷ Today, Co-operatives UK is the UK's apex cooperative and a member of the ICA. It represents a growing cooperative movement with 14 million members, 241 thousand employees and an annual turnover of £38.2 billion pounds as of 2020.¹⁸

⁷ Ibid, p. 5

⁸ J. Wilson, A. Webster and R. Vorberg-Rugh, 'The Co-operative Movement in Britain: From Crisis to "Renaissance," 1950—2010', *Enterprise & Society*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2013, Cambridge University Press, p. 274

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Third Way, 'The Co-operative Movement', archived from the original on 10 February 2007, retrieved 11 Feb 2021 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20070210215732/http://www.thirdway.org/files/articles/coop.html>

¹¹ Op. cit., ICA, at supra 1

¹² Op. cit., Wilson, Webster and Vorberg-Rugh, at supra 8, p. 279

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 286

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 290

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 296

¹⁷ Co-op News, '150 years together: Here's the story of Co-operatives UK', available at:

<https://www.thenews.coop/145682/sector/150-years-together-the-story-of-co-operatives-uk/>

¹⁸ Co-operatives UK, 'The Co-op Economy Report 2020', 2020, available at: <https://www.uk.coop/get-involved/awareness-campaigns/co-op-economy/co-op-economy-report-2020>

ii. Public national statistics

For a more comprehensive picture of the cooperative movement in the UK, 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 that collected by Co-operatives UK and presented in its publication 'Co-op Economy 2020', as well as the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

NUMBER OF COOPERATIVES:

According to data collected by Co-operatives UK, there were 7 063 cooperatives in the UK in 2020.¹⁹ According to BEIS, there were a total of 6 000 000 enterprises in the country in the same year.²⁰ This suggests that cooperatives made up nearly 0.12% of UK enterprises in that year.

EMPLOYMENT:

According to the ONS, there were an estimated 32 520 000 people employed in the UK between August and October 2020.²¹ Data collected by Co-operatives UK shows that UK cooperatives employed 241 714 in 2020,²² suggesting that more than 0.74% of the employed population are employed by the cooperative sector in the UK.

COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP:

According to data collected by Co-operatives UK, the UK had 14 008 457 members of cooperative organisations in 2020.²³ From the UK population of 66 796 807 in 2019, the most recent year for which ONS statistics are available,²⁴ these figures suggest that nearly 21% of British people are members of a cooperative as of 2020.

PRODUCTION VALUE:

In 2019, the latest year for which national statistics are available, the overall GVA of the UK stood at nearly 1 981 billion GBP, according to data from the ONS.²⁵ Figures collected by Co-operatives UK in 2020 show cooperatives had an annual turnover of nearly 38.2 billion GBP.²⁶ Although these figures are not directly comparable, they demonstrate the significant contribution of the UK cooperative sector to overall economic activity.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 3

²⁰ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 'National Statistics: Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2020: statistical release', available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-population-estimates-2020/business-population-estimates-for-the-uk-and-regions-2020-statistical-release-html>

²¹ Office for National Statistics, 'Labour market overview, UK: December 2020', available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/latest>

²² Op cit, Co-operatives UK, at supra 18, p. 3.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Office for National Statistics, 'Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2019', available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2019estimates>

²⁵ Office for National Statistics, 'Gross Value Added (Average) at basic prices: CP SA £m', 22 December 2020, available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/timeseries/abml/ukea>

²⁶ Op cit, Co-operatives UK, at supra 18, p.3

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 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 such as 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 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 the UK the Mapping questionnaire was distributed to and completed by Co-operatives UK, an ICA member organisation in the country.

II. KEY FIGURES

This section presents the results of the data collection directed by the ICA members. The UK counts **2** ICA member organisations, Co-operatives UK and The Midcounties Co-operative.

Co-operatives UK is a full ICA member.²⁷ The network for thousands of cooperative businesses, Co-operatives UK works to promote, develop and unite member-owned business worth more than £37 billion to the UK economy. Its mission is to grow the co-operative economy and it works to promote, develop and unite cooperatives across all sectors.

Its member organisations are active in the following sectors:

- Agriculture
- Arts and culture
- Digital and media
- Education
- Energy and environment
- Finance
- Food service and pubs
- Health and social care
- Housing
- Manufacturing
- Social clubs and trade unions
- Professional and legal services
- Retail
- Sports and recreation
- Transport
- Other

The Midcounties Co-operative is a full ICA member and is the UK's largest independent consumer co-operative. Their purpose is to “be a successful consumer co-operative working towards creating a better, fairer world and to enhance the lives of our colleagues, customers, and the communities we serve”. It offers services including travel, funeral care, energy, phone services, childcare, food and a pharmacy.

²⁷ This category covers members with voting rights – as opposed to associate members (which can include for instance governmental agencies).

iv. ICA member data

The data collected was provided by Co-operatives UK for the year **2020**. While a significant portion of the questionnaire was completed, data could not be provided for the following variables:

- Youth and gender

v. General overview

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

Category	Total
Number of cooperatives	7 063
Number of memberships	14 008 457
Number of employees	241 714

Co-operatives UK has compiled data on behalf of the UK cooperative movement, with data collected from a range of sources including the Financial Conduct Authority and Companies House in its report 'The Co-op Economy 2020'.²⁸ This report counts **7 063** cooperatives in the country, with a total number of memberships²⁹ of **14 008 457**, and a total number of **241 714** employees.³⁰

²⁸ See op. cit, Co-operatives UK, at supra 18

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ Defined as: all those workers who hold the type of job defined as paid employment jobs.

vi. Sector overview

The table below corresponds to publicly available data from Co-operatives UK in the 'The Co-op Economy 2020'.³¹ It is supplemented with sectoral level data for members and employees, which has been provided separately by Co-operatives UK upon request. The data below has been reclassified in line with categories used in the ISIC rev. 4. to classify the economic activities carried out by the organisations concerned. With regards to the turnover, the amount is provided both in the original currency, Pound sterling (GBP), and in the equivalent amount in Euro (EUR).³²

A general overview is provided in the chart below:

	Cooperative type	No. of cooperatives	No. of members	No. of employees	Turnover in thousands of GBP	Turnover in thousands of EUR
Banking	Finance	464	2 463 133	2 758	250 700	273 869
Agriculture and food industry	Agriculture	432	141 998	11 204	7 900 000	8 630 118
	Food service and pubs	220	20 657	600	38 500	42 058
Wholesale and retail trade	Retail	700	8 957 507	181 577	26 900 000	29 386 098
Education		286	4 995	6 402	501 800	548 176
Human health and social work activities	Health and social care	101	1 763	3 730	140 400	153 375
	Sports and recreation	550	367 701	25 391	736 700	804 786
Industry	Manufacturing	75	4 819	1 553	362 400	395 893
Information and communication	Digital and media	133	47 474	164	6 800	7 428

³¹ See op. cit, Co-operatives UK, at supra 18

³² This amount was calculated based on the monthly average rate (for June 2020) between the two currencies, using the currency converter InforEuro: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro

Real estate activities	Housing	704	76 897	3 303	578 100	631 528
Transport		25	1 383	200	6 000	6 555
Utilities	Energy and environment	255	36 520	99	24 000	26 218
Other	Arts and culture	164	7 099	197	6 000	6 555
	Social clubs and trade unions	2 459	1 687 393	3 303	537 300	586 957
	Professional and legal services	147	1 958	838	90 700	99 082
	Other	348	187 160	395	34 500	37 688
Totals		7 063	14 008 457	241 714	38 113 900	41 636 387

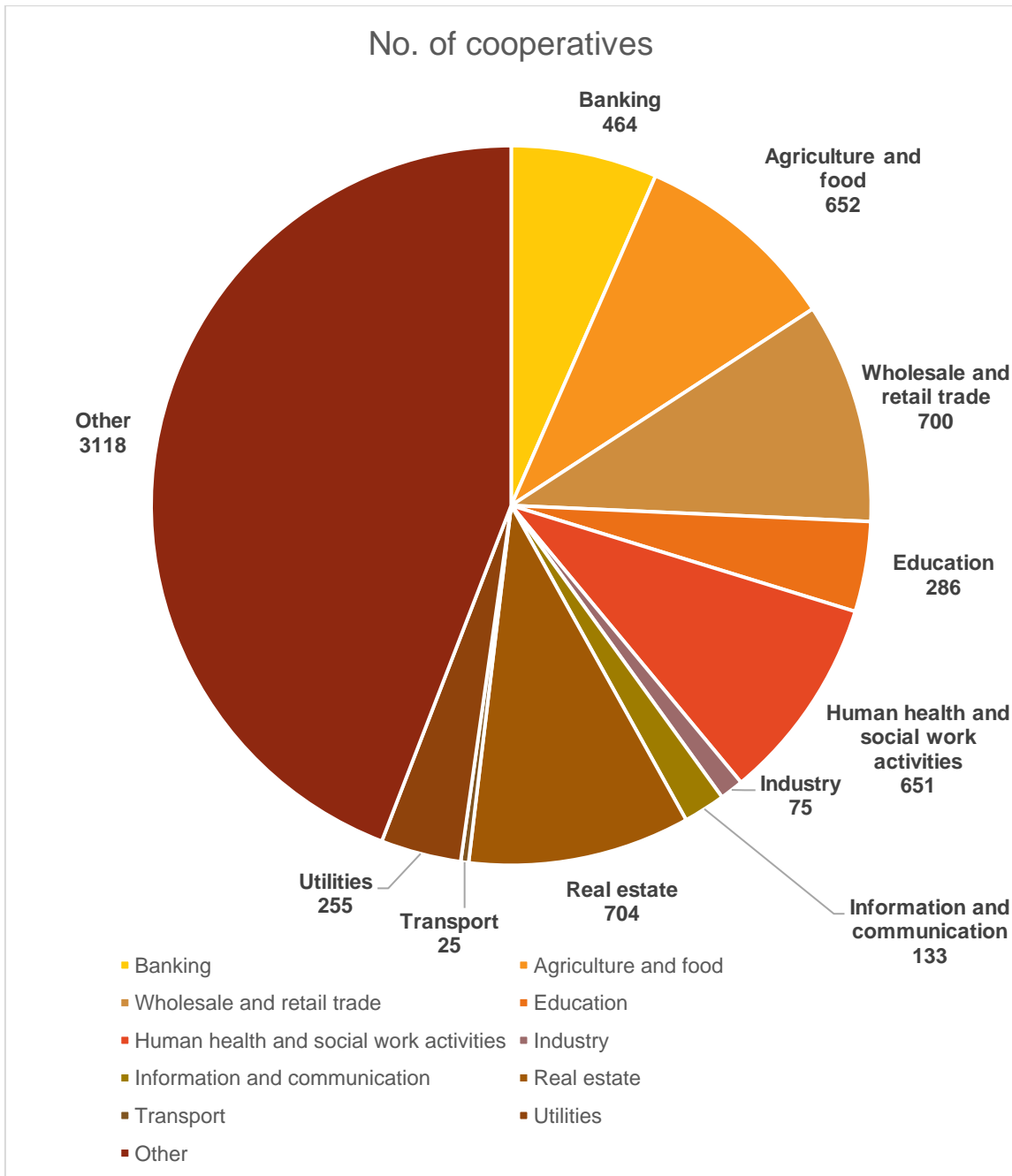
The table below provides totals by sector for the information provided in the table above:

Sector	Total no. of cooperatives	Total membership	Total no. of employees	Total turnover in thousands of GBP	Total turnover in thousands of EUR
Banking	464	2 463 133	2 758	250 700	273 869
Agriculture and food industry	652	162 655	11 804	7 938 500	8 672 176
Wholesale and retail trade	700	8 957 507	181 577	26 900 000	29 386 098
Education	286	4 995	6 402	501 800	548 176
Human health and social work activities	651	369 464	29 121	877 100	395 893
Industry	75	4 819	1 553	362 400	395 893
Information and communication	133	47 474	164	6 800	7 428
Real estate activities	704	76 897	3 303	578 100	631 528
Transport	25	1 383	200	6 000	6 555
Utilities	255	36 520	99	24 000	26 218
Other	3 118	1 883 610	4 733	668 500	705 727
Totals	7 063	14 008 457	241 714	38 113 900	41 636 387

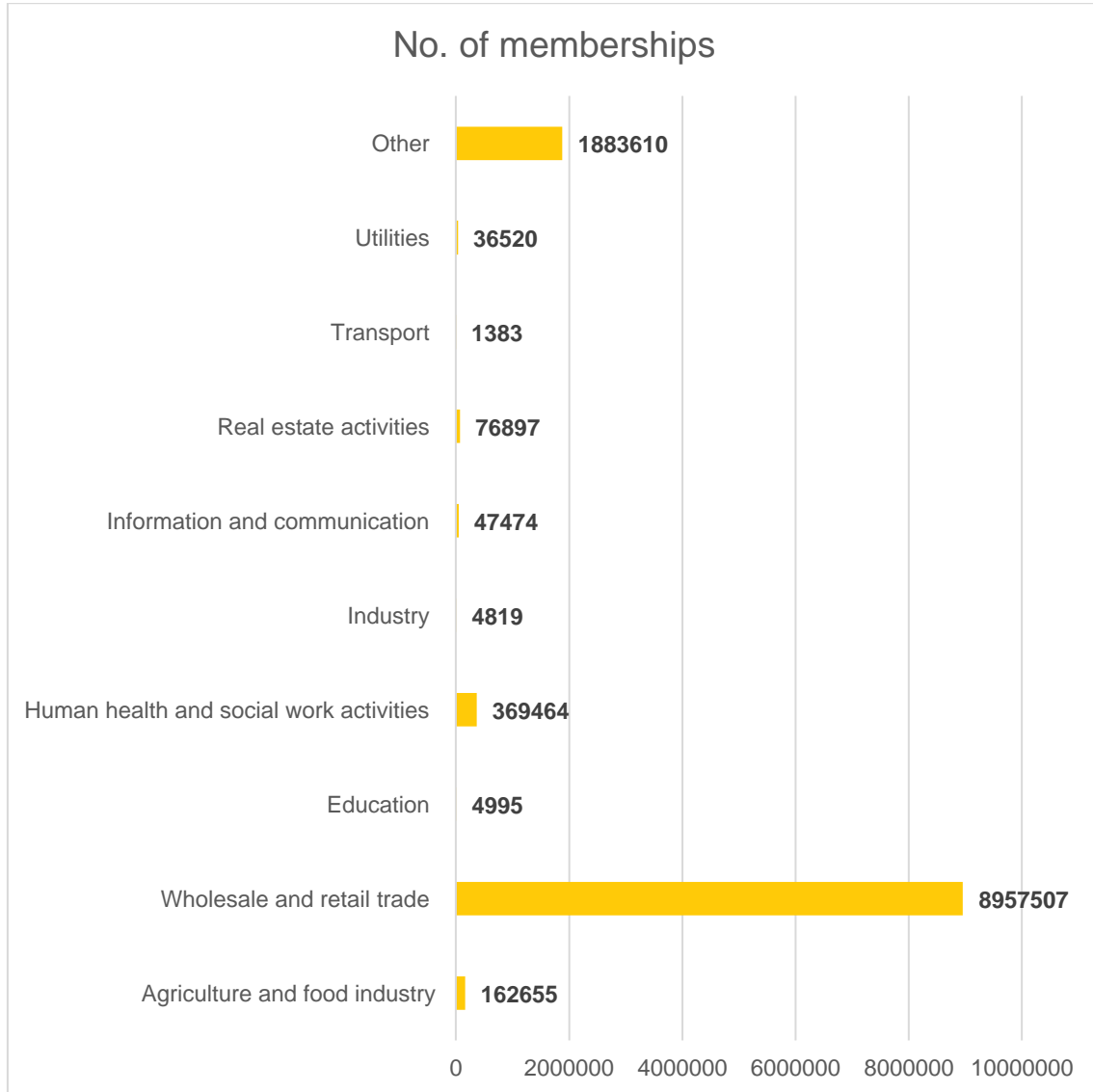
III. GRAPHS

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

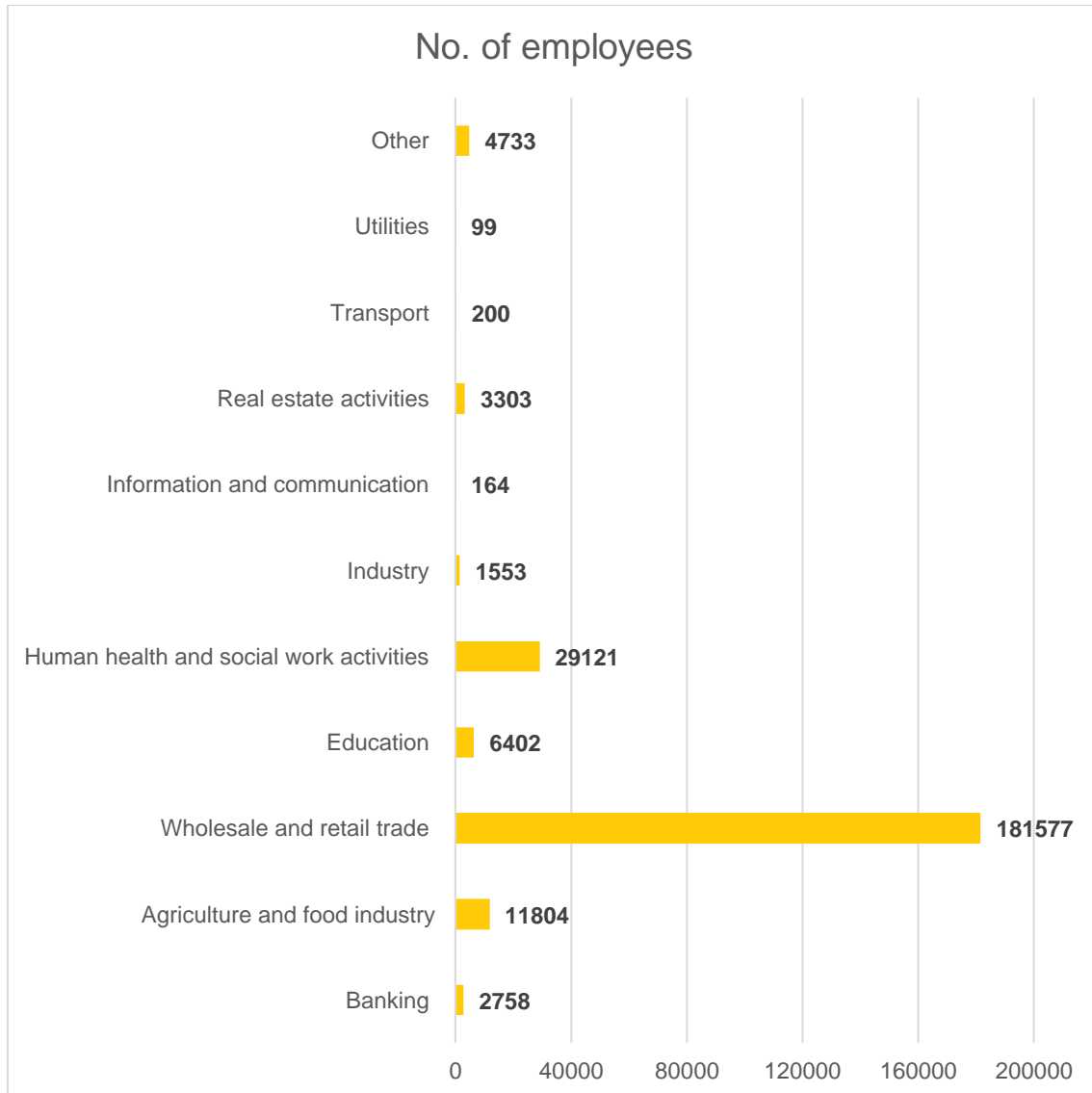
vii. Number of cooperatives by type of cooperative:



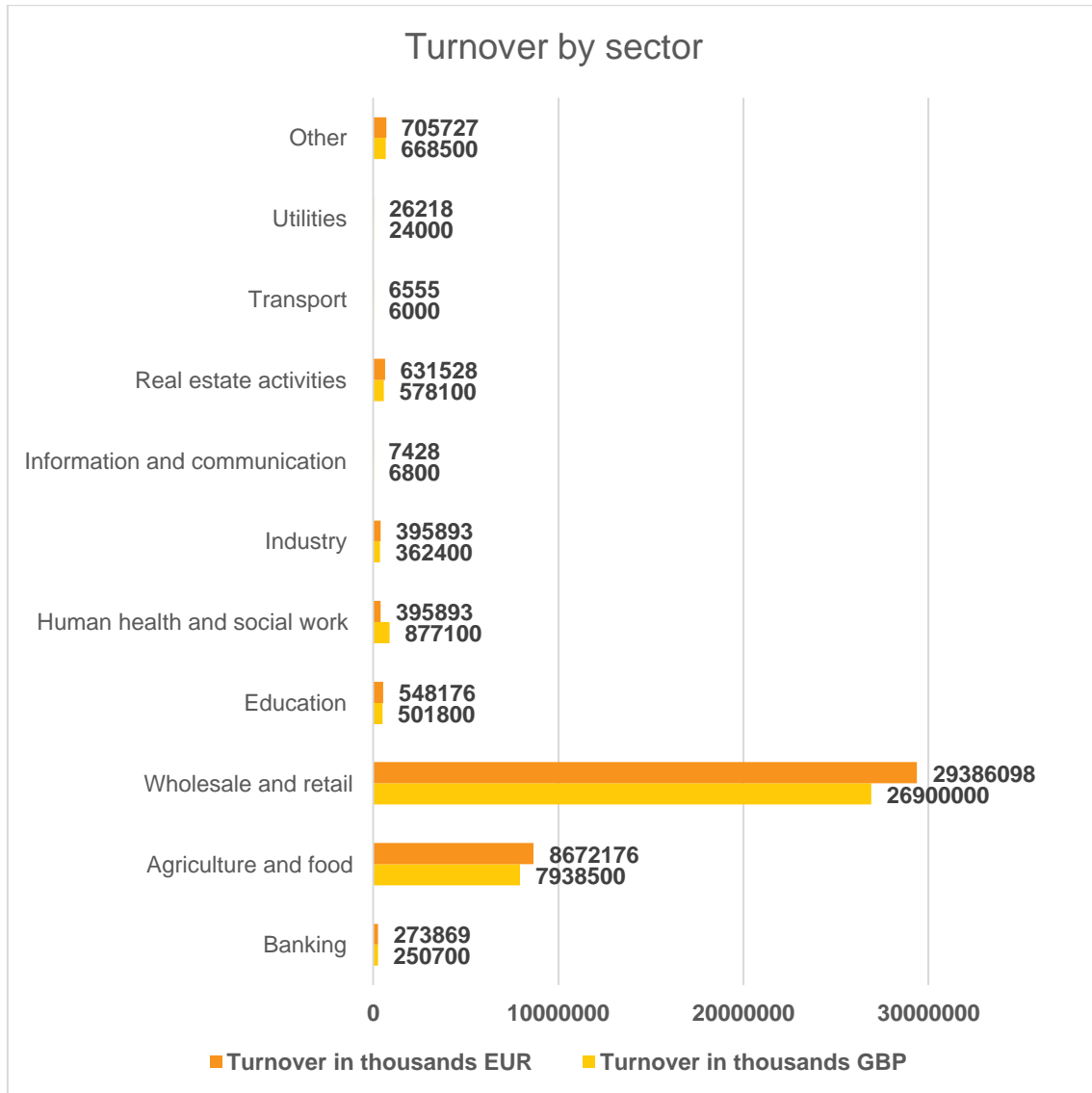
viii. Number of memberships by type of cooperative:



ix. Number of employees by type of cooperative:



x. Turnover by type of cooperative in EUR:



IV. ANNEXES

Sources and contacts are listed below.

Sources

Publications by statistical bodies

- Co-operatives UK, 'Co-op Economy 2020', 2020
- Co-operatives UK, 'The Co-op Economy Report 2020', 2020
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 'National Statistics: Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2020: statistical release', 2020
- Office for National Statistics, 'Labour market overview, UK: December 2020', 2020
- Office for National Statistics, 'Gross Value Added (Average) at basic prices: CP SA £', 2020

Other sources

- Co-op News, '150 years together: Here's the story of Co-operatives UK'
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Contacts

Further details on the Mapping research and other country reports are available on www.coops4dev.coop

The production of this report was overseen by staff from Cooperatives Europe and the International Cooperative Alliance. For any further information or clarification, please contact mappingresearch@ica.coop

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