

# **Comparative study of the French, European and World top 100 cooperative enterprises**

January 2022

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**T**he comparative study of the French, European and global top 100 cooperative enterprises (2019 figures) prepared by an economist specialising in cooperatives, Olivier Frey, for Coop FR aims to position the French cooperative movement at the global and European level.

It complements a United Nations study published in 2014 on measuring the size of the cooperative economy in the world<sup>1</sup> (member penetration, turnover and employment in relation to the total population and the country's GDP). France was ranked 2nd behind New Zealand. The UN study pointed out at the time the difficulty for governments around the world to assess support and assistance for the development of cooperatives without reliable data on the size and impact of cooperatives. At that time, there was no concise and reliable data on the number of cooperatives worldwide and by country, their membership/clients, turnover, employees and assets. The World Cooperative Monitor, an annual global observatory of cooperatives produced by Euricse for the International Cooperative Alliance, has partly filled this gap.

This study focuses on the economic (turnover, sectors of activity) and social (employment) weight of the 100 largest cooperatives at the European and global level. It shows that **France is not only one of the historical cradles of cooperation but also a superpower of the cooperative economy at world level**. French cooperatives are leaders in terms of turnover and represent **25% of the global turnover of the top 100**, with 344.75 billion dollars ahead of the German, Japanese and US cooperatives. Three main sectors dominate the world: agriculture and agri-food, trade and banking. France is also **the second nation in terms of employment**.

<sup>1</sup>. UN Report, Measuring the Size and Scope of the Cooperative Economy, 2014 - <https://www.entreprises.coop/la-france-2eme-economie-cooperative-au-monde>

# METHODOLOGY

In order to meet our objective of positioning the French cooperative movement at the global and European level, we have chosen to study 6 rankings of the top 100 cooperatives: World, Europe, France, USA, UK and Spain.

Compiling statistics on cooperatives is not an easy exercise. Few countries carry out this type of ranking. Some, such as Australia<sup>2</sup>, take into account both mutuals and cooperatives. Others, such as Germany and Italy, only carry out sectoral rankings, especially in agriculture.

To compile the top 100 cooperatives in the world we started from the list of the 300 largest cooperatives and mutuals in the World Cooperative Monitor 2021<sup>3</sup>. After excluding mutuals, we have established a top 100 cooperatives at world and European level. The turnover used for the top 100 worldwide and the top 100 in Europe is that of the financial year 2019.

In order to strengthen the comparison at the European level, we have chosen to study the top 100 in the United Kingdom (one of the cradles of cooperation) and in Spain. In Europe, cooperatives are particularly developed.

This study also aims to facilitate access to information that will allow us to compare France with other significant countries, for example with the United States. Interactive and entertaining graphs on the companies that make up the blocks of the 6 top 100 are available online on the Olivier Frey website<sup>4</sup>.

## Why leave out mutuals?

While mutuals and cooperatives are two fairly similar types of organisations in terms of how they operate, they have some key differences:

- Cooperatives can be owned by a variety of stakeholders (entrepreneurial customers or employees). Mutuals, on the other hand, are always owned by their customers (member-policyholders).
- Membership of a cooperative is voluntary, which means that you can be a customer of a cooperative without being a member. Customers of mutuals, on the other hand, automatically become members.
- Any member of a cooperative can stand for election to the board of directors or the supervisory board, whereas in mutuals it is the current supervisory board that nominates candidates for future elections.

<sup>2</sup>. [www.bccm.coop/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/BCCM-2021-NME-Report.pdf](http://www.bccm.coop/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/BCCM-2021-NME-Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>. [www.monitor.coop/chiffres2019](http://www.monitor.coop/chiffres2019)

<sup>4</sup>. [www.olivierfrey.com/etudetops100coopfr-en](http://www.olivierfrey.com/etudetops100coopfr-en)

# WHAT LESSONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THIS STUDY?

## French cooperative enterprises are leaders in Europe and in the world

French cooperative enterprises represent 25% of the global turnover of the top 100 worldwide, with 344.75 billion dollars, ahead of Germany (15.9%), Japan (11%) and the United States (10.1%). France is even more important in terms of turnover at European level, with 36.6% of the top 100. In 2019, of the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in Europe, 23 were French, 14 were German and 12 were Dutch.

## Cooperative employment is highly concentrated in Europe

The 100 largest cooperative enterprises in the world employ almost 3 million people (2,987,372 employees), of which just over 2.5 million are in Europe. European cooperatives account for 80% of the salaried jobs in the world top 100. With 613,351 employees in 13 cooperative enterprises, France is the second nation in the world top 100 in terms of employment, behind Germany (857,964 employees) and ahead of Switzerland (223,522 employees). This is due to the importance of retailer cooperatives in these three countries (Edeka and REWE in Germany, E.Leclerc and Système U in France, Migros and Coop in Switzerland) and to a lesser extent to the presence of several large cooperative banks (Crédit Agricole, BPCE and Crédit Mutuel in France).

## Three leading business sectors worldwide

The most represented sectors of activity among the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in the world are agriculture and agri-food, trade and banking. In France, while trading cooperatives are the most important in terms of turnover, agricultural and agri-food cooperatives as well as cooperative banks also have a significant weight<sup>5</sup>. The study of the top 100 in the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain shows particularities in the housing, energy and industry sectors.

<sup>5</sup>. See Panorama des entreprises coopératives, 2022 edition

# PROSPECTIVE

**Beyond the strong positioning of France within the global cooperative economy, this study allows us to enrich the prospective reflection: on the sectors of the future, on the impact of cooperative employment and the statistical perimeter, in particular.**

In 10 years, the leaders of the capitalist economy have changed dramatically, with GAFAMs<sup>6</sup> taking power at the expense of the "old economy" represented in particular by the oil companies and car manufacturers. Will the same happen to cooperatives?

## Sectors of the future

In 10 years, will we see other sectors emerge in the top 100, such as cooperative platforms or energy cooperatives? Will health and healthy food cooperatives (organic, short circuits, cooperative and participatory supermarkets...) enter these rankings? Or will we see a status quo of the three sectors that dominate today?

While the dominant sectors are strongly entrenched as we have seen in this study, new sectors known as the ecological transition and digital platforms are emerging. In the US, consumer-owned energy cooperatives have developed in partnership with local partners. Cooperatives own 42% (2.7 million miles) of the electricity distribution lines. They play an essential role in the territories. There are 24 of them in the US top 100.

This echoes the development of French cooperatives in the field of ecological transition and digital platforms. The "Licoornes"<sup>7</sup> claim to radically transform the economy by building a fully cooperative economic model. Green electricity, soft and shared mobility (car-sharing, cycling and rail networks), telecoms, electronics, short circuits and recycling: are the transition sectors the cooperative sectors of tomorrow?

In Spain, 11 health cooperatives are among the top 100 largest Spanish cooperatives. This is an inspiration for France, where the health sector is a major cooperative challenge in the fight against medical desertification. Will we see an increase in the number of health Scic<sup>8</sup> in the future, which bring together general practitioners and specialists, nurses, midwives, physiotherapists, etc., and organisations specialising in the provision of care? The first cooperative of this type, Med Clichy, was created in 2015 in the eastern suburbs of Paris.

Created in 2013, the first cooperative group of independent health institutions, Santé Cité, is today a key player in the French health landscape: 120 establishments spread throughout the country and a cumulative turnover of more than 2 billion euros in 2020.

Finally, food, and in particular its distribution method, has been undergoing transformations for several years in France: development of organic food, short circuits and cooperative, participatory supermarkets. Two retailers' cooperatives involved in organic farming, the Biocoop and Biomonde networks, have entered the top 100 in recent years. These new cooperative trends are reviving the cooperative principles of fair prices, quality food and consumer participation.

<sup>6</sup>. GAFAM for Google Amazon Facebook Apple Microsoft

<sup>7</sup>. The Licoornes are a group of 9 cooperatives in the field of ecological transition. <https://www.licoornes.coop/>

<sup>8</sup>. Sociétés coopératives d'intérêt collectif (Scic): French cooperative status involving all stakeholders, including local authorities, [www.scic.coop](http://www.scic.coop)

## Employment impact and statistical scope

The impact of cooperative employment today is only partially measured because the perimeters used at the global level are limited for certain cooperative families, primarily agricultural cooperatives.

To understand the impact of cooperatives on employment, it would be interesting to use the same perimeter, with the inclusion of indirect jobs (employees of farmers). The "social perimeter" of cooperatives allows for a broader account of their economic and social impact in the territories.

Let us take the case of France:

In its CSR report, the French cooperative group Agrial, for example, evaluated its contribution to direct or indirect employment at nearly 50,000 people, mainly in rural areas, whereas the cooperative and its various subsidiaries employ "only" 21,000 people. On the other hand, the retailer cooperative Système U communicates the total number of employees working in its 1,600 sales outlets, i.e. a total of 73,000 employees. Shouldn't farmers who are members of an agricultural cooperative and the employees they employ on their farms also be counted?

# Comparative study of the French, European and World top 100 cooperative enterprises

by **Olivier Frey**

January 2022, for Coop FR (France)

Interactive study available on [www.olivierfrey.com/etudetops100coopfr-en](http://www.olivierfrey.com/etudetops100coopfr-en)

Find all the detailed information on the companies in the top 100.

Source: Olivier Frey, based on World Cooperative Monitor, 2021, NCB, 2021, CEPES - 2021, Coop UK - 2021, Coop FR - 2022



# I. DISTRIBUTION OF COOPERATIVES BY ACTIVITY

## Agriculture, trade, banking: three dominant sectors of activity

When analysing the top 6 largest cooperatives in the top 100, we see that cooperatives specialised in agriculture and agri-food are still the most numerous. Their share varies from country to country, from 80% in Spain to 40% in the UK.

The second group that stands out is that of cooperatives specialised in trade. They generally represent about a quarter of the cooperatives, except in Spain where they represent 3% and in the United States where they represent 12%.

Finally, the third group that stands out is that of banking cooperatives. They account for 17% of the top 100 worldwide, 10% of the top 100 in Europe and 11% of the top 100 in the US. However, they are less present in the French top 100 (3%), even though they are very important in terms of turnover (Groupe Crédit Agricole, Groupe BPCE respectively 1st and 2nd in the world top 100, and Groupe Crédit Mutuel in the top 10).

French cooperative banks are organised in the form of an inverted pyramid where the local level holds the regional level, which itself controls the national level<sup>9</sup>. There are several thousand local banks, but also regional or federal banks depending on the network, and nearly 20,000 branches. On the other hand, cooperative banks in the United States are not organised in the same way. Each of them is independent. For example, the banks specialising in agricultural credit divide the US territory into four distinct areas. Cooperative banks are absent from the Spanish top 100 and the UK top 100.

Also noteworthy is the importance of energy cooperatives in the US (24% of the top 100), housing cooperatives in the UK (11% of the top 100) and industrial cooperatives in Spain (10% of the top 100).

<sup>9</sup> See in particular Richez-Battesti and Hector, 2012, <https://www.cairn.info/management-des-entreprises-de-l-economie-sociale-e-9782804170912-page-277.htm>

## World



**Among the world top 100 cooperatives in 2019**, 41 were in agriculture or agri-food, 27 were in trade, 17 were in banking, 10 were in insurance, 2 were in education and health, 1 was in other services, 1 was in fisheries and 1 was in industry.

## Europe



**Among the European top 100 cooperatives in 2019**, 50 were in agriculture or agri-food, 28 were in trade, 10 were in banking, 8 were in insurance, 1 in industry, 1 in fisheries, 1 in education and health and 1 in housing.

## United States



**In the United States**, agricultural cooperatives also dominate the top 100 in terms of numbers. There are 51 of them. In second place are cooperatives specialising in energy production. There are 24 of them. Next come cooperatives specialising in trade, of which there are 12. Then the banking cooperatives, which number 11. There is also one cooperative specialising in health and one in pharmaceutical distribution.



## FOCUS

### Why are there so many energy cooperatives in the top 100 in the US?

**Their history goes back to the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, the private electricity companies did not find it economically advantageous to serve the rural areas of the country.** As a result, much of the country was without electricity, and by the mid-1930s, nine out of ten rural households did not have access to electricity.

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) and a year later passed the Rural Electrification Act, which established a loan programme for this work. As private power companies continued to leave sparsely populated rural areas without service, agricultural electric cooperatives applied for these loans and eventually made rural electrification a reality.

In 1937, the REA drafted the Electric Cooperative Act, allowing States to establish and operate non-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives. As a result, over 90% of US farms had electricity by 1953.

There are two types of electric cooperatives: distribution cooperatives and generation and transmission (G&T) cooperatives. In total, 832 cooperatives make up the cooperative distribution network in the US and another 63 G&T cooperatives (source: NRECA, 2021).

Electricity cooperatives are local energy and technology partners. Consumer-owned and non-profit, they are shaped by the specific needs of the communities they serve. From booming suburbs to remote rural communities, US electric cooperatives are energy providers and economic development drivers. They play a vital role in transforming communities.

Today, they own and maintain 42% (2.7 million miles) of the electric distribution lines in the United States. They generate 5% of the electricity in the US and 12% of the supply. In total they power more than 20 million businesses, homes, schools and farms in 48 States (source: NRECA, 2021).



**In the UK**, agricultural cooperatives are the most numerous in the top 100, with 40. In second place are cooperatives specialising in trade. There are 24 of them. Then come housing cooperatives, which number 11. Then the health cooperatives, which number 10. There are also 6 cooperatives in sports and recreation, and 4 cooperatives specialising in industry.



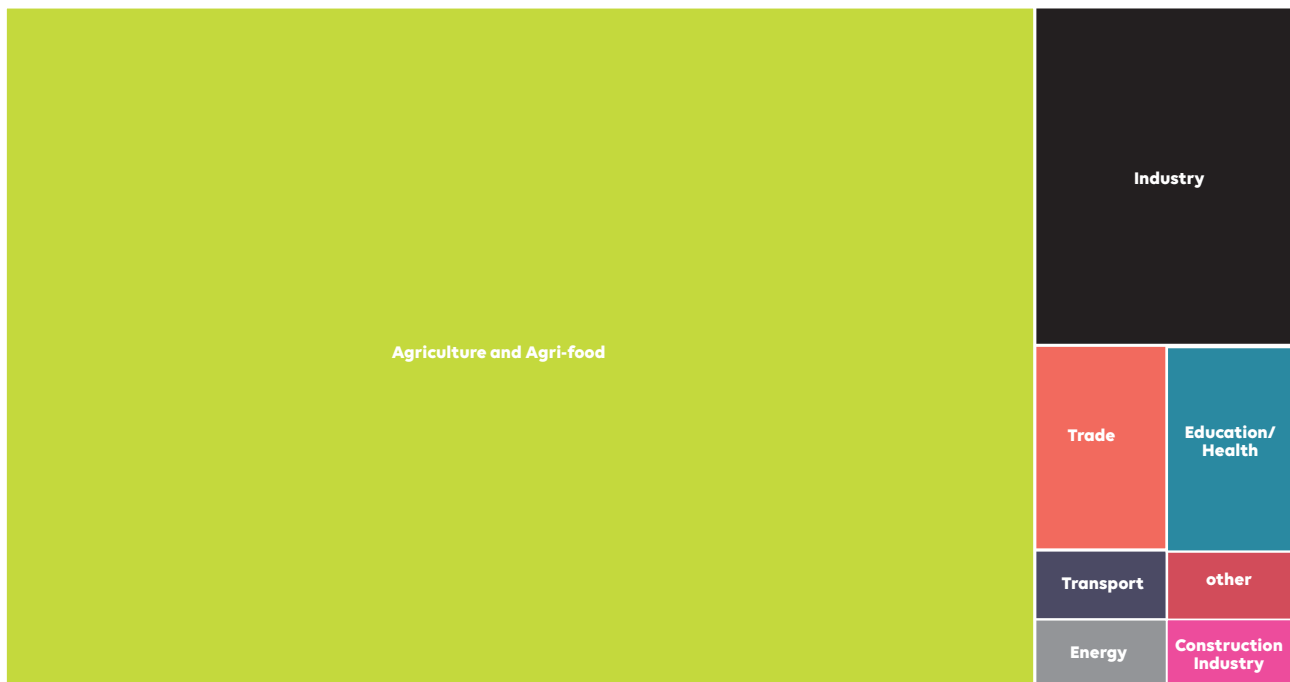
## FOCUS

### Why are there no cooperative banks in the UK top 100?

**In the UK, the legal status of cooperative is not allowed for banks.** Contrary to its name, The Co-operative Bank is not a cooperative bank. In fact, it is no longer strictly speaking a cooperative since its recent bankruptcy. Following a restructuring and the formation of a new holding company on 1st September 2017, The Co-operative Group no longer holds a stake in The Co-operative Bank and the relationship agreement between the two organisations ended in 2020.

In place of cooperative banks, the UK is home to “building societies”. These are a type of mutual that traditionally focus on mortgage lending, although building societies also offer other retail banking products and services. These institutions have existed in the UK since 1775. They were originally set up because members wanted their savings to be used to help other members buy their own homes (hence the name “building society”). However, their numbers have fallen sharply over the 20th century, from 1,723 in 1910 to 49 in 2010.

## Spain



**In Spain**, agricultural cooperatives are the overwhelming majority in the top 100. There are 80 of them. In second place, we find cooperatives specialised in industry. There are 10 of them. Then come the cooperatives specialising in trade, of which there are 3. Then the health cooperatives, of which there are 11. There is also one cooperative specialising in construction, one in education, one in energy, one in other services and one in transport.

## France



**In France**, agricultural cooperatives dominate the top 100 in number<sup>10</sup>. There are 65 of them. They are ahead of cooperatives specialising in trade (traders' cooperatives + consumers' cooperatives) which number 27. They are followed by cooperatives operating in industry (3), banking cooperatives (3), consumer cooperatives (2) and finally one cooperative in construction.

<sup>10</sup>. See Top 100 des entreprises coopératives, 2022 edition, Coop FR



## FOCUS

### Why are agricultural cooperatives so numerous in the French top 100?

**The high representation of agricultural cooperatives in the French top 100 can be explained in part by the history of the agricultural cooperative movement.** For the record, the first traces of organisations similar to today's agricultural cooperatives date back to the 12th century with the "fruitières" (fruit farms) of the Jura.

However, it was really during the inter-war period that agricultural cooperation took off in France. Several laws passed at that time contributed to the development of agricultural cooperatives. For example, the number of wine-making cooperatives rose from 92 in 1920 to 834 in 1939 and the number of cereal cooperatives from 650 in 1935 to 1,100 in 1939.

From the 1960s onwards, agricultural cooperatives began to engage in processing and over the decades they developed in the food industry. They have therefore grown and this is the reason why they are numerous in the French top 100. Moreover, some of today's large agricultural cooperatives have origins that sometimes go back more than a century.

## 2. DISTRIBUTION OF COOPERATIVES BY ACTIVITY AND TURNOVER

### Three sectors of activity almost equally represented in the world top 100

The cooperative families with the largest number of members are not always those with the largest turnover. Thus, at the global level, 3 families (agriculture and agri-food, trade and banking) represent almost the same weight in the global turnover.

In Europe, cooperatives in trade are the most important. In the United States, agricultural and food cooperatives dominate and represent more than half of the turnover. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, trade cooperatives are the majority and represent more than three quarters of the turnover. In France, although trading cooperatives are the most important, agricultural and food cooperatives as well as cooperative banks also have a significant weight.

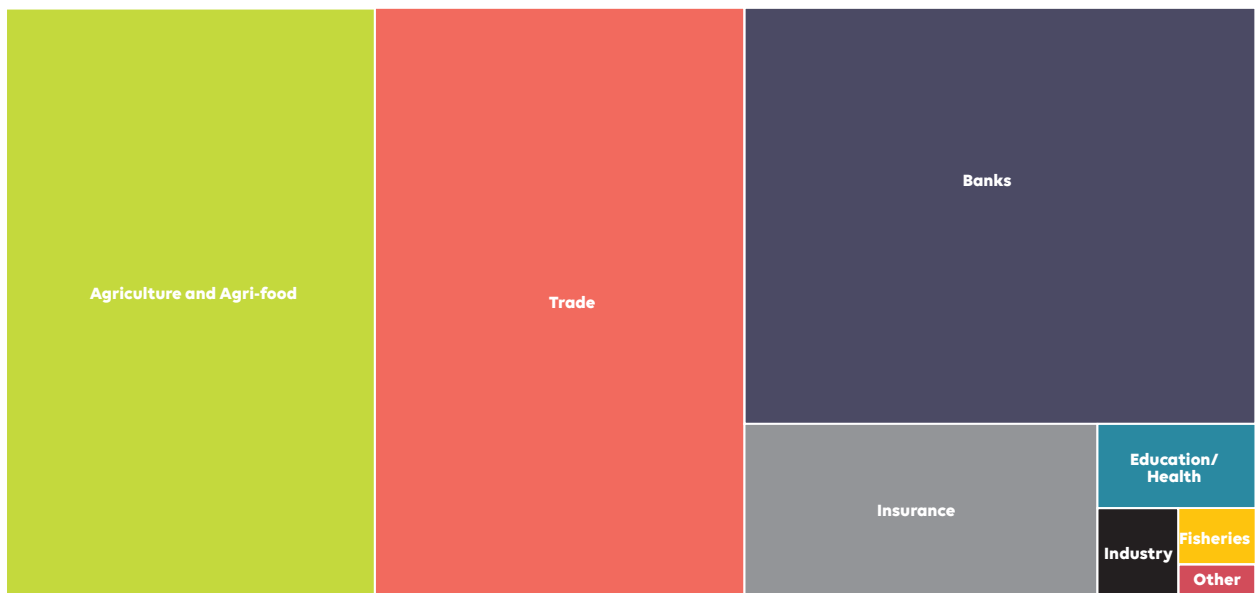
#### **Cooperatives contribute to food security in many countries**

The three main sectors concern everyday life, especially food.

Retailers' cooperatives are at the forefront of food security but also of purchasing power in the different countries.

Cooperative banks, on the other hand, are mainly deposit banks, financing the local economy.

## World

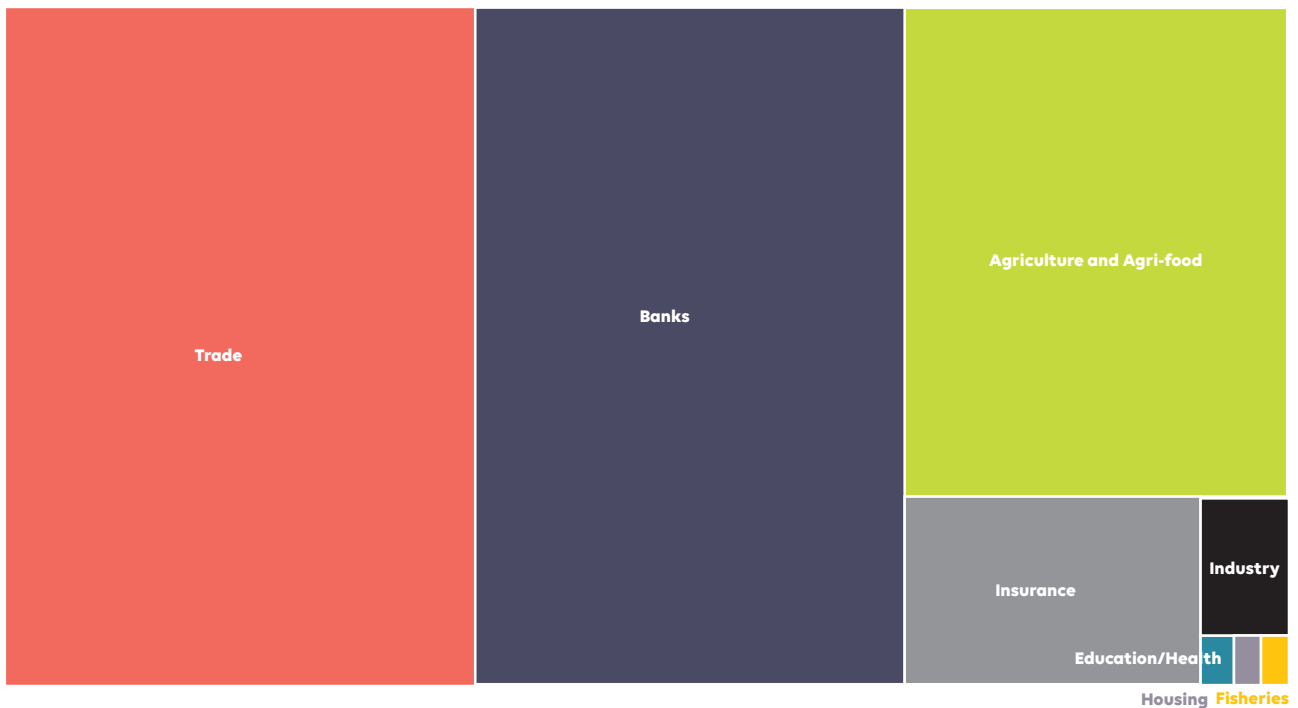


In 2019, **the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in the world** represented a combined turnover of \$1,352 billion.

Three major cooperative families dominate the global top 100 in 2019 almost equally:

- With \$400.56 billion in turnover, cooperatives with an agricultural or agri-food activity represent 29.63% of the overall turnover of the top 100.
- Cooperatives active in wholesale or retail trade achieved \$396.3 billion in turnover, representing 29.31% of the overall turnover of the top 100.
- Banking cooperatives had a turnover of \$390.37 billion or 28.87% of the top 100's total turnover.

## Europe



In 2019, **the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in Europe** represented a combined turnover of \$993.2 billion.

Three main families of cooperatives dominate the European top 100 in 2019:

- Cooperatives with wholesale or retail operations had \$363.9 billion in turnover, or 36.63% of the overall turnover of the top 100.
- Cooperative banks had a turnover of \$332.31 billion or 33.46% of the total turnover of the top 100.
- With \$214.75 billion in turnover, cooperatives with an agricultural or agri-food activity represent 21.62% of the total turnover of the top 100.



## United States



In 2019, **the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in the United States** had a combined turnover of \$228.2 billion.

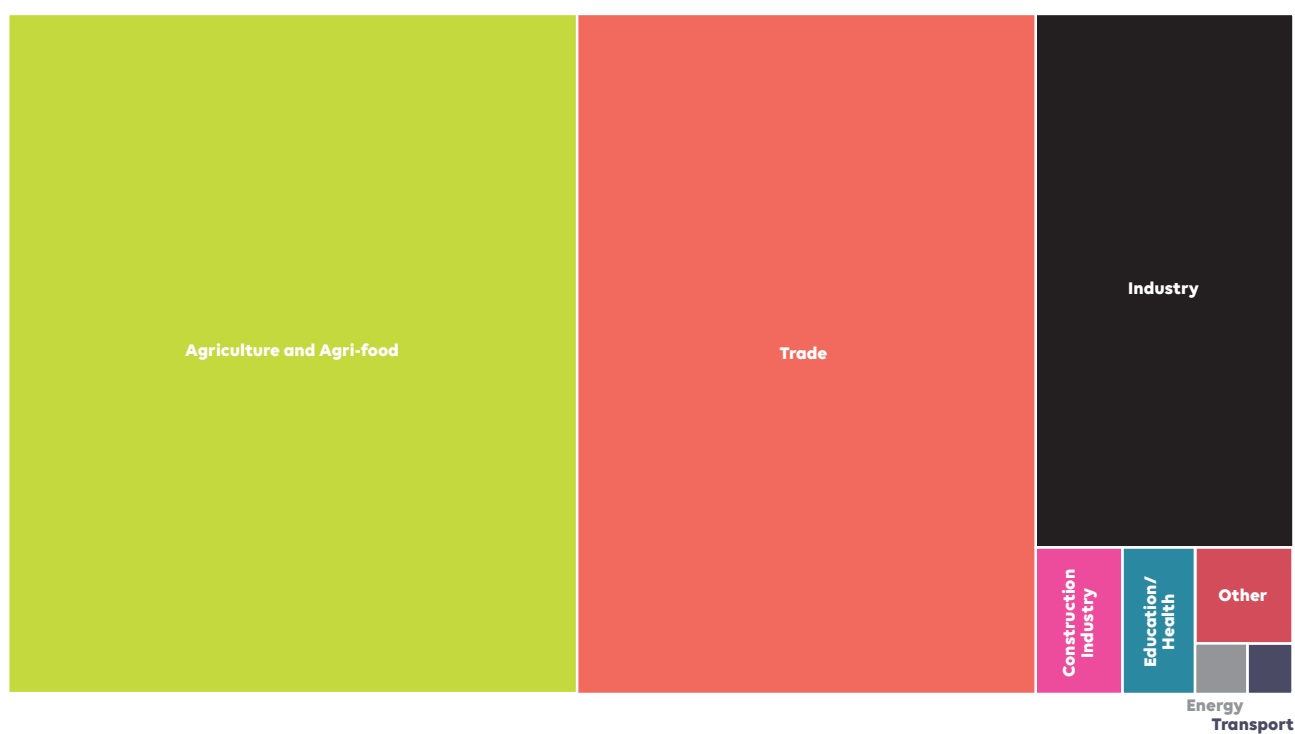
In terms of turnover, cooperatives active in agriculture and agri-food dominate the US top 100. With a turnover of 126.8 billion dollars, they represent 55.55% of the total turnover of the US top 100. Next come trading cooperatives which, with 44.7 billion dollars in turnover, represent 19.57% of the total turnover of the US top 100. With \$25.9 billion in turnover, cooperative banks account for 11.32% of the total turnover of the US top 100. Although they are the second largest cooperative family in terms of numbers, cooperatives specialising in energy production represent only 9.77% of the total turnover of the US top 100, with a turnover of \$22.3 billion.

## United Kingdom



In 2019, **the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in the UK** had a combined turnover of £37.6 billion. In terms of turnover, retail co-operatives dominate. With a turnover of £28.3 billion they represent 75.31% of the total turnover of the UK top 100. Next come the cooperatives specialising in agriculture and food processing which, with a turnover of £7.4 billion, represent 19.73% of the total turnover of the UK top 100. The other families of cooperatives are far behind, accounting for less than 5% of the turnover of the UK top 100.

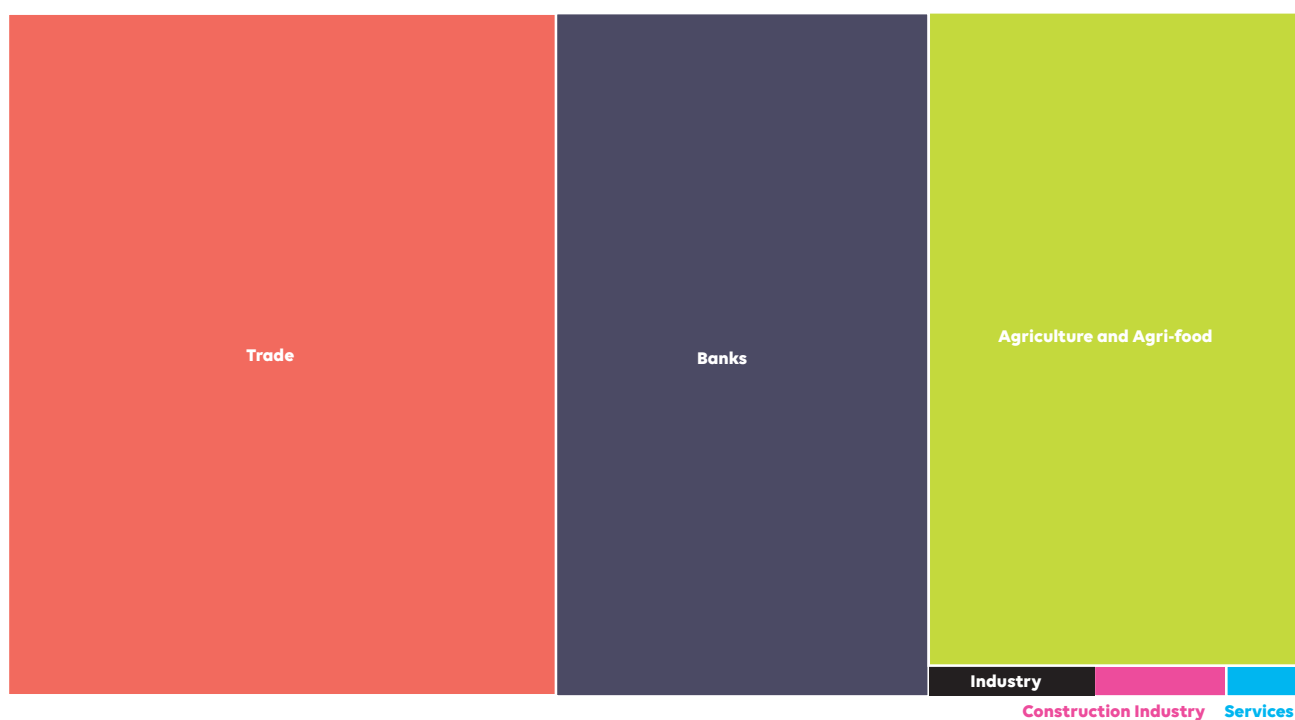
## Spain



In 2019, **the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in Spain** represented a cumulative turnover of €22.7 billion.

In terms of turnover, the cooperatives that are active in agriculture and agri-food dominate, but their weight is less significant. With a turnover of €10.1 billion they represent 44.53% of the total turnover of the Spanish top 100. Next come the cooperatives specialising in trade, which, with a turnover of €8.1 billion, represent 35.62%. Finally, cooperatives specialising in industry represent 15.55%.

## France



In 2019, **the 100 largest cooperative enterprises in France** represented a combined turnover of €257 billion.

In terms of turnover, cooperatives active in wholesale or retail trade (traders' cooperatives + consumers' cooperatives) dominate. With a turnover of €108.7 billion, they represent 42.28% of the total turnover of the French top 100. Next come the cooperative banks which, with €74 billion in turnover, represent 28.79% of the total turnover of the European top 100. Finally, with €71.6 billion in turnover, cooperatives with an agricultural or agri-food activity represent 27.87% of the total turnover of the French top 100.

### 3. DISTRIBUTION OF COOPERATIVE EMPLOYMENT BY ACTIVITY

#### Trade employs the largest number of people

The 100 largest cooperative enterprises in the world employ almost 3 million people, of which more than half (51.8%) are employed in wholesale or retail trade.

Of the 2.5 million jobs in the European top 100, trade accounts for 55.6% of employees.

In France, the 100 largest cooperative enterprises employ 904,253 people, 39.6% in wholesale and retail trade, 36% in banking, 19.2% in agriculture and food processing.

The majority of cooperative employment is in the trade sector. Nevertheless, it is necessary to modulate with regard to the perimeter retained: the number of employees in the shops of the members of traders' cooperatives. If the same perimeter were applied to agricultural cooperatives, i.e. counting all the employees of farmers, the agricultural sector would certainly take first place.

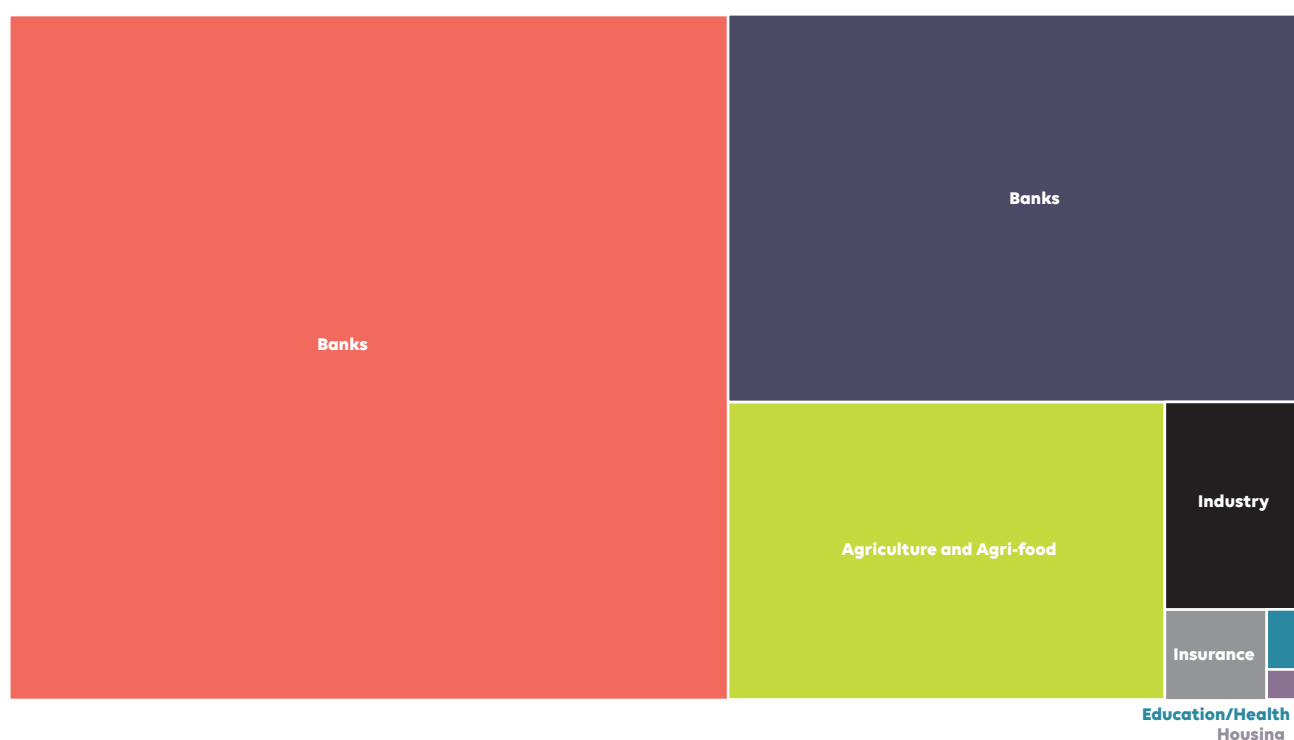
## World



### **The 100 largest cooperative enterprises in the world employ almost 3 million people (2,987,372 employees).**

With 1,546,954 employees, cooperatives active in wholesale or retail trade account for 51.8% of the employees in the top 100. Next come the cooperative banks which, with 790,819 employees, account for 26.5% of the employees in the top 100. Finally, the cooperatives with agricultural or agri-food activities, with 393,284 employees, account for 13.2% of the employees in the top 100.

## Europe



### **The 100 largest cooperative enterprises in Europe employ just over 2.5 million people (2,553,587 employees).**

With 1,418,586 employees, cooperatives active in wholesale or retail trade account for 55.6% of the employees in the European top 100. Next come the cooperative banks, which, with 643,424 employees, account for 25.2% of the employees in the top 100. Finally, the cooperatives with agricultural or agri-food activities, with 375,126 employees, account for 14.7% of the employees in the top 100.

## Spain

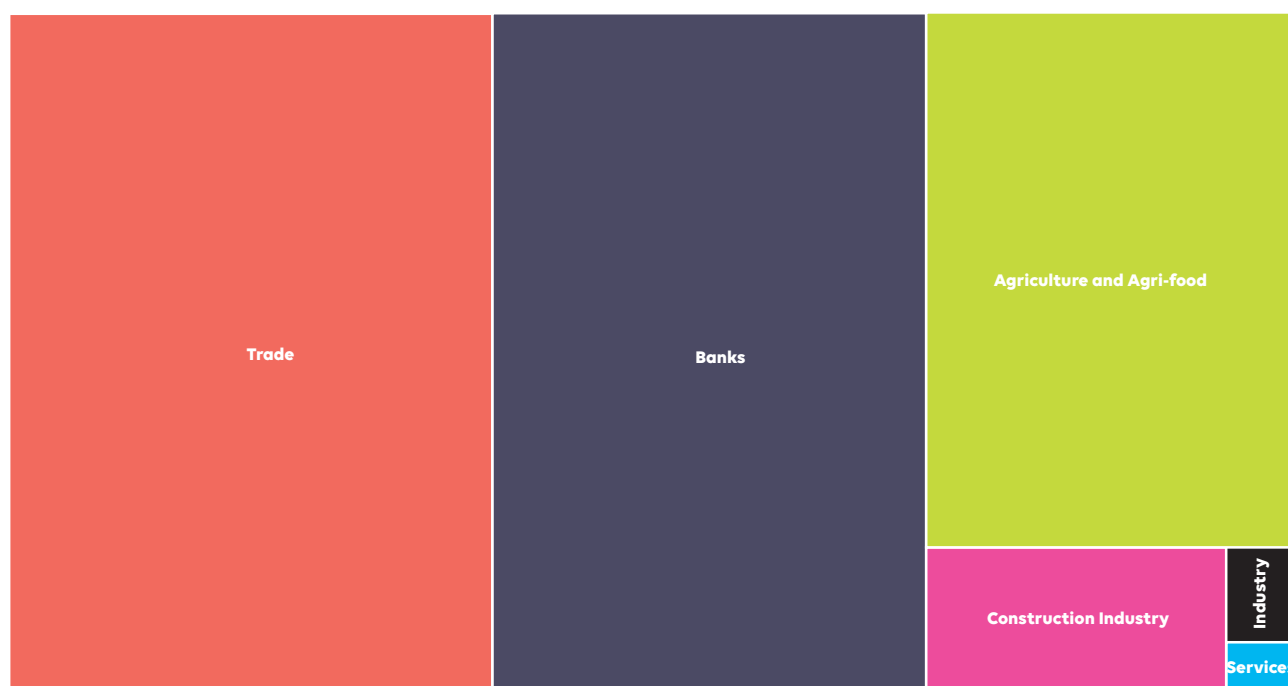


### The 100 largest cooperative enterprises in Spain employ 115,818 people.

With 46,220 employees, cooperatives active in wholesale or retail trade account for 39.9% of the employees of the Spanish top 100. Next come cooperatives specialising in industry, which account for 21.4% of the Spanish top 100, with 24,809 employees. Agricultural and food cooperatives, although dominant in number, account for only 21.3% of the employees of the Spanish top 100.



## France



### The 100 largest cooperative enterprises in France employ 904,253 people.

With 358,324 employees, cooperatives active in wholesale or retail trade represent 39.6% of the employees of the French top 100. Next come the cooperative banks which, with 325,538 employees, account for 36% of the French top 100. Cooperatives active in agriculture and agri-food, although dominant in number, account for only 19.2% of the jobs in the French top 100.

## 4. PLACE OF EUROPEAN COOPERATIVES IN THE WORLD TOP 100

European cooperatives are the majority in the world top 100 (57 out of 100). They account for 66.9% of the global turnover and concentrate a large majority of the cooperative workforce.

Distribution of the number of cooperatives in the top 100 worldwide by geographical area



In 2019, **of the world top 100 cooperative enterprises** by turnover, 57 were European, 26 were in the Americas and 17 were in Asia-Pacific.

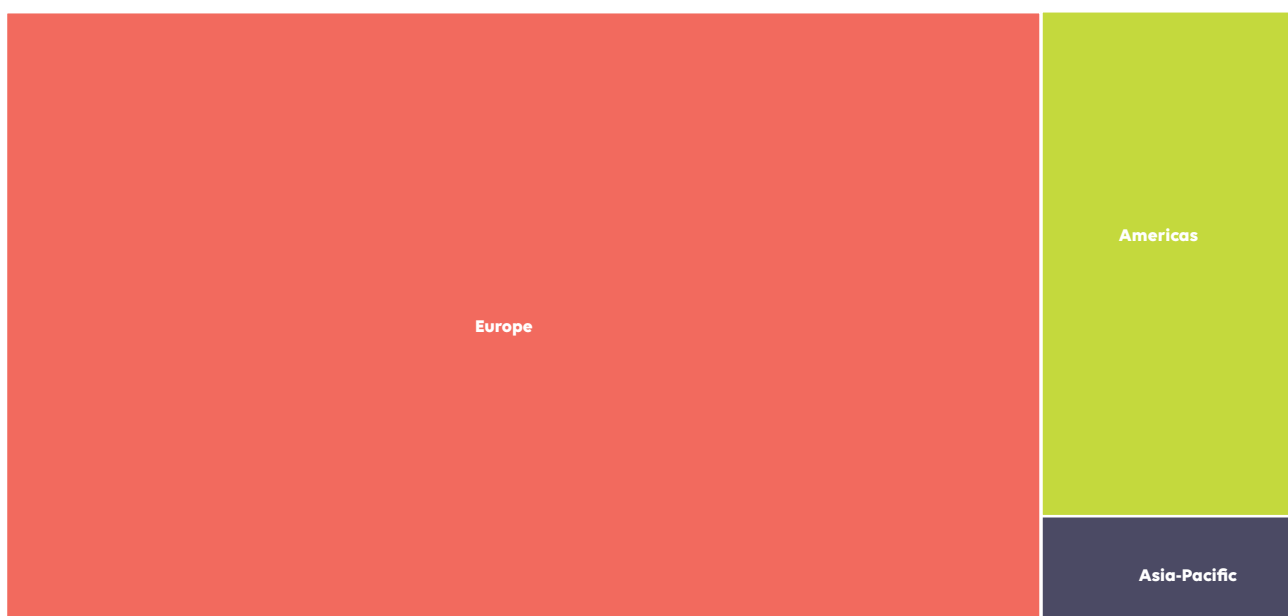
Distribution of cooperatives in the top 100 World by turnover in 2019



**In terms of turnover, European cooperatives are even more important in the global top 100.**

Indeed, the 57 European cooperatives achieved a cumulative turnover of 904.07 billion, or 66.9% of the top 100 total turnover. On the other hand, cooperatives in Asia-Pacific, although fewer in number than cooperatives in the Americas, are more important in terms of turnover. This is due to the fact that there are large federations of cooperatives in Asia (e.g. in Japan and South Korea). With a turnover of 231.85 billion dollars, they represent 17.1% of the total turnover of the top 100. With 216.08 billion dollars, cooperatives located in the Americas represent 16% of the global turnover of this top 100.

Distribution of cooperatives in the top 100 World by employment in 2019



In terms of employment, with 2,389,223 employees, **European cooperatives account for 80% of the world's top 100**. This is followed by cooperatives in the Americas which, with 497,814 employees, account for 16.7% of the world top 100 employees. Finally, cooperatives in Asia-Pacific with a combined total of 100,335 employees account for only 3.3% of the world top 100 employees.

## 5. PLACE OF FRENCH COOPERATIVES IN THE WORLD TOP 100

France is one of the historical cradles of cooperation and has several cooperatives that are world leaders. Some of them even have roots going back a hundred years. The statistics on cooperatives worldwide show us that France has all the makings of a cooperative superpower at the global level.

Although France has fewer representatives than the United States, with 13 cooperatives in the world top 100, French cooperatives are the most important in terms of turnover. With a cumulative turnover of 344.75 billion dollars, i.e. 25.5% of the global turnover of the top 100, France is ahead of Germany (15.9%), Japan (11%) and the United States (10.1%). Moreover, in terms of employment, France is the second nation in the world's top 100 with 613,351 employees, behind Germany (857,964 employees).

Furthermore, among the large French cooperatives are several banks that compete with their listed counterparts, retailer cooperatives that are among the leaders in food distribution, and agricultural cooperatives that have managed to reach critical size in certain sectors and have developed leading brands in the food sector.

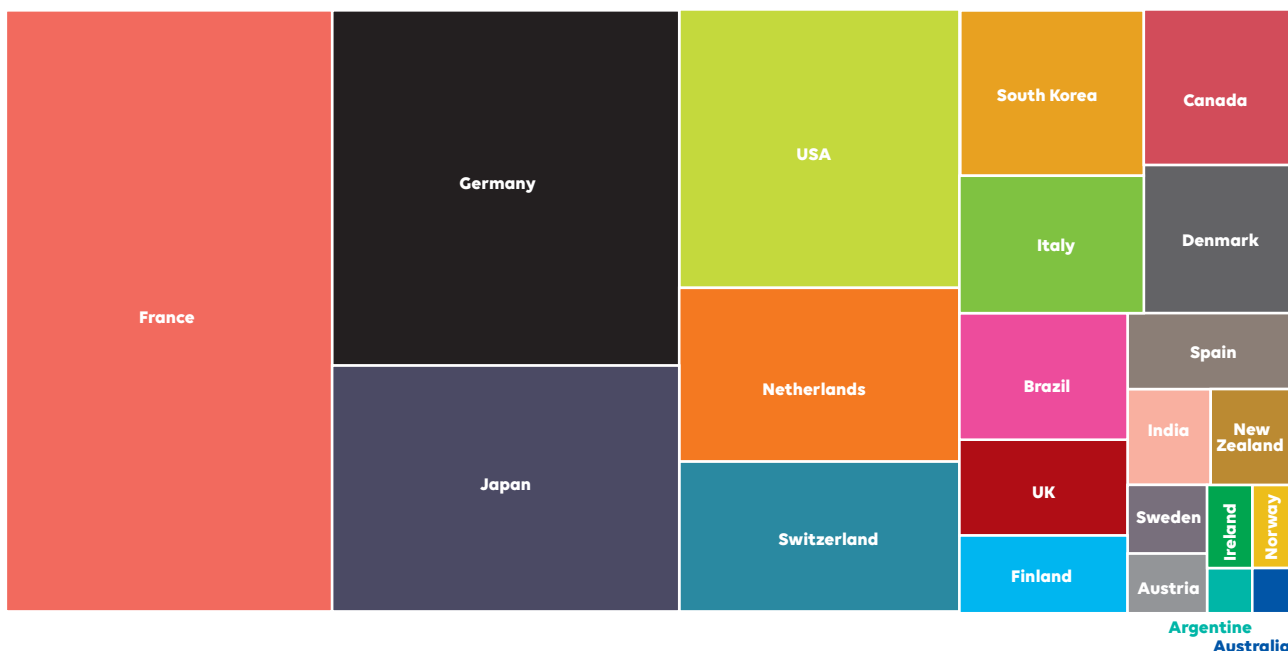
It is interesting to note that in France, cooperatives have been legally governed by the same law for 75 years and their operations are regularly audited, through what is known as the "révision coopérative" (cooperative audit).

Distribution of cooperatives in the world top 100 by country



In 2019, **of the top 100 cooperative enterprises in the world**, 15 were US cooperatives, 13 were French, 11 were German and 10 were Japanese.

Distribution of cooperatives in the world top 100 by turnover 2019 by country



Although they are not the most represented in the world top 100, **French cooperative enterprises** are the most important in terms of turnover. With 344.75 billion dollars, they represent 25.5% of the global turnover of the top 100. German cooperatives, with 215.11 billion in turnover, account for 15.9%, Japanese cooperatives, with 149.27 billion, account for 11.0% and finally US cooperatives, with 136.15 billion, account for 10.1%.

## Distribution of employment of cooperatives in the top 100 World by country



With 613,351 employees, **France is the second nation in the world's top 100** behind Germany with 857,964 employees but ahead of Switzerland with 223,522 employees. This can be explained in particular by the importance of retailer cooperatives in these three countries (Edeka and REWE in Germany, Leclerc and Système U in France, Migros and Coop in Switzerland) and to a lesser extent by the importance of cooperative banks (Crédit Agricole, BPCE, Crédit Mutuel in France, BVR in Germany).



### FOCUS

## Why are the German cooperatives in the top 100 the ones with the most employees?

**Germany's top position is largely due to the very large number of jobs at Edeka and REWE**, which together employ almost 623,000 people, or 1/5 of the jobs in the world top 100.

Edeka is a cooperative of retailers which was founded in 1907 under the name E.d.K. (Einkaufsgenossenschaft der Kolonialwarenhändler im Halleschen Torbezirk zu Berlin, which could be translated as "Purchasing cooperative of retailers of colonial goods in the Hallesches Tor district of Berlin"). At the time of its foundation, E.d.K had a capital of only 800 marks and cooperatives were still a new idea. Fritz Borrmann and Karl Biller were the first directors. E.d.K was soon joined by other cooperatives throughout the country. At a meeting in May 1908, a cooperative legal status was presented to 80 representatives of 23 organisations, and Edeka was officially born.

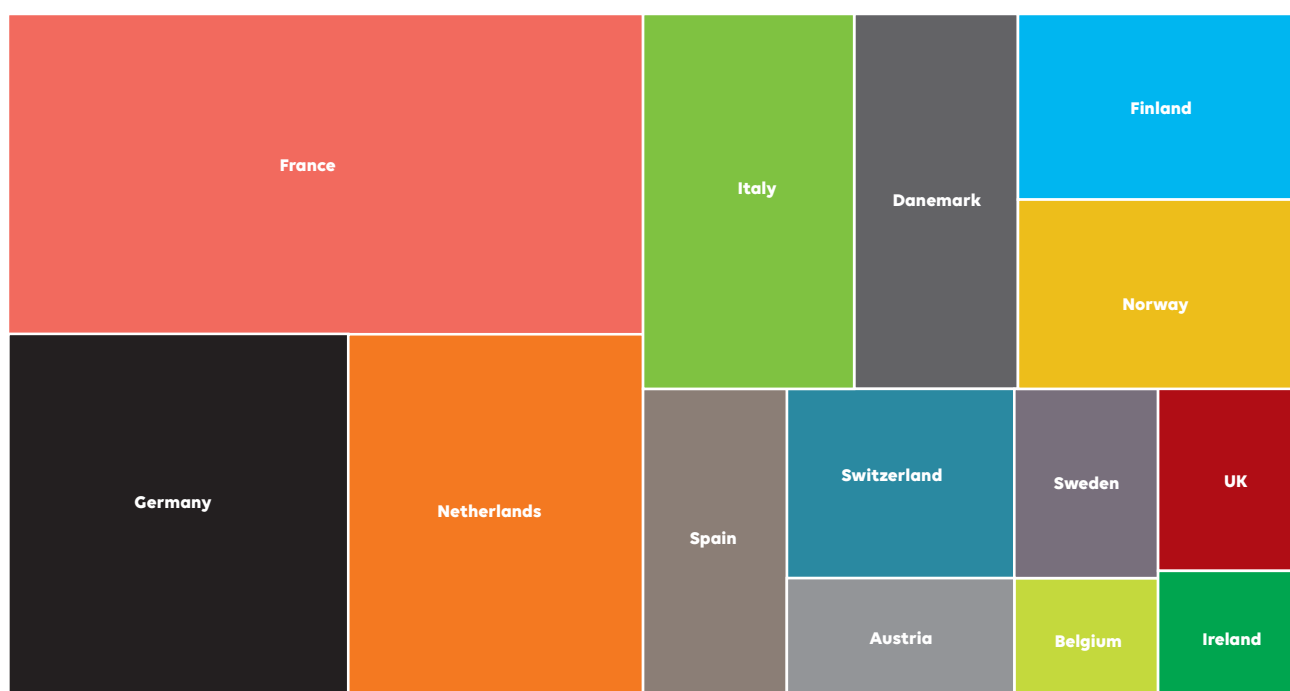
Today, Edeka is a cooperative organised on three levels (independent retailers, regional wholesalers and EDEKA Zentrale). Edeka has 11,112 shops with a combined sales area of 11.58 million m2. It is the largest supermarket chain in Germany.

At the end of 1926, 17 purchasing cooperatives agreed to join forces and in 1927 REWE was founded as the "Revisionsverband der Westkauf-Genossenschaften", which means "Audit Association of Western Purchasing Cooperatives". REWE specialises in two areas: retail trade and tourism. Today REWE has about 9,500 shops (6,000 in Germany and 3,500 internationally) and is the second largest supermarket chain in Germany after EDEKA..

## 6. PLACE OF FRENCH COOPERATIVES IN THE EUROPEAN TOP 100

Although French cooperatives are the most numerous in the European top 100, they have an even greater economic weight. Indeed, the 23 French cooperatives represent nearly 37% of the overall turnover of the European top 100. This can be explained by the fact that 3 of the 5 largest European cooperatives are French.

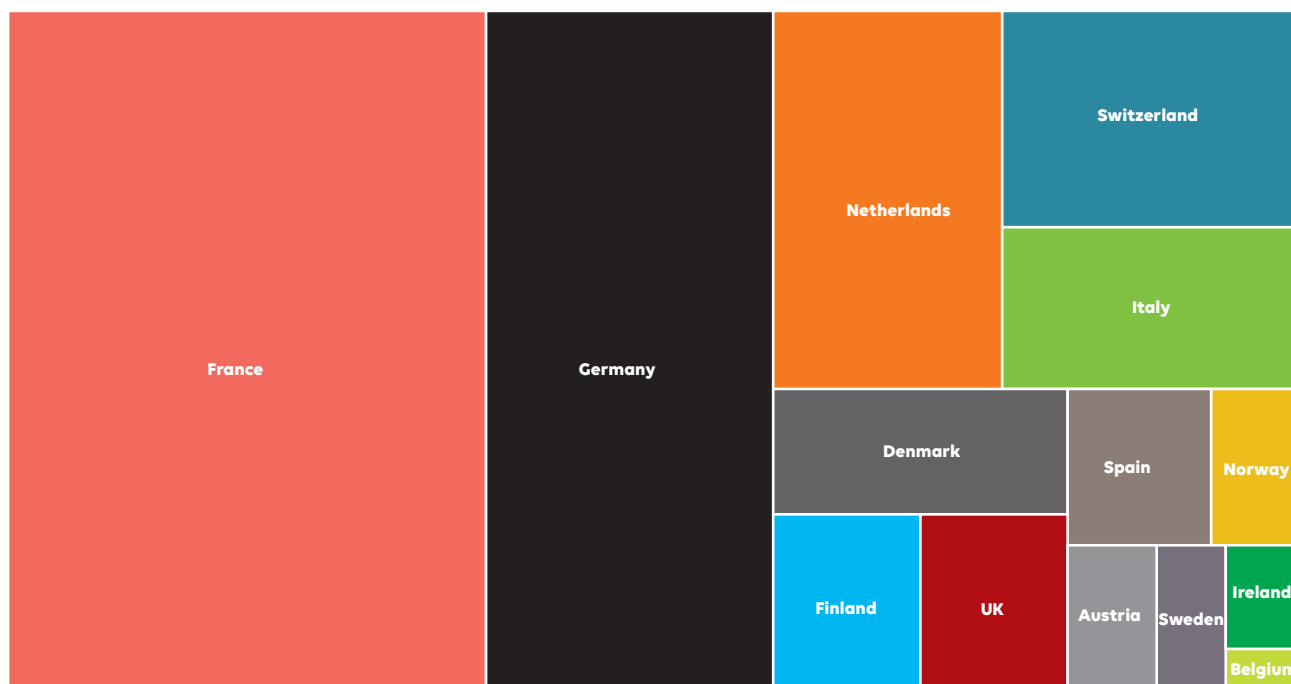
Distribution of cooperatives in the European top 100 by country



In 2019, of the top 100 cooperative enterprises in Europe, 23 were French, 14 were German and 12 were Dutch.

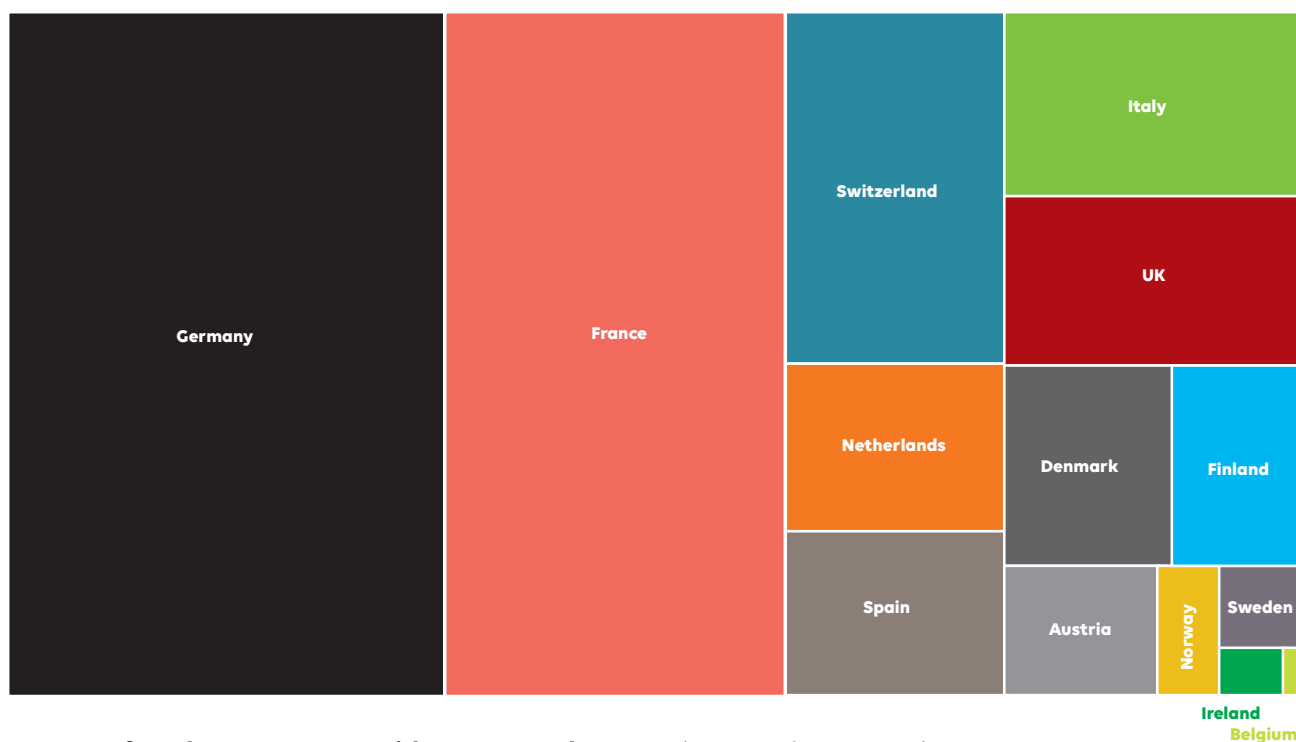


Distribution of cooperatives in the European top 100 by turnover 2019 by country



**French cooperative enterprises are even more important in terms of turnover.** With \$363.52 billion in cumulative turnover, they represent 36.6% of the European top 100. German cooperatives, with \$221.52 billion, represent 22.3% of the European top 100. Finally, Dutch cooperatives, with \$98.1 billion, represent 9.88% of the European top 100.

Distribution of employment of cooperatives in the European top 100



**In terms of employment, France, with 666,621 employees,** is the second nation in the European top 100 behind Germany with 865,666 employees. Switzerland completes the podium with 223,522 employees.



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