

# CO-OPERATIVES UNITED / WORLD FESTIVAL AND ICAEXPO

29 OCT — 2 NOV 2012  
MANCHESTER CENTRAL, UK



The **co-operative**  
good for everyone



# GENDER FORUM

**Women in cooperatives: tools for a work-life balance,  
participation and career paths**

**Dora Iacobelli**

Spokesperson Alliance of Italian Cooperatives  
President of Legacoop's Equal Opportunity Committee



# THE FOCUS OF MY REPORT

## Starting from the Italian situation

female employment

women in cooperatives

how the cooperative form of enterprise can meet the need to increase the participation of women in the labor market

I am representing here three Equal Opportunity bodies of the Cooperatives Organizations making up the Alliance of Italian Cooperatives – AIC (AGCI, Confcooperative e Legacoop)

# THE ITALIAN SITUATION

## Some figures

a female employment rate of 46.1%, which puts us among the last places in Europe just before Malta (the EU average rate is 58.2%), compared to 67.7% of male employment, nearer to the European average of 70.1%

a female unemployment rate higher than that of males, 9.7% versus 7.6%, while in Europe, for both genders, this rate is 9.6%

a very high inactivity rate, 48.9% and higher than the European equivalent at 35.5%



A strong sign of women's discouragement in job seeking.

Together with the difficulty to find a job, many women in Italy do not even try anymore

# THE ITALIAN SITUATION

## Other information

30% of mothers leave work for family reasons

there are significant barriers to career paths, and during their entire working life, women are more under-utilized, especially if they are graduates (40% versus 31% of men)

the net monthly salary of women employees is about 20% less than men's

# THE ITALIAN SITUATION

## The reasons

problems related to the structure of the Italian productive system

the insufficient welfare system

the persistence of cultural patterns penalizing the role of women,  
still widespread in Italy

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

**Cooperatives have in their DNA the focus on personal fulfilment and satisfaction of all stakeholder's needs**

the latest data relating to the three Alliance of Italian Cooperatives members have shown an average female presence of 53% of employees with some sectors exceeding 60% (social sector)

In addition, both quantitative and qualitative analysis of female employment in cooperatives show that:

cooperatives offer permanent labor contracts to women

they guarantee employment continuity, also in times of crisis women can enter the cooperative for all their working life

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

## What can we conclude?

- cooperatives seem to be more attentive to the needs of women balancing work with periods of non-working for reasons related to family or motherhood

## In fact

- there are experiences of excellence in terms of work-life balance, in particular for maternity safeguarding, flexibility in working hours and conditions, the presence of services for childcare, elderly, disabled

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

## Project “**Family, Enterprise, Work**” of Confcooperative

- a framework of the answer that the cooperatives offer to the need for a work-life balance
- it promotes a family friendly culture in co-operative enterprises, developing the mutual benefits and well being for both the cooperators and their families

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

## The problems

- cooperative company policies for work-life balance are not always sufficiently formalized
- there are a significant difficulties in creating career paths and participation of women in the enterprises

Female participation in company Boards of three larger Cooperative organizations confirms this situation: it is only

**23.9%**

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

## What to do?

The cooperative world, particularly attentive to defending employment, social responsibility, respect for diversity, and not only those of gender, is called upon to make a further step

## How?

- It has to promote all the human capital, taking into account the particular features of the various inputs, especially those of gender
- The cooperative system is an important player in the overall welfare system in Italy it can play a key role in improving the relations between women and the labour market

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

cooperatives can further improve their internal organization and welfare for their members and employees, the tools and policies for work-life balance, but can also promote and carry out services for women using the network model that is the main way to achieve stable results

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

Tools for enhancing women's work and overcoming the gender stereotype:

- to promote actions to change the management culture, also through specific training and consulting
- to award businesses that have experiences in quality in human resource management from a gender perspective
- to adhere to codes of conduct

In Italy, the **Charter for Equal Opportunities and Equality in the Workplace** has been promoted and is supported, among others, by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. This Charter was signed by the Italian co-operative organizations and many associated cooperatives.

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

Project about “**Quality in human resource management from a gender perspective**” of Legacoop

## *Main goals*

- developing in the cooperatives the awareness of costs and benefits of equal opportunity policies
- providing tools for an improved quality in the organizational processes from a gender point of view
- considering equal opportunities a widespread way to look at the organization
- valuing and monitoring several steps for improvement

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

Project about “**Quality in human resources management from a gender perspective**” of Legacoop

*The most important results of the project have been:*

- all the organizational system was involved in agreeing on the goals, top to bottom, through training programs and focus groups
- the company data was read from a gender view point were focused on
- some proposal for improvement are included in a plan for the equal opportunities approved by the company management body and a specific period has been set for its implementation

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

Project about “**The development of female management**” of AGCI

Starting from the constitution of a Women Committee, it want to promote all the tools to facilitate the work-life balance also bringing together the best practices carried out by the associated cooperatives

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

## Planned actions

Italian cooperative organizations have planned or are introducing minimum quotas for the general representative bodies and guidelines for governance were given required a minimum percentage of female presence in the cooperative boards

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

## On the occasion of the International Year of Cooperatives:

Starting from the experience of European Conference organized in Rome in 2010, in collaboration with Cooperatives Europe and with the contributions of six European cooperative organizations (France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom) we would like to identify an opportunity to work closely with our European colleagues on the issues of women employment in cooperatives

# WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES

**It's time to build an European network  
of women cooperators**