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Employees

The new Coop collective employment agreement sets out enhanced benefits, particularly for employees with family obligations. Paternity leave is increased from five to 15 days. Coop Campus opens as a new format brand for training.

In 2018, the Coop Group had a total of 89 579 employees in the Retail and Wholesale/Production business areas, including 3 447 apprentices. In the year under review, 62.8% of jobs were in Switzerland and the remainder abroad.

89 579

employees of
the Coop Group

The latest developments on the labour market make sustainable HR work a challenging task. Chief among those developments are the skills shortage, growing competition for qualified employees and rapid technological advances. Demographic change, particularly with regard to the low birth rate generations and the retirement of baby boomers, also requires companies to be highly adaptable. Professional activity is far more significant among women, the world of work is becoming increasingly multicultural, and working models are becoming more flexible. In this environment, the Coop Group positions

itself as a diverse, attractive and sustainable employer. This is particularly important in order to attract and then retain the best qualified job-seekers as employees.

In its HR work, the Coop Group pursues the following strategic priorities: attractiveness as an employer, enterprise and management and change management. One of the main aims of Coop's HR work, besides recruiting new staff members, is to enthuse employees for and impart to them the skills they need in order to deal with technological change and digitalization.

Attractiveness as an employer

New collective employment agreement with many improvements and pay increases

More than 37 000 Coop employees from all parts of Switzerland have benefited from a new collective employment agreement since 1 January 2018. The new agreement was negotiated in 2017 by Coop and the social partners Association of Salaried Employees of Coop (VdAC), Unia, the Swiss association of commercial employees KV Schweiz and the trade unions Syna/OCST, for the period 2018 to 2022. In the new collective agreement, Coop further and substantially enhances its benefits for employees with family obligations. Young fathers and mothers in particular benefit from the changes. Paternity leave has been increased from five to 15 days, on full pay, and is available to employees on a monthly salary and on an hourly wage. In addition, following the birth, fathers are entitled to two weeks' unpaid holiday. All female employees already receive 16 weeks of maternity leave from their third year of employment, instead of the statutory 14 weeks. By awarding maternity leave on full pay, Coop goes way beyond the statutory minimum. Since 1 February 2018, filling station employees of Coop Mineraloel AG have also had the benefit of a collective employment agreement.

Coop Child Care is also now enshrined in the collective employment agreement. Under this programme, Coop provides single-parent employees with financial support of up to 600 francs per month, per child. If there is more than one child receiving third-party childcare, the amount is up to 1 000 francs. In order to be eligible, employees must make use of external childcare and not exceed a specified pay threshold.

Moreover, as of 1 January 2018, the payroll of employees on an hourly wage and a monthly salary was increased by 1%.

Targeted measures following Veritas employee survey

Coop carried out an employee survey, which goes by the name Veritas, in 2017. Having evaluated the feedback, Coop began implementing measures during the reporting year. In Coop's Suisse Romande sales region, Coop launched the "Equilibre" project, the purpose of which is to reinforce a work-life balance as part of a positive corporate culture. The activities staged included a hiking day for all employees and their families, raising awareness among young Coop employees about tobacco consumption, preferential rates for gyms, a volleyball tournament and health coaching by experts. A Health Week also took place, accompanied by an app on which new topics and videos were shown each day.

Proactive measures ensure sustainable development of the pension fund

As at 31 December 2018, the CPV/CAP Coop Pension Fund had a coverage ratio of 108.4% (previous year 114.0%). However, the coverage ratio could not quite be maintained, due to the lack of investment returns and the costs of switching over the actuarial assumptions. Owing to developments on the financial markets, investment returns were also negative, at -1.9%. This result is below the strategic benchmark but above the tactical benchmark. Despite a difficult year, the old-age pension assets of active members accrued interest of 2.0% in 2018. Therefore, the interest was 1.0% above the BGV minimum interest rate of 1.0%. The provisional interest rate for 2019 is 2.0%. Pensions remained unchanged, and this will also be the case in 2019. At 37 181, the number of active members was slightly higher than the previous year (37 063 members). The number of pensioners rose by 362 people to 20 142 people at the end of 2018.

In light of persistently low interest rates, the Board of Trustees decided to once again lower the technical interest rate. Consequently, as of 1 January 2019 the conversion rate was revised and reduced to 5.15%. As a compensatory measure, a one-off contribution of 7.0% was made to the old-age pension assets. In addition, the annual old-age credits were increased by 2.1 percentage points. The statutory contributions to the insurance are borne one third by employees and two thirds by the company.

Coop receives employer award in Suisse Romande

Coop Suisse Romande was awarded the "Prix Bilan" by western Swiss financial publication "Bilan". Coop received the prize in the Large Corporations category for numerous measures which benefit employees, such as generous paternity leave, bonuses for employees celebrating anniversaries, its Pensioners Day and its free welfare service. Coop Suisse Romande is now planning further measures, including the "Equilibre" project, which involves initiatives aimed at employees on the subjects of health, well-being and family.

Transgourmet Österreich named a "Great Place to Work"

Since July 2018, Transgourmet Österreich has been entitled to display the claim "Certified by Great Place to Work". The certification was the culmination of an evaluation process lasting several months, as part of which employees of Transgourmet Österreich and mein c+c took part in a 63-question survey, among other things. In addition, Vienna-based Great Place to Work GmbH also evaluated the HR measures of Transgourmet Österreich and mein c+c. Transgourmet Österreich was evaluated in the overarching categories Credibility, Respect, Fairness, Pride and Team Spirit. The result speaks for itself: Transgourmet Österreich impressed the evaluation committee and more than satisfied the requirements of the "Great Place to Work" certification guidelines.

Holiday childcare at Transgourmet Österreich

In the summer of 2018, Transgourmet Österreich offered its employees summer childcare for the month of August at its locations in Traun, Graz, Spielberg and Brunn am Gebirge. For three weeks, children aged between three and ten years received care from three qualified teachers, during hours to suit the parents' needs. As well as a variety of activities at the childcare facility and numerous outings, each day the children were given meals from the company restaurant tailored specifically to their needs. The programme, which was in its third year, was launched in partnership with Austrian family association OÖ-Familienbund. Since 2018, the service has been available to all Transgourmet locations in Austria and is run where there is demand.

Training and staff development

Coop Campus: new format for training

Since 2018, Coop has grouped together all training and development measures for Coop employees under the name and new brand Coop Campus. A range of specialist and management training courses are on offer at all career levels, for employees who have completed basic training. There was also a greater focus on overhauling the career development courses in 2018, and the qualifications are now geared towards the four levels Professional, Expert, Master and Leader. Furthermore, the content of career development courses is tailored to the new needs profile of future managers, and the courses are referred to as Management and Leadership (M+L) courses. The Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS FH) in the area of Management and Leadership is a new qualification for leaders at Coop. Starting in 2019, the course programme enables participants to obtain 15 ECTS points and can be used to move on to Master of Advanced Studies (MAS). Now that the university of applied sciences course has been introduced, the training makes an important contribution to the further development of Coop's employees. Coop Campus thus bolsters Coop's leading position as a training centre in Swiss retail.

Coop apprentices successful at SwissSkills

The "SwissSkills" championship was held in Berne from 12 to 16 September 2018. As a Gold sponsor, Coop was supporting the event for the second time. Five trainees from various areas of specialization competed for Coop: two apprentices from "Garden" and "Consumer Electronics", an information scientist, a logistics technician and a meat specialist. Thanks to the extremely thorough preparations and the dedication of the graduates and of their trainers, the participants made it through the elimination rounds to the final round and, in the end, secured themselves a place on the leaderboard of the best in their respective occupational groups. In addition, on an indoor and outdoor stand covering 322 m², Coop presented its wide range of basic training and further development opportunities.

Pre-apprenticeship training gives refugees opportunities on the job market

In August 2018, 30 young people with refugee status began their pre-apprenticeship training at Coop. The programme covers positions in retail (Coop Supermarket and Building & Hobby) and in logistics. Coop will again be making 70 positions available across Switzerland for the pre-apprenticeship training for the start of the 2019 programme. The cooperative is therefore one of the first, and biggest providers of this training. For a whole year, the young people will have the opportunity to develop their potential within the company. The objective is for them to move on to further training, such as a federal vocational certificate or federal VET (vocational education and training) apprenticeship, at the end of the pre-apprenticeship training.

Coop graduate apprentices on tour

To enable Coop employees to get to know the four sales and language regions better after their training, since August 2018 Coop has offered a "Wanderjahr" (mobile experience year). This experience-gathering year involves selected graduate apprentices planning their individual route through Switzerland and choosing a Coop supermarket in which to work. The only requirement is that their tour must include all four sales and language regions. They spend between four and twelve weeks working at each location. The focus is very much on the graduates' personal and professional development: during their tour, they get to know different teams, cultures, languages and ways of working, making the "Wanderjahr" the ideal grounding for the young Coop talents for their first management role. Coop won the renowned "inHR award" for the initiative, in the "Talent Diversity and Inclusion" category.

Health-promoting leadership measures

To raise awareness among line managers of the early detection of health problems affecting their staff, specially devised workshops were run at two logistics locations for line managers of all levels. The “Veritas” employee survey carried out in 2017 clearly revealed the desire for this kind of training. In addition, line managers were offered support from the HR department with return to work interviews following extended, illness-related employee absence. The measure is intended to raise awareness among line managers of the need to request support early on, to ease the burden on employees who are ill and prevent extended or recurring absences.

Synergies from Shared Service Centre

To exploit synergies, in August 2018 Coop centralized the preparation of job references, job advertisements and pre-selection. The service deals mainly with functions in the collective employment agreement which arise very frequently in the four sales regions. One area of the Shared Service Centre is responsible for preparing interim references, references and confirmations of employment in German, French and Italian. Processes have been largely digitalized and centralized, enabling around 700 to 800 requests to be handled each month. Job advertisements and pre-selection for the most common vacancies in the four sales regions are dealt with by another area of the Shared Service Centre. As well as all regions being covered together, this procedure also enables candidate pools to be created, making it easier to quickly fill vacancies.

“Digital Recruiting” Centre of Excellence

Digitalization is now part and parcel of other Human Resources areas. Besides the online presence, social media and platforms such as Xing, LinkedIn and Kununu are increasingly important for HR marketing and from an employer branding perspective. The creation of the “Digital Recruiting” Centre of Excellence acknowledges this development. In 2018, the Centre of Excellence began setting up and actively managing the related presences on social media. The further development of digital recruiting centres on analysing use of advertising channels by specific target groups. This information will be helpful to Coop when directly targeting potential candidates for specialist or management roles.

New Meet & Eat learning format

Since 2018, Coop has been running a new further training format during the lunch break, called “Meet & Eat”. 75-minute talks on specific topics and discussion groups, panel discussions about the latest issues concerning Coop as well as management and leadership topics take place on selected dates in certain locations. As the name of the event suggests, eating sandwiches and snacks provided by Coop during the event is a permanent feature of the concept. The programme is attracting a great deal of interest: the 100 or so spaces are often fully booked just 30 minutes after they are announced.

Transgourmet France launches new e-learning platform

In 2018, Transgourmet France launched a new e-learning platform under the name “e-move”. The central idea is to improve employees’ professional development and expand the range of training measures. The new platform is paying dividends in the area of professional development in particular: in 2017, 81 positions were filled as a result of internal development measures whereas in the first half of 2018 alone, 83 people obtained a new qualification as a result of internal training courses. Transgourmet France is planning to extend the use of the e-learning platform to classroom training in the future.

Change management

Job Centre offers support when changing roles

The Job Centre continued to provide effective support to employees affected by the facility relocation in 2018. Support during the relocation of two Chocolats Halba production facilities from Wallisellen and Hinwil to Pratteln was a focal point. In addition, the Job Centre provides support for all temporary employees who work in Logistics and at selected manufacturing companies. This eases the burden on line managers as well as enabling efficient cooperation with the companies concerned.