

# Employees

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# Employees

Employees ride out the second exceptional pandemic year with a great deal of commitment, motivation and solidarity, and consistently implement Covid safety measures. The employee survey reveals a high degree of job satisfaction, and the Suisse Romande sales region is named best employer. Negotiations for the new collective employment agreement reach a successful conclusion.

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## 95 420

employees of  
the Coop Group

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Just as it did the previous year, the Covid pandemic demanded a great deal of commitment, flexibility and resilience of the Coop Group employees. The protection concepts were diligently implemented not only in stores, but also in Manufacturing and Logistics, creating a safe working environment. Customers in stores had the feeling that they were in safe hands. Unfortunately, the second lockdown on 18 January once again forced the closure of all non-food formats and restaurants, leaving thousands of employees unable to carry out their usual activities for a lengthy period. Administrative staff were required to work from home

until the end of May; subsequently, employees returned to the office for at least 50% of the time. Following the phased reopening of non-food formats in March and restaurants at the end of May, despite the exceptional situation a degree of normality was restored in day-to-day business. The exemplary commitment and tremendous solidarity shown by employees over this difficult period were admirable, proving yet again the fantastic level of cohesion within the Coop Group.

In 2021, the Coop Group had a total of 95 420 employees in the Retail and Wholesale/Production business areas, including 3 411 apprentices. In the year under review, 61.8% of jobs were in Switzerland and the remainder abroad. Coop plays an important integrative role in society, by employing people of all educational levels and nationalities.

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's strategic priorities are: 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

### Very gratifying result for the CPV/CAP Coop Pension Fund

In a year that continued to be shaped by the pandemic, the CPV/CAP Coop Pension Fund generated a very gratifying return of 8.6%. The target return was thus exceeded by a clear margin and, as at 31 December 2021, the funding ratio had risen to 120.3% (previous year: 118.2%); the target for the funding ratio is 118.0%. The old-age pension assets of active members accrued interest of 3.0% in 2021. This is far better than the minimum interest rate under Swiss law (1.0%). The provisional interest rate for 2022 is 2.0%. Pensions remained unchanged, and this will also be the case in 2022. At 39 305, the number of active members was higher than in the previous year (38 431 active members). The number of pensioners rose by 428 people to 21 140 at the end of 2021.

### Equality@Coop

Since 2018, annual management courses for women have been taking place as part of the “Equality@Coop” project with its three pillars: equal pay, family-friendly structures and advancement of women in management roles. Starting in 2022, the courses will also take place in western Switzerland. At the start of April 2020, Coop received the “Fair Compensation” certification from the Swiss Association for Quality and Management (SQS) for the Coop business units and therefore ensures equal pay. At the same time, Coop promotes alternative work time models such as job sharing at senior and other levels. In 2021, job sharing was successfully introduced at managing director and deputy managing director level in various supermarkets in the retail sales regions. “Promotion of part-time management positions” was a topic pursued across Switzerland, thereby creating major opportunities for women, for example after maternity leave. Female representation in management roles was a gratifying 44.5% in 2021.

### Veritas 2021 employee survey

Coop conducted the “Veritas” employee survey for the sixth time. To ensure anonymity, the survey was once again carried out in close partnership with an external survey institute. A total of 22 451 employees took part in the survey, which is slightly more than in the last survey in 2017. Analysis has shown that Coop’s employees experience a high level of job satisfaction. The figures for commitment are slightly higher than in 2017. Very high scores are evident for customer focus and work content. Work content along with the scores for “direct line manager”, “safety at work” and “fair treatment” are particularly noteworthy. The results have been communicated at all levels, and measures have been identified for all points requiring action.

### 2021 CEA negotiations – new CEA from 1 January 2022

Coop and the social partners renegotiated the Coop collective employment agreement for four years in 2021. The new CEA confers even more extensive benefits on Coop employees from 1 January 2022 onwards. The minimum wage has been raised by CHF 100 a month to CHF 4 100, and the reference wage for a two-year apprenticeship by CHF 50 a month to CHF 4 200. Additionally, the reference wages for three-year or four-year basic training have been enshrined in the CEA (CHF 4 200 and CHF 4 300 respectively), and on-call payments have been substantially increased. Moreover, Coop has further improved family-friendly working conditions in the new CEA. Now, regardless of length of service, employees are entitled to fixed maternity leave of 18 weeks on full normal gross pay. Coop is thus going well beyond the statutory requirement. The new CEA also provides for enhanced “Coop Child Care”, which provides employees on a low income with financial support for external childcare. The scheme is no longer restricted to single parents, and the maximum wage for eligibility for financial support has been greatly increased. In addition, in the event of the death of a spouse, life partner or own children/foster children as defined by the law, Coop now grants five days of paid leave instead of four. The very positive outcomes for both sides are the result of constructive and solution-oriented CEA negotiations between Coop and its social partners.

### **Suisse Romande sales region named best employer**

For the fourth time in succession, Coop's Suisse Romande sales region is awarded the prize for best employer in the Large Corporations category by the newspaper "Bilan". This prize acknowledges Coop's commitment to offering its employees outstanding working conditions. Help with finding childcare solutions, organizing an annual free day for pensioners (not during Covid), a Sunday hike open to all, an internal volleyball tournament and the "Confiance" project, which involves HR employees providing support, are just a few of the initiatives that are run in western Switzerland. There are other benefits besides these, such as high-quality Campus training courses, paternity leave, and recognition for people celebrating work anniversaries.

## **Training and staff development**

### **Coop Campus Compact**

Coop Campus' Meet&Eat events, held at lunchtimes, are an appealing platform for making specialist topics of relevance within and outside Coop accessible to a wide circle of employees. Since these events have been run in the digital space via Teams, rather than in a physical location, even more participants have benefited from them, giving rise to the idea for the new format "Coop Campus Compact". This will be a platform for company-wide exchange of expertise and experience. Short, open meetings covering topics such as innovations, IT skills, leadership tips or apprenticeship matters will be held for anyone interested, in order to promote the exchange of knowledge within the company and facilitate networking.

### **Basic training – experiences with Coopilot**

On 1 August 2020, Coop launched the new Coopilot in-company learning concept for employees. In February and March 2021, Coop carried out a review to ascertain the extent to which competencies taught by the learning concept were being displayed in Coop supermarkets in German-speaking and western Switzerland. The "Mysterycheck" method was used to check whether apprentices are able to correctly answer customers' questions and how skilfully they use operating systems and tools in the materials management process. Following on from this, interviews were conducted with apprentices and trainers about the processes covered by the learning concept and self-organized learning. While the review found that, as regards training and promoting apprentices' professional development, Coop is on the right track, it also indicates a need to optimize certain aspects of the training and professional development of trainers, review training programmes in the foundation year, and develop a concept that builds on the learning concept to nurture apprentices' talents.

### **Broadening horizons with "A fresh perspective for 10 days"**

The "A fresh perspective for 10 days" project gives staff in the Coop Marketing/Purchasing Business Unit the opportunity to spend two periods of five days experiencing the key materials management processes at a Coop sales outlet. The primary objective is to broaden horizons and knowledge, equipping participants to make better decisions in their own area in the medium term and so deliver greater customer satisfaction as standard. The programme is designed to enable participants to experience new work situations and acquire new knowledge on the job. Participants are introduced to the processes at the front end, so that they can then independently handle tasks at the sales outlet.

### **Learning new competencies with "Quattro"**

The "Quattro" programme assigns selected managerial employees to a specific task in another area for at least two months. The basic principle is: "don't just observe, do it yourself." This might even entail employees temporarily performing a different role. The aim is for employees to increase their own knowledge in "Customer/Sales", "IT/Digitalization" or "Processes". Since Quattro programmes are largely bespoke, they are complex to plan and implement. Initial experiences in the Retail and Marketing/Purchasing Business Units in 2021 suggest that everyone involved benefits from this exchange.

### **Incorporating CAS FH in processes and culture**

With Coop employees now having the opportunity to complete the “CAS FH in Management and Leadership” internally and the course having begun for the fourth time, a second CAS is now being offered from a university of applied sciences. The first course has got underway with 12 participants. This second course setting explores in depth a range of topics such as “Modern Collaboration”, “Experiencing Strategic Thinking and Processes” and “Developing Culture and Overseeing Changes”. Each of the two CAS run within Coop award 15 ECTS points on completion – after which participants can undertake a further CAS and write a Master’s thesis. Coop Campus is dedicating to offering employees from all kinds of areas outstanding prospects and development opportunities, whether through entry-level courses or very advanced training.

### **Reforms to basic training in Switzerland**

The “Sales 2022+” reform is well underway. The final adjustments and tweaks are being made at Coop ahead of its introduction in August 2022. An implementation concept has been devised for the new focus “Maintaining an online shop”, which will be run as a pilot from August 2022 in liaison with the cantons of Berne, St Gallen, Vaud and Zurich. In addition, in August 2021 the new VET was launched in IT, with the two specializations application and platform development. The basic “podiatrists with federal VET diploma” training has also been integrated into Coop’s new in-company learning concept, pursuant to the new VET ordinance. The process of reforming the basic federal VET diploma and federal vocational certificate for logistics technicians has also now begun. The basic training courses in food technology and polydesigner 3D are also being reformed. The need for a basic training course to federal vocational certificate level for specialists in system gastronomy has been reviewed and an application submitted to develop the course. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) has delayed the launch of the new basic KV training by one year, to 2023. Consequently, there will be a complete overhaul of several of the apprenticeships offered by Coop over the next few years.