

Individual paper submission

24th IAFFE Annual Conference
Gender Equality in Challenging Times

Growth, Energy and Equality. Energy Cooperatives from a Gender Perspective

Abstract

The ILO views cooperatives as important in improving the living and working conditions of women and men globally as well as making essential infrastructure and services available even in areas neglected by the state and investor-driven enterprises. Cooperatives have a proven record of creating and sustaining employment – they provide over 100 million jobs today; they advance the ILO's Global Employment Agenda and contribute to promoting decent work. (ILO 2015)

In order to establish a successful cooperative – as quoted above, members of a cooperative have to define institutions understood as rules, norms and shared strategies (Ellickson 1991: 240-264, Crawford and Ostrom 1995: 589, Vatn 2005: 6-7). The character of these institutions is frequently influenced by gender relations in the society and shapes interactions between women and men in a cooperative: the division of labour, access to and control over resources, their roles, interests and needs. Anne-Brit Nippierd emphasises that gender equality is promoted by cooperative values and principles such as cooperation, democracy, self-help, social responsibility, equality and equity and a large number of cooperatives have formulated policies on equal opportunities (Nippierd 1999: 175-176). However, little research has been carried out to date on cooperatives from a gender perspective to recognize how it looks in practice.

In my research conducted in the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science I addressed more than 50 energy cooperatives from different European Union countries, including the new Member States, represented in my research by Croatia. My project aimed to analyse if and how gender¹ perspective is included in the European energy cooperatives declarations and actions, depending on the cooperative size, adopted mode of governance and cultural determinants of the region/country. I would like to present the outcomes of that research at the 24th IAFFE Annual Conference.

¹ For the purpose of my research, I defined gender as a social construction of identity that assigns different roles, rights and opportunities to people depending on their sex (Peterson and Lewis 1999: 390-396).

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Bio

Zofia Łapniewska, PhD in Economics, is a Visiting Fellow in the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science for the Lent term 2015. She is an independent academic working on cooperatives as an innovative governance structure in the European market and their analysis from a gender perspective. She is a lecturer at the Gender Studies at the University of Warsaw and Jagiellonian University in Krakow (Poland). Her areas of scientific interest are feminist economics, institutional economics, and cooperatives. She is a member of the International Association for Feminist Economics since 2006.