

1978

50 YEARS



A CHRONICLE

2018

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**50
Years
of
IRU**

**a
Chronicle**

**Dear members of the IRU –
International Raiffeisen Union,
dear cooperative members
and dear individuals interested in
the history of our organisation,**

The year 2018 marks an important date for the cooperative movement worldwide: Raiffeisen 200!

The 200th birthday of one of the major pioneers of the world of cooperatives, Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, founder and namesake of the IRU cooperative, was and remains an occasion for a wide variety of events and campaigns. Worldwide!

Cooperative organisations in Europe in particular, the origins of which are directly or closely linked to Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen – such as the organisations in Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, South Tyrol, France (Alsace) and Switzerland – have celebrated the success of the entrepreneurial cooperative idea in the tradition of Raiffeisen with publications, expert panels, commemorative events, conferences, public celebrations and much more. But even beyond Europe, organisations such as Sicredi in Brazil, KUSCCO in Kenya and the Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU) have marked Raiffeisen's importance to their own beginnings with conferences, gatherings and publications. We are certain there were many more commemorations than the ones mentioned. And that's splendid!

Through his work, Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen not only had an impact on economic and social development in his immediate home, the then-barren and secluded Westerwald in Germany; he also had a worldwide impact.

Even while still alive, Raiffeisen was in direct contact with young cooperative organisations that were then in the process of being established, e.g. in Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary and Russia. This laid the cornerstone for an international alliance of cooperative organisations. The early attempts to institutionalise this international, cooperative collaboration were not yet crowned with lasting success. The joint initiative to create a group of European cooperatives reached its goal in 1968!

50 years of IRU – International Raiffeisen Union! In our fast-paced time, this anniversary is already a success in itself. With pride in this success, it is our pleasure to present you with this chronicle.

As a primarily non-material alliance, a small organisation such as the IRU can only endure if its members derive practical benefits from their affiliation and draw inspiration for new activities of their own through interactions with one another. We have succeeded in this!

Of course, the IRU has also been through ups and downs throughout its history. Vast political, economic and social transformations have occurred worldwide, including the East-West conflict, the fall of the Wall in 1989 and the financial and economic crisis. This had an impact on our member organisations, and thus on the IRU as well. The chronicle you are holding in your hands addresses these developments and serves as a reminder of our supporters over the life of our organisation.

After a prolonged crisis of purpose for IRU, we now see the IRU as a responsible entity on track to success. We have accomplished a great deal. We have now initiated a process with a clear focus on the future. This is done in close interaction with our committees and member organizations – and with their major support.

The aim is not to 'reinvent' the IRU. We intend to preserve and strengthen the tried and tested while enriching this with fresh ideas. The IRU lives through its members. Only our members can sustain our activities, which also have to offer added value. Partnerships and, where appropriate, closer interaction not only among member organisations but with other entities as well, seem to be a productive approach to us. We have already launched an exchange with the ICA, the International Cooperative Alliance, which represents all types of cooperatives worldwide.

Going forward into the future, we see the IRU as an important, globally visible voice for disseminating the body of thought and the contemporary practice of cooperatives in the tradition of our pioneer of cooperatives, Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen; this effort includes the ICA.

Raiffeisen's principles of self-help, self-administration and self-responsibility, cooperative values such as solidarity, equality and democracy, honesty, openness, social responsibility and concern for fellow human beings are more than simply timeless. They are important guardrails in this modern day and age full of global challenges such as the impacts of climate change, migration, resurgent national egoisms and the consequences of digitalisation. These principles have implications for the world of work, but also for the social fabric of people amongst themselves. They offer orientation and security. They are the basis for the fact that the cooperative organisational and legal form will endure in this changing world!

Raiffeisen, and his fellow cooperative pioneers along with him, have resolved, or at least mitigated, economic and social problems with the help of cooperatives. The challenges we currently face demand fresh answers. Cooperatives are rising to this task.

The IRU, as a network, will lend its weight to international partnerships in the effort to make the case for cooperative solutions. This is a mission for all of us, one that Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen left us on the path he prepared for us.

Leuven/Bonn, September 2018



Franky Depickere
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Depickere'.



Andreas Kappes
Secretary-General

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Kappes'.



The path to the IRU

The concept of the International Raiffeisen Union as an international association of cooperatives is not new. Even Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen carried on a correspondence with members and proponents of cooperatives from various European countries. In some cases, they even visited him in Westerwald to study his ideas first-hand. As part of a large family, they also became increasingly involved in a lively exchange of information and experience with one another.

In 1897, at a meeting in Tarbes, France, representatives of cooperatives from Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Serbia and Hungary decided to found an international association of Raiffeisen cooperatives. The purpose of the association was to promote the establishment of additional Raiffeisen banks and associations, advance sharing of publications and experience, and publish a yearbook of its own. So even then, there was an awareness that it might be beneficial for national cooperative organisations to develop the idea of the association further, joining forces in international networks. The effort, however, seems to have remained in the planning stages; the association never properly launched its activity. The idea at the time may have been to organise international cooperation through the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) that had been founded two years prior. When growing dominance by consumer cooperatives began to emerge, however, the rural cooperative organisations made another attempt to form an association of their own. At a meeting in Lucerne, Switzerland, in April 1906, representatives of agricultural cooperative associations from Germany, Italy, Austria and Switzerland concluded that it was 'useful and necessary' to maintain 'closer contact in the European countries than before'. With this in mind, on 1 January 1907 they created the 'International Union of Agricultural Cooperatives' as an association of national umbrella organisations. They conferred leadership of the International Union to the Advocate General of the Imperial Union of German Agricultural Cooperative Societies, Wilhelm Haas. The International Union organised a number of meetings, among other things, but its activities were discontinued in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War and were not resumed afterwards.

A contemporary described these first attempts at closer international cooperation among rural cooperatives as an 'achievement remarkable in its own right'. After all, it served to show 'the major, country-linking promotional force inherent to the cooperative idea'. At the same time, he expressed the hope that in future these international organisations would 'work more purposefully and with more practical benefit than before'. It would be several decades, however, before this would come to pass.

The establishment of the IRU

1968 marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. For the occasion, the German Raiffeisen Association (DRV) sought to honour its founding father with a major World Raiffeisen Day. The aim was to invite all of the cooperatives, from all over the world, that operated according to the 'Raiffeisen system', to join in the celebration. During its two-year preparations, to its own surprise, the association came to realise just how widespread Raiffeisen's idea had caught on all over the world. A survey conducted with the aid of German embassies and consulates found that, in 50 countries, there were nearly 500,000 cooperatives with 80 million members under cooperative management traceable to Raiffeisen himself. At the same time, the association discovered that international cooperative partnerships were gaining more and more importance.

In view of this, it seemed only logical to erect a transnational community 'in the name and spirit of Raiffeisen'. Its members would work for the preservation of the cooperative ideas, as the finding at the time and valid to this day read: 'The ideal is ineffective without the material, but the material is directionless without the ideal!' Corresponding suggestions for such an association had already been put forward by Raiffeisen organisations in some European countries. To commemorate the anniversary, the German Raiffeisen Association now took up the idea as well. Detailed consultations 'within the smaller, international group' of directors of several European Raiffeisen associations led to the first draft statutes for the establishment of the International Raiffeisen Union. It was intended to 'cultivate the ideas of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, represent them in public and promote their realisation by contemporary means worldwide.' In addition, it should 'bring about a constant exchange of opinions and experiences among its members.'



*Theodor Sonnemann
at the foundation
event of the IRU*

The German Raiffeisen Association ultimately issued invitations to commemorate the 150th birthday of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen on 30 March 1968, in Neuwied, Germany, where the official founders' meeting of the International Raiffeisen Union was held. As 'the most important scene of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen's activities' the city only seemed a logical candidate to serve as the legal registered office of the IRU. In the city's Kreismuseum [district museum], which also housed the Raiffeisen library at the time, the representatives of 19 cooperative organisations from nine countries passed the statutes and signed the founding charter.

Franco-German leadership for the IRU

This was followed by elections to the first Board of Directors. For this purpose, one person was first appointed from each of the nine countries from which the founding members of the IRU had come. The Board of Directors then elected Count Christian von Andlau as the first President of the IRU. As President of the French Fédération du Crédit Mutuel d'Alsace et de Lorraine, he had been an instrumental co-initiator of the founding of the IRU. The President of the German Raiffeisen Association, Dr. Ing. Theodor Sonnemann, was elected Vice President.



*left:
Dr. Gustav Klusak,
Advocate General
of the German
Raiffeisen Associa-
tion, explains the
statutes for the
new IRU*

*top right:
Full concentration
on the statutes of
the IRU*

*bottom right:
By show of hands
the statutes of
the IRU are
accepted and the
foundation of
the IRU is decided*





Just as cooperative collaboration grew beyond local boundaries in Raiffeisen's days, our mission today is to bring about cooperation that extends beyond national boundaries. Extensive, worldwide contact among the cooperative organisations, familiarity with organisational forms, the problems that cooperatives face and the solutions attempted in the various countries will help to link tried and tested economic forms with new ideas, in order to secure and improve the standard of living achieved in a rapidly advancing manner.'

*top right:
Dr. Alex Florquin
from the Central
Bank for Agricultural
Credit of the
Belgian Boerenbond
(left) and Ernst
Braunschweiler,
Secretary-General
of the the Union of
Agricultural Cooper-
ative Associations
of Switzerland, sign
the IRU statutes*

*bottom right:
Dr. Sonnemann
congratulates
Count von Andau
on his election
as the first IRU
President*

**Dr. Theodor Sonnemann, President
of the German Raiffeisen Association and
Vice President of the International Raiffeisen Union**





top:
The foundation was
also documented on
film for the posterity

bottom:
Toasting to the IRU



Preamble of the IRU statutes

In reverence and gratitude to FRIEDRICH WILHELM RAIFFEISEN, the founder and pioneer of a worldwide cooperative movement, in the endeavour to convene a community of all of the organisations throughout the world that are linked in this idea, and in the conviction of an obligation to maintain and promote this idea, and to further its development for generations to come, on the day of the 150th birthday of F. W. Raiffeisen, cooperative organisations of its system on an international basis have resolved to found this association and call upon all organisations working on the same basis and with the same spirit around the world to join this association.

The founding members of the IRU

Full members according to the founding statutes

Belgium

Belgian Boerenbond, Leuven

*Central Bank for Agricultural Credits
of the Belgian Boerenbond, Leuven*

France

*Fédération Centrale du
Crédit Agricole Mutuel, Paris*

*Fédération du Crédit Mutuel d'Alsace
et de Lorraine, Strasbourg*

*Fédération du Crédit Mutuel de
Franche-Comté, Belfort*

*Banque Française
de l'Agriculture, Paris*

Italy

*Confederazione Cooperativa
Italiane, Rome*

*Federazione Italiana
delle Casse Rurali ed Artigiane,
Rome*

*Raiffeisen Association,
South Tyrol, Bolzano*

Luxembourg

*Central bank of agricultural
cooperatives, Luxembourg*

Netherlands

*National Cooperative Council,
The Hague*

*Coöperatieve Centrale
Boerenleenbank, Eindhoven*

*Coöperatieve Centrale,
Raiffeisen Bank, Utrecht*

Austria

*Austrian Raiffeisen Association,
Vienna*

*Cooperative Central Bank AG,
Vienna*

Sweden

*Sveriges Jordbrukskassaförbund,
Stockholm*

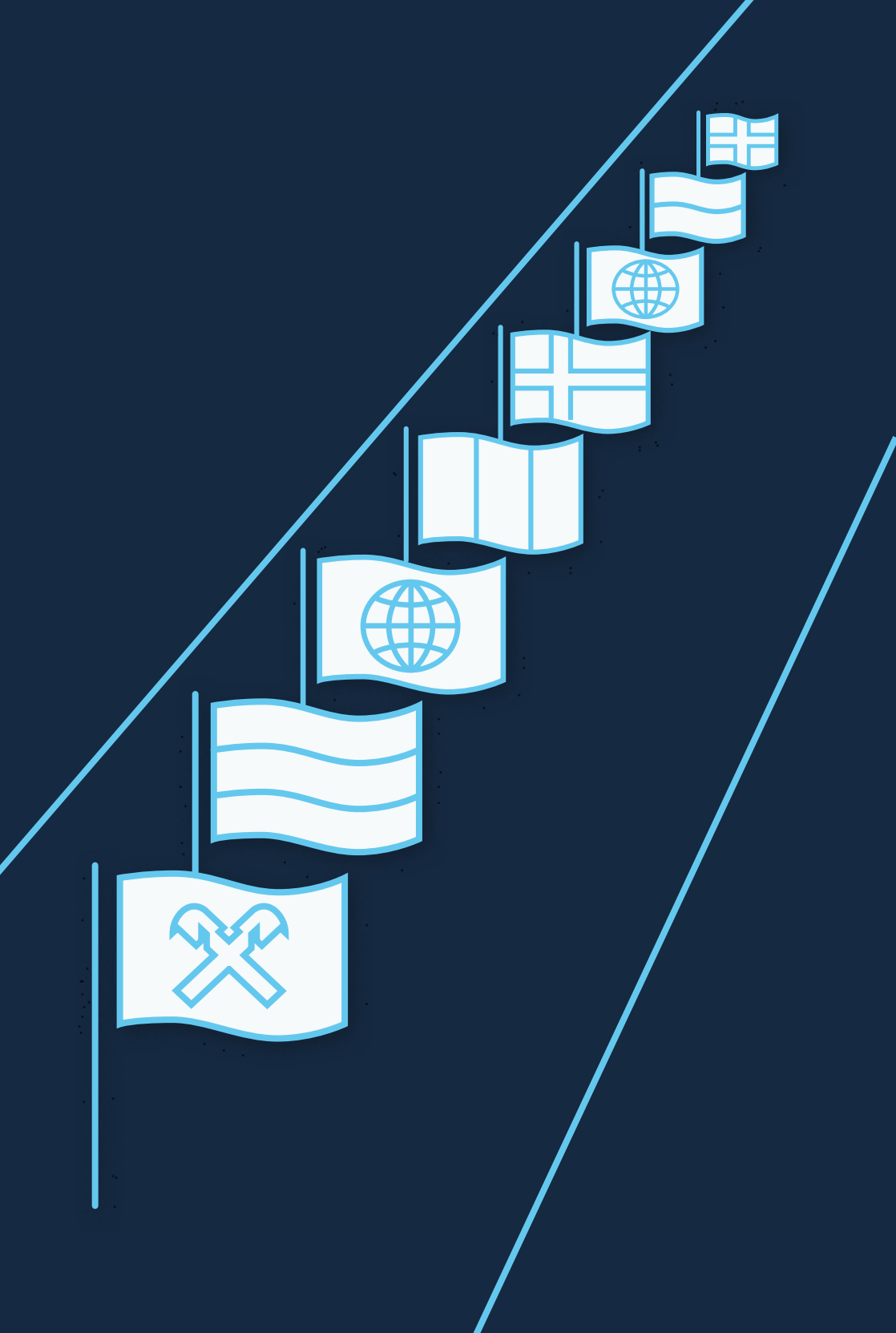
Switzerland

*Association of Swiss Loan Funds,
St. Gallen*

*Union of Cooperative Associations
of Switzerland, Winterthur*

Federal Republic of Germany

*German Raiffeisen Association,
Bonn*



Proclamation on a grand stage

Following the official founding of the IRU, it was necessary to announce this in the most solemn act possible. And what better opportunity presented itself for this purpose than World Raiffeisen Day, which was held on 19 and 20 June 1968 in Frankfurt (Main), Germany? To this end, the German Raiffeisen Association had sent more than 10,000 programmes and registration forms out to all continents – some 5,000 representatives of cooperative organisations from 72 countries accepted the invitation. From the main train station to the trade-fair grounds, the flags of the various nations wafted, between them the white flags of the Raiffeisen organisation with the gable cross symbol. The symbol of the congress was often seen at the event as well – a globe called 'Raiffeisen' as a demonstrative sign of a global idea and its realisation. Raiffeisen Day, as the German Raiffeisen Association later summarised, underscored the unchanged economic relevance of Raiffeisen's idea and illustrated the sense of fellowship among the cooperatives operating worldwide under the 'Raiffeisen System'.



*Count von Andlau,
first President of
the IRU*

A milestone of the event was the solemn proclamation of the IRU during a major ceremony in the Frankfurt Paulskirche on 20 June 1968. In his remarks, the IRU President, Count Christian von Andlau, called on all of the world's organisations, working from the same foundation and in the same spirit, to join the Union. This would 'not be some ideological association founded in memory of our great predecessor', Andlau observed. 'Suffused with the spirit of the one whose name it bears', it would rather 'become something alive, something practical, something that interests and concerns everyone', where all those throughout the world with an interest in Raiffeisen can find new impulses for their organisations. It was also thanks to this aspiration that the International Raiffeisen Union generated a great deal of interest among those in attendance. Representatives of cooperatives from 15 countries declared their accession at a first general meeting held as part of Raiffeisen Day, and these were joined by others in the following months. By the end of 1968, the IRU already had 46 members from 25 countries.

Beginnings with obstacles

On 1 October 1968, the Secretariat General of the International Raiffeisen Union, under its first Secretary General, Bernhard Stentzel, began its work in Strasbourg, France. The location had been chosen taking into account the Fédération du Credit Mutuel d'Alsace et Lorraine, the president of which, von Andlau, was also the first President of the IRU. In its first two years, however, as IRU Vice President Sonnemann pointed out in retrospect in 1970, it turned out 'that there were some initial difficulties that had to be overcome the things we did not appreciate sufficiently in the euphoria of the founding days.' The costs were the main factor involved. During preparations for the founding, the German Raiffeisen Association had set the annual budget at around 100,000 deutschmarks (DM). In the first meetings of the Board of Directors after the foundation of the IRU, the figure mentioned was DM 120,000, which was originally generally accepted. But once the breakdown of the budget across the individual member organisations became known, many of these appear to have become disillusioned. Some questioned their contribution payment for the second year or even threatened to leave the Union abruptly.

The following Board meetings in 1968 and 1969 thus witnessed intense discussion about the future shape of the IRU. Criticism particularly revolved around the cost of a separate Secretariat and the costly full-time employment of a Secretary General. The majority of the Board wanted to 'first build the profile the IRU in its purpose and activity for the time being' and spoke in favour of a 'gentle structure with modest means'. In their eyes, at least initially, part-time operation of the Secretariat by a member organisation would be quite sufficient.

In this situation, in early 1969 Sonnemann proposed dependence of the Secretariat General on to the German Raiffeisen Association in Bonn, Germany, which would provide office space free of charge. Furthermore, the Association would assume the running expenses of the IRU for the year 1969, as its budget would be heavily burdened that year by the winding up of the Strasbourg office. Although the proposal met with the general approval of the IRU Board of Directors, it did not meet the expectations of the first IRU President where the future role and activities of the Raiffeisen Union were concerned. Count von Andlau thus



*Dr. Arnold Edelmann,
President of the
International
Raiffeisen Union
from 1970 to 1981*

*top:
The Raiffeisenhaus
in Bonn/Germany:
For many years
the office of the
German Raiffeisen
Association,
respectively the
German Cooperative
and Raiffeisen
Confederation,
and of the General
Secretariat of the
International Raiff-
eisen Union*

resigned from his office at the end of 1969. His successor was Dr. Arnold Edelmann, Director of the Association of Swiss Loan Societies in St. Gallen, Switzerland (today Raiffeisen Switzerland).

On 1 May 1969, the Secretariat of the International Raiffeisen Union was relocated from Strasbourg, France, to the home of the German Raiffeisen Association in Bonn, Germany. Werner Schiffgen, the Head of the Department of Foreign Relations at the German Raiffeisen Association, managed the affairs as Secretary General. Although he worked part-time for IRU, his personnel expenses were covered mainly by the DRV. These measures reduced by about one third the budget of the IRU, which still consisted mainly of personnel expenses for an assistant and a foreign-language secretary.

Basing the IRU Secretariat General on a German member association has proven itself to this day. The only minor modification made here involved the reorganisation of the German association structure in late 1971. As a result, the Secretariat is no longer based on the German Raiffeisen Association but on the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV), founded in 1972 as a new umbrella organisation.

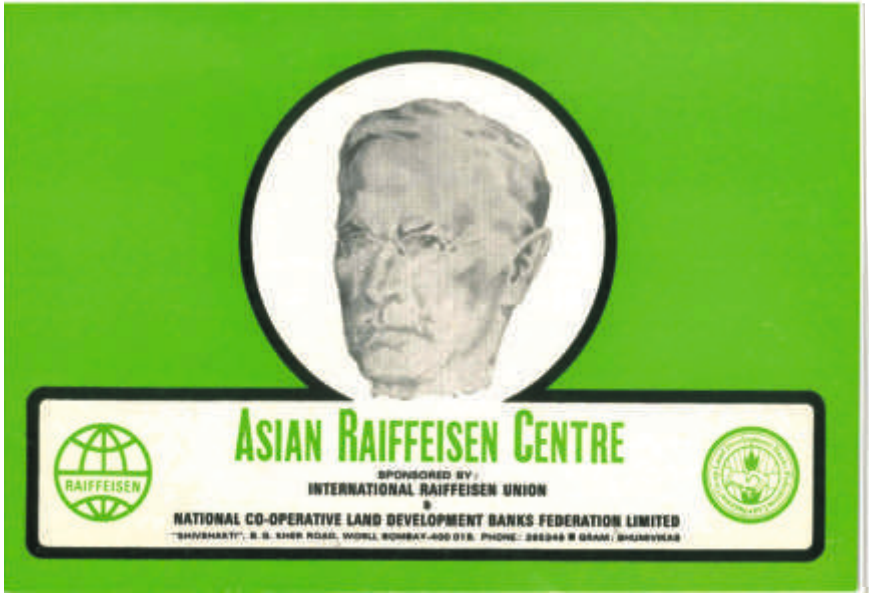
Information as mission

After overcoming initial difficulties, the IRU was able to set about the mission that had been defined in its statutes. As a material contribution to the worldwide promotion and dissemination of the Raiffeisen-inspired idea of the cooperative, in 1970 it launched publication of 'IRU-Informationen' ['IRU Information']. In the beginning, the publication was devoted primarily to a detailed presentation of the individual member organisations of the IRU and their activities. But general developments in the international cooperative sector were also reported there. 'IRU Information' was first published twice, and then from 1982 onwards three times a year in the four languages of the IRU – German, English, French and Spanish.

Parallel to this, the Secretariat General in Bonn, Germany, began creating central documentation for cooperatives. For this purpose, members were requested to provide figures and information about their cooperative work. Important documents such as annual reports of the member organisations were archived, as were reports and books about Raiffeisen or Raiffeisen movements. Thanks to this laborious effort, they sought to preserve the basis for a large-scale overview of the worldwide cooperative movement based on the 'Raiffeisen system'. For financial and staffing reasons, however, it soon became necessary to confine the effort to the most important data of the member organisations and other top-level cooperative organisations in the international arena.

The Raiffeisen Information Centres

What today seems outmoded in our era of global digital connectivity, in which much information is just a click or an e-mail away, was a useful tool back then. As a central point of contact, members could get ideas, for example, as to how other cooperative organisations dealt with new developments or solved certain problems. The benefit seen in such an offer at that time was also shown by the fact that, in later years, three IRU members set up four more such Raiffeisen Information Centres in their own countries. These centres were linked to and funded by regional cooperative organisations. The IRU supported their set-up with a very wide array of materials such as books, brochures, statutes, business reports, pictures, instructional



Title page of a booklet on the Asian Raiffeisen Center in Bombay (Mumbai) / India

materials and busts of Raiffeisen. The new centres were integrated into the information flow of the Raiffeisen Union and received diverse materials from member organisations on their national cooperative movements.

From Bonn to the world: The foundation of further Raiffeisen Information Centres

**Bombay (Mumbai)/
India**

*Asian Raiffeisen Centre,
founded in 1975*

**Lévis near Quebec /
Canada**

*Desjardins-Raiffeisen
Information Centre,
founded in 1984*

Panama/Panama

*Raiffeisen Information
Centre of the Confed-
eration of Latin-Amer-
ican Saving and Credit
Co-operatives, founded
in 1990 / 91*

Bangalore/India

*The Asia Raiffeisen
Centre as a branch of
the centre in Mumbai,
founded in 1992*



International networking

Another focal point of the work of the IRU, especially in the early years, was to establish contact with the most diverse international organisations in the cooperative setting. A very important part of this was the liaison status established at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in early 1971. As a result, the IRU was able to participate as an observer in FAO conferences and workshops; this gave it added appeal among international institutions.

For many years, there was also a similarly close association with the FAO, the European Confederation of Agriculture (CEA), the General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union (COGECA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and with the International Liaison Committee on Cooperative Thrift and Credit (CLICEC). Various forms of collaboration also developed with the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU), the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), the African Confederation of Cooperative Savings and Credit Associations in Nairobi (ACCOSCA), the Confederation of Latin American Savings and Credit Cooperatives (Confederación Latinoamericana de Cooperativas de Ahorro y Crédito, COLAC), the Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU) and The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), which was based in London at the time.

From Frankfurt to Montreal

The cooperation arrangements with the various international organizations and the resulting sharing of information helped the IRU fulfil its manifold tasks. The maintenance of contacts was facilitated by the fact that the Union was represented nearly worldwide by its member organisations. This meant that its Board members from the respective regions could represent the Union at many international events.

Its membership meetings were also important for the establishment of the IRU. The first such meeting were held in Frankfurt (Main), Germany, on 21 June 1968, the day after the official proclamation of the IRU. It hardly followed the established rules, however. Instead, the Board of Directors opted to give representa-

top right:
On the occasion
of the IRU General
Assembly on 18th
of May 1972, Pope
Paul VI. welcomed
a delegation of IRU
board members

bottom right:
General Assembly
1984 in Montreal

tives of the founding organisations in attendance, together with the other interested cooperative associations, an opportunity to present any questions they had and express their interest in joining. As the IRU Board later noted, this resulted in 'an expression of a great deal of enthusiasm along with interesting suggestions'.

The second General Assembly was held in Rome, Italy, on 18 May 1972 and was based on the 'Open World Congress of Cooperatives' hosted by FAO and ICA. Among other things, the participants discussed possibilities for closer cooperation between FAO and IRU for the promotion of rural cooperatives. Another General Assembly was held in Strasbourg, France, in September 1975; another, held in Wiesbaden, Germany, marked the 10th anniversary of the International Raiffeisen Union in September 1978. As in 1968, a World Raiffeisen Day was organised for the purpose, albeit on a smaller scale.

The General Assemblies of the IRU

1968
Frankfurt / Main
Germany
(21 June 1968)

1972
Rome, Italy
(18 Mai 1972)

1975
Strasbourg, France
(8 September 1975)

1978
Wiesbaden, Germany
(28 September 1978)

1981
Ham Castle near Brussels,
Belgium
(1 October 1981)

1984
Montreal, Canada
(11 June 1984)

1988
Frankfurt / Main, Germany
(10 March 1988)

1992
Leuven, Belgium
(23 September 1992)

1996
Budapest, Hungary
(29 October 1996)

2000
Vienna, Austria
(19 October 2000)

2004
Berlin, Germany
(3 November 2004)

2010
Paris, France
(1 October 2010)

2016
Lucerne, Switzerland
(14 September 2016)

2018
Koblenz, Germany
(27 September 2018)





The role of the IRU is not that of a curator whose mission is to preserve a rare item with useful recipes and pass it on, unscathed, to other parts of the world or to future generations. Rather, the IRU is the bearer of a living and luminous flame, with an obligation to keep and pass it along.'

IRU President Théo Braun, 1981

The IRU in development cooperation

The first ten years of the International Raiffeisen Union can be regarded as the development and establishment phase of the IRU. Through intensive membership recruitment at the time, it managed to increase the ranks of member organisations to 46 ordinary and 12 supporting members. The IRU was well situated financially as well. Thanks to 'frugal and economical administration', which also included the savings realised by eliminating the assistantship in the Secretariat General in 1974, not only were the annual budgets covered by the membership fees, but a reserve was created as well.

When it came to the substance of its work, another mission came into view for the IRU. This was triggered by the realisation that the mission contained in the statutes, to 'maintain and promote the Raiffeisen idea', also included a kind of 'cooperative development cooperation'. As early as 1970, the IRU Vice President, Dr. Theodor Sonnemann, had warned in the 'IRU Information' that the developing countries 'cannot build from nothing a cooperative system that meets today's requirements'. This would require the aid of cooperative associations 'with old experience', organisations that had grown up with Raiffeisen's ideas of self-help, self-administration and self-responsibility. They should make more of their experience available to the cooperative organisations in the course of formation and assist with the training of cooperative managers. This, Sonnemann continued, was the source of 'a particularly important and grateful role for the cooperatives of the countries of Europe with major cooperative traditions.'

From the mid-1970s, plans began to take shape for more robust involvement in development cooperation on the part of the IRU. It was clear at the time, however, that its funding was so limited that it could not implement or finance any assistance projects on its own. Another factor militating against such an approach was that numerous IRU members from industrialised economies were represented in developing companies with projects of their own.

One thing IRU was able to do within the scope of development cooperation was to assume a coordinating role. An impor-

tant basis for this was a regularly updated inventory of relevant activities on the part of its member organisations. To do this, IRU maintained a survey of which organisations were collaborating in which projects in which developing economies, and which problems might arise in this connection. The aim was to use these data to identify areas of overlap and duplicate assistance in cooperative development cooperation. If two or more of its member organisations were active in a particular developing country, the IRU could broker contacts, initiate information exchange and coordinate possible agreements of cooperation arrangements. This is how it sought to help ensure that the best possible use would be made of the universally tight funding that was available for cooperative development aid.

Group picture of the participants of the International Management Seminar in Castle Ham near Brussels / Belgium on September 30, 1981

A second, more practical focus in development cooperation emerged in the form of promoting training for cooperative professionals and executives from developing countries. Already in 1975, at the request of a Turkish member organisation, for the



first time, the IRU assumed the patronage of an international management seminar for around 200 executives of the Turkish cooperative movement. In 1976, the Union participated in a banking seminar for executives in Santander, Spain. Finally, in 1981, at Ham Castle near Brussels, Belgium, the IRU hosted its first self-organised management seminar for cooperative executives from 14 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe.



*Théo Braun,
President of the IRU
from 1981 to 1988*

The management seminar was held prior to the Fifth IRU General Assembly, which was also organised at Ham Castle. In this context, first of all, Théo Braun, President of the French Crédit Mutuel, was elected the new IRU President. Secondly, the members had to address a necessary change to the organisational structure: The Board of Directors of the IRU consisted of nine members at its founding; in the following years, these were joined by representatives of cooperative organisations from Turkey, India, Japan and Canada. In 1988, they were to be supplemented by another four representatives for Latin America and Africa. This extension, however, now to 15 persons, made meetings of the Board of Directors – to be held several times a year in a rotation of countries – more difficult to organise. In view of this, the Fifth General Assembly resolved to form an additional Presidium that consisted of the IRU President, Vice President and Treasurer. The new body, which convened for the first time on 8 December 1981 in Paris, France, assumed the work of general management. Since then, the Board has limited its tasks to landmark decisions and the audit of the annual financial statements, for which one meeting per year would be sufficient in future.

The IRU board planned another management seminar in Uruguay for September 1983, which was received with great interest by the representatives of Latin American cooperatives. A total of 457 participants – mostly presidents and board members – came to Montevideo from 148 cooperative organisations and development institutes from 22 countries. At the special request of the Latin American organisers, the speakers sent to the event by the European IRU members dealt mainly with topics that included the European experience of the cooperative practice. Among other things, these topics included current issues in the cooperative banking business and cooperative training.

As a result of the positive experience, the International Raiffeisen Union decided to hold a seminar like this every two years in future. These were aimed at cooperative executives from the developing economies who would then act as multipliers in their

*bottom and right:
Impressions of
the Management
Seminar in Turkey
under the auspices
of the IRU (1975)*

home countries. In many cases, the focus was on cooperative auditing, training and consulting; the relationship between the state and cooperatives; the relationship between cooperatives and their members, and cooperative network systems. The seminars typically lasted a week. The IRU provided the speakers from among the ranks of its member organisations and bore most of the costs of participants from developing countries.

The International Management Seminars of the IRU

1981 Castle Ham near
Brussels, Belgium

1983 Montevideo, Uruguay
1985 New Delhi, India
1987 Rome, Italy

1989 Nairobi, Kenya
1991 Buenos Aires,
Argentina

1993 Bangkok, Thailand
1996 Budapest, Hungary



IRU-TÜRKİYE KOOPERATİFLERİ ÜST DİRĞÜTLERİ
KOOPERATİF YÖNETİCİLİĞİ SEMİNERİ
2-12 NİSAN 1975



bottom:
Angel Castro from
the Association
of Latin American
Savings and Credit
Co-operatives from
Panama at the
Management Sem-
inar in Rome / Italy
(1987)

top right:
Excursion during
the Management
Seminar in Nairobi /
Kenya (1989)

bottom right:
Group picture of
the seminar
participants in
Bangkok / Thailand
(1993)





IRU *Coutiers*



IRU, l'Association des Industriels des Routes, est un organisme international qui a pour but de promouvoir et de défendre les intérêts des industriels des routes dans le monde entier. IRU est une association d'industriels des routes qui a pour but de promouvoir et de défendre les intérêts des industriels des routes dans le monde entier.

Reorganisation

At mid-year 1985, the previous IRU Secretary General, Werner Schiffgen, entered retirement. The new Secretary General, effective 1 January 1986, was Jürgen Heins. Like his predecessor, he was the Head of the International Relations Department at DGRV. One of his first responsibilities at the IRU was to develop and implement some 'conceptual changes' to make the IRU more 'concrete and efficient' in its work.

The new 'IRU-Courier'

An important point in this connection was the revision of the member publication 'IRU-Information'. Since April 1986, it has been published under the new title, 'IRU-Courier', with a new, relaxed presentation and with a changed content structure. This was also due to a variety of requests by members to make the IRU publication more of a dialogue tool. The aim was to give greater consideration to news by members, their reflections and their proposals. In addition to added articles about structural changes in member organisations and about fundamental questions on cooperatives, the publication also now included, for instance, a new category in which members could report on their developmental-cooperation projects in ways that would permit other member organisations to benefit from these experiences. The publication continued to appear three times a year, with each issue separated into the four languages: German, English, French and Spanish.

Another change involved the way in which the IRU planned international management seminars. These meetings would continue to be held on a regular basis but would strengthen their focus on the needs of the developing countries. This approach was first employed for the IRU seminar first planned for September 1987 in Rome, Italy. With this in mind, in 1986 the IRU conducted its first survey to ascertain the desired topics of its members. The responses made particular mention of the aspects of cooperative education, the role of agricultural cooperatives for the development of rural regions, and the savings and loan business of the cooperative banks.

*The first issue of
the new 'IRU
Courier', 1986*



‘Wind of change’ – A time of transformation in Europe



Otto Baron van Verschuer, IRU President from 1988 to 1996

The 20th anniversary of the IRU coincided with the 100th anniversary of the death of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. In commemoration, in March 1988 a major ceremony was held in Frankfurt (Main), Germany, in the context of which the IRU hosted its Seventh General Assembly. Among the resolutions passed by those in attendance was to grant the African and Latin American member organisations two seats apiece on the Board of Directors in future. In addition, Otto Willem Arnold Baron van Verschuer, Chairman of the Administrative Council of Rabobank Nederland, was elected the new IRU President. There was also a change in the position of the Secretary General in the same year. After Jürgen Heins resigned from his post at his own request, at its meeting of 11 November 1988, in Utrecht, Netherlands, the Board of Directors appointed the Managing Director of the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation, Dr. Hans-Detlef Wülker, the new Secretary General.

At the same meeting of the Board in November 1988, the representative of the Confederation of Latin American Savings and Credit Cooperatives, Angel Castro, pleaded for playing close attention to the fledgling liberalisation in the Soviet Union and the associated rethinking of economic policy. The economic and political transformation under way in the country of origin of socialism could have an impact on the discussions and actions of many countries in the Third World. What seemed to be a rather theoretical consideration at the time was soon overtaken by events: In 1989, the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’ ended the decades of cemented division in Europe. For the states of the Communist ‘East Bloc’ this marked the beginning of a longer, at times very painful phase of political-economic reforms. In addition to the creation of democratic structures and new political institutions, it was necessary to master the systemic change away from the planned economy to the market economy, and integration into the world market.



*Fall of the Iron
Curtain: Break-
through from
Hungary to Austria
on 19 August 1989*

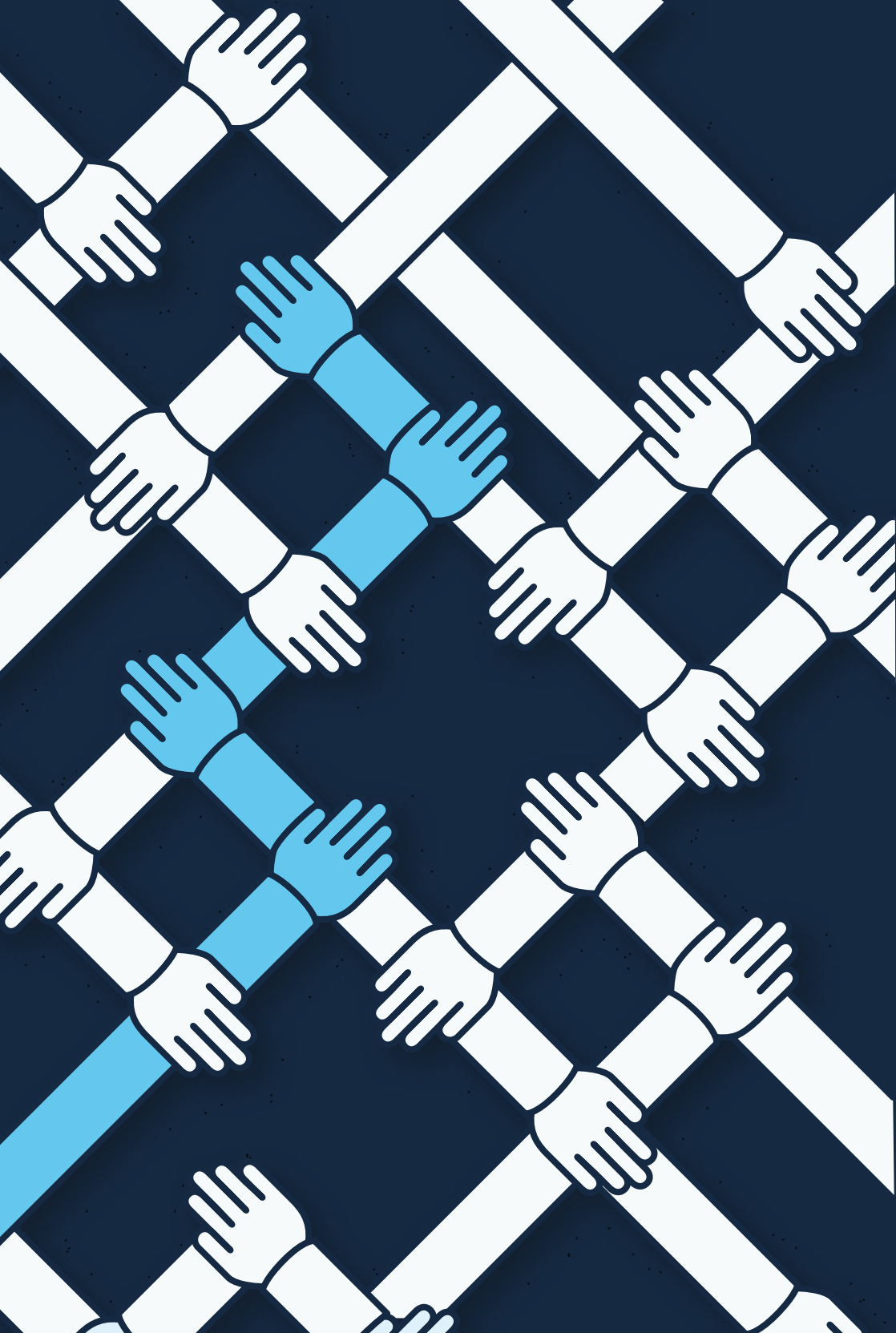
This process of transformation did not stop at the numerous co-operatives of Central and Eastern Europe. The Raiffeisen Union had maintained a rather restrained relationship with them to date. The ideological differences proved to be too large: For the IRU, cooperatives should be free, non-state undertakings with obligations to their members alone, rooted in self-determination and self-responsibility as well as voluntary membership. In contrast, in many cases, socialist cooperatives were often viewed as 'not built from the grass roots' and 'ultimately subordinate to the communist party programme of their governments.' Although this did not speak against consultations and contacts, the structures in the East Bloc countries remained an obstacle to including local cooperative organisations in the IRU.

The political transformation in the Eastern and Central European states opened up an opportunity for the Raiffeisen Union to redefine its relationship with local cooperative movements. It was not possible to support the cooperatives there with financial means. Through its international relations, however, it helped to change the framework conditions for cooperative entities. With the aim of facilitating a mutual exchange of experience on cooperative development in Central and Eastern Europe, the

IRU organised a conference in October 1994 together with the International Co-operative Alliance in Prague, Czech Republic. This marked the first time that the IRU had organised an event together with another international organisation. In March of the same year, IRU President Baron van Verschuer and ICA President Lars Marcus had learned about the situation and problems of the Eastern European cooperatives in the course of a joint fact-finding trip to Budapest, Hungary and Bratislava, Slovakia.

In the Cold War

The cooperative principles developed by Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen are neutral with respect to questions of religion and politics. Accordingly, from the start, the IRU also opted for an international cooperation that was as unpolitical as possible. Nevertheless, it was not spared from the impact of global politics. In fact, it was even a child of its time: Even in 1999, its Secretary General reminded that the Union had been founded in 1968 not only to strengthen the image of Raiffeisen organisations in Europe but had also been conceived to provide a counterbalance to the then highly socialist-oriented International Co-operative Alliance. The 'war of systems' in the second half of the 20th century led to a demarcation between liberal-minded, Western-style cooperatives, on the one hand, and state-influenced, socialist cooperatives on the other. The IRU Board of Directors also discussed the approach to take towards the Eastern European cooperative organisations and how useful a formation of the Western cooperative organisations within the International Co-operative Alliance would be in counterbalancing the self-contained Eastern bloc of cooperatives. Relations began to normalise only with the political transformation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that took place in the early 1990s.



The IRU Guidelines

The process of transformation in Eastern and Central Europe reminded the cooperative world once again that, in situations such as this, the ideas and concepts of cooperative movements in other countries cannot simply be transferred over or copied. Every nation, every cooperative movement has to find its own way. This will be determined by the history, by the economic, social, political and sociological circumstances, but also by the views and needs of the cooperative members. This is why every cultural setting also makes its own environment-related experiences in daily cooperative work. There are, however, some principles that link cooperatives and their members across boundaries and different political and religious views – these are the principles that preceded even Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen: self-help, self-administration and self-responsibility.

**‘One doesn’t plant a grown tree
but rather young seedlings.
After all, it is the soil that determines the roots.’**

Theo Braun, IRU President 1981-1988

To support sharing of ideas and experience, in October 1991 the International Raiffeisen Union published the ‘IRU Guidelines for Cooperatives’ which were drawn up under the auspices of the DGRV. The manual contains an analysis of the basic mission of the cooperative and its fulfilment by cooperative undertakings. In addition, established member organizations of the IRU from the industrialized countries describe insights from their own development that could possibly be transferred to the young cooperative organisations in the emerging economies. In addition, they report on their experiences in sharing their knowledge with local cooperative organisations. The IRU Guidelines represented an absolute novelty in the international development business and were translated into various languages.

Serious situation at the 25th anniversary

The International Raiffeisen Union was able to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 1993. By this time, it numbered 88 members from 43 countries. Two-thirds of these came from the cooperative banking industry, almost 20 percent from the agricultural-goods cooperative sector. However, there was no real celebration on this occasion – the organisation’s situation at the time was too ambivalent. It was clear that ‘the IRU is now respected throughout the world’, and that the international importance of the Raiffeisen idea for the development of national economies was known. At the same time, the IRU suffered from financial problems, to which the interpreting and translation costs in particular contributed significantly: By 1988, only the three languages German, English and French were used within the IRU Board of Directors. Translations of the very few submissions and minutes, as well as the interpreting activities in the meetings, were taken over by the General Secretariat. Then Spanish was added, and the extent of meeting documents also increased significantly in the subsequent period. The enlarged ‘IRU-Courier’ and the annual reports also had to be translated. The General Assembly which was held every four years also generated a large expense. At the same time, it became apparent that, ‘due to the changed global political situation and the economic downturn’, more and more cooperative organisations questioned their membership in international associations. The International Raiffeisen Union was not spared from this development. The ranks of its members dropped from 92 to 81 between 1990 and 1996, which in turn had an impact on revenue from membership fees and the latitude for a possible increase in contributions.

A question of cost

All in all, by the early 1990s, the IRU was unable to finance its basic tasks through the ongoing budget. Board member organisations increasingly had to step in with special contributions to finance the international cooperative seminars; with the General Assemblies, it was tacitly assumed that the host member would

foot the costs – all circumstances that could no longer be justified in the rapidly changing world.

The IRU had to rethink its cost structure and take austerity measures: Thus, the languages at Board meetings were limited to English and Spanish. In future, the international Raiffeisen seminars would take place only every three years instead of every two years. The aim was now also to pair the seminars with General Assemblies wherever possible. Then-IRU President Baron van Verschuer also raised the question of whether other international organisations were not in similar circumstances, and, if so, whether they should not work together more closely. There were various consultations with the International Co-operative Alliance and the World Council of Credit Unions. Cooperation on working groups and joint organisation of events were discussed, among other things. In addition, a temporal and local consolidation of committee meetings was aimed at. Since many of their member organisations' representatives were active in various commit-

*8th International
Raiffeisen Coopera-
tive Seminar of the
IRU in Budapest /
Hungary (1996)*





*Wim Meijer,
IRU President from
1996 to 2002*

tees, such coordination promised 'noticeable' savings potential. As a test run of sorts, the IRU proposed to the ICA to organise its meetings around the Eighth International Raiffeisen Cooperative Seminar and the associated IRU General Assembly in October 1996 in Budapest, Hungary. The ICA adopted this proposal.

At the 1996 General Assembly, there was also a change of leadership at the Raiffeisen Union: In place of Otto Baron van Verschuer, who retired and was named IRU Honorary President, his successor a Chairman of Rabobank Nederland, Wim Meijer, was elected the new IRU President. He faced the challenge of steering the IRU back through freshly difficult waters, as the budget adjustments decided in the mid-1990s had brought only short-term relief. A few years later, the financial situation of the IRU again gave cause for concern, also due to a further decline in membership. A threatened underfunding for 1999 could be averted thanks to special contributions of the member organisations represented in the IRU Presidium. But this approach was not a sustainable solution, especially since the forecasts for the years 2001 and 2002 could be expected to produce budget deficits once again.

In an analysis of the situation, Secretary General Dr. Wülker recalled that the IRU was founded in 1968 not only to strengthen the image of the European Raiffeisen organisations. It also sought to promote the exchange of experience between cooperative organisations from industrialised and developing countries. But in many cases, the sharing of experience also no longer occurred in the IRU, but increasingly bilaterally between the national cooperative organisations. Subsequently, the seminar, for a long time one of the core offerings of the IRU, was obviously no longer in such high demand as it had been in earlier times. In addition, there were now many institutions at the European level that fully covered the exchange of experience among European cooperative organisations.

Changed external conditions had made a discussion about the future of the International Raiffeisen Union inevitable. It had to be clarified in principle, whether the IRU as such was still contemporary, whether it was still needed, and, if so, what its future mission should be. It was quickly agreed that the mission of the IRU continued to apply: disseminate Raiffeisen's ideas with modern and up-to-date means. This included 'advocating for free, non-instrumentalised cooperative undertakings with membership retention' and, in dialogue with policy-makers, to positively influence the framework conditions of cooperatives. A dissolution of

the International Raiffeisen Union was thus out of the question, especially in light of fears of a loss of image for the entire Raiffeisen movement.

In the sharing of experience, particularly among the established European cooperative organisations, the IRU saw a clear deficit at the European level, in spite of numerous working groups: These committees addressed day-to-day events, but hardly with cooperative policy issues and strategic developments in the cooperative sector. Although almost all national institutions and associations were involved with the same topics, there was no exchange of results and findings. This is where the IRU came in: for several years, its committees had managed policy issues affecting all IRU members and their cooperatives. Among other things, this concerned challenges such as the 'member question', 'globalisation' and 'demutualisation', 'corporate governance' and 'capitalisation in changing conditions'. The topics were worked on by individual member organisations of the IRU and the results published in the 'IRU-Courier', and on the website that has existed since 1998. The IRU wanted to intensify this exchange of experience on cooperative policy topics even more in future. Provision was also made to continue reporting at regular intervals by individual members on developments and challenges in their respective organisations.

In addition, IRU planned to organise the hosting of so-called 'Raiffeisen Forums' at regular intervals. This is where scientific findings on basic topics and the modern implementation of the Raiffeisen idea would be shared. Likewise, they intended to discuss what developments the cooperative organisations expected over the next five to ten years, and how international cooperative partnerships could be developed further. In return for the new event format, after careful consideration, the IRU committees decided to suspend the international management seminars for the time being.

Membership
attractiveness



Member orientation
and member retention



Appeal of the cooperative
business model



Preservation of
the competitiveness
of cooperatives



Discussion on decentralisation
versus globalisation



Contribution of
cooperatives to the national
economy and society

‘

You
can
go
faster
alone

but
further
together’

In the words of an African proverb

The new millennium

In 2002, there was another change in the IRU leadership: To replace the retiring Wim Meijer, on 28 October 2002 the Board of Directors elected the Advocate General of the Austrian Raiffeisen Association, Dr. Christian Konrad, the new IRU President. Meijer was appointed Honorary President. Several months earlier, IRU's long-standing Secretary General, Dr. Hans-Detlef Wülker, turned his position over to the Head of the International Relations Department at DGRV, Dr. Paul Armbruster.

In order to fulfil its statutory mission in the new millennium, the International Raiffeisen Union intended to continue to serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas and experience between its members and as a point of contact for external inquiries. In addition to the publication of the 'IRU-Courier', in future, its work would continue to shape the handling of current fundamental issues that nearly all IRU member organisations must face. Topics covered during this period included: 'Identity and member retention', 'The importance of cooperative auditing', 'Basel II - The new equity regulations for banks', 'Promotion of renewable resources - Prospects and value-added opportunities for cooperatives', 'Development in real markets (agriculture, trade)' as well as 'Regionality and the Internet'.



*Christian Konrad,
IRU President from
2002 to 2006*

Active participation in international conferences and organisation of own seminars and forums remained an integral part of IRU activity. In 2003, for instance, the IRU and DGRV jointly organised a seminar on the 'Legal bases for cooperatives in Europe'. The conference in Berlin, Germany, was aimed at political decision-makers, parliamentarians and cooperative executives from the EU accession countries as well as from Bulgaria and Romania. Immediately before EU expansion, participants were to be reminded of the importance of the legal framework for successful cooperatives as part of the national economy. The focus the following year was upon the Eleventh General Assembly and the associated second Raiffeisen Forum, which also took place in view of the eastward enlargement of the EU in Berlin, Germany. The next General Assembly was scheduled for October 2008 in Bischoffsheim, in the French Alsace, but had to be cancelled at short notice as a result of the global financial crisis. Instead, the Twelfth General Assembly was made up on 1 October 2010



*Franky Depickere,
IRU President since
2006*

in Paris, France; the meeting elected a new IRU Board of Directors, among other things. In its inaugural session, the Board, in turn, appointed the Executive Director of Cera in Belgium, Franky Depickere, as the new IRU President.

The International Year of Cooperatives

In December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution declaring 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. Under the slogan 'Cooperative enterprises build a better world', the aim was to emphasise the immense importance of cooperatives for economic and social development. And the success of the cooperative movement was indeed respectable: for example, at the time, the International Co-operative Alliance counted more than 200 member organisations from around 90 countries, representing more than 800 million members. The United Nations also estimated that nearly three billion people benefited directly or indirectly from the cooperative business model.

In cooperation with the International Relations Department of the DGRV, the IRU had also campaigned directly with the United Nations for the proclamation of the International Year of Cooperatives. Now it, too, wanted to contribute to its success: on 3 May 2012, under the motto 'The Raiffeisen idea – A model for the future', it hosted an International Raiffeisen Conference in the former plenary hall of the German Bundestag in Bonn, Germany. Among others, Dr. Jaya Arunachalam, President of the Indian Working Women's Forum, reported on a major self-help initiative for particularly poor women in India. The cooperatives had taught women practical skills, developing dormant talents and leading them out of isolation. Similarly positive experiences from French West Africa were also described by Alpha Quedrago, Director General of the Confédération des Institutions Financières, representing 3 million members in this region.

On the basis of the intensive discussions, the Presidium adopted a resolution immediately after the conference, containing essential theses and results as well as an appeal to promote cooperative structures. It also called upon IRU members to inform about the cooperative model in their countries, to sensitize national legislators to the specificities of this business form, and to encourage the creation of new self-help organisations.

Organisationally, the year-end also entailed a change in personnel. After fully ten years in office, the long-time Secretary

General, Dr. Armbruster resigned from office with effect from 8 November 2012. His duties were temporarily assumed by DGRV board member Dirk Lehnhoff, Vice President of the IRU.

‘Respecting and sharing Raiffeisen’s ideas and exchanging experiences with various IRU members, is a task that (...) is close to my heart. This is rooted in the notion that we, the members of today, are not the owners of our cooperative and have only borrowed it from the coming generation. With this in mind, we must fulfil our task conscientiously and with enthusiasm.’

IRU President Franky Depickere in his inaugural speech on 1 October 2010



Revitalisation and modernisation

The International Year of Cooperatives had helped inspire the IRU itself to think more about its own goals and their implementation. A certain stagnation had taken hold in recent years: The engagement of many member organisations had suffered from the challenges of the international financial crisis and the crisis of sovereign debt in Europe. The attention of honorary IRU Board members was also divided with other pursuits. This development was accompanied by a further decrease in the number of members, due, among other things, to mergers of national cooperative associations, their switch to a non-cooperative legal form or also as a consequence of economic considerations and financial difficulties. In 1993, the IRU had 88 members from 43 countries, compared to 73 members from 41 countries in 2003 and just 61 from 36 countries in 2013.



*Andreas Kappes,
Head of the International Relations
Department of
DGRV and Secretary General of
the IRU*

Against this backdrop, the IRU initiated a process of revitalisation. A more modern appearance was the aim, along with an increase in the visibility and attractiveness of the IRU. In October 2014, the IRU Board appointed Andreas Kappes, Head of the International Relations Department of the DGRV, as the new Secretary General. A series of measures were initiated under his leadership: among other things, these included revision of the group's own website and a redesign of the logo. The latter was created with the support of the Belgian member Cera and embodies the character of the IRU as an international network of independent members. Amendments to the statutes and the previously postponed Twelfth General Assembly were also prepared. This meeting was held on 14 September 2016 in Lucerne, Switzerland. The IRU members supported the fundamental reorientation of the IRU. It was also possible to give new impetus through a closer interaction between the IRU and the DGRV's International Relations Department. Among other things, an exchange around cooperative development work and public relations took place in a variety of working groups.

The new website in a modern design has been available online since 1 August 2017. The main pages are written in English only. The 'IRU-Courier' also began appearing exclusively in English in

www.iru.de


Film stills from the documentation "Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. The Power of an Idea."



August 2017. Since 2016, the magazine has been published digitally only, via the IRU website and via e-mail.

Raiffeisen anniversary 2018 and 50 years of IRU

2016 also marked the beginning of preparations for the 200th birthday of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen and the 50th anniversary of the International Raiffeisen Union in 2018. As a highlight, in September 2018 the IRU organises an international event at Ehrenbreitstein Fortress in Koblenz, Germany, that will convene cooperative representatives from all over the world in 'Raiffeisenland'. In addition, IRU is participating as a co-producer of a film project devoted to Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. The documentary examines Raiffeisen as a person through the eyes of his eldest daughter Amalie – not only as a social reformer and co-founder of cooperatives in Germany, but also as a mayor, father and man. The film was developed especially for IRU members and will also be broadcast in 2018 on public stations in German-speaking countries.

The IRU logo over the course of time



Page 56–57: Participants of the XIIIth IRU General Meeting on 14 September 2016 in Lucerne/Switzerland

top left:

Dr. Nandini Azad (left), President of ICNW - Indian Cooperative Network for Women/India and candidate for the IRU board elections 2018

George Ototo (right), Managing Director of KUSCCO - Kenya Union of Savings & Credit Co-operatives/Kenya and IRU board member

bottom left:

3 members of the Turkish delegation; Mandy Pampel, Coordinator of the IRU Secretariat General/Germany; Dr. Nandini Azad; Ayşe Ferhat of the Central Union of Turkish Agricultural Credit Cooperatives/Turkey (from left to right)

top right:

Etienne Pflimlin (left), former President of the Confédération Nationale du Crédit Mutuel/France and Treasurer of the IRU

Selahattin Külçü (right), Managing Director of the Central Union of Turkish Agricultural Credit Cooperatives/Turkey and IRU board member discussing with Ayşe Ferhat

bottom right:

Andreas Kappes (left), Head of the Department of International Affairs at DGRV/Germany and Secretary General of the IRU
Franky Depickere (right), CEO of Cera/Belgium and President of the IRU



Participants of the XIIIth IRU General Meeting on 14 September 2016 in Lucerne/Switzerland
Full captions on page 55







These (Raiffeisen) principles are timeless because they promote human dignity, specifically the right of every human being to happiness and prosperity, to participation and co-responsibility, and more generally to the freedom instrumental to permitting every person to develop his or her own abilities. These principles are guideposts to human-friendly solutions in any economic, political or social debate. On this basis, tensions and confrontations can be overcome again and again.'

Dr Arnold Edelmann, IRU President from 1970 to 1981

Outlook

50 years of IRU. The environment of the organisation today is completely different from when it was founded in 1968. By 2018, the reality of life in the member countries, the national and international challenges, have changed significantly. The IRU has managed to assert itself while preserving the tried and tested. Will it also manage to evolve?

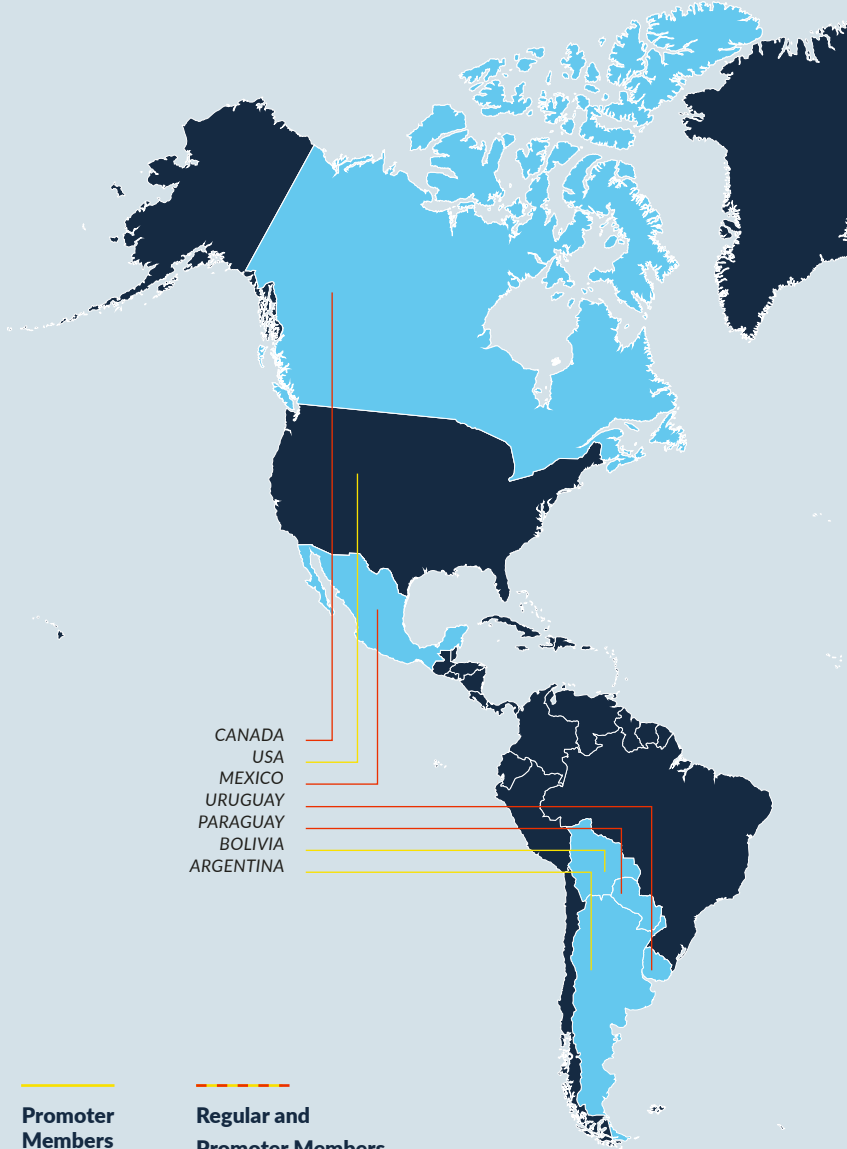
Cooperatives are active in nearly all sectors of the economy. In many cases, however, they are not present. How much 'presence' must the IRU demonstrate? What will be the areas of focus for its future work? Over 50 years, the shared 'Raiffeisen ideology' formed the cohesive kit that held the core group of members together. The Raiffeisen principles and values are timeless. Going forward, they should remain the foundation of the IRU alliance.

One aim will also be sharing among 'sister organisations in spirit'. Particularly in the context of the 2030 Development Agenda, new opportunities are opening up for finding cooperative solutions for global issues and making effective contributions towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is a search for new paths for overcoming challenges such as hunger, poverty and deprivation, achieving economic participation for all and dealing responsibly with the resources of nature. Cooperative organisations in particular are called upon to become involved in cooperative development projects. This is an area in which the IRU and its members can actively contribute the wealth of their experiences and networks. Finally, Raiffeisen's principles provide important conclusions and guidelines for cooperative development work. The IRU will redouble its efforts to promote the sharing of experiences among the diverse member organisations; through discussion of 'best-practice' examples, it will disseminate cooperative ideas and cooperative experiences. This should be done in close collaboration with other organisations, including the International Co-operative Alliance and the International Labour Organisation.

This is how the IRU continues to follow the mission statement of its founders to promote the worldwide realisation of the ideas of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen 'by contemporary means'.

The members of the IRU in the world

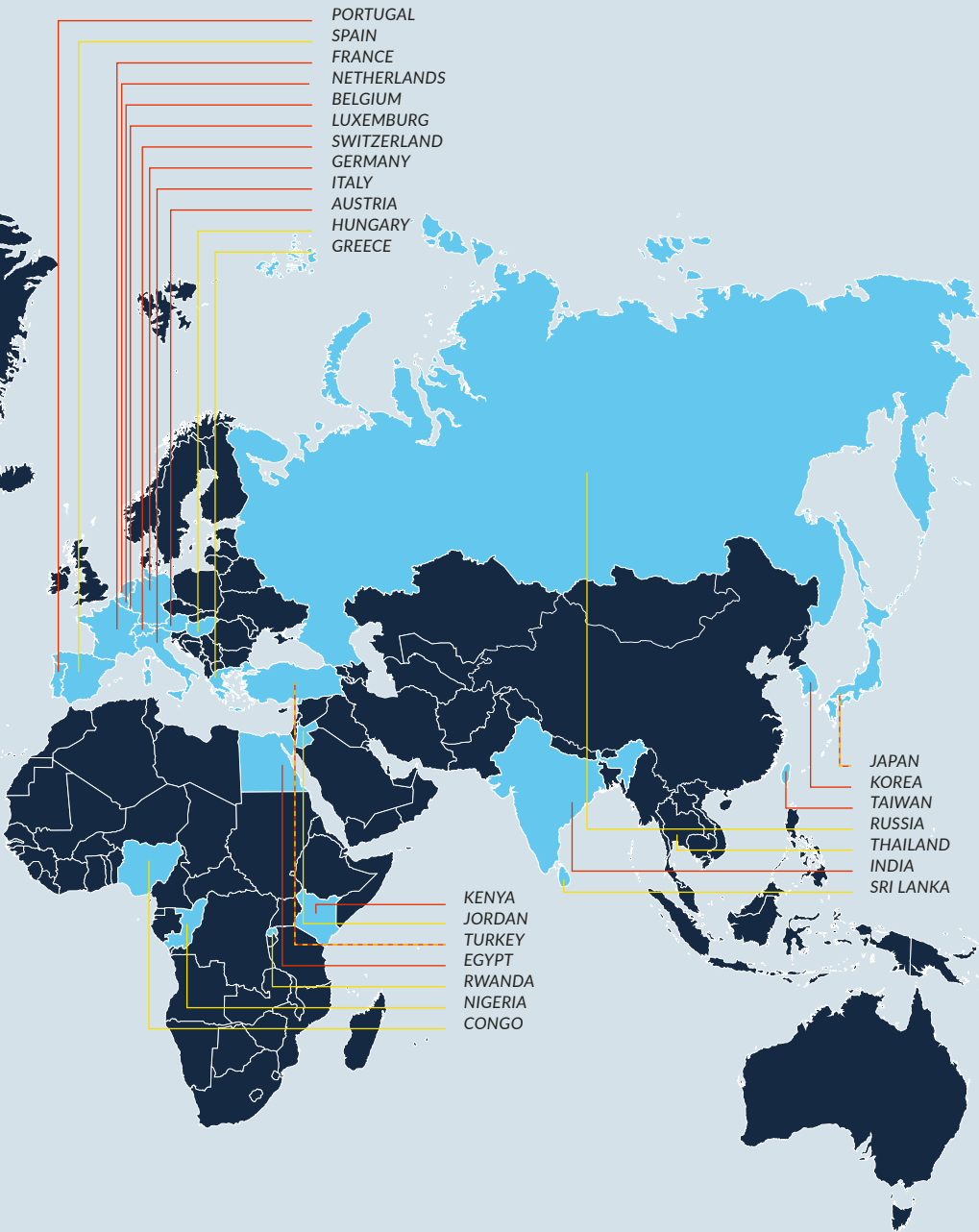
As of 2018: 53 members in 33 countries.



Regular Members

Promoter Members

Regular and Promoter Members



- PORTUGAL
- SPAIN
- FRANCE
- NETHERLANDS
- BELGIUM
- LUXEMBURG
- SWITZERLAND
- GERMANY
- ITALY
- AUSTRIA
- HUNGARY
- GREECE

- KENYA
- JORDAN
- TURKEY
- EGYPT
- RWANDA
- NIGERIA
- CONGO

- JAPAN
- KOREA
- TAIWAN
- RUSSIA
- THAILAND
- INDIA
- SRI LANKA

The Presidium and Board members of the IRU

As of September 2018



FRANKY DEPICKERE
President



ETIENNE PFLIMLIN
Treasurer



DR. ECKHARD OTT
Candidate
Vice President*



**DR. HILMAR
GERNET**
Presidium &
Board Member



**DR. HANS
GROENEVELD**
Presidium &
Board Member



GUY HOFFMANN
Presidium &
Board Member



**DR. WALTER
ROTHENSTEINER**
Presidium &
Board Member



DR. NANDINI AZAD
Candidate Board*



SELAHATTIN KÜLCÜ
Board Member



**DR. HEINER
NICOLUSSI-LECK**
Board Member



GEORGE OTOTO
Board Member



EDWIN REIMER
Board Member



**DR. CHANDRA
PAL SINGH YADAV**
Board Member

* Candidature for election on 27 September 2018

The General Assembly of the IRU elects the Board of Directors every four years (maximum 15 persons, as of August 2018: 12 posts). The Board of Directors elects from its circle the 7-member Presidium, which in its turn selects the President, Vice President and Treasurer from among its members. These three form the Board in the legal sense (§26 para. 2 BGB).

Former Presidents

1. Count Christian von Andlau, France	from 1968 to 1969
2. Dr. Arnold Edelman, Switzerland	from 1970 to 1981
3. Théo Braun, France	from 1981 to 1988
4. Otto Baron van Verschuer, Netherlands	from 1988 to 1996
5. Wim Meijer, Netherlands	from 1996 to 2002
6. Dr. Christian Konrad, Austria	from 2002 to 2010
7. Franky Depickere, Belgium	since 2010

Former Secretary-Generals

1. Bernard Stentzel	from 1968 to 1969
2. Werner Schiffgen	from 1970 to 1985
3. Jürgen Heins	from 1985 to 1988
4. Dr. Hans-Detlef Wülker	from 1988 to 2002
5. Dr. Paul Armbruster	from 2002 to 2012
6. Dirk J. Lehnhoff (Vice President), interim	from 2012 to 2014
7. Andreas Kappes	since 2014

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