

**LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME**

**2007 – 2013 - selection 2007**

**MULTILATERAL PROJECTS - DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATION**  
PRIORITY 5 - VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

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**EXP3 – ANALYSIS REPORT**

# **ANALYSIS REPORT**

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## 1. COOPERATIVE CULTURE

The cooperation is a culture rather than a formula. This is a distinction of great significance. The co-operatives need an environment, like a tree needs and ecosystem to grow healthily. Thus, the co-operatives are embodied in a human geography, a society and a historical context. Outside them, in other geographies and contexts, fertilising cultures of this kind could take years. Creating and sustaining cooperatives is much more complex than the mere fact of creating companies of capital. Logically, the co-operative is made up of elements that can be shared with other type of organisations, but it is a reality with a strong identity feature.

The cooperative culture requires demanding and complex conditions to be reproduced. It is not something that reproduces itself spontaneously or in a natural way. Even, less if we consider that the cooperative model is a minority in the economic and business world; it is a fact that the individualistic values prevailing in society don't help, absolutely, to promote the advantages of cooperation. The cooperative culture, even in the areas where it has been created, needs to be lubricated constantly to counteract a context of individualist values.

Cooperative culture is a sort of a plant the care and cultivation of which requires the pampering of many factors. Community needs have always been the objective basis for the expansion of co-operatives. Another of the factors we can cite is the care of the 'glue' needed for inter-co-operation or the reproduction of the core values of work and solidarity, the education of the generations, the links with the living forces of the community or the country and area links of social cohesion, among others. In other words, what is needed is a network of shared feelings on which to base the elements that could produce sustained co-operative motivation. The deep-rooted transformation of the sociological context all over Europe in the last thirty years has a deep influence on co-operativism and its meanings. References, such as, the display of welfare societies, its crisis, the hyper-consumism, the raising place taken by the private sphere, the financial expansion of the economy, are platitudes. This is to say that the cooperative culture is renewing starting from a contemporary reading of the key elements of the cooperative identity.

Alex Laidlaw in "Cooperatives in the Year 2000"<sup>1</sup> initiated the discussion about cooperative identity, identifying 'three crises in the development of the world cooperative movement: the first was one of credibility, as co-ops became established and had to prove their viability. The second was managerial, because as they became larger they faced the problem of how keep an active membership and to curb the technocratic power of the managers. The third was ideological, arising from "gnawing doubts about the true purpose of co-operatives and whether they are fulfilling a distinct role as a different kind

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1 'Cooperatives in the Year 2000' is the report that Laidlaw presented at the ICA in 1980.

of enterprise."<sup>2</sup> The analysis of these crises was one of the starting point for the revision of the cooperative principles in 1995 according to the ICA's original purpose of safeguarding and periodically updating and interpreting them. This revision answered to the recognised need to connect the cooperatives to their present context, paying a specific attention to the cooperative principles<sup>3</sup> as practical guidelines derived from the everyday practices and immediately applicable.

So, as we have said earlier, we must consider that the culture is not a field of human action playing spontaneously. Moreover, the core elements that constitute the co-operative culture must be read from the point of view of the ever-changing present. However, it means that the co-operatives need to intervene actively to strengthen, revitalize and reinforce the cooperative culture. If not, sooner or later, it will be absorbed by the mainstream's entrepreneurial culture. Co-operatives will be capable of continuing to be co-operatives only if they are capable of reproducing strong elements of identity. It is fair to say that this achievement as long as it is so elementary, sometimes might be underconsidered.

"Co-operation is one of the most natural things in the world. Human beings do it every day – in their everyday life, at work, at leisure. Co-operatives are also one of the most 'natural' phenomena in the world, after all we have more than eight hundred million members. But cooperatives have become invisible in many countries and in much development theory. They are too often dismissed as a relic from the past".<sup>4</sup>

These words of Ivano Barberini – ex-president of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) – give a clear idea of the co-operative context at the world level, its importance but also the need of promoting the cooperative culture and its continuous updating according to the globalisation trends.

More recently, the actuality and importance of the cooperativism is highlighted from the decision of the United Nations to proclaim 2012 International Year of Co-operatives. The Resolution A/RES/64/136 passed on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009 by consensus was proposed by 55 UN Member States recognises that the co-operative business model is a major factor in realising economic and social development and calls on governments, international institutions, co-operatives and other stakeholders to support the development and growth of co-operatives worldwide. The resolution calls for member states to raise awareness and promote the growth of co-operatives. It also proposes governments around the world review legislation governing co-operatives to ensure their growth and sustainability.

This initiative was evaluated very positively by the international representatives of cooperatives. Attestations of interest were:

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<sup>2</sup> Birchall Johnston (1997), *Co-operative values and principles: a commentary*, in Journal of Co-operative Studies Vol. 30:2 (No 90) September 1997, p.1. This article quotes also Laidlaw Alex (1987 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), *Co-operatives in the Year 2000*, Geneva: International Co-operative Alliance (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

<sup>3</sup> ICA gives a precise definition of cooperative as '*autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise*' and declares that co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

<sup>4</sup> Barberini Ivano (2004), Foreword in Smith Stirling (2004), *Promoting Co-operatives. A guide to ILO Recommendation 193*, Co-operative College, Manchester UK

Rainer Schluter, Director, Cooperatives Europe: *"This gives us another tool to promote the co-operative business model and the 'co-operative difference'. I ask all our member organisations to start to consider how they and Cooperatives Europe could use the year to further our aims and objectives in the European region and inside the EU Institutions. Along with the global ICA we will be planning future events and activities so, as Cooperatives Europe, we will need to decide how these actions are co-ordinated and put into practice. I look forward to hearing your ideas."*

Dame Pauline Green President of the ICA: *"It is our responsibility to make sure we're not only ready for that year, but that we maximise the value that it offers to us. This means we have to act now and we have to act with speed. We should prepare by making sure that we drive our co-operative visibility in to the decision-making global institutions and create a real sense of the strength and the values of the co-operative economy in the world."*<sup>5</sup>

So, from the perspective of SKILLS, to ensure *co-operatives' growth and sustainability* means basically to strenght and promote the cooperative identity and culture, as principal vehicle of transmission not only inside the co-operative movements all over Europe but also towards society. A strong co-operative movement, with solid roots, self-confident and being aware of the co-operative virtues, is the best visit card to convince third parties of the transformation vision on which rely the democratically-based organisations known as co-operatives.

Turning to the beginning of this epigraph, the questions that remains are: How is the reproduction of the "glue" that unites sovereign co-operatives to be achieved? How can this be done in a general individualist culture in which the co-operatives are included?

## 2. COOPERATIVE TRAINING

Reproducing this glue requires many elements: it will need intelligent, precise management, as well as the right policy of internal communication, a presence of the historical memory that will make the path trodden by this culture of union be felt, while continuing to educate the different generations about its values. Very likely, despite all this, the "glue" cannot be kept going for long if there is no sense of community, if no renewed vision of working together is stabilised. The whole of the co-operative metabolism needs an important commitment to look after its cultural elements.

In this sense, there is no doubt that education and training are central tasks in the co-operatives. We have heard on many occasions that there can be no co-operation of any kind unless there are people prepared to co-operate. The cooperative subject is prior to the object, the co-operators precede the co-operatives. And, since we have already mentioned training, this brings us to the key resource for the future: *education*. To give an example, in the case of Mondragon, the creation of the first co-operative was preceded by fifteen long years of educational training lead by Arizmendiarieta.

Those who are part of SKILLS project are aware that the comprehensive education, which takes into account ethical-social education in addition to technical education, will enable co-operative members to learn about the key issues facing the modern world and to define their position with regard to them maturely and responsibly. This is vital in order

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5 <http://www.coopseurope.coop/spip.php?article784>

to enable us to envisage and create a better, fairer society.

The International Co-operative Alliance, an independent, non-governmental organisation which unites, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide, also reflects the strategic value of education and training, as it is observed in its 5<sup>th</sup> Cooperative Principle, titled Education, Training and Information:

*“Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation”.*

So, to activate the socio-educational aspects –the social and educational ones– of the co-operatives is a key element of present and future co-operative action. In this framework of analysis, projects such as SKILLS may prove key elements for the achievement of this objective.

An interesting experience in Cooperative training is the one developed by the Cooperative College of Manchester<sup>6</sup>, an educational charity, founded in 1919, serving the co-operative sector in the UK and globally. The mission statement of this organisation is to provide learning, education, training, consultancy and research for the co-operative mutual and social enterprise sectors in the UK and internationally.

In order to meet the recognised needs of board members in co-operatives, the College offers to the Member and Director Framework the opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding and skills as an effective co-operator by means of a framework externally recognised, accredited and divided in four programmes:

- Intermediate Award in Co-operation and Mutuality - course for those who wish to increase their knowledge of the co-operative movement;
- Intermediate Certificate in Co-operation and Mutuality - certificate that equips members and directors with essential skills and knowledge for their role;
- Advanced Diploma in Co-operative and Mutual Directorship – diploma aimed at co-operative, mutual and social enterprise directors who wish to extend their skills and knowledge of the broader context of the movement;
- Professional Diploma in Co-operative and Mutual Directorship – diploma that provides a firm grounding and a heightened awareness of the skills and knowledge required to be an effective co-operative director, as well as providing a forum for exploring relevant issues associated with the role.

The training is mandatory for whom wants to be a co-operative director.

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6 The Cooperative College (<http://www.co-op.ac.uk/>) has four key areas of work:  
I. Developing members and managers.  
II. Working with co-operatives globally.  
III. Learning from our heritage.  
IV. Working with schools and young people.

### 3. SKILLS PROJECT

The SKILLS project —co-funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme - Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme of the European Commission—, aimed to improve the quality of qualifications and cooperative competences for members by developing a new curriculum based on the specific and common characteristics of cooperatives from different European countries.

In line with today's recognized need to reinforce cooperative identity for successful and longlife cooperatives, the project SKILLS has developed an innovative learning system, validating existent non formal and informal learning to combine with different methodological approaches and innovative contents for training co-operators to become more aware and active in the cooperative enterprise. The design of the cooperative curriculum has been developed taking the cooperative systems of Trentino (Italy), Sweden and the Basque Country (Spain) as main reference. A comparison and study of these important examples in Europe have allowed us to establish a common dialogue among different cooperative systems and offered a convergent model for cooperative training at European level.

The SKILLS system proposes a model of intervention both to respond to the need of training of the co-operatives, and to analyse and validate the existent non formal and informal learning opportunities on the basis of a shared balance of skills. In this way, the system will give a general model for the validation of the preexistent non formal and informal learning in the cooperative world.

In line with the central objective both for the International Cooperative Alliance and Cooperatives Europe, SKILLS promotes the cooperative model and supports the cooperative enterprises in knowing their specific system and working according to ICA cooperative principles. SKILLS responds to the recognised need of reinforcing the cooperative culture and identity in the countries involved. To summarize, SKILLS will help:

- to strengthen the democratic nature of cooperatives by developing common informal and non-formal training programmes;
- to validate professional experience in the cooperative sector;
- to develop innovative learning programmes and materials based on partners' experience and cooperative learning methodology.

The partners agreed to refer the International Cooperative Alliance principles as guide to work on the skills necessary to manage cooperatives ethically and with other cooperatives. This reference has a recognised international value that allows translating the same value in the co-operator curriculum.

In line with the Copenhagen Declaration, the co-operator curriculum is a tool for:

- rendering transparent and validating the co-operator skills through the identification of the skills necessary and their description in line with the ICA

principles, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning occasions suitable for gaining them;

- improving the quality of the non-formal learning occasions for the co-operators through the construction of a learning system that validate and combine them with the informal ones to have a good and aware co-operator;
- helping the co-operator understand and use learning opportunities available for improving her/his ethical and technical skills through the collection and validation in a learning system.

#### 4. THE CHANNELS OF TRANSMISSION

Apart of the skills to be developed or validated, in order to respond to the need of training of the co-operatives, it is also crucial to know clearly which are the main channels of transmission of the cooperative culture and identity, so that those channels are appropriately activated and strengthened. This initial idea introduced us into the question of the co-operative education in the social co-operative body itself, its organs, its new members and the new generations of co-operative members.

The cooperative, as well as any other type of enterprise is an open system. It is in constant contact with its environment. So, it is not self-sufficient but permanently in touch with the external environment from which it receives the new members that:

- Substitute the old ones (retirement, death, etc), or
- Get involved in the cooperative (especially, during growing periods).

So, there is a flow of people, skills and tacit-knowledge between the “inside” and the “outside”. This is an interesting question by the point of view of the learning process, also for paying a particular attention to the first moment when someone establishes a relation with a cooperative as worker, consumer or collaborator.

SKILLS has proposed three main stages in the life-cycle of the co-operators. Being a potential member (1), being a member (2) being a board member (3).



**Figure 1. The co-operator life cycle**

Once identified the three basic stages in the life-cycle of the co-operator, the next question to be answered was: How is made the transmission of knowledge,

competences, skills and cooperative practices within the cooperative system? ¿Which are the most important channels of transmission? And, in the whole life-cycle which are the most important milestones?

To answer properly to this question it was necessary to know the learning structure in the cooperative system. In fact, this was one of the initial task (Skills of balance) developed by SKILLS with the participant countries/regions. It implied to collect information about the existent learning systems in the cooperative contexts involved as premise for the following analysis of the formal, non-formal and informal learning occasions<sup>7</sup>.

In order to analyse correctly the existent learning systems and answer to the general objective of the project to develop an innovative learning system, validating existent non formal and informal learning and combing them with different methodological approaches and innovative contents for training co-operators, the starting point was to agree on the same reference given to the learning process.

The EC definitions were customised considering some examples as reported in the work done by LANKI and agreed by all the partners during the initial meetings. So, examples of reference for the analysis of the existent learning systems were:

- The cooperatives involve their members in different actions like technical-professional training courses for improving the professional skills (based on the right of the cooperator for training as it is foreseen in the cooperative law) [**Formal learning**]
- Courses, seminars and workshops in specific areas, both in technical and socioinstitutional skill improving. Information and advice services on accounting, compiling balance sheet or legal matters. [**Non-formal learning**]
- The long tradition in the cooperative field transferred from a generation to another. The day to day experience working in the cooperative and actively participating to its activities is the other important point for informal learning. [**Informal learning**]

In general, the cooperative systems involved in the project have structures, tecno-roles and institutional-roles, based on the general principles of the cooperation, quite similar. However, dealing more in depth with the roles and functions, we recognised the presence of different kinds of membership sanctioned by law, with specific roles and

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<sup>7</sup> "The EC (2001) Communication on Lifelong Learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning" and the following definitions:

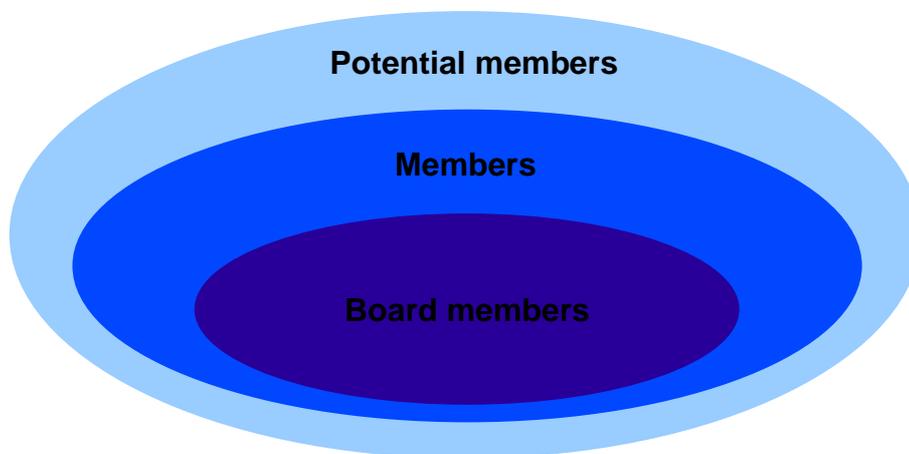
- "**Formal learning**: learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- **Non-formal learning**: learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- **Informal learning**: learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or "incidental"/ random) (p32-33)."

activities in the different systems involved. So, as a common base, the partners agreed to have all the kinds of members as targets groups of a basis training.

The co-operators considered are persons with:

- very different backgrounds (from the primary to the university education);
- very different ages (from major to elder people);
- very different experience in the cooperatives (from potential members to founders of cooperatives with long tradition);
- very different roles in the cooperatives (from simple members to administrators part of the board).

This basis training considers the co-operator life cycle with three main steps – potential member, members, board member – that represent the possible learning levels of this curriculum.



**Figure 2. The co-operators' dimensions**

The biggest circle represents the potential members, that is to say, all the people that have a first contact with a cooperative<sup>8</sup> and so that are at the start of their co-operator life cycle. Potential members can be people without formal relationship with the cooperatives (potential consumers, clients, etc) but also people already actively involved in the cooperatives (workers, voluntaries, colaborators, etc.).

Second step for some of this group of people is to become cooperative members. The transition from potential to effective members is a very important moment to be supported by non formal and informal learning occasions in order to be an 'aware and good co-operator'.

The activism of few cooperative members and their interest in the success and longlife of their enterprise represents the third step of the co-operator life cycle for becoming board

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<sup>8</sup> For example, they can be consumers that buy something in a cooperative retail store; employees that start their work in a work cooperative; clients that open their first current account in a cooperative bank; people that ask more information about a cooperative in general.

members<sup>9</sup>. Also the transition from the state of cooperative member to board member needs to be supported by non formal and informal learning to develop specific skills and knowledge of the cooperative system, values and principles for managing the cooperative in a coherent and aware way.

At this point, it is also important to introduce the concept of 'mobilisation actors'. The transitions from one to another of the dimensions above described can be called as a 'milestone'; those passages need to be supported by non formal and informal learning occasions but also by 'mobilisation actors'. We refer by mobilization actors, those cooperative advisers and/or leaders that promotes the cooperative culture; not only as chain of transmission, but also as key actors meeting and supporting members.

The 'mobilisation actors' can operate in the three levels identified in this curriculum as adviser in non formal and informal learning occasions, i.e.:

- to promote the cooperative identity/culture as basis for the potential members for being part of the cooperative system as 'good and aware co-operators'. These 'mobilisation actors' can be *promoter* of the cooperative identity also as young co-operators that can also share their enthusiasm for the cooperative system;
- to support the cooperative members in better understanding their cooperative systems and their potential for acting as 'good and aware co-operators'. They can be *knowers* also as old co-operators that have a deep practical and theoretical knowledge and interest of the cooperative principles and their contextualisation (in terms of roles, rules, etc) in their specific system;
- to support the board members in improving their abilities and potential for managing their cooperative in a coherent and aware way thanks to the study in depth of their cooperative systems and related principles. These 'mobilisation actors' can be *expert* in cooperation.

In conclusion, the targets of interest for the cooperative curriculum are:

- co-operators considering three steps in the co-operator life cycle: potential members, cooperative members and board members. They represent the final users of the SKILLS products;
- 'mobilisation actors' as facilitators in the skills gaining process as promotion and strengthening of the cooperative identity, considering the three steps described above. They represent the target involved in the testing sessions also as validators.

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<sup>9</sup> In Sweden, the cooperative movement is often divided in two parts: the old and the new cooperatives.

In the old cooperatives, members are co-operators by tradition and also retired people. They are often very big cooperatives – so big that the members often do not know that they are members and do not identify themselves as co-operators.

The new cooperatives contain people from very different ages, but mostly young people active on the labour market who constitute small cooperatives. Many of them are non-traditional entrepreneurs. Furthermore, they are not striving to get positions in the board of direction, on the contrary, their primary goal is to create activities in the cooperative. These members can be considered as board members for their activism in their cooperatives.

## 5. VALIDATION SYSTEM

There are two basic elements of the need for new systems to recognize and accredit non-formal and informal learning<sup>10</sup>. The first element is that the nature of work has substantially changed in knowledge-based societies. In this process, productivity is based on information to the production process and there is a shift from standardised material production to more flexible specialised information production processes. Thus, while the developments of globalization run, the knowledge economy is created with these changes. In this context, education and training systems must be flexible enough to enable people to engage and re-engage with learning at various points throughout their careers made necessary to develop for modern societies. In brief, European Commission aims at modernizing education system within the framework of European social model<sup>11</sup>. Besides, when traditional forms of knowledge are not enough, these systems must cover changing learning needs of the workforce, society and, economy. As a consequence, all of these developments lead to the argument that new forms of knowledge should be recognized.

The second element is concerns on social justice and social inclusion. Dividing based on learning between rich and poor of knowledge has become more significant in the knowledge-based society. Because, those whose participation in formal learning and who have only limited qualifications will become increasingly excluded from full participation in society. Therefore, strategies must address issues of equality of opportunity and of targeting specific groups to ensure that lifelong learning opportunities are available to all. In this context, it is suggested that one of the 'key points' is the need, within the formal sector, to adapt entry, progression and recognition requirements to take account of non-formal and informal learning.

In the EU *White Paper on Teaching and Learning*, the idea of non-formal and informal learning recognition was presented in 1995, emphasizing a common attitude on identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning. At this point, a clarification on certain concepts such as *certification, validation, and recognition of prior learning* frequently used in this topic should be enabled. They do not contradict each other, rather they emphasise one or another learning aspects: evidence of learning and gained experience, formalisation of learning, providing status, process of validation<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Jim Gallacher, Michel Feutrie (2003), *Recognising and Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Higher Education: An Analysis of the Issues Emerging from a Study of France and Scotland*, European Journal of Education, Vol. 38, No. 1, p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Joachim Schild (2002), *The White Paper on Youth and the Lifelong Learning Strategy: A New Impetus for Non-Formal Learning?*, Coyote, No. 6, European Commission, Brussels, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Margarita Teresevičienė, Nijolė Burkšaitienė, Genutė Gedvilienė, Eglė Kaminskienė, Lina Kaminskienė, Vaiva Zuzevičiūtė, Irena Šemaitaitė. (2003) *Tendencies of Identification, Assessment and Recognition Of Non-Formal And Informal Learning in Europe and Lithuania*.

**Certification** (leading to conferring diplomas and professional certificates) is a concept related to formal teaching and learning in full-time departments, as well as combined learning at school and on the job site.

**Official validation/recognition** is a concept used while speaking about recognition of skills and competences going beyond formal teaching and learning boundaries, i.e. a very broad scope of skills and competences acquired by a person in various life contexts: formal learning, work and leisure time. The process of official validation is applied for those skills which are transferred from one context to another: from leisure to work or formal teaching/learning. Therefore, facilitation of this transition is the most important motive, aiming to include as many of the skills as possible into the process of recognition.

**Prior learning assessment** is a concept defining a systemic process in accrediting learning acquired outside the boundaries of formal teaching institutions – through work experience, on-the-job training, preparatory courses in private organizations, seminars, learning independently, performing independent voluntary activities and through participating in the community activities. The purpose of such assessment is to determine if prior learning could be recognised and given a credit; it is performed while comparing the results of non-formal and informal learning with the standards set for the subject or course.

Learning is not a reproduction; instead it is reformulating, renewal of knowledge and competences. In new situations learner cannot solely rely on the competence he or she possesses; learner often has to look for new solutions and act in another way. Not only can successful learners reproduce competences existing in ‘communities of practice’, but also they can develop them.

Another feature of learning is that its results, i.e. competences, are partly tacit in character; therefore, sometimes it is difficult to verbalise a competence. Often people are not even aware of possessing a certain competence or ability to produce something. This aspect is highly relevant to the task of the development of assessment methodology. The majority of us can ride a bicycle, but it is usually very difficult to describe in words what we do when we ride. These competences that are difficult to verbalise are so common to us that we do not think about them, still they underlie the most of our activities.

‘**The know-how**’ makes the most part of non-formal and informal learning. Sometimes it is so difficult to ‘translate’ the tacit, intuitive knowledge into officially named knowledge. It is difficult as we are entering an area that is in general difficult to define, as at the end of this ‘translation’ the outcome may be something completely different. Another doubtful issue: ‘translation’ costs, so is it worth spending resources to assess every individual? Besides, some ethical issues emerge: can we rename something that previously was a job activity, hobby or family life into ‘learning’ and assess it? Thus, learning recognition is a complex task that politicians, researchers and practitioners are faced with.

In summary, within SKILLS the *validation* has been defined as the process of identifying, assessing and recognising a wider range of skills and competences which people develop through their lives and in different contexts, through education, work and leisure activities. In lifelong learning, “validation” is a crucial element to ensure the *visibility* and

to indicate the appropriate *value* of the learning that took place anywhere and at any time in the life of the individual<sup>13</sup>.

The validation system has accredited the results and the model of intervention of SKILLS. So, the aim of the validation is recognition of:

- a) the idea and the importance of co-operative training;
- b) the importance of the co-operation among the different cooperative movements within Europe in the view of converges and dialogue.
- c) the need to set up common codes.

## 6. THE VALIDATORS EVALUATION

As part of the validation system each partner has identified a prominent member in the cooperatives to assess and accredit our work both in terms of objectives and in terms of results.

On behalf of the Federazione Trentina della Coopearazione (FTC) was appointed:

Carlo Dellasega, General manager of Federazione Trentina della Cooperazione from 2004 after a long and intense experience in the Trentino cooperative system. In fact, he worked at the central credit cooperative (Cassa Centrale Banca) from 1980. From 1982 he moved to the Federazione Trentina della Cooperazione working on audit, consultancy and marketing services for the credit cooperatives. Carlo Dellasega is furthermore active part of the summit of different sector associations and companies participated by the Federation, working also in international context as volunteer. As general manager of FTC he promoted and coordinated the work on the values chart of the trentino cooperative system.

On behalf of the Institute for Cooperative Studies (LANKI) was appointed:

Mikel Lezamiz, Director of Cooperative Dissemination of Mondragon Cooperative Group. He was the Human Resources Manager of FAGOR Domestic Appliances, the biggest industrial cooperative of the group and the biggest company in Spain and France in its sector. He was the President of Arizmendi, another cooperative of the group in the educational sector. And he also is in charge of the Sociology Department of Otalora, Cooperative and Management Centre of MONDRAGON.

On behalf of Coompanio Skaraborg (KUS) was appointed:

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<sup>13</sup> Council of the European Union (2005), *Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, Commission Staf Working Document*, SEC (2005) 957, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, p. 27-28.

Per Johansson, HR-manager and manager of membership issues at HSB Nordvästra Götaland, a regional branch of the Swedish Tenant Owner's Association (a national federation, dedicated to the building and administration of tenant owned housing). He is in charge of HSB Nordvästra Götaland's educational programs for the board members of tenant owned housing co-operatives.

And finally, on behalf on Cooperatives Europe was appointed:

Jean-Claude Detilleux, board member of Cooperatives Europe. He has held the position of President of the Groupement National de la Coopération (GNC) since 1998. GNC brings together 15 national sectoral organisations in France. His principal occupation is President and Director-General of Crédit Coopératif, one of the five co-operative banks of France which has 175 branches and 2400 staff and a balance of 8.5 billion Euros. The membership of the Crédit Coopératif is constituted by non-profit organisations (associations, trade unions, mutuals, etc) as well as small and medium-size enterprises. Mr Detilleux's experience in the co-operative movement thus spans not only the finance and banking but also the wider non-financial co-operative movement. He served on the ICA board from 2005 to 2009 and was re-elected at the ICA General Assembly in Geneva for another four-year term.

Before the signature of the validation certificate formalised in Brussels on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, the validators completed a grid of questions about the main deliverables of SKILLS project. In the following lines we summarize the most relevant contributions made by the validators.



Deliverable/Content of the accreditation	disagree	agree	don't know	Notes/suggestions
<u>Learning system</u>				
Do you agree with the structure of the learning system as a combination of different items (balance of skills, curriculum, validation system, etc.) as useful support to strengthen cooperative identity?		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the web-tool the purpose and meaningfulness of the Attitude Evaluation in the section “Learning Unit 2” is an issue that should be open for discussion and evaluation. When doing the test, the answer given by the person taking it, is subjective, based on previous experiences and feelings. For example the following question in the Attitude Evaluation: <i>The sense of responsibility in your cooperative means to understand the power of listening in preventing and resolving conflicts, while reinforcing the democratic behaviours within the cooperative. Choose one answer.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I strongly agree</li> <li>- I agree</li> <li>- I disagree</li> <li>- I strongly disagree</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The answer given by the person taking the test is then compared to the answer that the person who designed the test has decided is the correct one. Subsequently, my subjective answer will be compared to an answer that is decided to be objectively correct.</p> <p>I have been given an answer as to why the test is constructed as such and the meaning behind it, but I am still not comfortable with the existence of the test, its purpose and its construction.</p>
Do you agree that the SKILLS results could be a first step for contributing to cooperative identity and in introducing a possible reflection on mandatory training for co-operators?		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If mandatory training is deemed necessary, which is another issue that must be thoroughly examined, then the Skills tool may be such a step. The question whether there should be a mandatory training still stands though. From my view point, considering the line of business the organisation I work for is in combination with the fact that we are a co-operative, I can name numerous reasons why the idea of mandatory training is not feasible.</li> </ul>

<u>Balance of skills</u>	I disagree	I agree	I don't know	Notes/suggestions
Is the skill list complete, considering that the choice was for a support to reinforce cooperative identity in a European context?		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the only goal is to reinforce the cooperative identity, the list is complete. If the project aims to do more, it is not.</li> <li>The balance of skills is a good analysis that do not exist before in the cooperative context and is a starting point for future actions.</li> <li>The activities specified in the Skills Framework (D 1.3) aim at identifying the necessary skills in reference to being a good and aware co-operator as well as to, in a limited sense, entrepreneurship. However, as the work done in Skills Framework, (D 1.3) is based on the seven cooperative principles, some of the activities, such as “supplying”, when connected to the principle of democratic member control, feels somewhat forced and not altogether natural. There is a risk, the magnitude of which is difficult to determine, that the ambition to connect the identified skills in the Skills Balance (D 1.2) to the seven co-operative principles, results in necessary skills missing from the curriculum.</li> <li>Other skills could emerge after an in depth customisation process in our cooperative context</li> </ul>
Do you think that there are other skills or knowledge necessary for being aware of the specificities in cooperativism?		x		
<u>Curriculum</u>	I disagree	I agree	I don't know	Notes/suggestions
Do you agree that it is a useful tool for self reflection and consequent recognition of the skills already gained of the co-operators involved?		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why “self reflection”? What happens when the co-operator performs the test and ends up with a result saying that he/she is not at good and aware co-operator?</li> </ul>
Do you think that there are other items and experience necessary to indicate for recognising an		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A functioning democratic co-operative is not only the result of active and aware members, but also the direct result of good knowledge and sound practice of meeting techniques.</li> </ul>

aware and active co-operator?				
<b><u>Validation system</u></b>	<b>I disagree</b>	<b>I agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Notes/suggestions</b>
<p>Do you agree that the validation of co-operator skills can support the valorisation of cooperative identity and help reinforce it?</p> <p>(note that there are not formal learning occasions specifically dedicated to cooperative identity; these skills often need to be recognised and valorised, rather than gained in formal occasions)</p>		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely! The skills gained in everyday life, in many cases carry a greater value and use than skills learned with in a formal framework. Often, it is through the practical use of knowledge, information etcetera, that the actual skills are refined and honed.</li> </ul>
<p>Do you agree with the proposed validation process as customised step for validating co-operators' existent skills and planning a future customised training process in line with co-operators' expectations?</p>		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See answer above.</li> </ul>
<p>Do you agree that this process could be an initial step for introducing and planning a formal training offer about cooperative identity for co-operators?</p>		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering that the Skills Balance and Skills Framework list skills that aim, not only at supporting and strengthening co-operative identity, when drawing the outlines of a formal training, other skills necessary should be taken into account. One must ask one self what it is that the project aims at. Is the goal only to create grounds for the making of good and aware co-operators or are there further goals that should be achieved. Do we want to create good and aware co-operators just for the sake of creating good and aware co-operators, just to spread the word so to say, or do we want more? Spontaneously I feel that the question of entrepreneurship is somewhat lost in the work done. I see traces of it, but nothing substantial. The question is,</li> </ul>

				why do people become co-operators? What came first? The idea of doing something constructive or the idea of doing things with others.
<b><u>Catalogue</u></b>	<b>I disagree</b>	<b>I agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Notes/suggestions</b>
Do you agree with the use of the catalogue as presentation of the SKILLS project and results and support to the promotion of tools to reinforce the cooperative identity?		x		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the target group of this document? For whom is it intended? To fully understand the value of what is offered, a basic knowledge of what the word “co-operative” means, is necessary. No information on this is given in the document.</li> </ul>

## **7. MANDATORY TRAINING**

After the development of the SKILLS project the partners reaffirm the importance of cooperative training; the conclusion of the project members lead to mandatory training in the co-operatives, even more than at the beginning of the project.

In this sense, this report comes to be part of that process of reflection in the line with mandatory training for co-operators. This process demands us to collect more information about the state of the art and the future opportunities. It demands a detailed description of the different contexts involved (data and information about the cooperative training experiences, and also further co-operator mandatory training experiences in other EC countries, if known).

We must recognize that through the development of the Learning Framework we have already collected the summary of learning structure present in the cooperative systems of participant countries/regions in terms of main actors, skills developed, availability of formal, non-formal and informal learning; methodologies, possible use of ICTs, etc. However, we did not collect information about the institutional context in which the cooperative training takes place in each participant country. In other words, the context for the sake of mandatory and non-mandatory training. So, in the following lines we summarize the different national/regional contexts involved in this project.

### **6.1.1 Mondragon group:**

The analysis made during the Reflection Process on the Meaning of the Experience by the co-operatives (2005-2006) and which culminated in the resolution passed during the Mondragon Cooperative Congress in 2007, provided an important step in the sphere of education and training. It led the Cooperative Training to a new status. It recognized the need and importance of training the cooperative community (in a wide sense, including potential members).

In fact, this resolution provides an important step in the sphere of the Cooperative Training by proposing a new phase in co-operative education. It is a phase that has got going through the process to train the organs, the training of the staff, education of the trainers and other actions. Since 2005-2006 reflections and actions are moving in this direction.

At this phase the important sphere of co-operative education is the social co-operative body itself, its organs, its new members and the new generations of co-operative members.

As LANKI have outlined in some other part of this project, together with Otalora Centre, Lanki is responsible for carrying out these new training programmes, and since it started up in late 2007, more than 1.500 members of social organs have completed it. In parallel, as this first experience of "standard" training (16 hours programme) goes ahead; and new programmes, with a more in deep approach, are being introduced.

After two years of experience we are in the position to say that the balance is positive but insufficient. Our conclusion is as follows:

- This step taken by Mondragon means a qualitative leap in the line of a mandatory training. This is to say that the continuity of these programmes in no case should be subject to economic variables such as the business performance.
- Rather than as an expense, it should be understood as an investment.
- Cooperative training must be understood as a Life-Long learning process. So, it cannot be reduced to one, two or three training programmes. It should be conceived as an open process.
- The training also has to focus not only in the informal learning channels, but also in a system of validation of those existent skills and knowledge.
- The training could be improved introducing with greater force learning in terms of competences, especially if we consider the three dimensions of competences (performative, cognitive and attitudinal dimension)
- To reinforce the cooperative identity the cooperative training should be combined with a positive disposition on the part of the cooperative and its social organs toward change.

So, in the view of our training activities and our role as cooperative trainers within the Mondragon cooperatives, Skills will help us to:

- Introduce a systematic process of auto-evaluation, with the validation of the existent skills and a process for their discussion.
- Reinforce points of reference for any cooperative learning system based on the development of competences.
- Enhance the design of most important new training programmes foreseen in LANKI, especially in relation of the Cooperative Curriculum and the Validation system.
- Answer the specific needs for improving awareness rising in the cooperative identity.
- Open a reflection on the need to build a *common language* to multiply the possibilities of exchange and mutual learning on cooperative training along EC countries.

## **5.2 Coompanion Skaraborg:**

Coompanion will use the tools and methods developed in the Skills project and implement them in ordinary activities i.e. advice and training to new and existing cooperatives.

Through the project we have become aware of the differences that exist regarding regulations in different countries in terms of cooperative activities. We can also see areas of

cooperation that can be further developed. A basic policy will be necessary regarding co-operators education to facilitate a joint national and international training and the same applies for the validation system. We can see the need to develop this further, something that ultimately would facilitate mobility and increased opportunities for learning and education in the cooperative movement in the EU.

Sweden don't have mandatory co-operators education but there is a large demand for education and training courses. There are a few Universities, Folkhighschools and adult education organizations that offer training for tutors in social cooperatives.

We would also particularly like to highlight the importance of working with group processes so that individuals can grow and develop together within the cooperative. This will create sustainable cooperatives that rest on a strong democratic ground.

Skills tools are an important piece of the puzzle in the design of a common system of training and validation in the cooperative movement in EU. In order to increase access and usability further a translation of the Skills tools into mother tongue of each country will be necessary

### 5.3 Federazione Trentina della Cooperazione:

The cooperative system in Trentino, following ICA principles and values and the present trends, represents an important reality in economic, social and cultural local context. A brief introduction about numbers, characteristics and learning occasions of the Trentino cooperative system is here important for giving an idea of its role in the local economy, i.e.:

- geographical data: the total area covered by the Province of Trento is about 6,200 km<sup>2</sup>, which is 2% of the national territory. The local population stands at about 500,000 inhabitants;
- cooperative movement data: 12,000 permanent workers and 18,000 suppliers in 507 cooperatives, 170,000 members (out of 220,000 registrations as people can be members of more than one cooperative).

The cooperative know-how developed and matured in Trentino over the years means that the local socio-economic background can be preserved and maintained, in order to help the enterprises survive not only in their local context but also in a global market, while respecting both a social need and an economic perspective. A way for maintaining this heritage is the training occasions that were collected and analysed in the Learning Framework, briefly:

- the training for cooperatives in Trentino has three main actors: the co-operative movement (Trentino Federation of Cooperation – FTC - and other organisations and associations related to the movement); schools as primary and secondary schools and public institutions as the Region and the Province;
- the formal learning occasions are represented by first level, masters and post-masters degrees specializing in cooperative studies, social companies' management, banking and economics with sub-specializations focusing on cooperatives offered by the University of Trento, in collaboration with FTC and Promocoop spa. Other formal learning occasions are organised by the collaboration of the Formazione Lavoro (Training & Work Agency) and the FTC that are offered to professionals who have worked or who are currently working in

their careers such as managers, consultants, administrative staff, and retired cooperative members;

- the *non-formal learning occasions* are represented by a series different learning occasions offered by FTC in collaboration with Formazione Lavoro, the Association of Women in Cooperatives, the Association of Young Co-operators, and the European Project Office. The learning objectives vary depending on targets involved that is very heterogeneous (cooperative members, cooperative administrators, individuals interested in cooperatives, cooperative members, managers, and employees; women co-operators and women interested in cooperatives; young co-operators and potentially young co-operators; and people interested in the Trentino cooperative system, especially international delegations, schools and training organizations, cooperatives and other businesses, trade associations, the public sector, and national and international universities and research centres). Focus of many learning occasions is to promote and strengthen cooperative identity in the co-operators by reinforcing and emphasising cooperative principles and values; to present and promote the concept of the cooperative card and the meaning of active cooperative membership;

### FTC ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING COOPERATIVE SKILLS

The cooperatives are an important economic reality in Trentino that is recognised both by the national and the local government. In fact, the Italian Constitution declares that the Italian Republic recognises “the social function of cooperation with respect to mutuality but not to private speculation”<sup>14</sup>, whilst the Civil Code defines cooperatives as “organisations with variable capital and mutual aims”<sup>15</sup> (whereby mutual aims are those concerning reciprocal benefit between an enterprise and its members). At a local level, the “development of cooperation and the supervision of cooperatives”<sup>16</sup> was recognised when the Trentino Alto Adige Region was declared autonomous in 1948 giving legal power to the local authorities<sup>17</sup>.

Between 1988 and 1993, legislation at a regional and then provincial level helped develop some sectors of the economy, and also provided financial resources to help promote the culture and values of cooperatives. Of special importance in this time was a law passed by the Region of Trentino Alto Adige in 1988<sup>18</sup> for the no profit sector of social cooperation, which preceded the national law. Later in 1993, Regional Law 15 recognised two forms of social cooperatives: cooperatives working in health, culture and education management; and cooperatives working in various fields such as that of agriculture, industry and services relating to the employment of disadvantaged persons.

In line with this recognised need of reinforcing the cooperative identity, FTC worked on different actions not only on learning occasions. Central action was the compilation of the the Trentino Cooperative Movement Statement of Value<sup>19</sup>, approved in 2007 as

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14 Article 45 of the Italian Constitution.

15 Article 2511 of the Italian Civil Code.

16 Article 4 of the Region Special Statute.

17 Three areas are covered by the regional autonomy for the cooperatives, i.e.: registration of cooperatives, along with a constant supervision of their registered status; frequent checks and revisions of the cooperatives; actions and measures implemented in the event of irregular behaviour in the management of cooperatives, with the possibility of closing the activity.

18 Law 381 of 8<sup>th</sup> November 1991.

19 The ethical values recognized as fundamental goods to be concerned about by being a

representation of the definition of cooperative enterprise that itself suggests that being a cooperative means holding specific ethical values and principles, operating on the basis of democratic management and economical participation of shareholders. The Trentino Cooperative Movement Statement of Value answered to the recognised need to be in line with the present change process placing the people in the middle and remaining development agent for the economy, the institutions and the society.

Another important present process of promotion of the cooperative identity is the approval of new strategical plan. The Executive Committee of the Federazione Trentina della Cooperazione (FTC) met on 8/02/2010 for the definition of the guidelines of the new strategical plan, discussed about the possibility to introduce learning programme/occasions aimed to improve the cooperative culture (and knowledge) of the members and FTC employees that may be added on their curriculum. The analysis on this theme started in 2005. Actually the present management of FTC which began its work in 2005, has encouraged and increased many actions aimed to promote the cooperative identity among the members, employees, administrators, students such as study visits, seminars, conferences, publications and other media tools. These activities/events have aroused great interest and strengthened the idea which led to the definition of a mandatory learning project to be realized in the future.

In this context, the main SKILLS objective to validate the cooperator SKILLS gained by non-formal and informal learning occasions could be of reference. The use of the developed learning system in Trentino will be possible after a customisation action for having a system that will answer to the specificities of the Trentino cooperative system. Other item of attention recognised by the feasibility plan for FTC was the future need of a change management action that supports the necessary transition from the awareness of the change need (reinforcing the cooperative identity) to the change (to have more active and aware co-operators).

The customisation of the learning system and an attending change management support will be necessary actions for the future of SKILLS products in Trentino. Field for this actions will be the integration in non-formal learning occasions. The introduction of the SKILLS products in the formal learning occasions will be a next step. In fact, the SKILLS products will further be tested in real non formal learning occasions and this will allow their customisation on the specificities of the Trentino cooperative system.

The introduction of the SKILLS learning system could be an action in line with the present process of review of the promotion of the cooperative identity described above.

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member of the Trentino Cooperative Movement are: democracy, reciprocity, mutuality, equality, solidarity, equity, respect, trust, merit, attention towards others, humility, intercooperation, honesty, transparency, peace, social responsibility, sustainable development, freedom, subsidiarity.

## 5.4 Final Conclusion

The previous overview don't allow us to make strong generalizations; instead, it allows us to have an idea of the existent heterogeneity among the different co-operative movements within the European Union.

Regardless of the stage in which each co-operative movement is situated, it is a common trend to increase the efforts to situate the cooperative skills, and thus, the cooperative training in a central place.

This is a purpose not only concerning the co-operators but especially the institutional representatives and the decision makers. This point has also been remarked in the future action plan of the Feasibility plan.