



**Iris Network**  
Istituti  
di Ricerca  
sull'Impresa  
Sociale

## WP6 Pilot Seminars Results - Euricse

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On September 13, 2012 Iris Network on behalf of Euricse conducted a focus group with 10 participants from across Italy.

Iris Network is the Italian national network of the social enterprise's research institutes, created to promote and support activities of empirical investigation and theoretical thinking to help a deep knowledge of the social enterprise organizations, affirming the role and improving their power of intervention.

The focus group took place during the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of Workshop on Social Enterprise. The workshop is an extended appointment to a large audience to promote the interaction and the exchange of innovative practices within the scientific community and the insiders (operators and managers of social enterprises, of non profit organizations, of public and private institutions). The Workshop is held every year in September at Riva del Garda, Trentino. This year edition was held on September 13 and 14 and was titled "Custom-made Innovation: doing more with less"; fifty good practices of social enterprises, innovating the production, aiming to new business models and testing management solutions to face the crisis were presented.

In this context the participants to the focus group had the possibility to be inspired by the Workshop's themes and to meet more than 400 practitioners from all over Italy.

The three areas of assessment, as specified in the project proposal were:

- to validate the quality and relevance of these training modules tailored to the specifics of each country. (does it address needs & level of SE managers in your country)
- to improve the modules and transfer process.
- To assess the integration of this module into existing qualifying training programmes (fit with existing trainings -gaps in provision)

**But note that our Aim in these Pilot Seminars is more centred on: assessing the general tools and the design/adaptation process, as opposed to evaluating the "product" or training that results.**



## Pilot Seminar description and participants

On September 13, 2012 Iris Network conducted a focus group with 10 participants from across Italy. Five were trainers and five were practitioners, deriving from Universities, consulting companies, federations of cooperatives, social cooperatives, second level organizations, and associations. This seminar was conducted in Riva del Garda, Italy during the Iris Network Workshop for social enterprises. The duration was approximately 3 hours.

Trainers	Practitioners
Giuliana Baldassarre - Management School, Bocconi University, Milan	Cristian Aiardi - Cooperativa Eliodoro (social cooperative type A), Trento
Antonio Benedetti - Consorzio CGM (national consortium for social cooperatives), Milan	Cristina Arrò - Consorzio Copernico (consortium of social cooperatives), Torino
Katia Candiotto - Confcooperative (regional federation of cooperatives), Treviso	Francesca Fiori - CSV Trento (center for volunteer associations), Trento
Alessandro Duranti - Confini online s.r.l. (consulting company for non-profit training), Trento	Mirella Maturo - Confcooperative Campania (regional federation of cooperatives), Naples
Immacolata Russo - Iccrea BancalImpresa (federation of cooperative credit), Padova	Martino Orler - Cooperativa Alpi (social cooperative type B), Trento

### Materials used for Pilot Seminar:

- The Ariadne project was introduced and the materials were presented using the attached Prezi presentation. A paper version of the Ariadne tools and methodology was given to each participant.

## Results of Pilot Seminar

### Introduction by coordinator

The participants were welcomed and the Ariadne objectives and project overview were presented.

### The three tools developed through the Ariadne project

- Competence Model

**The trainers** agreed overall that the Competence Model is complete and a useful tool. They highlighted that the most innovative and useful aspect of the model is that it is transversal rather than discipline focused (in Italy training usually focuses on the topic such as finance, law, etc, not the skill or competency). They liked that both external and internal relationships and considerations are addressed in the model. They discussed at length whether a manager should have all of these competences and agreed that a top manager should have a general overview of all the competences to be able to devise an organizational strategy. The trainers liked the idea of using the competence model to conduct a self-evaluation of competencies and skills one has or is lacking.

**The practitioners** were initially concerned about who and what type of manager the competence model is directed towards. They said it would be difficult to find one person that has all of the competences described. They proposed considering the competences combined as a definition of "management" more than of "manager". They mentioned that in the cooperative model the managers usually work as a team and that one person may not have all the competences. As the discussion continued and the ideas were exchanged with the trainers, they agreed that the model is complete and that it can be useful, especially for high level managers who should have a general overview of all the competences even if some are delegated to other managers.

In response specifically to the questions in the focus group methodology:

1. is this framework relevant to addressing needs of SE managers in your country?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners*
2. is this framework relevant to addressing level of SE managers in your country?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners*
3. is this framework reasonably comprehensive or are there significant gaps?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners*
4. Do you have any suggestions for improvements?  
*It could be useful to include the definition of manager/management and the concept of delegation or teamwork. They also suggested the importance of self-assessment prior to the training.*

- Country Specificities Chart

\*we discussed the country specificities chart before the general training framework because it seemed more logical to us to present the Competence Model and Country Chart in sequence.

The feedback from the trainers and practitioners was very similar. They all agreed that in general the chart is complete and useful and they liked the systematic organization of the topics. In particular, in the Specific Characteristics section they found the legislative topics of highest importance because it's the one that most impacts the other topics. In the second section (positioning/role) they mentioned the importance of awareness of all the relationships in order to understand the environment in which the organization operates. They placed highest weight and importance on the third section regarding future prospects since this is the topic that allows the organization to reflect upon the characteristics and environment of the organization. While the first two topics are static so to speak, the third is the one that pushes the managers to think about their strategy for going forward.

In response specifically to the questions in the focus group methodology:

1. Is the Chart useful and relevant for developing a course for SE managers in your country?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners. The trainers underscored the importance of all the topics in any management course and the practitioners highlighted the importance of new staff understanding these topics for the specific organization.*
2. Is the classification of topics useful and relevant?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners. Both agreed that the third topic presents the biggest challenge for managers and that if a training can effectively address this topic it would be complete and innovative.*

- General Training Framework

We showed the basic structure of the modules to the participants and had a very brief discussion, opting to spend more time on the variables. The participants, both practitioners and trainers agreed that the format could be good. Later in the discussion the notion of the European dimension was discussed at length. A suggestion that emerged was that the European dimension could be integrated with all the topics as opposed to separating the European dimension into one block and the local/country dimension into another. They all agreed that managers must be cognizant of the European dimension and influence on their organizations since without considering it there is a risk of becoming overly self-referential. In general, the trainers and practitioners were satisfied with the idea of having a general module (morning) and then a module focused on a specific topic or competency (afternoon). They noted that this is only possible, though, with direct communication between the trainer and the participants so that the needs and objectives are outlined beforehand.

In response specifically to the questions in the focus group methodology:

1. Are these areas of curriculum relevant to addressing needs of SE managers in your country?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners.*
2. Are these areas of curriculum relevant to addressing level of SE managers in your country?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners.*
3. Is this reasonably comprehensive or are there significant gaps?  
*Yes, for trainers and practitioners.*
4. Do you have any suggestions for improvements?  
*See above about European dimension and communication between trainer and participant.*
5. How do both elements fit with existing training provision; i.e. Can you identify any gaps in provision that this might help to fill?  
*They see this as a positive addition to current training offerings to enrich existing training and develop new trainings.*

### **Design methodology (8 variables) feedback**

The 8 variables were presented one by one to both the practitioners and the trainers.

1. Existing training context

Everyone agreed this is important to consider and that you should consider what is already existent before developing a new course.

2. Teaching corps

**Trainer feedback:** The trainers suggested it is very important to have a support team with the instructor to ensure that he/she understands the needs of the participants. The instructor should not just have scientific/theoretical knowledge, but also political awareness of the sector and the proper methodological competence to conduct the training. The trainers appreciated very much the mention of young researchers, who are often overlooked in Italy.

**Practitioner feedback:** The practitioners highlighted the importance of having instructors that know the sector, but also instructors from other sectors that can help raise new ideas and opportunities. They mentioned they would be interested in also bringing in testimonials from the for-profit sector to compare with the social economy. They suggested that instructors should not just be local and that they should bring in new elements.

3. Target

The trainers and practitioners both agreed that it is important to understand who the target is (the organizers as well as the instructors) and their motivations for attending the course; whether the target is sent by an organization or enrolled on his or her initiative is

key. The target can be either homogeneous or heterogeneous, as long as the instructor knows who is in the group.

4. Country oriented context and 5. Priority competences

See above feedback about country specific chart and competency model. The participants reiterated that the priorities can only be assigned after knowing the true needs of the target. In any case, they view the variables as complete and useful.

6. European dimension

The participants all agreed that the European dimension is essential to consider and that it reduces the risk of becoming self-referential. A suggestion was raised that instead of focusing on the European dimension in the morning and the local context in the afternoon, the European element could be brought in across all topics (give examples of best practices, comparisons, etc throughout the discussion of each topic).

7. Format

The format is not a neutral variable; it depends on the objectives of the training. Both the practitioners and trainers agreed that 3 consecutive days can be intense and can make it hard for the participants to take in everything, but that if the format is not simply lecture style, but mixed with other types of instructions (especially case studies) it can be lightened. They mentioned that on-line only works in certain cases and for certain objectives, like technical training and as support for in-person activities. They do not think that an all on-line course works.

8. Teaching method

The participants agreed this is important and must be considered along with everything else, not independently. They all felt a mix of teaching method is the best approach.

**Practitioner feedback on design methodology:**

- *Are the 8 variables useful and relevant for developing a course for SE managers in your country?*  
Yes. See above on specific variables. None of the practitioners suggested additional variables or removing any.
- *Is the design approach useful and relevant?*  
The practitioners see this approach as a way to really consider the needs of managers in a training course. If the variables are discussed with the participants themselves during the planning and design phase of the course, a truly useful and interesting training can be co-designed by trainer and participant.
- *Is the broad outline of this course attractive enough for you to attend and/or recommend it?*  
Yes, especially considering the above feedback. In particular, it is very useful to have a complete and concise overview of the competences and country oriented theme in order to help determine the needs for training.

#### Trainer feedback on design methodology:

- *Are the 8 variables useful and relevant for developing a course for SE managers in your country?*  
The trainers appreciated the variables and said it can help identify unexpressed needs, in particular through the country specific chart and competency model.
- *Is the design approach useful and relevant?*  
Yes, in particular as a reminder of all the elements to consider when planning a course. The trainers felt this is an innovative approach if used in collaboration with the participants during the design of the course.
- *Would you use it, either within existing training or as an approach to new course design?*  
The trainers would use it, perhaps adapting it to their own methods and existing trainings. They would use it to enrich what they are already doing.

#### Developments of Shared resources discussion:

- *Is Ariadne approach to shared resources useful and relevant?*  
The managers and trainers like the idea of the glossary and Wikipedia with a complete bibliography and thought the didactic information should be made available in one place (like a repository on the Ariadne website).
- *Are case studies from other countries likely to be useful in your country?*  
Yes, both the managers and trainers were interested in having a database of case studies to refer to.
- *Do you have any suggestions for improving the development of shared training resources?*  
They suggested a video tutorial on how to use the training methodology.

