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Executive Summary

This report addresses readers who are involved in cooperative systems, vocational training organisations and academic institutions in the social economy fields; elected cooperative members and managers, cooperative employees; European and National agencies embedded in the ECVET system and in qualifications; public authorities and services concerning employability policies.

The cooperative enterprise proves to be an important protagonist in the international market today, both for its widespread presence in all economic sectors and for its crucial role in social development by contributing towards reducing poverty, creating employment and promoting social inclusion.

In this period of ongoing economic and environmental crisis, there is considerable evidence that cooperatives have proved to be more resilient than other forms of business enterprise, and can provide a more suitable instrument for sustainable community development.

Cooperatives therefore need to equip themselves with tools compatible with their mission in order to empower them and reinforce their competitiveness on a national and global market, but at the same time must work to preserve their social character and mutual nature. The governance of a cooperative enterprise must have training available to increase their awareness about the characteristics, values and principles of cooperative identity.

In light of the acknowledgment of the cooperative role in the socio-economic context today, the European Coop Campus (EUCoopC) project main purpose is to define a European professional profile for cooperative board/elected members and top management positions, and encourage mobility at international level by adopting the European framework of ECVET. This professional figure will be equipped and able to promote the development and attractiveness of a collaborative business model, by strengthening the core values of co-operation to sustain strong and valid enterprises.

The partnership is a combination of expertise provided by coop systems, research centres in the field of social enterprises, cooperative training providers and networking organisations. The partner countries of Italy, UK, Germany, Spain, Greece, Romania and France, offer a wide umbrella vision and perspective that can enhance the chosen target of sustainable project results to be used at a European level, to provide useful research and practical guidance.

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1. Project Objectives

The main purpose of the project is to provide the board/elected members (cooperative top management positions) with a fresh awareness towards their role and the role of cooperatives in the European economy.

In this respect, the partnership designed and tested innovative methodologies and best practices and agreed a mutual recognition in order to enhance the importance of learning by doing and learning from others' experiences, especially in this working sector where traditional competences have to be strengthened with soft skills, an ethical outlook and a keen spirit of innovation.

To this end, the main objectives are to:

- respond to cooperative needs to rely on qualified staff to implement the principles of the cooperative movement and to promote cooperative enterprises as a sustainable business;
- support cooperatives to expand and develop a sound business through cross-border cooperation;
- enhance the attractiveness of continuous learning and mobility for coop board/elected members by developing personalized and modularized learning pathways.

The project allowed the partners to work on the following operational objectives:

- implementing the ECVET system for the mutual recognition of a common job profile for cooperative board/elected members and for adopting a common method to assess cooperative managerial skills through a blend of formal and non-formal learning;
- leveraging existing cooperative managerial skills into the professional development pathways of the board/elected members by elaborating a credit system for non-formal and informal training;
- promoting exchange experiences through the introduction of mobility learning units (MLU) in the training pathways of cooperative board/elected members.

Cooperative board/elected members can directly benefit from this project because it introduces crucial changes in traditional training by:

- recognizing NF learning and prior learning are a central focus, making continuous learning a reality;
- strengthening the role of managerial ethical competences, which will lead to a more transparent and responsible management with advantages also for coop members;
- fostering mobility as part of cooperator training pathways, which is an important innovation for the cooperative sector.

In addition, the creation of a permanent network within the project provides the basis for a long lasting European network for the mobility of cooperators, for monitoring the implementation of the ECVET framework at national level, and for other cooperative sectors and related organizations involved across Europe. Other international

organisations who plan or already have exchange programmes with the partners of this project can also take advantage of the ECVET tools for mobility, facilitating their further use and contributing in their improvement and customization.

The innovative process and the supporting guidelines produced can benefit VET institutions that adopt and customize the tools to redesign curricula and training programmes. Universities and research centres can find useful ideas for developing new courses, strengthening the collaboration with the SMEs and the cooperative context in the output of the project.

Finally, ECVET European thematic networks and national competent institutions will be able to take stock of the project experience and analyse a bottom up perspective of the cooperative sector to better engage future development of the transparency instruments and principles, and updating the qualification framework.

2. Project Approach

The partnership operated on the basis of a multi-actor approach and involved organisations with expertise in the fields of cooperative movement, training, and research within cooperatives and social enterprises. Specific tasks were assigned to partners based on their expertise in order to ensure the successful achievement of project results.

The EUCoopC project focused on two main topical issues for cooperative learning systems: the enhancement and recognition of non-formal learning through innovative methodology by way of strengthening soft skills and ethical competences; and mobility as a crucial factor for development of change and renewal.

To this end, the project adopted the concept of “learning organization” (Schön). This implies firstly to recognize evaluation as a situated learning and a crucial practice for innovation, alongside the valorization of human capital and re-organization; and secondly, to foster managers to become ‘reflective practitioners’.

Involving direct beneficiaries, such as coop board/elected members, provided an important opportunity for a participative definition of criteria and methodology. In this way, the project enabled beneficiaries to take part in the process, thus orienting the training offer according to their specific needs.

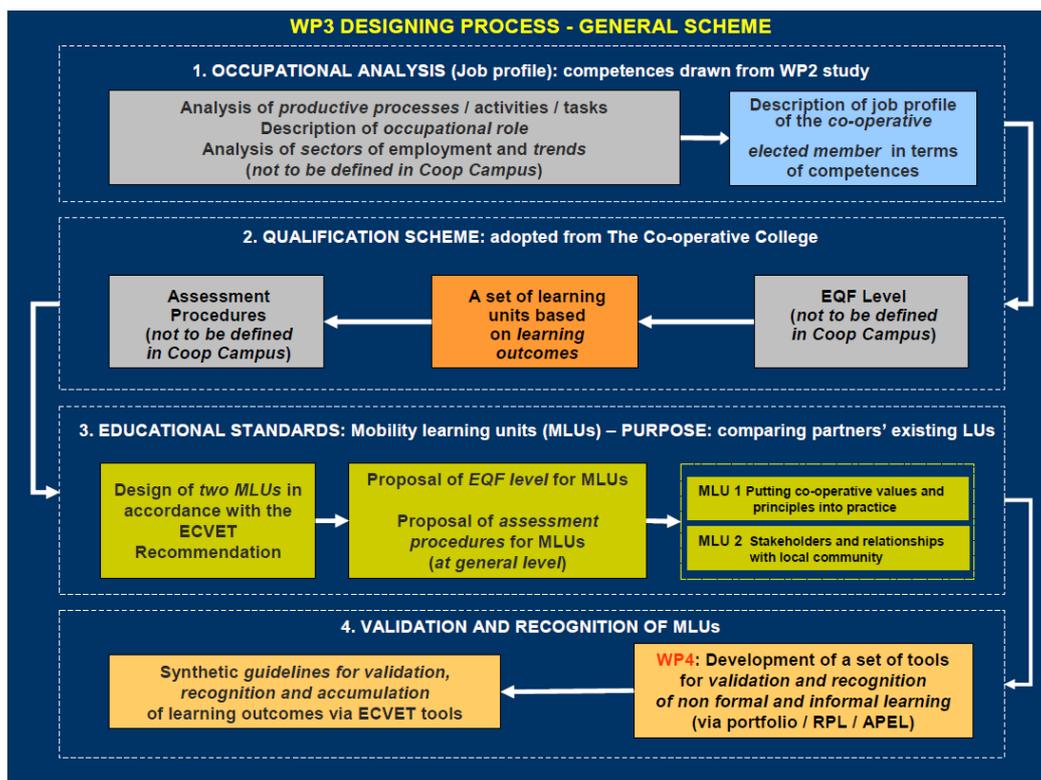
The working approach of the project was structured in eight work packages that complemented each other (WP1 - Management, WP2- State of art analysis, WP3 - Designing process, WP4 - ECVET Tool Development, WP5 - Pilot action, WP6 - Evaluation, WP7 - Dissemination, WP8 - Exploitation) based on the logical-framework method.

A glossary concerning the main concepts and terminology was shared since the beginning of the project to accompany all the work and to help make contents and concepts clear in all the national partner contexts, further supporting the partners in identifying common objectives. In this respect, some specifications emerged, especially concerning the meaning of “cooperative manager” due to the interpretation of the meaning of “manager” in the different languages and contexts. Therefore, it was agreed that “cooperative managers” as used in the description of the project refers to board members, elected members, and cooperative members with key roles.

A grid for analysis and focus group method (WP 2 State of art analysis) were used to carry out the phases of investigation and comparison, to focus on an analysis and comparison of professional profiles of coop board/elected members in the partners’ contexts.

The following work on the definition of the coop board/elected member job profile (WP3 - Designing process) took into account some of the results from the previous work package and adopted the methodology for drawing the qualification as recommended by European policy in the field of credit transfer in VET (ECVET).

The chart below details the framework for the designing process (WP3).



The work on the designing process was also supported by the exchange of good practices as part of the methodological approach, previously developed by the other partners.

The accomplishment of the WP4 -ECVET tools development required the adoption of a specific strategy especially for the definition of a common assessment method. In fact, at an early stage of the project, it became clear that the partners' evaluation systems (where existing) were too diverse and not suitable for mobility. It was, therefore, decided to develop and customise a new assessment system in line with ECVET recommendations, which is the so-called *Reflective Journal* and which offers many advantages for assessment, particularly for informal and non-formal learning contexts. By maintaining a journal throughout the mobility period, learners are able to record their experiences, insights, thoughts and ideas in a way which encourages active learning and self-assessment, both of which are consistent with the co-operative values of self-help and self-responsibility. Also, a well-structured Reflective Journal gives all learners equality of opportunity to generate assessment evidence in a way which, particularly for those with a less academic background, is less intimidating than formal examinations, tests or assignments.

The efficiency and the improvement of the ECVET tools and the methods developed in the WP4 were ensured by implementing two testing sessions carried out within WP 5 – Pilot action.

The evaluation strategy of the whole project was based on a risk assessment approach to ensure the quality achievement of the outcomes, by way of working in teams with the lead partners using a shared method and agreed progress markers.

The overall implementation of the project dissemination was based on a common strategy, which was concretized in each partner's dissemination work plans collecting the promotional actions that partners aimed to carry out, the methodology

implemented and the related indicators. Traditional marketing tools (website, logo, leaflets), promotional events and a social network, were the easiest ways to reach a larger audience to promote the project and its results.

A common grid was used for collecting partners' action plans for future exploitation of the project results. The grid took into account the stakeholders and targets of the exploitation; the tools and outcomes offered; and how to promote them.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

In line with the work packages and the objectives of the project, the main outcomes and results produced are as follow:

- **D.3.1. Job profile description** - a description of a European qualification scheme described in terms of a relevant set of KSC, related Learning outcomes (LO) and Learning Units (LU), and aligned with EQF levels. The work was accompanied by an introduction to the VET credit system for educational mobility across Europe and a brief description of EQF and ECVET devices, in the framework of new European policy for recognition and validation of qualifications and competences. All the work was also based on the analysis and comparison within the partners' contexts involved.
- **D.3.2. Mobility Learning units (MLU)** - a description of the transferable part of the job profile defined, that can be achieved through an exchange program and recognized as part of the learning pathway for the coop board/elected members and top management positions. The MLU aimed to provide a common reference to the training activities across partner countries.
- **D.3.3. Operational guidelines for the allocation of ECVET credits** - summarising the European Recommendation on ECVET, about the recognition of LO process and the allocation of ECVET credits for non-formal and mobility learning context , taking into account topics such as: transfer, recognition and accumulation of LO; learning agreement and personal transcript; ECVET points.
- **D.3.4. ICT tools for transcript of records** - a webapp providing a method for the transfer of credit for LO achieved in formal, and where appropriate, non-formal and informal contexts. The method is based on the following stages:
 - the “hosting” institution assesses the LO achieved and awards credits to the learner. The LO achieved and the corresponding ECVET points are recorded in a learner's “personal transcript”;
 - the “home” institution validates the credits as a suitable record of the learner's achievement, and then recognises the LO that have been acquired.

To support the exchange of experiences and the introduction of the mobility learning in the cooperative board/elected member training pathways the following deliverables were produced:

- **D.4.1. ECVET framework** - a document defining the tools and methods of an ECVET model framework, designed to facilitate within an ECVET partnership:
 - i) mutual acceptance of each other's quality assurance, assessment and recognition arrangements,
 - ii) the transparency of competences in measuring LO,
 - iii) validation criteria and procedures suitable for the purposes of credit transfer. The core of this ECVET framework is the assessment tool (**Reflective Journal**) and the process designed ad hoc through the project. Assessment refers to the methods used to establish the extent to which a learner has attained the particular knowledge, skills and competences required in order to achieve the agreed LO.

- **D.4.4.Guidelines for implementing ECVET** - a guidance addressed to trainers, VET providers, research centres and institutes providing Masters degrees on social enterprise, and cooperative colleges, which support the implementation of ECVET tools and processes developed and tested within the European Coop Campus project.

The Guidelines introduce **in the first part** the ECVET model framework and the tools drawn up to support the transnational mobility designed as part of the proposed European Qualification for the coop board/elected members. The tools include:

- i) the **Reflective Journal** (mentioned previously);
- ii) the **D.4.2. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** - a framework for co-operation between the competent institutions, aiming at establishing mutual trust between the partners. In this MoU, partner organisations mutually accept their respective criteria and procedures for quality assurance, assessment, validation and recognition of knowledge, skills and competence for the purpose of transferring credit;
- iii) **D.4.3 Learning agreement (LA)** - an individual document which sets out the conditions for a specific mobility period and it specifies, for a particular learner, which unit/s and LO should be achieved, together with the associated ECVET points, and also lays down that, if the learner achieves the expected LO, and these are positively assessed by the 'hosting' institution, the 'home' institution will validate and recognise them as part of the requirements for a qualification.

The second part of the guidelines D.4.4. groups together templates, facsimile examples and guidance on how to use the tools in coherence with the ECVET recommendations.

To follow, a **Permanent Network D.8.2** was established between partners with the objective of ensuring the on-going use of the project tools and results beyond the conclusion of the experimentation within the project. Its main goals are to foster mobility of the coop board/elected members; monitor and follow up the implementation of the ECVET framework, enhance cross-border cooperation, and form the basis for future exploitation projects.

The founder members of the **Permanent network** are the four partners representing cooperative systems and their training providers (FTC, The Co-op College, COEXPHAL and ADG).

The network is also open to other partners according to their needs and interests, alongside other cooperative organisations, research centers and academic institutions operating in the field of social enterprise.

All the deliverables previously mentioned are available on the project website in the Results area and are translated into all partner languages. <http://www.coopcampus.eu/Results> .

Further information about the project and its results can be received by contacting the partners' emails published on the project website.

4. Partnerships

The makeup of the consortium ensured a wide range of competences to address the objectives of the project and to ensure a strong and long term impact.

The Consortium is made up of eight experts in the diverse fields of:

- cooperative systems and coop training providers (4 partners: The Federation of Cooperation in Trentino - Italy, The Co-operative College – UK; The Academy of German Cooperatives - Germany; COEXPHAL- an association of fruit and vegetable producer organisations of Almería – Spain);
- research centres in Social Enterprises & Social Economy (3 partners: EURICSE- European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises - Italy; University of the Aegean- Greece; Civil Society Development Foundation - Romania);
- training and evaluation consultancy – Actif Europe France

The involvement of partners with complementary competences endorsed the maintenance of a good balance between specific working requirements from cooperative enterprises and the academic approach to ensure the achievement of the objectives set.

The partnership also offered an interesting and promising geographical and cultural heterogeneity since there are 7 different countries that provide a good starting point to develop a mobility programme and to ensure a valuable pilot action for target groups.

Furthermore, the consortium benefitted from the support of an important organization that plays a crucial role at European level: *OECD Lead Trento Centre* provided a paramount contribution for the future exploitation of the results. More precisely, the mission of the OECD Centre is to increase synergies between different areas of expertise and disseminate best practices on the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to promote entrepreneurship, SME growth and local economic and employment development.

5. Plans for the Future

The outcomes and the results produced within the European Coop campus project represent an important opportunity for the international cooperative organizations, and they can be considered unique tools for encouraging and strengthening the specific training and competences required for the people who are members, who work and manage cooperatives and social enterprises. The tools produced can also support the realization of a *portfolio* aligned and recognized within the ECVET system at European level.

The creation of the permanent network to be implemented as a European cooperative campus formalized with the signature of a **Cooperation partnership commitment** by the four partners representing coop and training systems in their countries (FTC, The Cooperative College, ADG, COEXPHAL) offers specific training pathways through mobility exchanges and transfer of competences, including recognition and validation of non-formal learning.

This Permanent Network, the Coop campus at European level, is open to the other partners who belong to the academic and research context and to new affiliations with other possible European cooperative organizations or relevant institutions. Specific webpages for sharing information, events and training programmes of this Coop Campus will be added on the project website and linked to the partners' own websites.

In line with their characteristics, partners have designed further strategies to support the sustainability of the project and exploitation of the results, both concerning the job profile and the inclusion of MLU in their training programmes and the supporting tools and methodology (Assessment tool, MoU, LA, etc.).

The job profile structure for the coop board/elected members elaborated within the project was a fundamental step for achieving a formal qualification in the cooperative enterprises field.

As a consequence, the Coordinator FTC (Italy), intends to complete the definition of a coop board/elected members' profile, thanks to the collaboration with the competent institution, who has already validated the process and the methodology adopted in the project to prepare to reach the formal certification and the recognition of the qualification for the coop board /elected members in credit and social cooperatives.

EURICSE (Italy) will work on a possible harmonization of their existing and future training aimed at coop top management positions with the job profile elaborated.

Cooperative delegations and international organisations visiting FTC and EURICSE, can also take advantage of the ECVET tools for mobility which will be included in their exchange programmes in order to further improve and customize the work done so far.

The Co-op College (UK) are applying to become an accredited sending agency for mobility units.

The partner ADG (Germany) aims to continue to promote the established coop profile of board/elected members for the internal use of ADG as an input in designing training programmes, seminars and workshops.

ADG will also implement the established MLU according with the demand of their European partners and will put into practice the MoU designed to make available the outcomes of the project to training institutions interested, ECVET based training centres, and other competent institutions.

COEXPHAL will work on harmonizing the existing training programmes and LO that form the job profile and introduction of the MLU and assessment methodology with the visiting cooperative delegations.

Actif Europe (France), a partner not directly linked to the cooperative context, managed to involve French SCOP Federation and Oxalis (the cooperative network for entrepreneurs), which express their interest in using the project results. Cross fertilization with other French training initiatives already implemented where mobility opportunities are relevant, will follow.

CSDF, as a key actor in the public dialogue around the social economy in Romania, have begun a close collaboration with the organisation of consumer coops in Romania (CENTROCOOP). CSDF made the first step in Romania in introducing a coherent ECVET implementation framework in the area of social economy training contributing to the development of cooperatives in the country.

UAEGEAN (Greece) will enable the use and further facilitate the European Coop Campus materials produced within the academic research area of the three PhD programs that were launched in 2013 on cooperative research involving the Fishing Coops in the Aegean; the Women Coops in Lesbos; and the Mastic growers Coop of Chios.

Partners will also continue to raise awareness about the project outcomes, making available the results for other organizations in their context networks and spreading the knowledge about the project within other cooperative systems at national and international levels. A particular focus of interest will be given to promote the structure of the job profile among the main target groups (cooperatives, board/elected members, stakeholders interested in cross-border cooperation between coops) in regard to the valorisation and recognition of specific skills needed for managing cooperatives in all countries considering that all cooperative systems have adopted the same principles and values stated by ICA (International Cooperative Alliance).

In this respect, reinforcing the links with the ECVET national contact points and competent institution is essential for achieving a formal recognition and certification of the qualification for the top managerial positions in cooperatives.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The EUCoopC project specifically addresses cooperatives, which represent a crucial part of SMEs, and their learning needs, by fostering innovation, development and sustainable growth through knowledge and continuous training, as recommended by the Bruges Communiqué and suggested by ET 2020.

The importance and the positive role of cooperatives as vehicles for the implementation of many European Community objectives in fields like education, employment policy and social integration, is demonstrated by the recognition, for example, of cooperatives by the EC as a mainstream development actor alongside NGO and trade unions, in 2010.

Furthermore, the proclamation by the UN of 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives marked an important recognition within the international community of the role of cooperatives in promoting “fullest possible participation in the economic and social development of all people”, including women, people of all ages, ethnicities and disabilities (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the UN, Agenda items 61b). In addition, the International Co-operative Alliance recently postulated that cooperatives would be the fastest growing form of enterprise by 2020.

The definition of the cooperative board/elected member job profile has taken into account the Recommendation of the European parliament and of the council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the Monitoring of ECVET implementation strategies in Europe (Cedefop 2013), contributing to the Copenhagen process.

The project addresses the lack of a credit transfer system and the recognition of professional profiles in coop systems needed to better promote the personal and professional development to enhance the role of continuous training (LLP). The project also aims to strengthen mobility in order to enhance cooperation both in training and working through the design and testing of ECVET methodology, which is still an important priority in the new Erasmus + programme.

An analysis of possible overlapping areas among different European programmes can provide cooperative systems with a wide range of mobility opportunities and support the integration and cross fertilization of European programmes.

Furthermore, the EUCoopC project supports several European policies under Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion programmes as New Skills for New Jobs by developing matching between skills required and cooperative needs for improving their competitive advantage within the challenge of the economic and social sector. It overlaps the goals with ESF - 2020 priorities, promoting a synergic action such as employability, social inclusion and better education and of the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020.

By developing tools for increasing the competitiveness of cooperatives, the project also answers to the EC communication presented in the document “Social Business Initiative Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation”, October 2011.

The main topic of the project and the range of partners involved in the EUCoopC concerning cooperative enterprises and training/research institutions, can meet the

goals of the programme Sector Skills Alliances, as an initiative designed to promote European cooperation within a specific sector of the economy. In fact, partners sought to promote cooperation between three core groups of stakeholders; VET providers and researchers, and VET authorities and decision-making bodies.

