



## **European Coop Campus**

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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 and principles in order to reinforce their competitiveness on a national and global market, but at the same time must work to preserve their social character and mutual nature. So training and education take on a meaningful role in strengthening the cooperative identity and development.

In light of the recognition of the cooperative role in the socio-economic context today, the *European Coop Campus* (EUCoopC) project aims to develop an innovative application of ECVET tools at international level, both to increase and to recognize member cooperative competences as a way of empowering coop enterprise and encouraging cooperation throughout Europe. Learning and working needs of cooperative managers are matched to design an ad-hoc credit system that recognizes and qualifies skills in answer to European market needs, simultaneously enhancing mobility and transfer of skills at a transnational level.

A European cooperative manager job profile will be the result of such alignment, alongside a coherent and continuous training path as support to the valid future and success of the cooperative enterprise, to provide working opportunities and solutions, not only to survive the current crisis but to live and work better in a globalized economy and the current socio-economic context.

The partnership is a combination of: 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 cooperative managers (i.e. elected members and members with key positions) with an innovated approach towards their role and the role of cooperatives in the European economy.

For this reason, the partnership design and test innovative methodologies and exchange agreements 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 managers and elected members by developing personalized and modularized learning pathways.

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

- identification and definition of a common cooperative manager/elected member job profile based on the analysis and comparison within the partners' contexts involved;
- elaboration of a credit system for non-formal and informal training and methodological guidelines for cooperative training institutions matching the learning needs and suggestions of coop members;
- identification of transversal learning areas for defining MLUs and related LOs, that is a set of knowledge/skills/competences that can be better achieved through an exchange program and that would be recognized as part of the learning pathway of the coop managers and elected members;
- testing implementation of ECVET tools (Memorandum of Understanding, Learning Agreement) within cooperatives mobility;
- establishment of a permanent network of partners that will be operative also after the project lifetime in order to maintain coop mobility as designed in this project.

Moreover, the project has achieved the objective proposed by involving research and training centers and European networks working on VET. This is meant to maintain a good balance between specific working requirements from cooperative movements and the ECVET framework.

The definition of a European cooperative manager profile can be considered a first step for a future recognition from national certification institutions so that the project

results can be easily integrated within ET frameworks and cooperative system strategies.

Cooperative managers and members will directly benefit from this project because it introduces crucial changes in traditional training:

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

In addition, the creation of a permanent network during the project aims to provide the basis for a long lasting European network for the mobility of cooperators, to monitor and follow up the implementation of the ECVET framework at local level, and to encourage future exploitation projects.

Finally, an analysis of possible overlapping areas among different European programmes will provide cooperative systems with a wide range of mobility opportunities and support the integration and cross fertilization of European programmes

## 2. Project Approach

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

The EUCoopCampus project focuses 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 and change.

To this end the project adopts 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 cooperative managers and elected members, has provided an important opportunity for a participative definition of criteria and methodology. In this way, the project enables beneficiaries to take part in the process, thus orienting the training offer according to their specific needs.

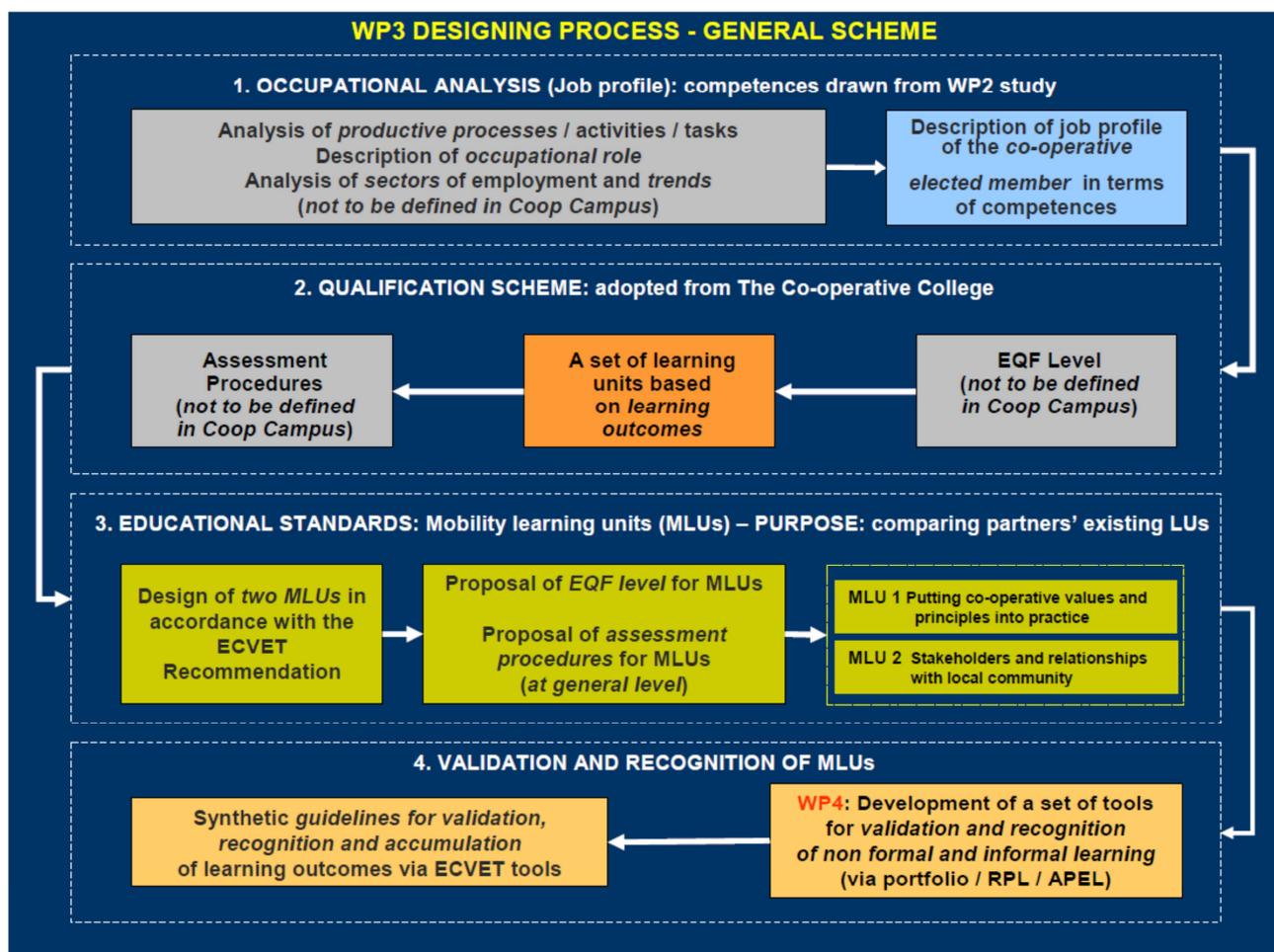
The working approach of the project is structured in eight work packages that complement each other (WP1. Management, WP2. State of art analysis, WP3. Designing process, WP4. ECVET Tool Development, WP5 Pilot action, WP6. Evaluation, WP7. Dissemination, WP8..Exploitation) based on the logical-framework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

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 managers in the partners’ context.

The following work on the definition of the coop manager/elected member job profile (WP3 - Designing process) took into account the results from the previous work package mainly 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 practice as part of the methodological approach, previously developed by other partners.

The evaluation strategy of the whole project is 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 is based on a common strategy which is concretized in each partner's dissemination work plans collecting the promotional actions that partners aim to carry out, the methodology implemented and the related indicators.

For the Sustainability of the project, an exploitation plan according to the partners' needs has been taken into account, mainly focussing on the establishment of a permanent network able to foster a durable impact of the project.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

In line with the work packages and the objectives of the project the main outcomes and results produced so far are as follow.

Within the *WP 2 State of Art* analysis which had the aim to provide an overview of existing cooperative manager profiles in the partner cooperative systems in order to reach the definition of a common and specific European job profile for cooperative managers, two deliverables had been produced.

- **A comparative study (D.2.1)** took into account the following aspects: a) the existing professional profile by listing and analysing the LOs (learning outcomes) in terms of KSC (knowledge, skills and competences), especially focusing on the “cooperativistic” field; b) the cooperative learning framework, with particular attention to non-formal and informal learning occasions; c) the EQF levels and the ECVET specification within each partner cooperative learning system, if available. This study identified the common elements and differences which provided an initial definition of a shared European job profile for cooperative enterprise managers.
- **A bottom-up identification of the learning needs (D.2.2)** aimed to help understand and analyze the gaps between the needs of the cooperative enterprise in terms of qualified managers and existing suitable profiles. The study also aimed to identify areas of competences suitable for MLUs (mobility learning units) needed for promoting the exchange among partners, training mobility across Europe, and for the basis of the permanent network (D. 8.2) within the exploitation phase.

Work Package 3 – *Designing process* followed the results collected in Work Package 2, which has the purpose to draw an outline for the cooperative manager /elected member job profile. To this end the following deliverables were produced:

- **D.3.1. Job profile description** i.e. the description of a qualification scheme described in terms of a relevant set of KSCs, related LOs and LUs (learning units), and 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.
- **D.3.2. Learning units (LUs)** i.e. a detailed description of the transferable part of the job profile to be codified in MLUs. The MLUs aimed to provide a common reference to the training activities across countries to be undertaken in the next phases of the project (WP4 - ECVET tools development). Their main function was to provide a framework for the comparability of existing LUs that each hosting partner institution already has in its current training offer (in terms of learning outcomes and duration) to be used in the next testing phase (WP 5 - ECVET Pilot action);
- **D.3.3.Operational guidelines for the allocation of ECVET credits** i.e. a methodological approach developed by implementing the European Recommendation on ECVET about the recognition of the LO process and the allocation of ECVET credits, taking into account topics such as: transfer, recognition and accumulation of LOs; learning agreement and personal

transcript; and ECVET points. This work will be updated after the realization of WP 4 - ECVET tools development and will accompany the European coop manager profile to be used by the cooperative training providers.

- **D.3.4. ICT tools for transcript of records** i.e. elaboration of methods for the transcript of records using ICT tools. This work is still in progress. Initially the method for transcript of records was supposed to take into account the possible improvement (from a technological viewpoint) of the cooperative membership card, usually used by the coop systems to collect data about the members. The quick ICT changes and rapid innovation has led partners to explore more updated technology, such as apps instead of membership cards.

The outcomes achieved in the first year of the project are uploaded in the project website: [www.coopcampus.eu](http://www.coopcampus.eu) (D.7.3 Project website) in a reserved area only for the partners. As many of them will be updated after the testing phase, the final versions will be open to the public. The outcomes will also be available in the partner languages. Further information about the project can be received by contacting the partners emails published on the project website.

## 4. Partnerships

The composition of the consortium ensures 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 partnership also offers 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 benefits from the support of 2 important organizations that play a crucial role at European level:

- the *OECD Lead Trento Centre* and *Cooperatives Europe* that will provide a paramount contribution for the future exploitation of the results. More precisely, the mission of 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.
- *Cooperatives Europe* is the European Region of ICA representing the biggest membership organisation in EU for promoting the cooperative model of enterprise for sustainable economic progress which will contribute to the dissemination of the results.

## 5. Plans for the Future

The first year of the project mainly focused on the identification and description of the cooperative manager /elected members' profile in light of the cooperative system's needs and in line with the ECVET recommendation.

The next step will be to detail the implementation of the ECVET system by:

- Mutual recognition of the cooperative manager profile across Europe;
- Adopting a common method of cooperative managerial competence assessment;
- Allowing for mobility in cooperative managers' training pathways.

The ECVET tools developed will be tested in two sessions under WP 4 - Pilot actions: one in Spain where the target group involved will be representative of training providers, and one in Germany where the target group involved will be the final beneficiaries, i.e. cooperative managers/ elected members.

The final phase of EUCoopC project will be the creation of a permanent network for the management of the mobility exchanges among the partner countries, and to open up to new affiliations with other possible European organizations.

It has to be underlined that the outcomes of the project represent an important opportunity for the cooperative systems and for the lifelong learning training which aim to preserve and protect the specificity of being and acting as a cooperative member. It is also fundamental to have a codified job profile for aware and responsible members and a toolkit which allows the realization of a *portfolio* aligned and recognized within the ECVET system at European level. Such *toolkit* would be unique and original for the European coop systems as support to their needs for encouraging and strengthening the specific training and competences for those who work in cooperatives and social enterprises.

This *toolkit* could contribute at different levels:

- basic training of cooperative members about cooperative culture;
- specific training for members who want to candidate for key positions in the cooperative;
- general training in schools for students about cooperative principles and values.
- Innovative training for the development of the professional profile of the people working in the social enterprise sector.

To this end, all partners commit to develop an active dissemination programme to spread the results of the EUCoopC project and to encourage the startup of exploitation projects.

It is therefore important to:

- continue the promotional strategies according to each partner's specificities and needs in relation to their cooperative contexts, in the numerous meetings and workshops held at national and international levels;

- strengthen the close collaboration with the network established among partners, by exchanging and sharing experiences;
- test and customize results internally, within partner's own organizations;
- spread the knowledge about the results of the project within other cooperative systems and European organizations and networks;
- reinforce the links with national ECVET points and qualification agencies.

A final workshop will be held in Brussels in December 2014 to give the opportunity to all those interested to increase their knowledge about the project and to meet the project team for further details, contacts, and possible future plans.

## 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 adoption of the Recommendation on the Promotion of Cooperatives by the International Labour Conference in 2002 which states, “The promotion of the cooperatives should be considered as one of the pillars of national and international economic and social development.”

The definition of the cooperative manager /elected member job profile has taken into account the recent 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.

Furthermore, the EUCoopC project overlaps the goals with Social Fund priorities, promoting a synergic action such as axe II (Employability), axe III (Social Inclusion), and axe IV (Human capital).

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.

