

# YOUNG PEOPLE, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & NON-FORMAL LEARNING:

## A WORK IN PROGRESS



SALTO-YOUTH PARTICIPATION

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## YOUNG PEOPLE, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & NON-FORMAL LEARNING:

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## ROBERTA TROVARELLI

Roberta Trovarelli has worked in Legacoop Emilia Romagna since 2009. She is in charge of Co-operative Promotion and International Projects and Relations. At the moment, together with the territorial structures of Legacoop, Generazioni (the network of young co-operators) and various public and private stakeholders, are committed to developing measures to actively promote the co-operative movement and the creation of start-up co-operatives.

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# YOUTH SELF-EMPLOYMENT:

## THE CO-OPERATIVE AS A MODEL OF ETHICAL ENTERPRISE

Co-operatives were established with the objective of improving the economic conditions of those who have less opportunity to improve their lives. During its 150 years of activity, the co-operative movement has become increasingly important. The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) is an independent, non-governmental organisation established in 1895 to unite, represent and serve co-operatives worldwide, and also to be a guardian of the co-operative identity, values and principles, which are the basis of all co-operatives. Its members come from all sectors of the economy (agriculture, banking, consumer, fisheries, health, housing and insurance), from one hundred countries, representing one billion individuals worldwide; one hundred million people work for a co-operative locally<sup>6</sup>. The acknowledged worldwide importance of co-operatives and their contribution to social and economic development can be summarised in the words of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon during the UN International Year of Co-operatives: 'Co-operatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility'.

Today, we can see that entrepreneurship is constantly evolving. New economic challenges force us to deal with new technologies and a new global framework and, at the same time, with relevant local issues such as unemployment, environmental emergencies, economic crises, abandonment of rural areas and the related values and traditions.

New generations face a challenge and they are at the heart of the solution. They have the skills to understand the changes and they show a renewed awareness and attention to values like honesty, sustainability, respect, and the right to work. These are the priorities which emerged from a survey that Legacoop – one of the main organisations representing co-operatives in Italy – has commissioned for young people under thirty (Swg, 2012). That is why Legacoop believes that young people are closer to the values of co-operation and are the solution for a more sustainable and ethical future.

### WHAT IS A CO-OPERATIVE? PRINCIPLES AND MODES OF ACTION

According to the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), a co-operative is an 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. So, the role of people in a co-operative organisation is central and is the reason for the existence and creation of the co-operative. Importantly, ‘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’ (ICA, 1995).

This leads to the idea that people are at the centre of this kind of economic organisation. Each co-operative is created by a group of people who choose and define the way in which the enterprise is going to be run. All co-operatives across the world are based on seven principles, which guide the way the values are put into practice.

1. Voluntary and Open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member economic participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among co-operatives
7. Concern for community

The spirit of a co-operative lies in the reasons for its establishment, namely to respond to common needs, with democratic management.

The above principles mean that specific behaviour is required of co-operative owners, in line with the following ideas:

- Voluntary and open membership: a co-operative is open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities. So, it is a collective project which includes the capacity of all the members and allows the members to develop their own capabilities and their entrepreneurial spirit.

- Democratic member control: one member-one vote means that members control the organisation, they are part of the decision-making process and set out policies. A co-operative ‘chief’ does not exist and each co-operative chooses its governing representatives.
- Member economic participation: the members are equally involved in terms of capital investment and decisions, strengthening the democratic aspect. Part of the equity is dedicated to the co-operative itself and its development.
- Autonomy and Independence: each co-operative is autonomous and its self-help organisation is controlled by the members. A co-operative can receive external resources (enterprise, public organisation, etc.) but retain its co-operative autonomy and the members continue to make decisions in a democratic way.
- Education, Training and Information: co-operatives invest in training and allow their members to develop their own capabilities for co-operative development and improvement.
- Co-operation among co-operatives: each co-operative must reinforce the co-operative movement through local, national and international structures.
- Concern for community: a co-operative is run with respect for the environment and local sustainable development. Inter-generational spirit leads co-operatives to act with respect for the environment and future generations. Co-operatives are part of the local community and they engage in socially responsible behaviour.

A co-operative’s sustainability is built on three pillars and requires the balancing of social; economic, and environmental components. All of these values make a co-operative a special type of business, with strong links to its territory, to the local community and the protection of employment. But the co-operative is also an enterprise that has to succeed on the market, compete with other players, and respond to new challenges in a more efficient way and with respect for people’s needs.

What sets co-operatives apart from other types of enterprises is the way in which they achieve their goals. A co-operative focuses mainly on people and not on profit. Unlike private companies aiming to maximise profits for their shareholders (often by decreasing the income of producers), the ultimate goal of a co-operative is to satisfy the needs of its members, whether they are workers, consumers or users. So the co-operative is an enterprise which first and foremost creates value within the society it operates in. Co-operatives have been classed as three main types. The first is a ‘worker-owned co-operative’. This means that the co-operative is created by workers, who provide co-operative work (hence the resulting key figure of the ‘working member’). These co-operatives are widespread in the industrial, construction and design and service (catering, transport, cleaning) sectors. The second is ‘the consumer-owned co-operative’: this co-operative is created by individuals who take advantage of the co-operatives’ goods and/or services in a more favourable way compared

to the market. The main examples are large-scale distribution chains in co-operative form, although these co-operatives are also widespread in other sectors (telephony, electricity distribution). The third is ‘the producer-owned co-operative’: this co-operative is created by individuals who provide products to be processed and sold or services to be provided for work taken on by the co-operative from private and public purchasers. There are many examples of this type of co-operative in the agri-food sector, such as cheese factories. Members of these co-operatives are milk-producing farmers. The co-operative collects the raw material and converts it into cheese, also handling the marketing and distribution of the finished product.

Co-operation is evolving and demonstrating its ability to meet the new needs of people in a changing society as local economic and global conditions change. The co-operative model also provides a framework for workers who have been made redundant: it enables them to not lose their skills and knowledge, to be productive, engaged in more democratic and respectful working relationships, to engage in socially meaningful work and to construct their own professional life.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN ITALY

The history of co-operatives in Italy began back in 1854. It was only 10 years after the first co-operative experience, set up in England by the ‘Rochdale Equitable Pioneers’ Society’. At present, the Italian Constitution (1948) recognises the social function of co-operatives operating with a non-profit and mutual aid approach (art.45). The legal system promotes and favours the co-operative as a type of association using the most suitable means and, with suitable controls, ensures its nature and objectives. A recent reform (Legislative Decree n°6/2003) also awards some tax breaks to co-operatives with ‘prevalence of mutual aid’<sup>7</sup>. These advantages apply to co-operatives which do more than 50% of their business with members of the co-operative.

The co-operative movement in Italy now consists of 80,000 co-operatives, 1,382,000 jobs. The three main organisations representing Italian co-operatives officially joined together to establish the Italian Co-operative Alliance. This new organisation represents 43,000 companies, over 12 million members, and a turnover of €127 billion, 7% of GDP. There are more than 1.1 million employees (6% of the Italian population) 45.5% of them women (compared with 38% in firms which are not co-operatives) and co-operatives represent 11.5% of enterprises employing more than 1,000 people. The decision to become part of the same Alliance shows that ideology is no longer dominant. Even at representative association level, ‘together is better’.

The co-operative movement is permanently in search of new challenges. Considering that a co-operative is created to satisfy common needs, and the way in which the co-operative has a long term vision, it can be a tool used in

response to the increasing need for socially and economically sustainable development; development featuring greater fairness and social cohesion, providing opportunities for generations of youngsters. Innovation can be brought about by co-operatives and some proposals have already been put forward.

For example, in some small towns in the Italian countryside, which tend to be depopulated, residents have created a community co-operative, which searched for solutions to keep locals engaged and stop them from moving away. The solutions were found in developing local tourism and offering fundamental services for the community, such as social – welfare services, services in the public interest, and shops, but also work in agricultural, forestry, artisan and renewable energy sectors.

Another relevant experience is Cooperare con Libera Terra, an agency which promotes co-operatives that work on confiscated assets. Created in 2006, the agency is backed by some of the biggest Italian co-operatives and Legacoop, and provides an instrument for the development of co-operatives which manage confiscated goods legally taken from the Mafia (agricultural fields, houses, firms), according to a national law. Libera Terra is the label with which the organic products of Libera co-operatives are marketed. For the members of these enterprises, being together means working against illegal systems for a fairer, more responsible economy.

### Legacoop: Background information

Legacoop Emilia Romagna is the main organisation representing co-operatives in Emilia Romagna and uniting co-operatives and their economic subsidiaries in various sectors. This Italian region is home to the country’s highest rate of co-operation. Legacoop Emilia Romagna brings together 1,500 enterprises, representing more than 2.5 million members, 156,000 employees and €30 billion of production value. Legacoop Emilia Romagna covers the entire region and all the economic sectors (industrial, agricultural and service sectors) responsible for organising co-operative – based solutions to meet the needs of their members (producers, workers, consumers, inhabitants, users, retailers), with a carefully structured network of local and sector-based Legacoop units which work in a co-ordinated fashion.

Legacoop Emilia Romagna represents co-operatives when dealing with the authorities, other business organisations and workers’ trade unions. It promotes start-up co-operatives, and their establishment and development towards innovation and internationalisation. One of the missions of Legacoop Emilia Romagna is to promote the co-operative movement. For that purpose, it has recently launched a dedicated website, ([farecooperativa.it](http://farecooperativa.it)) through which it proposes a path for approaching co-operation for all those people potentially interested in obtaining more information, and also for all individuals who are ready to take direct action.

Farecooperativa is particularly focused on young people looking to start-up an enterprise, and who are convinced or are evaluating the idea of setting up their business as a co-operative. These may include university researchers with a new, brilliant idea to put onto the market, or even new graduates who have decided to jointly face the world of employment by forming new co-operatives of knowledge (where working members have increased levels of education and expertise in the world of science or advanced services).

One of the values of the co-operative movement is its inter-generationality. Legacoop Emilia Romagna promotes three different projects to work on this issue. The first is Rete Regionale Bellacoopia, a specific programme for young people, allowing students from 15 to 18 years old to work on co-operative subjects through the creation of a virtual co-operative in order to develop their entrepreneurial spirit. This project is supported by a local Legacoop and managed by Legacoop Emilia Romagna. The second is Generazioni, an open and democratic network, that keeps attention focused on generational turnover, promoting insight and projects. Managers, workers and members of Legacoop Emilia-Romagna co-operatives who are younger than 40, can be part of it and participate in the activities or attend some seminars or training. Generazioni is a network where young co-operators meet to face current and future challenges. The third project is Seniorcoop, an association of retired co-operative managers who volunteer to support the promotion and the creation of co-operative start-ups. In this way, Legacoop Emilia Romagna supports the start-ups and the initial period of consolidation of the new co-ops and takes care not to lose the know-how acquired through the experience of a lifetime.

The spirit of the above three projects is to involve people, and to make them part of a collective movement, throughout their lives. It is important to pay particular attention to young students who are likely to develop the co-operative movement in the near future. They are part of the first stage of the co-operative chain and it is crucial, from the start, to involve youngsters and make them aware of the potential of co-operatives to respond to the current challenges.

### BELLACOPIA: A PROJECT FOR PRESENTING CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMIC MODELS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

#### The context

Emilia-Romagna, has been ‘the land of co-operation’ since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its economic and entrepreneurial fertility are proof that this type of social economy is truly entitled to continue providing business opportunities in this region. Emilia-Romagna is one of Europe’s top regions in terms of its number of co-operatives and it certainly has far more co-operatives than any other region in Italy. Statistics indicate that just under one out of every two

inhabitants is a member of at least one co-operative. The following part will present a project aiming to raise awareness of co-operative values in secondary schools students in the Emilia-Romagna region.

The idea of working with schools and in particular with young people preparing to enter the world of work comes from the historic, cultural and economic roots of the Emilia Romagna region. Co-operative enterprises are inter-generational and never truly ‘owned’ by the members working in them; instead they belong to the community where they were created, expanded and perhaps where they prospered. It is therefore important for young people to get to know what co-operatives are, so they can discover the social importance and economic value for the region they operate in. This is why Legacoop Emilia Romagna promotes a project that accompanies students and teachers on a journey to discover a different way of participating in the economy, where the focus of the enterprise is on people and their needs. Amongst other things, it includes awareness of safety, welfare, education, and solidarity in the workplace.

The training project is applied mainly at a territorial level, through specific activities in schools, aiming to encourage youngsters’ entrepreneurial skills and a knowledge of the area’s co-operative background. It supports young students in creating virtual co-operatives, to allow them to experience what running a business means and applying the principle of learning by doing. Young people learn by team work to value their own ideas and to apply a democratic approach in decision making. The project represents a fruitful exchange between formal learning and working experiences.

By and in 2008, the activities developed on the ground became a regional initiative under the name ‘Bellacoopia Regional Network’. The aim of the project is to link and emphasise all local initiatives of education in co-operative values, and is mainly targeted at high school students. It is a strategic action that in more than ten years has involved 50 schools in 8 provinces, 723 classes, 14,500 students and 833 submitted projects.

The Bellacoopia Regional Network is financed through public and private national, regional and local funds: co-operatives, a regional fund to promote and develop mutualistic co-operation in Emilia-Romagna, local chambers of commerce, local banks and foundations, the Italian Documentation Centre on Co-operatives and Social Economy. The interest of all these different types of bodies in the project shows that Bellacoopia is considered useful and of added value to young students.

## Project description

In practice, each class or group of students develops its own business idea, taking care of all the entrepreneurial aspects through the creation of a simplified business plan. They are supported by their teachers, by tutors provided by Legacoop, and experts from the co-operative world. The most innovative business ideas are finally selected to participate in the last stage of the project. The students, approximately 250 each year, who have put together the best project ideas, are invited to the final regional event to attend the awards. This is an opportunity for prompting reflection on the co-operative movement, and for summing up the main ideas they learned throughout the year.

In the morning session, participants take part in a creative laboratory to stimulate their imagination, their ability to work in teams and to get them actively involved in the project. Last time, for example, they were divided into groups of students from different schools, and they had to represent one of the 7 principles of the co-operative using stationery, various objects and staging materials. Then, the youngsters were invited to explain to the audience why they chose to represent a particular principle and their choices. In the afternoon, the best co-operative project receives an award. The ranking of the projects is made according to an evaluation grid which takes into consideration important themes for the co-operative movement, namely:

1. Sustainability (it looks into the 3 pillars: environmental, social equity and economic demands);
2. Innovation of the product (the activity has to create social and environmental value);
3. Feasibility (the activity has to be realistic and cannot be just 'a dream');
4. Replicability (as young people have to understand the method of enterprise creation and management, which can be useful in all contexts);
5. Innovation of the process (the product has to be produced in an innovative way);
6. Private and public partnership (the project includes other local stakeholders from the public or the private sector).

In this way the Bellacoopia project ends with a celebratory event entirely conceived and designed for and with the participants. In 2013, Legacoop Emilia Romagna will propose a laboratory focused on the concept of inclusion. The youngsters taking part in the final – on 5 November 2013 – will work with animators, communication experts and social enterprises, to put together a survey that will remain open for the 2013/14 school year. This survey will cover the subject of inclusion in the world of work, in one's own town, in school, and will end with the publication of a 'youngsters' sustainability manifesto' which can be used for dialogue with public and private stakeholders in order to find out the opinion of young people about their future and the areas where they live.

## How does the project work in practice?

The next part will present the different stages involved in its implementation.

The Call is launched in high schools in September, by local Legacoop associations. Each school can apply for classes of students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year, by indicating the number of classes, motivations and expected results of the participation. Some selection criteria might be applied (for example to give priority to new schools) but the general approach is to include all applicants.

In a second stage (Didactics and methodology), each class is assigned a tutor, who comes from the co-operative system. This person has the task of assisting the teachers who welcome, within their programme of activities, training on the co-operative model. The tutor presents the co-operative business model, principle and values to the students using an interactive approach (co-operative games), to stimulate business ideas. They are also coached to receive a business plan training and the training programme for meeting with experts and experienced co-operators, as well as visiting the headquarters of some co-operatives in the area.

The third stage puts students in a real situation in which they have to create a co-operative themselves, so they are asked to identify a business idea, to decide on the sector and type of co-operative, to perform market analysis, to focus on the innovative aspects of the idea, to develop a business plan, and to identify and highlight co-operative values in the structure of their co-operative.

The fourth stage involves the selection process and local awards. In April, all the classes submit their projects to the local Legacoop association. A local pool of experts from Legacoop and co-operatives assess and select the best project according to the following criteria: understanding of co-operative values; creativity and innovation; entirety of the project; social responsibility; sustainability and feasibility. In May each local Legacoop organises an event to recognise the three best projects. All the groups who submitted a project give a presentation of their ideas during the event.

In the fifth stage, the three best projects in each local contest go on to the regional contest 'Bellacoopia Regional Network'. A regional committee of external experts and Legacoop's officers is in charge of the evaluation and selection, in line with the evaluation grid described above.

In the Autumn, Legacoop Emilia Romagna organises the regional celebration described earlier. The co-operative movement uses this initiative to address the world of education, to promote its values of mutuality and solidarity amongst young people by giving them the opportunity to learn about their region by working hard but also enjoying themselves.

## Further developments

**Bellacopia Junior:** In some areas the Bellacopia project is also used in primary schools. In some provinces experimental work has been carried out to also involve students in primary education. Rather than being based on competition, such experiences focused on explaining co-operative values through games and interactive workshops, as well as providing kids with a concrete idea of what a co-operative is. In some case the class carried out research on the history of a co-operative from their city, going to visit it and learning how it was established and developed. Other experiences went even deeper, with the class that set up a co-operative school growers' association for flowers and vegetables, for example.

**Bellacopia international:** is a successful experiment from several years ago. Due to economic difficulties, it has not been repeated. The aim of this action was to make students understand that the co-operative movement extends around the world and applies the same principles and values everywhere. The law is different from one country to the next but there is a universalism of values shared by a billion members worldwide. Young people are the most promising carriers of ethical messages.

To work together on common values, with young people from different countries and with different social and economic backgrounds, was an exciting experience for the tutors, teachers and promoters. We furthermore assessed that it was important to create future links and exchanges of good practice by bringing together young people from an international background.

From 2008 to 2009, Legacoop Emilia Romagna organised a double exchange between Italian and Argentinian students during their summer holidays (August for Italians and January/February for the Argentinians) to develop inter-culturality and see the differences and similarities between the co-operative movements in the two countries.

The topics covered during these two exchange periods were: insights into co-operative sectors such as industry, services and social co-operation that do not yet exist in Argentina; a two-week experience in Sunchales, the capital of Argentine Co-operativism, in close contact with a youth movement totally devoted to social responsibility and with interesting experiments to create student co-operatives within high schools. Those co-operatives supply services to students and the school system, and organise activities which are socially useful for the area in which they are based.

These kinds of exchanges create the opportunity to strengthen the international co-operative movement and give young students the chance to have a special experience which can make them grow up in a very positive way and develop their entrepreneurial spirit.

**Bellacopia Europe:** another interesting experience was managed by Legacoop Forlì Cesena, the 'Bellacopia Europe' project. It was created as a Youth Initiative, Action 1.2 of the 'Youth in Action' Programme in 2009. The main goal was 'to raise young people's awareness about co-operation and its values, encouraging their creativity and entrepreneurship as well as their capacity to work as part of an international team'<sup>8</sup>.

The first Bellacopia Europe involved 16 youngsters from Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom, for 6 months. It had 3 different phases: in the first one, 'the youngsters met in Forlì, where, through workshops, visits, meetings with experts of the co-operative world and roundtables, the group agreed on a common idea of European co-operative enterprise'<sup>9</sup> to develop'. In the second phase, each national group worked in its own country to develop the business plan of the SCE, so that, at the end of this phase, 4 business plans were conceived. Four business plans for four enterprises which would operate in each partner country. In the last part of the project the participants met up again in Forlì to approve the business plans and to present their work to local and regional authorities during two public events'.

## How the project was received by participants

### *Business seen by students*

The students who work on this project are between 15 and 18 years old; they are aware of what a business is but they are too young to really understand all the implications of creating an enterprise. We believe that making them the protagonists of this project triggers a process of training that will enrich them with perspectives and visions for their future, even if they do not intend to study economics and become entrepreneurs.

First of all, they learn to discuss and justify their ideas and, democratically, choose the best one. Working in teams, they collaborate on a business plan, elect the corporate bodies, create a logo for their co-operative, identify aspects of mutuality, and enhance sustainability issues; all of these actions create positive dynamics that remain with the class, hopefully even outside the school context.

The tutor's role in this process is very important, as is empowering the teachers. Legacoop's objective is to pass on to young people the co-operative experiences, tradition and values. The Bellacopia project is the tool that allows us to do so. For students, knowing how to create a co-operative and how it is managed is part of a process of awareness that encourages the future development of entrepreneurship. Each student, after being part of a project, acquires new skills, abilities and is more capable of understanding the economic world and its challenges. It can also be the first step in a life project. Videos and interviews show faces which are concentrated, smiling when working at the computer,

sometimes disoriented when working with numbers, proud when they explain their project to the audience, intimidated when they have to interview the president of a real co-operative.

### *The importance of values – solidarity and sustainability*

The students show that they care about inclusion and solidarity. They understand the importance of team work and of helping each other. This element is what interests the organisers most. The team work skills are important, whether they choose to become co-operators, or they choose another path in their lives.

The environment always features heavily in their projects, as well as the issue of territorial development. The importance of the enterprise's social responsibility is always highlighted in their projects and students, i.e.: future workers, teach us that the environment is not just a marketing choice but a way of considering society and people. The competition puts them in the position to be as imaginative as possible, and some projects have innovative ideas in terms of technology and social innovation.

### *Bellacoopia in the future*

One of the roles of the Legacoop Emilia-Romagna association is to promote the co-operative movement and values in the region and at international level. Links have existed for years between co-operatives and the representative association. Reinforcing those links, working at school level is an important challenge. Bellacoopia could be a good way to make it possible. Furthermore, the experience of exchanging know-how with foreign partners was a real success and can create new links that could be developed with co-operatives in the future.

The Bellacoopia project allows students to imagine a virtual co-operative; but not an unrealistic one. The project is excellent training for them, as they can learn by experience, really getting involved in the project. Giving them the opportunity to have a real working experience in a co-operative is a project that Legacoop Emilia-Romagna could develop. Indeed, after a year of immersion in the co-operative world, in contact with co-operators, young students seem to take advantage of and improve their knowledge by working in a co-operative, for example, during the summer. The idea is to assign internships to students in co-operatives similar to those which were planned during the Bellacoopia project.

The Bellacoopia junior project could be developed by making primary school students the authors of a book in which they could develop stories about co-operative values, or research the co-operative tradition in their territory. This

initiative could enhance the path to regional social and economic development through the stories and testimonials collected from students. It would also allow an in-depth look at aspects of the world of work that seem just as crucial now as they were in the past (immigration, work for women, economic crisis).

Finally, as it is not possible to have students create a real co-operative, it could be an interesting experience for them to manage a co-operative project, setting up a school co-operative association. The association would have the same function as a co-operative and it would be a first approach to the working world. Some experiences have already been implemented by students: e.g. an association which organises the sale of school books at the end or the beginning of the year.

## NOTES

<sup>6</sup>  
Today, the ICA represents 260 member organisations, 96 countries and 1 billion members; The ICA Asia-Pacific (ICA A-P), based in Delhi, founded by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru in 1960 represents 26 countries. In Europe, the ICA represents 171 organisations, 267,000 co-operatives and 163 million members and in America, there are 88 member organisations from 22 countries.

<sup>7</sup>  
Prevalence of mutual aid means co-operatives which primarily do business with and for the benefit of their members.

<sup>8</sup>  
[bellacoopia.eu/project-description.php](http://bellacoopia.eu/project-description.php)

<sup>9</sup>  
The European Co-operative Society (SCE, for Latin Societas Cooperativa Europaea) is, in company law, a European co-operative type of company, established in 2006 and related to the European Company. The SCE's members (individuals, legal entities, co-operatives) shall come from at least two EU States.

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