

# ECO O P E

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EVALUATION TOOL FOR  
COOPERATIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION  
GOOD PRACTICE PROGRAMS IN EUROPE



a project co-funded  
by the European Union



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## 1. OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the ECOOPE project is to contribute to the *reduction of youth unemployment* through the dissemination and implementation of successful and innovative entrepreneurial education methodologies and courses.

The project aims at *identifying good practices on existing cooperative entrepreneurial programs, courses, methodologies and tools* on a European scale that provide secondary school pupils and university students with the necessary skills and competences needed in the current and future labor market, thereby raising their employability leading ultimately to a reduction in youth unemployment.

The project will *identify crucial success factors* regarding the methodology, educational approach and content of successful programs, courses and tools that have proved to result in the acquisition of capacities and skills of pupils and students required for the set-up and management of cooperative entrepreneurial ventures.

One of ECOOPE's purposes is to *design evaluation methodology* for the identification and selection of good practice cooperative entrepreneurial training programs and methodologies in secondary and university education.

## GOALS

### IDENTIFY CRUCIAL SUCCESS FACTORS

In the methodologies, educational approaches and contents for the acquisition of skills and capacities to set-up and manage co-operative ventures.

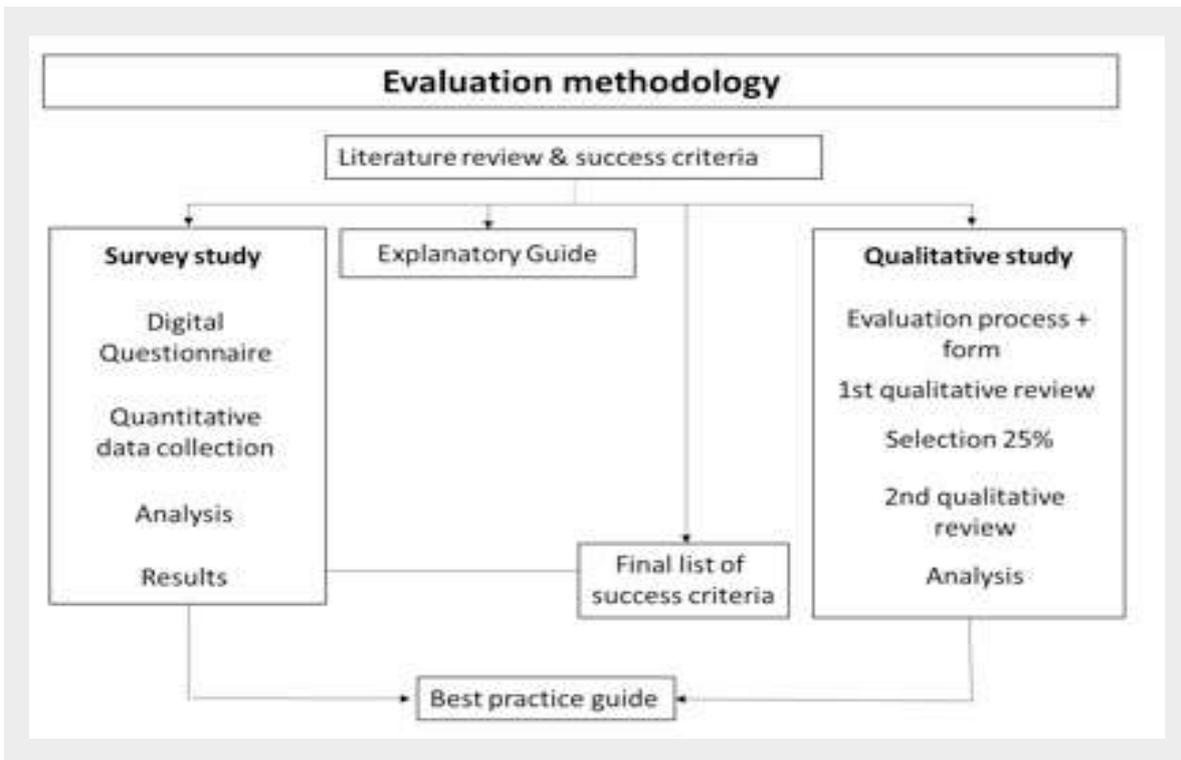
### REDUCTION OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Introduce co-operativism as a valid business model for young entrepreneurs throughout Europe, to help improve European youth unemployment rates.



The evaluation methodology is presented in the picture 1. It consists of:

- literature review
- success indicators
- evaluation process (for identifying good cooperative training program practices)
- digital questionnaire
- explanatory guide



Picture 1 - The Evaluation Methodology Process

## 2. GUIDING FRAMEWORKS AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The framework of evaluation criteria is based on research of entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial learning and cooperative studies.

**EC 2016 Entrepreneurship Competence Framework** and other relevant indicators on the cooperative approach have been utilized with developing a catalogue of success indicators for cooperative entrepreneurial training programs and courses.

*The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework*, also known as **EntreComp**, is a tool to improve the entrepreneurial capacity of European citizens and organizations. It consists of 3 competence areas (resources, into action, and ideas & opportunities), 15 competences, an 8-level progression model and a comprehensive list of 442 learning outcomes.

*Ideas and opportunities, Resources and Into Action* have been labelled to stress entrepreneurship competence as the ability to transform ideas and opportunities into action by mobilizing resources. These resources can be personal (namely, self-awareness and self-efficacy, motivation and perseverance),

material (for instance, production means and financial resources) or non-material (for instance, specific knowledge, skills and attitudes).

The three competence areas are tightly intertwined: entrepreneurship as a competence stands above all of these three. The fifteen competences are also interrelated and interconnected and should be treated as parts of a whole. It is not suggested that the learner should acquire the highest level of proficiency in all 15 competences, or have the same proficiency across all the competences. The framework does, however, imply that entrepreneurship as a competence is made up of 15 building blocks.

The learning outcomes suggest what European citizens should know, understand and be able to do to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency in entrepreneurship competence. **(Picture 2)**

*EntreComp* was developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission on behalf of the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).



Picture 2. EntreComp Framework (EC, 2016).

Furthermore, one of its cornerstones is the following definition:

***Entrepreneurship is when you act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural, or social (FFE-YE, 2012).***

According to a comparative study of the existing training programs (Chang & Rieple, 2013) non-formal learning seems to be the best way for learning most of the topics.

On the recommendation of the EC (2006), the **key competence** number seven for lifelong learning is called **sense of initiative and entrepreneurship**. It is described as an ability to turn ideas into action through creativity, innovation and risk taking as well as ability to plan and manage projects.

The phenomena of entrepreneurship and its promotion are very wide and therefore we try to capture its crucial elements by using as broad as possible approaches. For example,

Jamieson (1984) proposed a three-category framework for entrepreneurship education:

- (a) education *about* enterprise
- (b) education *for* enterprise
- (c) education *in* enterprise

Align with that, we use this framework for cooperative training programs by making sure that we receive rich enough data from three perspectives, namely education about co-op, for co-op, and in co-op.

Furthermore, we found Mwasalwiba's (2010) study very interesting and useful for this project. Especially his framework (**Figure 1**), reviews about general objectives of entrepreneurship education (**Figure 2**) and his categories about most used tools and methods in entrepreneurship education (**Figure 3**) were of high importance in creating evaluation methodology for cooperative entrepreneurial education good practice programs, and later on, when analyzing the data.

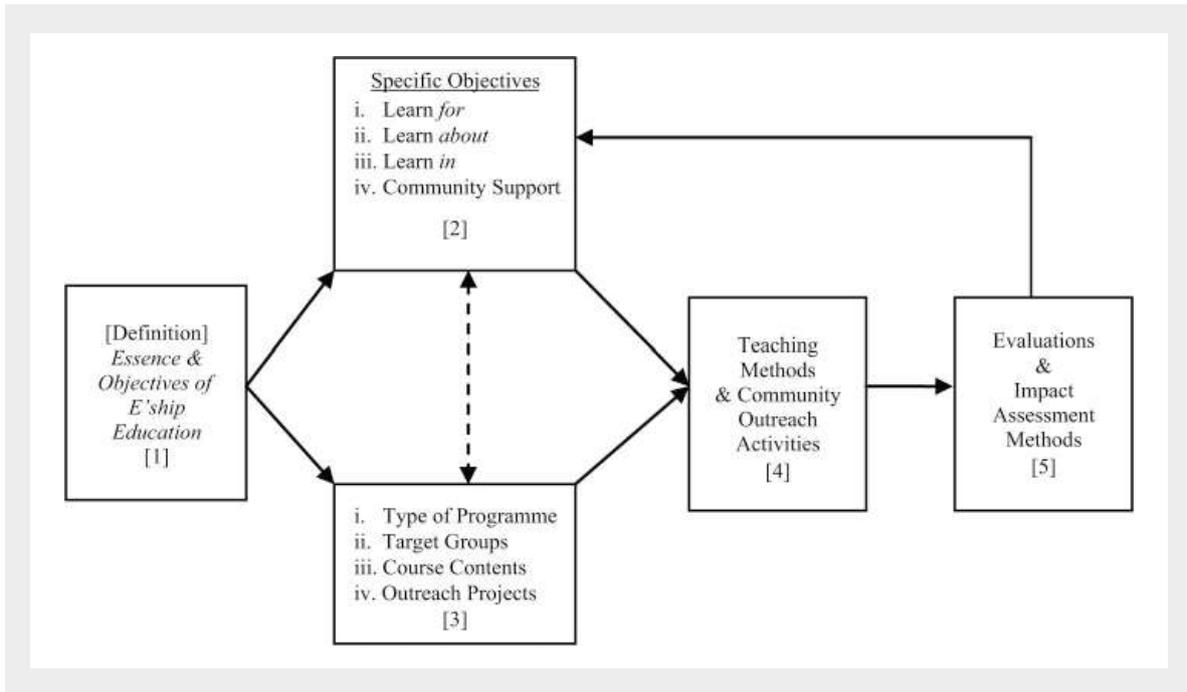


Figure 1. Framework by Mwasalwiba, (2010).

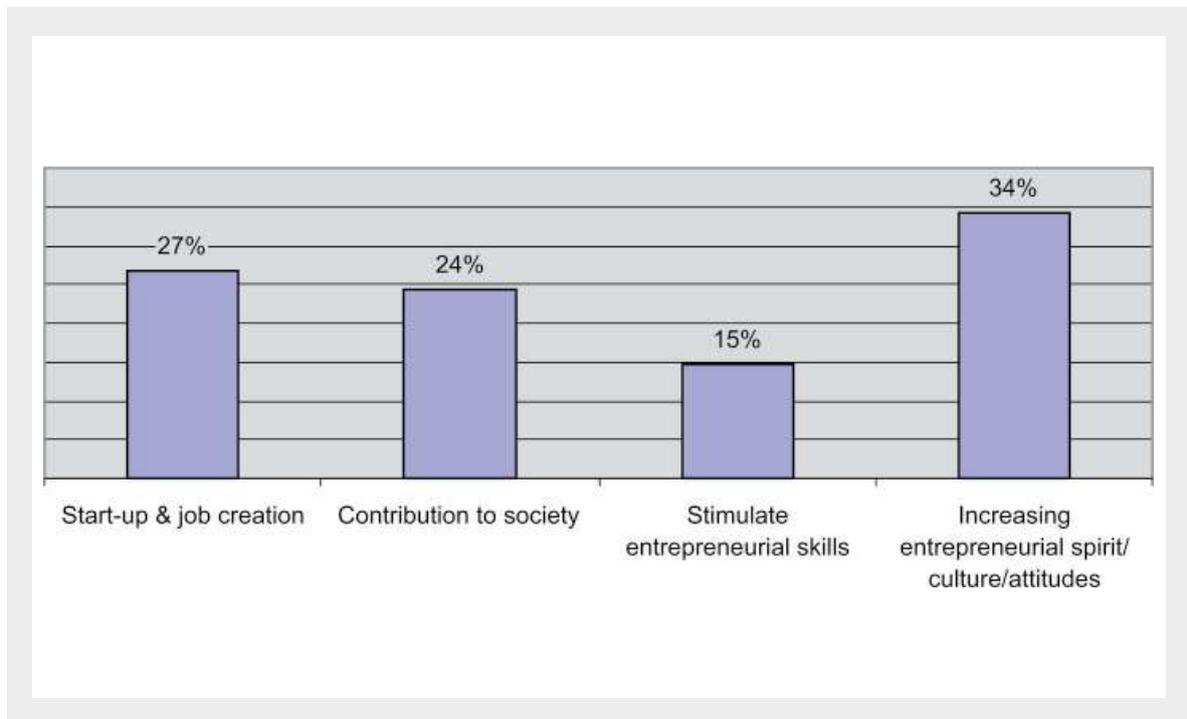


Figure 2. General objectives of entrepreneurship education by Mwasalwiba (2010).

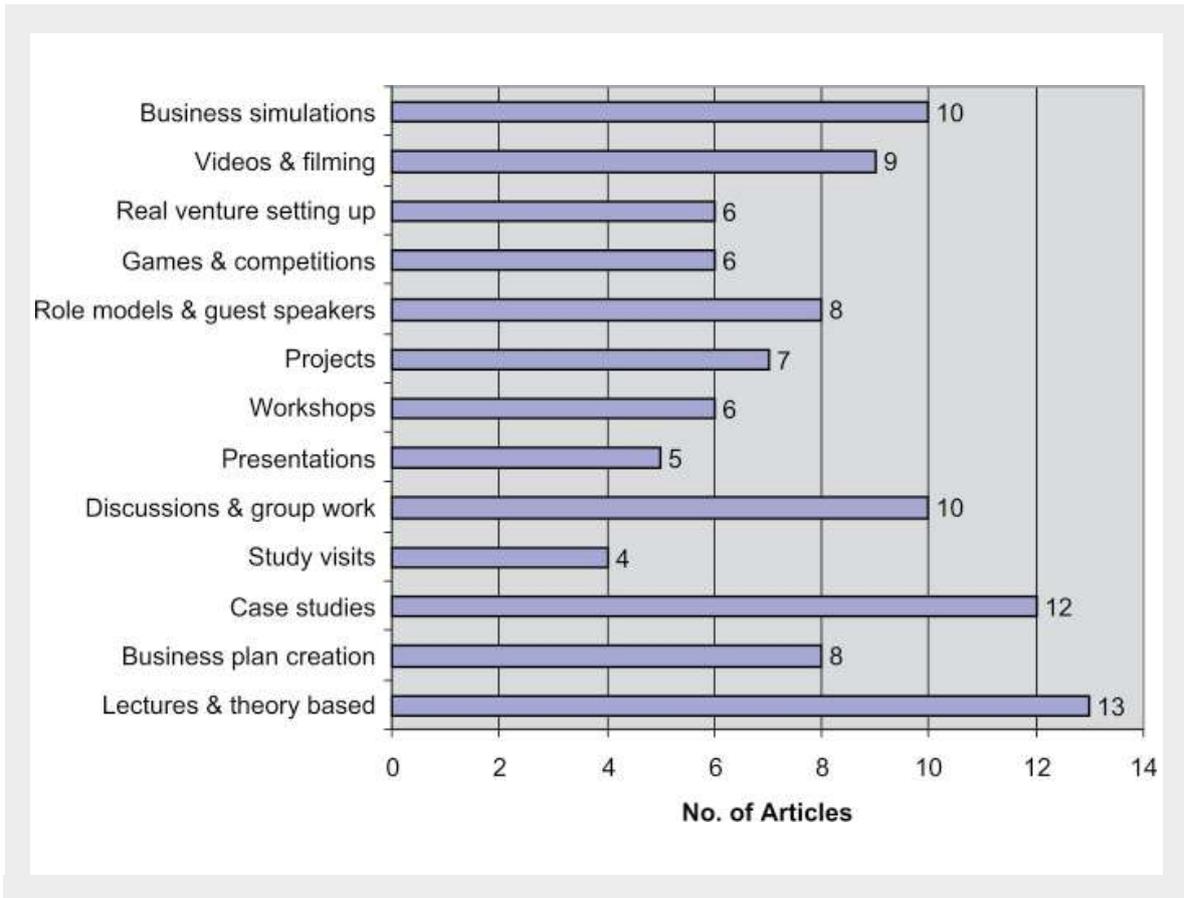


Figure 3. The most used teaching methods in entrepreneurship education, by Mwasalwiba (2010).

### 3. SUCCESS INDICATORS

Based on the framing guidelines and theoretical background, we set the preliminary success indicators for co-operative training programs. They are based on the program's process, pedagogy, methods used and outcomes in terms of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, co-op and youth unemployment. The following list of success indicators was examined and updated during the evaluation process.

The identified success indicators, which are used in the evaluation process, are:

- 1) The program has been put in practices successfully at least once.
- 2) The program is well-established in sense of its curricula, objectives and/or assessment.



3) The program aims to increase the understanding of (e.g. the following) entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial competences/business skills:

- (co-operative) entrepreneurship knowledge and identity
- mind-set and attitude
- innovation
- creating new business
- entrepreneurial networks
- successful entrepreneurship
- governance
- leadership
- human resources management
- financial and economic literacy
- financial management
- financial planning
- financial targets
- financial indicators
- accounting
- external stakeholder management
- market and products / services
- increasing belief in one's abilities (including self-efficacy)
- taking the initiative
- perseverance
- coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk

- spotting opportunities
- marketing
- marketing strategies
- (market) research techniques
- customer satisfaction monitoring
- market segmentation
- value creation, valuing ideas
- design thinking
- planning and management (including mobilizing resources)

- Human resources management
- Process of a product/service from idea to the final customer (product development)
- Managing ideas and innovations
- Decision-making

4) The program aims to increase (including the following) employability skills:

- learning in real-life settings
- gain professional experience
- earn salary
- establish helpful networks
- build impressive resumes
- receive job offers
- taking responsibility for self
- manage people in an organization
- risk evaluation
- project management (to plan, to organize, to control resources to achieve specific goals, to manage a project office)
- communication
- teamwork
- problem solving
- planning and organizing
- self-management
- technology skills

5) The program aims to increase the understanding of co-operatives, e.g:

- Cooperative values and principles
- Cooperative principles and norms of behavior
- Ethical issues related to business
- Cooperative's socio-economic role
- Different cooperative types
- Social benefits
- Social responsibility
- Corporate governance in relation to a co-operative
- Participation in a cooperative
- Managing a cooperative

6) The program uses proper and diverse pedagogical methods and tools, e.g:

- Problem-based learning
- Independent learning
- Online courses
- Blended learning
- Flipped classroom
- Lectures
- Team teaching
- JA models
- Practice enterprise
- Setting up a real venture
- Videos, films
- On the job training
- Workshop
- Group work
- Seminars
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Brief course without credit
- Internship / work placement
- Simulations
- Case studies
- Field trip / Study tour / Study visit
- Games
- Competitions
- Presentations
- Group-based assignments
- Research project
- Company-driven assignment
- Class or group discussions
- Guest speakers / Role models
- Textbook readings
- Stories about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship
- Business idea assignment
- Business plan preparation
- Entrepreneurship / Co-op theme day
- Mentoring
- Networking with entrepreneurs in residence

- Pitching business ideas to investors and shareholders (team presentations)
- Reflection
- Other

- Salary
- Pass / fail rate
- Graduation time (how long it takes to graduate)
- Learning impact, e.g. as a final evaluation or test

7) The program succeeds in meeting its objectives in terms of:

- Number of participants
- Co-ops created (number)
- Increasing the understanding of entrepreneurship
- Increasing employability skills
- Increasing entrepreneurial competences
- Increasing the ability to lead a group of people

8) After the program, changes can be seen in participants':

- knowledge
- working experience
- employability
- salary
- new cooperative establishment



## 4. DATA GATHERING AND EVALUATION PROCESS

In order to facilitate the identification process and ensure objectivity, we developed *criteria for identifying the cooperative training programs*. We also developed the *digital questionnaire* containing the relevant indicators that can be used by all cooperative training program managers in Europe. Addition to that, we produced an explanatory guide on how to use the questionnaire.

Next, we present the data gathering process and how the good practices were selected for the purpose of the ECOPE Good Practice Report.

### 4.1. DATA GATHERING

The evaluation process concerns two phases:

- 1) the identification of existing cooperative training programs in Europe
- 2) the selection of successful cooperative training programs

During these phases, we collect quantitative data (by digital questionnaires) as well as qualitative data (by reviewing program

websites and other publicly available information and by interviewing the stakeholders).

Each of the ECOPE project partners had certain countries they were responsible for finding relevant programs, contacting the stakeholders, etc. All project partners made research by identifying the existing cooperative training programs on the internet. Partners also encouraged representatives of their countries to respond to the digital questionnaire.

### 4.2. THE IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING CO-OPERATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

First, each of the consortium partners revised past and current educational programs in secondary school and university education in designated European countries (approximately three countries per partner were assigned).

The consortium members provided the gathered information within agreed timetable and mode ([Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#)).

The programs were selected with the following selection criteria:

- Information about program is available (on the internet)
- The program has been put in practice
- The program is well-established and recognizable
- The programs represent secondary schools, universities or both
- The programs represent different time spans (short/long term)

In addition, partners contacted the national cooperative umbrella organizations in order to identify training programs. All contacts collected and the link to the digital evaluation tool was sent to all the contacts found. To conduct the preliminary evaluation, each partner was advised to use the evaluation form (**Appendix 3: Evaluation Form**).

#### 4.3. DIGITAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of the digital questionnaire was to gain new knowledge about European co-operative programmes. The results were utilized in selecting good training program practices and in planning pilot training programs. The items and the themes presented in the questionnaire are based on the relevant literature, presented in chapter 2.

The digital questionnaire collected quantitative data that is stored in LUT database and only the LUT project team has access to data. Data has been handled as confidential in every phase of the analysis.

The digital questionnaire is made for co-op program/course managers in European countries. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to fill in the online. The questionnaire consists of issues related to the following themes: respondent's background information, objectives of the program, program's learning outcomes and impacts.

Furthermore, we collected information on the tools and methods used. The structure of the questionnaire is based on logic generic framework of measuring impact by using the **IOOI-model**, consisting of input, output, outcome and impact (*European Commission, 2015*). The data was collected during October-November 2017.

The digital questionnaire consists of 33 questions (**Appendices 4 & 5**) and it is available at ECOOPE project's website <http://youth.ecoope.eu/your-initiative/>.

There are two separate questionnaire links, one for secondary schools and another one for universities. The links to the questionnaires were delivered by email to all the contacts gathered in earlier phase when identifying cooperative training programs. The link to the questionnaire was sent to more than 150 program managers or other contact person of cooperative training programs. Additionally, project partners disseminated the link via social media and a special social media campaign was established to support the dissemination. The project managers were also encouraged to answer the questionnaire by personal phone calls made by ECOOPE project partners.

#### 4.4. ANALYZING THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

The quantitative data was processed and analyzed by LUT as a part of a larger body of data. Moreover, respondents provided us with various data when answering the open (text) questions.

First, the data was carefully reviewed by LUT project team to get an overall picture. It became evident that the programs vary a lot: they have very different durations, contents, used methods and tools, and they have different aims. Some of them are very new, whereas other programs have a long a long history in the marketplace.

Some of the programs had been running for less than a year, whereas some have a history of twenty years or more. Therefore, there is great variation of how, for example, the respondents reported about the program's impact. Furthermore, it should be noted that some of the questions were compulsory and some were not, so the amount of data varies between the programs.

Based on the first round of analysis we ended up studying the following three themes more carefully:

- 1) Methods and tools used in program
- 2) Outcomes of the program and
- 3) Impact of the program

Next, we conducted three new sum variables, and named them as Methods and tools, Outcomes and Impacts. Based on the aforementioned data and criteria, LUT gave a suggestion about the most successful cooperative training programs. This suggestion of good programs was based on the scoring of sum variables.

#### 4.5. THE SELECTION OF SUCCESSFUL CO-OPERATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The good practice search continued with a pre-selection of the top 25% of programs based on the score assigned, in turn based on the digital questionnaire answers. This pre-selection was established with the total score by combining the individual scores of methodology & tools, outcomes and impact. These short-listed programs proceeded to the qualitative interviews.

However, from among the top 25 percent, we only considered programs that met the following conditions:

- 1) be a learning program (formal, non-formal or informal)
- 2) have a link to the cooperative theme and
- 3) have a link to entrepreneurship in the

wider sense or at least business. If a program was eliminated from the list in this step, the runners-up from among the lower 75% of programs were considered.

Based on the previously presented (4.4.) data and criteria, LUT gave a suggestion about how to select the final choice of "good practices" to be featured.

An **Interview Analysis Sheet** was developed to help score the programs in various dimensions. The scores were intended for internal use only to assess how the programs perform in the dimensions studied and relevant to the final selection (see section 4.7.).

In order to mitigate the possibility that some good programs may be left out of the interviewing process, ECOOPE partners screened also the other programs found at the identification process, including those that did not answer the ECOOPE digital questionnaire.

Partners were invited to nominate additional interview candidates. These interview candidates came from among all programs (total 191) that were identified during the initial country-specific screening that ECOOPE partners performed, including those that were in the lower 75% according to LUT's score, or programs that did not participate in the online questionnaire at all.

The suggestions of programs by partners were based on their expertise and the understanding gained during their screening for programs.

A brief written justification has been documented as to why the program was added as an additional interview candidate, with a justification on the program's merit in at least one of the three categories: methodology/tools, outcomes and impact.

That step mitigates the possibility that some good programs may be left out of the interviewing process. As a result, 7 additional university programs and 4 secondary school programs were contacted for interviews based on these nominations.

#### 4.6. INTERVIEWING THE REPRESENTATIVES OF SELECTED PROGRAMMES

After the pre-selection process was done, all programs passing through the first step (see 4.5.) were contacted for interviews, although the work package leader reserved the right to exclude programs at any time at its discretion, especially if an interview revealed that the fulfillment of the basic requirements for a program was questionable or if the program was not clearly classifiable as either a secondary school program or a university program.

The interviews aimed at collecting insightful information to identify five good practices at secondary education and five at the university level (see section 4.7.). The interviews were conducted by PEEP between February and early April 2018.

#### 4.7 ANALYZING THE QUALITATIVE DATA

Scores to support the final benchmarking and selection were assigned based on the information obtained during the interviews, and brief justifications for the scoring were documented in the Interview Analysis Form for each program interviewed.

From among those interviewed, the top 5 secondary school programs and the top 5 university programs (primarily based on the score obtained in the Interview Analysis Form) to be featured in the report as good practices.

Finally, the choice of good practices was subject to external *quality assurance* by two

European experts. The organizations were:

1) *Bantani Education*, which is specialized in supporting and developing entrepreneurial learning policy and practice, reviewed if the steps taken to make the good practice selection followed the methodology outlined above.

2) *Pellervo*, which is the cooperative umbrella organization from Finland, reviewed the selection to ensure that the cooperative element is sufficiently incorporated in the programs.

The Guide contains guidelines on key success factors of cooperative entrepreneurial programs, detailed information on the successful training models identified as good practices, as well as conclusions on context, identified gaps, tendencies and innovative ideas regarding the future of cooperative entrepreneurial education models.

The guide is available online on the project's website and is being disseminated through the projects social media channels: [youth.ecope.eu/documents](http://youth.ecope.eu/documents)



## 5. SURVEY RESULTS THAT INDICATE THE GOOD PRACTICES IN CO-OPERATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Project results are based on the analysis of responses gathered via digital questionnaires and the qualitative study. With this data ECOPE got totally new and unique information about European cooperative training programs, courses, methodologies and tools, which ones are good and effective practices and which programs seem to meet their objectives best.

ECOPE digital questionnaire consists of 33 questions and it is available at ECOPE's project website <http://youth.ecope.eu/your-initiative/>. The questionnaire consists of issues related to the following themes: respondent's background information, objectives of the program, program's learning outcomes, and impact. Furthermore, it collects information about which tools and methods are used. The data is handled confidentially and stored by LUT in a database where only LUT project team has access. In the following chapters (5.1. and 5.2.), the results are based on the data collected by an ECOPE digital questionnaire, prepared by LUT.

The link to the questionnaire was sent to more than 150 project managers or other contact person of cooperative training

programs. Furthermore, the link was distributed via social media and by emails. The project managers were also encouraged to answer the questionnaire by personal phone calls made by ECOPE project partners. Explanatory guide (**Appendix 6**) was produced for the respondents.

### 5.1. SECONDARY SCHOOL CO-OPERATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The number of respondents was 19 and their positions were diverse, representing, for example, managing director, project manager, regional office director, entrepreneurship program coordinator and entrepreneurship education coordinator.

The countries represented in the data were the following: Spain, Germany, Netherlands, UK, France, Italy and some of the programs took place also in Ecuador and Chile.

Most of the programs were organized locally and on a voluntary basis for students, only a few were included in the curriculum.

The range of all results in *Methods and tools* were between 3-17 (on a scale of 0-32), for *Outcomes* 0-36 (on a scale of 0-36) and between 0-28 for *Impact* (on a scale of 0-28), see **Table 1** below. For choosing the “good practices”, we calculated the three aforementioned sum variables into a cumulative sum, and finally, four programs with highest cumulative sum were selected as “good practices”.

Theme	Results
Methods and tools	3-17
Outcomes	0-36
Impact	0-28

Table 1. All secondary school results in Methods & Tools, Outcomes and Impact

### Methods and Tools

The study results show that, out of the introduced 33 cooperative learning methods and tools in this questionnaire, nearly half of the respondents were using learning in real-life setting, team teaching, peer-to-peer learning, class or group discussions, workshops, group work, presentations, business idea assignments and business plan creation. However, almost all respondents selected group oriented learning methods and tools. According to the answers, none of the programs chose internship as a used method/tool. The highest scored programs were using most variety of the learning methods.

### Outcomes

The outcome was measured by program participants’ improvement of working experience, business performance, study performance, attitudes and intentions to cooperatives, social capital and professional

networks, understanding of entrepreneurship, employability skills, entrepreneurial skills and competences related to cooperatives. Most of respondents considered very much or much improvement in participants’ attitudes and intentions to cooperatives as well as competences related to co-ops. Study performance and understanding of entrepreneurship were considered improved as next best.

### Impact

To study programs’ impact we gathered information about the following themes: Has the program raised awareness of entrepreneurship?; Has the program raised awareness of cooperatives?; Has it had an impact on economy?; Has it had some impact on society, community and environment? And finally, has the program improved the participants’ employability?

Almost all programs evaluated that their program has very much or much impact on general awareness on co-operatives and entrepreneurship. Most of the programs also evaluated very much or much impact on society/community.

## 5.2. UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The number of respondents was 28 and their positions were diverse, representing, for example, professor, director, assistant director, head of program management and other representatives of cooperative training programs.

Most of the programs were organized nationally and many also internationally. Most of the programs were organized on voluntary basis for students, but many of them were also included in the curriculum.

The countries represented in the data were the following: United Kingdom, Finland, Spain, Denmark, Italy, France, Belgium, Greece, Austria, Germany and Portugal. One of the program also takes place in China.

The range of all answers in *Methods and tools* were between 3-32 (on a scale of 0-32), for *Outcomes* 0-34 (on a scale of 0-36) and between 0-22 for *Impact* (on a scale of 0-28), see **Table 2 below**. For choosing the “good practices”, we calculated the three aforementioned sum variables into a cumulative sum, and finally, five programs with highest cumulative sum were selected as “good practices”.

Theme	Results
Methods and tools	3-32
Outcomes	0-34
Impact	0-31

Table 2. All University results in Methods & Tools, Outcomes Outcomes and Impact

**Methods and Tools**

The study results show that, out of the 33 introduced methods and tools in this questionnaire, more than half of the respondents were using the problem based learning, learning in real-life setting, class or group discussions, lectures, workshops, group work, presentations, case studies and guest speaker; role models and stories about entrepreneurs.

However, almost all respondents selected the classroom and group in discussions as prevailing learning methods, and it was stated to be in use in nearly all cooperative learning programs. The highest scored programs were using most variety of the learning methods.

**Outcomes**

The outcome was measured by program participants’ improvement of working experience, business performance, study performance, attitudes and intentions to cooperatives, social capital and professional networks, understanding of entrepreneurship, employability skills entrepreneurial skills and competences related to cooperatives.

Nearly all of the programs considered very much or at least much improvement about participants’ attitude and intentions to cooperatives as well as participants competences related to cooperatives. Half of the programs considered very much or much improvement in participants’ working experience and business performance.

**Impacts**

To study programs’ impact we gathered information about the following themes: Has the program raised awareness of entrepreneurship?; Has the program raised awareness of cooperatives?; Has it had an impact on economy?; Has it had some impact on society, community and environment? And finally, has the program improved the participants’ employability?

Nearly all respondents evaluated that their program has very much or much impact on society/community. Likewise almost all programs considered very much or much impact on general awareness on cooperatives.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The overall process of evaluating and selecting the best or at least good European existing cooperative training programs, was a very ambitious and challenging task. During the identification and evaluation process we ended up choosing the term “**good practice**”, **instead of “best practice”**, as we did not try to rank the programs, but to find the most successful programs and to identify good practices.

The identification of European cooperative training programs was an enormous and labored process, as many of the programs do not have any public websites or any other public marketing channel or material. In addition, many of the training programs operate only locally, in local language, so there were some language issues during the identification process as well. As the project team was multilingual, this obstacle was handled successfully. Considering these circumstances, the project team succeeded very well by identifying over 150 cooperative training programs in the countries involved in the project.

Usually marketing and implementation of a large survey takes several months. As in this project the timetable was very tight, delivering the ECOPE digital Questionnaire and data gathering had to be done during only a few weeks.

The response rate would have been bigger if there would have been more time, but due to the marketing efforts of project team members, we succeeded to gain 47 responses (out of the aforementioned over 150 programs) in agreed timetable and some also after that.

One of the most interesting findings during the identification process was that some of the training programs did not include any content about setting and running a cooperative, nor any legal or economic issues. It seems, that in some cases the only connection to cooperatives was that the program took place in a cooperative, although the contents of the training were totally something else. This was very useful information, for planning the criteria and contents of the **pilot programs, which were carried out later on in this project.**

As in any study, also this has some limitations. For example, the heterogeneity of the programs between countries was challenging. The importance of local context and importance of the territory in the impact of the course were not studied in this research. The questionnaire response rate is limited, and therefore the results may not be fully generalizable. Nevertheless, this kind of information is **unique on a European scale.**



## APPENDICES

- APPENDIX 1: Document for identifying the existing co-operative training programmes
- APPENDIX 2: Preliminary questionnaire for identifying the co-operative programmes
- APPENDIX 3: Evaluation form
- APPENDIX 4: Digital questionnaire for secondary schools
- APPENDIX 5: Digital questionnaire for universities
- APPENDIX 6: Explanatory guide



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## ADDITIONAL LINKS

<https://coopseurope.coop/resources/news/eu-commission-releases-report-cooperative-working-group-foster-cooperatives%E2%80%99>

<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/cooperatives/>

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