



CALL TO ACTION

CALL FOR THE INCLUSION
OF COOPERATIVE BUSINESS
MODELS IN EUROPEAN
EDUCATION INITIATIVES





Cooperatives Europe calls for the inclusion of cooperative business models in European education initiatives.

In the European Union, educational systems often overlook the diversity of business models, including the cooperative model, all of which deserve equal attention. Recognizing these models would enable younger generations to discover business ideas based on values that simultaneously address economic and social needs. Therefore, the European cooperative movement urges the Commission to take account of the cooperative dimension and the plurality of business models in general in its education-related programmes and initiatives.



The cooperative advantage

Cooperatives are part of the daily life of millions of citizens in Europe. One out of five citizens in Europe is a member of a cooperative. Cooperatives are more than 160,000 enterprises across Europe, owned by 123 million individual members and providing jobs to 5.4 million citizens.

Their economic and social role is undeniable. However, cooperative enterprises not only aim to succeed in competitive markets but have broader goals and objectives than simply profit maximization. They have strong local roots, enabling them to play their part in interlinking and consolidating the socio-economic fabric of regions. At the same time, they contribute to maintaining social cohesion. They are value-based businesses, operating and managed according to a set of principles recognised internationally impacting their specific governance. They are collectively owned, benefiting the many with a long-term vision, instead of serving just the few.

The cooperative is a people-centred enterprise that offers many opportunities, both globally and nationally, to increase economic activity and improve the quality of life. It has the potential to address many societal problems, such as poverty reduction and community development. It supports environmental protection and gender equality. Cooperative enterprises perfectly fit with the EU strategy calling for a sustainable economy, putting people first with a sustained fight against exclusion and often supporting a transition to a greener economy.





Cooperatives and education

In these unstable times, characterized by exceptionally strong economic concerns, war, environmental problems and growing inequality there is a particular need to highlight value-based business models in education.

However, in the European Union, educational systems fail to acknowledge the diversity of business models, such as cooperatives, each warranting recognition in their own right. Education and management training predominantly spotlight the shareholder company model, thus neglecting the unique identity and value of the cooperative business model.

Research indicates that young entrepreneurs frequently overlook cooperatives, primarily due to a lack of awareness. Conversely, those youths who are educated about cooperatives often find themselves drawn to their value-driven approach and identifiable model. While the EU may not directly control national education curriculums, the European Commission possesses specific mechanisms to impact national policies, thereby addressing shared challenges across Europe





Our Request to the European Commission

Cooperatives Europe, which represents cooperatives across the European region, aims to capture the European Commission's focus on the pivotal role of cooperatives and, more broadly, the spectrum of business models within school and higher education curricula. Emphasizing these models could significantly contribute to the overarching goal of EU education policy, to enhance creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Specific Actions Proposed:

We call therefore the European Commission to include in its different actions and programmes the cooperative difference.

- In primary and secondary education, it's crucial to introduce children and young people to cooperatives, teaching them about their values and principles in ways that resonate with their stages of development. This approach aligns with and supports the implementation of the Council's recommendations on promoting common values and inclusive education.
 - In higher education, different EU initiatives should encompass the issue of cooperatives to reinforce the objective for an open and inclusive higher education system. This could involve forming partnerships between European higher education institutions to foster a collaborative learning environment.
 - Special attention should be paid to entrepreneurship and education in line with cooperatives: fostering the knowledge about various business models in the education and innovation strategy should reinforce the knowledge about cooperatives. This approach aligns with the aspirations of young people, upholding values and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - Include a specific focus on cooperative entrepreneurship in the Erasmus+ Programme, supporting two of its main horizontal priorities: Participation in democratic life, and Inclusion and diversity.
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The different working and expert groups put in place by the Commission regarding education should be an opportunity to include exchanges with cooperative experts.

To ensure harmonized teaching of the cooperative, the European Commission should encourage Member States to include education on cooperatives at all levels of the educational system and to encourage and promote collaboration between Universities, Higher Education Institutions and the European cooperative movement, in line with the International Labour Organization's [Recommendation for the Promotion of Cooperatives](#) which was voted on by all EU member states.

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