

# **Executive summary of Review of European Co-operative Societies (SCEr)**

**2012 – 2014**

## **Short description of the action**

On the basis of the existing experiences of SCEs, the present project intended to provide a contribution in terms of knowledge and awareness on the phenomenon of the SCE and in particular on the role that employees' involvement plays in the transnationalisation of the activities of cooperatives. It aimed at providing to the partnership and to wider public involved in the ongoing debate on the implementation of the SCE legislation, a depth information on mechanisms, levels and impact of employee's involvement in the SCEs. The project focused more specially in the very first phase of creation of a SCE, when employees' representatives may exercise and influence on decisions regarding the governance system of the future transnational economic actor.

A qualitative research based on the experience of existing SCEs and of those in the process of being established has been carried out. Coherently with the complexity of matters related to the implementation of the SCE legislation, investigations focused on different aspects and characteristics of the cooperative reality in Europe in a transnational economic and legislative dimension. Qualitative information was gathered on substantial matters such as the type of activity performed, its geographical scope, the reasons for creating a SCE, the process of creation has been carried and which role has been played by the 'labour side', the difficulties encountered, the added value registered...

Therefore, a specific focus has been given to the employee's involvement, both with regards to the implementation of the Directive 2003/72/EC and the (best) practices of workers' involvement in the SCE, both at national and transnational level. This investigation allowed to have clearer picture of the European "legislative" experience of SCE in relation to and in combination with the concrete realities, role, needs and aspirations of all actors involved.

## **Main objectives of the action**

- to identify established and in the process of being established SCEs, contributing to attempt to have a clear picture of the number and nature of SCEs existing in Europe
- to collect relevant public documents (Statutes, arrangements for employee involvement, where existing) and store them in a centralised archive or 'register' as a section of the project website
- to draw an in depth 'mapping' of a selection of SCEs with regards to their external (form, composition, economic activities, geographical scope, performance) and internal (purposes, expectations, mechanisms of decision making, employee involvement) characteristics
- to find links and positive relations among above mentioned features, especially as far as employee involvement is implied
- to put into light the deep interrelations among different economic, organisational, governance features with workers involvement in decision making at transnational level through the interviews and the direct investigation, to have an in depth overview of the issue related to the creation of a SCE, with specific regards to the legislative aspects and the involvement of workers
- to gather first-hand information on the role of employees involvement in the earlier stages of the creation of the SCE and its impact
- to identify good practices of employee involvement in the SCEs and provide in depth information of their functioning and their positive outcomes

## **Key results of the action**

The project “Review of European Co-operative Societies (SCer)” has collected information and experience regarding the SCEs in Europe with a special focus on the employee’s participation in the European Co-operative Societies (SCE).

Effectively, SCer project led a vast study based on interviews in order to analyze the situation of the active SCE in Europe, to understand what their situation, their needs and to define the advantages but also the limits of being a SCE. With the results of the project, the partners of SCer give a great opportunity to European stakeholders and especially to public institutions to support and implement the statute at the national and European level.

The project achieved a comprehensive review of SCE crucial features, including the collection of existing public material (SCE statutes). It provided a picture of screened SCEs as integrated realities, in which different features coexist to put into light the mutual influence of crucial aspects involved in its creation. SCer’ project made a clearer picture of the realities of the existing and upcoming SCEs in Europe under several aspects. In addition, it carried out a series of interviews and direct investigations providing in depth information on reasons, modalities, obstacles related to the creation of the SCE, as a concrete contribution to the assessment process of the SCE legislation with this respect, frame worker involvement as a mainstream. The project identified possible directions for improvement or revision, especially regarding the involvement of employees. Effectively, the project carried an in depth analysis of the role and value of employee involvement in SCEs, identifying convergences to promote and issues to be tackled. It permits to better understand the role of employee involvement in the phenomenon of SCEs, to be able to envisage concrete actions to improve and better address it.

SCer project produced a study taking all the collected information in order to establish a statement of the present situation of the SCE in Europe. As mentioned, the report focuses on the advantages and limits of being a SCE and on the employees’ involvement in the management of the SCE. It states that the SCE in Europe need to improve the involvement of their employees. Due to their very small size, limited economic resources, their very new statute, they are pioneers in Europe and they will probably need more time to develop a proper management strategy to include their employees at the making decision process. In addition, the public institutions need to support and promote even more the statute of SCE in order to facilitate the administrative procedure to establish a SCE. Based on the information collected by interviews, emails, Skype conferences, the partners have established a database including all the registered SCE (46) with a deeper information on the active SCE (15).

The project achieved to increase the knowledge of internal mechanisms of decision making with respect to cooperatives internationalization of activities with specific regards to practices of employee involvement and social dialogue to identify in some depth the existing systems of information, consultation and participation in worker cooperatives (including best practices) the further definition of a series of higher, complementary, standards of ICP in the specific case of SCEs. Then, the project provided to social partners Institutions and other stakeholder information and evidences to engage further debate on the topic of the SCE in Europe. In that sense, SCer project made an assessment of the phenomenon of SCEs from an internal point of view of both employer and labour side in order to understand better the phenomenon of SCEs, their benefit and the obstacles to their diffusion.

In addition, the project strengthened transnational co-operation among workers and employers’ representatives. Effectively, the partnership was composed by Trade Union and representatives of the cooperative movement and social economy. The results of the study and of the analysis are in the final report and the electronic interactive version of the final paper on the research available on the website. The project also designed a set of dissemination materials as the website [www.scer.eu](http://www.scer.eu), poster, A4 presentation and flyers and the partners have promoted the project during European events.