



The project iCareCoops no AAL-2008-1-(214-118) is funded under AAL JP.



## BEST PRACTICE REPORT ON COOPERATIVES

Project Title:

**FOSTERING CARE COOPERATIVES IN EUROPE BY BUILDING AN INNOVATIVE PLATFORM WITH ICT  
BASED AND AAL-DRIVEN SERVICES**

### PROJECT

Acronym: iCareCoops  
Coordinator: SYNNO GmbH  
AAL Project No: 214-118  
Project Start: 1 March 2015  
Duration: 26 months  
Report Covers: 9 months  
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### DELIVERABLE

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Work Package: WP2 Analyse  
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The European continent is confronted with an inevitable demographic change: over the next 40 years the proportion of the population over the age of 65 in the European Union will double, rising from 17% in 2005 to 30% in 2050 (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working, 2009). As European healthcare systems are facing challenges of sustainability and increasing resource scarcity, dignified ageing and caregiving is becoming a pressing concern to a huge number of Europeans in the long-term future (McLean, Protti, & Sheikh, 2011) (OECD, 2011) (Simoens, Villeneuve, & Hurst, 2005).

In reaction, individuals and organizations across Europe from all walks of life and from every political persuasion are experimenting and developing viable and innovative solutions to the needs of elderly. As autonomous associations of persons who voluntarily cooperate for their mutual social, economic, and cultural benefit, cooperatives have a unique opportunity to play a lead role in this movement.

Cooperative enterprises bring together civil society and local actors to deliver community needs. They are typically based on the cooperative values of “self-help, self-responsibility, democracy and equality, equity and solidarity” and the following principles:

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic member control
- Economic participation by members
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Inter-cooperative cooperation
- Concern for community

Cooperatives are dedicated to the values of openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Economic benefits are distributed proportionally to each member's level of participation in the cooperative, for instance, by a dividend on sales or purchases, rather than according to capital invested. Such legal entities are distinguished from other forms of incorporation in that profit-making or economic stability are balanced by the interests of the community (International Co-operative Alliance).

This report looks into exploring cooperatives in different sectors and countries to gain a sound understanding of their practices and needs. Two goals are pursued here: analyse key features to learn from, in order to support the set-up of elderly care cooperatives, and understand the role of ICT and the technological state of the art in the service delivery.

The report also serves to study cooperatives concepts in other domains and to identify ICT driven roles and workflows, and as a strong learning mechanism for the conception of iCareCoops to be done in WP3.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This report summarizes first preliminary results, based on a small and targeted sample of six interviews carried out in five countries. It does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of elderly care services provided by cooperatives in Europe, but it is intended to get a first insight into the sector, the way different types of cooperatives work and their main concerns. The interviews were carried out by 4 partner organisations of the iCareCoops consortium: COOPEU, ZHAW, ZDUS and VIA.

A qualitative content analysis was used as this method allows for an in-depth study of the models surveyed, and a better understanding of the context, processes and goals pursued in each case. All interviews were semi-structured on 38 open questions focussing on three main areas: a) founding of the cooperative, members and services; b) ownership, financing and governance; c) use of ICT tools. They were conducted face to face or by phone, and transcribed verbatim. A template was used for the analysis and to consolidate all results of each question from the partners.

This first round allowed us to deepen our knowledge on this topic at the crossways between cooperatives and elderly care, and to propose a certain number of potential best practices. A second round of interviews, which will be conducted over the next months, is necessary to verify the existence and relevance of these best practices, but also confront these results with other countries and social contexts. 14 additional cooperatives will be selected for the sample according to their geographical diversity (representing at least 6 additional countries)<sup>1</sup>, the sector covered (focus on elderly care activities) and to their innovative governing models (matching the best practices identified).

## 3 OVERVIEW OF THE SAMPLE

The sample surveyed at this stage includes six organisations. The selection criteria included:

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<sup>1</sup> The additional countries considered for the second round of interviews are: Croatia, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom.

- geographical diversity: 5 countries represented (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Slovenia), with a preference for the countries where each partner organisation is established – so as to allow face to face interviews whenever possible;
- sectorial diversity, meaning a) diversity of elderly care services provided (nursing, home care at large, retirement houses); and b) diversity of economic activities covered, including sectors closely related to elderly care (i.e. healthcare), and strong locally embedded sectors (i.e. renewable energy) so as to identify relevant best practices inspired from the cooperative movement at large;
- organisational diversity, including a) diversity among cooperative governance models (worker cooperatives, second-level cooperative, multistakeholder cooperatives) and b) diversity of organisations (legally registered cooperatives and non-profit associations implementing cooperative principles).

Four are officially registered as cooperatives, among which three operate in the elderly care sector:

- Aldia Cooperativa sociale (Italy), founded in 1977. This worker cooperative provides a wide range of social services, including elderly care (at home and in nursing centres);
- Meerdael (Belgium), founded in 2014. This worker cooperative provides home care nursing services, including elderly care;
- Razvojna zadruga eTRI (Slovenia), founded in 2006. Its activities aim at supporting various eco-friendly initiatives.

The sample also includes another cooperative whose activity does not include elderly care, but has been considered relevant for its innovative governance model:

- Ecopower (Belgium), founded in 2010, renewable energy producer and provider;

Finally, two organisations are included, which are not legally registered as cooperatives, but operate in the elderly care sector in close relation with the cooperative movement, and implement the cooperative principles:

- The Marie foundation, founded in 1958. Non-profit organisation gathering 17 independent nursing homes: offers homely housing, empathic health and social care, and professional support to people in need.
- Seniorengenossenschaft Riedlingen (Germany), founded in 1991. This organization works in the core principles as a cooperative, although its legal form is a non-profit association. Its activities aim at encompassing all services needed to live at home until death.

## 4 DISCUSSION OF BEST PRACTICES

The interview template aimed at providing information on how a good cooperative functions. Seven topics were analysed, divided into three subject categories. Firstly, we compared the surveyed organisations through typical cooperative characteristics, i.e. the *raison-d'être* of the cooperative (4.1), its membership and governance scheme (4.2), and how the cooperative principles are actually implemented (4.3). Secondly, we adopted an entrepreneurship point of view so as to learn from their business model, focusing on the service delivered (4.4), the financing (4.5), and maintenance and growth of the cooperative (4.6). Lastly, in a AAL project perspective, the use of ICT tools (g) was reviewed. An overview of the relevant comments from these parties is outlined in the following paragraphs.

### 4.1 Foundation of cooperative

The first step was to understand the *raison-d'être* of each cooperative.

The organisations that have been interviewed were initially created around one or two services, on a need-driven basis. The approach chosen by the different organisations also varies: for some of them the initial motivation was to address a need of the community (such as the lack of public services, evolution of local economic context), while for some others the motivation stemmed from a group of individuals (striving to create job opportunities for example). In both cases, two main arguments seem to justify the choice for a cooperative model:

- Public incentives in favour of this form (legislative and financial tools)<sup>2</sup>;
- Relevance of the cooperative governance and ownership principles in light of the needs and aspirations of members. In some cases, the choice of the cooperative business form was associated with political convictions.

Interestingly, public support seems to have been poor – or passive – in the founding process of these cooperatives. The interviewed cooperatives received support mainly from the cooperative movement (apex organisations, inspiration from examples abroad...) and social economy organisations (e.g. non-profit organisations).

At the origin of these cooperatives' foundation, there was thus a need (inexistent service or poor job opportunities, but also aspiration for a democratic governance model), and a cooperative-friendly legal and fiscal environment. It is worth highlighting that, in some countries, organisations feel that

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<sup>2</sup> These aspects can also deter the creation of cooperatives: cf. Riedlingen.

the legislation is unfavourable to the cooperative model (eTri): this explains why one of them opted for a non-profit association legal form, while implementing the cooperative principles and organisational schemes.

## 4.2 Membership and Governance

Open membership and democratic governance are at the heart of a cooperative organisation. However, there are different ways to implement these principles.

Interviewed cooperatives are diverse both in terms of social capital – ranging from 26.000€ (Meerdael) to 65.000.000€ (Ecopower) – and in terms of type and number of members: eTri, second level cooperative, has only 3 members; Ecopower, multistakeholder cooperative, has 50.000 members.

The price of shares varies between 250€ (Ecopower) and 6200€ (Meerdael). Usually, only one kind of share is offered; however, in some cases, types of shares (and their price) can vary depending on the member status (workers or supports: Aldia), functions (managers or workers: Meerdael) or aims (membership participation or investment aims: Aldia).

Access to membership generally depends on the cooperative form. Among the surveyed cooperatives, it appears that three kinds of membership systems are implemented:

- Community or service cooperatives (Ecopower, Riedlingen): open membership, anyone can become a member. In the multistakeholder case (Ecopower), members can be both individuals and organisations;
- Worker cooperatives (Aldia, Meerdael): only hired workers can become members. Sometimes (Aldia) membership also open to external support, with different types of shares;
- Second level cooperatives (eTri): organisations only can become members.

A standard cooperative governance scheme would be the following:

- A General Assembly (GA), gathering all the cooperative members, who have the fundamental democratic power. Meeting at least once a year, its decisions are taken democratically according to a “one member = one voice” principle. It elects its representatives, approves the cooperative’s statutes, the internal rules, the annual financial and moral reports, the budget, and, last but not least, takes the strategic decisions.
- A Board, elected by the GA, is the body in charge of implementing the GA’s strategic decisions. It meets on a regular basis and reports its actions before the GA. When a secretariat exists, it usually appoints the Director and ensures to maintain the link between the governance and management bodies (The Co-operative Learning Centre).

The governance model of the interviewed businesses is generally structured around this traditional General Assembly / Board scheme. The main concern seems to ensure that the governing bodies stand as close as possible to the members: this takes the form of direct election (cf. Ecopower, Meerdael, Aldia), flat hierarchy and inclusive decision processes.

Mechanisms aimed at ensuring this proximity include open board meetings (Ecopower: information sessions during which board members present cooperative's current concerns and address members' questions and demands) and itinerant general assemblies (Aldia: two general assemblies per year, one "statutory" at the headquarters, another one "strategic" organised in different cities so as to be accessible to members).

Meerdael manages to combine inclusiveness and efficiency: all decisions are taken by the General Assembly, which is organised frequently; when a decision has to be taken urgently, the Board is entitled to anticipate the General Assembly decision – and reports to it as soon as possible. In some cases, other bodies are also set up: controlling members (Ecopower and Aldia) to ensure good management practices from the Board; coordinators (Aldia) appointed by the Board to establish a link with the members.

Interviewed organisations show very integrated governance and management bodies. The governance deals with almost every aspect of the cooperative's concerns; nevertheless, in some instances it focuses on main strategic decisions (Marie foundation). In worker cooperatives (Meerdael, Aldia), presidency and direction functions are de facto completely integrated. Ecopower also opted for a strong integration: the board is composed of 5 "internal" members (employees) and 3 "external" members; the President and General Director is an internal member, elected by the Board.

Inclusiveness, strong links and frequent exchanges among members and governing / managing teams are perceived as the main strengths of the cooperative governance. However, some cooperatives also reported issues such as time consuming processes (Meerdael) and issues related to representativeness (Ecopower: lack of gender, ethnic and age diversity in General assemblies). A majority of interviewed cooperatives also report a strong involvement and team spirit among the board members (Ecopower, Marie foundation), who are in all cases but one (Riedlingen) not remunerated.

Last but not least, membership enables cooperatives to be embedded in local communities: the multistakeholder membership in particular allows consumers, but also supportive citizens, government representatives, local NGOs, businesses and municipalities to be integrated into the governance, and to invest and generate profit from a local economic activity (Ecopower and Marie foundation). This goes together with the organisation of local information sessions, as a way to promote the cooperative culture and expand their membership (Ecopower). Most organisations also

ensure to establish informal links with local partners (e.g. other care provider organisations) (Riedlingen), inviting them to information and capacity building sessions (Meerdael).

Interviewed organisations' membership, ownership and governance models vary in terms of social capital, price of shares and access to membership. However, they all demonstrate a concern for inclusive governance and flat hierarchy, wisely combined with a necessary efficiency of decision-making processes. These models are also characterised by a strong integration between management and governance bodies, and mechanisms to involve the community as a whole in the cooperative environment.

### **4.3 Implementation of the cooperative principles**

More generally, all of the six organisations demonstrated a high concern for the seven cooperative principles.

Despite the different sizes, all of them implement the "1 member = 1 vote" principle – although in some cases distinctions are made between different categories and price of shares (Meerdael, Aldia).

The equal redistribution of profits between members and the close interaction between the management body and members/beneficiaries (Riedlingen) create a positive environment: dedicated and available managers (Aldia), high quality of working conditions (Meerdael), and inclusive decision-making process (Meerdael). A large part of the profits is reinvested in the collective organisation (Aldia), ensuring its economic stability and long-term development, as well as an established know-how (Marie foundation and Aldia). When this goes together with principles of honesty, ethics and reliability, the cooperative model constitutes a proper and convincing selling point, able to create a snowball effect without any marketing strategy (Ecopower).

However, interviewed cooperatives also highlighted the down sides that applying the cooperative principles sometimes imply:

- time-consuming collective management and decision-making processes, which can impact negatively the business activity (Meerdael);
- lack of management skills (Meerdael) and self-organisation (Ecopower), as a result of the bottom-up constitution process;
- absence of a proper marketing strategy (Ecopower and Riedlingen), although these organisations are aware that their market could be substantially expanded if they had one;
- IT and ICT solutions insufficiently integrated to the organisation (eTri), although they would probably help them addressing specific difficulties although they are impose low margins (Aldia) expanded if the Aldia).

Cooperative principles are perceived as strengths, whence not questioned by the interviewed organisation who are actively involved in their day-to-day implementation. However, in a few instances, implementation mechanisms' efficiency could be improved through development of capacity skills and integration of IT and ICT solutions.

#### 4.4 Service delivery

Service delivery is one of the main aspects allowing for a better understanding of (cooperatives') business models. This part aims at providing an overview of the economic environment created around the cooperatives, to understand who their clients are, how they interact with them, and how are their services are developed.

The services provided by the cooperatives are obviously diverse, given the diversity of sectors represented. Focusing on the specific elderly-care case however, two remarks can be drawn:

- Members are the cooperatives' primary beneficiaries. In most cooperatives, services are provided exclusively to members. In one case (eTri), non-members can also benefit from specific services (pro bono advice). Worker cooperatives are specific in this regard, since their service users are not members.
- Organisations operating in the elderly care sector usually provide a wide range of elderly care services, addressing all aspects of home living before death. Riedlingen, for instance, provides the following services: assisted living, house-keeping, pick-up and delivery, consulting, housing, dementia care, social networking, professional networking and coordination, actions against social isolation...
- Organisations providing elderly care services do not operate exclusively for this target group, but also provide care services for other kinds of customers (children, disabled...). Care across population approach seems thus to offer opportunities in terms of economy of scale and sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Their unique selling proposition is twofold:

- The service provided was inexistent or rare in the region before the cooperative was settled (Meerdael), or ensures a better value for money compared to other providers (Aldia) also others of the named six coops;
- The approach, especially the concern for and involvement of the community, is itself unique or rare in the sector and/or territory (Ecopower, Riedlingen).

Except in one case (Marie foundation), these services constantly evolve, still on a needs-basis logic.

Service users and/or members are attracted by the following aspects: a) competitive price and quality (Marie foundation, Riedlingen, eTri and Ecopower) of the services provided; b) the links

created by the organisations with the community as a whole; c) the possibility to have a say in the governance process; and d) the fair distribution of profits generated from local economic activity (Ecopower).

Two conclusions seem to be particularly worth highlighting. First, the members' need-driven approach provide the cooperative the ability to develop services in line with its consumers/users, and consequently to establish a strong unique selling proposition on one territory. Second, organisations operating in the elderly care sector seem to prefer a trans-sectorial and/or trans-generational approach, which may be more efficient and economically stable than a specialization in one unique elderly care service provision.

## 4.5 Financing of Cooperative

We wanted here to understand the financing conditions allowing for – or preventing – the creation of cooperatives.

As indicated earlier (cf. a. Foundation of Cooperative), the foundation process of these cooperatives relied essentially on members' contributions. Some did not benefit from any external financial support (Meerdael and Aldia). One exception: Ecopower activity received an initial European grant, which covered 80% of its start-up investments. Riedlingen could benefit from a pilot project for the foundation of cooperatives facilitated by the federal state Baden Württemberg in Germany in 1991.

Interviewed cooperatives are confronted with two main financing challenges:

- Inexistent or poor social funding mechanisms (Slovenia, Ecopower), financial institutions and administrations being often reluctant to invest into local cooperatives;
- Glass ceiling effect: growing cooperatives face a lack of financial capacities preventing them to reinforce their management human resources (Meerdael) or invest into IT and ICT solutions (Marie foundation).

Cooperatives – especially the ones operating in the elderly and health care sectors – are thus viable by themselves, and can rely essentially on their members' contributions for the start-up phase. However, external funding mechanisms are necessary to encourage the development of new cooperatives, compensate territorial economic inequalities, and help existing cooperatives to realize the necessary investments so as to stabilize, strengthen and develop their business model.

## 4.6 Maintenance and growth

Interviewed organisations were asked to think about their economic future, and to share with us their current concerns but also factors of success.

Cooperatives' economic future generally seems very positive, all of them reporting a constant economic growth, which in one case has even been defined as "too fast" (Meerdael).

Interviews show that the main concerns raised by these organisations are the stabilization of the business model and issues related to competitiveness. Cooperatives are looking for tools to improve the quality of the service that they provide (Ecopower), but are also concerned by unfair competition from companies pretending to be "cooperatives" but not implementing cooperative principles (Aldia). When the economic model relies on volunteers, membership renewal is an eligible concern (Riedlingen): to stabilize this business model on a long time perspective a sufficient high amount of members without service needs are essential. Reaching more people (Ecopower) and support citizen-driven innovation (Marie foundation) are also considered as potential tools to address these concerns.

According to the interviewed persons, two main factors are crucial for a cooperative to be successful:

- In terms of business model, the cooperative has to provide good and reliable services, combined with professionalism and efficient management strategy (Marie foundation, Ecopower, Aldia, Riedlingen). Especially for elderly care, the cooperative has to show itself able to anticipate and adapt to the users' needs (Aldia);
- In terms of cooperative principles, a successful organisation ensures a democratic and inclusive governance, makes sure to keep a close relation with the community so as to be responsive to collective needs and aspirations (Meerdael, Ecopower, Riedlingen). It also shows itself transparent and open to its external partners (Meerdael). On top of that, communicating on the organisation's social responsibility and ability to encourage civic action contributes to create public trust and fidelity (eTri, Riedlingen).

The general positive vision reported is striking, especially in a difficult economic context. Cooperative organisations are confident about their ability to develop their economic activities, but are instead concerned by long-term maintenance matters (e.g. quality of service, unfair competition, or membership renewal).

## 4.7 Use of ICT tools

Lastly, while the focus of this research is on an organisational level, one of its aims is also to provide a basis for the IT and user requirements. To this end, interviewed persons were asked to assess the penetration of IT and ICT tools in their organisations.

For most of the interviewed organisations IT resources will be limited to basic office programmes (Office Pack) and cloud services (DropBox) for diverse tasks as HR management, administrative procedures, etc. Bigger organisations will also use professional HR management, task management, accountancy, business communication and book keeping systems (Slovenia, Aldia, Ecopower). In some cases, specific professional programs are imposed by the sector's specificities or legislation: remote control of installations (Ecopower), and nursing care programme (Meerdael) for instance. One cooperative (Meerdael) is involved in several IT projects driven by or in liaison with governmental agencies: integration of pharmacist and nursing programmes; common medication programme between doctors, pharmacists and home care givers; platform ensuring a better follow-up of patients through improved coordination between different care-givers; integrated systems to allow care givers accessing to hospital specific data.

The use of social networks is also relatively unexploited: WhatsApp for internal communication (Riedlingen), Facebook for external communication (Ecopower).

One cooperative (Aldia) shows more involvement in ICT though. The organisation is currently experimenting two projects: an online social platform for elderly care, involving social network and telecare services; an improvement of welfare systems through better coordination and knowledge-sharing between formal and informal care-givers.

Overall, interviewed organisations are aware that they could use IT and ICT solutions more extensively, which would improve their management procedures (eTri, Ecopower: logistics, human resources, internal communication...), service delivery (Meerdael: patient safety monitoring and care-givers coordination) and marketing (Aldia).

However, cooperatives are often deterred by IT and ICT systems, which are considered too expensive and complex in relation to their needs and capacities. Some of these indeed require high learning efforts and sophisticated technical support to be implemented and maintained (Riedlingen). Licence costs may exceed small organisations' financial capacities (Riedlingen). Generational issues can also interfere, especially in the elderly care sector: ICT tools seem to hardly be relevant to interact with elderly people, demonstrating less frequent use of IT and higher suspicion towards new technologies.

ICT disadvantages would thus essentially stem from accessibility issues, especially for disadvantaged and elderly groups, a substantial number of whom do not have access to the Internet or can not use complex applications (Ecopower and Slovenia). Also, as presented above time and money considerations do interfere (Riedlingen and Meerdael).

Generally, at present, a distinction may be drawn between two categories of users: care givers and care receivers. From an elderly care receiver perspective, a majority of the elderly being not familiar with ICT-based tools, the use of ICT by cooperatives may have mitigated results including potential marginalisation effects. From a caregiver perspective though, a need for ICT based solutions (e.g. interface including several functions such as membership organization and resource scheduling) was expressed: although professional IT and ICT tools are already available, some of them are too expensive, too complex or incompatible with other systems used by the organisations.

## 5 CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Many recommendations could be provided to someone who is planning to create an elderly care cooperative. However, some of them have been raised several times by the interviewed organisations:

- Country-specific information is needed and has to be considered;
- Gathering information from the environment and the regional conditions of implementation, and from the cooperative movement;
- Asking for external support, especially expertise and capacity building;
- As a first step, specializing as much as possible, and opting for an economic-driven logic before considering any opportunity of service expansion.
- As one major issue, including and involving people for creating a vision and spirit of active citizenship.

### 5.1 Defining best practices

The main objective of WP 2.2 is to explore cooperative best practices, which may inspire and support the development of innovative elderly care organisations. Pre-requisites include (a) defining what should a best practice be, (b) identifying these best practices and (c) assessing their relevance for the elderly care sector.

The first round of interviews allowed us to fulfil step (a) in formulating, for each research item, a set of criteria which may be constitutive of a best practice. These criteria, which are presented below,

are complementary and non-exclusive: they will be used as a reference guideline to fulfil step (b), i.e. identifying best practices during the next round of interviews.

**Ownership of Cooperative/Motivation:**

- membership is open to service users (elderly people and/or relatives) and providers (formal and/or informal), and/or to other stakeholders;
- membership is used as a tool to stimulate care cooperative culture on a given territory;
- interactive mechanisms are implemented to ensure compliance of cooperative processes and services with the needs of users and providers;
- service users feel empowered; members are better-off thanks to the elderly care cooperative.

**Governance of Cooperative:**

- decision-making processes involve service users and providers, and/or other stakeholders;
- internal rules and innovative mechanisms ensure inclusive decision-making processes based on a flat hierarchy.

**Service Delivery:**

- a cooperative is the unique elderly care service provider on a given territory embedded in a tight local network and driven by user-oriented needs;
- elderly care services are delivered in an innovative way.

**Financing of Cooperative:**

- the cooperative model allows the settlement of a viable elderly care business – where other models fail;
- the cooperative implements mechanisms to attract external investors and/or raise additional public funding.

**Involvement of Community:**

- the cooperative interacts with the local community through innovative mechanisms;
- the local community has developed a better awareness of elderly care issues thanks to cooperative action / intergenerational solidarity have spread in the community thanks to the cooperative's actions.

**Use of ICT tools:** ICT tools are used to support innovative mechanisms / service delivery systems and management enhancement or simplification

These criteria may evolve: they will be confronted to actual practices, reviewed by elderly care cooperatives, and eventually confirmed or invalidated during the second round of interviews.

## 5.2 Identified user requirements

Finally, based on the organisations' main concerns, we could formulate the following user requirements for a future iCareCoops ICT solution. We chose to present them as user stories, so as to highlight the expectations formulated by each group.

*As a manager of an elderly care cooperative, I need to access to low-cost or free licence software so as to reduce expenses on IT and ICT tools.*

*As a manager of an elderly care cooperative, I want to have effective tools for marketing, so that I can attract new members,*

*As a human resources manager of an elderly care cooperative, I want new ICT solutions to be compatible with and integrate the software already used by my team (especially the mandatory professional programmes), so that we prevent a time-consuming multiplication of processes.*

*As a human resources manager of an elderly care cooperative, I want a simple and quick solution for membership renewal, so that our cooperatives does not lose members.*

*As a professional caregiver working in a cooperative, I want IT and ICT solutions to be simple and intuitive, so that I don't spend extra time learning and understanding new processes.*

*As a professional caregiver working in a cooperative, I want to be able to communicate remotely and easily with the head office, so that I can share my professional concerns with the management team and have a say in new projects developed by my cooperative.*

*As an elderly care receiver and cooperative member, I want my organisation to use ICT interactive and intuitive solutions adapted to my personal situation, so that I can easily access relevant information.*

*As an elderly care receiver and cooperative member, I want to follow the news of the cooperative, so that I stay well informed.*

*As an elderly care receiver and cooperative member, I want to have a tool for involving me in the decision-making processes, so that my personal needs are heard.*

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**APPENDIX:**

**COOPERATIVE BEST PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE AND  
DOCUMENTATION**

## Cooperative Best Practices Draft Questionnaire

### Contact details

Contact name:	
Name of organisation:	
Founding year:	
Phone number:	
Email address:	
Address:	
<b>Background information</b>	
Sector:	
Position of interview partner in cooperative	

### Introduction

Explain purpose of the research, structure of the interview, confidentiality etc.

### Establish a context

1. To begin with, please tell me about your role in the cooperative.

### Founding of the cooperation, members & service

I'd now like to ask a few questions about your cooperative & its members and services.

2. What was **the reason for the founding** of your cooperative?
3. Where did your organisation get guidelines and help in the founding process?
4. What **services & products** does your cooperative offer the members?
5. Do you also provide services to **non-members**? If yes: What is the **proportion** in relationship to members?
6. How has your **offer of your services evolved** since the creation of your cooperative?
7. What do you regard as your **cooperative's USP** (unique selling proposition)?

8. What are the strength and weaknesses of your cooperative?
  9. What sort of things is your cooperative **concerning** at present? (E.g. the economy, members, etc.)
  10. Why are members **using the services/products of your cooperative**?
    - Competitive price
    - Range of services
    - Joint ownership of cooperative
    - Joint decision of members to choose services or products?
  11. Do you think your organization should or could **be doing more (e.g. provide more services? Or reach more people, expand to other areas)**?  
If yes: What should be done and what prevents the cooperative from doing so?  
If no: Please explain why.
  12. What are the **key workflows or activities** of your cooperative (e.g. joint purchasing, marketing, etc.)?
- Now let's talk about your cooperatives members:
13. Who are the **members of the cooperative**?
  14. How many members does your cooperative have?
  15. Who are the most important members?
  16. What do you think is the motivation of members for joining your cooperative?
  17. How do you attract new members?
  18. How is your cooperative **embedded in its local community** (local council, NGOs, etc.)?
    - No relationship with local community
    - Via members
    - Via partnerships on specific topics (public-private & private-private)
  19. Which factors do you think are crucial for a cooperative to be successful?
  20. What are the reasons for your success?
  21. What advices would you give to someone who is about to found a cooperative?

### Ownership, Financing & Governance

I'd now like to move on to the cooperatives ownership, financing and governance (cf. reference document).

22. What is the ownership structure of the cooperative? (types and number of members, social capital...)
23. How are the member **shares** distributed? (number and price of shares, main members... not to be confused with votes: cf. reference document)
24. How is the **membership organized**? (who can be a member? how?)

25. How is the **governance** of your cooperative organized?
  - Which governance bodies are there? (General assembly, Board, presidency, commissions...)
  - Which role do they have? (decision making, advisory, coordination, education or animation roles...)
  - How are people elected? (direct/indirect election processes)
  - Is there any remuneration for governance bodies?
26. What are the **key issues** your governance is dealing with? (membership, commercial strategy...)
27. How does the **relationship** between your governance bodies and the cooperative's management work? (when applicable: director's appointment, management of volunteers...)
28. What **strengths and weaknesses** do you see in your governance?
29. What importance have the **cooperatives' values & principles** in your cooperative?
  - Which ones are most important ones?
  - How do you ensure that those values & principles are being followed?
30. How was the founding of your cooperative **financed** (member contributions, loan finance, donations)?
31. What are your **key financing issues**/challenges today (e.g. acquiring new investments, ongoing finance)?
32. How do you see the **economic future** of your cooperative and why?

#### Use of ICT tools in your Cooperative

One important element of our project is to analyze use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools within cooperatives, in order to create better tools to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness for the cooperatives. Let's have a short look into this before ending our interview.

33. What do you **use ICT** for in your cooperative (finance, purchasing)?
34. What kind of **IT solutions** do you use (apps, wikis, ...)?
35. What part of your business could **be managed better** if it was supported by suitable ICT solutions? How needs the ICT solution to be to support your cooperative better?
36. What is your **experience with ICT** solutions?
37. Do you see situations where ICT is an advantage or disadvantage in your cooperative?

#### Finally:

38. Thank you for all your answers. As a last question, I'd like to know what kind of **advice** you would give to people, who plan to create a cooperative in the field of elderly care?

#### Finish the interview — Additional details

Date and time of the interview:  
Interviewed by:  
Minutes or recording provided by:  
Partner organisation/country:

Task 2.2 Individual Interview iCareCoops		Slovenia	Denmark	Belgium	Belgium	Italy	Germany	Summarized results over all six interviews
Name (Date of interview)		Razvojna zadruga eTRI (03/09/2015)	The Marie foundation (29/09/2015)	Ecopower (25/09/2015)	Meerdael (28/09/2015)	Aldia (25/09/2015)	SeniorenGenossenschaft Riedlingen (24/09/2015)	
Establish a context	#							
1. Please tell me about your role in the cooperative.	1	entrepreneur, inclusion	Director	Former finance and project officer (until 2015)	Founder, president, and coordinator of the cooperative -- and also worker (nurse)	President, CEO	Chairman	
Founding of the cooperation, members & service	Part I							
Few questions about your cooperative & its members and services.								
2. What was the reason for the founding of your cooperative?	2	inter sectorial cooperation, social innovations, sustainable development, circular economy, behaviour culture.	to offer social services and private care, a lady had created a privatorganisation for private care in 1958 and in 1980 she donated it all to a private found	Initially, co-housing project in a watermill. This watermill producing renewable energy, founders (involved in th green movement) got he idea to create a renewable energy co-operative (1991). Remained sleeping organisation until 2001: public call from a municipality to build windmills.	Initially (since 2000), informal network of nurses: the aim was to allow a better organisation among nurses to take care of their patients. But necessity to have a formal legal structure: formalizing partnership, getting an extended social protection: creation of a co-operative in 2014	Initially, children and elderly care. 12 women decided to create an economic tool allowing them to get new job opportunities: they created the co-op around the services they knew, i.e. home care	Pilot project on civic engagement launched by the federal state in 1991 with an objective to encourage the creation of cooperatives. Cooperatives benefit from higher confidence from the population, and are more attractive for external investors	- Public involvement: encouragement through legislative or financial tools - Need: co-op as the most relevant tool for the service provided or the organisation principles targeted - Political convictions
3. Where: did your organisation get guidelines and help in the founding process?	3	exchange of information, existing cooperatives, open source		Not much information from the government about renewable energy. Strong commitment, links with the co-operative movement	Legal part: lawyer. Cooperative specific information (governance, membership...) brought by Coop Buro	Received support from ACLI (catholic association which create services for persons). In Italy, the business legislation favoured and encouraged co-operatives	No guideline: inspired from the USA experience	Cooperative movement, non-profit organisations (associations)
4. What services & products does your cooperative offer the members?	4	Finances, book keeping, development, legal advice	Consulting, salary administration, accounting, shared skill development, renting estates for elderly homes, social psychiatric homes	Renewable energy supplier (solar, hydro, wind power) to the Dutch-speaking region	Job opportunities, health insurance, administrative support, monthly training, pension savings...	Core business: school care for disabled people. Also Kindergarten, summercamps for children, before and after school services, home care service for elderly and disabled people..	Everything what is needed to live in the own surrounding until death: assisted living (gardening, grocery and meal delivery...), health care, shuttle service...	- elderly care: large number of services (list) - others: legal and financial services, energy provider... - interesting potential of combining several services (even not focused on elderly care)
5. Do you also provide services to non-members? If yes: What is the proportion in relationship to members?	5	also services to non-members, pro bono advice	No	No	No: workers' co-op. Except that: - service users are not members (but opening new forms of membership is being considered) - there are non-member workers: after 3 years, can access to membership	Members are the workers: service users are non-members	Services to members only	Essentially to members only - when service co-op: sometimes services to non-members - when workers' co-op: to non-members exclusively
6. How has your offer of your services evolved since the creation of your cooperative?	6	constant evolution, living lab	It is the same offers but to more members	Started to supply wood chips last year. New project: focusing on energy efficiency, for private housing and municipalities	Started a new co-op with 3 pharmacists (Zorgpunt) which allowed to provide new services to workers: discount on products, efficiency of inputs (collective acquisition) + new network of clients...	See N.2	Yes: new services such as shuttle service, consulting, housing, day care and dementia care	Constant evolution: usually, co-op set up around a couple of services. Then, development of new services on a needs-based approach Sometimes equivalent offer, but evolution in membership
7. What do you regard as your cooperative's USP (unique selling proposition)?	7	Inter sectorial development approach, circular economy, social impact	Consulting, salary administration, accounting, renting estates for elderly homes, social psychiatric homes	Energy democracy, involvement of local communities, re-investment in the local economy. Project: financing projects to address local community needs	Very specialised scope: hospital care at home, which is very new in Belgium.	Specific pedagogical project for the Kindergarten. Regarding elderly care, tight guideline have to be implemented; however, bring some complementary improvement.	everything what is needed to live in the own surrounding until death, organised around a solidarity inside the community	starting point is a need of a people (mainly in social live) which are not sufficient addressed by the legislation Two aspects: specific service (unique seller in one territory), or governance principles which add a new interest to using this service

BEST PRACTICE REPORT ON COOPERATIVES (D2.2)

8. What are the strength and weaknesses of your cooperative?	8	Strengths: business model of eTRI, intergenerational approach, zero waste concept. Weaknesses: existing legislation not favorable for cooperatives.	Strength: Know how and about weakness: IT	Strengths: 50.000 members, among whom many active; honesty and ethical management; Ecopower considered as a reliable partner / supplier. Weaknesses: ethical management but lack of self organisation; Ecopower could reach more than 1.5% of the market	Strength: - Working together - Social benefits for workers: holidays, pension saving  Weakness: - Working with quite a lot of associates, who need to go all into the same direction. Have to follow the majority. Need to limit the integration of new members - Management capacity building	Weaknesses: low margin (but this is specific to the market); huge geographical territory to cover (necessity to reinforce the management structure). Strengths: high availability of the management, which ensures to remain as close to its members as possible; all profits reinvested in the coop development; equality, redistribution between members.	Strengths: openness, solution-oriented and flexible management Weakness: no marketing	Strengths: close ties between beneficiaries and management/operational services; know-how. Also, ethicality and links with the community (trust, recognition...); generation of social benefit Weaknesses: democracy (time- and energy-consuming); business models (low margins, no marketing strategy...) due to the social functions undertaken; geographical approach; usually poor marketing strategy and use of IT
9. What sort of things is your cooperative concerning at present? (E.g. the economy, members, etc.)	9	re-use/re-cycle, ergonomy, healthy work place	cultulting, salary adm. Accounting, renting estates	More energy projects; linking it with energy efficiency; working with private people and municipalities; improving the quality of service; creating links with other renewable energy co-ops; increasing social acceptance of energy transition	- Membership: growth and stabilization issues - Management: nurses' coop, nobody is trained as a manager	Mainly competitiveness issues: some businesses abuse of the co-operative term (don't play with the same rules); competition with public tenders.	Keeping enough helpers in the future for services such as dementia, household work.... No marketing: matter of resources	Stabilization and strengthening of the business model (especially administration and team management); competitiveness issues; membership renewal; matters directly linked to the market or national specificities
10. Why are members using the services/products of your cooperative?	10	available support, free services	The cooperative offers a high quality of services	Competitive price and flat rates; joint ownership; transparency and ethical management		Cooperative state of mind: collective thinking to increase job opportunities	Need-driven services; competitive price; chain of services	Competitive price; collective organisation (collective thinking of the service provided...); links with the community; joint ownership; transparency and ethical management; quality of service
Competitive price	10a		no					
Range of services	10b		no					
Joint ownership of cooperative	10c		not relevant		Yes, more and more. This model attracts new members and improves the service			
Joint decision of members to choose services or products?	10d	X	To choose IT solutions		Yes			
11. Do you think your organization should or could be doing more (e.g. provide more services? Or reach more people, expand to other areas)?	11	ethical bank, co-financing, socially responsible press agency	The organization would like to provide and support citizen-driven innovation in municipalities. And expand and expand housing for handicapped and vulnerable citizens	(1) Provide more services: energy efficiency; (2) reach more people	Yes	Planning to develop the children care at school, and increase elderly care at home	keep enough helpers for household work in the future	Yes. New services or improvement of services delivered (broaden the membership and/or customers...); ensure the cooperative's renewal (recruitment of new care providers); developing new approaches (citizen-driven innovation)
If yes: What should be done and what prevents the cooperative from doing so?	11a: if yes	supportive environment	economic	(1) Project being implemented; (2) political decision not to make advertisement campaigns	Reaching more nurses and customers. Hope to create co-op movement over home care in Belgium			
If no: Please explain why.	11b: if no							
12. What are the key workflows or activities of your cooperative (e.g. joint purchasing, marketing, etc.)?	12	inter sectorial cooperation	accounting, leadership	Democratic and local management of energy production, joint purchasing of solar panels	See above	School care for disabled people	everything what is needed to live in the own surrounding until death	
Now let's talk about your cooperatives members:								
13. Who are the members of the cooperative?	13	variety of organizations	17 nursing homes	Large majority of Dutch-speaking Belgians; but anyone can become a member. There are Belgians, foreigners, private individual, companies and	Workers (nurses)	Workers	all people having a need to live at home by assistance, people who want to help others	Organisations / workers / customers / community / multistakeholders

				public entities				
14. How many members does your cooperative have?	14	3 formal members	17	50.000 among whom 42.000 customers (8.000 bought shares without consuming electricity produced by Enercoop)	14 (+ 6 soon)	500	750 members, among whom service providers (125) and service receivers (300-350)	between 3 (organisations) and 50.000 (multistakeholders)
15. Who are the most important members?	15	All equally important	they are all important	No one: 1 member = 1 vote. No distinction in membership. Max 20 shares per person	A associates (3): nurses who also assume administrative tasks B associates (11): nurses who do only the field work One member = one vote. Decisions are taken with a 70% majority	2 categories: - Workers: main shareholders - supports (5000€ share): one foundation and one company	All members	No distinction: 1 member = 1 vote. Sometimes, price of shares can be different between different kind of members (but no substantial distinction)
16. What do you think is the motivation of members for joining your cooperative?	16	mission, social responsibility	best value for money	Cheap or reasonable price energy, coming from local sources	Social protection and collective management of the coop	Cooperative state of mind and job opportunities	Need-driven services; model of civic action	Relevance and quality of services provided; social responsibility and relation with the community
17. How do you attract new members?	17	own initiative, info through media and events	By offering excellent service. New members come by their own and others from the municipality	Word of mouth: good reputation	Initially, advertisement: the selling point was work and salary. Now, no need to attract new members: they come by themselves.	Classic recruitment process: when new services are opened, call for applications	Public relations; helps recruit new followers: snowball principle	Word of mouth and reputation are a major asset for membership and recruitment
18. How is your cooperative embedded in its local community (local council, NGOs, etc.)?	18	franchise for local communities	Some local politicians are members of the cooperative	Information sessions organised by the board; use of social media. But no local committees nor working groups	Try to develop connection with the local communities: idea to deal with local pharmacists, which led to a new co-op. Once a year, party with elderly people: creating a feeling that the coop has a link with them, other than their weakness.		Networking with regional professional services	Networking with relevant organisations of the territory (professionals, volunteers, public services...), involvement of local representatives. Also importance of public information sessions
No relationship with local community	18a		Dealing with the municipality					
Via members	18b				Yes: strategy built collectively during the meetings.			
Via partnerships on specific topics (public-private & private-private)	18c	see above		Close collaboration with municipalities and local governments; organisations (public and private) can (and some of them are) members of Enercoop		Special connection with volunteers and volunteer associations. Currently carrying a European project: combining home care for elderly people with formal and informal care givers (e.g. families)		
19. Which factors do you think are crucial for a cooperative to be successful?	19	social responsibility in economy	High quality of support	Like any other business, co-ops need a good product or service to be successful. Has to be combined with good management, joint ownership, transparency, autonomy and democratic ownership	Democracy, working together (not only in the co-op but also other companies), inviting non-members to meetings (way to promote this co-op and the co-op model)...	Be professional: specialised people, study how the others are offering such services, need to build trust and feeling of reliability with members and users, be able to understand users' needs	Civic action model (supporting each other in a community...); quality of service; long-term establishment	Co-op specificities: democracy, social responsibility, linkage with the communities' needs Business matters: professionalism, quality of service, reliability
20. What are the reasons for your success?	20	mitigation of alienation	High quality of support	Quality of service, trust, ethical management, cheap and reliable service		Combination of cooperative state of mind and professionalism		
21. What advice would you give to someone who is about to found a cooperative?	21	values, financial implications	Get hold of the economics. Get a qualified board of directors	Democratic ownership, decentralisation and power to the people are the terms of the future. People should proceed with their ideas to set up cooperative.			embed your cooperative in a regional network; promote a vision for convincing and gathering people; try to be as independent as possible (even from administration)	
Ownership, Financing & Governance	Part II							

I'd now like to move on to the cooperatives ownership, financing and governanc (cf. reference document).								
22. What is the ownership structure of the cooperative?	22	national legislation/rules	Consulting. With a board of directors	50.000 members, 65 million € of social capital. No restriction to become a member. Membership open to organisations (businesses, NGOs, local governments...)	14 members. Social capital: 26.600€	500 members, social capital of 180.000€	share system (as in a cooperative) ; membership reinvested in the organisation	Social capital ranging from 26.600€ to 65.000.000€. Membership: from 14 to 50.000
23. How are the member shares distributed?	23	equal shares	not relevant	Share = 250€. Max 20 shares per person	A-shares: 6.200€ (x3) B-shares: 1.000€ (x11)	Cf. Above: distinction between workers and supports. For workers, two kinds of shares: - ordinary shares (a member can own only one): 360€ - extraordinary shares: 500€		Usually, one kind of share (ranging from 250 to 1000€). Also existence of some different shares, not linked with the membership status (e.g. Shares aimed at allowing a bigger investment, or linked to a temporary position)
24. How is the membership organized?	24	co-working, sharing space, specific themes	??	Anyone can become a member. New membership approved by the General Assembly	Recruitment process: a candidate meets the 3 A-associates, who report to the B-associates. Essentially on professional skills, and also social (ability to work as a team). After 3 years, test by an assessment office: personal involvement in the work, probability of sick leaves... If they pass the test the GA decides if they can become a new associate (70% of the votes). If they don't pass the test, can work with the co-op but not as an associate.	Members are the workers: after the recruitment process, the Board formally accepts new members (criteria: professional skills, principles and values)	Membership cancellation is possible at any time	- service coops: generally open membership, no restriction - workers' coop: recruitment process, involving personal values and adhesion to the coop model
25. How is the governance of your cooperative organized?	25	democratic decision making, re-organization planned	Board of directors. 9 members of the board				Steering committee-based organisation: advantages in contrast to managing director Shared responsibility Flat hierarchy of responsibility and participation	Direct election process, preference for flat hierarchy and inclusive decision processes. Also, mechanisms to encourage members' participation in political and strategic discussions (e.g. Distinction between mandatory GA on one side, and political GA on the other side)
Which governance bodies are there? (General assembly, Board, presidency, commissions...)	25a	general assembly	Board of directors.	General Assembly, Board, Controlling members	- General assembly: at least once every month, but usually twice a month - Board (3 A-associates, and 2 B-associates)	- General assembly - Board (7 persons) - coordinators, appointed by the board	management level: 14-15 persons steering committee: 7-11 persons	
Which role do they have? (decision making, advisory, coordination, education or animation roles ...)	25b		leadership	General Assembly elects the board Board (8 persons) composed of 5 'internal' members (working for the co-op) and 3 'external' members (bringing external knowledge) Controlling member (4 persons): control the board	Board: takes urgent decisions, like signing a contract. If possible, all decisions are taken in GA.	- President is also CEO; the 4 other board members are directors - Coordinators pass on workers' ideas, questions and suggestions	Steering committee's role: decision-making, counselling, exchange of information	Usually, close integration between governance and managemnet
How are people elected? (direct/inirect election process)	25c		??	Direct election process	CEO: elected by the GA once every 9 years Other A-associates every 7 years (all of them are board members). Other B-associates every 7 years (who can control the books of the A-associates).	The GA elects the Board members	Election of steering committee: based on experience, appropriateness, interest	
Is there: any remuneration for governance bodies?	25d	no remuneration	Don't know	No financial compensation	No	No	Yes	Usually, no remuneration of governance bodies

BEST PRACTICE REPORT ON COOPERATIVES (D2.2)

26. What are the <b>key issues</b> your governance is dealing with? (membership, commercial strategy...)	26	constant re-innovation of business model	economic issues, high quality of care in the nursing homes	Strong integration between governance and management: governance deals with all aspects of the co-op	Everything	Governance and management are completely integrated	Decision-making, counselling, exchange of information, cooperative development	Very broad range of issues. In some cases, pretty much everything; in some cases, focus mainly on strategic decisions
27. How does the <b>relationship</b> between your governance bodies and the cooperative's management work? (when applicable: director's appointment, management of volunteers...)	27	no employments in eTRI cooperative	The management can give some recommendations	Strong integration between governance and management. 35 employees. The President of the Board is also the Director (called coordinator), elected by the Board	Very integrated	See above	Flat hierarchy, based on trust, participation, co-determination	In most cases, very integrated
28. What <b>strengths and weaknesses</b> do you see in your governance?	28	pro bono counselling, understanding of basic concepts of cooperative	A strength: A small group of cooperative managers (board of directors) only 9. Great engagement. Competent members. Some have experience with leadership.	Strengths: good team with strong solidarity feeling, sharing common vision and opinions, very ethical approach Weaknesses: Board members' average age is 50 (too old to involve new members); the co-op would need new vision and dynamic; people who come to the GA are mainly elderly male (50+) : gender and generational issue	Strengths: very inclusive, can go very quick Weaknesses: growth, time consuming	60% of the members attend the GA. 2 GA are organised each year: - one, statutory, happens every year at the same place; - another one, more political and strategic, is organised in a different city each year to allow broader and easier participation	Strengths: flat hierarchy, based on participation, co-decision and trust; areas will be managed as a company (managers' level of responsibility)	Strengths: inclusiveness, strong links between members and management team, flat hierarchy. When organisation of cooperatives: high competency of board members Weakness: GA attendance (representativity issue), time consuming processes
29. What importance have the <b>cooperatives' values &amp; principles</b> in your cooperative?	29		The cooperative provide good lives for the residents. The good lives are the most important matter.	7 principles are important but the most important ones are "transparency", "direct ownership", "autonomy" and "independence"				
Which ones are most important ones?	29a	inclusive society			- Democracy: 1 member = 1 vote - Openness: invitation to non-members to attend meetings	Members are at the center of a co-operative		
How do you ensure that those values & principles are being followed?	29b	key principles of cooperatives	They just do !	Only cooperatives that respect these principles can apply for a membership of REScoop.eu.		See above: close relationship between members and the Board		
30. How was the founding of your cooperative <b>financed</b> (member contributions, loan finance, donations)?	30	Equal contributions	Dealing with real estate-	Started up with annual fees of our members (20%) and a European grant (80%) (project REScoop 20-20-20)	Exclusively members' contributions	The foundation was exclusively financed by members' contributions	Start-up financing, membership fees, investors	Members' contribution as the main financing tool; sometimes complemented with external fundings (public or private)
31. What are your <b>key financing issues/challenges</b> today (e.g. acquiring new investments, ongoing finance)?	31	ethical bank needed	To maintain a good economy. Investments in IT and ICT solutions	Convince local municipalities that they should work with a local REScoop rather than a regular project developer	Project: buying or building offices Hiring employees in charge of administrative tasks (secretariat)	See above: margin (then investment issue)	good financial situation	Social funding mechanisms; reinforcement of the coops' support structure (secretariat, daily expenses...); economic model maintenance (especially through IT and ICT solutions)
32. How do you see the <b>economic future</b> of your cooperative and why?	32	members' contributions	The economic future is rather optimistic	To link up with local municipalities to initiate more wind projects in Flanders.	Positive: constant growth	Very positive: 5 years ago, 150 members and 2 million € turnover; today, 500 members and 10 million € turnover	good financial future	Very positive
<b>Use of ICT tools in your Cooperative</b>								
One important element of our project is to analyze use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools within cooperatives, in order to create better tools to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness for the cooperatives. Let's have a short look into this before ending our interview.								
33. What do you <b>use ICT</b> for in your cooperative (finance, purchasing)?	33	CRM, business communication SW, book keeping SW	ICT could be used for accounting and documentation	Management of customers' data, remote control of installations (SCADA), email programs, project management system (Producteev), Dropbox, social medias	Nursing care programme: information about the patient, billing... Dropbox: HR management, paperwork	- Human resources management - Additional project being experimented: Somedial (social platform for elderly, mix between social network and telecare); CM (improvement of welfare system through better coordination and knowledge	email, whatsapp, excel, fax, mobile phone... generation not familiar with ICT licences are expensive; softwares should be simplified for cooperative needs	Usually, basic IT tools (email, office...) Sometimes professional tools, mainly required by national legislation No specific apps...

						sharing between formal and informal care givers)		
34. What kind of IT solutions do you use (apps, wikis, ...)?	34		Almost none. PC . Homepages. Programmes for economics	Mainly office programs; no specific app nor wiki	Mandatory nursing care programme. Additionally, some IT projects: - integration of pharmacist and nursing programs - common medication program between doctors, pharmacists and home care givers - MyCare (government project): ensuring a better follow-up of the patient by the different care givers - allowing care givers to access to hospital specific data	Professional programs. Also some apps and softwares for disabled children	none	Two kinds: - main office tools - specific professional tools
35. What part of your business could be managed better if it was supported by suitable ICT solutions? How needs the ICT solution to be to support your cooperative better?	35	Logistics – food supply, planning, purchasing, warehouse mgmt, transport, material accounting	Documentation of the care of the citizens.	Governance (linking with the members), internal coordination (platform to get a more efficient team coordination), client service (interconnection between the client team and engineers team), communication (example of SomEnergia, around which has been created a dynamic community reached through instinctive website and social media)	- Patient safety: monitoring of the patient, remote surveillance - Communication between the nurses and a centralised secretariat	Communication and selling: marketing purposes	ICT-based data for a comprehensive management	Essentially service improvements (management, logistics...); sometimes governance issues (links with members)
36. What is your experience with ICT solutions?	36	expensive, open source	Almost none	Experimenting Producteev, designed to allow a better project monitoring. Would be used mainly by the staff, but also with the clients during the implementation of the energy efficiency activities.	See above	Management process: HR, financial, administrative	complex systems; not always applicable to cooperatives; high learning efforts; licences are necessary (and expensive); need for technical support and improvements high potential of development	Complex and expensive systems, need for external support. Sometimes ICT tools appear to be not relevant, especially with elderly people
37. Do you see situations where: ICT is an advantage or disadvantage in your cooperative?	37	inclusion of deprived groups, manual methods should always be possible	Unfortunately we only have one person to deal with IT support. We prefer to buy IT solutions instead of creating new solutions ourselves. The cooperative is quite conservative in using ICT solutions. We did not prioritize ICT solutions in a economical way, but it is necessary.	ICT can be a barrier to some people, especially the elderly: everyone can't have access or can't use new technologies.	ICT shouldn't take over the patient care: be careful not to lose the primary goal. Administration shouldn't take over the patient care.	ICT is useful everywhere: no weakness	Disadvantages: time consuming learning processes, complex applications, target group not prepared	Accessibility issues: inclusion of deprived and elderly people. Also, ICT can be time-consuming and could take prevalence over the quality of service itself
<b>Finally:</b>								
38. Thank you for all your answers. As a last question, I'd like to know what kind of advice you would give to people, who plan to create a cooperative in the field of elderly care?	38	mature experts supporting young ideas	you have to make a revenue to make a profit. Its important that you do what you do best and let other people do what they do best.	A toolbox is available on the Ecopower website, with resources, reports, financial guidelines on how to set up a business model. Keep in mind that there is no "one size fits all" model	Don't start too quick Make sure to have talked quite a lot Be sure that every member goes to the same direction Make sure that you have been thinking about everything for your project	Be professional: have to hear your clients'/users' needs	Networking, solutions based on a model of civic action in a community	Gathering information from your environment and the cooperative movement; ask for expertise; specialise and follow an economic logic
		Thank you!	Thank you!	Thank you!	Thank you!	Thank you!	Thank you!	Thank you!