

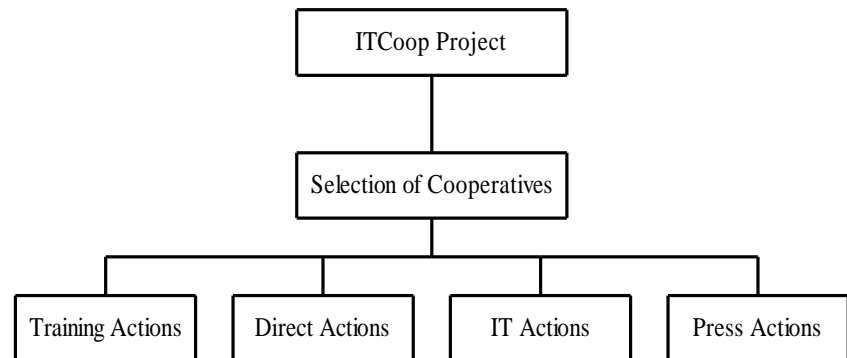
**EUROPEAN COMMISSION - DG III and DG XIII  
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES**

**IS 98053 (IS), ITCoop Project**

**Information and Assistance Service in the field of Information Technology  
for a network of industrial cooperatives**

**SHORT DESCRIPTION AND GRAPHIC/PICTURE**

The **ITCoop** project started with the selection of 30 cooperatives. Once the target was selected, the **ITCoop** project proceeded along 4 different lines of action: training (5 Workshops), direct (10 visits to the selected cooperatives to effect an ICT Check-Up), IT (implementation of an ITCoop Web site) and the press (publication of ICT News bulletins and a Report on the work this project involved).



**CONTEXT**

Legacoop represents, safeguards and assists a group of 11,000 associated cooperative enterprises from a wide range of economic sectors (industry, building, agriculture, consumer goods, services, housing and insurance) and has become increasingly involved in services to help develop strategic business functions over the last few years.

**ITCoop** was established following the increased awareness that the cooperative movement is behind with regards to new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), a serious setback to the competitiveness and development of cooperatives themselves. A large number of cooperatives do not take full advantage of (or totally neglect) the potential of technology capable of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of businesses.

This project therefore stems from the assumption that ICT can become the main mean and channel of changing and redefining the

cooperative network, thereby providing the connecting link essential for “networking” and “clustering”.

**OBJECTIVES**

In general terms, ITCoop aims at increasing the awareness of cooperatives concerning the potential and benefits of increased knowledge of Information Technology and thereby improve the performances of enterprises and/or their different business functions.

From an operational viewpoint, this project aimed at creating a primary technological interface between the supply of advanced and innovative information and communication services and both emerging and potential Demand for such services from industrial cooperatives working in similar sectors, with common industrial problems, located in the same areas and connected by the same network.

**PROCESS**

The ITCoop project comprises 4 individual types of actions:

**training** (for all 30 cooperatives involved). This involved 5 workshops aimed at providing concrete replies to the everyday operational needs of companies. These workshops included demonstrations and problem solving cases for all aspects of business life such as applications for marketing, logistics and production, office automation and administration and finance.

**direct** (for a sample of 10 selected cooperatives). The selected cooperatives were given the opportunity to use the services of an ICT consultant who made a diagnosis of the “technological assets” (hardware and software) of these cooperatives (ICT Check up).

**IT** (for a wider range of cooperatives including a number not involved in the project). Information, data and news on the ICT system and its uses were provided by the new ITCoop Web site located within the LegaCoop Extranet ([www.legacoop.it/itcoop](http://www.legacoop.it/itcoop)).

**press** (for all the associated cooperative). The cooperatives were informed of the initiative in ques-

tion, the results achieved and new developments in ICT.

The following three parameters were used to assess the participating cooperatives, in accordance with the executive plan for the project:

- the economic and productive sector in which the cooperative works;
- the size of the cooperative (turnover/number of employees);
- the use and/or general capability to use ICT.

The 10 sample cooperatives involved in the direct actions initiative were selected as follows:

- voluntary cooperatives;
- following diagnosis stating their real and potential need for ICT;
- cooperatives operating in the same sector and their potential capability to "be a network".

The ICT Check-Up methodology used during the direct actions was initially developed via an ex ante assessment of the technological infrastructure of these 10 cooperatives, thereby allowing to ascertain how far they adopt new technology and how open the management is to ICT. These direct actions were effected at the operational premises of the selected cooperatives using the subsequent procedure:

- demonstration of the results of the ex ante assessment of the cooperative's ICT infrastructure and subsequent discussion;
- an on-site examination tour of the company;
- an interview with the management to assess the cooperative's ICT and strategic requirements.

On termination of this direct actions, a diagnostic report was drawn up which helped outline the technological requirements of these cooperatives, integrate this with the management's level of willingness to adopting Informa-

tion Technology and the companies' medium-term business plans in order to propose the relative lines of ICT development.

## RESULTS

The following output/results were achieved:

- 5 workshop in which 35 speakers and 35 managers or executives from 30 cooperatives took participated;
- 30 general cooperative profiles with regards to ICT Capability were produced;
- 10 cooperatives as beneficiaries of the diagnosis effected as part of the direct action and 10 technological profiles and technological raising plans;
- a new Web site "service" divided into 7 separate areas was created;
- 30 personalized logins, passwords and home pages were created;
- 2,206 visits to the Site were made, 35 workshops documents provided and 133 news bulletins and 10 FAQs published on-line;
- 13 documents and news bulletins were published in the press.

## IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

From the viewpoint of the short-term effects and qualitative results, the following activities as a whole led to the carrying out of a package of tools and services to support the ICT needs expressed by these cooperatives:

- experimentation of an efficient information and service system, which could be extended to all cooperatives of the sector;
- increased in-depth knowledge and awareness of the subject and benefits of ICT;
- design and test of a method based on the cycle of "information → consultancy → diagnosis → planning → feedback evaluation", which could be reproduced in other situa-



tions in both Italy and other Member States of the EU;

- the dissemination of a strategic outlook regarding ICT among the cooperatives as well as a mentality towards diagnosing and self-diagnosing assets and technological requirements;
- outlining and implementing business plans for technological adaptation;
- the creation of a permanent system of ICT services and a network of industrial enterprises;
- the creation of the elements necessary for developing both horizontal (subjects) and vertical (sectors) additional cooperative networks and clusters for interaction, communication, exchange, dissemination and sharing knowledge and experiences beginning with IT service and assistance provided by ITCoop's Web site which has now become a real "Portal".

## CONTACT DETAILS

### Project name

ITCoop Project - Information and Assistance Service in the field of Information Technology for a network of industrial cooperatives

### Timescale

01.01.1999 – 31.12.1999

### Keywords

Cooperatives – ICT Check-up methodology – ITCapability – Networking – Service on-line

### Key Project Participants

LegaCoop, Telecom Italia, Telecom Italia Mobile, Isinet, Cineca, Ervet, 30 cooperatives associated with Legacoop (IT)

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