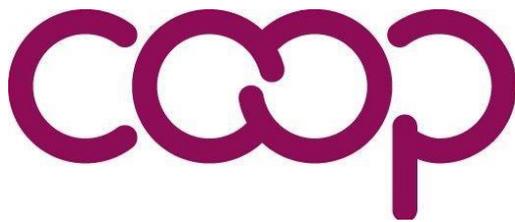


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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΕΥΝΕΤΑΙΡΙΑΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ

& ΜΕΛΕΤΩΝ (ΙΖΕΜ)

Title of abstract: Cooperatives as a Social Innovation Laboratory

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Abstract:

Since their origin in the middle of the XIX century, cooperatives have been a laboratory for legal and social innovation. The first aspect has been evinced itself in the development of the cooperative form as a manner of organizing an economic activity that seeks to improve the living conditions of its members through mutual aid. The identity of a cooperative is defined by the principles that, since the Rochdale pioneers, have considered internal democracy and the concern for community as structural elements of its institutional design. They have been included in national legal systems in very different ways, even with the creation of specific legal types, such as social cooperatives or inclusion cooperatives, which anticipated the regulation of social enterprises. In the last decade, these concerns have become part of the various efforts to redefine the concept of enterprise (for example, inclusive capitalism, human rights and enterprise, responsible capitalism, Imperative 21, SDG's) or to create new figures to cover the field from the fourth sector (for example, blended enterprises, low-profit limited liability companies, benefit corporations, dual- or multi-purpose entities, flexible- or social-purpose corporations, etc.). Cooperative principles and values have become generalized, as evidenced by the environmental, social, and (good) corporate governance (ESG) approach or the formulas of hybrid companies. Therefore, it can be said that cooperatives have been one of the first experiments in social innovation. They have provided a new solution for specific social problems, whose survival has proven to be effective, efficient, sustainable, and fair, adding value to society as a whole and not just to the individuals that comprise it. The purpose of this submission is to review some comparative experiences that demonstrate the aspects that this innovation has impacted, as well as the diffusion of cooperative values and principles towards other enterprises forms.

Keywords: Cooperative principles – Cooperative values – Comparative Cooperative Law – Social Enterprises – Social Innovation