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Social cooperatives as social enterprises¹

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Abstract : (max. 300 words)

In spite of the many coincidences, cooperatives on the whole cannot be considered directly as social enterprises, since they do not meet all the requirements to be so. However, within this type of entity, a type of cooperative has emerged which, after adapting some of its attributes while respecting cooperative principles, is considered by many to be a type of social enterprise, known as a social cooperative. This type of cooperative leaves behind the mutualist purpose typical of the cooperative movement in favour of the general interest of the community, developing health, educational and cultural activities, etc. They have some limitations that affect their economic regime, and include multiple stakeholders who will have a direct influence on the cooperative's decision-making, enabling it to increase its commitment to the community in which it operates.

This type of cooperative is increasing its presence by leaps and bounds all over the world, and especially in Europe, where more than 10 European states have already made adjustments to their legislation to introduce them. However, the regulation of this type of cooperative has been carried out very unevenly, using different names to refer to them and without a clear consensus on how they should be configured.

In this paper, the different legislations of the main countries that regulate this type of cooperative will be analyzed in order to establish some common characteristics that may allow us to identify the identifying features of this type of cooperative.

Keywords: social cooperatives, general interest mission, multi-stakeholder, economic regime, regulatory models

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