

## Call for expression of interest for Cooperatives Europe members to join Knowledge Base federated network.

---

### 1. Background

The Knowledge Base is an initiative implemented under the Framework Partnership Agreement (#coops4dev🌐) signed between the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and its regional offices and the European Commission in March 2016. The program seeks to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to foster international development, through policy, knowledge building and sharing, networking, and visibility actions.

In line with these objectives, Cooperatives Europe, the European regional office of ICA, has invested in open-source software to develop a Knowledge Base which can be understood as an innovative “cooperative search engine” for information and resources. The software is piloted via the mentoring programs CoopStarter 2.0 and Global Cooperative Entrepreneurs (GCE) and is based on the related methodology. The two mentoring programs are built on innovative partnerships between cooperative organizations and youth organizations aimed to stimulate youth cooperative entrepreneurship. The programs have been the start of a growing global community of cooperative experts, new partner organizations and ambitious young cooperative entrepreneurs.

The Knowledge Base software is based on Startin’Blox technology, a free, modular and easy-to-use tool to build decentralized applications. It uses the SOLID; meaning that all resources made available are indexed using the latest standard of the semantic web, is interoperable and can be shared with many other applications. Because it is an open source technology, the Knowledge Base code is free. This creates transparency and enhances the collective power of its federated network.

The Knowledge Base is focused on cooperative entrepreneurship and designed for two broad categories of users:

- **Contributors:** they can index resources and validate resources indexed by other contributors. Potential contributors could be, among others: mentors from GCE and CoopStarter 2.0, experts in cooperatives such as members and staff of Cooperatives Europe/ICA, as well as training centers and universities.
- **Searchers:** they can search for resources related to cooperatives and post requests to the contributors for resources they cannot find. Potential searchers could be, among others: aspiring cooperative entrepreneurs, students, researchers, and any actor interested in cooperative entrepreneurship.

*This document has been co-funded by the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Cooperatives Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*

The Knowledge Base is free to be used by anyone – be it a cooperative expert to index resources or a student interested to learn what makes a cooperative different from other types of businesses. The Knowledge Base is therefore a unique opportunity for the cooperative movement worldwide to capitalize on its 5<sup>th</sup> principle: providing education, training and information to the public. The design also fosters cooperation between cooperatives with key actors like universities, training centers, local authorities, and civil society organizations interested in cooperatives.

As the Knowledge Base is an open source tool, any organization can install it and join the federated network however, it requires a bit of technical know-how and effort to maintain it. The first installation of the Knowledge Base is currently accessible through [starter.coop](http://starter.coop) website. Cooperatives Europe intends to officially launch the Knowledge Base in Spring 2020 and to cover the costs for the deployment of two additional installations in the near future. Cooperatives Europe invites interested members to send their expression of interest to join a global community toward stimulating a more enabling environment for young cooperative entrepreneurs around the world.

Therefore, Cooperatives Europe is launching this call for expression of interest to select which among its members may be interested in hosting and installing the Knowledge Base on their respective website contributing to and benefit of knowledge sharing on cooperative entrepreneurship worldwide. As a continuous activity under the ICA-EU Partnership, Cooperatives Europe will also finance technical maintenance support of the installations from Startin'Blox until May 2021.

Startin'blox (<https://startinblox.com>) is a cooperative that develops free tools based on the latest web standards pushed by the SOLID project (<https://solid.mit.edu/>). The technology they develop is based on Linked data convention and web components. It allows any developer with a minimum of technical skills to develop federated and interoperable applications at a lower cost, to take advantage of these standards. Their mission is to empower users by allowing them to regain control of their digital tool and benefit from a network effect within a chosen ecosystem in order to emancipate from large platforms.

## ***2. Benefits of a Knowledge Base installation for the hosting organization***

The Knowledge Base can bring about considerable impact for a hosting organization.

The Knowledge Base will be an effective tool to apply a common standard to management of public documents. Resources indexed on each knowledge base installation can be made available for researches on the whole network or just for researches on the local installation. In this way the hosting organization can directly manage the level of sharing of its own resources.

*This document has been co-funded by the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Cooperatives Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*

In addition, the Knowledge Base is an excellent forum for sharing your developed content with cooperators around the world. Indeed, the Knowledge Base involves a growing global community of experts in cooperative entrepreneurship, young cooperative entrepreneurs, students, universities and civil society organizations. This means that the resources you choose to index with open access will be visible for an audience far larger than your usual one and thus increasing the visibility of your work.

Moreover, at the same time, you will also be able to access a range of materials from other organizations from around the world. Indeed, the Knowledge Base will allow your organization to diversify your information flow by viewing resources posted by others. Indeed, the Knowledge Base can serve as your single entry to relevant cooperative resources and you can also post a request for resources to you see missing. As of now, the Knowledge Base interface is available in English and French but resources written in other languages will also be indexed and you can search for resources in particular languages and from certain countries. Thus, using the Knowledge Base will also allow your organization to easily contact cooperative experts, engage with cooperative entrepreneurs or identify organizations that you would like to collaborate with.

### 3. Profile requirements of a hosting organization

The organization interested to host an installation of the Knowledge Base needs to fulfill the following profile requirements:

- Demonstrated resources (e.g. documents, videos) related to cooperative entrepreneurship that can be shared with others via the Knowledge Base
- Demonstrated networks of actors with expertise in cooperative entrepreneurship that can act as contributors of the Knowledge Base by indexing resources and validate resources that have been indexed by other contributors
- Demonstrated networks of cooperative entrepreneurs and/or actors interested in learning about cooperative entrepreneurship and development that could benefit from accessing resources on cooperative entrepreneurship around the world
- Have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain the Knowledge Base post the maintenance provided from Cooperatives Europe;
- Demonstrated connection to the cooperative movement (priority to member organization of Cooperatives Europe) and/or elaborated interest to get involved and to contribute to the cooperative movement (e.g. university with curricula on cooperatives, civil society organizations with cooperative focus).

### 4. Technical- and sustainability requirements

The organization interested to host an installation of the Knowledge Base needs to fulfill the following requirements regarding technical aspects and sustainability measures:

*This document has been co-funded by the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Cooperatives Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*

- Availability of a WordPress website to host the search interface
- Availability of a server with sufficient bandwidth and support to Python3 and PostgreSQL for running the backend
- Control of a domain name (preferably .coop) to create 2 subdomains to be used for the knowledge base installation
- A maintenance plan for 3 years for the knowledge base and the related websites

### 5. Registration of interest

Fill in application form, see “Annex 1” and submit the application to Hanna Persson, Education & Training Officer – Cooperative Development at Cooperatives Europe: [h.persson@coopseurope.coop](mailto:h.persson@coopseurope.coop)

Deadline for submitting the application is: 15 September 2020.

### 6. Selection procedures

The selection of the two organizations will be based on the content of the submitted applications. As elaborated in Annex 1, the application form is divided into 2 parts.

The first part includes the technical requirements (e.g. the website needs to be of a Wordpress design) and the second part focuses on the organization’s involvement in/connection to cooperative entrepreneurship. Therefore, the two organizations selected will be the ones that fulfill all technical requirements and, at the same time, score the highest in the second part.

*This document has been co-funded by the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Cooperatives Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*

## Annex 1: Application Form

The application is divided into two parts, the first part focuses on the technical requirements and sustainability measures which are essential to host the Knowledge Base and the second part aims to assess your organizations involvement- and connection to cooperative entrepreneurship.

While the first part of the application is based on a structure of ticking boxes (“Yes”, “No” and “Do not know”), the second part is built around a self-assessment. You will be asked to provide a score for each listed requirements along with a brief explanation to validate/verify your indicated scoring. You will be asked to score a number between 1 to 5 in which, 1 is indicating no relevance and 5 is indicating high relevance.

Example: Does your organization have relevant resources available?

- 1 (no relevant documents);
- 2 (a very limited resources);
- 3 (some relevant resources);
- 4 (a lot of relevant resources);
- 5 (extensive range of relevant resources).

### Part 1

<i>Requirements</i>	YES	NO	DO NOT KNOW
<i>Availability of a Wordpress website to host the search interface</i>			
<i>Availability of a server with sufficient bandwidth and support to Python3 and PostGreSQL for running the backend</i>			
<i>Control of a domain name (preferably .coop) to create 2 subdomains to be used for the knowledge base installation</i>			
<i>A maintenance plan for 3 years for the knowledge base and the related websites</i>			

*This document has been co-funded by the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Cooperatives Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*

## Part 2

### Requirements

	Self-assess your estimated scoring here (1-5)	Validation/supported evidence Write a brief explanation to explain your self-assessed scoring.
<i>Relevance of the resources (e.g. documents, videos) related to cooperative entrepreneurship that you could index and share with others via the Knowledge Base</i>		
<i>Demonstrated networks of actors with expertise in cooperative entrepreneurship that can act as contributors of the Knowledge Base by indexing resources and validate resources that have been indexed by other contributors</i>		
<i>Demonstrated networks of cooperative entrepreneurs and/or actors interested in learning about how to start up cooperatives that could benefit from accessing resources on cooperative entrepreneurship around the world</i>		
<i>Have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain the Knowledge Base after the maintenance provided from Cooperatives Europe;</i>		
<i>Demonstrated connection to the cooperative movement (e.g. member organization of Cooperatives Europe) and/or elaborated interest to get involved and contribute to the cooperative movement (e.g. university with curricula on cooperatives, civil society organizations with cooperative focus).</i>		

Your organisation:

Contact person:

Email:

*This document has been co-funded by the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Cooperatives Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*