

CORE cvba-so: Cooperative Enterprise in Rational Energy Consumption

From:

KU Leuven

Faculty/Department/Programme/External partners:

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Abstract:

CORE is a cooperative enterprise, started and managed by students who want to contribute actively to the sustainable development of our society.

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Description:

CORE cvba-so is a **cooperative enterprise with a social purpose that was started and is managed by students** who want to contribute actively to the sustainable development of our society. The CORE cooperative unites students, companies and organisations that are actively engaged in the energy and sustainability sector. Here, students are given the opportunity to develop themselves within several projects which they introduce themselves, in close cooperation with companies and knowledge institutions. These **projects are focused within the sectors of mobility, housing and industrial energy consumption.**

In addition to that, the students are responsible for the company's success, which allows them to develop a large number of other competences as well. They are in charge, for instance, of the accounts, the legal structure, internal and external communication, strategic decisions, etc. These are competences which are often not taught together in traditional programmes. Moreover, the students acquire in-depth knowledge of the cooperative business model. Contrary to the current business model which is based on growth, competition, market and profit, the cooperative model is all about sustainability, cooperation and added value.

Because profit maximisation is not the objective, there is room to work on innovative projects. Moreover, part of the profit generated by the cooperative will be used to promote cooperative enterprise and sustainable development through education, which is the social goal of the cooperative.

Students who carry the business follow the **Postgraduate Programme in Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Engineering**. This programme offers engineering technology students the opportunity to follow a two-year Master's program and to put the knowledge they acquired during their engineering technology training into practice. After two years they pass on the torch to the next generation of students. Students who do not follow this postgraduate programme, which means students from other disciplines as well, can contribute to the cooperative as temporary collaborators, possibly by means of a Master's thesis.

The combination of students' youthful enthusiasm and potential and the partners' knowledge, experience and expertise leads to innovative and interesting projects. Both the student and the company are owners of the cooperative (through the purchase of shares), which means that they are both responsible for the company's success. This creates a synergy between the student and the entrepreneur and creates a lot of benefits for both parties. The student is given the opportunity to acquire more in-depth knowledge of his or her area of interest and at the same time also gains a great deal of additional experience. For the entrepreneur this is a unique chance to work together with motivated students and to provide education.

The model which CORE is based on can be easily copied to other environments. Consequently, other initiatives may be set up with regard to students and sustainable development.