

The Øresund Excubator

Promoting Cooperative and Sustainable Entrepreneurship in the
Øresund region

White Paper

COMPANION
KOOPERATIV UTVECKLING

KOOPERATIONEN

TÆNKETANKEN
Demokratisk Erhverv

Interreg
Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak
European Regional Development Fund



Table of Contents

Introduction and reading guide	4
Summary of the report's main findings	5
Results of the project	5
Suggestions for the future	7
1. Democratic entrepreneurship in perspective	8
1.1. What is a democratic business (and why have them at all)?	8
1.2. Democratic businesses in Scandinavia: barriers and support structures	9
1.3. International experiences	11
2. The ØreXund Excubator	13
2.1. Aim and description of the program	13
2.2. Participating partner organizations	13
2.3. Summary of the project plan	14
2.4. Course elements	14
3. Material and method	15
4. Democratic entrepreneurship in action - learnings from an Excubator	16
4.1. Evaluation of the Örexund Excubator	16
4.1.1. Recruitment	16
4.1.2. Communication and planning	18
4.1.3. Candidates	20
4.1.4. Course elements and activities	23
4.1.5. Final business ideas and models	25
4.1.6. Creating new networks	27
4.1.7. Knowledge about and commitment to start a democratic business	29
4.2 Strategic and political goals	32
4.2.1. Strategic networks: presentations, debates, and workshops	32
4.2.2. Important outcomes	32
4.2.2. Advisory Board	33
4.2.3. UNI-package: Spreading knowledge about democratic entrepreneurship	33
4.2.4. Learnings from the strategic work	34

5. New Perspectives / Looking ahead	34
List of references	36
Appendix	37

Introduction and reading guide

Despite the need for new and sustainable jobs in the region, and strong evidence showing that democratic startups are doing comparably well, both Sweden and Denmark are seeing a slow growth of new democratic and sustainable businesses. A common regulatory framework is lacking in both countries, and it can be particularly difficult for new democratic companies to find the support they need from governmental authorities and private business advisors. Due to lack of knowledge in the area, the democratic form is rarely even presented as a viable alternative when entrepreneurs seek advice (source). Furthermore, public knowledge about the democratic form remains generally low (Rothstein 2020), and there is relatively little research conducted on the subject.

This is what the ØreXund Excubator project has been set out to change. The ØreXund Excubator project is an interregional collaboration between three organizations focusing on democratic entrepreneurship, sustainability, and cooperation: Kooperationen (DK), Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv (DK), and Coompanion Skåne (SE). The project is funded by Interreg Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak and has been running between the 1st of January 2021 and the 30th of September 2022. The Excubator's primary aim has been to support democratically governed and/or sustainable startups in order to ensure the growth of new and sustainable jobs in the Øresund Region by establishing a strong collaboration between the project partners, as well as other external partners. On an operational level, the project offered an excubator training program for Swedish and Danish startups and businesses. Creating strategic partnerships with universities and other organizations promoting entrepreneurship, and working on a political level to increase awareness of cooperative entrepreneurship, were important parts of the overarching aim.

This whitebook provides a summary of all the information, knowledge, and insights gathered over the course of this project. The data is primarily based on evaluations with the course participants and in-depth interviews with the organizers. The aim of the whitebook is to create a solid knowledge foundation for future projects that want to support democratic and sustainable entrepreneurship in the region or elsewhere. Hopefully, the report will serve as a go-to handbook for the further promotion of sustainable and democratic companies, thereby contributing to the sustained development of successful new businesses. At the same time, the whitebook offers new insights and data on democratic business practices in the initial stages of starting a business, i.e., data that might be relevant to entrepreneurs but also research institutions.

Chapter 1 includes a background section on the barriers and support structures for democratic startups in Denmark and Sweden, setting the stage for the ØreXund Excubator. It also summarizes some key insights from similar initiatives that have taken place in Spain, Great Britain, and Italy. **Chapter 2** introduces the Excubator, describing the aim of the project and the goals set by the collaborating organizations. In **chapter 3**, the empirical material and method of the white book will be discussed. **Chapter 4** evaluates the organization and final results of the ØreXund Excubator, both in terms of participant satisfaction and learning outcomes, as well as the strategic and political outcomes of the project. Hence, this part will give concrete suggestions

on what future projects might consider in their endeavor to promote a more sustainable and democratic business landscape. It also entails data on the participants' educational and professional background, gender, and motivations for joining the program. Finally, **chapter 6** will conclude with a final note on the future outlook of the project.

Summary of the report's main findings

This report collects all the information, knowledge, and insights gathered over the course of the ØreXund Excubator project. The data is primarily based on surveys with the course participants and interviews with the project organizers. The results and main findings from the study are shortly summarized in the following section:

Results of the project

- The program established the first Excubator on democratic and sustainable entrepreneurship in Scandinavia. It managed to attract 134 entrepreneurs consisting of 117 teams in total, who participated in one of the 4 jointly held courses. 56 teams were based in Sweden and 61 in Denmark. The courses were taught in English and included both physical and virtual course elements. Above the course elements, which were divided into 9 steps focusing on everything from developing a business idea to making a financial forecast, the project offered about 1100 hours of one-on-one business consulting and xxx additional webinars on democratic and sustainable entrepreneurship.
- The most appreciated course elements were the one-on-one meetings with business advisors and the application of the Entrepreneurdy tool. Satisfaction with the course has furthermore remained high. 85% of the participants rated the overall experience of the program as either 'Very good' or 'Good', and 68% of the participants stated that their business ideas had been strengthened during the course to a 'Very high degree' or a 'High degree'.
- The course opened for several networking opportunities, also between Swedish and Danish entrepreneurs. 34% of the participants found that they had built new and useful business networks across the sound to a 'High' or a 'Very high' degree. 32 participants continued to meet after the course ended by joining the Klub Kooperativ initiative - a common workspace for cooperatives in Copenhagen that was created by Kooperationen as an extension to the project.
- Beyond the Excubator as such, the project aimed to spread knowledge about democratic entrepreneurship and push for relevant political changes. It contributed on several levels, including:
 - The participation and facilitation of a total of 91 presentations, debates, workshops, meetings, or conferences on democratic entrepreneurship, directed towards relevant organizations.

- The establishment of and participation in the FIDE network, which gathers researchers interested in democratic businesses. A research group from the IT University of Copenhagen has further initiated a research project on democratic entrepreneurship, using survey data collected from the participants of the Excubator.
- The establishment of an Expert group, appointed by the Danish government, which has been designated to evaluate the legal and financial barriers for new democratic companies. The Expert group used insights from the Excubator when formulating their suggestions.
- The creation of a course module on democratic entrepreneurship that has been taught at universities in both Sweden and Denmark.
- A conference that was held on March 30th, 2022, by Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv, focusing on current barriers for new democratic companies.

Key insights from the first cooperative Excubator in Scandinavia

- The Excubator's focus on democratic and sustainable businesses attracted a diverse range of entrepreneurs, both in terms of gender (63% of the participants were female) and professional/academic background. The participants were more often purpose and value-driven than profit-driven, and almost everyone worked with sustainability in some sense.
- The aforementioned entrepreneurs have previously had a hard time finding the kind of business advice and networks they need, often feeling a sense of 'not fitting in' at more conventional business incubators. Hence, a feeling of community – finding other people that are interested in the same issues, business advisors that understand their motivations, and potential collaborators to work or merely discuss with – has been especially important for the participants of the course.
- While almost all participants have had a strong focus on sustainability, the focus on democratic organization has varied. Some joined the program specifically to start a democratic business, while others knew little about the subject from the start. The program managed to promote democratic entrepreneurship to both groups, by 1) inspiring and educating entrepreneurs to consider the democratic form, showing examples of successful democratic businesses, and 2) to advise entrepreneurs who were already interested in starting a cooperative on how to build and organize their businesses.
- The Excubator showed that generic entrepreneurship curriculums can be highly applicable to more 'purpose-driven' entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs, however, gain from learning about business in a setting where this is an understanding of their specific purpose and the type of business they want to create.
- Finally, sustainability and democratic ownership seem to go hand in hand. Hence, while not everyone decided to create a cooperative on the spot, they were a group of entrepreneurs who were sympathetic towards the democratic company form. This implies

that focusing on entrepreneurs interested in sustainability can be a good starting-point when wanting to promote cooperatives.

Suggestions for the future

- Recruitment takes a lot of time and effort – not least during a pandemic. Making sure that recruitment is prioritized with sufficient resources early on is imperative for a successful entrepreneurship program. Defining clear target-groups are central for a good recruitment effort.
- There are different ways to teach a course on democratic entrepreneurship depending on the target-group. Whereas more experienced entrepreneurs can focus solely on aspects such as sustainability and democratic organization, early-stage entrepreneurs benefit from a combination of generic business advice and more inspirational elements. Future projects could consider targeting one of these groups, allowing them to focus more on one or the other aspects.
- Networking was highly appreciated by the participants. Focusing solely on creating network opportunities, especially for individuals who would like to find a partner to start a cooperative with, could be a useful and much-needed way forward.
- Projects that are managed across countries demand more attention, time, and resources than national projects. Furthermore, cross-national projects can benefit from having a strategic manager assigned in both countries. Making sure that the strategic work is internally communicated and that the strategic goals are spelled out in detail, preferably already in the application phase, may help the overall coordination of the project.

1. Democratic entrepreneurship in perspective

1.1. What is a democratic business (and why have them at all)?

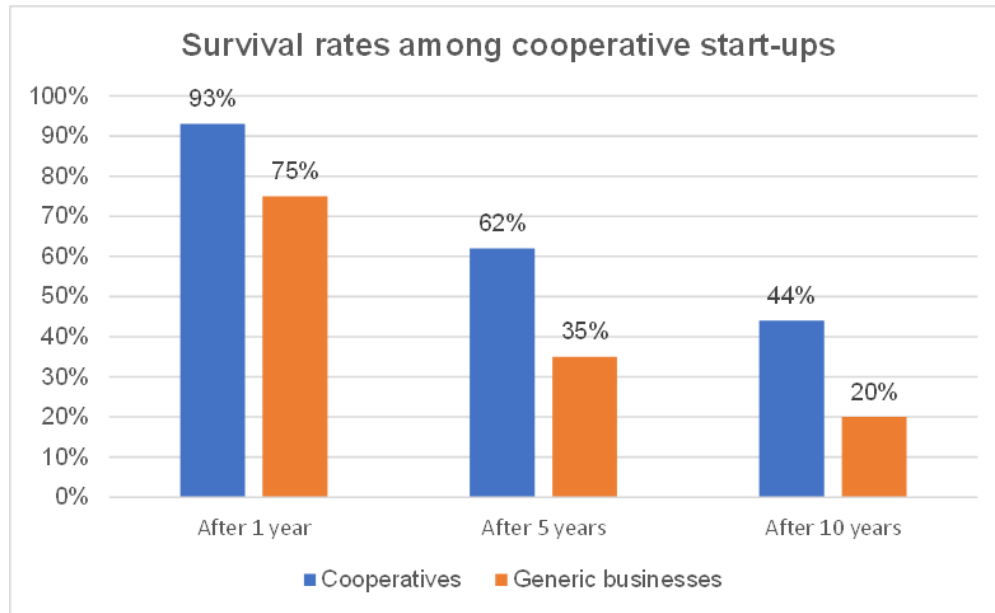
The main difference between democratic and traditional businesses is that the former are owned and governed by their members, rather than by the company's shareholders. The most common way to govern is through the 'one-member, one-vote' rule, meaning that all members, regardless of, for example, their stock share, have an equal right to vote when larger decisions are made within the company.

Who counts as a member depends on the business. Four models are usually applicable for democratic businesses:

- A consumer-owned cooperative is governed by the consumers of the company's products or services. The purpose of consumer-owned cooperatives was initially to provide consumers with high quality products at a lower price. Some examples are COOP, LB Forsikring, and Arbejdernes Landsbank.
- A business/producer-owned cooperative consists of several individual and privately owned businesses. Usually, every business, regardless of their comparative size, has an equal right to vote, whereas the profit is distributed according to individual revenue. Some examples are Arla, Danish Crown, and Kop & Kande.
- An employee-owned cooperative is governed by those who work at the company. This alternative is not too widely applied in the Scandinavian context, but more common in other European countries such as France and Italy (Cooperatives Europe 2015). A Danish example is Analyse & Tal.
- A mixed association is governed by different actors, e.g. both consumers and employers. One example is the Spanish supermarket chain Eroski, which is a worker-consumer hybrid cooperative.

Both Sweden and Denmark have a long history of setting up associative companies and cooperatives, resulting from the strong workers and farmer's movements in the late 19th and early 20th century (see e.g. Møller Mulvad & Rübner Hansen 2020). Moreover, research has shown that democratic businesses are doing comparably well in terms of, for example, stability over time, productivity, and levels of investment (Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv 2022), and the survival rate among cooperative startups is higher:

Figure 1: Survival rates among cooperative start-ups



Source: *Ministry of Economic Development in Canada (2008)*.

Employees in employee-owned companies also seem to be more satisfied with their working condition and the staff turnover is on average lower (Freeman 2015). Finally, many democratic businesses support their local economies, contribute to community development, and are often value-based organizations emphasizing diversity, democracy, and social inclusion rather than mere profit. They are therefore ideal business models when working with sustainable development, just as sustainable businesses can benefit from the cooperative model.

On a more general level, cooperatives can attract new types of entrepreneurs and spur the development of new companies. Denmark is especially seeing a low rate of newly started businesses, as only 3% of Danes have started or are in the process of starting a business on their own. This stands in stark contrast to the European average of 8-10%.

1.2. Democratic businesses in Scandinavia: barriers and support structures

The Ørexund Excubator is formed as an innovative response to some of the challenges that both new and established democratic businesses are facing in Denmark and Sweden today. In the following, some of the main barriers for democratic businesses in both countries will be discussed, to better account for the gap that the Excubator has intended to fill.

To start with, the startup rate of democratic enterprises still remains quite low in both Sweden and Denmark compared to other European countries. Sweden is doing better with an average of 380 new democratic businesses established per year between 2008-2018 (Svensk Kooperation 2021). In Denmark, an average of 38 new cooperatives were established during the last three years (Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv 2022). In comparison to countries such as Italy and France, the growth-rate is low. This is particularly the case when it comes to establishing new

employee-owned businesses. The development stands in stark contrast to the European Commission's efforts to promote democratic companies in the EU. The EC has for almost two decades aimed to ensure that "co-operatives continue to make an important contribution to economic dynamism and growth" and that "Member States' authorities, as well as national, regional or local level organizations develop or intensify their efforts in ensuring a better understanding of the sector" (EC 2004). There is therefore reason to look more closely at the barriers and challenges for democratic businesses in both Denmark and Sweden.

Why is it that the democratic business sector is not growing faster in Denmark and Sweden, despite their historical experience with cooperatives and the strong evidence in favor of starting up a democratic business? And what can a business incubator do to improve these conditions?

It is evident that both countries lack the institutional support needed for democratic business practices. In a cross-country comparison of the legal framework and support structures for employee-owned businesses in the EU, Sweden and Denmark rank poorly with a passive or non-existing regulatory framework (Lowitzsch & Haschi 2014). Furthermore, public knowledge about democratic companies remains low and there is generally little attention given to employee-owned companies in the public debate (see e.g. Rothstein 2020, Katalys 2019). There is also a lack of research on democratic ownership in both Sweden and Denmark. Whereas Sweden, for example, previously had a research institution called 'Kooperativa Institutet', which was fully devoted to spreading knowledge about the cooperative form in a national and international research context, no equivalent can be found today (Katalys 2019). Hence, **pushing for policy-changes** that can spur the development of cooperatives, **raising awareness** of the democratic form among relevant actors and curious entrepreneurs, and **supporting research** in cooperative organization, are all important factors that can help change the institutional setting. The Excubator has extensively addressed these factors through its strategic work, but also by inspiring entrepreneurs that have had little knowledge in cooperative organization to start a democratic company.

The general lack of knowledge on democratic entrepreneurship has further consequences for the availability of business support. This becomes particularly evident when democratic companies seek advice from governmental authorities and private business advisors. The lack of experience and understanding of democratic companies makes it difficult for entrepreneurs to learn about alternatives to other company forms. Supporting democratic businesses requires specialized knowledge in, for example, taxes and regulations, options for investments and fundings, and legal advice on how to structure a democratic enterprise. As many advisors lack such knowledge, the cooperative form is not always presented as a viable option when entrepreneurs seek private or public business advice - even when a democratic ownership structure would better suit the company (Nielsen et al 2022).

There are some exceptions. In Sweden, Coompanion, partly funded by Tillväxtverket [The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth], provides business advice and guidance to sustainable and cooperative enterprises across all 25 Swedish regions. Potential cooperatives are offered a minimum of 5 hours of free counseling, focusing on both coaching and legal and economic advice. In Denmark, Kooperationen provides legal advice on cooperative governance

to about 50-100 entrepreneurs per year, but they lack the economic resources to provide more long-term business counseling as they receive no regional or national funding. The existing support structures for democratic businesses therefore diverge somewhat between Denmark and Sweden. In both cases, however, it is clear that more can be done to promote democratic businesses - and especially employee-owned companies - in the same way as is already being done in many other European countries.

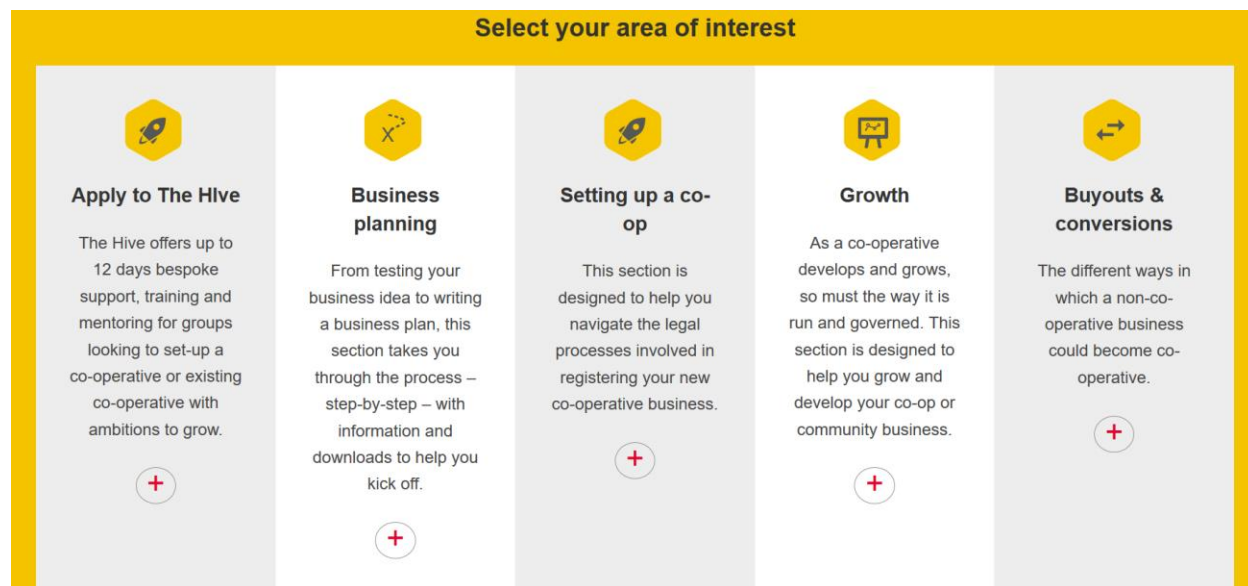
Such initiatives have already been undertaken in several European countries, where democratic businesses have been promoted through business incubators or course modules on cooperative entrepreneurship. Some of these experiences have recently been investigated in a report by Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv (2019), and will be shortly summarized in the following section.

1.3. International experiences

Great Britain

In Great Britain, the entrepreneurship program *The Hive* supports the whole life cycle of a democratic business - from the initial idea to business development and sales - through a tailored advisory program. The Hive specializes in providing counseling, education, and a network of cooperative entrepreneurs. The experiences from The Hive show that it is essential to begin with the business idea before the legal structures of the company are established. Many cooperative entrepreneurship programs have rather focused on the legal forms in the early stages of the program, and have therefore wasted valuable time and resources on companies that will never develop a sustainable business.

Figure 2: Offer from The Hive.



Source: *The Hive 2019*

Spain

The Spanish consultancy firm Tazebaez offers entrepreneurial courses on university level in Seoul, Shanghai, Bilbao, Seattle, and Berlin. The initiative started in Bilbao and consists of a four-year study program on democratic entrepreneurship. Here, 10-18 students start a democratic business from day one. The teachers function as mentors and coaches, and teach collaboration, business development, accounting, IT, financing, etc. The Leinn Bilbao program is one out of few educational programs where you are obliged to start a business, i.e. the students need to collaborate with a set of co-entrepreneur students to start and develop their business. It has also been highly successful in doing so: between a third and two fifths of the graduates become entrepreneurs after completing the program. Half of the businesses end up as cooperatives and almost all companies focus on social responsibility.

Italy

The Italian entrepreneurship program *Coop start-up* was founded in 2016 and specifically targeted towards young entrepreneurs. Based on a model of competition, entrepreneurs had to send in a project proposal, whereas the best proposals were chosen by an expert panel. The finalists participated in bootcamps and were offered advice to improve their business models. A final number of entrepreneurs then received between 5-25.000 Euro and six months of free counseling. This competitive model worked in two ways: it helped the winners to establish their cooperative businesses, while it encouraged a group of finalists to improve their business plans.

Another initiative called *Coop-up* has focused on South Italy; an area which is more economically vulnerable and lacks the strong cooperative traditions of the North. Here, 10-15 entrepreneurship centers have been established, where entrepreneurs receive education and facilities in collaboration with, or at the physical location of, already established cooperatives. The programme is based on a staircase model, where entrepreneurs can use the facilities and receive advice for free during the first months, and thereafter pay more and more over time. Creating collaborations between new and already established cooperatives is considered to be the project's primary strength, as the newly founded cooperatives contribute with products that existing cooperatives are already in need of.

To summarize, there are various ways to support democratic entrepreneurs and there is plenty to learn from previous initiatives. The Örexund Excubator has built upon these experiences by, among other things, 1) combining social and democratic entrepreneurship, 2) focusing on the business idea as much as the legal aspects of starting a company, and 3) inviting established cooperatives to meet and share their experiences with new entrepreneurs. But the project has also led to new learnings on how to best support democratic and sustainable entrepreneurs. This will be the focal point of the following white book.

2. The ØreXund Excubator

2.1. Aim and description of the program

The primary aim of the ØreXund Excubator has been to increase employment by promoting the growth of democratic and sustainable businesses in the Öresund region. Beyond this overarching aim, the project has been guided by the following goals:

- To establish a strong collaboration across the sound between Coompanion Skåne, Kooperationen, and Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv, as well as other external partners, that will enable better support for upcoming and established entrepreneurs.
- To jointly operationalize and develop 120 startups and small firms with cooperative and sustainable methods - half from Sweden and half from Denmark.
- To develop common business advice modules for sustainable and cooperative businesses.
- To open new markets across the sound and create networks for new and established cooperatives within the region.
- To develop new and innovative ways to reach out to a larger diversity of new and established entrepreneurs with cooperative methods.
- To use established cooperative businesses as mentors and door-openers for new cooperatives.

These overarching goals were pursued on three different levels:

1. Operationally, by creating an Excubator for democratic entrepreneurship across the Öresund region.
2. Strategically, by working together with universities and other organizations promoting entrepreneurship.
3. Politically, by reaching out to politicians, media, and the public to increase awareness of cooperative entrepreneurship.

2.2. Participating partner organizations

Coompanion is a Swedish organization promoting social, economic, and environmentally sustainable entrepreneurship. Coompanion operates in 25 different locations across the country and offers information, training, and personal advice on how to start a business. They focus on cooperative enterprises and social entrepreneurship, but also give advice to other company forms.

Kooperationen is the Danish Cooperative Employer's Organization with a network of 117 member companies and NGOs. They promote the cooperative form across several sectors. They offer professional legal advice and counseling within areas such as employment law, company law and construction law.

Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv is a Danish think tank that promotes and unites democratic businesses in Denmark, by providing and producing knowledge, participating in the public debate, and creating networks in the democratic business sector.

2.3. Summary of the project plan

The Ørexund Excubator has been running between 01-01-2021 and 30-09-2022, including a planning and preparation phase. In total, 4 excubators were held with a total of 134 entrepreneurs divided into 117 teams. The courses have been running between 14-09-2021 and 09-06-2022. The Excubator was largely based on the project “Fra akademiker til iværksætter”: a democratic business incubator that was made in collaboration with DM, MA, Kooperationen, DSF and Tænketanken Demokratisk Erhverv from August 2020 to February 2021. Insights from the project were therefore implemented to the larger project funded by Interreg.

The project management was led by Coompanion but the operational contributions were divided between all project partners. Kooperationen had the primary responsibility for execution, and Taenketanken Demokratisk Erhverv for the strategic work. The external communication both recruited entrepreneurs to the excubator and informed members, collaborating partners, and other business-promoting organizations about the project.

2.4. Course elements



The elements of the ØreXund Excubator course are largely based on the digital platform Entrepreneurdy, founded by Dr Yngve Dale, Associate Professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway. Entrepreneurdy builds upon the S-E-A-M method, providing guiding principles for startups and new entrepreneurs that can be applied in incubators and similar. In the Ørexund Excubator, the principles included:

- Purpose
- Resources
- Business Idea and Impact
- Business Model
- Objectives and Tasks
- Financial Forecast

The 6 guiding principles listed above were all incorporated into six course days, with online lectures, discussions, and additional readings. Above the online course work, three physical events were held in either Malmö or Copenhagen. These included:

- A Kick-off Meeting, where participants met for the first time, got an introduction to the course, told their story, and listened to inspirational talks.
- A Study Tour and Network Event, where participants visited a democratic company and networked with businesses across the region.
- A Pitch-day, which was the final stage of the course, where the participants were encouraged to make a 10 min presentation (pitch) of their business idea followed by feedback from an expert advisory panel.

During the various stages of the course, the participants were also provided personal business advice in one-on-one meetings with business advisors.

3. Material and method

The material used in the evaluation is based on surveys conducted with the participants and interviews conducted with the organizers. The quantitative results are primarily based on the aggregated results of the course evaluations. The course evaluations included questions on:

- Background/demographics
- Motivations to join the program
- Rating of course activities/elements
- Learning outcomes
- Network opportunities
- Evaluation of the overall program

The course evaluations were conducted and sent out by Kooperationen at the end of every course period. 4 course evaluations were in total sent out, with a total of 47 respondents. The survey response rate was thereby 35,1%.

A longer survey was further conducted at the end of the program period and sent out to all Excubator participants. The survey was made by Taenketanken Demokratisk Erhverv in collaboration with IT University. The questionnaire included similar evaluating questions as mentioned above, but also included more in-depth questions about the participants' thoughts on democratic entrepreneurship. It managed, however, only to gather a total of 19 responses,

whereas 13 participants fully completed the questionnaire. As the survey and course evaluations were filled in anonymously, it was impossible to know whether or not the respondents in the later survey had also completed one of the course evaluations. Due to the lower number of respondents in the longer survey, these responses have not been counted into the aggregated results. Only one exception can be found: the figure on 'Motivations to join the course' contains results solely from the longer survey. Some of the written responses from the longer questionnaire have also been quoted in the text.

Finally, it should be noted that the results on 'Occupational status' have been sorted according to a categorization of the respondents' individual answers, instead of having used pre-established categories for the respondents to choose between (multiple-choice). This might therefore cause a certain ambiguity in the results.

Besides the survey results, the evaluation builds upon individual interviews with the organizers. The interviews were conducted between 02-05-2022 and 11-05-2022 and transcribed thereafter. Five themes were discussed during the interviews:

- How were goals and objectives of the program achieved?
- Organization, planning, and recruitment
- Evaluation of the progress of participants
- Evaluation of the different course elements
- Evaluation of the strategic work

4. Democratic entrepreneurship in action - learnings from an Excubator

4.1. Evaluation of the Örexund Excubator

4.1.1. Recruitment

Several organizers expressed that it was difficult to recruit participants to the program and that it took a lot of time. Covid-19 also clearly hampered the possibility to recruit. A larger number of candidates would have allowed for the possibility to set a higher barrier for joining the program and to make use of the applied selection criteria, both in terms of the candidates' skills and motivations, how far they were in their business journey, and their interest in creating specifically a democratic and sustainable business. Setting the barrier a bit too low, on the other hand, implies risking that the most motivated and suited candidates choose another program. Hence, in terms of the overarching goal to support and create new democratic and sustainable startups in the region, the project could have focused more on receiving the most suited candidates already at the start. This would also have created a better synergy between the participants, who were now in somewhat different places in their business journey, and allowed the project to focus more on established businesses and already organized co-operatives. Some participants also highlighted

this aspect in the course evaluation, requesting a larger focus on already somewhat established businesses.

The program is geared more toward people who are thinking about starting a business, and less toward people who have started but may be struggling. Would be useful to have content targeting us. - *Participant*

On the other hand, the project met its goals in terms of the total number of participants. A total of 134 entrepreneurs consisting of 117 teams attended the course, with 56 teams from Sweden and 61 teams from Denmark. The recruitment also succeeded with its overarching goal to attract 'non-stereotypical' groups of entrepreneurs, both in terms of gender, ethnicity, and background. This was most likely the result of contacting a variety of groups, i.e., not merely business schools, and by showing a diversity of people on the marketing material used for the program.

ØREXUND

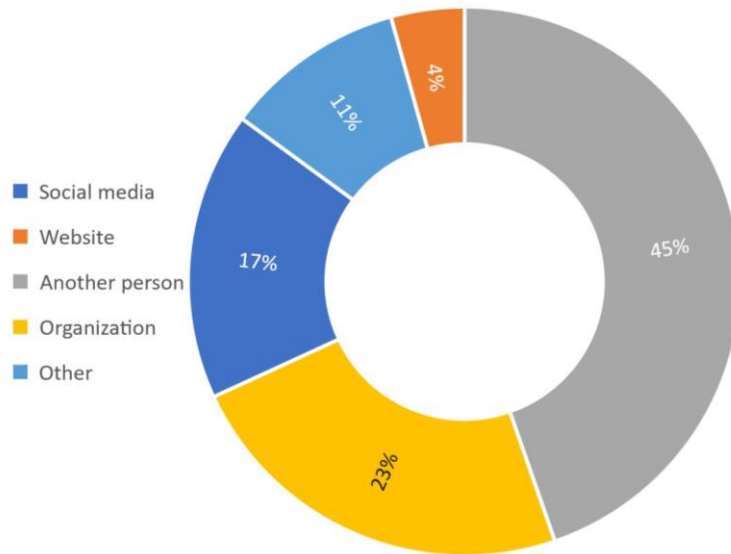
GIVE YOUR BUSINESS A SUSTAINABLE KICK-START

APPLY NOW!
next course start 21 april

Photo: Coompanion Skåne, Facebook page

Candidates primarily learned about the program from friends, colleagues or family. Social media, especially Facebook, was otherwise the most successful channel for attracting new recruitments. Other initiatives included presenting the course at universities and other organizations, both physically and virtually, and reaching out to people in already existing networks. Over 100 different kinds of interest groups, schools, etc. were contacted.

Figure 3: Where did the participants first hear about the Örexund Excubator?

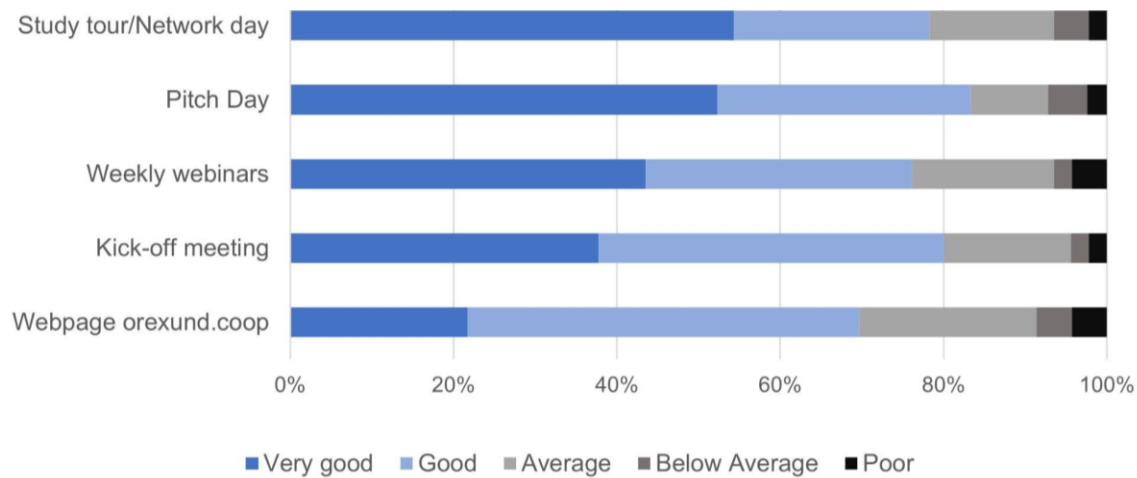


To improve the recruitment process, it has been suggested to make more use of the networks already in place - both in terms of the onboarding participants' networks and the partner organizations' networks. Other suggestions have been to keep better track of the data traffic on the website and to work more on reaching out with the created SoMe material, for example, by using sponsored Facebook links. The project could also have aimed to reach out to all 'A-kasser' and unions in Denmark and Sweden, as these organizations were great gateways to new recruitments.

4.1.2. Communication and planning

The project team primarily used emails to communicate with the participants throughout the course. There was also an internal Facebook group where the participants could communicate with one another and discuss relevant topics. A website was built for the Örexund Excubator, with information about the course and course dates. The participants generally found the level of communication to be 'Very good' or 'Good'. The graph below shows the survey respondents' rating of the communication for the different course activities and the website.

Figure 4: Rating of the level of communication



Due to some time pressure, the deadline for applying to the course was often close to the course start date. Having some time to send out relevant material, such as readings and course objectives, to the participants before the course started, would potentially have benefitted their learning outcomes. This was requested by some of the participants as well.

Some information was sometimes also lacking in the communication material, such as the fact that the course was for free and that the 9 weeks course was not a full-time commitment. Some participants expressed that they felt unsure about the expectations of them and how much time they should spend on the course. Finally, it could have been more explicitly communicated on the website how much and in what way the sustainable and democratic aspects of the course would be included. This remained somewhat unclear in the course description, as these elements were incorporated into the one-on-one meetings with the business advisors rather than into the course modules. Some organizers mentioned that this made certain participants unsure of how to approach these topics.

In terms of the planning-phase, several organizers emphasized that it can be quite a complicated process to work with three different organizations and create something new from scratch - especially during a pandemic. The pandemic forced the project teams to change the organization of the course and required that the course was adapted frequently. The initial planning phase went slowly, placing, perhaps, too much time and focus on technical details, such as the creation of a common website. A lot of time was later spent on agreeing on the basic concepts of the course, such as which digital tool to use, what the focal point of the course should be, how to include the sustainable and democratic aspects of the course, etc. Learning how the organizational structures work in different countries and within different organizations, and discussing the available resources of the collaborating partners, were also important elements of the planning phase. While all this took some time and energy, several organizers expressed that

this process was necessary and, in the end, fruitful for the collaboration between the organizations.

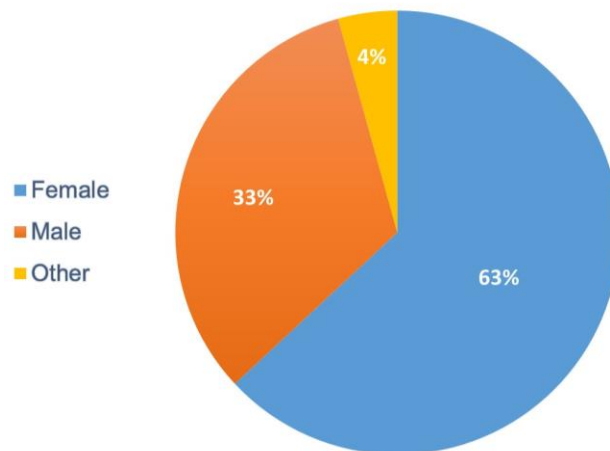
The pandemic circumstances also had some positive effects: what was going to be a Swedish and a Danish course held separately, with 9 physical meetings in total, were instead combined into one single course in English, with 6 online meetings and 3 physical ones. This new concept of dividing the course into one digital and one physical part seems to have been working well for the project. Other, smaller changes to the course were also implemented throughout the project period, primarily related to the internal methods of the project team.

It would potentially have been beneficial to include all organizing partners already in the beginning of the planning process, to avoid a longer process. It would also, again, have benefitted the program to focus more extensively on recruitment and strategic partnerships with relevant organizations, such as the various A-kasse organizations in Sweden and Denmark, very early on in the process. Additionally, some organizers expressed that the planning was often a bit behind, and could have become more effective with a more coordinated and structured plan. That includes breaking down the Gantt chart into smaller packages, dividing the tasks and groups more clearly, and setting individual deadlines and meeting agendas for the different groups.

4.1.3. Candidates

The participants consisted of a broad group of people, both in terms of gender, age, professional background, and occupational status. One thing that stood out, however, was that the majority of the participants were female.

Figure 5: Gender



85% of the participants had finished a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree. 26% were self-employed, 26% unemployed, and 21% part or full-time employed when the course started.

Figure 6: Educational background

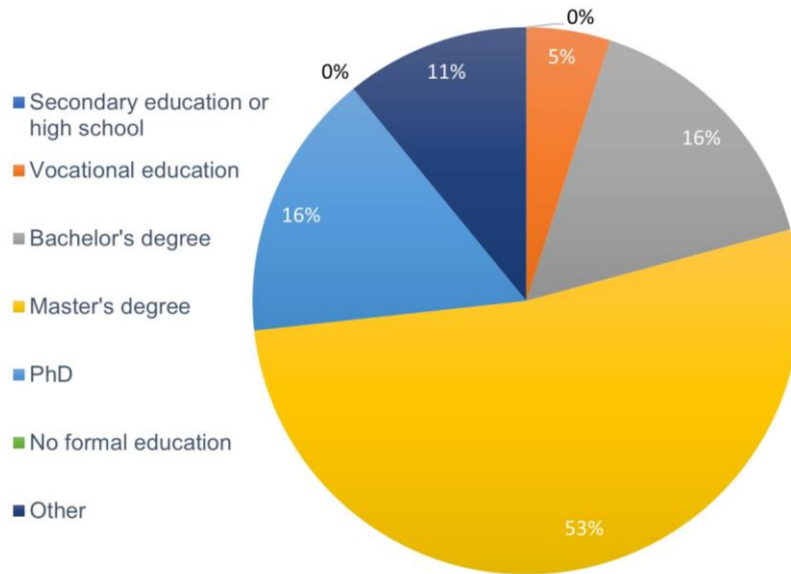
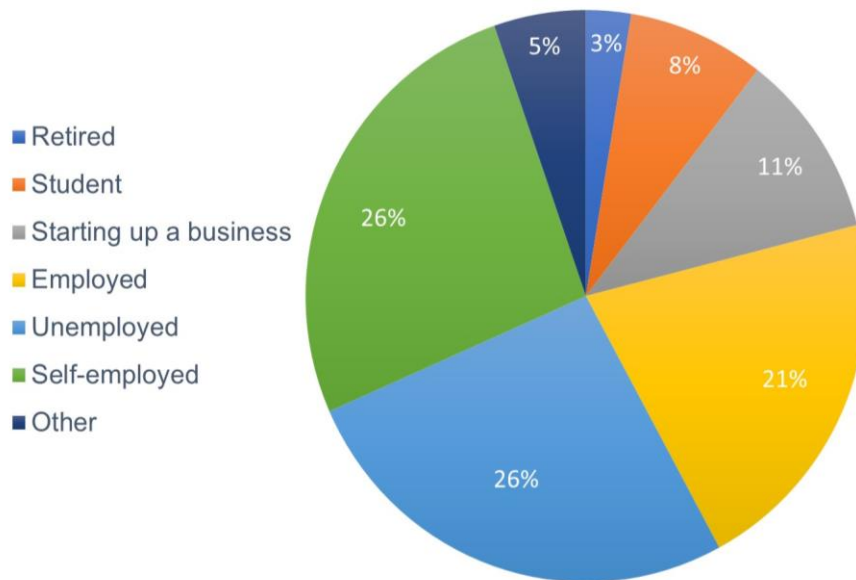


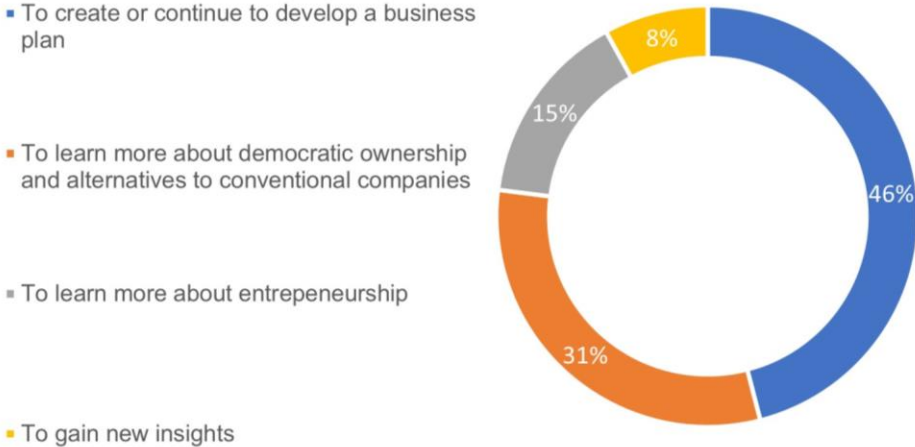
Figure 7: Occupational status



While only a few percent answered the survey question regarding motivations to join the program, the few answers indicate that more generic business advice was the participants' primary motivator. 31% stated that they were primarily motivated by the program's democratic focus¹.

¹ The participants could choose between multiple alternatives. These were the only categories that were chosen on the list.

Figure 8: Motivations to join the program



The organizers added that many candidates were seemingly looking for a community and a sense of belonging. Especially those who are starting a business on their own are often quite lonely on their entrepreneurial journey, and are searching for a context and a possibility to discuss their business idea with others - both professional business advisors and other participants. This also became clear in the course evaluation: networking opportunities, discussions with peers and advisors, and connecting with other entrepreneurs were often highlighted as the most valuable elements of the program.



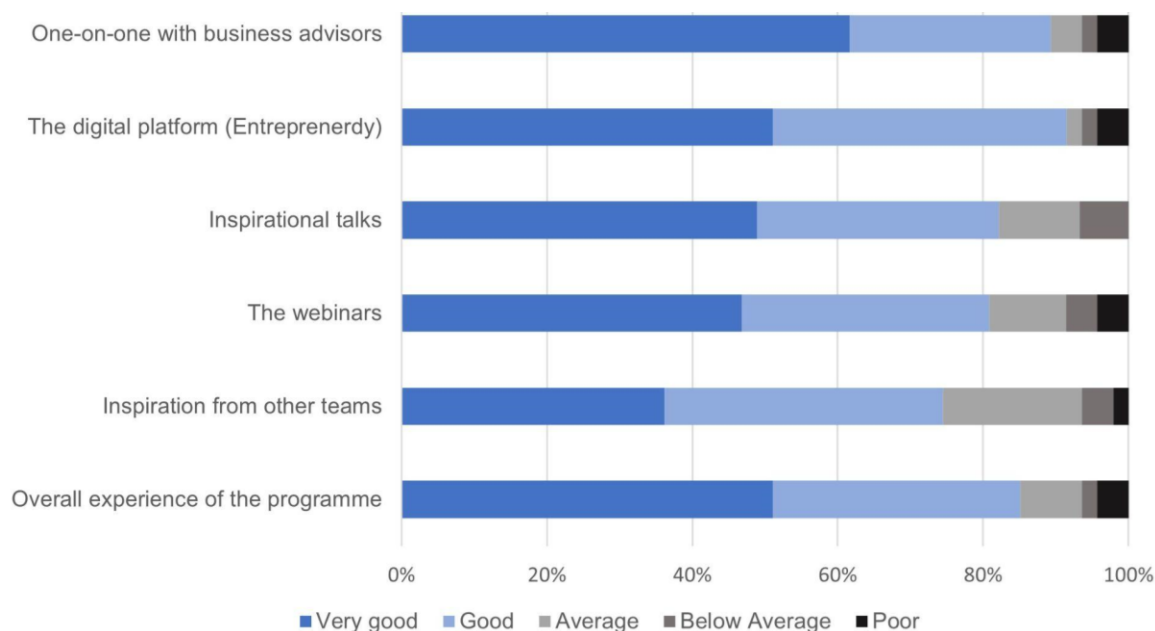
Photo: Study Tour, Course 3

Several organizers also highlighted that the participants shared some core values: values and motivations to start a business that diverged them from more generic entrepreneurs and therefore also more generic business incubators. They were less focused on profit-making and much more purpose-driven, and almost all participants had a strong focus on sustainability. When asked to compare the Excubator to other entrepreneurship programs, some participants expressed precisely that the program’s focus on “social entrepreneurship” and its emphasis on other values than “growth or commercial goals” made the program stand out. The focus on democratic organization has, on the other hand, varied. Some groups were already in the beginning set out to start democratic businesses, but not everyone participated strictly to create a cooperative. When asked if they were planning to start a cooperative in the future, 62% answered ‘Yes’, 15% ‘No’ and 23% ‘I am not sure/undecided’.

4.1.4. Course elements and activities

The most appreciated course elements were the one-on-one meetings with the business advisors and the digital platform tool Entrepreneurdy. 89% of the participants rated the one-on-one meetings as ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’, and 92% rated Entrepreneurdy as ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’. 85% of the participants rated the overall experience of the program as either ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’. Only 6% rated it as either ‘Below average’ or ‘Poor’. All ratings of the course elements can be viewed in the graph below.

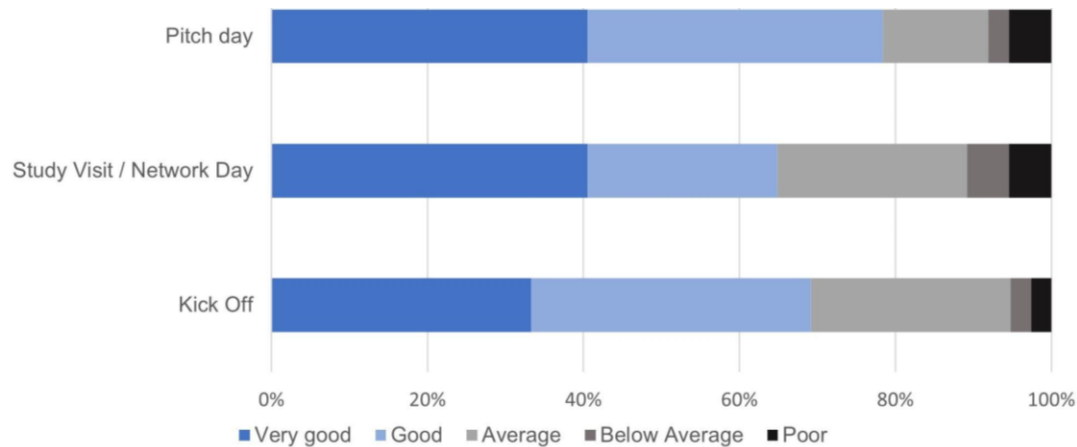
Figure 9: Rating of course elements



The three fixed course activities - held either physically or virtually depending on the situation with Covid19 - were generally also appreciated. 78% of the participants rated the Pitch Day as either ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’, and 69% rated the Kick Off as either ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’. It should be noted that the attendance at the different events varied. Those who did not attend most likely set

a lower rating. One person, for example, stressed that the Study Visit was too much of a time commitment. Others did not attend due to Covid restrictions.

Figure 10: Rating of course activities



In terms of improvements, several participants highlighted that the course was decisively more intensive and difficult at the end of the program. Having spent more time on the ‘Budget and forecast’ lectures would have benefited their learning outcomes. Furthermore, while there were many benefits of offering the course across the sound, having a cross-national course also implied some challenges. Language barriers, physical distance, and differences in culture, potentially impacted the participants’ experience of the course. Most importantly, it limited the possibility of discussing more concrete organizational issues, such as business law or tax benefits, since they diverge between countries. One participant highlighted that the experts on the Pitch Day should have given advice to participants from respective countries:

The experts for the Swedish group should have been from Sweden since there is a slight difference in the business culture between Denmark and Sweden.

Participants also requested more time for networking (see more in 4.1.6) and more concrete guidance during the seminars. Some were unsure about how much access they had to their business advisors and some would have liked to be assigned an advisor from the very start, instead of after the first kickoff meeting. Most comments, however, were overwhelmingly positive.

Thanks to this program, I feel empowered and much more organized in my strategy to realize my dreams through my business ideas! I savored every moment and am grateful to all involved, especially the facilitators and mentors! - *Participant*

It’s truly been the inspirationskilde and life-altering experience I hoped for. The people in the programme have been so great, participants as well as consultants. I can’t imagine going back to work in a traditional hierarchical company. - *Participant*

4.1.5. Final business ideas and models

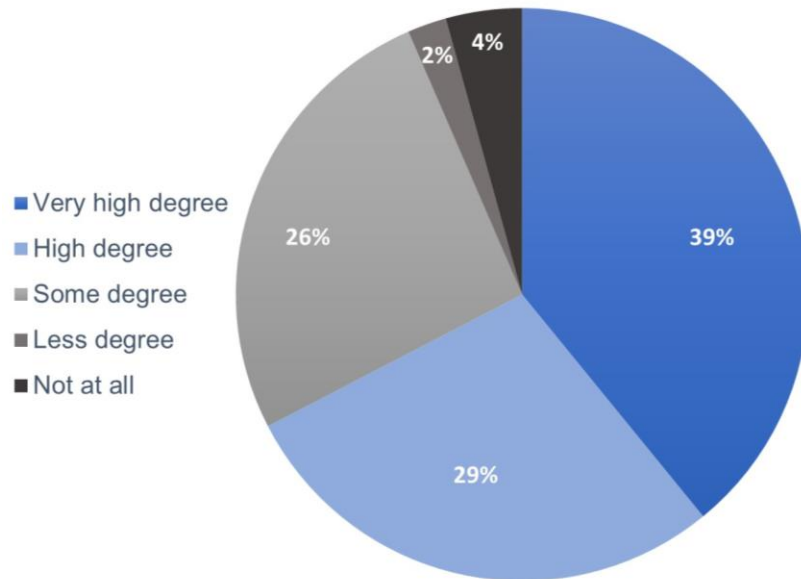
Evaluating the final results of the project in terms of actually developed businesses is somewhat difficult. Not many entrepreneurs were ready to start their businesses after the course finished. One indicator is that only [53] out of [117] teams wanted to present their final business proposal on the Pitch Day. The participants that seemed the most likely to start a business in the near future usually had a clear business idea already when they started the course. They were motivated to follow through with the course, took the course elements seriously, and were often willing to show their products or share their ideas with others. Generally, they also tended to have longer work experience behind them. Focusing more extensively on recruiting highly motivated candidates, with a clear business idea already at the beginning of the course, could therefore have increased the number of newly established businesses. Another suggestion has been to assign mentors from already existing businesses to the participants, in addition to the business advisors.

On the other hand, several organizers emphasized that you cannot expect too much from a 9-weeks course. Most participants, especially those who were very much in the starting-phase when they joined the course, simply needed more time to develop a successful business model. Many participants were furthermore primarily value-driven and needed guidance on how to commercialize their idea. The Entrepreneurdy platform filled an important function in this regard, helping the participants to make their business plans more feasible and concrete, in terms of finding the right target group, knowing what problem(s) the business aimed to solve, and starting to develop a revenue model. Many entrepreneurs also expressed that they would continue to use the Entrepreneurdy tool after the course ended.

It's a very good exercise to go through and describe your business idea in smaller bites at a time. Forcing you to formulate concrete and realistic answers to both questions about values, your resources and also your mission statement. Working with Entrepreneurdy helps you to clarify a lot of the steps ahead to realize your ideas. - *Participant*

Moreover, several organizers mentioned that the course managed to create a sense of direction among the participants, encouraging them to use the skills and resources that they already have and to maintain realistic goals. Hence, rather than helping the participants to realize their business ideas immediately, the participants learned methods and tools that could be applied to any kind of sustainable and democratic business idea - regardless if they did so today or in the future. According to the participants, this approach seemed to have worked well. 68% of the participants stated that their business ideas had been strengthened during the course to 'a very high degree' or 'a high degree'.

Figure 11: “Has your participation in the programme strengthened your business idea?”.



One important lesson can be drawn from this experience: also value-driven and democratic entrepreneurs need to learn how business works and can make use of more generic entrepreneurship curriculums. They gain, however, from learning these skills in a setting where there is an understanding of their specific purpose, and of the kind of business they wish to build. Many organizers emphasized that this was also central for the project as a whole; attracting less 'generic' entrepreneurs and creating somewhat of a safe space for people that would usually feel uncomfortable or unwelcomed in a regular business incubator.



Photo: Diplomas handed out at the final Pitch Day, Course 1.

To summarize, there are fundamentally two ways of evaluating the final outcome in terms of how well the project contributed to the establishment of new democratic and sustainable businesses in the region. On the one hand, the project's overall focus on very early-stage entrepreneurs, who were primarily purpose-driven and needed more basic guidance on entrepreneurship, potentially hampered the possibility of creating new and successful businesses in as short a time as 9 weeks². On the other hand, these entrepreneurs were also very much in need of support and had found it difficult to fit into other entrepreneurship programs. Making sure that they did, indeed, receive this support must therefore be considered as an important outcome.

The socio-economic context of both Sweden and Denmark should also be considered when evaluating the final results. At the time when the project was proposed, a sharp increase in unemployment was expected. Quite on the contrary, the unemployment rate has decreased in both countries since the end of 2020 when the first course started (Arbetsförmedlingen 2022; Danmarks Statistik 2022). This implies that fewer people were available to engage in the course than expected, thereby decreasing the total number of applicants and possibly also the level of the final candidates. Finally, Covid-19 severely impacted the recruitment process, making it more difficult to reach out to relevant organizations to recruit the right candidates.

4.1.6. Creating new networks

The course opened up for networking between the participants in several ways, also across the sound. The physical events were held in both Sweden and Denmark and the online courses were jointly taught in English. Other important places for networking and remaining in contact with one another were the Facebook group and Klub Kooperativ³ in Denmark. Finally, the business advisors often gave suggestions on people to contact; entrepreneurs that perhaps worked in the same field or had some previous knowledge in the topic, and encouraged the participants to reach out to them.

Most of the organizers were positive about the participants' possibilities to network and connect with each other, primarily in order to get an opportunity to reflect on their ideas and discuss them with others. Networking was also highlighted as one of the major benefits of the program by the participants themselves. Some, however, requested even more networking opportunities, not only to meet and learn from one another, but to form groups to start a cooperative with. For some, this was also the primary motivation to join the program.

² It should be noted that the entrepreneurs were able to receive one-to-one business advice as long as the project lasted. Since the data used in this white book is solely based on the specific course outcomes, it is possible that several participants were closer to starting a business *after* the course had ended - with the continuous help of their business advisors.

³ Klub Kooperativ - a common workspace for cooperatives in Copenhagen, created by Kooperationen as a result of the project and which is still ongoing and soon open for all - is one initiative that aims towards helping participants to go further with their business plans. Here, entrepreneurs that want to continue to develop their business ideas can come by every second Thursday to work together in a shared work space. They can also receive help from business advisors in more formal or informal ways. Klub Kooperativ, furthermore, serves as a space for single business owners that want to find partners to start a cooperative with.

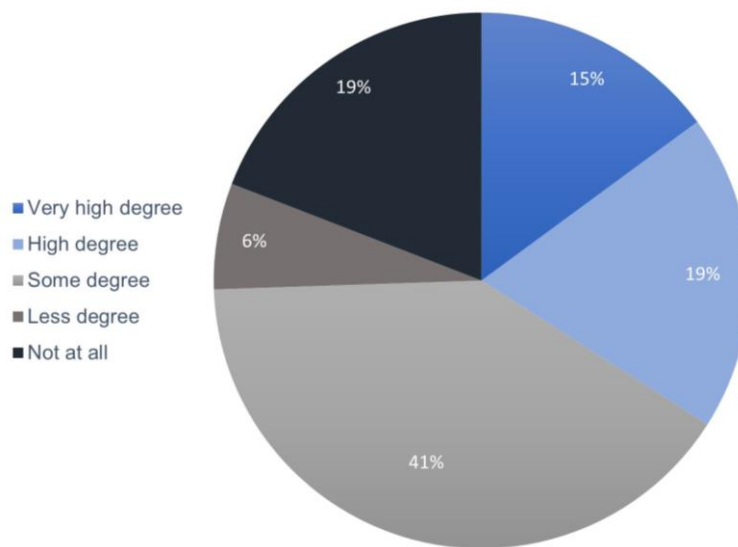
“Maybe accept also participants that are searching for teaming, some projects are too difficult to run alone [...] I still have no idea how to find a team and start working”

“[I would have liked] more opportunities to network and have more time to discuss our business plan during the time allocated”

“[...] we had started a cooperative and needed exchange in experiences with other startups, that have focus on value based businesses”

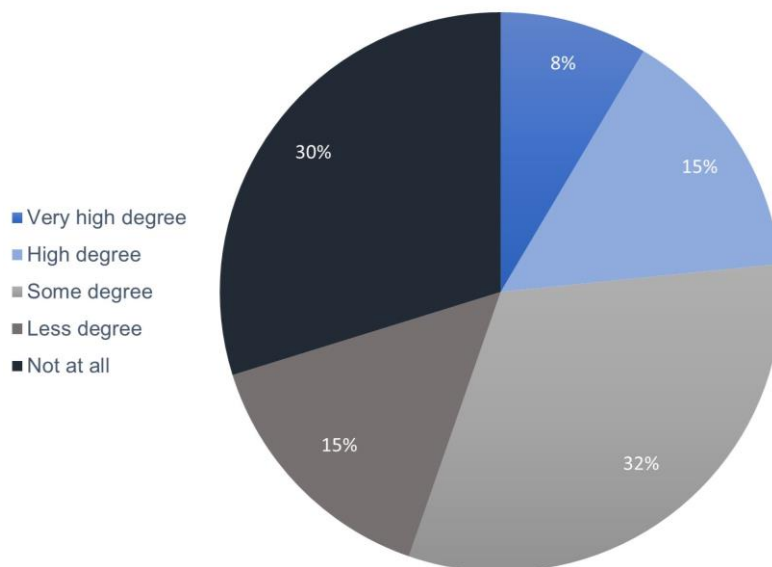
During some of the courses, Covid-19 severely hampered the possibilities to meet and network in real life. This clearly had an impact on the participants’ network experiences. When asked if the participants had become part of an Öresund-based network of sustainable /democratic companies, 15% answered to a ‘Very high degree’ and 19% to a ‘High degree’. 19% answered ‘Not at all’.

Figure 12: Have you become part of an Öresund-based network of sustainable / cooperative / democratic businesses?



The program was also set out to open up new markets for the entrepreneurs across the sound. This is, of course, difficult to fulfill during only a 9-weeks period, but 23% of the participants had nonetheless become closer to start selling their products across the regions to a very high or high degree.

Figure 13: Have you become closer to start selling products/services on the other side of Öresund?



4.1.7. Knowledge about and commitment to start a democratic business

All organizers were confident that the participants who were already set out to start a democratic business also received good advice on democratic entrepreneurship during the course. The one-to-one business advice was the primary channel for learning more about democratic entrepreneurship, and the participants were encouraged to make use of these meetings in a way that suited them. Hence, those who were looking for advice on democratic entrepreneurship could also be sure to find it among experts on precisely this matter. However, among those that knew less about democratic entrepreneurship, there were fewer opportunities to learn more about the subject. The project team quickly realized that only a minority of the participants were actually dedicated to starting a democratic company, and since it was not demanded by the participants that they would do so, they chose to focus more on generic entrepreneurship in the course modules. The Entrepreneurdy platform, used as a baseline throughout the course, also lacked a module on democratic entrepreneurship and no further modules were added to the course.

On the other hand, the cooperative form was often brought up as an example throughout the course. At the Study Visit, for example, several businesses who presented their case were already established democratic businesses, and during a workshop in Denmark, an attorney was invited to discuss the legal aspects of starting a cooperative. Moreover, in the webinars that all participants have been invited to, democratic entrepreneurship has been one of the central themes.

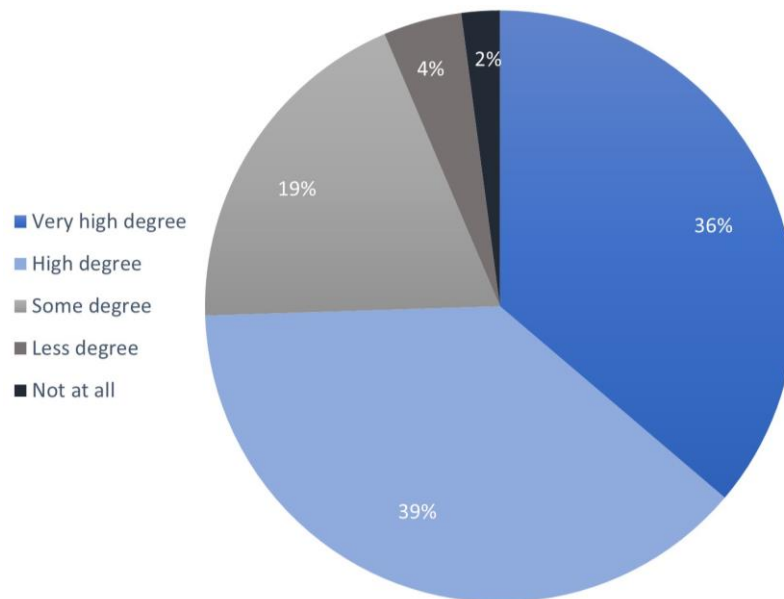


Photo: The employee-owned business Analyse & Tal giving a presentation, Course 1.

Hence, rather than focusing solely on democratic entrepreneurship, the course landed in two separate objectives: 1) to advise democratic entrepreneurs on how to build and organize their businesses around the cooperative model, and 2) to inspire participants to start *considering* the democratic form, by presenting the democratic/cooperative ownership model, its advantages, and examples of successful democratic entrepreneurs. A few entrepreneurs were directly influenced by this and decided to develop their traditional business models into a democratic one, but it was mainly the participants that were already planning to start a cooperative that ended up doing so.

Some organizers, however, would have wanted the course to engage more with the democratic aspects. This was also mentioned by some participants in the course evaluation. One participant, for example, requested “more info on existing cooperatives”. Another one felt, still, unsure of the “mechanisms of setting up a cooperative in Sweden”. When asked if the participants had gained more knowledge about sustainable and cooperative businesses during the course, 36% rated ‘To a very high degree’ and 39% ‘To a high degree’.

Figure 14: Has your participation in the program given you more insight and knowledge about how to develop a sustainable/cooperative/democratic business?



One suggestion from the organizers has been to collaborate with an already existing entrepreneurship incubator, so that the resources of the program can focus on aspects that more generic incubators are lacking. Another suggestion has been to focus more on “matchmaking” for single entrepreneurs that are interested in finding partners to start a cooperative with.

The ‘sustainable’ approach to business, on the other hand, was more pronounced among the participants. This potentially made them more open also towards a democratic organization.

Some of the organizers elaborated on precisely the relationship between the participants’ sustainable approach to entrepreneurship and their openness towards a democratic structure. They concluded that among the entrepreneurs who were primarily purpose or value-driven, it seemed to be rather “natural” to work together with others and therefore benefit from the democratic form. That the participants connected a value-based or sustainable approach to the cooperative form became further evident in the survey. When asked what they thought the main difference between democratic businesses and other companies were, several respondents linked democratic businesses to sustainability in some sense:

The democratic businesses I have knowledge about all have sustainability in some way or form in their core values. The businesses are by nature socially responsible for the co-owners and this mindset sets a collective path of approaching markets and clients with a consciousness for community, people’s lives and earth-regeneration, I believe.
- Participant

More focus on sustainability, less on capitalist interest - capitalist interests should gain the people and environment, not personal profit. - Participant

In other words, while many were not ready to start a cooperative business on the spot, they seemed to be quite likely to do so in the future. Targeting this specific group of entrepreneurs, who are looking to solve social or environmental problems rather than making a lot of profit, might therefore be a good start when wanting to promote cooperative entrepreneurship.

4.2 Strategic and political goals

The strategic work of the project can be divided into three major phases:

1. The initial phase consisted of incorporating learnings from previous experiences, such as the project 'Fra akademiker til ivaerksaetter', and building partnerships with relevant experts in the field. The aim was to make sure that the project would be evidence-based and make use of the best available knowledge.
2. Throughout the project, the project team communicated with relevant actors, such as politicians, organizations, and universities/research groups, to spread knowledge about the project and democratic entrepreneurship and push for relevant changes.
3. Finally, the strategic work has revolved around making sure that the learnings from the project are gathered and documented, so that future projects can make use of this knowledge. These insights have primarily been gathered into this white book.

In the following sections, we will shortly summarize the content of the strategic work and what the outcome has been in terms of spreading knowledge about the project and creating political change in favor of democratic entrepreneurship.

4.2.1. Strategic networks: presentations, debates, and workshops

Altogether, all three partner organizations facilitated and participated in a total of 91 presentations, debates, workshops, meetings, webinars, conferences, or lectures on democratic entrepreneurship during the project period. The events were held at various universities (see UNI-package in section 4.2.3), high schools, public and private organizations/departments, unions, and other relevant organizations. Some examples are: Copenhagen Business School, Dansk Magisterforening, Københavns kommune, Erhvervsstyrelsen, Malmö Stad, Lunds kommun, Erhvervshus Hovedstaden, and Dansk Socialdemokratisk Ungdom.

4.2.2. Important outcomes

One of the most important outcomes of the strategic work is the formation of a Danish expert group, consisting of several political representatives affiliated with the government. The expert group has since 2021 been designated to evaluate how the barriers for creating new democratic companies can be removed. To push for this change and provide relevant information to the politicians, insights from both the previous pilot-project and the Örexund Excubator have been

used. 9 recommendations were in total proposed by the Expert Group, in which representatives from Kooperationen and Taenketanken Demokratisk Erhverv have participated:

1. More knowledge and better understanding of democratic businesses
2. Simpler and clearer possibilities for employee-ownership in democratic businesses
3. Better opportunities for converting to a democratic business
4. Better opportunities for generational transitions to employee-owned businesses
5. Better opportunities to finance democratic businesses
6. Composition of proposals for a well-functioning management of democratic businesses
7. Better opportunities for democratic businesses to communicate with their owners (members)
8. Better opportunities for asset protection
9. Better opportunities for the green transition

Another important part of the project has been the establishment of the Danish research network FIDE. FIDE gathers researchers from several Danish universities who are interested in the issue of democratic ownership and entrepreneurship. As an outcome of the project team's participation in the research network, a research group from ITU has also taken part in the making of this white book, to gather new data about democratic entrepreneurs in the start-up phase that will be used in their future research projects.

Finally, a conference was held on March 30th, 2022, by Taenketanken Demokratisk Erhverv, focusing specifically on the barriers of democratic entrepreneurship and how to overcome them. The conference brought together politicians from four Danish parties across the political spectrum, representatives from the democratic business sector, and researchers within the field, and was an important milestone for the political acknowledgement and support of democratic entrepreneurship.

4.2.2. Advisory Board

Beyond spreading knowledge about democratic entrepreneurship and creating relevant networks, an Advisory Board was appointed to give feedback and input as the project evolved. Three Advisory Board meetings were held between June 2021 and June 2022. The board consisted of members from both Denmark and Sweden, who were either researchers within the field, representatives from other entrepreneurship programs in the region, entrepreneurs from already established cooperatives, or representatives from the public sector. The aim was to make sure that the project remained of high quality and that the members of the Advisory Board worked as kind of ambassadors for the project, thereby creating a larger impact both as the project proceeded and after the project period had ended.

4.2.3. UNI-package: Spreading knowledge about democratic entrepreneurship

The UNI-package is a seminar and workshop package that was created and distributed to universities in order to spread knowledge and awareness of democratic entrepreneurship among university students. The package was developed by project team members from both Sweden

and Denmark and is written in English. The material can be adapted according to the length of the seminar and the interests of the audience, and it also includes assignments and questions to work with in groups. The material has already been used for a number of lectures held at Danish and Swedish universities, but the organizing partners will continue to give university lectures after the project has ended.

4.2.4. Learnings from the strategic work

In terms of outreach to relevant partners, the project team managed to create impactful relations with several central actors and push for real political change that can benefit the further development of democratic businesses. However, several organizers highlighted that the strategic work of the project was not communicated enough internally, and that it remained somewhat ambiguous what the work would actually imply. It was also unclear how much resources the different organizations were to place on the strategic work and who remained responsible for what. One suggestion has therefore been to incorporate monthly meetings where the overall direction of the project would be discussed internally. The strategic work should also have been more concretely spelled out in the original application, to make sure that all the organizing partners agreed upon the overall direction of it.

Another problem has been the lack of focus on the Swedish side of the project. The fact that Taenketanken Demokratisk Erhverv was primarily responsible for the strategic work naturally placed their efforts on Denmark. As resources were limited, it simply made more sense to focus on building upon already existing networks and relationships. However, having appointed someone responsible for the strategic work in Sweden would potentially have benefitted the project.

5. New Perspectives / Looking ahead

The Ørexund Excubator project succeeded in creating the first business incubator for sustainable and democratic entrepreneurship in the region, filling an important gap in the market for business incubators. Despite the rather short project period, it managed to come up with new and innovative ways to support democratic and sustainable entrepreneurs and push for political changes. As the project period is soon to be over, it is worth mentioning the ways in which the project will continue to make a difference in the region.

First of all, the project has resulted in a cross-border network among the partner organizations that has never succeeded prior to this project. The strengthened relations between three central organizations working to promote cooperative and sustainable entrepreneurship will increase their ability to create long-lasting change. New tools, methods, and processes have been invented that the partners will continue to apply in their work, as well as share with other entrepreneurship programs in the region. This will help place the agenda on sustainable and democratic business in the center of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, making sure that there are different ways to do business and still receive the support needed.

Furthermore, the project has extended into two independent initiatives based on the experiences from the Excubator: Klub Kooperativ and the Democracy Lab.

- Klub Kooperativ and Democracy Lab is common workspaces for cooperatives in Copenhagen and Malmø, where participants can work on their ideas, meet with their former business advisor, and share experiences with other cooperatives. The initiative was grounded on the decision to let participants remain in contact with their business advisor also after the course period had ended. Sharing a common workspace, where advisors and entrepreneurs could meet in a relaxed environment, filled an important and much-requested function for the participants. It is now open for all – not only for former participants – and will continue to be a place where cooperative entrepreneurs can find support and share experiences with one another.

Finally, the strategic work of the project has somehow just begun. The Expert Group proposals will continue to be discussed over the course of the year and lead to new and better legislation for cooperatives in Denmark.

The UNI-package seminars on democratic entrepreneurship, developed for university students in both Sweden and Denmark, will be applied beyond the project period to raise awareness of the different ways of doing business. And the established strategic networks with research institutions, public and private organizations, high schools, unions, and the like, will continue to serve the development of democratic and sustainable businesses in the region.

Democratic businesses are an integral business model in today's world with the challenges and urgencies we face. They guarantee decent working conditions, stimulate social innovation, and contribute to long-term growth. In other words, they are here to stay.

List of references

Arbetsförmedlingen (2022). Downloaded 08-08-2022 at: <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/press/pressmeddelanden?id=61030CA7F31661BD>

Cooperatives Europe (2015). *The power of cooperation: Cooperatives Europe key figures 2015*.

Danmarks Statistik (2022). Downloaded 08-08-2022 at: <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/arbejde-og-indkomst/arbejdsloese/arbejdsloese-register>

EC (2004). *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions - On the promotion of co-operative societies in Europe*. 23.2.2004 COM(2004) 18 final.

Freeman B. (2015). *Workers Ownership and Profit-Sharing in a New Capitalist Model?* The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, Stockholm.

Katalys (2019) *Demokratiska företag - Varför är personalägande så ovanligt i Sverige?* Recorded seminar 11 april 2019, ABF-huset, Stockholm

Lowitzsch, J., & Haschi, I. (2014). *The Promotion of Employee Ownership and Participation*. European Commission, Brussels.

Møller M. & Rübner H. (2020). Eclipsed by the welfare state - Understanding the rise and decline of the Danish Workers' Cooperation, 1871–2000. In *Civil Society: Between Concepts and Empirical Grounds*, ed. Lars Bo Kaspersen & Liv Engholm. Routledge, pp. 145-158.

Rothstein B. (2020) *Varför ingen ekonomisk demokrati i Sverige? - En kontrafaktisk ansats*. Arena Idé, Stockholm

Svensk Kooperation (2021). *Nya kooperativa företag 2008-2021 - siffror, fakta och trender*.

Taenketanken Demokratisk Erhverv (2019). *Erfaringer med kooperativt iværksætteri - Potentialer og faldgrupper*.

Taenketanken Demokratisk Erhverv (2022). *Det erhvervsdemokratiske landskab - En kortlægning af demokratiske virksomheder i Danmark*.

Appendix

UNI-package PPT : <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1tzvy9Qx6QbYMhFjhhT72r8LLHbs-t9Rx/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103084441839673735944&rtpof=true&sd=true>

UNI-package description:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X2OSwvTiNQj2OjuE7DagsLYbIDAFfodi/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103084441839673735944&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Longer survey: <https://www.survey-xact.dk/LinkCollector?key=C1HSE5QWUN1P>

Course evaluations:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vWk7FAIvd2uAMBGR2mA2iamLruy0C0dw>

Expert group proposals:

List of workshops/presentations/seminars: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Bxw1Nn-1uqJDfC5oSwVMGty-H8XTKZRZlovSlpf3Bc/edit?usp=sharing>

If you need to change the graphs: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1w2-JG4mwQEQHwIh6lqa4ECvTLyF3_KVz/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103084441839673735944&rtpof=true&sd=true