



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

EDUCATION & TRAINING



E3M working with Suara Care Co-operative, Spain

E3M's Catalan Co-operative Learning Exchange

In 2023, E3M ran a learning exchange programme with Suara (<https://www.suara.coop/en>), Spain's largest care co-operative. Based in Barcelona, Suara employs over 4000 people and operates services across the whole of Catalonia. The programme had the goal of sharing learning about innovative practice in key service areas and to learn about business practice in the wider social economy in the UK and Catalonia.

In October, 25 Catalan delegates visited E3M members' social enterprises (<https://e3m.org.uk/leaders>) in 13 locations around the UK, to experience services from nurseries to elderly care, homelessness support to offenders' / addiction rehabilitation and career development. Their visit ended with a workshop with E3M's members and partners (<https://e3m.org.uk/partners>) to consolidate learning from the visits and to explore common areas of interest for education and innovation.

Then, in November, 28 UK delegates went to Barcelona to learn from Suara. Catalonia has a long and strong history of co-operation, and this leg of the exchange started with an informative afternoon of presentations from Suara personnel, the Catalan Workers' Co-operative Federation and the Catalan Government's Director General of the Social Economy.

This level of support for a co-operative model for public service delivery immediately impressed the UK delegation!

Day 2 saw the UK delegation split into groups to visit Suara's services for elderly care and homeless people in Barcelona, nurseries and young people's services in and around Girona, and youth services in Tarragona. Across all these services and locations, as well as at HQ, a common thread noticed by many of the UK participants is that, as a co-operative, Suara has sophisticated built-in systems for employee participation, shaping the culture of the enterprise. This is evident in its decision-making processes and day-to-day management. It is visible in the design of services, which focus on and include the individual and their holistic needs, while encouraging the sharing of ideas leads naturally to ongoing innovation. Implementation of bigger projects is achieved through collaborative partnerships with other organisations including regional and local government, universities, businesses and other social economy organisations, the focus being on transparency and sharing to get the best results for the service user.

Many of these observations came to light during the closing workshop on day 3, others in participants' feedback. A full report on the trip is available at www.e3m.org.uk and E3M is continuing and deepening the learning exchange with Suara during 2024.



E3M members and partners with members of the Suara team at the Barcelona HQ

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