



“How to check your democracy level”

Guide to Democratic Empowerment Module 2



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Check your Democracy Level!

Purpose of the Module

Welcome to **Module 2** of the coACTION Guide for Democratic Empowerment! In this module, we'll guide you through the preparation and conduction of the coACTION Sensor. This second step invites you to check the level of democracy your school has already achieved. You will invite members of the whole school community - the school management, the teachers, the pupils and their parents - to participate in the coACTION Sensor, organise and conduct the online survey.

What you will do

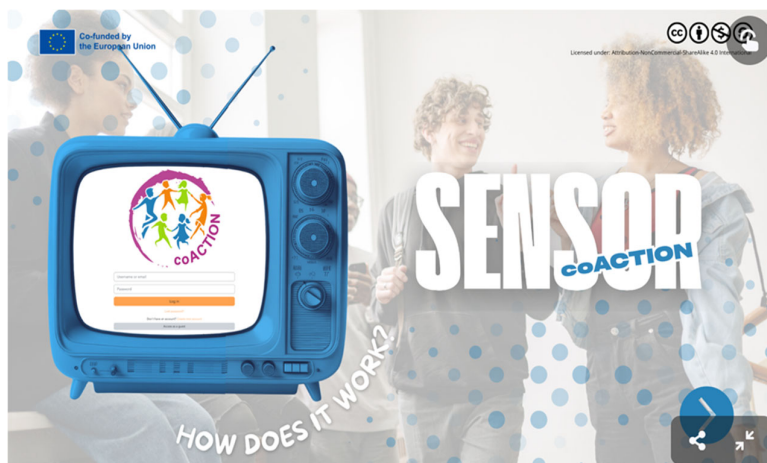
By completing this module, your school will:

- ◇ choose the participating classes
- ◇ plan the implementation
- ◇ prepare the administrative documents
- ◇ conduct the coACTION Sensor surveys.

What you'll need

- ◇ your school Project Team to plan and organise the survey
- ◇ access to the coACTION platform
- ◇ the invitation forms provided
- ◇ a valid access code (contact your programme coordinator if needed).

At the coACTION Platform, you find a tutorial on the use of the Sensor:



When should this happen?

Your school can choose the most suitable time to carry out this module. It is advisable to start at the beginning of a school year, to be able to set the democracy targets on time.

At the end of the school year, the coACTION Sensor is applied a second time to evaluate the results and set new democracy goals (see Module 6). If you want to use the coACTION Sensor as a standard process in your school, you may decide to only use the coACTION Sensor once per school year, thereby evaluating the current status and setting new goals at the same time.

The system allows for a deviation analysis. This means you'll be able to view side-by-side results from this year and last, so you can track your school's democratic growth over time.

Important Questions

Who will organise and conduct the coACTION Sensor survey?

The designated coACTION Project Team at your school is primarily responsible for organising and implementing the survey. However, it can call on additional support at any time (e.g. from the school administration or the school office).

Who will answer the coACTION Sensor?

The aim of the Sensor is to involve all members of the school community. There is a questionnaire for

- ◇ pupils
- ◇ parents
- ◇ teachers
- ◇ the school management (all persons involved in the organisation, administration and steering of the school).

Who needs to register?

When you register your school on the coACTION Democratic Empowerment Platform, you will receive your own school space there, which only authorised persons (the Project Team) can access.

School management and teachers must register once and will receive a password from the system to log in on the platform and answer the questionnaires.

With their access, the Project Team has the authorisation to generate access data for pupils and parents.

What about Data protection?

Individual evaluations (per pupil / parent / teacher) are not provided by the system.

The primary goal of the coACTION Sensor is to promote democratic development in schools. For this reason, only class results are evaluated. Each school has access only to its own results.

Each school only works with the data that it already has within its school administration. No additional sensitive data is requested.

Reflective Prompt (Optional)

If your school wants to start with reflection, use these questions as a prompt for discussion:

- ◇ How would you rate the level of democracy at your school?
- ◇ Have you already taken any steps?
- ◇ How would you recognise that democratic measures are proving successful at your school?

How to prepare the coACTION Sensor Survey

Step 1: Choose the participating classes

The coACTION Sensor is suitable for pupils from Grade 3 onwards (aged 8 and above). This means that you can survey all classes from Year 3 onwards, their parents and teachers, as well as members of the school management team. Although the ultimate goal is to involve all members, you can start with a smaller sample and expand the survey next year.

Step 2: Plan the Sensor Survey

1. Set the time frame for the survey. Ideally, the first Sensor survey is done between September and November. It is advisable to plan for a period of approximately 3-4 weeks, during which ideally a parents' evening should take place.
2. Appoint one or two contact persons who can be contacted with questions about the Sensor.
3. Schedule regular meetings of the Project Team during the survey period in order to observe the process and be able to react promptly if delays occur.
4. Set a date for an event at which you will inform all members of the school community about the results of the Sensor and the newly set democracy goals.

5. Familiarise yourself with the use of the Sensor. You will find a tutorial on the platform.
6. Consider the setting in which you want to conduct the survey of the individual target groups. You can find more information on this in the chapter about the implementation of the coACTION Sensor
7. Offer the participating class teachers a briefing in which they receive all the information about the survey of their classes.

Step 3: Prepare the administrative documents

We try to reduce administrative efforts as much as possible. All the forms you need are ready to edit and print on the platform. They're at your disposal, and you can change them to suit your needs or just fill them out. Of course, you can also use your own forms. You'll find these documents on the platform:

- ◇ Registration Table
- ◇ coACTION Presentation for teachers
- ◇ Info for Parents

Implementation of the coACTION Sensor for the individual target groups

Sensor Survey of School Management

Use a team meeting to answer the Sensor. Plan an inspiring start that emphasises the character of your school as a democratic place of learning. Begin by letting the participants discuss in small groups where they already experience democracy in everyday school life. Ask each group to write down two keywords and share them with the whole group.

Then introduce the coACTION Sensor. Gather all participants around tablets or laptops and show them step by step how to log in and fill out the form. The coACTION Sensor can be completed on a smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer.

While the participants are individually completing the questionnaires, invite them to an 'open space' station: anyone who has technical questions can come to the moderator's table; anyone who feels uncertain about the content can receive brief explanations of the questions there. This prevents frustration and ensures that everyone feels confident and well supported.

Right afterwards, gather first impressions: Which questions were clear, and which require more in-depth discussion? Make a note of these points so that you can use the tool even more effectively the next time. Use the insights you have gained to formulate

specific guiding questions for your next meeting, e.g.: 'How can we further strengthen the feeling of participation?'

Sensor Survey of Teachers

The teachers, too, can answer the Sensor during a team meeting. Start with a short story to set the mood: for example, talk about a school project that originated from an idea put forward by pupils.

Then introduce the coACTION Sensor. Remind everyone of the goals of the Year of Democracy and that the Sensor is used to assess the current situation in order to set relevant democracy goals for the school year. Point out that the questionnaire is anonymous and that only honest answers will help to strengthen democracy at your school. Discuss one set of questions as an example and invite your colleagues to think aloud ('What do I understand by "democratic skills"?'). This will encourage reflection even before they start filling out the questionnaires.

Explain the use of the online tool. Give a live presentation on how to register and get started with the Sensor and how to fill it out. The teachers can use their own smartphones, tablets or laptops to answer the questionnaires or use devices of the school, if necessary.

During the fill-out session, invite participants to an 'open space' station: anyone with technical questions can come to the moderator's table; those who feel uncertain about the content can get brief explanations of the wording of the questions there. This prevents frustration and ensures that everyone feels confident and well supported.

At the end of the survey session, add a feedback round: What worked well, were there any ambiguities? This meta-feedback forms the basis for making the process even smoother for parents and pupils.

Sensor Survey of Pupils

The pupils' questioning should be prepared in advance so that they can answer adequately. Some terms or questions may be new or unclear to them when they read them for the first time.

The class teacher can prepare the survey as follows:

- ◇ familiarise yourself with the questionnaire for pupils.
- ◇ tick all the words and phrases that should probably be explained.
- ◇ incorporate these words and explanations into the lessons when opportunities arise. For example, help them to understand the difference between facts and opinions:
 - Fact: It is raining. Opinion: Noah is in a bad mood because it's raining.

- Fact: Wednesday and Friday we have gym classes. Opinion: We should have a gym class every day.
- Fact: Emily has a new hairstyle. Opinion: The new hairstyle suits her very well.
- ◇ Explain the terms “respect” (basic acknowledgement of every person, their needs and their rights) and “recognition” (being seen; appreciation of what a person contributes) so that the children understand the difference.
- ◇ Encourage the children to ask questions if they have not understood something.
- ◇ Look out for examples of situations that arise in everyday school life and talk to the children about them. For example: Kathi helped Max clear away. She had realised that he could use some help. Or: That's a good idea, Stephan, we can think about what to do with it!
- ◇ If necessary, familiarise the children with the smiley system: let them give an evaluation with smileys in class. (How am I doing today? How did I like the excursion?)

Dealing with the online questionnaire can also be unfamiliar, especially for younger pupils. Therefore, think about how you can best support the children when they complete the questionnaires. It can be useful to have a colleague with you who is available if there are any questions or technical difficulties.

If there are not enough laptops or computers available, split the class in smaller groups for the answering session.

Emphasise that the Sensor is not a test of knowledge or school assignment, but that it is about the school also wanting to improve. Their answers will help to recognise what is already working well and where the school can still improve. It is therefore particularly important that the questions are answered honestly. Explain to them that the result is only an overview of the answers of the whole class and that no individual answers are analysed. It is therefore not possible to find out who gave which answer.

Allow sufficient time to answer the questionnaires and play quiet music while the questionnaires are being completed so that everyone can concentrate on their work.

Make sure that all pupils complete the questionnaires and also click on the ‘Send’ button so that their answers are saved in the system.

Sensor Survey of Parents

Reaching the group of parents to answer the Sensor is possibly the most difficult. Prepare this step carefully by introducing the Year of Democracy at the beginning of the school year, referring to it again and again in conversations and thus preparing the parents and making them curious that they will fill out a questionnaire.

In order to reach as many parents as possible with the Sensor survey, we recommend using one of the following options or combining several of them:

- ◇ The school organises a parents' evening during which the Sensor is completed.
- ◇ The parents' association organises an event on the topic of 'Democracy at our school', during which the Sensor is completed.
- ◇ Parents receive an information e-mail containing everything they need to know about the survey, as well as a link to the Sensor Tutorial and the registration.
- ◇ The pupils take home an information letter containing everything the parents need to know about the survey.

Here are some tips for conducting the survey during an event:

Start with a lively introduction: You could begin by giving an example of what democracy can look like in the classroom. Then let the parents discuss in small groups which aspects are particularly important to them. Give specific examples of how parents can get involved in the school: 'Last year, thanks to parent feedback, we made our break rules more flexible. This year, we would like to ask you questions in different areas of democracy in order to improve the democratic culture at our school. Explain to parents why their honest assessment helps to set goals that can contribute to their children's long-term development.

Then explain the online tool. Give a live presentation on how to register and get started with the Sensor and how to fill it out. Ask parents to use their smartphones to answer the questionnaires and provide a few tablets, computers or laptops if necessary. Invite parents to get started right there on the spot.

Provide an "open space" station for the duration of the survey: anyone with technical questions can come to the moderator's table; anyone who feels uncertain about the content can receive brief explanations of the questions there. This will prevent frustration and ensure that everyone feels confident and well supported.

Wrap up the evening with an outlook: specify the date and format of the results presentation so that parents can see that their input will not disappear into data nirvana but will actually bring about real change.

Get Support Through Coaching

If your school participates in the coACTION project, the Project Team offers regular coaching sessions to support you throughout the process. This is a valuable opportunity to talk about your experiences, highlight successes, and discuss areas that still require attention or energy.

Coaching isn't about judging results, it's about supporting your school's development with insight, empathy and care. If your school has access to a coach, you can use this opportunity to ask questions, review your progress, and prepare for the next steps.

If your school is not participating in the coACTION project, you are still welcome to contact your country's Project Partner or the Coordinator directly if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you!

Wrap-Up

At the end of the implementation phase of the coACTION Sensor, take some time to summarise how it worked. These findings can be very useful for future surveys:

1. Was the time frame for the survey appropriate? Was it too long/too short? Were there delays? Why? How can they be avoided?
2. How did the involvement of colleagues work out? What can we take away as good practice, what should be improved?
3. How did the cooperation with the school management work? Do we need more support somewhere? What are we grateful for?
4. How did the individual groups react to the survey? How well did we succeed in explaining the purpose and getting people interested? What do we learn from this and take with us for the next time?
5. How did the organisation of the individual surveys work,
 - ◇ for the school management,
 - ◇ for teachers,
 - ◇ for pupils,
 - ◇ for parents?
 - ◇ What went well, what could be improved?
6. Other findings:
7. How are we as a project group doing with what has happened so far?
8. List everything else here that you are happy about and that makes you proud.

Follow Up

Congratulations!

You have completed **Module 2**.

With the coACTION Sensor survey, you have reached another milestone in the *Year of Democracy!*

You are probably already very curious about the results of your coACTION Sensor survey and how you can use them for the quality development of your school.

Go to **Module 3** to learn more about it.



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