



Smart Democracy Targets

Guide to Democratic Empowerment Module 4



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SMART Democracy Targets

Introduction

A functioning democratic school culture depends to a large extent on clearly defined and effectively communicated goals.

This module helps you to formulate SMART goals (specific, measurable, attractive, realistic and time-bound) that are in line with your school's democratic vision and values.

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to formulate clearly defined, achievable goals.

The theoretical basis for this is provided by:

- ◇ William Glasser's 'Theory of Basic Psychological Needs' (Glasser, 1998)
- ◇ Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Genuine Participation' (Arnstein, 1969)
- ◇ as well as the Reference Framework for Competences for Democratic Culture (Council of Europe, 2018).

By embedding these SMART objectives into your school's quality management system, you ensure that they become a sustainable part of school development and actively involve all members of the entire school community.

Who is this module intended for?

This module is aimed at school leaders, teachers, pupils and their parents who are involved in setting clear, achievable and effective democratic goals as part of their school's quality management (QM) processes.

What does this module contain?

- Introduction to SMART targets in democratic school development.
- Step-by-step instructions for setting targets.
- Practical templates and examples.
- Guidelines for integrating targets into Quality Management.
- Instructions for communicating targets to the whole school community.

Why SMART Targets?

Clear and precise goals ensure that democratic processes and competencies can be effectively developed and measured.

"**SMART**" targets are:

- **Specific:** Clearly defined with detailed actions.
- **Measurable:** Indicators and benchmarks to track progress.
- **Achievable:** Realistic given available resources.
- **Relevant:** Aligned with your school's democratic vision.
- **Time-bound:** Defined timeframes for achieving results.

Step-by-step: Setting SMART Targets to Strengthen Democracy

Setting SMART goals for greater democracy is a collaborative and reflective process that ensures your school's goals are both meaningful and achievable. The following steps will help your school team to identify key areas for development, define SMART goals, align them with your school's needs, and finally integrate them into the quality management system.

By following this structured approach, you will foster shared responsibility for democratic goals and make progress visible and measurable for the entire school community.

Step 1: Preparation

- Review coACTION Sensor results.
- Identify priority areas (needs orientation Glasser, 1998), participation (Arnstein, 1969), competence development (Council of Europe, 2018).
- To support your reflection, use the *Sensor Reflection Sheet* provided in Annex 1.

These structured questions will help your team identify strengths, weaknesses, and priority areas for action.

Step 2: Draft SMART Targets

Use the SMART framework to clearly articulate your goal:

| Requirement | Key Questions | Your SMART Target(s) |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Specific | Who, where, what exactly will happen? | |
| Measurable | How will we measure success? | |
| Achievable | Can we realistically achieve this? | |
| Relevant | Why is this important for our school? | |
| Time-bound | By when will we achieve this? | |

Table 1: SMART Democracy Target Template with Guiding Questions

Note: The column "**Your SMART Target**" is intentionally left blank for your school project group to complete. Use the provided key questions to create your own specific SMART targets during your planning sessions.

You'll find a printable and fillable SMART Democracy Target Template in Annex 2. This tool guides your school team in articulating each element of the SMART goal step by step.

Step 3: Consult and Decide

- Present drafted targets to the school project group.
- Gather feedback and refine targets, ensuring authentic participation (Arnstein, 1969).
- Official approval in the school council, reflecting genuine delegation of power (Arnstein, 1969).

When preparing to finalize your goal, refer to the *SMART Target Approval Checklist* in Annex 3. This will help ensure that your draft meets all SMART criteria and includes diverse stakeholder input.

Step 4: Integrate into Quality Management

- Enter finalized SMART targets into your school's QM plan, systematically aligning with competence development (Council of Europe, 2018).

- Assign responsibility for each target clearly, promoting autonomy and recognition (Glasser, 1998).
- Set regular checkpoints for review and adjustments, ensuring targets remain achievable and relevant (Glasser, 1998; Council of Europe, 2018).

Example of a SMART Democracy Target

Here are two examples of SMART objectives for a primary school that wishes to become more democratic and to embed this in its long-term school development plan.,

Example 1:

By the end of February 2026, weekly class councils will be gradually introduced across all year groups at our school, giving pupils the opportunity to experience genuine participation and learn about democratic processes. Teachers will receive training in advance and be provided with materials to support implementation. An evaluation will take place at the end of the school year.

- ◇ **Specific:** A weekly class council will be introduced in all year groups.
- ◇ **Measurable:** By the end of the school year, all classes will hold a class council meeting at least once a week.
- ◇ **Achievable:** Pupils experience genuine participation and learn about democratic processes.
- ◇ **Relevant:** Teachers will receive training in advance and be provided with materials to support implementation.
- ◇ **Time-bound:** Introduction by February at the latest; evaluation in June 2026.

Example 2:

Between December 2025 and April 2026, two days of professional development on the topic of "Democracy education in everyday school life" will be offered to the teaching staff in collaboration with regional training institutes or NGOs, with the aim of strengthening pedagogical competence and fostering a team culture. At least 90% of the teaching staff will take part.

- ◇ **Specific:** Delivery of training sessions on the topic of "Democracy education in everyday school life".
- ◇ **Measurable:** At least 90% of teaching staff will take part in two full-day workshops.
- ◇ **Attractive:** Promotion of pedagogical competence and team culture.
- ◇ **Realistic:** Cooperation with regional training institutes or NGOs.
- ◇ **Scheduled:** First training session in December 2025, second by April 2026.

Special Consideration: Whole School Approach

Ensure all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, management) are involved:

- ◇ Clearly communicate the SMART targets through newsletters, assemblies, parent meetings.
- ◇ Regularly highlight progress and celebrate milestones to sustain engagement.

Conclusion

- ◇ Refer to the SMART Target Template (Table 1 in Step 2) to collaboratively draft your school's democracy goals using the guiding questions provided.
- ◇ Schedule a meeting with your school project group to review and refine the draft targets.
- ◇ Present the finalized targets to the school council for discussion and formal approval, ensuring they reflect the voices of all stakeholders.
- ◇ Embed the approved SMART targets into your school's Quality Management documentation or development plan.
- ◇ Assign clear responsibilities for monitoring progress and ensuring regular reviews.
- ◇ Celebrate early successes and communicate progress with the whole school community to foster ownership and ongoing engagement.

Remember: A strong SMART target translates democratic intentions into actionable, trackable steps that shape your school culture meaningfully over time.

To guide your transition from planning to action, see the *Plan-to-Action Summary Sheet* in Annex 4. It captures the full process in a concise format and can serve as a practical reference during implementation.

Follow-up

Congratulations!

You have reached the end of Module 4. You are now able to set SMART goals and incorporate them into your school development plan.

Now it's time to move on to implementation planning:

- ◇ What measures are most likely to help you achieve your goal?
- ◇ Who needs to be involved in the implementation?
- ◇ What steps are necessary?

Continue with **Module 5** to find out more!

Bibliography

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>

Council of Europe. (2018). *Reference framework of competences for democratic culture (RFCDC)*. Council of Europe Publishing.

Glasser, W. (1998). *Choice theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. HarperPerennial.

Suggested Readings

These additional resources offer deeper theoretical insights into democratic education, participation, and school culture:

Biesta, G. (2011). *Learning democracy in school and society: Education, lifelong learning, and the politics of citizenship*. Sense Publishers.

Council of Europe. (n.d.). *Democratic school governance for inclusion*. Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/charter-edc-hre-pilot-projects/democratic-school-governance-for-inclusion>

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Schröder, R., & Kesper-Biermann, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Demokratiepädagogik in der Grundschule*. Beltz Juventa.

Urban, M., Swadener, B. B., & Løkken, I. M. (Eds.). (2012). *Democracy and inclusion in early childhood education: Practices, politics, and policies*. Springer.

Annexes

Annex 1. coACTION Sensor Reflection Sheet

A structured reflection tool for reviewing your coACTION Sensor results and identifying priority areas for democratic development. Referenced in Step 1.

Annex 2. SMART Democracy Target Template

A printable and fillable PDF form to help your school project team develop a Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound democracy goal. Referenced in Step 2.

Annex 3. SMART Target Approval Checklist

A checklist for use during project group or school council meetings to validate whether your target meets the SMART criteria and reflects stakeholder input. Referenced in Step 3.

Annex 4. SMART Target Plan-to-Action Summary

A one-page summary to guide schools from SMART goal approval to implementation, monitoring, and celebration of early successes. Referenced in the final session.



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