

# **coACTION: A Whole School Approach for Democratic Empowerment in Primary Education**

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## **Abstract**

Democracy must be learned young—and lived daily. The coACTION project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, promotes a whole school approach to embed democratic culture within primary education. Against the backdrop of rising populism and diminishing trust in democratic institutions, coACTION empowers school communities across Austria, Portugal, Greece, and Spain to foster participatory learning environments that equip children with key democratic competences from an early age.

The project mobilizes all stakeholders—school leaders, teachers, learners, and parents—in shaping school life through inclusive decision-making and shared responsibility. It supports schools to integrate democratic values into their quality management systems, ensuring that these principles are not only taught but systematically embedded in daily practices.

Key outputs include the coACTION Sensor, a set of tailored questionnaires that help schools assess their democratic culture; the Democratic Empowerment Platform, offering step-by-step guidance, training videos, and a “Treasury of Tools” for classroom and community use; and the “Year of Democracy” pilot programme, supporting 10 primary schools through a transformative school year guided by trained facilitators.

Through the synthesis of policy, pedagogy, and community action, coACTION offers a replicable, sustainable model for democratic school development. The project stands as a powerful response to European and global calls for civic renewal—anchored in education, led by schools, and driven by communities.