

SOCIOCRACY IN SCHOOLS

workshop proceedings



**Co-funded by
the European Union**





**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The Workshop Proceedings of the cycle of conference on "Sociocracy in Schools" was produced by the partners of the SOCIS project and published in June 2023.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not imply any endorsement of its contents, which reflect solely the opinion of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project: "SOCIS- Sociocracy in Schools "
2021-2-BE02-KA210-SCH-000048971



Sociocracy in schools



INTRODUCTION

SOCIS is a European project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action - 210 - Small scale partnership cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices).

The duration of the project is of 16 months, from 01/04/2022 to 31/07/2023

SOCIS is implemented by 2 European Countries (Belgium and Austria).

The partnership is made up of one European Network promoting Quality Education (QUEST) and one organisation promoting sociocracy (Soziokratie Zentrum).

The project has the ambition to support the development of sociocracy in European schools, in order to offer an innovative and democratic educational establishments management where students have an active participation in decision-making and every voice is heard.

In order to achieve this objective and meet the expected results, the project SOCIS is divided into three main activities:

1) Research – A Research providing an overview of Sociocracy in School in Europe

2) Workshops – A series of workshops on how to support sociocracy in schools

3) Guidelines – Guidelines to scale up the use of sociocracy in schools

The SOCIS project

what is

SOCIS is a European project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 2). It is implemented by two partners: QUEST (Belgium) and Soziokratie Zentrum (Austria).

Start date: 01.04.2022
End date: 31.07.2023

our mission

Support the development of sociocracy in European schools, in order to foster the emergence of innovative and democratic educational centers where all school actors have active participation in decision-making and every voice is heard.

The project steps



OVERVIEW

The SOCIS consortium convened a cycle of workshops in March 2023 called "Sociocracy in Schools".

The Workshop series was held in virtual format. Four sessions, each 3 hours and half in length, brought together around 50 participants who contributed to the workshops by exchanging personal experiences, doubts, opinions, informations and insights on the topic of the workshops.

Participants came from a wide range of countries, from different school types (private, public, democratic, waldorf, kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high school, ...) and had different backgrounds regarding school (parents, teachers, administration, researchers, ...)

The four sessions were held in a similar format: at the beginning of every session, a presentation was given addressing cross-cutting issues. Then guests speakers have been invited at every sessions to share their expertise through an interview format. Finally, a more interactive moment would take place, where the participants could join small discussions or exercise groups.

Moments for questions and answers were also present in every sessions to allow participants to have their doubts solved and to exchange deeper on the subject.

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

.....

4
sessions
running in

March 2023

.....

83 persons
registered

from

18 countries

.....

case studies from
6 schools

session 1



This first session was dedicated to provide a general overview of what Sociocracy is. After the welcome words, we asked the participants to fill out a survey to get a picture of how the group was formed and how their knowledge of sociocracy was.

Following, participants were invited to reunite in small groups where they could get to know each other with some guiding questions.

At the end of this first ice breaking session Florian Bauernfeind provided an overview of sociocracy, by explaining the four key principles of sociocracy. Werner Kratochwil followed by bringing information on the use of sociocracy in schools: how many schools use sociocracy, where they are located and the benefits of sociocracy in schools for the different actors involved. Werner Kratochwil made specific references to the research work conducted together with Martina Paone (QUEST) in the first phase of the project, in which they could map out the use of sociocracy in schools in Europe and highlight benefits and challenges.

Afterwards, an Interview with Barbara Strauch (Soziokratie Zentrum) and Martina Paone took place.

Barbara was talking about how the organization of schools that used sociocracy got more efficient over time. Barbara mentioned the challenge that in schools run by parents, the parents are both customers and at the same time in the top management. This brings the teachers in a problematic "sandwich position".

6 March 2023 / 17h00-20h30

Session title:

Introduction to Sociocracy

Speakers:

Werner Kratochwil, SoZe
Florian Bauernfeind, SoZe

Guests speakers:

Martina Paone, QUEST
Barbara Strauch, SoZe

When using sociocracy with kids, Barbara warned that it is important that teachers learn about sociocracy themselves, before they start using it with kids. Furthermore, having clear domains for the pupils is important to give them the chance to really decide freely on their own. According to Barbara, sociocracy provides democratic tools and philosophy that fits very well into "alternative pedagogies" as the Montessori philosophy of children observation and responsibility. She finally also introduced the open election of class representatives, which can also be used in schools where sociocracy is not (yet) possible.

An interview with Martina Paone followed, where she was talking about the challenges and benefits of sociocracy, by using her experience of running a democratic school that applied sociocracy. She was also given examples of children domains and how parents can be included into the circle structure. She provided examples of the challenges that opening schools with “horizontal” organizations can bring, and how sociocracy - if well applied- can provide clarity of roles and benefits for the whole organization.

After the interviews, the more interactive part of the session started. Participants could choose between experiencing sociocracy decision making methods, or having more direct exchanges on the topic in a smaller group.

In the experience groups, the participants were asked to pretend to be a group of teenage pupils in school, who decide with consent together.

Barbara Strauch, Werner Kratochwil, Florian Bauernfeind (all Sociocracy experts), facilitated the group through the phases of the decision making (picture forming, opinion rounds, decision) of sociocracy and led the group towards consent.

At the end of the exercise, the feedback from the participants was collected: The group had a positive experience trying out consent decisions and realized that deciding together is manageable, but can be tricky at some points, therefore having an experienced facilitator is important.

Martina Paone led the discussion group, where different teachers and school actors joined to ask more questions about specific aspects of sociocracy and express some challenges they were facing with sociocracy. We found answers for their questions and ways on how sociocracy could help them.

At the very end of the workshop, all the groups came together and reported what they learnt in their small groups.

We closed the workshop with an outlook on the following workshops and a closing survey.

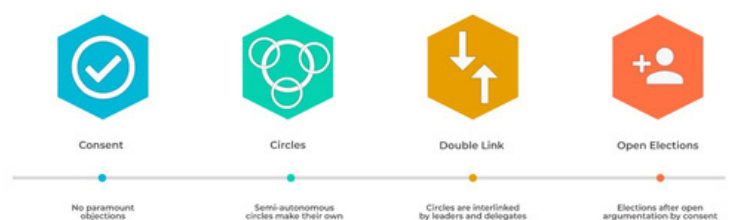
Sociocracy

socio (ally / together) & cracy (govern)

SOCIOCRATIC CIRCLE ORGANISATION

Sociocracy offers a profound model for organisations of all kind, for effective cooperation, based on equivalence. Its simple principles are enabling system-wide participatory decisionmaking and selforganisation by shared power and responsibility.

4 Basic Principles



Consent Facilitation

1. Pictureforming

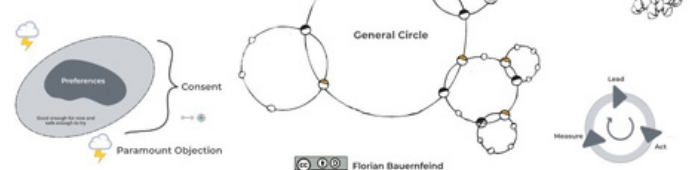
make sure we understand the topic/proposal

2. Opinionrounds

share perspectives, arguments and opinions

3. Decisionmaking

Integrate and form a proposal, ask for consent



session 2



In this session – after the welcoming and check-in in small groups – we started by describing the four phases of implementing sociocracy in an organization, in this sense we departed from the first session and we repeated the the key principles of sociocracy but located them in an implementation story of the school Kreamont.

For the insights of the school Kreamont (Austria) we had Rita Mayrhofer as our special guest. We sent out the case study from Kreamont to all participants beforehand to read before the session.

In this interview we asked specific questions on all the four principles and also gave a short explanation of each principle as a repetition.

One question was on the difference between the delegate system they had before to the delegate system of sociocracy. Another question was what has changed with the parent jobs with the open election. Regarding consent, the question was how the process was from majority vote towards consent.

Another vivid story was when the parents had to move out of the pedagogical circle to keep the pedagogical vision clean and the parents who did not want to go out at first, later founded a new school.

After the break, we made them exchange in groups of four on open topics about the four principles. Later two of these groups came together to form a bigger group to exchange with each other and with a member of the team.

13 March 2023 / 17h00-20h30

Session title:

Four principles in sociocratic schools

Speaker:

Werner Kratochwil

Guest Speaker:

Rita Mayrhofer,
Kreamont school

Topics in the exchange groups were fears that consent takes too much time, the difficulty to introduce sociocracy in public, about strategies to spread it among other teachers, how to make teachers stick to their consent, parents domains, about how to gather the money for implementation or moderation and facilitate in bigger groups (e.g. classes of pupils). Like in the first workshop, all groups came together in the end to share what was happening in each big group. Also the outlook of the next workshops and the check-out was similar to the first workshop.



For this workshop we asked four schools who apply sociocracy to share the organigram of their school and talk about the domains of each of the circle in the organogram.

After the usual welcome, survey and check-in in small groups, we started this workshop with an input on the structure and domains of different schools.

The special guest of this workshop was Judith Bauer from the school Sonnenhaus (Austria). In the interview she talked about the structure of her school and about the domains of the pedagogical circle and the children structure.

In the second half of the workshop we asked the participants which school had an organigramm and domains ready for discussion. Four schools were prepared to share their schools and after the break had discussions about their topics in small groups.

In the small groups we had enough time to present the circle structure and the domains of the circles and deal with questions that came up regarding the domains or the school in general. Already here we discussed about sociocracy in public schools and how to deal with bureaucracy in this case.

Also the question was how parents can have the right domain to be productive and do not disturb the pedagogical circle. Or where to start with the implementation and how the implementation circle can be built up.

20 March 2023 / 17h00-20h30

Session title:
Different actors and their
domains in the schools

Speaker:
Werner Kratochwil

Guest speaker:
Judith Bauer,
Sonnenhaus school

Also the discussion was on how the children structure can be connected to the main circle structure and about the domains of the children.

Another topic was how the schools have to match the curriculum in the different countries and how the school can still offer the best for their kids.

We also talked about open election of class representatives in school and kindergarten as a possibility for teachers to try sociocracy with their kids. Implementing sociocracy in a Waldorf school was another interesting topic.

In the end - as in every workshop - we were sharing what happened in each group. This time we had more time left and closed with an open check-out round.

session 4



In this fourth and last session we gave an input on effective meetings and time management in sociocratic meetings.

Our special guest in this session was Judith Memisi and Claudia Gull from Rychenberg public school (Switzerland).

In the interview with the school we started with general infos about the school, how they started with sociocracy and how the structure of the school currently is and how the school already implemented certain values within the school (curiosity, respect, community, joy) - even before they had sociocracy. And what schools could do to get the headmaster inspired by sociocracy.

After the break we again offered the choice between experience of a sociocratic decision-making or exchange in small groups about the topics.

What was remarkable this time in the experience group was, that - although it did not seem possible to find a consent at start - we finally managed after following the process for some rounds to find a good consent and experience the feeling of community.

27 March 2023 / 17h00-20h30

Session title:

Time management and
effective meetings

Speakers:

Werner Kratochwil
Florian Bauernfeind

Guest Speakers:

Judith Memisi,
Rychenberg school
Claudia Gull,
Rychenberg school

In the exchange group the school laws in different countries was a big topic that gathered many reflections and interests.

After the small groups we came together to share what was happening in each group.

At the end, we talked about the final conference of the SOCIS project and other methods of SOFA to stay in touch.



For the whole team of the SOCIS project, the workshops have been a very good and satisfactory experience.

We have been pleased to deliver it, but also to receive so many positive feedback from participants.

It was particularly interesting to work with a group of very different experience levels. On the one hand, we had participants experiencing for the how decision-making in sociocracy can form a community.

On the other hand, we also had experienced people attending the workshop and putting forward key questions on domains and how to include a new group of actors into sociocracy.

It was interesting to have such a big number of different countries in the workshop and to learn about the challenges schools in other schools are facing.

Finally, it was a good opportunity to learn in depth about the special guests' schools and about all the other schools who were offering insights about their own experiences, the challenges they face and the benefits that the application of sociocracy is bringing to them.

TESTIMONIALS

Here a very short summary of some of the testimonials gathered from participants of this workshop.

"Thank you for making a change in education" (C.H., Lebanon & Romania)

"Thank you so much for the useful seminar!" (A., Greece)

"Very inspiring! Thanks a lot! Yes time was running, thats a good sign!" (B.)

"Great experience! Great feeling! Thank you!" (A., Greece)

"Thanks a lot for the opportunity, it was great being a part of this workshop."
(G. K., Greece)

"Thank you so much! Very helpful" (A. S., Lebanon & Palestine)

"A great opportunity to exchange experiences and for networking" (R. B., Italy)

"Thanks for the inspiring workshop" (A. K.)

"It was a very useful meeting!" (C.H., Lebanon & Romania)

TO KNOW MORE

BOOKS AND WRITINGS

- Rau, T. J., & Koch-Gonzalez, J. (2018). Many voices one song: shared power with sociocracy. Sociocracy for All.
- Endenburg, G., & Bowden, C. W. (1988). Sociocracy: The Organisation of Decision-making: "no-objection" as the Principle of Sociocracy. Stichting Sociocratisch Centrum.
- Wilder, H. (2021) Let's Decide Together: Practicing Sociocracy with Children. Sociocracy for All.
- Strauch, B. Soziokratie (in German), Published by Vahlen (2018)

MOVIES

- School Circles- Every Voice Matters. By Wondering School

WEBSITES

- Quest (European Network reuniting Educational Organisations):
- SOFA (Sociocracy for All) connects people using sociocracy worldwide.
- SOFA sociocracy forum.
- sociocracy in schools signal group and website
- Facebook-group "Sociocracy in education"

EXPERTS

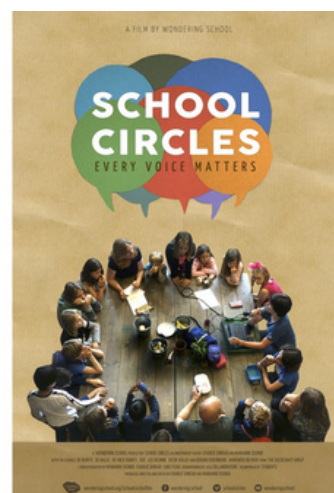
In case you need sociocracy experts for support or to start with sociocracy please have a look at these links:

ISCB: <https://www.iscb.earth/consultants/>

for German speakers:

Soziokratie Zentrum:

<https://soziokratiezentrum.org/unserangebot/beratung/#cse-liste>





Sociocracy in schools



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not imply any endorsement of its contents, which reflect solely the opinion of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

