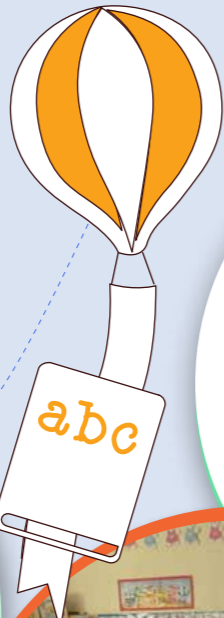


# QUOTES



"We've used it always to complement what was being learnt during the week or a particular day. We never (...) just worked on the letters per se, we always used it to supplement what was being done."  
*(Elsa, educator)*

AlphaEU is a different resource because it is a digital resource (...) that responds to children's needs and interests. (...) It was used as such, a resource that is different from a book and from the materials we build ourselves.  
*(Sandra, trainee student)*



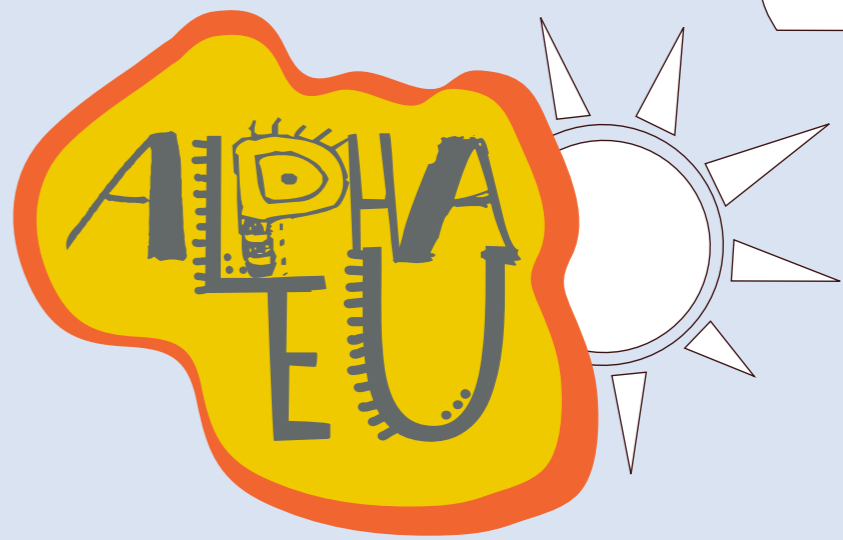
"With the three-year-olds we explored the sounds of the words to promote learning how to pronounce them (...) this was always done in the context of what we were exploring"  
*(Gina, educator)*



"The feedback of a mother was that her daughter would accept to play with AlphaEU, but would soon get tired of it, because this material is more didactic and thus different from the other simple games she plays on the computer."  
*(Sandra, educator)*

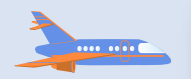
"The children had fun listening to the same word, which they already knew in several languages, in a language that was completely different and unfamiliar, such as Greek"  
*(Gina, educator)*

"We compared words in Portuguese and in Italian and the children loved it; they'd just say the Italian words as if they were Italian"  
*(Elsa & Rita, trainee students)*



# Alphabets of Europe

[www.alphaeu.org](http://www.alphaeu.org)  
CASE STUDY - PORTUGAL



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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Studies have shown that phonemic awareness is closely associated with reading ability in the early and later years of schooling, while letter-sound correlation is proved to play an important role in learning how to read and write a language. The Alphabets of Europe (AlphaEU) project focuses on the European Commission's priority of "Promoting early language education." It aims to promote the acquisition of multilingual awareness, and to foster language learning and language skills of pre-schoolers in various European countries, by developing, piloting, and implementing digital alphabet books and alphabet-related interactive activities. Targeted alphabets/languages include: English, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian.

The innovative aspect of AlphaEU is that active and creative language learning is channelled through digital media that encourage children to approach European languages and alphabets in a comparative manner. An AlphaEU guide introduces stakeholders to the project's approach and material, while eLearning modules inform and train adult mediators in utilising the digital material. The project encourages involvement of family members in supporting language learning and is expected to have a positive impact on pre-primary language education across the EU.

AlphaEU defines a general approach and philosophy on using digital alphabet books and activities to raise awareness to foreign languages and cultures at the pre-school level. The alphabets and suggested activities highlight the importance of developing multilingual awareness and promoting openness to different cultures. Besides working on phonemic awareness and learning by doing, the AlphaEU materials raise the curiosity for the other, and offer possibilities to contrast and compare languages, sounds, and objects.

The digital alphabets are simple, interactive, and entertaining. They can be explored online and offline and they introduce children to several European languages, through sound, visual image, and letters. They also introduce two alphabets: the Roman and the Greek. They thus offer children the possibility to discover new letters, new words, and new sounds to describe familiar objects.

The AlphaEU project aims to:

- Develop an AlphaEU ELL approach.
- Pilot, design, and develop 30 digital alphabet books and 30 interactive activities in relation to 6 different European languages.
- Provide free access to these materials, by incorporating them in an online platform.
- Provide eLearning training for at least 20 adult mediators in each participating country, bringing teachers and parents in contact through blended learning environments.
- Implement the AlphaEU approach and materials in collaboration with 10 pre-primary teachers and 10 parents in each partner country.
- Author and publicize at least one case study from each country, in order to evaluate, valorise, and demonstrate the AlphaEU approach and materials.
- Pursue intense dissemination and exploitation, in order to make stakeholders aware of the AlphaEU resources, as well as the general value of playful and creative ELL.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF BOOKS AND ACTIVITIES

The implementation of the AlphaEU books and activities involved 110 children aged 3 to 6 in three pre-school centres in Castelo Branco, Portugal (Centro Social P. Redentoristas - Infantário Raposinho; Jardim de Infância S. Casa da Misericórdia 1; Centro Infantil nº 2 do CRSS). It involved 21 pre-school student teachers and 5 experienced pre-school teachers, who invited 10 parents to become involved in exploring the AlphaEU materials with their children at home.

The implementation activities were carried out over the period of two weeks and explored the Farm, the School, and the City Alphabet books in Portuguese, English, Greek, German, and Italian. The AlphaEU materials were integrated into curricular activities, such as exploring farm animals and visits to a farm; reading picture books; art; drawing and learning letters; food processing. All the activities were planned by pre-school teachers and student teachers with the AlphaEU researchers, following a ten-hour training course. The aim of the implementation was to involve the pre-school communities in multilingual and intercultural practices through the AlphaEU resources.

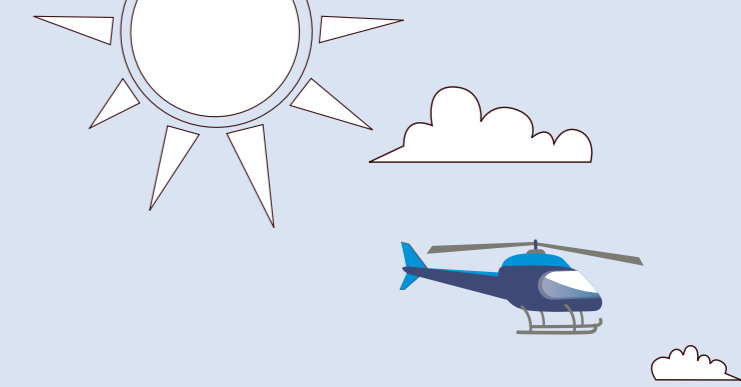
## RESULTS

### Examples of Best Practice

- Bringing Alpha and Zara alive through puppets, cardboard figures, and real-life characters resulted in positive outcomes with the children.
- Strategies to sensitise children to multicultural environments through objects in two or three languages were also very successful and were met with curiosity and enthusiasm from the part of the children.
- Phonemic awareness was developed through repetition of words in a foreign language and children showed great enthusiasm for the words in the languages they had never heard of. Not knowing a language constituted an added interest.

### Challenges

- Old equipment delayed the display of pages and sound, and sometimes spoiled the AlphaEU digital experience that requires a quick pace and getting feedback from the images on the screen.
- Online digital alphabet books and activities also require a digital pedagogy that pre-school teachers and student teachers tried to harmonise with current pedagogical practice that is not digitally-based.
- Some parents viewed the AlphaEU alphabet books as online games, with a clear disadvantage, because the alphabet books are not 'drag and drop' games; they have a didactic purpose and should be explored in particular didactic playful ways to enable active learning and multi-cultural awareness raising.



## TIPS FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

### Teachers

- Integrate books and activities in the curriculum, as they help reinforce language awareness, vocabulary recognition, and cross-cultural awareness.
- Study thoroughly the material before implementing it in the classroom.
- Encourage role-play based on the characters and storyline of the books.
- Create Alpha and Zara puppets.
- Integrate the story line in the lesson and ask the students to come up with alternative development in the storyline, or ending, or continuation.
- Use flashcards and a poster to play a game on it with letter and flashcards beginning from that letter.

### Parents

- Learn a new language along with your child; make this a shared experience!
- Play WITH your child!
- Build on what is done at school and extend on it at home.
- Explore different languages and compare vocabulary between them.
- Do not focus on mistakes; the important aspect is that children are daring to learn a new language!

