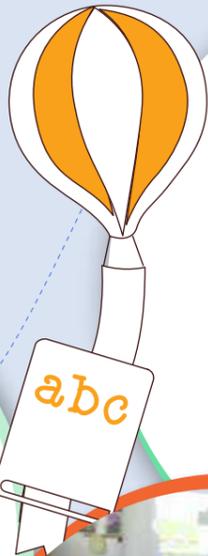


QUOTES



"It would be good to expand these magnificent alphabet books to other themes (occupations, means of transportation) and include more languages. They can be easily integrated in different curricular areas (man and society, language development, etc). Parents were enthusiastic about discovering foreign languages with their children while using new technologies."

(Denisa Ionescu - kindergarten teacher)



"The books offer colorful pictures, a plot that is easy to follow and common preschool themes, preschoolers having the opportunity to repeat the tasks when they make mistakes. The Country books seem like mini encyclopedias, enriching the culture and the vocabulary of the preschoolers. The language is accessible to them."

(Florina Brezoianu Sofronie - kindergarten teacher)



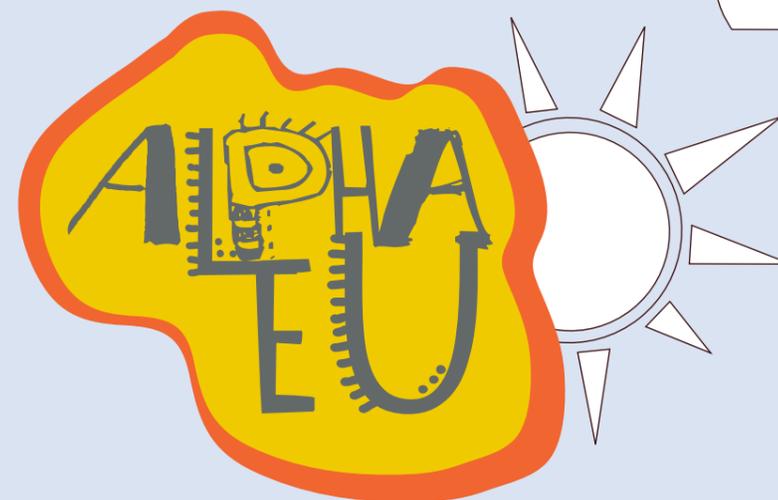
"AlphaEU helps us continue at home different activities started by teachers in class and guide my child in learning the alphabet in a pleasant way. The digital products function as a game which captures and trains preschoolers in exploring different activities. I consider the project particularly valuable for its complexity."

(Anca Oprea - parent of 2 preschoolers)



"My 5 year old boy wanted to explore the City alphabet book in Italian because he is going to visit his cousin in Italy; while browsing through the Italian book he noticed the resemblance between Italian and Romanian words. Then he moved to Greek and found the image of the letters very interesting which aroused his curiosity."

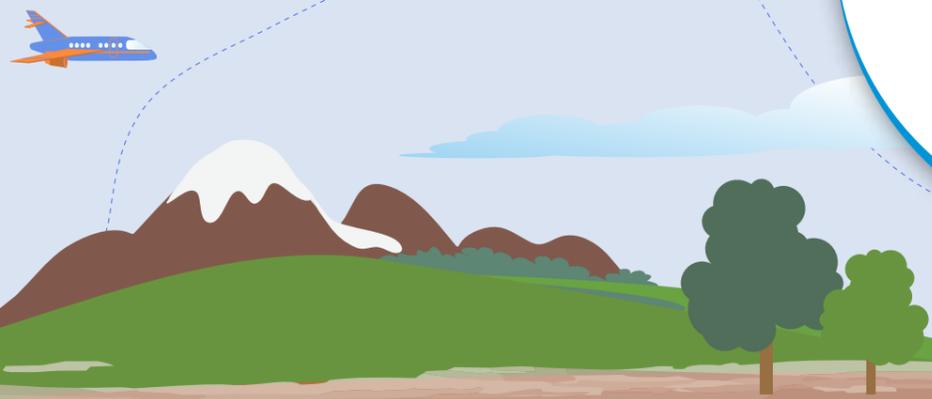
(Cristina Langa - parent of preschooler)



Alphabets of Europe

www.alphaeu.org

CASE STUDY - ROMANIA



Lifelong Learning Programme

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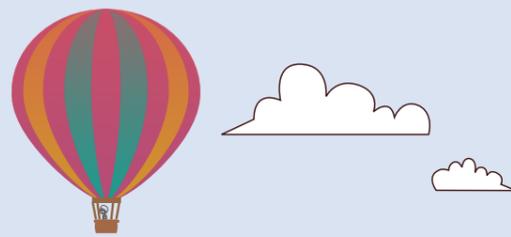
PROJECT OVERVIEW

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.

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 AlphaEU implementation took place in 3 kindergartens (Alba ca Zapada, Dumbrava Minunata and Andrei Paunescu) and 1 primary school (Matei Basarab), all located in Pitesti, and involved children aged from 3 to 6. 10 preschool and primary school teachers implemented lesson plans that they developed during the Adult Mediators' Training module, all focusing on the use of the AlphaEU digital books and activities. The teachers explored the digital books and activities over a period of 2 weeks and invited 10 parents to assist to their didactic activities and become familiar with the use of these materials. The AlphaEU digital products (Farm, School, House alphabet books; country alphabet books for Italy, Portugal and Cyprus; digital reinforcement activities: Test your memory and Match the language) were mainly used to raise language awareness and reinforce pronunciation of words, both in Romanian and English, Italian and Greek. They were integrated in the weekly activities on different topics: the school, farm animals, pieces of furniture, the house. Children focused on the pronunciation of letters and words and matched words to images. All the AlphaEU alphabets were used to introduce new letters, sounds of letters and words, develop pronunciation, and writing, though the pairing of Romanian and English was chosen most of the times.



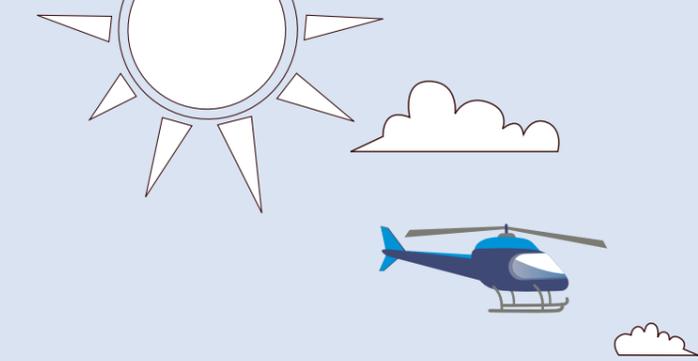
RESULTS

Benefits

- Innovative and very appealing to children as they have colourful images and sound as well as attractive characters and storylines.
- Valuable for introducing foreign languages to children in pre-school in order to develop their phonological awareness and intercultural skills at an early age.
- Useful when teachers want to switch from the regular curricula to introduce something new in the educational process and keep the children motivated for learning.
- Can be introduced together with the week's theme, following the design of the national pre-school curricula.
- Native pronunciation of words and letters is very useful.
- Parents can continue at home different activities started by teachers and guide their children in learning the alphabet in a pleasant way.

Challenges

- Lack of computers in kindergartens (children take turns).
- Older children complained that the number of the words per page was too small.
- Need of a reward after completing a digital activity; suggested introducing sound rewards, (not only visual reward) like "Well done!" to motivate children when doing the digital activities.
- More objects on each page, for each letter (or sound) and more animation to make the books more appealing to children.
- It is not recommended for the native language to be associated to more than one foreign language at a time.



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!

