



Empower the young with talking objects is a 3-year Erasmus+ funded project. It runs from 2024-2027. Together with partners from Portugal, the Netherlands, and Belgium, we are developing activities for children aged 4-8 years and training for teachers on topics such as climate change and active citizenship.

Project kick-off



How incredibly fun and educational to meet in Leiden on March 5, 6 and 7, 2024. Finally we could meet in real life to kick off the Empower the Young project, a project in which we develop tools to enable conversations with young children about today's big issues! Among other things, we visited the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam to try out different types of Talking Objects. We talked about the educational strategies and framework, revealed our beautiful project logo and communication strategy, learned how to program a Talking Object and planned all the deliverables. Inspired and with a positive energy we are ready to work on this project together! The atmosphere is good!

In November we will meet up again, this time in Portugal. To learn from Ciencia Viva and the team. The first prototype of the talking object will be revealed by Go Wonder and assessed by the rest of the team.

Global challenges for young children

Solving the problem of climate change and being an engaged citizen; these are two challenges of today. In this project we set ourselves the challenge to discuss these topics with young children. And young children are masters of creative thinking. To find the best way to engage them in big challenges, we have started a search for good examples to follow.

One example worth mentioning is the clay animation film 'Savages'. The film is set in Borneo where two children and an orangutan resist the arrival of palm oil plantations. The film tells us the important lesson that the truth, although not always pretty, can already be shared at a young age.

Another good example is the film 'The Lorax' where the young audience gets an important message delivered: 'Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not.' These films, and other sources of inspiration like books, performances and exhibitions will help us to make a good educational product relating to the global challenges.





Partners in the Spotlight

Naturalis



Naturalis is the Dutch institute for biodiversity. It counts approximately 1100 employees and is a museum besides research facility with 150 researchers and 13 professors.

The museum houses 10 exhibition halls, three workshop rooms for educational purposes and one big open space called LiveScience. LiveScience can be visited free of charge. Visitors are encouraged to engage into conversations with the researchers and staff as they perform their daily research activities. and preparing dinosaur-bones.

In the museum Naturalis provides educational programs for families, primary and secondary education. Naturalis has a lot of expertise developing materials for both formal and Informal education. A perfect match for the project Empower the young in which Naturalis is project coordinator and responsible for the development of all learning material for teachers and educators.

BAMM - Mooss



BAMM is a Belgian non-profit organisation focusing on arts education and cultural participation for children and young people aged 2.5 to 30. With four subdivisions (Bazart, AmuseeVous, Mooss and Mastiek), many innovative projects and more than 40 years of experience, they stimulate and organise a wide range of quality encounters for young people with art and cultural heritage. BAMM is active throughout Flanders and participates in numerous international projects. They are guided by the conviction that art is important for the development of young minds.

Mooss works with children both in and outside school in music, visual art, theatre and audiovisual art. They provide training for teachers, educators and others working with children. They have extensive experience with vulnerable audiences.

Bamm/Mooss developed its own methodology centred on constructivism. The theory is based on several learning theories (G.Hein, H.Gardner, D.Kolb, M. Csikszentmihalyi, ...) The book is a standard work on art education and is used at several universities.





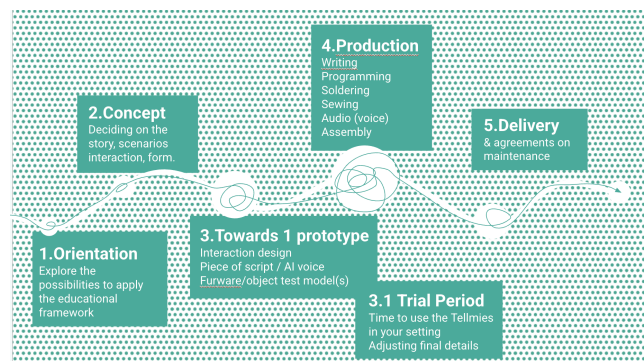
Tellmies Tech

Concept phase



Creating a Tellmie is a bit of a journey and Go Wonder always walks that path together with the other partners. But this project is a bit more complicated than we normally tackle...

We always kick things off with the orientation and concept phase, where we explore the possibilities together. What shape could the Tellmie take? And what's its mission? How do we realise the educational goals?



Versatile

Now, in this particular project, things are a bit trickier than usual. Why? Because we are working with multiple partners, tackling various topics, and planning to use the Tellmie in all sorts of settings: museums, workshops and schools. So, the Tellmie has to be super versatile and offer some flexibility for partners to adapt it to their wishes.

Hands-on!

During our first meeting in the Netherlands, we dove into some hands-on creativity with all the partners. We played around with clay, stuck random bits onto other bits, and discovered that the fitting design could be pretty abstract. Think something like a Barbapapa!

When it came to interaction, we were all on the same page quickly: of course, the Tellmie should talk, play audio and respond to touch (and maybe even movement, like tossing it from one person to another!), and be aware of its location so it can share place-specific stories.

Next up

We're co-creating a concrete storyline themed around climate change for a workshop setting and a design proposal to get a seamstress started. Of course: we'll keep you posted!



Results of the project

Science and NH Museums, art spaces, schools and tech partners will use talking objects (puppets) to foster young children's engagement. Targeting teachers and educators, we will build the children's critical thinking skills and introduce them to current global issues such as climate change and participation in democratic life in a manner appropriate for their age group and context. We will create inclusive educational material and training tools, easy to adapt and implement beyond the project.

Overall we will contribute to students' 21st Century skills, make them agents of change, build communities and encourage exchange of expertise and practice.

We start with the development of **an educational framework and educational strategies for addressing 4-8 year old students** and a **project website** where all materials will be kept until at least 2030.

For educational purposes we develop **a toolkit of educational activities on climate change, democratic values and global challenges** both with and without the use of **technology advanced talking objects (tellmies)** as educational tools.

During the lifetime of the project we will organise teacher/educator training sessions on the local premises.

Because learning never stops, we will also work on building **learning ecosystems** in Portugal, Belgium and The Netherlands advancing activities for early childhood education

Project Timeline

In the coming three years a lot of deliverables are planned. All partners of the project contribute to get the best result possible. Are you interested in joining this process please contact the coordinator or your national contact point.

In broad terms, we have set the following milestones:

2025

May - Educational framework and project website are launched

November - 1st prototype Tellmies is released

2026

May - Toolkit of educational activities, final Tellmies and train the trainer sessions can be booked

2027

March - Conference where we share all our lessons learned to be held in the Netherlands

Keep me informed!

Would you like your colleagues to be on top of the news of this project as you are? Let them subscribe to this newsletter!

