STORIAS

LITERACY RE-IMAGINED

Inside the STORIAS Project's Testing

and Future Strategies

Storias

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INTRODUCTION

This guide represents and synthesises our two years of hard work in the development of innovative and creative resources to rethink the teaching of literacy in European primary schools. Designed to provide additional support to teachers, this guide presents good practices and testimonials regarding the implementation of the Storias tools within the classroom and at home. Through those pages, the partnership seeks to enhance the results of the project to ensure the best possible transferability of the resources and approach developed with the Storias method.

Based on resource testing and the partners' professional experience, we aim to promote the importance of the Storias project in the **development of basic literacy skills in pupils aged 5-10**. Through a variety of storytelling tools and adapted material targeting writing and reading skills, the Storias method offers an inclusive approach to the teaching of literacy taking into account students with SLDs and students for whom the traditional education might not be relevant. Articulated into three categories of results which have all been tested across the different countries of the partnership and in different schools, the resources presented within this guide target different aspects of this alternative teaching of literacy.

The first result is composed of **24 Storiaskits** addressing popular tales and portraits of national characters. Each storybox contains one activity book and a storytelling tool, both targeting reading and fine motricity skills. The second type of resources are the **Participatory Stories**, which have been designed in a Pupil and Teacher version, and address the development of writing and creative skills. The last result that has been tested, is the **Pedagogical guide**. Meant for teachers and professionals, this guide serves to define the pedagogical scope and outcomes of these storytelling tools.

This Implementation guide has been divided into four chapters. First, we will introduce the project in terms of the accessibility of its resources, and national challenges and perspectives relating to literacy attainment. The second and main part is dedicated to testimonials of the testing and the implementation of the resources within the classroom. Then, we will discuss how to ensure the sustainability of the project, followed by a conclusion.

WHAT IS THE STORIAS APPROACH?

Seeing as how our project aims to target the improvement of literacy skills in primary school–aged pupils, the STORIAS approach hinges on the development and direct application of our three more 'practical' project Results: Storiaskits, Participatory Stories, and a Pedagogical guide.

With this in mind, **the STORIAS approach is composed of three phases** (or steps) corresponding to the aforementioned Results:

Phase 1

- Primary school teachers read the Pedagogical guide to acquaint themselves with the purpose and aims of the project.
- Teachers then choose to read a story from our list of 24 titles, made up of legends, tales, and accounts about historical characters from France, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Poland and Romania. Each of the stories targets one of three pupil age groups – 5-6-, 7-8-, and 9–10-year-olds.
- Working from the Activity Books that come with the Storiaskits, the children will experiment with handwriting tasks.

Phase 2

- Using the storytelling tool that corresponds with the story they read to the pupils (such as: origami, story map, silent book theatre and others), teachers will re-tell the story to the class.
- To curate more hands-on learning during this activity, the teacher should invite the children to take turns to re-tell the story themselves using the storytelling tool from their example, or, if time allows, the teacher can propose that they create the tool from the materials provided together.

Phase 3

- Moving on to the Participatory Story activity, depending on the story you've chosen, you will either read a summary of the story with your class and enrich each sheet (Enriching Participatory Story) or orally summarise the story before introducing children to the writing prompts on each sheet (Co-Creation Participatory Story)
- Continue working on the sheets by tackling different writing topics, inviting your pupils to use their creativity and imagination to write their new stories
- Once their stories are written, you can choose to record the pupils reading their creations.

We believe that the combination of these phases and the chronology in which they unfold is conducive to **activating pupils' imagination, engagement and concentration** during storytelling activities, paving the way for improved literacy competences.

THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE STORIAS RESOURCES

The STORIAS resources have been created with inclusion in mind – this means that we have ensured that the content and design of the materials used by pupils (Storiaskits and Participatory Stories) **accommodate the needs of those with special learning needs**. As one of our target groups, pupils with learning disorders make up 9-12% of the student population in Europe. In particular, these pupils struggle with two core components of literacy attainment: reading and writing.

When it comes to reading, this manifests as challenges with phonological awareness, i.e., the ability to identify and pronounce the spoken parts of words and sentences. This challenge then leads to poor spelling, word recognition, vocabulary development and reading fluency. **When it comes to writing**, learning disorders manifest as challenges with handwriting (the physical act of putting letters in paper) and written expression. Being able to write down your thoughts in an organised and structured manner requires a learner to follow the teacher's instructions and demonstrate proper letter formation, spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary.

Research and our own experience as education experts have shown that pupils with learning disorders can thrive in environments that make reasonable adjustments according to their needs and which highlight their strengths. The way we've accounted for these points is twofold – **creating accessible design and creating accessible content**.

Accessible design entails making learning materials that prioritise readability and usability:

- Using literal and easy-to-understand language in lieu of metaphors and slang
- Being explicit in our language by clearly stating the main points and characters in stories – for example, instead of using subject pronouns 'he' or 'she' at the beginning of sentences too often, we opt for repeating the name of the character.
- Specifying when actions occurred in the story (a long time ago, first, next, then, finally, etc.) to assist pupils with the chronology of events.
- Applying 1.5 line spacing, Sans Serif font and left alignment to all texts
- Using a multisensory technique to master each story: pupils are introduced to stories first with their ears (listening to stories), then with their hands and eyes

(using our storytelling tools and activity book exercises) and then with their speech (retelling the stories in their own words).

Accessible content entails making learning materials that target literacy – related challenges:

- Literacy challenge #1: Decoding story meanings

Our storytelling resources use tangible items, like figurines from the Story Box, as a pathway to absorb information from the story. By actively engaging with our tools and playing out scenes from the story, pupils learn that comprehension encompasses more than just reading; it includes non-verbal communication, emotions, and motives. Through these activities, learners can delve deeper into the narrative, asking important questions such as why a character feels a certain way, how they express their emotions, and what they aim to achieve. Embodying the characters, students gain a richer understanding of the story's nuances and enhance their comprehension skills.

- Literacy challenge #2: Dexterity and motor skills

Our hands-on storytelling tools not only stimulate the development of motor skills but also boost hand-eye coordination. Through manipulating various objects and assembling different components, pupils develop fine motor skills, fostering improved control in their movements. This can be experienced through activities such as origami: the intricate folds require a harmonious coordination between the hands and eyes, leading to improved hand-eye coordination, accuracy, and precision. This newfound dexterity is useful for various other activities, including reading and writing tasks (such as tracking text).

- Literacy challenge #3: Verbal expression

Our storytelling tools use figurines and puppets to address various speech issues, including articulation problems, fluency challenges, sound processing difficulties, and lack of confidence in speaking. These tools serve as dynamic mediums for dramatising concepts and learning conversational rules. Through puppet movements, spatial and temporal terms can be taught, and actions and verb vocabulary can be demonstrated. This spontaneity helps children with delayed speech or speech difficulties feel at ease, creating a relaxed atmosphere conducive to communication. As a result, these interactions not only strengthen teacher-pupil relationships but also encourage more communication, providing a valuable platform for improving speech and language skills.

- Literacy challenge #4: Memory retention

The dynamic nature of our stories' narratives captivates pupils' attention and engages multiple senses, making it easier for them to recall and retain information. In addition to dramatic presentations, our tools, such as the Story Map, are structured to give a detailed overview of the relationships between different story elements. By understanding the story's layout, pupils with memory challenges can grasp the sequence of events and contextualize information, making it easier for them to recall facts. In addition, our Story Card tool provides repetitive exposure to essential concepts, helping reinforce memory and improve retention.

THE CHALLENGES OF ACQUIRING BASIC LITERACY SKILLS: PARTNERSHIP COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE

Basic literacy acquisition in France

When looking at the PISA and PIRLS results of the last two decades, France has **moved from a decrease to a stabilisation of its results**, yet not entirely impressive when looking at countries that share a similar socio-political context (Conceicao et al., 2023). On top of the actual obstacles, the effects of the repetitive Covid-19 lockdowns have added new challenges that have directly impacted students' motivation and learning.

Different factors have been explored to explain those results. Though the French curriculum has been revised in 2015 to create a common ground of work and teaching, the French schooling system faces **deep inequalities**. Indeed, the disparities between the location of schools and the social background of the students creates a noticeable gap in the literacy skills of pupils (OECD, 2019). The quality of teaching has been pointed out as another factor, yet since 2015 teachers need to graduate with a Master's degree in Education to enter into careers in National Education. However, it has been also revealed that to combat the lack of a competent workforce, **the quality of teacher recruitment has decreased**, which, in turn, impacts the qualifications of the new teachers hired, and accentuates territorial inequalities (Frajerman, 2023). The teaching conditions have also become more exhausting and difficult; as shown in the PISA results, **the rate of teacher satisfaction in France is one of the lowest** among the countries surveyed ("Conditions d'exercice du métier," 2016). The low income, the pupil-teacher relationship (Martin, 2023), and burn-outs resulting from disciplinary actions expressed by the students contribute to more difficult conditions for the teaching of literacy. This then impacts the relationship between the teachers and the pupils, seeing as how students expressed a lack of support and motivation from their teachers. Consequently, the school climate does not foster appropriate teaching conditions and asks for changes in the way teaching is approached.

Nonetheless, not all the schools are facing those challenges, but the difference and inequalities between the location of the school and students are a reality that has to be taken seriously. These boundaries are reflected in basic literacy skills acquisition. Besides this socio-political dimension, the fact that **literacy does not appear on the French curriculum** is also an element to take into consideration. Its vague definition in the French curriculum inevitably reinforces inequalities as it focuses on pupils who have already mastered some literacy skills and doesn't include those who are left behind (Elalouf & Péret, 2022).

All in all, there is room for improvement in the manner of introducing literacy skills in early and primary grades to dismantle the inequalities the French schooling system is facing. The Storias tools through their inclusive character can be an interesting device to adopt in the classroom in order to rethink the teaching of literacy.

Basic literacy acquisition in Belgium

Despite Belgium's compulsory education system, a significant portion of adults in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, where our project partner Logopsycom is based, faces literacy challenges. Research studies reveal that approximately **10% of adults in French-speaking Belgium struggle to complete basic reading and writing tasks** (En Belgique (Francophone), Un Adulte Sur Dix Est Analphabète, 2018; In Belgium, 1 in 10 Adults Have Difficulty Reading and Writing, 2019). This number does not even count students whose reading level is insufficient, undocumented immigrants, foreign people who do not have Belgian nationality, etc.

The composition of people with limited or no literacy skills should also be examined. Despite a wide-spread prejudice, illiterate individuals in Belgium are not made up solely of immigrants. According to a 2016 French-speaking Belgium survey, people of foreign origin represent, in total, 71% of illiterates (59% in Wallonia and 70% in Brussels)(En Belgique (Francophone), Un Adulte Sur Dix Est Analphabète, 2018).

Illiteracy affects a much wider audience and spans across younger generations, debunking the belief that illiteracy issues are contained to older individuals. According to the latest PISA statistics for reading/writing skills from 2018, a decline in performance, first observed in 2015, was confirmed: with a score of 481, the French-speaking Belgian region is **below the OECD average** (PISA 2018 : Recul En Lecture, Mieux En Mathématiques, Stable En Sciences, 2019).

Most alarmingly, **nearly 15% of children left primary education** without the Certificate of Basic Studies (CEB) in 2017 (En Belgique (Francophone), Un Adulte Sur Dix Est Analphabète, 2018).

The PISA report also shows that the literacy gap between young people of immigrant origin and young people of Belgian origin, of equivalent socio-economic origin, is relatively small and less marked than in other OECD countries. If the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is distinguished by strong social inequalities, it therefore seems that inequality specifically linked to ethnic or cultural origin is not added to it.

The root cause of these challenges can be traced back to **stark disparities prevalent in the education system**. Studies by the King Baudouin Foundation and UNESCO emphasise the impact of socio-economic factors on educational outcomes, not specifically linked to ethnic/cultural origin, leading to pronounced inequalities in accessing quality education (Goffinet & Van Damme, 1990).

Furthermore, it seems as if the benchmark for navigating society with limited literacy has increased in Belgium with the proliferation of reading materials and the complexity of writings, as now m**any administrative procedures require a higher level of reading skills**. Relatedly, literacy requirements are ingrained in the acquisition of certain rights: policies and regulations, such as the new Belgian Nationality Code, condition **access to citizenship on mastery of reading and writing skills** (Pinchart, 2016).

Basic literacy acquisition in Italy

School is, first and foremost, a place of meeting, confrontation and growth, and where it is taken for granted that children learn to read and write. However, not all children have the same abilities or possibilities, because beyond learning difficulties, there are situations such as **social and cultural poverty** that can affect and delay learning for these children. Being able to express yourself appropriately or understand what you have read are skills to which teachers and family should devote their care and attention, since it is from the acquisition of this kind of knowledge that we derive our ability to communicate and interact with others.

Therefore, it becomes crucial to enhance literacy skills from the earliest levels of education. Italy's national literacy level, according to Iea-Pirls data, ranked higher than that of other major EU countries in 2021. However, it was also found that in Italy, as in other countries, **the pandemic has led to a deterioration in literacy skills among children**.

In addition, analysing internal data (test INVALSI, Progress in international reading literacy study – Pirls) reveals **a large North-South gap**, as well as the fact that **one in four students have low levels of proficiency in reading and comprehension**. The tests were targeted at children in the 9-year-old range because that is the age when they should have already acquired the ability to read and comprehend and, therefore, use these skills for learning. It is precisely in the "main" subject, Italian, and specifically in written and spoken language, that the greatest difficulties are shown (**only 20 % achieve high average scores in the North, while in the South over 40 % achieve low average scores**). These data can be alarming because they point to basic requisites that allow us to assess the health of a community and the future that awaits it through its young people, who have shown to be vulnerable. The improvement of literacy skills is an unavoidable and fundamental priority for all in order to attain access to the labour market that is becoming increasingly competitive and where the level of competence is continually raising.

The establishment of an **International Literacy Day** (September 8) is important but not sufficient, as it is only through adequate and high literacy from the earliest years of education that situations of civil poverty and social exclusion can be eradicated. And this is in line with Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (signed in September 2015 by the governments of the 193 member countries of the UN) which proclaims that we all must "Provide quality, equitable and inclusive education and learning opportunities for all."

Basic literacy acquisition in Greece

Acquiring basic literacy skills is a difficult task worldwide and when the available teaching materials (i.e., books) and teaching methods do not closely coincide with the ones proposed by the principles of literacy pedagogy, then this acquisition can become more challenging. In Greece's educational system, prior to the implementation of the 2003 and 2006 material, several Greek studies and research projects demonstrated that the majority of students displayed medium or low written discourse achievement, while their success depended on their social background (Fterniati, 2012). These results were attributed to the nature of the teaching material, which was based on the structural approach in language teaching and relevant teaching practices, as well as to a lack of adequate educator training (Fterniati, 2012).

In Greece, the 2003 National Curriculum for the Greek language in the Elementary School (FEK 2003) and the 2006 school textbooks and teacher manuals for the language arts class

(Ministry of Education 2006), that are still used in Greek schools till today (2023), brought teaching material for a better basic skills' acquisition and a new teaching approach that aims to help students realise each genre's different structure and choose the appropriate linguistic means to produce specific texts (Fterniati, 2012).

In the context of the basic skills and the principles of the literacy pedagogy, the "new" books of 2006 promote literacy's goals such as the development of communicative skills, the systematic teaching of text comprehension and production and the teaching of multiliteracies (Fterniati & Manolopoulou, 2019).

Despite the new curriculum (2003) and the new books (2006), that were written according the principles of literacy, and also despite the fact that the National Course Curriculum for Language Arts in the Greek Primary School calls for an approach to language teaching centred on communication and communicative-textual competence (CTC) (Fterniati & Spintourakis, 2004), the results of some studies appear to indicate that the type of instruction provided in Greek schools has not produced the expected results (Fterniati & Spintourakis, 2006). According to the researchers, the possible reason children lack fully developed literacy skills may result from a mismatch between stated expectations (curriculum policy) and the manner it is produced in materials and teaching practices. Moreover, some other Greek studies have noted the absence of language instruction methods focused on a textual competence and that contemporary language teaching practice in Greek schools still promotes a sentence-based view of language, which is far from the pedagogy of literacy (e.g. Kostouli, 2000; Papoulia-Tzelepi, 2000; Papoulia & Spinthourakis, 2000).

Furthermore, current practices appear to retain the knowledge-telling model with a focus on the product and corrections based only on linguistic elements; such teaching lacks interactive opportunities and is virtually devoid of communicative discourse dimensions (Fterniati & Spinthourakis, 2006).

As the researchers mention, even though teachers satisfy the surface requirements of language arts, it appears that specific language teaching methods focused on a textually communicative mode are either not well known or continue to maintain a theoretical and non-practical status, despite the many discussions on the subject in Greece.

To sum up, putting the scientific data together with our teaching experience and observations, despite having a curriculum and books that follow, to a certain extent, the principles of literacy pedagogy (but do not propose interesting teaching materials and methods for literacy skills enhancement), Greek teachers face great difficulties in teaching and helping students develop their basic literacy skills.

Their methods and practises are either "old-fashioned" or simply are not adequate to help all students, especially those with learning or general difficulties, as teachers do not have formal (i.e., one that is administered by the Greek Ministry of Education) training on innovative and attractive teaching methods for enhancing literacy skills, one that could grab students' interest and thus lead them to truly and effectively engage in literacy tasks. Last but not least, Greek students' and teachers' books lack well-structured exercises for oral literacy tasks (e.g. oral genre production: narration, description, argumentation), which are necessary before moving on to written literacy tasks.

Basic literacy acquisition in Poland

Acquiring basic literacy skills can pose various challenges, and the situation in Poland may reflect some common issues faced by learners worldwide. Here are some challenges in the acquisition of basic literacy skills and insights into the situation in Poland. These challenges often affect the learning process and can impact the overall educational development of students.

First one to consider is the **access to education**. In certain regions or among marginalised communities, access to quality education and resources can be limited. In Poland, despite a generally well-developed education system, there might be disparities in the availability of education, especially in rural or economically disadvantaged areas.

The second factor is related to the **quality of teaching**: the effectiveness of teaching methods and the quality of educators greatly influence literacy acquisition. Outdated teaching techniques, insufficient teacher training, or a lack of innovative approaches might hinder the learning process. Very often lessons that are too unengaging might deter pupils in their acquisition of literacy. In some cases, traditional teaching methods might not cater to the needs of all students. There might be a lack of innovative teaching techniques or resources that engage and support various learning styles.

The third factor worth mentioning is **language complexity**. Polish is a complex language with its own set of grammar rules, spelling, and phonetics. Mastering these intricacies can be challenging for young learners. In addition, **language barriers** may also appear. Among non-native speakers or communities with diverse linguistic backgrounds, acquiring literacy in the official language can be a considerable challenge. In Poland, this might apply to immigrant communities or minority groups whose first language differs from Polish.

In the case of students, the next challenge in literacy acquisition is related to having a **learning disability**. Students with learning disabilities or special needs may face challenges in acquiring basic literacy skills. Identifying these needs early and providing appropriate support is crucial for their educational progress. Moreover, **socioeconomic factors**, socioeconomic conditions, such as poverty or lack of resources at home, can impact a student's ability to focus on learning. This is particularly relevant in Poland for families facing economic hardships. Another related factor that is becoming more prevalent is a **technological divide**. In today's digital age, the lack of access to technology or digital resources can hinder literacy development, especially considering the growing importance of digital literacy alongside traditional literacy skills.

Last but not least, **cultural and social stigmas** impact literacy attainment. Societal attitudes towards education, particularly in certain communities, might pose obstacles for the acquisition of basic literacy skills. This could include factors like gender biases or cultural norms that devalue education, which might impact the willingness to pursue literacy skills.

In Poland, efforts are made to address these challenges. The education system has undergone reforms aimed at improving early childhood education, providing additional support for students with learning disabilities, and integrating modern teaching methods into the curriculum. Special programs and resources are often allocated to schools in disadvantaged areas to support pupils' literacy development. There are programs aimed at promoting literacy, including additional resources for disadvantaged groups and non-native speakers. Government initiatives, along with support from non-profit organisations and community efforts, aim to bridge these gaps and enhance basic literacy acquisition.

However, **continuous improvement in teaching methodologies, additional resources, and more tailored support for students**, especially those facing socioeconomic or language-related challenges, remains crucial in fostering successful basic literacy acquisition among pupils in Poland.

Basic literacy acquisition in Romania

As far as the evolution of the literacy rate in Romania is concerned, we can say that the literacy of the population has been a long process. The latest available data are from 2016 and show that over 98% of Romanians can read and write.

Beyond the figures, however, there is also the notion of "**functional illiteracy**" which refers to people who can read but do not understand what they have read. More specifically, a person can reproduce a text verbally or in writing but does not understand it well enough to use it as a resource for success or performance. The graphic signs are recognised, but the content of ideas is only possibly understood at a very superficial level. In contrast, there is also the notion of **absolute illiteracy**.

According to the definition given by UNESCO in 1958, an illiterate person is someone who has never learned to read and write. Functionally illiterate people are people who have attended school and have either obtained a diploma corresponding to a level of education or have left school before obtaining a diploma (dropout), but in both cases lack sufficient basic skills.

There are two current challenges in Romania. The first challenge is that **socio-economic status in Romania directly predicts literacy development**. This socio-economic status has an indirect effect and is mediated by cognition and language, which means that there are discrepancies between children when they arrive at school in terms of cognitive and language skills, but when they are educated effectively, these discrepancies can be reduced. It means that there are mechanisms related to socio-economic status that influence literacy development. For example: a second grader gets a textbook for free from the state that has about 20 texts, but if the child needs aids, books, extra reading, and if they sometimes need tutoring, all of this automatically comes with an added cost.

The second literacy-related challenge that persists in Romania is that **children are taught as if they were a homogeneous group**. Most classes are taught in a one-size-fits all manner, which is advantageous for certain fields of literacy learning (such as spelling, which is fairly transparent and can be decoded automatically more easily); however, other fields would fare better from a **blended learning approach** that could be facilitated by digitisation. This would allow teachers to focus on smaller groups according to their specific literacy needs.

2

TRYING OUT THE STORIAS APPROACH: Testimonials from teachers & pupils

CONTEXT OF TESTING

As mentioned, the Erasmus+ project STORIAS aims to develop the basic literacy skills of pupils aged 5-10 by creating multisensory storytelling experiences, in order for children to improve reading and writing through visual, kinaesthetic and auditory practices.

TESTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The objective of testing these resources has been to examine whether our target group (teachers and pupils) can consider them a useful addition to classes focused on literacy (storytelling, writing, reading, grammar, etc.). Relatedly, we believe that testing our resources is important for several reasons:

1. **Real-world application**: Teachers and their pupils provide a real-world context for testing a project, in order for us, as project coordinators and managers, to observe how our methods and materials are implemented in an actual educational setting.
This ensures that they are practical, feasible, and effective for our target group.

2. **Feedback from our target group**: Teachers, pupils, and other stakeholders can provide valuable feedback about the project's content, methods, and impact. We have used their insights to examine whether pupil interest and engagement was sustained and whether the project can have impacts on educational outcomes.

3. **Adaptability and scalability**: Schools are diverse environments with pupils of varying abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. Testing in schools allows us to assess the adaptability of our materials, with the ultimate aim to cater to a wide range of learners, especially those with Specific Leaning Disorders (SLD).

4. **Identify challenges and highlight strengths**: Testing in schools helps identify the strengths of our approach, as well as challenges that might arise during the use of our resources, such as material constraints, time limitations, or lack of curriculum relevance.

5. **Development of competences**: Implementing the project in schools provides an opportunity for teachers to enhance their teaching methods by applying a multisensory and participatory technique to literacy exercises.

In addition, the professional skills of those involved with executing the project are targeted thanks to continuous partnership knowledge exchange and creation of pedagogical materials.

TESTING METHODOLOGY:

Timeline – the testing of our project has been carried out in two phases, between October 2022 to January of 2023 ('pilot' testing phase) and between October 2023 to January 2024 (second testing phase).

Location – the testing took place in formal and non-formal settings with primary school teachers and pupils in the countries of the partnership: France, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Poland and Romania.

Materials tested – both testing phases assessed three project Results: Storiaskits, Participatory Stories and the Pedagogical Guide.

- The first phase tested 3 Storiaskits (Story box, Shadow play, Silent book theatre) and 3 Participatory Stories (either Enriching and/or Co-Creation type), corresponding to the 3 stories related to European myths/legends/tales introduced to the children: Manneken Pis (5-6 years old), The Fern Flower (7-8 years old) and Orpheus and Eurydice (9-10 years old)

- The second phase tested 9 Storiaskits (including Kamishibai, Story map, Story cards, Myriorama, and Origami), 9 Participatory Stories (either Enriching or Co-Creation type), corresponding to 9 new stories related to European myths/legends/tales and grouped according to age group:

  · 5-6 years old: Karl Katz, The Disappearance of the Sun and the Moon, For a Little Bit of Spilt Milk
  · 7-8 years old: Cupid and Psyche, The Labyrinth, The Strongest Wizard
  · 9-10 years old: Icarus – the boy who flew too close to the sun, The Prince and the Bald Man, The Holy Grail

In addition, each partner also created 2 more Storiaskits and 2 more participatory Stories for the tests, corresponding to the 12 stories linked to the national heroes of the 6 partnership countries (2 per country):

- France: Olympe de Gouges and Simone de Beauvoir
- Belgium: Hergé and Jacques Brel
- Italy: Eleanor of Toledo and Margherita Hack
- Greece: Konstantinos Kanaris and Kallipateira
- Poland: Marie Curie and Nicolaus Copernicu
- Romania: Stephen the Great and Henri Coandã

This equates to Storiaskits and Participatory Stories prepared for testing for the second phase of the project testing.

- Both testing phases also included the testing of the Pedagogical Guide, intended solely for teachers and other education stakeholders to read before testing the Storiaskits and Participatory Stories, in order to gain a better understanding of the project and its resources.
- Overall, the two phases tested 12 stories related to myths/legends/tales and 12 stories related to national heroes (24 stories in total).

Test participants – The participants of our two testing phases consisted of primary school teachers and pupils. Considering the diversity of our partnership, consisting of 3 expert organisations and 3 schools, the expert partners tested the materials externally (collaborating with teachers in their networks) and the schools tested the materials internally (in their classrooms with the pupils attending their establishments). Before beginning testing, we established additional criteria: involving at least 35 local teachers and 400 pupils, with 50 of those pupils facing learning obstacles, whether geographic, socioeconomic or related to learning difficulties[1].

- For the first testing phase, our data shows that the materials were tested with: 20 teachers, 313 pupils, with 24 of them experiencing learning disorders or geographical obstacles.
- For the second testing phase, our data shows that the materials were tested with: 20 teachers, 368 pupils, with 41 of them experiencing learning disorders or geographical obstacles.

In total, our testing phases included: 40 teachers and 681 pupils (with 65 youngsters experiencing learning obstacles)

[1] As discussed earlier in the guide, this project proritised creating resources that would ensure the full participation of pupils that experience challenges with literacy activities (reading and writing in particular) such as those with dyslexia.

TESTING TOOLS:

In order to assess the effectiveness of our project method, we used a Googleforms questionnaire for teachers (1st and 2nd testing phase) and a printed-out survey for pupils (2nd questionnaire) to evaluate our test participants.

The questions on both questionnaires sought to assess the clarity of the instructional sheets, the duration of all proposed activities, the usefulness of the Storiaskits and Participatory stories for improving literacy, their level of engagement for pupils, and other criteria.

TESTING PROCESS AND AFTERMATH:

To prepare for testing, all subjects freely gave consent to participate in the testing phase, potentially have their experience photographed and/or to record the pupils reading their storytelling creations. In addition, testing participants were instructed to follow the 3 phases of the STORIAS approach for conducting testing of the Storiaskits, Participatory Stories and Pedagogical Guide (more information on this approach can be found in section 1.1 of this Guide). All tests were monitored by a member of each project organisation, to facilitate the process and clarify issues, if they were to arise.

Following testing, participants answered questions from the aforementioned questionnaires. Their responses provided valuable feedback which the partnership applied to enrich and/or modify aspects of the project materials.
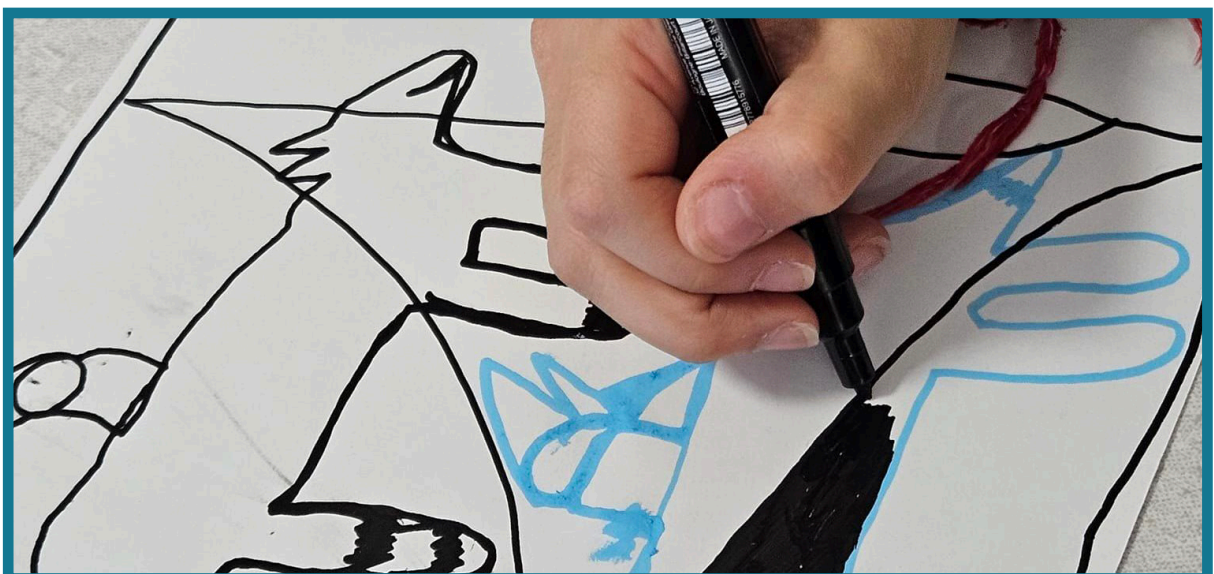
HOW DID WE PREPARE TEACHERS FOR THE TESTING AND USE OF OUR MATERIALS?

When implementing the Storias method within the classroom, we believe that its efficiency lies in the ability of the teachers to understand its philosophy and to be aware of all the possibilities it encompasses. Therefore, before using the different Storias tools with the pupils, we deem that a **prior familiarisation with the content is essential**. To meet this need, we have developed three types of resources aiming to prepare teachers for the application of our tools in their classroom. It started with the **writing of a pedagogical guide and technical sheets, and we then added an infographic that summarises the different steps of the Storias approach** in order to provide additional visual support. The Storias project represents an inclusive, innovative and alternative teaching of literacy. We believe additional training materials such as the ones mentioned are, therefore, necessary for teachers to more easily adapt their practices and confidently use new tools.

Additionally, the project adopts an inclusive stance by promoting resources that are designed to be **SLD – friendly**. The Storias approach intends to take into account the barriers encountered in traditional schooling to present alternative solutions on how to adapt the teaching of literacy.

In this sense, **the pedagogical guide represents the first encounter to the Storias tools and method**. It aims to accompany the teachers in the implementation of the resources while providing a pedagogical and theoretical framework. Based on academic research and best practices, this guide is designed as a theoretical support that presents reflections, studies and the potentials of alternative teachings of literacy through art and storytelling tools. This background also serves to anchor the project in academic findings and to develop a method that can rely on pedagogical and reliable foundations. Consequently, we needed this guide to be tested by teachers to obtain insight and empirical viewpoints for our research. The testing also served to observe if the guide was an effective tool to prepare teachers for the testing of our materials.

The feedbacks themselves were very positive and encouraging: the clarity and the quality of the information provided were remarked on positively, and could aid in the implementation of alternative forms of teaching literacy.

In addition to these resources, pedagogical professionals can find other informative types of resources on our website, namely the technical sheets. **Each storytelling tool comes with a technical sheet** that provides the reader with an explanation on its origins, its functioning and an illustrated step-by-step section on how to construct it. These technical sheets have been created as another tools for teacher support.

Indeed, **each tool also describes the benefits it can have for pupils with SLDs**, and also for those for whom traditional teaching methods are not relevant.
The objective of these additional resources is to provide teachers with a document that encompasses both theory and technical information.
The length of each sheet (4 to 8 pages) enables quick reading just before the activity to ensure the best use of the tools.

In addition, these sheets also enable teachers to **consider and construct their own storytelling tools**. We have also accounted for accessibility by ensuring that each sheet describes how these tools can be built with little material and budget.

Consequently, these pedagogical and theoretical tools are the perfect way to be introduced to the Storias method before starting to work with the Storiaskits and Participatory Stories. In case of doubts, the teachers can always refer to the infographics and technical sheets which offer direct and succinct information.

After having read the entire guide and built their own storytelling tool, we advise teachers to try their hand with the Storiaskits and Participatory Stories, to let their creativity flow and test out **the practical application of Storias tools** in various contexts.

TESTING THE STORIASKITS IN CLASS

How did pupils react to the narrative & writing tools during the storytelling activities?

This section centers on pupils' interactions with the narrative and writing tools within the Storiaskits during storytelling activities in the varied environments in the partnership countries.

1st TESTING PHASE

In the first creation phase, the Storias project produced twelve short stories divided by age group according to the topic and difficulty of the text. Each story in addition to the written text was accompanied by a narrative tool designed to facilitate children's comprehension. Each StoriasKit has specific peculiarities and partially different uses, so it was interesting to be able to test them in very different situations, countries and environments.

The fact that all the tools play on the visual aspect and a narrative made through the illustrations and pictures contributed to the almost total success. The teachers, and especially the children in the various countries, emphasized how engaging the hours spent in these activities were. In designing these tools, the primary goal in fact was to create a medium that would make it easier and more immediate for the children to both understand the text and tell the story on their part.

The test was divided into two complementary parts:

1. A series of activities from each Activity Book incorporating playful drawing and writing "exercises" designed to develop the fine motor skills of children with SLDa but welcomed by all as a time for discovery and play. For instance, the task of drawing without taking their hand off the page was very successful among the children who created increasingly complex drawings and words with each new attempt. This activity has the potential to improve the motor skills needed for writing of children with dysgraphic difficulties. Even if it was deemed too simple a task for

the pupils in the 9-10 age group, it could be incorporated in storytelling activities as a "relaxing" task to do between lessons for pupils with SLDs in the same age group.

2. The second part, on the other hand, focused on storytelling with the narrative and writing tools. Children responded according to their age group and the inherent difficulty of the narrative tool. For example: the SILENT BOOK THEATRE tool is more complex than the KAMISHIBAI or the SHADOW THEATRE tool. In fact, the KAMISHIBAI required that children pay attention mainly to the story being told to them that they would then need to repeat, while the use of SILENT BOOK THEATRE required them to first participate in the construction of the tool.

Overall, the time the teachers devoted to the test was considered well-spent by pupils as it allowed them to better understand the stories by placing themselves within the context of a game. The activities also shone a new light on traditional storytelling tasks that children would often find too boring or difficult to understand. These factors resulted in the pupils leaving aside their hesitancy and shyness almost immediately.

With the use and repetition of the activities, children reported overcoming some of their fears and shyness, improving their storytelling skills, learning new vocabulary, but most of all improving their listening skills, their ability to speak and communicate. Many of our StoriasKits are graphical representation of stories (illustrations, silhouettes, object constructions, etc.), so the visual aids were able to immediately serve as reminders for the stories' events, positively impacting memory retention.

Country-specific reactions:

- **Greece**: The use of the SILENT BOOK THEATRE tool enabled children to approach reading and storytelling as active participants, getting them excited, and also improving collaboration among themselves.

- **Italy**: The Italian children participated with joy and even repurposed the method it in other educational activities. The children felt free to express themselves and the group activities strengthened collaboration and listening skills. In one class with numerous cases of learning difficulties everyone was able to participate, due to the children working in groups and because the use of oral storytelling as an alternative to reading enabled different cognitive mechanisms to be activated.
The children, imitating their teacher's role as storyteller, learned to modulate their voices, use appropriate gestures, develop real emotional skills by learning to manage their emotions, and practice empathy towards their peers.

- **Poland**: Using the SHADOW THEATER in Poland saw the children particularly engaged not only in telling their own version of the story but also in listening intently to the other groups. Even the shyer children took part and threw themselves confidently into the activity.

- **Belgium, France and Romania**: In these countries, children displayed a strong connection to the storytelling tools, as they enabled them to delve deeper into stories, improving their interpretive skills and teamwork. While there were difficulties in some cases, for example in the implementation of the SILENT BOOK THEATRE, in general children reported feeling involved and passionate about the stories and the tools.
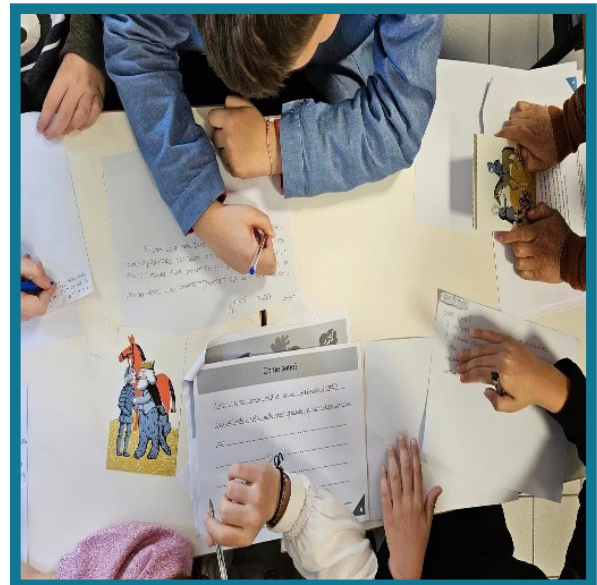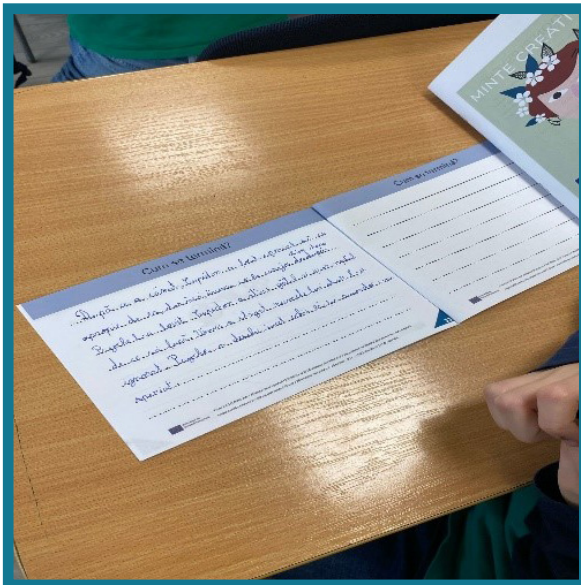
2nd TESTING PHASE

With the start of the second phase of the project, new narrative tools and twelve new stories (biographies of historical and famous figures chosen by the respective partner countries) were added to complete the testing methodology; combining and reinforcing theory with practice. These new stories provided the opportunity to demonstrate how the subject of History (but potentially other subjects as well) can be narrated and presented to children in a different way, not only allowing for cultural enrichment but also turning traditional lectures into an interactive and participatory experience.

The new additions are considered even more significant in light of the fact that they proved especially important for pupils with special educational needs. Therefore, the diverse possibilities of the new tools and stories highlighted how pupils, given the freedom to

unleash their creativity from an emotional, intellectual, and motivational standpoint, reported an improvement in their oral skills, self-awareness, and self-confidence.

The tools that schools had the opportunity to experiment with and test in this second phase have highlighted the ability of the Storiaskits to stimulate the critical thinking and processing skills of children. Another fundamental aspect of the project highlighted by these recent tests is the group work that has stimulated discussion, mutual listening, and, above all, the willingness to express curiosity by accepting others' ideas.

The results of the tests have demonstrated how, starting from a common foundation, it is possible for pupils to create something original and even unique as storytellers.

Country-specific reactions:

- **Greece**: The Greek pupils used MYRIORAMA to endlessly modify the basic narrative, but also to draw their own images and scenes to continue modifying the story, demonstrating how the tool has found additional use given its flexibility and adaptability.

- **Romania**: In Romania, where the school program is quite rigid, the new tools have proven highly effective in engaging children of various age groups, meeting quality criteria.

- **Italy, France, Poland**: Italian, French, and Polish teachers highlight how the approach induced by Storias has encouraged exploration and, consequently, the discovery of new knowledge by children. This has allowed them to develop original solutions and navigate paths independently for their full and healthy personality development.

How do teachers assess the usefulness of the Storiaskits for teaching and learning literacy skills?

In this section, we present teachers' assessment regarding the usefulness of the STORIASKITS for teaching and learning literacy skills following up two test phases that were conducted by the countries/partners of the STORIAS project.

1st TESTING PHASE

Teachers found the STORIASKIT materials appropriate for the pupils' literacy level, very engaging for the pupils, useful to improve literacy, and quite easy to prepare as a classroom activity. It was a common belief that the usefulness of the material lies in its ability to encourage pupils to express themselves whereas at the same time it provides a framework that supports them in the process thus acting as a facilitator of the learning process.

- The teachers of the 5-7 age target group think that the whole process was enjoyable and new, and helped pupils improve their fine motor skills and have fun. The story of Manneken Pis seemed particularly interesting to them and motivating to improve their storyelling skills.

- The teachers of the 8-9 age target group feel that their students enjoyed the whole process. They liked the stories, showed interest and felt willing to discuss its moral dilemma.

- The teachers of the 10-11 age target group commented on the motivational effect that the STORIASKITS had on their students. They were deeply involved in the process, felt willing to participate, learn the story, create the characters, become actors of the story and compose their own version of the story. Even pupils who do not usually show an interest in literature subjects really enjoyed the project and participated actively.

In addition, it was stated that the pupils particularly enjoyed the creation of the STORY BOX tool and the characters of the story as well as the activities that involved drawing on the paper without removing their hand from it. Teachers also commented on their pupils' engagement in the activities involving puppets and shadow storytelling and all activities that involved the recreation of the characters and places of the story.

All things considered the STORIASKITS were rated as very useful tools, engaging children with hands-on activities in which they can cooperate, think creatively and experience a learning process that differs far from traditional teaching structures.

THE STORY	AGE GROUP	STORIASKITS
Manneken Pis	5-6 years	Storybox
Karl Katz	5-6 years	Origami
The Disappearance of the sun and the moon	5-6 years	Kamishibai
For a little bit of split milk	5-6 years	Shadow Theatre
Margherita Hack	5-6 years	Myriorama
The Fern Flower	7-8 years	Shadow Theatre
Eleonor	7-8 years	Story Map
Cupid and Psyche	7-8 years	Story Cards
The Labyrinth	7-8 years	Myriorama
Orpheus and Eurydice	9-10 years	Silent Book Theatre
The Prince and the Bald Man	9-10 years	Myriorama
Icarus the boy who flew too close to the sun	9-10 years	Story Cards
The Quest for the Holy Grail	9-10 years	Story Map

2nd TESTING PHASE

The teachers of the 5-6 age target group stated that: the Storiaskits materials were appropriate for their pupils' literacy level, engaging, useful for literacy improvement, and easy to prepare; creativity was freely expressed, with pupils finding ORIGAMI to be a particularly fun and engaging activity, and the STORY MAP was reported as successful in captivating pupils with a story's chronological events. Teachers praised the variety of interesting and engaging activities that stimulated creativity, motivation, and collaboration among the children. The adaptability of the activities allowed each pupil to engage according to their aptitudes and experiment with new learning methods applicable in various contexts.

The teachers of the 7-8 age target group stated that: the material created was successful in motivating pupils, and on the other hand, helped them to produce speech, both oral and written, which was their main goal; the pupils managed to improve their fine motor skills and create alternative story ends by using and shuffling the STORY CARDS; and the STORY MAP was effective in facilitating storytelling. Overall, the teachers' belief was that the project's contribution to the inclusion and active participation of pupils with learning disorders and attention deficit disorder was significant. In conclusion, the pupils were motivated to work collaboratively and they felt comfortable in expressing and challenging themselves.

The teachers of the 9-10 age group stated that: the Storiaskit materials were found to be highly appropriate for the pupils' literacy level, engaging, useful for literacy improvement, and easy to integrate into classroom activities; and that pupils were able to explore their individual strengths and preferences, experimenting with innovative learning methods that could potentially be applied in diverse educational contexts. Overall, the tested materials demonstrated their effectiveness in enhancing literacy skills, fostering a positive learning environment, and encouraging a multifaceted approach to education.

OVERALL IMPACT FROM THE STORIASKITS, AS OBSERVED IN TESTS

Engagement and literacy improvement:

- The material successfully captivates children's attention by fostering an emotional connection with the learning material, facilitating the introduction and reinforcement of literacy concepts.
- The tools enhance language acquisition and promote a love for reading, as pupils absorb language patterns and explore grammar and syntax independently, promoting lifelong literacy habits.

Sociability and collaboration:

- The STORIASKITS enhance sociability, sharing, collaboration, and cooperation among pupils.
- The tools encourage an inclusive educational environment that values each pupil's individuality and uniqueness.

Active and creative learning process:

- Positions children at the center of the learning experience, shifting the educational focus from mere content transmission to encouraging active participation and making them protagonists of their own learning.
- Allows for a learning environment where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process, not something to fear.

Critical thinking and cultural understanding:

- Encourages pupils to apply analysis, make predictions, draw inferences, and evaluate information, enriching their academic and real-world problem-solving abilities.
- Provides stories and narrative techniques from diverse cultures, fostering empathy and understanding among learners, thus enhancing cultural awareness.

TESTING THE PARTICIPATORY STORIES IN CLASS

How do pupils react to the interactive and participatory approach to writing their own stories?

This section centers on pupils' experiences and responses to the interactive and participatory approach of writing their own stories within the Participatory Stories in the countries of the partnership.

1st TESTING PHASE

Participatory Story materials, tailored to match the pupils' literacy levels, proved to be not only engaging but also instrumental in supporting students' improvement in literacy and the development of narrative skills within Storias project. In addition, the design of the stories prioritised greater readability, which ensured they were comprehensible and accessible to a wide array of puils.

The interactive nature of the Participatory Story materials captivated students' interest and encouraged active participation in the storytelling process.
Through clear, varied writing tasks (interactive prompts, immersive narratives, etc.) pupils were drawn into the storytelling experience, fostering a deep sense of engagement and investment in their learning journey.

Participatory Story materials served as valuable tools for supporting pupils' improvement in literacy by providing structured tasks to develop their vocabulary and grammar in different categories. Pupils could concentrate on adding character adjectives, adverbs of manner, sound words in their own versions of the pilot stories. Those open tasks guided by the given prompts helped children practice their descriptive writing skills.

Country-specific reactions:

- **Belgium**: The Stories were recognised for enhancing literacy skills through encouraging personal expression, and teachers noted pupils particularly enjoyed the creative aspect, finding joy in the process of creating something unique.

- **Italy and Greece**: For the pupils in these countries, the dramatisation of characters stood out as a particularly enjoyable aspect, with each student finding a role within the narrative, contributing to a collective storytelling effort. Children actively used facial expressions and body language, which helped them understand and relate to the characters more profoundly.

- **Poland**: For younger pupils (ages 5-6), oral storytelling was favoured over writing, as constructing whole sentences proved challenging. The Co-creation Type stories were preferred, offering pupils the freedom to narrate endings in their own words, thereby avoiding the constraints of formal tasks.

- **Romania**: The opportunity to develop and act out their versions of the story was particularly appealing, allowing pupils to become storytellers and actors within their creative space.

2nd TESTING PHASE

For the more intensive second testing phase, one of the most notable observations among pupils from implementing the interactive and participatory approach to writing their own stories was their heightened level of engagement and enthusiasm. Unlike conventional methods where writing may feel like a solitary task, Storias encourages collaboration, peer interaction and active participation among pupils. The participatory nature of the approach empowered pupils to take ownership of their stories, imbuing them with a sense of authorship and pride in their creations.

Engaging in the writing tasks facilitated language acquisition and vocabulary expansion, as pupils explored new words and expressions within the context of their narratives. Moreover, crafting narratives required pupils to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving.

Country-specific reactions:

- **Italy**: Young pupils actively engaged in the story creation process with the "Eleonor" Participatory Story, with some expressing a desire for more time, indicating deep involvement to the writing tasks. Their connection to the characters was also strong, showcasing a variety of emotional responses and creativity. Older pupils also voiced a unanimous enjoyment and participation to the stories of "The prince and the bald man" and "Icarus, the boy who flew too close to the sun", suggesting a well-received balance in storytelling challenges and themes.

- **Greece**: The participatory storytelling materials were highly rated for aligning with pupils' literacy levels and engaging them effectively. As with the first testing, the dramatisation aspect was particularly favoured, enhancing pupils' ability to express themselves and empathise with characters.

- **Poland**: Stories such as "Karl Katz" and "Labyrinth" demonstrated that while younger pupils (5-6 years) found writing challenging, they thrived in oral storytelling and role division, pointing to a preference for less structured, co-creative story forms. The overall response highlighted the participatory storytelling's impact on creativity, with students appreciating the freedom to craft unique narrative endings and engage in group collaboration.

- **Romania**: The approach to participatory storytelling significantly empowered students, giving them the autonomy to craft and alter narratives. The process encouraged a vibrant exchange of ideas, with pupils proposing alternative storylines, showcasing a strong engagement with creative thinking among the children.

How do teachers assess the usefulness of the PARTICIPATORY STORIES for teaching and learning literacy skills?

In this section, we present teachers' assessment regarding the usefulness of the PARTICIPATORY STORIES for teaching and learning literacy skills following up two test phases that were conducted by the countries/partners of the STORIAS project.

1st and 2nd TESTING PHASES

Teachers have found the CO-CREATION and ENRICHING types of Participatory Stories to be significantly beneficial for all pupils, particularly aiding those with learning difficulties. They observed that the CO-CREATION type effectively simplifies story elements, enhancing pupils' understanding, creativity, and self-direction. Conversely, the ENRICHING type was noted for fostering improved communication, empathy, inventiveness, and notably expanding children's vocabulary.

Feedback on the Participatory Stories highlighted their role in stimulating imagination and interactivity among pupils. Teachers reported increased usage and activation of vocabulary, with the stories prompting pupils to employ words infrequently used in everyday contexts. The adaptability of story endings encouraged creativity and helped pupils make literary connections, further enriching their learning experience. However, some stories were noted to contain complex themes or vocabulary that required additional explanation, indicating a need for age-appropriate content.

Teachers unanimously agreed that Participatory Stories aided in vocabulary development and motivated pupils to explore similar literary genres. Although there was enthusiasm for the stories, some teachers noted that younger students required support in reading and comprehending longer, more complex texts. Despite these challenges, the desire to uncover character experiences drove children's engagement and ambition.

The overall teacher feedback was profoundly positive, emphasising the educational value of the Participatory Stories. Teachers appreciated the structured guidance provided, which not only enhanced pupils' learning but also contributed to their own professional development. The classroom success of these materials was evident, with teachers observing heightened pupil engagement compared to traditional stories. One noteworthy feedback highlighted a pupil's newfound interest in literature, sparked by the interactive and creative aspects of the Participatory Stories.

Country-specific reactions:

- **Belgium**: Belgian teachers emphasised the clarity brought by visual summaries outlining steps for successful implementation of Participatory Story activities. The structured and guided approach of the materials was highlighted, aiding in the clear execution of tasks with pupils.

- **Poland**: The Participatory Story materials were commended for matching pupils' literacy levels and engaging them effectively. Polish teachers highlighted the materials' role in fostering creative participation among students, especially in writing their own endings or adding dialogues.

- **Greece**: Greek educators found the materials to be well-suited to their pupils' literacy levels and notably engaging.

- **Romania**: Romanian teachers described the Participatory Stories as "innovative and fun" and conducive to children's moral development. The new storytelling approach was praised for enhancing reading and writing skills and aiding in manual dexterity.

- **Italy**: Participatory Stories were seen as appropriate and beneficial for literacy development, especially for encouraging group work and collaboration among younger students (7-8 years old).

OVERALL IMPACT FROM THE PARTICIPATORY STORIES, AS OBSERVED IN TESTS

Comprehensive literacy development:

- By offering a diverse range of tasks and narrative elements, Participatory Stories facilitate literacy development, from expanding vocabulary and mastering grammar to enhancing sentence structure and storytelling elements.
- Children are empowered to "rewrite" stories, tailoring characters and plots to their perspectives, through co-creation or enriching activities, thereby further advancing their literacy skills with age-appropriate tasks.

Enhancement of collaboration and creativity:

- Participatory Stories significantly bolster creativity, and collaborative skills among pupils, offering structured yet flexible storytelling frameworks.
- The initiative has been instrumental in fostering an environment ripe for personal expression and group collaboration across varied educational settings.

Curriculum integration and pupil development:

- The integration of Participatory Stories into the literacy curriculum enriches pupils' learning experiences by providing a framework for literacy development that is adaptive to each student's unique needs.
- Active engagement with these materials leads to improved literacy skills, heightened confidence in storytelling, and lays a foundation for ongoing success in literacy education.

Inclusivity and accessibility:

- The stories are designed to be inclusive, enabling full participation from all children, including those with learning disabilities, in storytelling activities.
- The method of "participatory storytelling" introduces a dynamic, student-centered storytelling experience, encouraging children to actively shape the narrative, thereby becoming active participants rather than passive listeners.

3

GOING BEYOND

ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR PROJECT APPROACH AND METHOD

The French partner, Les Apprimeurs, will continue to, and has already started, to work on a series of workshops based on the Storias method. Given the partner's expertise in children's publishing, Les Apprimeurs aims to target the creation of leporellos as a means to encourage active participation, creativity and storytelling in class. The leporello support had been tested during a workshop about Olympe de Gouges. The pupils collaborated to reassemble pieces of her life to create a giant leporello. The activity was a success and enabled to address in a playful way important values and historical events. Consequently, the French partner is very keen to keep exploring the potential of the Storias tools through role playing workshops on emotions, moral and values. This format could be transposed to other national tales and contribute to the valorisation of heritage, as one teacher from Tchad has been desired to implement in her classroom.

In addition, Les Apprimeurs is interested in developing the various possibilities that the Activity books offer, in particular to work about mythology and children's imagination. Using their editorial skills, they seek to disseminate and widen this type of learning support in classrooms, especially in classes where children have less access to reading.
Finally, Les Apprimeurs are also interested in involving their network of public libraries to collaborate on a story time in French sign language. The idea arose with the kamishibai, which is a precious support to reinvent and retell stories in a more inclusive way. In this sense, it bridges storytelling with another form of expression while advocating for the democratisation of sign language for all children targeting the symbolic period of story time.

The Belgian partner, Logopsycom, will remain dedicated to ensuring the project's long-term impact and sustainability of its innovative approaches to literacy and inclusion. Central to this commitment is the continued exploitation and dissemination of the Storiaskits and Participatory Stories.

To do this, Logopsycom, leveraging its extensive expertise in educational innovation and support for individuals with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD), will continue to host and develop workshops centered on the STORIAS project's methodologies. These workshops will target educators, professionals, and parents, equipping them with the skills and resources to implement our storytelling techniques effectively within diverse learning environments. By fostering an understanding of the project's core principles, we aim to perpetuate the pedagogical impact beyond the life of the funding.

Furthermore, our collaboration with associated partners — schools, educational organisations, and institutions across Belgium and Europe — serves as a pivotal channel for the sustained use of STORIAS materials. By integrating these resources into their curricula and programs, our partners will help ensure that the project's innovative approaches to literacy continue to reach and benefit a broad spectrum of learners, particularly those with learning difficulties.

Logopsycom also recognises the importance of networking and collaboration in the sustainability of educational initiatives. Therefore, we will continue to strengthen and expand our educational networks, sharing valuable resources and best practices derived from the STORIAS project. Through ongoing dialogues, partnerships, and community engagement, we aim to build on our ecosystem that supports the continuous exchange of knowledge and resources.

Through targeted workshops, partner collaboration, and active participation in educational networks, we aim to ensure that the valuable methodologies developed through STORIAS remain influential and accessible, thereby supporting our overarching mission of fostering inclusive, innovative learning environments for all.

The Italian partner, Grimm Sisters, will use the experiences and positive feedback, during the various times when the developed materials were tested, to ensure the continuity of the method. Nonetheless, a foundation has already been laid for the materials to continue to be used and implemented.

In fact, especially after workshops with the StoriasKits in Italy, many teachers have seen how the children have benefited and enjoyed them and have already contacted the partner for other teachers to be involved. The intention is to promote the method not only in schools but also all centers of culture and aggregation such as municipal and public libraries, with which a network and feedback have been established.
The involved teachers who have experienced the method have already begun to use it in their classrooms as a way of working alongside traditional teaching.

The Greek partner, Arsakeio Primary School, will seek to ensure the sustainability of the approach and method of the "Storias" project in the following ways:

1. Utilisation of the material in our school's weekly Reading Club and Skill Workshops as well as in the context of the monthly planning of creative activities, such as in the context of reading comprehension activities, and its dissemination through posts on the main website (arsakeio.gr) and our schools' social media (Facebook / Instagram).

2. Presentation of the creation process and the positive results of using the material of Storias project in our teaching, in the context of international and national educational conferences which, depending on the type of conference, may be accompanied by an article in proceedings.

3. Presentation of the material on the annual Open Day (welcoming day for parents and children interested in getting to know our school up close).

4. Carrying out afternoon workshops at school premises or in after-school clubs as part of fun-reading activities and activities with guest authors.

5. Presentation of the material by our students in live meetings with students and teachers from other primary schools of Patras.

6. Conducting workshops either in the context of conferences or by organising teacher training workshops in our prefecture. As for the second, they could be either live or online workshops (webinars) for teachers of the Department of Primary Education of Achaia (includes 5 municipalities, 332 schools, elementary and kindergartens) where www.storias.eu will be forwarded to the participants as well as its free-to-use material, which they will be able to use in classroom.

7. Conducting small surveys with quantitative data in order to search if there are statistically significant differences in the quality of students' narrative skills among students who have used the narrative tools of Storias project and students who had prior competence in narration tasks. In case of significant differences, we shall promote and support the project not only through educational workshops and conferences but also through scientific conferences, where we shall present Storias' approach on a more scientific base and with convincing data about its outcomes, its effect and its value.

8. Presentation of the material to students of the Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work (for teachers) and the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education (for kindergarteners) of the University of Patras, not only as materials to be used during their practice (3rd and 4th year course) or in their future classrooms and during their future teaching career, but also as research materials, i.e. as materials for educational research through which we could have, apart from empirical data from teachers' experience, scientific data measured through valid research tools in order to investigate the real outcomes from using Storias' materials.

The Polish partner, MSPEI, will organise workshops designed to train and empower participating organisations, educators, and relevant stakeholders in implementing the project's methods. These workshops can focus on creating storyboxes, developing participatory stories, and utilizing the project's methodologies effectively.

MSPEI is planning to collaborate with associated partners to use and promote the project's materials. His will be done by encouraging their involvement in utilising the resources, sharing experiences, and integrating the project's approach into their own initiatives.

MSPEI will also disseminate the project website and its materials through various channels, such as online platforms, workshops, or conferences. Moreover, they will foster a community of practitioners, educators, and stakeholders interested in the project's methodologies. Dissemination will also entail establish forums, discussion groups, or online platforms where individuals can exchange ideas, share experiences, and provide ongoing support to each other.

Efforts will be made to integrate the project's approach into formal and informal educational curricula. The partner will collaborate with educational institutions to embed the methodologies into their teaching programs, ensuring sustainability and wider adoption.

Public awareness will be raised about the project's benefits and successes. Advocacy efforts can attract interest, support, and resources from governmental bodies, NGOs, or private entities to ensure the longevity of the project's impact.

By implementing these strategies, the project can transcend its initial funding phase and establish a sustainable legacy, ensuring its methodologies continue to benefit the intended audience and beyond.

The Romanian partner, EuroEd Primary school, has first piloted and presented the results of the project to the teachers and educators employed by EuroEd primary school; after carefully analyzing their feedback and incorporating it in the new versions of the results, the STORIAS project management team participated in the monthly pedagogical group meetings and professional dialogues group meetings with kindergarten/primary school teachers and asked for suggestions on how to make the STORIAS project sustainable and reachable to a larger number of educators/teachers and to do that consistently.

The plan includes:

- presentation of the project (including videos, photos, testimonials) at the monthly pedagogical group meetings that are held in Romania regularly and reach professionals involved in literacy skills acquisition for the age groups that are relevant for our project;
- a link to the STORIAS website with reference to the possibility to freely download materials will be visibly posted on the website and social media channels of EuroEd primary school and foundation;
- the results will be freely made available to the pedagogical BA and MA students for whom our teachers are mentors; our project team will disseminate to other partners from other Erasmus projects our school is involved in.
- the future development of the project focuses on providing teachers with suitable materials and training them to develop children's literacy. Thus, all project's outputs will be piloted in schools and modified to meet the needs of teachers and children.

4

CONCLUSION

Overall, The STORIAS project has been positively received, garnering appreciation from teachers and students alike. Its impact is evident in the enthusiastic response and the positive feedback received from both groups, indicating a successful implementation and meaningful engagement with the project's resources and testing phases. What STORIAS aimed to demonstrate is the importance of creative learning to stimulate pupils' writing and reading skills. The entirety of our material (the activity books, the storytelling tools and the Participatory Stories) has been designed to prioritise inclusion. This inclusive aspect not only ensures that no pupils are left behind, but it has also paved the way for autonomous and independent learning. Indeed, the collaboration and critical thinking developed with the resources placed the teachers in a position to better guide learners. The pupils, thus, could have an active participation and a greater sense of engagement. This guided learning empowered them and made them gain confidence in their abilities.

All in all, literacy skills acquisition can be promoted in an engaging way without losing its pedagogical dimension. The workshops in class demonstrated that a playful and creative learning environment could stimulate the learning of not only writing and reading competences, but also of oral and fine motor skills. In some workshops, the teachers revealed that even the shyer pupils took part in the storytelling. Most importantly, the pupils took on the role of respectful listeners towards their peers, granting them the possibility to improve their listening and speaking skills. In other words, we could say that STORIAS is not only a creative but also holistic teaching method, in which all senses are stimulated, hence the teachers' ambition to embed it into the curriculum.

The core appeal of the STORIAS method lies in its emphasis on the users—teachers, parents, and students—effectively adopting and using the tools provided. This has been achieved through the sustained efforts and initiatives of the partnership. What makes the method dynamic and so engaging is its possibility to go further and to adapt the materials to the diverse profiles and proficiency levels found in various classes. Indeed, STORIAS seeks to create and sustain a spark for learning, inviting all included to tell and retell stories in the most creative way.

5

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