

Cartoon campaign encourages green lifestyles among EU children



Still from "My Friend Boo"
(LIFE07 INF/UK/000950)

Today's children are tomorrow's consumers and so raising awareness among young people about how to live environmentally sustainable lifestyles can have beneficial future impacts in a wide variety of matters including climate action, water conservation and biodiversity protection. The introduction of LIFE's new Information and Communication component provided an opportunity for environmental education stakeholders to do just this by helping primary school children to understand how they themselves can make a difference by adopting greener ways of life.

LIFE's Information and Communication component can provide co-finance for awareness raising campaigns on environmental, nature protection or biodiversity conservation issues, as well as other topics such as forest fire prevention for example. The component is becoming increasingly popular as more and more people become aware about what is possible.

One of the first LIFE projects funded under the component was launched in 2007 with aims to increase the participation of Europe's youngest citizens in positive environmental actions. Titled [Eco-Animation](#), this project adopted a bottom-up method to rolling out its package of LIFE support. Staff on the project knew that it was essential to find the right approach for getting environmental messages across to young people and cartoons were considered to be a promising medium. A plan was thus developed to use the project's €258 000 of LIFE funds for working with children to identify the type of cartoon that would be most attractive and most effective for helping them understand what they could do to help look after their planet.

Outcomes led to the idea for a new cartoon character called '[Boo](#)', and designers from the hit pre-school series Bob The Builder were brought in to animate Boo. Feedback from focus groups of five and eight year old children who watched the pilot shows indicated that the resulting "[My Friend Boo](#)" cartoon was a big success.

Learning outcomes

Focus groups were held in Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy and Poland to gather a broad range of young opinions and 95% of the children said they enjoyed the animation. Messages in the pilot episodes sought to increase children's appreciation about how to use water wisely. When asked what they had learnt from watching the LIFE cartoon, kids commented that they now knew that its important "not to pollute the water", to "save water", "not use water more than necessary" and "not to waste water".

Comparing these results with baseline research indicated that the cartoon had helped to make children more aware that water is a limited resource and that it is important to use it properly. Equally valuable, the focus group feedback showed that children had learnt that they, as an individual person, are responsible for the supply and quality of water.



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LIFE's Eco-Animation team were delighted with these responses and the cartoon's producer Luigi Petito said "My Friend Boo is the first project of this scale to respond to the needs of Europe's new generation of young viewers. We have taken important and complex lifestyle issues beyond the walls of formal places of learning and translated them into a medium that kids love the most."

Broadcasting companies in over 15 countries have now taken up the My Friend Boo show which is provided free of charge and accompanied by downloadable teaching material. These environmental education tools are being produced in 14 languages and include techniques to help children brainstorm on what they have learned in each episode, as well as discuss activities they will do with their families to involve parents and siblings in better understanding of environmental matters.

See the [Eco-Animation website](#) to find out more about the types of project actions that can be funded by LIFE's Information and Communication component.