ALPA Kids
The Solar System Game

The usage of digital devices among children and the need for native language content
Children under 8 years spend on average every day 2h 16 min behind screens (Ducharme, J. 2017). Every 5th Estonian child under 3 uses a smart phone on a daily basis. The Estonian digital awareness research (Digital Awareness Research) also claims that about 70% of 7-year olds already own a device. But at the same time, most of the content is in a foreign language as most web content is in English (W3Techs). Based on the research of Elyna Nevski, Sonia Livingstone and also international reports (e.g Unicef, Global Kids Online) it is clear that there is a huge need for native language content that is educational and safe to use.

Previous activity of ALPA Kids
As parents ourselves we really needed native language digital content, so we established our company ALPA Kids OÜ. Together with educational technologists and teachers we create educational mobile and tablet games for children aged 2-8 to provide games to learn the alphabet, numbers, local nature etc through cultural elements that children can relate to.

Our first app was in Estonian. It has more than 12K downloads, about 1.6K weekly users and it is used in 85 countries (many Expat Estonian families). The games are developed on Unity for both Android and iOS.

During the COVID-19 lockdown we got a lot of exposure also abroad and in a short time we have localized the app culturally also for the Indian English community and the Hindi community.

There are about 7000 languages spoken in the world and we aim to localize our games culture by culture. Our mission statement is “every child deserves the chance to use quality digital content in its native language” and we would love it if you would help us on this mission!

More about us here and previous app links: https://www.alpakids.com/, https://www.facebook.com/alpakidsestonia/

The Solar System Game: the foundation
We see that native language digital content would help to popularize STEM subjects. Astronomy is among the topics that children are very interested in from a very young age – often before they learn to read. We want to enable the possibility to shift their screen time towards something useful and shape the new generation in astronomy.

We have joined the Tartu Science Park Sat Apps pre-incubation program and we have validated the idea of creating mobile and tablet games to learn about the solar system with their panel of experts (incl. Andrus Kurvits, Martin Jüssi, Vaido Mikheim).

The informative part of the game is compiled with the help of Tartu tähetorn and educational institutions (preschool and primary schools) as we are a part of the official Estonian co-creation programme.

The first edition would be in Estonian and then we would localize it for all the languages in the need of native language content – even the smallest cultures.
The Solar System Game

Mission:
Planet Earth is polluted, so Alpa has to find an astronomical body that is the most similar to Earth as possible to transfer the colony of alpacas.

Visual:
Photorealistic 3D model (the company will purchase), https://www.turbosquid.com/3d-models/solar-photorealistic-v2-0-model-1314834?fbclid=IwAR28psILM20_IQthyns6IxLT5pZ-Xl8tCF6IfEPUWcgeTii--SNOR7V5vbw0

Game Play:
1. stage – Get to know the Earth. Tap on Earth and here exciting information about it (size, temperature etc with comparisons to easy real-life things). When the info is gathered a small test will follow and passing the test you can continue finding a suitable destination.
2. stage – Move around the Solar System and get to know all the planets. A test will follow and passing the test, you can continue finding a suitable astronomical body like natural satellites.
3. stage – Planet by Planet you can discover astronomical body like natural satellites. A test will follow. Alpa will understand that it is wiser to go back to Earth, stay there and put all of the effort into taking care of it.

References
Livingstone, Sonia (PhD). Blog, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/parenting4digitalfuture/
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