open
future
lab

Apira

A future-focused investment framework
for children and their families.

What we show today

Apira is a concept designed to inspire ideas, spark reflection and, most importantly, encourage banks and fintechs to turn it into a real service.

What we present includes early ideas, concrete examples and solutions that have already been developed and tested with people, ready for others to use.

Apira journey is **conceptual**

Easy contribution was **tested and prototyped** in Romania

Companion tools are **ready to be used and localised**

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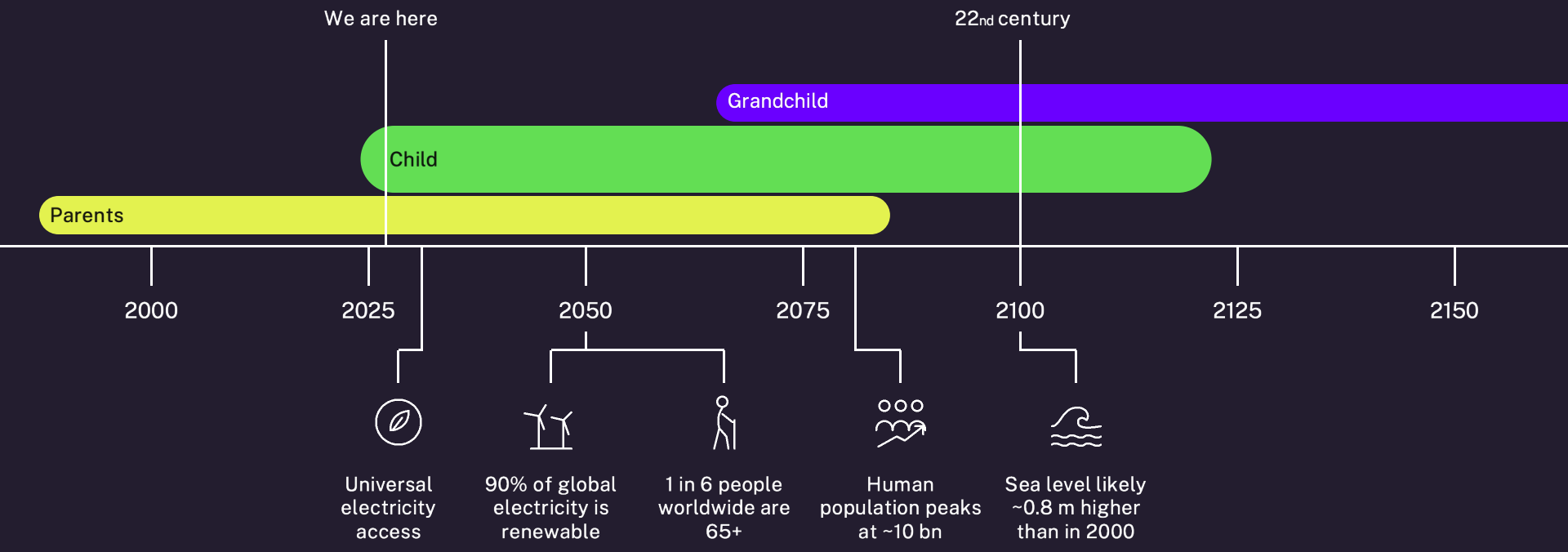
Children born today will come of age in the 2040s and may retire in the 22nd century.

They will experience a completely different reality.

More than ever, we need to focus on future generations.

Future shifts



Executive Summary

Future signals: Building for the world children are growing into, not the one their parents grew up in.

STRONG SIGNALS



Families and children

Fewer children, more varied households
births are at a record low, first children arrive later, and single-parent and non-traditional households are growing.

A wider but thinner circle
more adults without children and a historic transfer of wealth between generations, but also widespread loneliness.

A longer road to adulthood
More young people become financially independent later in life.



Growing up today

Worry about the future
Majority of young people very worried about climate change and find the future frightening.

AI companions are already normal
Majority of teens have used one and almost a third find it as satisfying as talking to friends.



Policy and regulation

Long-term retail investing now a priority
The EU wants household savings to move into investments. State-run investment account already exist.

Financial literacy as part of daily life
The EU strategy targets teachable moments, making complex processes simpler.

Sustainability disclosure now expected
Impact to be explained in everyday language.

WEAK SIGNALS

- Families living across borders
- Automated household finances
- From nudges to system design
- Fewer, more meaningful gifts

SPECULATIVE SIGNALS

- Reproduction beyond bodies and couples
- Embryos scored before birth
- Companies simulating the dead

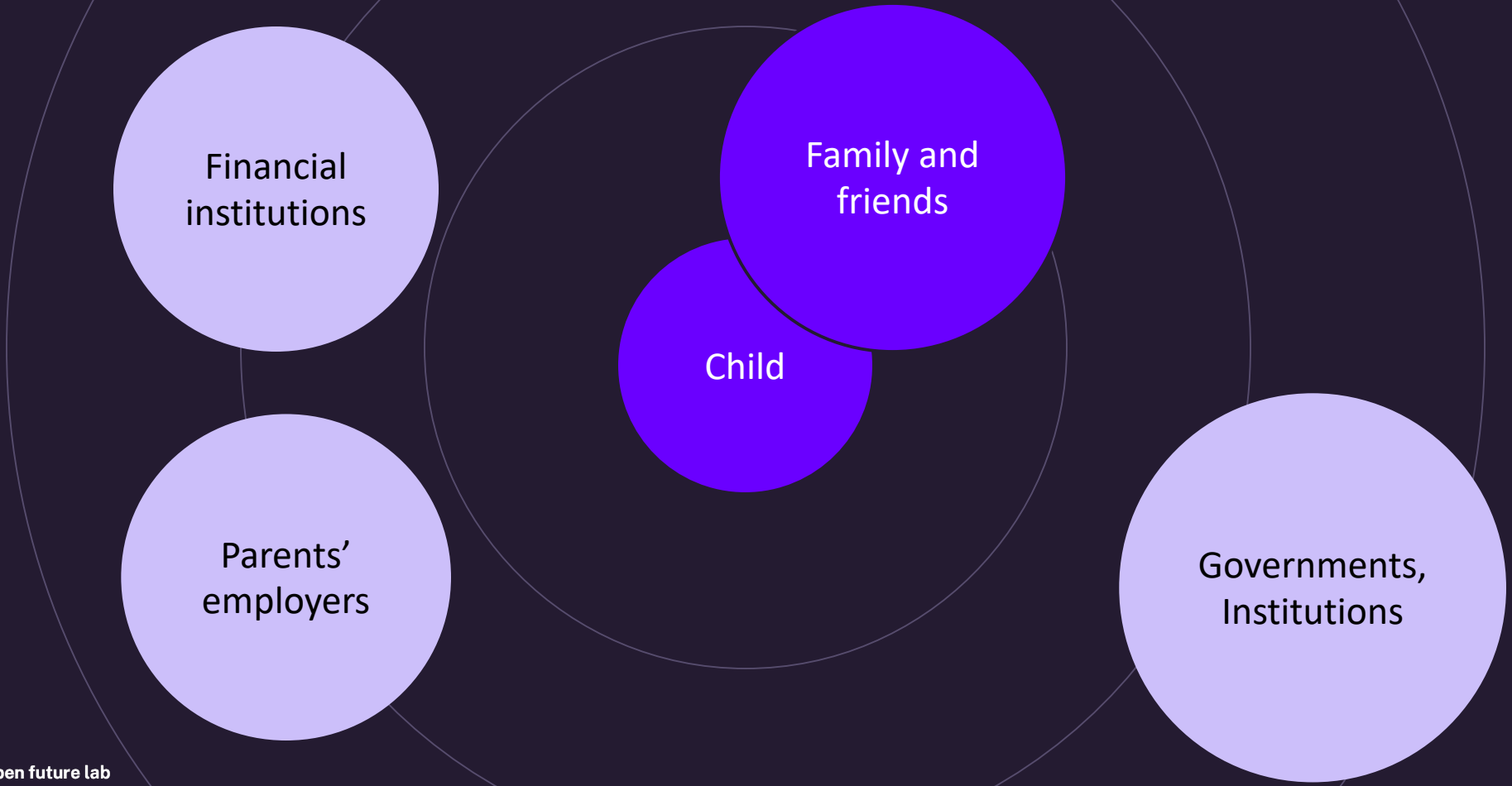
Source: Apira Blueprint, Appendix 1: Future signals

Executive Summary

Three key ideas, three shifts

Reframing Impact	An investment strategy for the child	→	The money invested builds the world the child will inherit.
Lifelong Companion	Passive investment account	→	Lifelong financial companion
Easy Contribution	Disposable gifts	→	Gifts that grow with the child

Stakeholder Radar



Three Apira Context Chapters

The premise

A child born today may well live to see the next century. Families think long-term when a child arrives, but most products keep money safe and do little more. Banks, insurers and pension providers already have much of what it would take to offer more.

The definition

A long-term investment for one child that any family can start. It brings together investing for a better world, a companion that grows with the child, and an easy way for friends and family to take part. At eighteen, the fund becomes fully theirs.

The design rules

The money stays invested until the child comes of age. Companion materials help children explore money and prepare to take responsibility. Others can give as easily as buying a present, and the fund gives families a reason to talk about money.

Implementation

Today's focus is how it can be built

How to actually build Apira, with a focus on the user experience.

Apira Implementation



“Investing is not for me”



Emotions are important drivers



Language can exclude, or include



People want to support, but do not want to ask for help

Apira transforms existing savings into a connected family experience, focused on building your child's future in one place.



One sustainable fund per child

opened by a parent or caregiver on the child's behalf. The fund is held in the child's name where the law allows



One default investment

Families start without comparing funds. Risks and fees in plain language.



Materials for every age

Posted, printed at home or read online, with contact around dates the family marks.



Kept for the child

It stays invested, and nothing is taken out before the handover.



Giving is easy for others

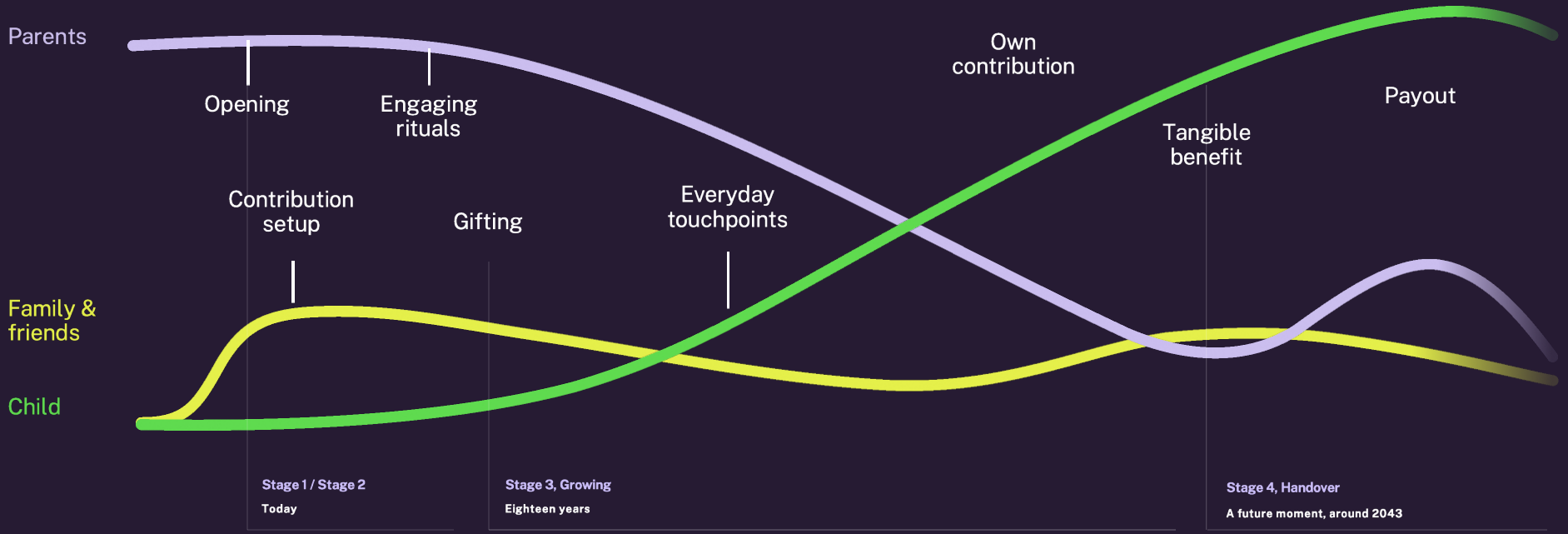
Friends and family give without an account with the same bank.



Taking control at eighteen

The young person takes over. If they do nothing, it stays invested.

User journeys

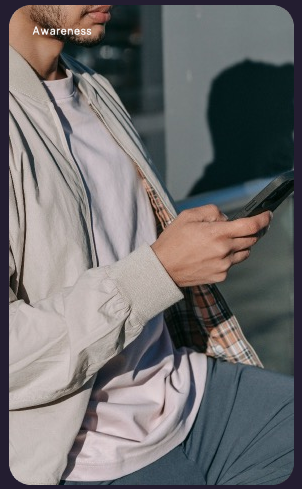


The Apira Journey

We will now walk through what the journey could look like, using example screens and an overview of the steps. These are meant to inspire, not prescribe exactly how Apira should be built screen by screen.

Personas

The people in Mia's story, and how each moment feels to them.



A family friend

Shares Apira with Mia's parents

EMOTIONAL SNAPSHOT

"Saw this and thought of you. You can set it up in a few minutes."

Thoughtful · Helpful



Mia's parents

Open her fund when she is born

EMOTIONAL SNAPSHOT

"One of us was enough to start, and it took ten minutes."

Relieved · Hopeful



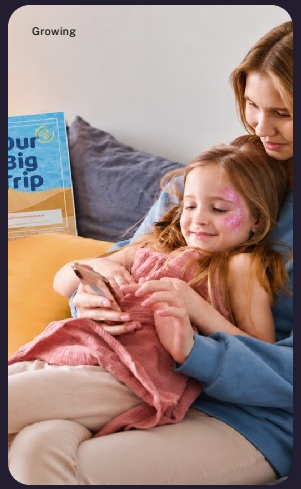
Aunt Ana

Her mum's best friend

EMOTIONAL SNAPSHOT

"I wanted to give her something that lasts, not another toy."

Generous · Included



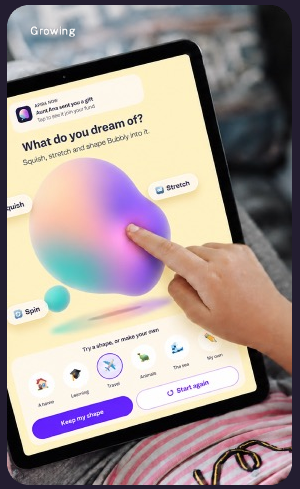
Mia, 6

Grows up with her fund

EMOTIONAL SNAPSHOT

"Bubbly got bigger when Aunt Ana sent a gift!"

Curious · Proud



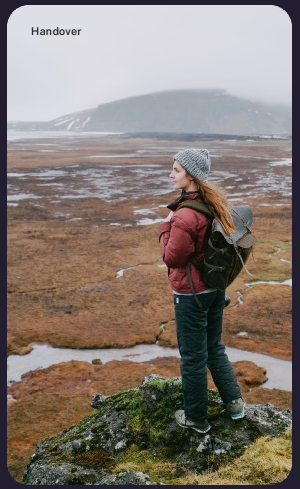
Bubbly

Mia's fund, made playful

EMOTIONAL SNAPSHOT

"Changes with every gift and with time, and never shows a number."

Playful · Alive



Mia, 18

Takes control of her fund

EMOTIONAL SNAPSHOT

"It has been mine all along. I'll decide in my own time."

Free · Unhurried

Stage 1, Awareness

Mia’s parents hear about Apira from a friend, or when they register her birth.

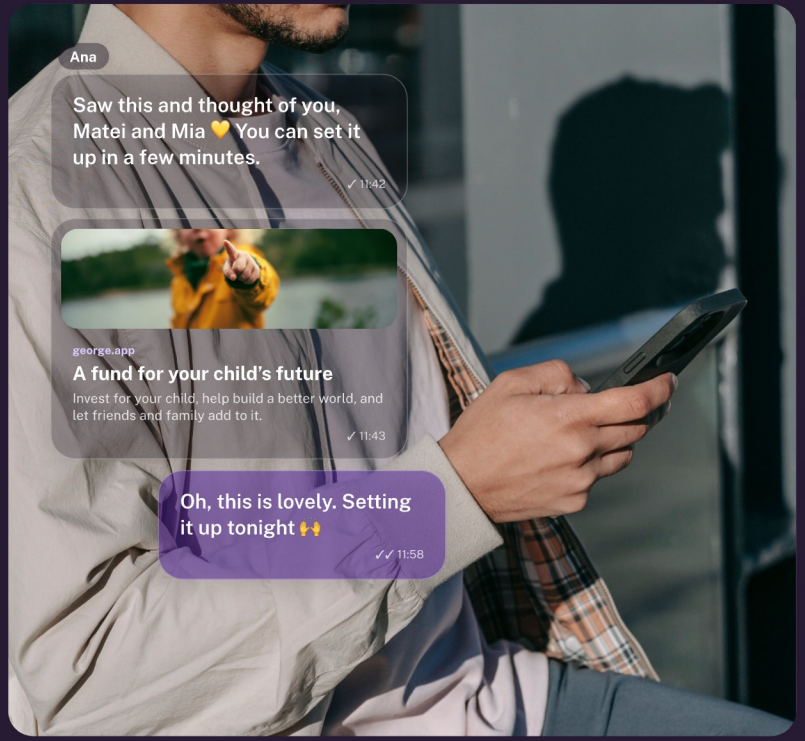
Either way, they see what Apira is in a few plain words and feel it is meant for them, whatever their background. One clear button takes them straight into setting up her fund.

Easy to explain
Parents can describe Apira to a grandparent in their own words.

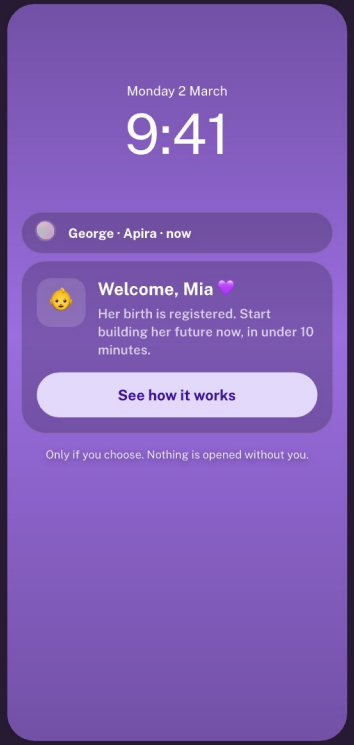
Right at any age
No family is made to feel that they are starting too late.

Easy to share
The page is accessible to everyone and easy to pass on.

One clear next step
A single button takes parents straight to setting up the fund.



A friend passes Apira on in the family chat, and the parent replies.



Or the bank offers it when the birth is registered.

Stage 2 , Onboarding

As Mia is welcomed to her family, her fund is already waiting. One parent can set it up in under ten minutes and the other parent can join anytime.

Information arrives step by step, with risks and fees in plain language. The fund is always presented as the child's, and the moment it is ready is marked in their name.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

One sustainable fund to start
No funds to compare. Risks and fees explained in plain words, costs shown in euros.

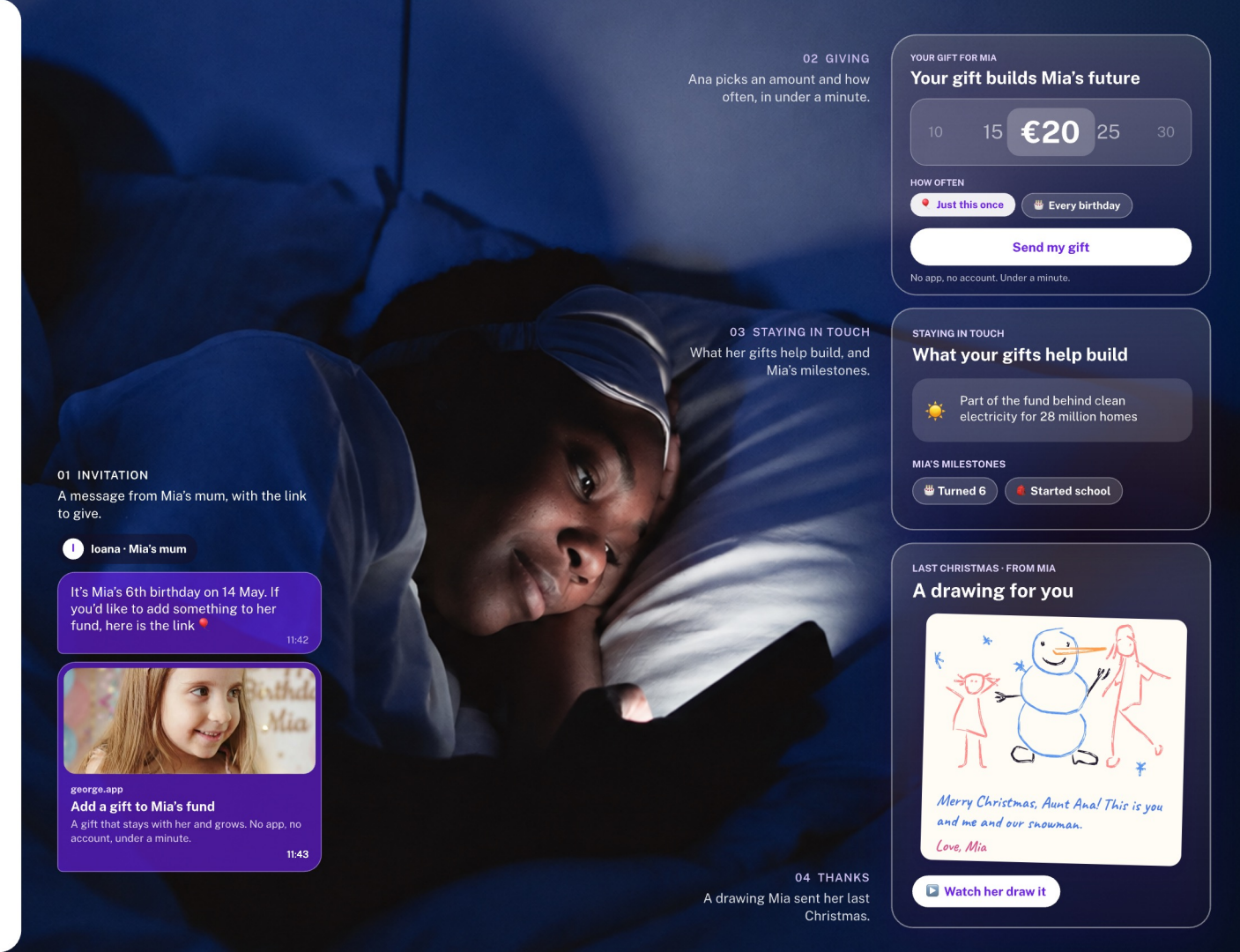
Positive feedback along the way
Each step is acknowledged, so parents feel good about the decision.



Stage 3, Growing

Aunt Ana, Mia's mum's best friend, has just been invited to give for Mia's birthday.

She can give in under a minute, with no account and no app. If she'd like to stay close, she can see what her gifts help build and look back at Mia's thank-yous.



What gifting is in society

01



Expression

Gifting is embedded into social structures. It always **demonstrates something**: it can be closeness, distance, status or care.

02



Connection

Gifts are something that is passed from a giver to a receiver. An **exchange that creates a connection** between the two.

03



Lasting

Gifting is a **form of legacy**. It stays after we have left. How long it lasts, and the value it creates over time, depends on the gift itself, its nature and how it is cared for.

Communication principles

How Apira talks about money, gifts and the future, at every stage.

01



Giving money is a personal act

Money is not a lesser gift. It becomes personal through how it is framed, given and received.

02



Asking creates connection

Asking can feel awkward, but most people are glad to be asked to support someone they care about.

03



A gift is for the future

A gift can keep its meaning, growing with the child instead of disappearing after the day.

HOW WE SAY IT

- **Friends and family**
  In that order, so people think beyond their immediate family.
- **No comparisons**
  One way to give, never better or more meaningful than others.
- **Human language**
  People are experts in their own lives, not lacking knowledge.
- **Practical, with feeling**
  Warm, but never overwhelming or grand.

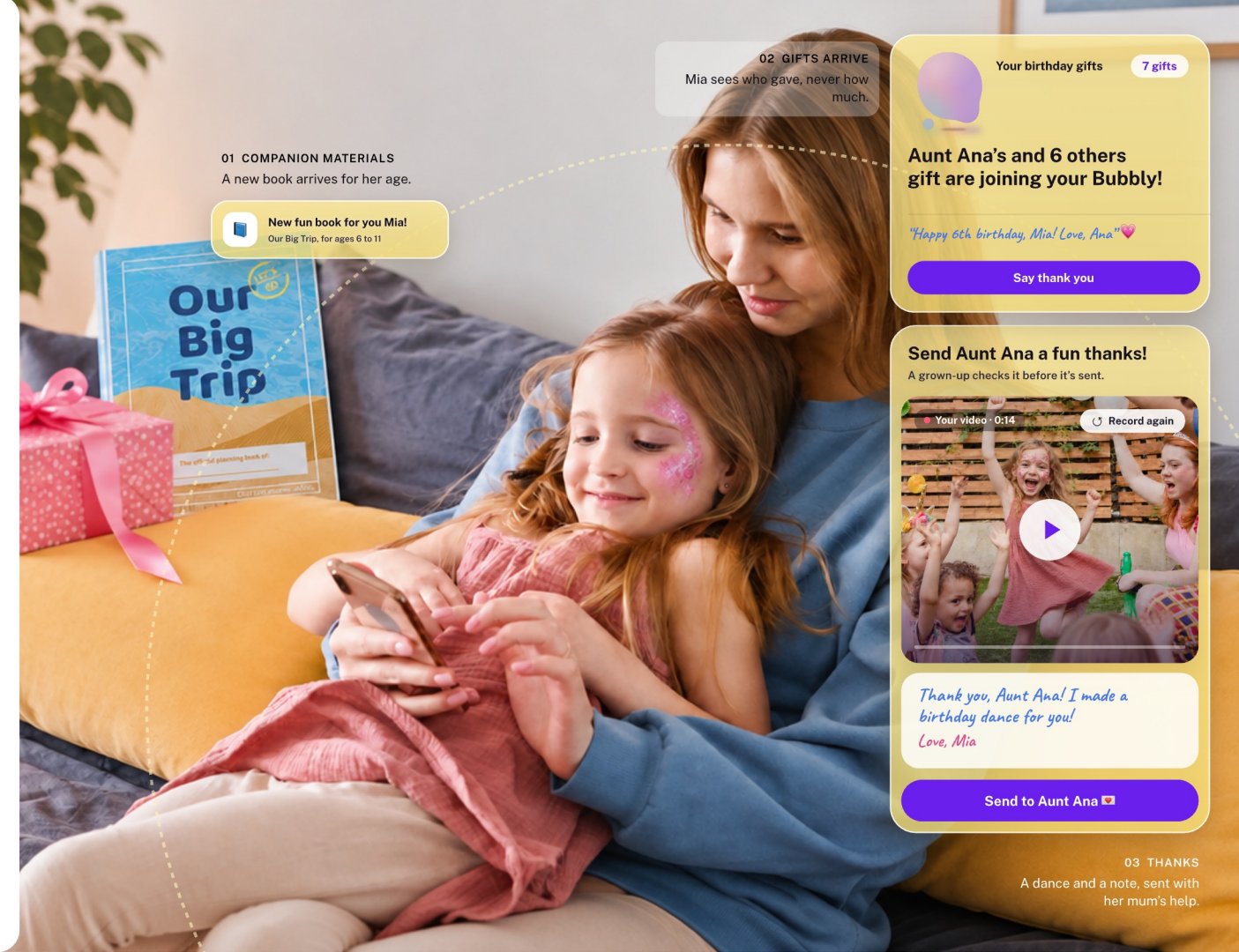
HOW WE SHOW IT

- **People before product**
  Real relationships, and different kinds of families.
- **Context, not abstraction**
  Birthdays, gatherings and milestones, not generic finance.

Stage 3, Growing

Mia and her mum slip away from the party to thank everyone who gave through Apira. For Mia, it's also a chance to play.

The dashboard shows what the fund does, who has added and how many gifts. Bubbly is one example of how to show it: it changes when money arrives and as time passes. Materials arrive as the child reaches each age.



Stage 3, Growing

A fund Mia can touch and play with, not a page of numbers.

Money set aside for the distant future is hard to picture, even for adults. Bubbly moves when Mia touches it and can turn into a book, a house or a bicycle, just as her money might one day. It changes when someone gives, and also as time passes. Actions matter, but so does time.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

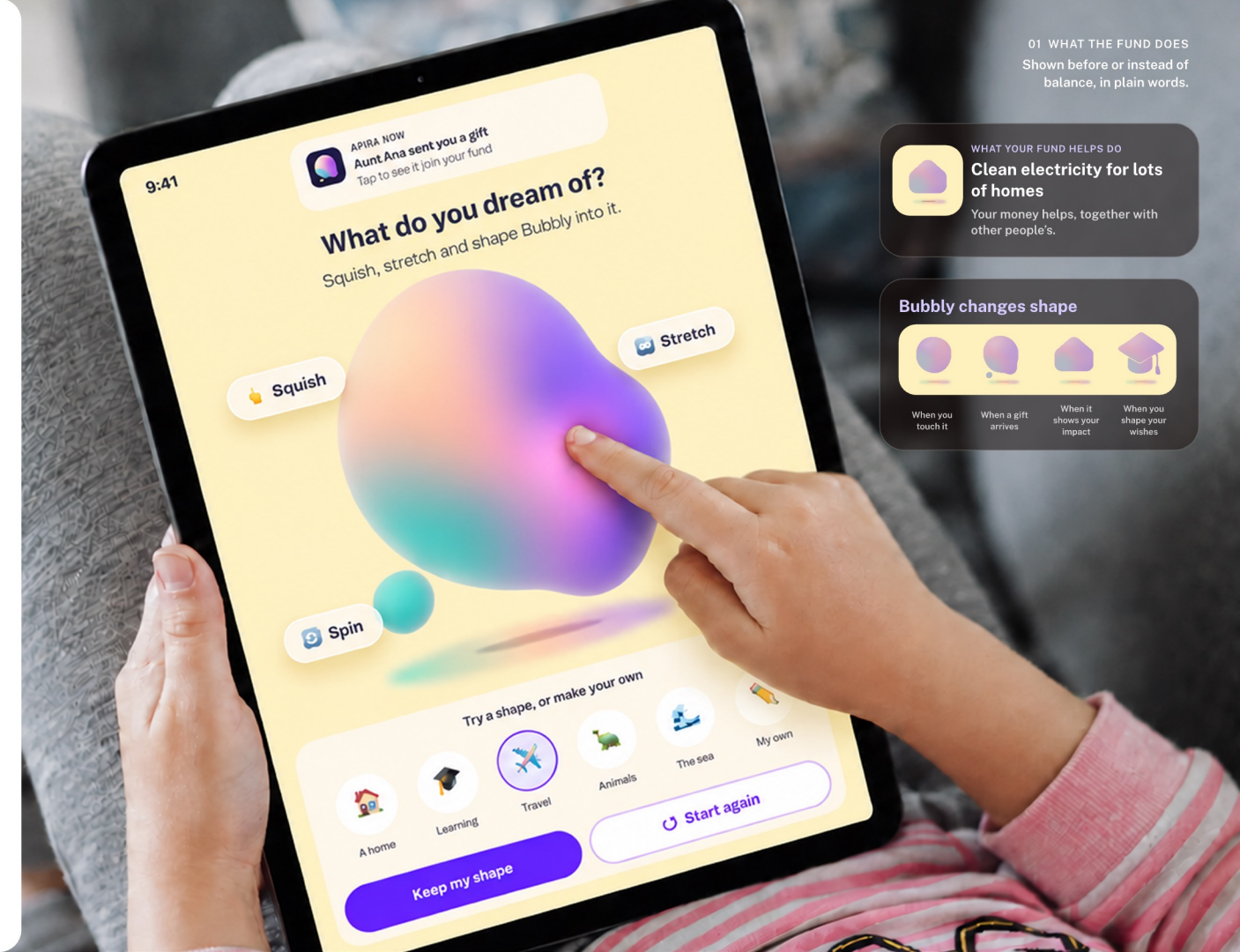
A dashboard for all ages
Adults and children can both find their way around it and enjoy it.

NO NUMBERS

Mia sees her fund grow without ever seeing a sum.



Age 5 → Today, age 6



01 WHAT THE FUND DOES

Shown before or instead of balance, in plain words.

WHAT YOUR FUND HELPS DO

Clean electricity for lots of homes

Your money helps, together with other people's.

Bubbly changes shape

When you touch it | When a gift arrives | When it shows your impact | When you shape your wishes

Stage 4, Handover

At eighteen, Mia takes control of money that has been hers from the start.

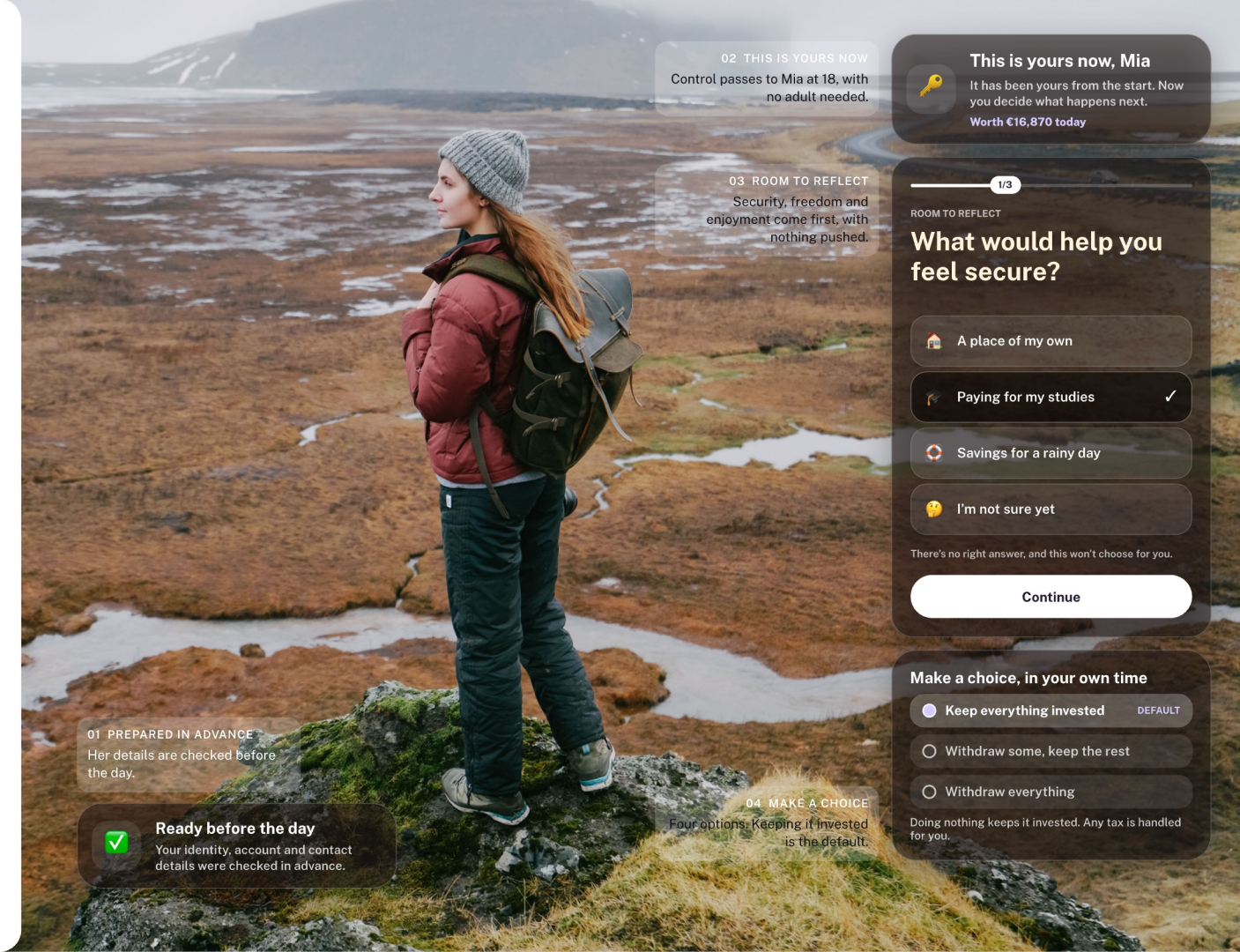
Before deciding, she reflects on how money can help her feel secure, give her freedom and let her enjoy life. Then she can keep everything invested, withdraw part, set up monthly withdrawals, or withdraw everything. Any tax is handled automatically.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Independent of parents
She takes control automatically, without a parent's permission.

No pressure to decide
Keeping it invested is the default. She can take her time.

Room to reflect
Security, freedom and enjoyment, with no choice presented as better.



Journey Map

Parent · Friends and family · Child or young person · Institution

Today

One sitting: understand Apira, open the fund in under ten minutes, set up the first money.

Eighteen years

Birth · 3 · 6 · 12 · 15 · 17

Reminders before dates the family chose (white dots), and a few other touchpoints. Time does the work.

A future moment, around 2043

17 · 18

Markets, products and technology may look very different by then. The rules hold; the details will change.

Stage 1 · Awareness

1 Getting to know Apira

Friends and family
- 1.1 A relative or friend finds Apira and shares it with the parent

Parent
- 1.2 What is Apira?
- 1.3 How is Apira different?
- 1.4 Why Apira matters
- 1.5 Start now: one call to action, into set-up in the same session

DESIGN PRINCIPLES
- Easy to explain
- Right at any age
- Easy to share
- One clear next step

Stage 2 · Onboarding

2 Setting up the fund

Parent
- 2.1 Your child's profile: name, date of birth, photo, and an optional second parent or guardian
- 2.2 Who owns the fund: in the child's name (case A) or the parent's (case B)
- 2.3 Investment options: one sustainable fund, risks and fees in plain words, costs in euros
- 2.4 Celebration and feedback: the fund is open, and what comes next

DESIGN PRINCIPLES
- One sustainable fund
- Positive feedback
- One adult is enough

3 Setting up contributions

Parent
- 3.1 A standing contribution, once or every month, offered once at set-up

Friends and family
- 3.2 Occasion gifts from the wider circle, shown separately

Child
- 3.3 An older child can add their own money

Stage 3 · Growing

4 Inviting friends and family

Parent
- 4.1 A reminder before a date the family chose. Ready-made words, sent in one or two taps or shown as a QR code

Friends and family
- 4.2 Receives the invitation: a link in a message or a code on a card

Friends and family
- 4.3 Gives once or on repeat, with no account and no app

Child
- 4.4 Is thanked by the child, for the act and never the sum

Friends and family
- 4.5 Stays in touch: sees what the family shares, from the same link

5 Dashboard and companion materials

Parent
- 5.1 Dashboard: Blobby, what the fund is doing, who has added and how many gifts. It changes over time, even when nothing new comes in.

Child
- 5.2 Materials for each age, in the format the family chose

Child
- 5.3 Their own view: who gave, and later what the fund is worth

Friends and family
- 5.4 Regular giving: a giver can set up a recurring gift, with a gentle note if a payment is missed

Institution
- 5.5 Others can give too: employers, foundations and the state, such as Austria's €500 per child

DESIGN PRINCIPLES
- Every gift is welcome
- The money belongs to the child
- Regular giving made easy
- Givers are there for the child
- Time matters, not just money

Stage 4 · Handover

6 Preparing for 18th Birthday

Institution
- 6.1 Checks the young person's identity, receiving account and contact details in advance

Young person
- 6.2 Already knows the fund exists, that it is theirs, and what it has supported

Parent
- 6.3 Nothing the transfer depends on. Optional: their own contact details for the young person

HOW CONTROL PASSES

Automatically at 18, whether the fund is held in the child's name or the parent's. No adult needs to act.

7 Taking control at 18

Young person
- 7.1 A few questions first: security, freedom and enjoyment. They ask, never steer

Young person · Option 1
- 7.2 Keep everything invested. This is what happens if they do nothing

Young person · Option 2
- 7.3 Withdraw part, keep the rest invested

Young person · Option 3
- 7.4 Set up monthly withdrawals, keep the rest invested

Young person · Option 4
- 7.5 Withdraw everything

DESIGN PRINCIPLES
- Prepare in advance
- Independent of parents
- No pressure to decide
- Room to reflect

Three Apira Context Chapters

Building Apira

- Most of what Apira needs already exists in retail banks.
- One experience holding the hands of families.
- Legal questions are addressed early, and limits are documented for policymakers.

Protecting the child's money

- The fund stays locked until eighteen.
- Low, clear fees.
- Children grow up knowing the fund exists and belongs to them.

A lifelong companion

Rather than just keeping money locked away until eighteen, Apira helps children gradually prepare to take responsibility for it.

Many initiatives focus on financial knowledge, but the ability to use that knowledge in everyday life is often overlooked.

Apira's companion materials help children develop these abilities, by making choices, thinking ahead and reflecting on their decisions, so they can gradually become more ready to manage their money at eighteen.

Knowledge

Knowing what inflation is and the difference between a fund and a share

Skill

Being able to make a budget

Ability

Being able to make choices about money, considering your needs, circumstances and future goals.

The difference between knowledge, skill, and ability, in the context of money:

Apira Companion Tools



Blossom

Conversation game

PURPOSE

Card game for parents enabling everyday life, financial well-being and parenting

Parents



What is later?

Story book

PURPOSE

Children's book exploring the meaning of later

3 - 5 years



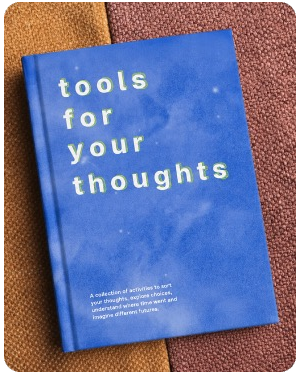
Our Big Trip

Travel planner

PURPOSE

Introducing "financial autonomy" to 6-8 and 9-11 year olds

6 - 11 years



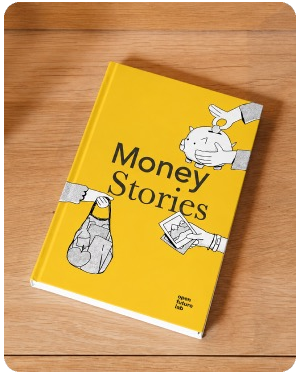
Tools for your thoughts

Interactive journal

PURPOSE

5 simple tools helping young teens connect today's thoughts and choices to their future selves.

12 - 14 years



Money Stories

Collection

PURPOSE

Reading stories depicting how our relationship with money is shaped by family, culture, emotion and life events.

15 - 18 years

Apira Companion tools

Blossom

A conversation card game that helps couples and (future) parents have more open, meaningful conversations about their everyday life, financial well-being and parenting while growing a tree together.

Impact

Produced and distributed 200 physical copies (176 in use), reaching couples, (future) parents, communities and potential collaborators.

Validated the game through 3 testing rounds with 120+ participants, including online validation, couple interviews, longitudinal testing, a family psychologist review and partners.

Partnered with

Developed a digital prototype with Hey George Romania (BCR) and translated the game into German to increase accessibility.

Released a free printable version, enabling anyone to download, print and play the game at home.

Hey George – BCR Romania
Wiener Städtische (testing)
PhD candidate at the Institute of Gender in Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin
Ivana Oracova – Family Psychologist



Apira Companion tools

What Is Later?

(Ages 3–5)

A picture book with a story and activities to help children explore what “later” is and how to relate to it.

Why we made it

To a young child, “later” can feel like never. Yet imagining and waiting for the future is the root of a healthy relationship with money, and it starts early.

What we learned in testing

The hands-on activities made the idea click. Children used “later” more often and more accurately, and reading together became a ritual they looked forward to.

“My child began to understand that ‘later’ is not just about waiting but about planning for what’s next.” (Mother of a 5-year-old)



Apira Companion tools

Our Big Trip

(Ages 6–8, 9–11)

A planning book in two editions that makes the child the official planner of the family's next trip, with a real say and real money to manage.

Why we made it

Children want to be trusted with something real but that often doesn't happen. So we reversed the usual roles: the child plans, budgets and runs the countdown, and the adults agree to honour their choices.

What we learned in testing

Children took the planner role seriously. The money pages, where they chose what to give up and fitted their plans to a budget, were their favourite part.

"I felt responsible. I was the one planning the trip." (Boy, 11)



Apira Companion tools

Tools for Your Thoughts

A booklet of five activities that helps young teenagers sort their thoughts, weigh choices and imagine different futures.

Why we made it

At this age, the future can feel distant, as if it just happens to you. Small tools for reflection help teens see it as something they can shape.

What we learned in testing

Teens saw the booklet as a safe space to think, not homework. They valued being able to start anywhere and use the tools in their own way.

“This booklet helps you understand what you want. It can help you feel more confident about your decisions.” (Girl, 12)



Apira Companion tools

Money Stories

A booklet of true stories about money, told by Romanians of different generations, with no advice and not always a happy ending.

Why we made it

Most of what teenagers hear about money is either financial education or stories of big success and failure. Few look at the quiet beliefs behind their own habits, which often come from home. Honest, everyday stories make those beliefs easier to see and talk about.

What we learned in testing

Teens found the stories credible and relatable. Many recognised their own family's habits in them, and some began thinking about their own future choices.

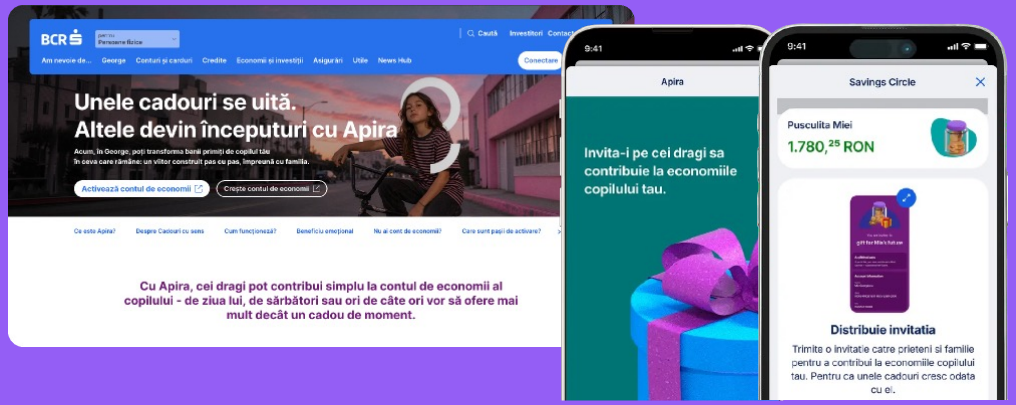
"I realised that many things I know about money came from watching my parents, not from actually talking about it."
(Girl, 16)



Apira is live at national level in Romania

BCR pilot live since 1 June 2026

A core Open Future Lab concept, live with BCR – **a first step towards Apira as an Erste Group-wide initiative.**



Strategic objective: Build a scalable model that helps families save and invest together for children's futures across the Erste ecosystem.

1,161
people clicked the Apira banner

599
continued past the first screen (52%)

160
(27%) shared the account with loved ones

7–8%
of new children's savings accounts came via Apira

BCR: a very good sharing rate compared with other features it launched before – up to 34% in September.

Building Apira

Parents employers

Childs Future

Governments

Childs Future

“None of them alone will be enough to create a long-term revolution of the human mind. But together – and when practised by a critical mass of people and organisations – a new age of long-term thinking could arise out of their synergy.”

— Roman Krznaric

Download the Apira blueprint

Family and friends

Financial institutions

Childs Future

open future lab

A diverse team of experts

Bringing together unique perspectives

Vision and strategy


Andreea Petrea-Schweiger
Managing director


Rauno Pello
Managing director

Driving products and community


Andrea Colovic
Product owner

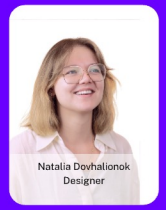
A team dedicated to pioneering financial and social research


Naoki Matsuyama
Researcher


Xueyi Yao
Researcher


Gerald Geier
Designer


Martijn Rigters
Designer


Natalia Dovhalionok
Designer

Specialists in visual, strategic, speculative, and futures design

Consulting cognitive science and fintech specialists


Elin Helander
Consultant

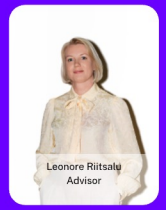

Matus Strajanek
Consultant


Tomas Vysny
Consultant

An advisory team of experts

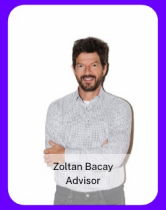

Ara Abrahamyan
Advisor


Christine Bachler
Advisor


Leonore Riitsalu
Advisor


Michael Schuster
Advisor


Tanya Selvaratnam
Advisor


Zoltan Bacay
Advisor

open future lab