



## **Statement for a special attention to children's films within the Creative Europe MEDIA Sub-Programme**

*The special focus on live-action children's film production and transnational circulation within the Creative Europe MEDIA Sub-Programme should be maintained. The MEDIA Sub programme provides an important component for the support of a multifaceted children's film culture in Europe and also serves as an incentive for a strengthening support of children's film within the individual EU Member States.*

*Films are cultural objects and form an integral part of our cultural identity and diversity. Films for children support media literacy and provide the ground for personal development, give a sense of European identity as well as a sense for an independent social and economic responsibility. Attaining film – and media literacy is an important part in the European education and support programme. Children are the audience of today and tomorrow. They have a right to access films with contemporary heroes with whom they can identify, that promote their self-confidence and that entertain or touch them or expand their critical awareness.*

*Existing market mechanism's across the European territory suppress a satisfactory utilization of children's films and complicate the conditions for financing and development. Germany has given special attention on children's films since 2013 and invests a preference to the development of original scripts for screen content in order to strengthen the diversity of the children's film culture in Germany and abroad. Denmark, Sweden and The Netherlands exhibit a similar attention to children's films. However, these conditions are not natural within other EU Member States, which is why the subgroup programme MEDIA needs to continue its positive discrimination / focus on children's film and lead the way for change.*

*Indeed Pan-European blockbusters like ASTERIX, MR. BEAN'S HOLIDAY or animated films in Pixar-style are important, profitable and loved by the audience, however, they are not particularly developed for a children's audience nor do they reflect European diversity and needs as required in the objectives of the European Union.*

The general and specific objectives within the EU REGULATION (EU) No 1295/2013 of THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT and of THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013, establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020) read in *Article 3 (A)* and *Article 4 (b)* and in particular:

- to safeguard cultural and linguistic diversity and to promote Europe's cultural heritage
- to promote the transnational circulation of cultural and creative works... to reach new and enlarged audiences....with particular focus on children, young people...

The priorities of the MEDIA Sub-programme pronounced in article 9 demonstrate a particular focus on audience development and film literacy which is also accentuated in the support measure in article 10 (b) and (j) and in particular:

- the development of European audiovisual works ... and children's and animated films...with enhanced cross-border circulation potential;
- ...promoting film literacy



## **Facts on children's films**

The study "The Theatrical Circulation of European Children's Films" (2004 - 2013) by the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO, Martin Kanzler 2014) raises a number of concerns which need to be addressed at the European level and highlights the need for a strong focus on children's film production and distribution within the Creative Europe MEDIA Sub-Programme.

### **1) Lack of information and transparency of data**

- there is no accepted definition of a children's film within the EU and the EAO study could not distinguish between "children's- youth or family films" (Kanzler 2014, p13)
- the EAO study covered a so called "average European children's film"
- pan-European blockbusters like MR. BEAN'S HOLIDAY or Pixar-style animation pre-dominate the market and thus distort the view of children's films that have been exclusively developed and distributed for children

### **2) The production volume and circulation of quality live-action children's films is significantly low**

- the majority of produced children's films from 2004 – 2013 were live-action films (60%), but they represent only 4% of the total number of European fiction films produced
- the other 40% of the produced children's films are animation films that represent 78% of the total number of European animation productions
- children's films are particularly important only in some countries like Luxemburg, Germany and most Nordic countries whereas in all the other countries children's films play no bigger role
- children's films circulate better than non-children's films, but this is mainly true for animation with an average 4,6 non national European markets "...compared to only 2,6 non national markets for children's live-action films" (Kanzler 2014, p5)
- the export rates are partly linked to common linguistic areas as it is "... easier for a German children's film to get released in Austria or Switzerland or for a French film to get released in Belgium than e.g. for a Polish film to get released in Germany" (Kanzler 2014,p27)

## **Recommendations for MEDIA Sub-Programme until 2020 and the Work Programme for 2018**

Live-action children's films should be given a special attention for their development, production and transnational distribution with more incentives and European wide studies. Furthermore Film Education should be strengthened. Hence we recommend:



### **On a short-term basis:**

#### **Single Development, Slate Funding:**

- Since the automatic award criteria will no longer be applied new criteria have to be developed in order to achieve a proper balance between the funding for a young audience and a non-children audience.

#### **Distribution - Selective Scheme**

- Due to the fact of a continually increasing number of theatrical releases and decrease of available slots the exception for children's films (live-action and animation for less than 12 years old) to be presented a minimum of 3 times during the first week of release should be changed into 2 times.
- Maintain the special attention to children's films whereby minimum one title per call will receive funding (in practise the title with the highest score among the live-action children's film applications).

### **Long-term recommendations:**

#### **Distribution – Selective Scheme**

- Dedicate a special budget to live-action children's films within the scheme to ensure a better circulation.
- Award criteria: provide more soft incentives with a special focus on content quality, diversity in terms of format, artistic style, theme, genre as well as transnational circulation and new ways of marketing and distribution.

#### **Sales Agents Award Criteria**

- In exception for live-action children's films, a sale of educational rights used in a long-term educational programme should be considered as a theatrical release

#### **Film Education**

Film Literacy (now Film Education) has been addressed by a specific EACEA Call for proposals since 2013. We believe this has been a relevant first step by the Commission in order to develop a wider awareness of the necessity of a regular film literacy presence in children's and youngsters' life. Getting to know cinema, its history and its language means to understand how moving images work and how they can produce meaning; it also allows recognizing that films can contribute in shaping aware European citizens, able to face contemporary issues and to express themselves, thanks to the new digital technologies, which allow a simpler and wider access to images. Furthermore, Film Education is a way to support audience development: If we involve younger generations in the experience of cinema-going through Film Literacy actions, this also means to supply them with tools and motivations to continue attending screenings in a theatre and watching movies the way they were conceived: as a collective experience on a big screen.



We recognize that a wider awareness of the importance of Film Education is spreading in many countries: for example, Italy has recently approved a new law that re-shapes the whole cinema sector and intends to include Film Education in the school curricula. This growing awareness has to be supported on a European level and the importance of Film Education for the future of European Cinema within the digital world should not be underestimated:

- The available budget should be increased substantially.
- It is important to keep the reference to European Film Heritage and its relevance both from a cultural and from an audience development point of view in the future Film education calls.
- The duration of the eligible projects should be extended to 2 years at least: actions aimed at improving not only practical skills but also a wider knowledge of Film history and language cannot be successfully designed, implemented and measured in just 1 year. We have to look farther in order to change the relevance and the impact of Film Education among younger generations.

#### **Data, research & further debate**

- Europe should start a debate or/ and work towards common characteristics of a children's film e.g. target audience must be 12 years-old or under – or an agreed European definition.
- More transparency of data as a basis for evaluation and awarding: Identify children's films according to a general accepted definition / formats within the list of selected projects.
- The EAO should revise their analysis based on films that have been defined as children's film: A new revised database of films defined as children's films produced from 2004 until 2014 can be provided by ECFA in cooperation with KIDS Regio and the Martin-Luther-University of Halle-Wittenberg, Dept. for Media and Communication.

***KIDS Regio** represents an initiative designed for the industry professionals in film for children & youth with the objective to build a strong, vital and diverse children's film culture in Europe that is visible and accessible. As a sub group of **Cine Regio** it is imbedded as a project within the German Children's Media Foundation **GOLDEN SPARROW** and supported by *Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung* and the State Chancellery of Thuringia.*

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***The European Children's Film Association (ECFA)** is the organisation for all, who are interested in high quality films for children and young people: film makers, producers, promoters, distributors, exhibitors, TV-programmers, festival organizers and film educators.*

*ECFA offers a communication panel promoting new ways of co-operation within Europe in the fields of production, festivals, distribution, exhibition and film education. We want to create a positive attitude towards European films for children – also in its economic and political aspects.*

*At the moment ECFA has more than 100 members, mostly companies and organisations, coming from 36 different countries.*

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