



Why Europe needs attention to children's film

A statement for the continuation of the Creative Europe MEDIA Sub-Programme with special attention to children's films

This joint statement from ECFA and KIDS Regio wants to address how important it is that the Creative Europe MEDIA Sub-Programme continues with its positive focus on children's film and lead the way for change. Today, there are too few member states that pay enough attention to this field on their own. And quality films for children with subject matter and a social context that they can relate to seems more important than ever in order to bring Europe together.

Background

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.

In times in which populism and nationalism are on the rise in Europe and European ideas and ideals are questioned it is more important than ever to support European Film Culture with a special focus on children's film. So far, the MEDIA Sub programme has provided an important component for the support of a multifaceted children's film culture in Europe and also served as an incentive for a strengthening support of children's film within the individual EU Member States. Particular attention should be given to films with original stories that are not based on a brand (original children's film).

Existing market mechanism's across the European territory still suppress a satisfactory utilization of original 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 . However, these conditions are not natural within other EU Member States, which is why the subgroup programme MEDIA needs to continue with its positive discrimination / focus on children's film and lead the way for change.

We hope very much that this very important work of the Creative Europe Programme will be continued after 2020 with a new Media Sub-Programme true to its objectives and priorities.

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)* already establishes important objectives. 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. Although some years have passed since the results were presented they are still of high relevance. They highlight 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 continuation afterwards

Original children's films should be given a special attention for their development, production and transnational distribution with more incentives backed up by European wide studies. Furthermore Children's Film Festivals and Film Education should be strengthened. Hence, we recommend:

On a short-term basis:

- **Single Development, Slate Funding:**
 - New criteria have to be developed in order to achieve a proper balance between the funding of films for a young audience and a non-children audience.
- **Distribution - Selective Scheme**
 - Maintain the special attention on original children's films whereby a minimum of one title per call will receive funding (in practise the title with the highest score among the live-action children's film applications).
 - Due to the fact of a continually increasing number of theatrical releases and decrease of available slots the exception for original 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 to 2 times.

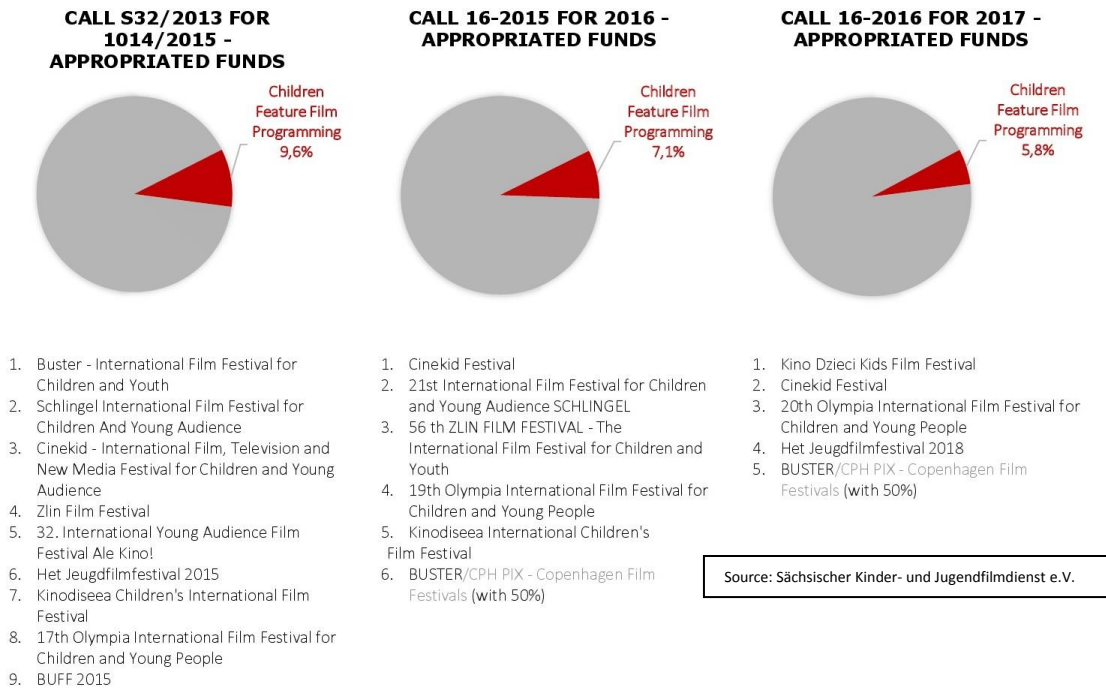
Long-term recommendations:

- **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**
 - As an 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.
- **Promotion of European Works Online**
 - A special scheme should be established to promote and distribute films for young audiences online.



Support for Children’s Film Festivals

With growing concern we observe the development of the children’s film festival’s funding situation. The amount of money for the support as well as the number of funded festivals is decreasing:



The important role of children’s film festivals in the fields of Film Education, Audience Development and bringing a huge diversity of European original children films on the big screen which are not visible in the regular markets should not be underestimated but encouraged and supported:

- Each year 10% of the available budget should be dedicated to children’s film festivals and 8 to 10 festivals in a variety of countries/regions should be funded.

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’ lives. 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 to shape conscious European citizens, able to face contemporary issues and to express themselves. 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 which provides 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 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 an European level and the importance of Film Education for the future of the European Cinema within the digital world has to be valued:

- We appreciate the gradual increase of the available budget and hope that this strategy will be continued until 2020 and after.
- The reference to European Film Heritage and its relevance both from a cultural and from an audience development point of view has to be kept in the future Film Education calls.
- In 2018 the possibility to apply for 2-years projects has been introduced - 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 further in order to change the relevance and the impact of Film Education among younger generations. Therefore this practice should be continued and 3 to 5 year projects taken into consideration as well.

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 – based on 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 and the voice of its currently more than 115 members, mostly companies and organisations, coming from 36 different countries. ECFA offers a communication panel promoting new ways of co-operation within Europe in the fields of production, festivals, distribution, exhibition and film education. ECFA's aim is to support cinema for children and youth in all its aspects: cultural, economic, aesthetic, social, political and educational.*

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