One quality of this meeting was its clear overview on the current situation, based on facts and figures that Reinhold T. Schöffel collected in his recent survey* (regular readers of ECFA Journal found a detailed report in the last issue**) and Felix Vanginderhuysen's report about the results of the distributors' grouping that ECFA started in 2006.

The Distribution Grouping
It was at another Cinekid seminar two years ago when nine European distributors decided to form an informal grouping. Coriander Film, Arthaus (Norway), MFA + Film and BJF (Germany), Jekino (Belgium), Twin Film (The Netherlands), N eaniko Plano (Greece), Les Films du Préau (France) and Folkets Bio (Sweden) had some common goals: exchanging information and experience, but mainly getting better access to the EU's MEDIA Program funding.

Finding compromises between nine small and headstrong distributors isn’t always easy. All of them have their own taste, tradition and national market situation. But the efforts resulted in twelve applications to the Media Program, out of which five

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The News Section: Films, Festivals, Awards

Best Film For Children: „Dragon Hunters“ by Guillaume Ivernel and Arthur Owak, France 2008
Special Mention: „The King of Ping Pong“ by Jens Johansson.
Best Film For Youth: „The Tracey Fragments“ by Bruce MacDonald, Canada 2007; Special Mention: „Lake Tahoe“ by Fernando Eimbcke, Mexico 2008.
Audience Award: „Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging“.

www.buster.dk

Filmtfest Hamburg, Children’s & Youth Film Festival „Michel“, Hamburg/Germany
Audience Award: „Butterflies“.

www.filmtfesthamburg.de

Children’s Filmfest Münster, Germany

www.kinderfilmfest-muenster.de

Schlingel - Int. Film Festival for Children and Youth Audience, Chemnitz, Germany
Audience Award: „Alice Upside Down“ by Sandy Tung, USA 2007.

Films actually were granted: Lotte from Gadgetville, My Name is Eugene (aka Rascals on the Road), Trigger, Fighter and Where is Winky's Horse. It is impossible (or too early) to conclude how the group's work influenced the individual results of these films; the list contains both flops (My Name is Eugene) and well received titles (Trigger). But this grouping definitely offered chances to films that otherwise would never have been distributed and enlarged the amount of films on the European market.

In cooperation with the Association of European Distributors the ECFA-grouping also started a lobby to change the regulations of the MEDIA Program, with some results in the changing both the 'selective' as well as the 'automatic support system'.

A new survey

Reinhold T. Schöffel presented the results of his recent survey on the European market situation (most of his conclusions you could find in the ECFA Journal Nr. 3 from September 2008 [**]). Here is a short summary:
- The distribution of successful films was mainly handled by big US majors or by their national European departments. But at the same time small independent (arthouse) distributors proved themselves able to create a successful release. Ambitious high quality films can be successful and commercial projects can flop. What ever the reason for commercial success or failure in the cinemas, the cinematographic qualities of a film is certainly not the most important criterias.
- Children’s cinema loses ground to new media (which was backed by surveys in Norway and Sweden), particularly male teenagers don’t go to the cinema anymore. Therefore cinema needs to present itself as attractive and diverse as possible. Arthouse as well as entertainment is needed. Audience awards in many festivals prove that children’s appreciation is not limited to just blockbusters.
- A remarkable contradiction: cinemas and multiplexes cannot find enough children’s films or do not have a chance to screen them since major distributors enforce their films to be shown during all slots. And kids... they do like arthouse films but hardly find their way to the screenings.
- New impulses might come from digital cinema. With the easy transfer of films from one format to another (cinema, DVD, pay and public TV, online video, etc.) films will have their own chance to sneak to the audiences in every possible way, whether it is by using the cinema, school, home or Movie club market, national or international. That is an extra reason for joining all European distributional and promotional forces together to bring good films to a young audience.

From the marketer’s perspective

All the experts present at the seminar agreed that it is time for a new approach. The main problem to be solved: how to make the audience aware that European children’s films exist? Harley Cokeliss (director, Barzo Productions, UK) suggested European cinema should become a brand, like Dreamworks or Disney. “With people are familiar with the brand, they will know what to expect from it.” But the strength of the European film market (variety in languages and traditions) is at the same time its major weakness: Diversity is a blessing and a curse. And to what extent can educational values actually be used as a tool for promoting films? That arthouse films can be just as entertaining is not often enough advertised.

Xiao Juan Zhou (Delphis Films, Canada) made a few promotional suggestions. In general European films should invest more in marketing.

- Cross media solutions (with YouTube as the most obvious example) should be used as a marketing tool. Franchising is a good way to improve your promotion.
- The way the film is labelled by its distributor depends upon the market. Do not use „children’s film” as a fixed term. Sometimes it is better to brand it as „quality family entertainment”.
- Why not consider a „double shoot”? For a relatively small extra cost (shooting every scene in the original language and in English) new market possibilities could arise.

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Experts Meeting on Children's Film Distribution in Europe: It is Time for a new Approach

Henning Camre, representing Think Tank on European Film and Film Policy, presented a recent survey on media literacy in Europe. It is clear that film education should have a higher priority in European schools, to avoid the perception amongst kids that American blockbusters are the only possible standards for storytelling.

A distributor's struggle
Children's film distributors struggle with a lack of money and a lack of screens:
- Broadcasters these days are less involved in children's film, therefore the funding of children's films is mainly based on public subsidies. But the percentage of the national film budget spent on distribution is often too small (or even non existent), since most of the money goes into production. With the changing film consumption patterns we must find other ways to get some of the money back and not just through ticket sales.
- Access to screens is a big problem: European children's films are seldom shown daily at different slots. In Europe there are a lot of independent distributors for a small amount of films. The result is fragmentation. To be ready for the new ways of distribution we should steal the secrets of the United States, where there are only a few distributors. Despite our anxieties, this is the only way to reach an audience. Public policy should work together with the industry and form conglomerates for production and distribution.

Other ways of distributing are a necessity, says Petri Kemppinen (Finnish Film Foundation). You can think of special events or promote the films at international film festivals. A cinema-on-demand platform is a possibility, and screenings at schools is an important method to expose children to European films.

Conclusions
US distributors dominate the world. It is nice to have so many independent distributors in Europe, but maybe the price paid for this freedom is too high. To create a better landscape for European film, producers, distributors, cinemas and policy makers have to work together on an international level to create more awareness. We have to establish European films as more a brand. Better film education at schools is an extremely important way to introduce children to specific ways of storytelling in European film. Given the uprising role of new media, distributors should prepare to think out of the box and consider new ways of distribution.

This expert meeting took place during Cinekid Amsterdam, October 25th 2008 and was organised together with ECFA and the Dutch Film Fund. The meeting was moderated by Michiel de Roolj (BosBros Film-TV Productions)

Report: Gert Hermans, Wendy Koops, Nina Cetic

* The survey with the figures of admissions for more than 200 films for children from the years 2005 until 2007 you can find at 
  www.ecfaweb.org/projects/statisticsindex.htm

** This issue of ECFA-Journal as well as all previous issues can be downloaded from ECFA's website
  www.ecfaweb.org/journal.htm

The News Section:
Films, Festivals, Awards
  www.ff-schlingel.de

International Biannual Festival of Animation, Bratislava, Slovak Republic
  www.bab-slovakiaisk/Cinekid - International Film, Television and New Media Festival for Children and Young People Amsterdam/Netherlands
  www.cinekid.nl

The Chicago International Children's Film Festival, USA
  www.cicff.org

Nordic Filmdays Lübeck/Germany, Section Films for
Films on the Horizon

New European films for children or young people which are ready to be discovered for your programmes. More information and more films can be found at www.ecfaweb.org. Obviously we can never guarantee that we cover all important new films. Producers, distributors and sales agents are kindly invited to inform us of their new releases.

Children & Young People


Children & Young People


www.filmtage.luebeck.de

Cinemagic - World Screen Festival for Young People, Belfast, Northern Ireland


www.cinemagic.org.uk

Castellinaria Festival Internazionale del Cinema Giovane Bellinzona, Switzerland


www.castellinaria.ch

Internationales KinderFilm-Festival, Vienna, Austria


www.knister.com/

Kuka

Director: Jaroslaw Tschewaschewski
Production: Kinokompanija “Staralis”
World Sales: Kinokompanija “Staralis”
Derbenewskaya Str. 20/16
RUS-115114 Moscow
phone: ++7-495-510-5848
fax: ++7-495-510-5849
E-Mail: staralis@staralis.ru
Internet: www.staralis.ru

www.planetcarlos.de

Planet Carlos

Director: Andreas Kannengeisser
Production: KW Filmproduktion, Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen „Konrad Wolf”
World Sales: KW Filmproduktion
Bundesallee 86
D-12161 Berlin
phone: ++49 30 50 59 50 25
fax: ++49 30 50 59 50 22
E-Mail: mail@kwfilmproduktion.de
Internet: www.kwfilmproduktion.de

www.egonanddonci.com

Egon & Donci

Director: Adam Magyar
Production: AEnima CGS
World Sales: Hungaricom Ltd.
Mesterházi u. 10.
HU-1116 Budapest
phone: ++36-1-365 1750
fax: ++36-1-365 1755
E-Mail: info@hungaricom.hu
Internet: www.hungaricom.hu

www.hexe-lilli-der-film_de

Ilja and the Robbers

Director: Vladimir Toropttschin
Production: Melnitsa Animation
World Sales: Melnitsa Studio
Melnichnaya Ul. 4
RUS-192019 St. Petersburg
phone: ++7-812-567 1540
fax: ++7-812-567 8506
E-Mail: info@melnitsa.com
Internet: www.melnitsa.com

www.knister.com/
Films on the Horizon

The Story of Leo
Feature Film, Italy 2008
Director: Mario Cambi
Production: EsseBi Cinematografica, Dujass Film
World Sales: Adriana Chiesa Enterprises
Via Barnaba Oriani 24a
I-00197 Roma
phone: +39-06-8086052
fax: +39-06-80687855
E-Mail: info@adrianachiesa.entreprise.com
Internet: www.adrianachiesa.entreprise.com
www.dujassfilm.com

Sunny and the Elephant
Feature Film, France 2008
Director: Frédéric Lepage
Production: MC4 Productions, France 2 Cinéma
World Sales: Studio Canal
1, Place du spectacle
F-92130 Issy-les-Moulineaux
phone: +33-1-71 35 35 35
fax: +33-1-71 75 88 88
E-Mail: rrrea@canal-plus.com
Internet: www.studiochannel.com
www.sunnytelephant-lefilm.com

Switch – Snowboarder
Feature Film, Norway 2008
Director: Ole Martin Hafsmo
Production: Rubicon Film AS
World Sales: NonStop Sales AB
(address see above)
Internet: www.nonstopsales.com/switch

Three Lives
Feature Film, Czech Republic 2007
Director: Jiri Strach
Production: CeskaTelevize
World Sales: Czech Television
Telexport Programme Sales
Kavlicka Hory
CZ-140 70 Praha 4
phone: +42-2-6113 7047
fax: +42-2-6121 1354
E-Mail: teleexport@ctv.cz
Internet: www.czech-tv.cz/sales

The Secret of Moonacre
Feature Film, Gr. Britain/Hungary 2008
Director: Gabor Csupo
Production: Forgan Smith Entertainment
World Sales: Velvet Otopus
3a Lower James Street
GB-London W 1F 9EH
phone: +44-207-2871900
fax: +44-207-2872314
E-Mail: info@velvetoctopus.com
Internet: www.velvetoctopus.com
www.forgan-smith.com/id81.html

Special People
Feature Film, Great Britain 2007
Director: Justin Edgar
Production: 104 Films Ltd.
World Sales: 104 films ltd
PO Box 63849
GB-London N1P 1ND
phone: +44-207 6900424
E-Mail: justin@104films.com
Internet: www.104films.com

Spirit of the Forest
Animation, Spain 2008
Director: David Rubin & Juan Carlos Pena
Production: Dygra Films
World Sales: Fantastic Films International
3854 Clayton Avenue
USA-Los Angeles, CA 90027
phone: +1-323-661-7088
fax: +1-323-661-7188
E-Mail: info@ffimail.com
Internet: www.fantasticfilms international.com
www.dygrafilms.com

Stormheart
Feature Film, Finland 2008
Director: Kaisa Rastimo
Production: Stormheart Oy Ltd
World Sales: NonStop Sales AB
Döbelnsrgatan 24
SE-11352 Stockholm
phone: +46-8-6739999
fax: +46-8-6739988
E-Mail: info@nonstopsales.net
Internet: www.nonstopsales.net
www.stormheart.fi

Forthcoming Festivals
International Young Audience Film Festival Ale Kino!, Poznan/Poland
December 12th to 20th 2008
www.alekino.com

International Filmfestival Berlin, Section Generation, Berlin/Germany
February 5th to 15th 2009
www.berlinale.de

Europees Jeugdfilmfestival Vlaanderen, Antwerp & Brugge/Belgium
February 21st to March 1st 2009
www.jeugdfilmfestival.be

New York Int. Children’s Film Festival, New York/USA
February 27th to March 15th 2009
www.gkids.com

Montreal Int. Children’s Film Festival, Montreal, Canada
February 28th to March 8th 2009
www.ffem.com
Deadline for submissions: January 9th 2009

BUFF Financing Forum 2009

All who are looking for financial help for their children's film project are invited to come to the BUFF Financing Forum 2009 at Malmö, Sweden with their project to meet 15 international financiers, who may just be looking for your children's film project to invest their money in.

TV, shorts, series, documentaries as well as animation, feature films and new media formats aimed at a young audience will be suitable for submission in the following states:
- Development
- Under production
- Post production
- Ready for distribution.

When the organizers have made their selection of projects, the selected production companies will get the opportunity to have one-to-one meetings with 15 participating international financiers covering broadcasters, commissioning editors, co-producers, distributors and sales agents.

Projects can be submitted online through the website below. For further information please check the website or contact:

Annette Brejner
Producer of BUFF FF
E-Mail: annette.brejner@buff.se
Phone: ++46 733 612 619
Internet: www.financingforum.eu

BUFF Financing Forum 2009
Producer of BUFF:FF
Annette Brejner
E-Mail: annette.brejner@buff.se
Phone: ++46 733 612 619
Internet: www.financingforum.eu

ECFA’s Annual General Meeting in Berlin, Saturday, February 7th 2009

The Annual General Assembly of the European Children’s Film Association will be held during the International Film Festival Berlin on Saturday February 7th, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm (approximately).

Location: Hotel Savoy Berlin, „Salon Bellevue”, Fasanenstrasse 9, 10623 Berlin

Preliminary Agenda:
4. Approval of the reports
5. Election of new board members
6. Projects for 2009
7. Proposals from the members for future projects
8. Information from the members about their projects
9. Any other business

A get-together of the Children’s Film Community at the International Film Festival in Berlin, February 7th 2009, New Location!

On Saturday, February 7th, from 9pm to 12pm there will be the famous get-together for all those working with children’s films, organized by ECFA, Bundesverband Jugend und Film, Farbfilm Distribution, Förderverein Deutscher Kinderfilm, Kinderfilm GmbH, MDC International Film Distribution, Schlingel International Filmfestival for Children and Young Audience and Stiftung Goldener Spatz. The get-together will be at a new location, you will need an invitation to get in. ECFA-members will receive their invitation from our office in Brussels. Guests are welcome of course, please contact ECFA’s office at least a week in advance, so we can send you your invitation by mail.

Your Advertising in ECFA-Journal and on www.ecfaweb.org

ECFA-Journal is published and distributed both on paper and as pdf-file in 800 copies and reaches almost everybody involved in the production, distribution, broadcasting and exhibition of films for children in Europe. It is an effective publication to inform the scene of your new production, sales offers, festival dates or distribution programme.

Prices: full page (267 x 180 mm): 200 Euros
half page (133 x 180 mm): 120 Euros
column (267 x 53 mm): 70 Euros

Special formats on request. There will be an extra charge if we have artwork to do. For more details and for advertising on ECFA’s website please contact the editor.