

The KIDS Regio Forum 2014 | Children as Audience
From the Perspective of Research and Practice



report

Table of content

1.	About KIDS Regio.....	3
1.1.	Our Activities	3
1.2.	Our Motivation	3
2.	Concept and Structure KIDS Regio Forum 2014	5
2.1.	The Programmes Journey.....	5
2.2.	The Journey's Process.....	6
2.2.1.	SCAN	6
2.2.2.	FOCUS	10
2.2.3.	ACT	13
2.3.	Summary Outcomes	14
3.	Impressions of KIDS Regio Forum 2014.....	18

1. About KIDS Regio

KIDS Regio presents a lobby initiative for high quality and multi-faceted European Children's Films. KIDS Regio is linked to a network of content creators, funders and distributors from within the European film industry, alongside film academics and politicians in order to discuss new synergies. Headed by project manager Viola Gabrielli, the initiative supports the professionals who work in film for children and youth to strengthen existing networks, define solutions and instigate actions to improve the profile, circulation, diversity and access of European productions.

KIDS Regio particularly supports original live-action feature films for children, which offer children a wide variety of stories, genres and styles.

KIDS Regio is the brainchild of Cine Regio, the network of regional film funding institutions and is supported by the Central German Regional Film Fund (Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, MDM) as well as the Thuringian State Chancellery (Thüringer Staatskanzlei).

KIDS Regio is imbedded in the German Children's Media Foundation GOLDEN SPARROW and works closely together with its creative director Margret Albers.

1.1. Our Activities

- **KIDS Regio acts as a proponent** for children's film productions and distribution in Europe informing and stimulating debates for understanding the social and cultural value of films for children but also their specific requirements regarding their production and distribution.
- **KIDS Regio acts as a mediator** to bring together academics, politicians and the children's media industry to discuss challenges and new synergies.
- **KIDS Regio facilitates the exchange of ideas** by strengthening and building new partnerships in order to accelerate and encourage circulation as well as variety of European productions, co-productions and distribution for children and youth.
- **KIDS Regio designs and produces innovative international workshops** which focus on exploring new innovative ways of marketing solutions (including transmedia) and best practice examples (linear and transmedia).
- **KIDS Regio promotes film as an essential part of cultural diversity** and supports film literacy to introduce and recommend cinema and film as art to become part of the school curriculum.
- **KIDS Regio improves transparency and exchange of statistical data** across all European countries, and provides data on annual children's film productions for the European Audiovisual Observatory (e.g. Lumiere database with children's film productions, admissions).

1.2. Our Motivation

"Stories are nourishment for the soul". In quoting Malorie Blackman, a British writer for children and young adults and the Children's Laureate for 2013-2015, we fully agree and underline this statement. We love to see these stories in films as another form of nourishment for the soul. We are convinced that films are and will ever be an essential part of children's media culture and therefore form a fundamental part of cultural diversity. Children represent a new creating generation. They are the audience of today and tomorrow, they critically question the world they live in through stories with convincing characters. They have a right to watch films in high quality, films that take

them seriously and are told from their perspective. They have the right to see films that entertain them and also provide social orientation.

KIDS Regio dedicates its campaigns to ensure that children in Europe have access to and a wider choice of multi-faceted stories that represent their living world and the European cultural diversity.

Europe
CHILDREN'S Film

★ RAISE the
VISIBILITY & Profile
★ INCREASE ACCESS

for the
AUDIENCE of TODAY
and TOMORROW

ERFURT
Declaration
2009

THERE IS HUGE
DEMAND!

WE LOVE
MOVIES -
from SERIOUS to
FUN!

2nd
KIDS regio
FORUM
2014, JUNE 19 & 20 in ERFURT

the CENTER
OF GRAVITY

2. Concept and Structure KIDS Regio Forum 2014

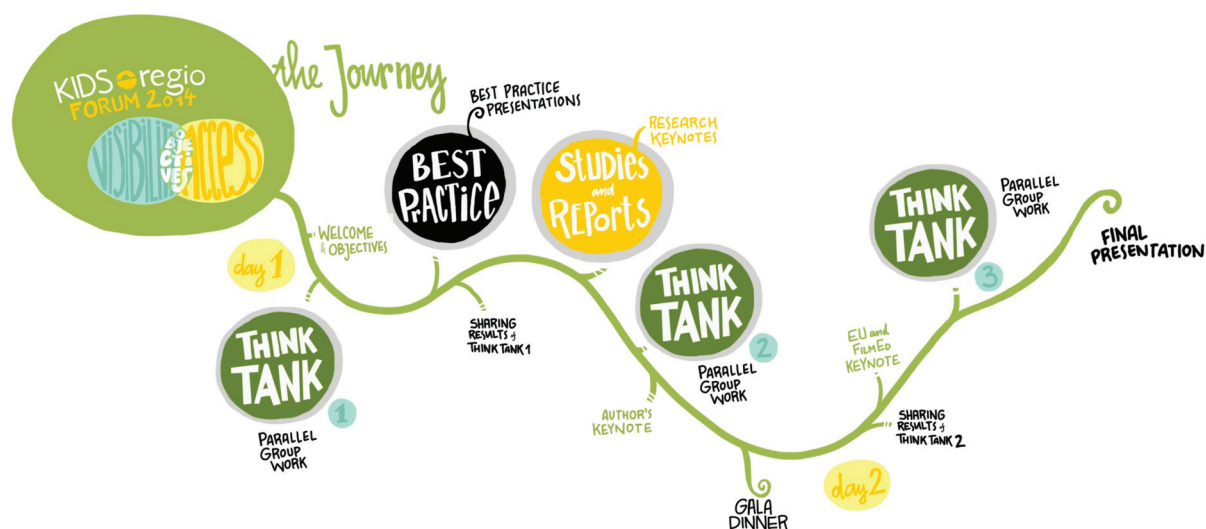
Joining forces is a necessity to enhance diversity in children's films in Europe. At the KIDS Regio Forum 2014 we were bringing together more than 80 children's content creators, funders and distributors from 18 different countries within the European film industry, alongside film academics, in order to share both research and practice regarding children as a film audience. Aim of the forum was to specify the Erfurt declaration of 2009 by identifying both the specific needs of a young audience and the nature of the market. Participants were involved more than ever to take on certain activities and sign-up for actions.

Through an initial combination of keynotes and best practice presentations the forum has provided an interactive hub for information and knowledge exchange exploring two key questions:

- Raising Visibility and Profile: How can we create and design films produced in Europe that will successfully reach our target audience?
- Increasing Access: How can we improve access to children's films given the audience's changing consumption habits, interests and needs?

This was followed by a series of interactive Think Tanks, where - in workshops and small group settings - participants have further analysed and explored the key questions from different perspectives: academic, critical, practical as well as creative.

2.1. The Programmes Journey



Within the KIDS Regio Forum 2014 each participant was taken on a journey to further analyse and explore the key questions from different perspectives. The interplay of keynotes and best practice presentations on the one hand and interactive Think Tanks on the other hand provided a creative space. Participants have been encouraged to reflect on and utilize the forum's content to explore synergies and strategies to deal with the day to day challenges they encounter in their own particular and the common fields of work and practice. The programmes journey which has been developed in close cooperation with the forum's facilitator Svenja Rüger (www.thevalueweb.org), was divided into different process phases named as SCAN, FOCUS and ACT (taken from *The Value Web* based on MGTaylor). These different phases supported the participants within their analysis and explorations.

SCAN: During the scan phase the participants established a shared language, intention and a common understanding about the problems in order to avoid jumping into quick solutions. By keynotes and best practice presentations in combination with Think Tanks in small groups, participants shared information, experiences and could learn more about challenges from different viewpoints. Generally, each of the participants encountered different challenges and market situations.

FOCUS: During the focus phase of the Think Tanks, participants were inspired to look at the entire system and future scenarios of 2020 from a negative & positive perspective. Critical arguments and certain assumptions helped to test out how potential solutions could be unfold.

ACT: Within the act phase of the Think Tank participants self-organized into key themes that have been discussed over the scan and focus phases. They assembled a list of recommendations and actions that should be taken as a next step.

2.2. The Journey's Process

2.2.1. SCAN

The forum started with a welcome note of Margret Albers, CEO of the German Children's Media foundation GOLDEN SPARROW, followed by a welcome note of the forum's patron, Jürgen Gnauck (State Chancellery of Thuringia) and the keynote of KIDS Regio project manager Viola Gabrielli. The Opening visualized the motivation and intention behind the KIDS Regio Forum 2014 and described the work of KIDS Regio, demonstrated its achievements as well as the goal of the forum itself

Following main achievements have been mentioned:

On the European level:

- within the framework of a Young Audience Film Day the European Film Academy has established the European Young Audience Award in 2012 with a participation of 17 different European cities /countries
- the new Creative Europe Programme has given a special attention to audience development and film literacy from 2014
- particularly within the new distribution scheme a special attention is given to live-action children's films
- furthermore extra points are given to the development of children's films

On a national level in Germany:

- a special attention on funding German children's films based on original scripts reached a governmental resolution in 2013
- the initiative *THE OUTSTANDING CHILDREN'S FILM* has been established

BEST PRACTICE PRESENTATIONS

Throughout the BEST PRACTICE PRESENTATIONS KIDS Regio has gathered examples from successful film productions, innovative VoD platforms and inspiring Film Literacy projects - all representing children's film culture in Europe.

Successful productions presented ways of how they handled the challenges of the European market with recognition to national taste and competition to US films.



Speakers:

Ewa Karlström, SamFilm (Germany) WINDSTORM

Harro van Staverden, Bijker Film & TV (The Netherlands) COOL KIDZ DON'T CRY

Eva Jakobsen, Nimbus Film (Denmark) ANTBOY

As an innovative VoD platform Maxime Lacour, CEO (Belgium) visualized the structure of the European service *UNIVERSCINÉ BELGIUM*, a platform that belongs to the EuroVoD group. Furthermore, he demonstrated how they faced the challenges of the European market regarding content for the young audience.

Inspiring Film Literacy projects demonstrated how they engaged the young audience into film culture.

Speakers:

Linda Arbanová (Czech Republic) with the project *AEROSKOLA*

Martin Brandt-Pedersen, The Danish Film Institute (Denmark) with the project *FILMCENTRALEN*

Jolanta Pisarek (Poland) Generator Foundation with her project *KINOTERAPIA*

RESEARCH and CREATIVE KEYNOTES

During the research KEYNOTE sessions first insights of the latest research examples of children's films and the situation of Film Literacy in Europe have been presented. All keynotes responded to key questions regarding to the specifics of the young audience and the market circumstances.

The KEYNOTES I and II informed about the children's preferences regarding content and style as well as the challenges that modern children's films are facing.

KEYNOTE I: Film Consumption and Preferences of European Children

Speaker: Franziska Matthes, University of Erfurt (Germany)

KEYNOTE II: The Significance of Sound Design Regarding Children as Addressed Audience

Speaker: Tobias Kurwinkel and Philipp Schmerheim, University of Bremen (Germany)

The following two KEYNOTES gave a closer look on diverse platforms (Cinema, TV, Online) the performance and circulation of children's films among European countries and the accessibility for the young audience.

KEYNOTE III: Theatrical Circulation of European Children's Films

Speaker: Martin Kanzler, European, Audiovisual Observatory (France)

KEYNOTE IV: Children's Films on TV and Online

Speaker: Franziska Matthes, University of Erfurt (Germany)

The last Research KEYNOTE explained methodical insights and displayed first results on the FilmEd Study focusing on **Audiovisual Content in European Schools - Obstacles and Best Practices**.

This study has been curated by the European Commission.

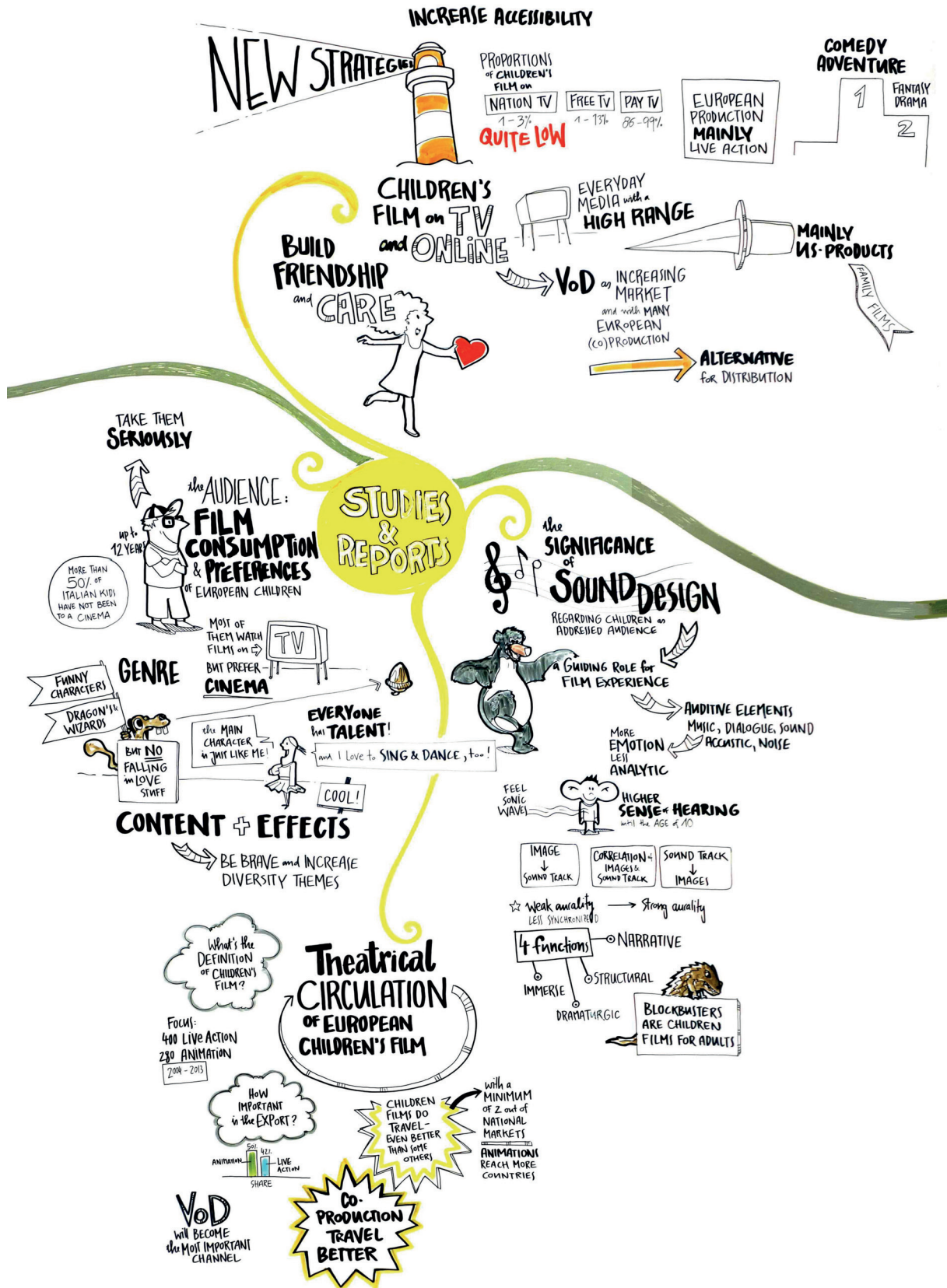
KEYNOTE V: FilmEd Study

Speaker: Lidia Peralta, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)

To complete the picture of Europe's children and children's films each KEYNOTE session ended with either a creative or the political point of view. In his Creative KEYNOTE **Stories of the 21st Century** the international awarded children's and youth' author **Edward van de Vendel** (Netherlands) visualized what it means to be a good storyteller, how to immerse children into worlds that matter to them and which visions of life we as adults do transmit to them. **Susanne Ding**, representative of the European Commission and the Creative Europe Programme (Belgium) demonstrated in her KEYNOTE the **Significance of Children's Films within the EU Commission**, its Film Literacy policy as well as the high attention given to audience development and research within the EU Commission's strategy.

Most presentations are still available either as a download or video on our websites:

www.kids-regio.org/kids-regio-forum-2014/presentations/keynotes/



THINK TANK I Create the Problem

Think Tank I focused on identifying a shared intense of our day-to day challenges and the anchorage of the problem.

Given the fact that the problem is created when we discover a gap between reality and our vision for a new reality, the problem is neither the current conditions nor the vision and rather the discrepancy between them. Too often we attack what we perceive to be problems without considering the bigger picture.

The task was to articulate a problem/challenge statement that gives the European children's film strategic direction. Following questions were used as guidelines:

- What is the gap between where we are today and where we want to be?
- What problems come to mind when thinking about multi-stakeholder collaboration, production, distribution, promotion, marketing, film literacy, research etc.?
- What needs doing? Who needs to be involved?

THINK TANK II Share the Problem

In THINK TANK II participants were given a few minutes time to gain insight into what the other teams have been working on so far.

Each group has left a spokesperson to explain the work of the team so far to people visiting from other teams. Each team had to make sure to visit all the other teams. During the presentation the spokesperson shared the work of his team to the visitors and collected valuable feedback from them that contributed to improving and enhancing the work of his team.

2.2.2. FOCUS

THINK TANK III Imagine the Future of Children's Film in 2020 with a positive and negative scenario

In THINK TANK III the participants were asked to imagine the future of children's films in Europe in 2020. Two scenarios a positive and a negative one have been created. The participants were asked to deliver a presentation on how the advances within the positive scenario were made and on how the challenges within the negative scenario were not overcome.

The **positive scenario** was presented as following:

It is June 2020 and you are preparing to attend the next Kids Regio Forum 2020. This Forum intends to return to the subject of raising visibility, profile & awareness of European children's films, but this time celebrating the successes achieved in the last four years. All involved stakeholder groups have managed to collaborate across regions and the European children's film has finally reached the awareness that it deserves. In fact, this progress has been far greater than was even hoped for in 2014:

- In 2019 a British/Dutch/Czech coproduction based on an original screenplay made it into the Top 5 Box office in 10 countries. The film was not only awarded with the Young Audience Award but also with the award as best European feature film.
- 60 live action children's films are produced in Europe. 50% are based on original screenplays. On average these films are released in a total of 7 European territories and are doing well (among the TOP 50 of the yearly box office).
- Children watch more European films than American productions. In addition to a wide theatrical distribution there are regular feature film slots on each child's channel in Europe, a variety of VoD platforms and films are watched on a regular basis in schools.

Following questions supported the presentations:

- How did we get to such a successful solution?
- What were the roles of other stakeholder groups and how did they collaborate around actions?
- How were those actions allocated between the different stakeholder groups?
- What changes of behavior were needed?
- What were the key decisions made in 2014?
- What was the role of Kids Regio?
- What was needed to actually implement these decisions?
- What else would you like to tell your audience?

The **negative scenario** was presented as following:

It is June 2020 and you are preparing to attend the next Kids Regio Forum 2020. This Forum intends to return to the subject of raising visibility, profile & awareness of European children films as several issues have not been solved during the past years. The European children's film has still not reached the awareness that it deserves, collaboration across different stakeholder groups and regions is challenging, and the target audience does not seem to care.

- The remake of HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE is the most successful film for the young audience. Due to lack of production and decreasing interest in the target group the last Young Audience Award of the European Film Academy was presented in 2017.
- 10 live action children's films are produced in Europe (mostly sequels and remakes). On average these films are only released on their national markets.
- Children have hardly a chance to watch European films.

Following questions supported the presentation:

- Why did we not achieve what we set out to do in 2014?
- What were the roles of different stakeholder groups and how did they collaborate (or not) around actions?
- How those actions were allocated between the different stakeholder groups and why did it not work?
- What changes of behavior were needed that did not happen?
- What were the key decisions made in 2014?
- What was needed to actually implement these decisions and why did it not happen as planned?
- What else would you like to tell your audience?

THINK THANK IV Share the Knowledge & Handling the Challenges

In THINK THANK IV the participants were asked to share the knowledge with the other team members regarding their work on the positive and negative scenario. One example of each positive and negative scenario has been chosen to be presented to all participants.



THINK TANK V Handling the Challenges & Prepare to build Solution

In Think Tank V the participants were asked to summarize their scenarios with a conclusion and think already about a solution.

2.2.3. ACT

THINK TANK VI Built Solutions

From the outcomes of the scan and focus process the facilitation team has identified 6 main topics to choose and to discuss in groups during Think Tank VI:

- Research/Statistics
- Development/Production
- Funding/Regulation
- Marketing/Branding
- Distribution
- Film Literacy

Each group had the task to develop solutions that helped to raise the visibility and profile of and increases access to European children's films.

Group RESEARCH / STATISTICS

Following questions supported the process of developing solutions:

- How can the development of academic networks be strengthened?
- Could the collection and accessibility of general data be improved?
- Where should be the focus in future research projects?

Group DEVELOPMENT / PRODUCTION

In Europe we have a lot in common and could therefore start thinking about developing common topics / issues together. This may lead to coproduction or to different national/language versions of projects.

Following questions supported the process of developing solutions:

- How can we develop European-wide co-productions?
- How do we get the most talented writers interested in writing for children (develop Writer's Labs on different levels - national, bilateral, international)?
- How can we use talents from the transmedia/game industry who are dealing with children's media content to co-develop an intriguing project?
- By which means do we get producers interested in our target group (e.g. incentives)?

Group FUNDING / REGULATION

Following questions supported the process of developing solutions:

- On which political levels is lobbying necessary to get a better awareness of the importance of a filmic diversity for children?
- In which already existing funding programmes should children's film be considered/supported?

Group MARKETING / BRANDING

Following questions supported the process of developing solutions:

- Which means could improve the image of children's film in Europe?
- Could/Should there be a brand „European Films for Children“?
- Children of different age groups, parents, and teachers - How can we deal successfully with these very diverse target groups?
- How can we increase awareness of children for European film culture?

Group DISTRIBUTION

Obviously there is a demand for live action children's film, but distribution on the „regular“ market is still risky.

Following questions supported the process of developing solutions:

- What could be means to lower these risks and get distributors more interested in children's films?
- Which role could/should festivals play in distribution?
- Children are Early Adopters - How could digital distribution beyond Cinema, TV, DVD/BluRay help to lead children's films to more access, visibility & success?

Group FILM LITERACY

Following questions supported the process of developing solutions:

- Which Film Literacy models could “travel” in Europe?
- Throughout Europe the status of children's films in Film Literacy programmes differs – where is the common ground?
- What can be done within school systems and what outside?

2.3. Summary Outcomes

The conference's workflow based mainly on the expertise of the participants and exchange is not likely to lead to a consensual agenda of actions and solutions. However there have been aspects and demands on which all participants agreed.

It has been identified that research is absolutely in the right position to answer questions and serve needs of the media industry. According to the studies presented at the forum it has been proven that feature films for children still enjoy a huge popularity among the young audience, they raise more audience and travel better than European films for an adult audience. However, cinema presents only one of many platforms to watch films. Childhood nowadays is constantly changing. We, as the creative industry, must continuously update our knowledge regarding preferences and needs of the young generation and integrate this information within the creating process. It has been mutually acknowledged that Film Literacy is an important issue in order to maintain cultural variety in Europe. Thus, film education must be imbedded in the curriculum as an entitlement for all learners.

On the other hand the establishment of a European brand for children's films as well as the allocation of a 25% rate of European State Funding was discussed controversially. It became clear that approx. 50 % of the participants support these suggestions.

In a final round, many ideas have been brought together within the 6 action areas. Several ideas, levers and recommendations were openly expressed and can be captured as following:

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS - Make research more available and accessible

- Create a platform for European research.
- Establish a two-yearly conference on children's media research!
- Integrate abstracts of research / summaries of conferences, contacts and links to projects on established websites (KIDS Regio or ECFA).

DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION - Collaboration is the key word

- Implement tax incentives for all countries.
- Establish co-development funding and slate funding. Create a European reference points system for admissions.
- Set up residency programmes for writers, directors and producers.
- Explore talent dating sessions where talents meet sales agents and distributors early in the project.
- Instigate European producer's tours to different countries.
- Introduce Children's film sections at A-Festivals including Financing / Co-production Markets e.g. expand the Financing Forum to other cities, e.g. Berlin, Cannes, and Amsterdam.
- Set up Creative Labs with writers, transmedia people and scientists e.g. MINTIFF.
- Create special programmes for film schools.
- Facilitate more co-operations with schools, including film booklets for teachers!

FUNDING AND REGULATION – European state film budgets should be allocated to children's films

- Recommend a budget 25% allocated to annual children's film productions.
- Eurimages should show positive discrimination to children's films.
- EU children's IP development fund to be co-financed by member states (dubbing).
- Create political awareness at a national level for the demand of at least 4 non-national films on each relevant TV channel a year.
- Children's feature film slots should be compulsory for public service.
- For the funding Agenda 2020 -> establish a Creative Europe Kids regarding Marketing, Co-Production, Development, Dubbing, Subtitles, and Exhibition.

MARKETING AND BRANDING - Made in Europe

- Establish a European Brand for children's films.
- Discuss a solution combining international and national strategies of distribution.
- Collect more consumer data: Who are these kids, who are their parents, who make the decisions?

DISTRIBUTION - European films need time to grow

- The demand for more consumer data exploring the questions: Who are these kids, who are their parents, who make the decisions?
- The need for a potential online distribution channel.
- Create a European database of rights holders.

FILM LITERACY - Don't invent what is already there!

- Create a potential online distribution channel?
- Create a European database of rights holders.
- Create a European Online Platform based on the Danish model Filmcentralen that includes: advice on rights, teachers training, and evidence of learning outcomes.
- Request Creative Europe to incentivize that project and cinema education programmes, production funds to commission educational material for each film.
- On a national level: encourage a closer relationship between cultural and educational ministries.
- Establish and support a film catalogue with several options, subtitles, dubbing.
- Create a website for teacher training, learning, research, teaching plans.
- Embed film education in the curriculum as an entitlement for all learners.

NEW CO-DEVELOPMENT FUND

A key announcement was made at the Forum by Manfred Schmidt (MDM, the Central German Regional Film Fund) and Monique Ruinen (Netherlands Filmfonds): A special German-Dutch Co-Development Fund for original children's film projects is about to be created. This special fund will be in place at the end of this year.

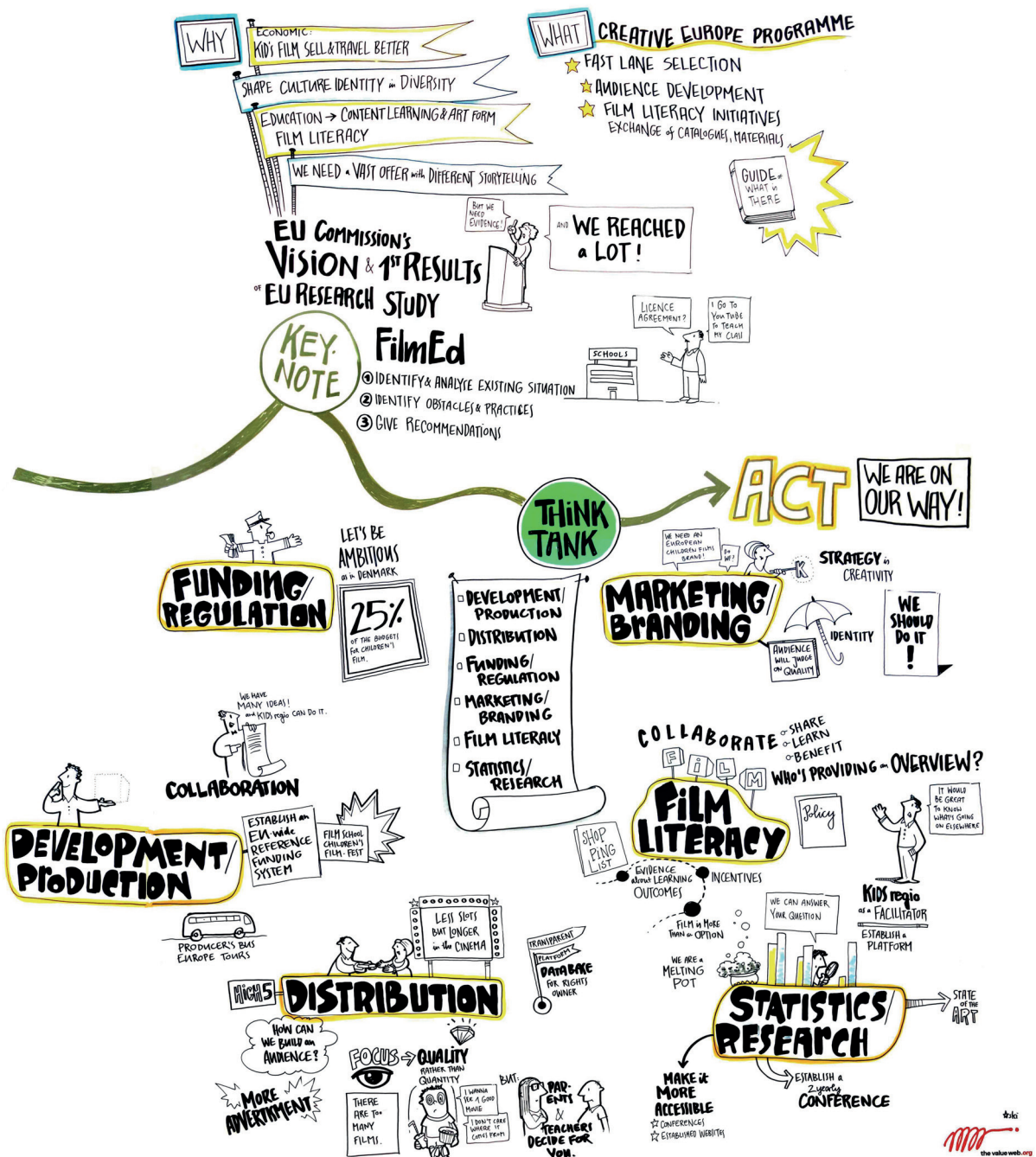
"Hopefully this is a new way to make more and better artistic films for children that travel throughout Europe" (Monique Ruinen).

NEXT STEPS

KIDS Regio has been acknowledged to be the "center of gravity". For further actions KIDS Regio should continue to function as an awareness platform (live and online), a mediator from academic to media worlds as well as a motivator to join forces.

As a next step KIDS Regio will explore a closer cooperation with several Universities and the European Audiovisual Observatory in order to stimulate the creation of a European research platform and the collection of consumer data for the industry. In cooperation with Steffi Schültzke

(University of Halle) an online research network platform on children's films and a mailing list is already in a working process. Here, also contacts as well as abstracts of research will be published. The platform will be curated by Franziska Matthes (University of Erfurt) and linked with the KIDS Regio website. Regarding the recommendations of the other action areas all participants of the KIDS Regio Forum 2014 are requested to collaborate, contact each other, meet, take up controversial discussion points and or discuss next steps. Participants that were involved in the discussions about **MARKETING and BRANDING, DISTRIBUTION, FUNDING and REGULATION** as well as **DEVELOPMENT and PRODUCTION** are invited to meet at The Financing Forum for Kids Content which takes place from March, 10th – 12nd 2015 in Malmö (Sweden). As in the years before KIDS Regio will support and work as an instigator who examines the key recommendations step by step.



3. Impressions of KIDS Regio Forum 2014

Some Voices of the Final Round

Franziska Matthes Group RESEARCH/STATISTICS

"The scientific community is like a melting pot and everyone has a special expertise [...] so, we have to think about how to get the people connected and to get the right persons in charge connected."

Ene Katrine Rasmussen Group FUNDING/REGULATION

"We want to be very ambitious and say that 25% of these budgets should be allocated to children's films..."

Harro van Staverden Group MARKETING/BRANDING

"The quality of European films should be judged by the audience and not by us."

Fusun Eriksen Group DISTRIBUTION

"We say more quality, less quantity! [...] Many of the children's films have a longer life period than these mainstream films..."

Martin Brandt-Pedersen Group 1 FILM LITERACY

"The one thing that is really needed and that could come out of this, these conferences, is if someone takes the responsibility to make this overview, to make a website with an organized calendar to see [...] what happens when, in this kind of field in Europe. [...] And it is important that it is not connected to a project, because projects die in a year or two, but it's important that it could be supported and done by an organization that keeps on." (and that is when KIDS Regio comes into the picture)

Cary Bazalgette Group 2 FILM LITERACY

"[...] there has to be first of all a closer and more respectful relationship between the cultural and the educational ministries [...] what we're trying to achieve is a sort of change."

Participant's impressions of KIDS Regio Forum 2014

After the KIDS Regio Forum, the participants were asked in form of an anonymous online questionnaire following specific questions as a personal reflection and a feedback for us how to proceed. Some impressions of this feedback are given here:

Did the KIDS Regio Forum 2014 fulfill your expectations? If not, please let us know why:

"No, I expected it to be boring and that the industry interests would drown out the academic interest. In fact it wasn't like that at all - it greatly exceeded my expectations and was unlike any other conference I've been to - it was really good!"

How would you evaluate the conference with regard to your own work?

"Very useful insights, discussions with international professionals, new inspiration for domestic market."

"Nearly perfect, maybe some partners from TV industries could be invited for one or the other social event next time, but overall, it was great."

"Interesting crossover of theoretical and practical aspect; revealed benefit of mutual collaboration between different strands of children's film production and research."

"Absolutely motivating, important information are shared, really helpful and worth travelling and offering 3 days of my time. I loved it!!"

How would you describe the KIDS Regio Forum 2014 in one sentence?

"There is lot of work to do in the future for the children's film and make it stronger."

"An inspiring journey to insights in the future of children film together with professionals from Europe."

"It was lively, full of surprises, with brilliant organisation and interesting, thoughtful people from a wide range of practices."

"An eye-opener that broadened my professional work."

"The ultimate THINK TANK."

"Theory meets practice - on the road to European Children's film."

"One of the most vivid and fruitful meetings of film/cultural workers I have ever participate in."

"Highly important and very effective forum about children films production and distribution."

