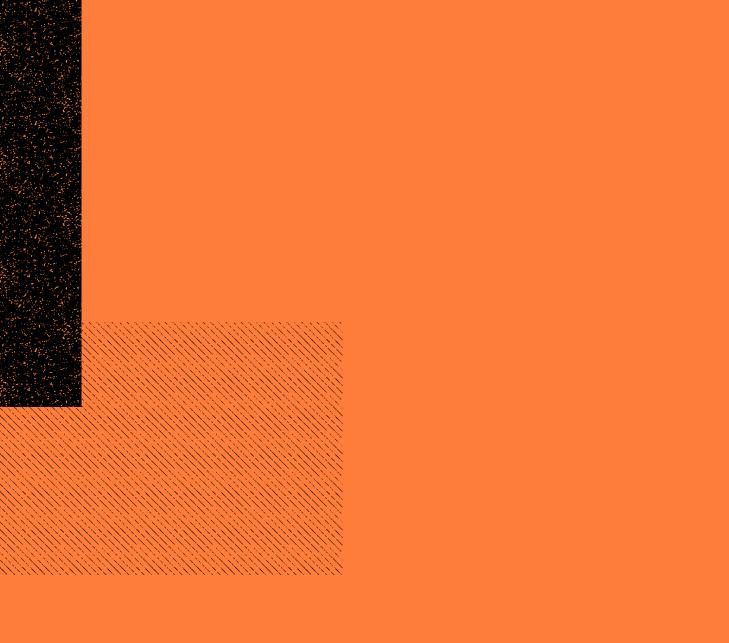
# Childnen

RECEPTION & PARTICIPATION



RESEARCH REPORT ON THE CURRENT STATE OF DATA AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION IN THE FILM INDUSTRY



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CHAPTER 1

## Introduction and Foreword

In 2020, the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF announced "seed grants" for the inception of artistic and scientific-artistic research projects. The call was aimed at projects that address the current challenges facing society, conceive future scenarios, or explore practices of participation and intervention.

We are delighted that our project *The Participation of Children in Film Culture – New Approaches to Brand Loyalty* received one of these "seed grants" and that we are now able to present our research report. This version provides an abridged account of our research report, offering trenchant insights into gaps in data collection as well as recommendations for action for the film industry. The full research report is available for digital download on the homepage of the Förderverein Deutscher Kinderfilm e.V.:

www.foerderverein-kinderfilm.de/veroeffentlichungen/

Children want to discover the world and help to shape it. Yet there is a glaring lack of networking between film education and the film industry. This report is a first step in breaking new ground, examining the state of research on reception behaviour among young viewers between the ages of six and 13, highlighting participation models and citing practical examples from various cultural fields, drawing attention to gaps in research and practice, and making recommendations for action to facilitate more participation by children in film culture.

We would like to thank Anna Göpfert and Anne Schultka, who immersed themselves in some wide-ranging fields of work and produced this report with great insight and passion, as well as Hanna Reifgerst for her expert guidance on behalf of the Förderverein Deutscher Kinderfilm e. V.. We would also like to

thank the Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk e.V. as well as AG Kino – Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater and HDF Kino e.V., who assisted with the report's design and layout. Gratitude is also due to Dr. Stella Donata Haag, Head of Research and Transfer at the Film University, for her tireless and knowledgeable support.

In order to move the cinema as a cultural location back into children's awareness after the crisis and to bring producers closer to their target group, we would like to collaborate with you and ensure that our recommendations for action may now be followed by concrete measures. We wish you an inspiring read!

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# Reception behaviour among children between the ages of six and 13

Regarding the question of a link between media reception and participation among children between the ages of six and 13, it is necessary to create an overview of studies on the target group's media reception. Accordingly, in the long version three studies published in 2021 were consulted and evaluated:

- X Every two years, the Medienpädagogische Forschungsbund Südwest (mpfs, Media-Educational Research Association South West) publishes the study Kindheit, Internet, Medien (KIM), which investigates the importance of the media in children's everyday lives between the ages of six and 13. The KIM-Studie 2020 (data collection in autumn 2020) was published in May 2021.
- X The report Kinder Medien Monitor 2021 (data collection in spring 2020 and 2021) was commissioned by the publishing houses Egmont Ehapa Media, Gruner + Jahr, Panini Verlag, EDEKA Media and the children's broadcaster Super RTL and examines the media, leisure and consumer behaviour of children between the ages of four and 13.
- ★ The Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA, Institute of Film Funding) published the study Kinobesucher\*innen 2020 (Cinema Audiences, data collection 2020) about the general development of the cinema market as well as the forming of audience behaviour in those over the age of ten.

The inventory and analysis of data were examined from the following perspectives: How deep an insight do the available studies provide into where, how much, and with whom children watch movies? What information is lacking in this regard?

The detailed investigation described in the long version of our research report reveals gaps in the studies and formulates some associated recommendations for action:

The KIM-Studie 2020 as well as the Kinder Medien Monitor 2021 make clear that within the periods under investigation, from spring 2020 to spring 2021, which cover the same time as the Covid-19 pandemic to a great extent, children's use of moving images became more differentiated as well as more intensive. It is noticeable that with regard to the frequency of use of media libraries, free video services and streaming, the figures in the Kinder Medien Monitor 2021 are considerably higher than in the KIM Studie 2020. This may be an expression of the fact that in face of the currently very mobile media market, two different samples surveyed at different times using a different study design will also result in differing outcomes.

On the basis of these two studies, answering the research question of where, how much and with whom children consume films is only possible to a limited extent. This is due in particular to a clustering of the terms which define moving images: while "broadcasts/series/films/videos" are subsumed in the KIM Study 2020, it is "series", "films" or "videos" in the Kinder Medien Monitor 2021. Thus, although it can be assumed that children also watch films on all the playout channels they use, from linear television to Netflix, it is not possible to determine the extent to which this occurs and in what company. Only the investigation of DVD/Blu-ray use in the KIM Studie 2020 permits the cautious deduction that films are frequently watched in this way together with friends, parents or siblings. Likewise, the results of the Kinobesucher\*innen 2020 study suggest that films are often watched in company.

In addition, the fact that both studies on children's media use do not consider and survey the cinema as a platform/playing channel for moving images proves to be a hindrance. This is classified as a "leisure activity" and, as such, has fallen considerably in interest and intensity of use as a result of the pandemic.

The extent of these losses overall is illustrated by *Kinobesucher\*innen 2020*. In relation to children as moviegoers, however, the study provides only limited insights: on the one hand, it only covers audiences from the age of ten upwards; on the other hand, the ten- to 19 age group includes both children and young people, who have different interests and use media differently. The extent to which the media use of six- to nine-year-olds differs from that of ten- to 13-year-olds, for example, is demonstrated by the results of the *KIM Studie 2020* as well as the *Kinder Medien Monitor 2021*.

We have, therefore, the unsatisfactory situation that the cinema is not considered as a platform in the studies that are regularly devoted to children's media use; their reception of films is included in overall use of moving images and is not measurable as a result, while the regular study of cinema audiences does not take into account the youngest target group under ten years of age.

The emergent gaps may be covered with the following (research) questions:

- What proportion do films represent in children's use of moving images?
- Which playout channels/platforms (including cinema) do children use to watch films?
- X With whom do children watch films, how often and when?
- X Which films do children watch?

These questions might provide stimulus for independent studies, but could also be included in the regularly conducted study reports. Thus, in the *KIM-Studie*, for example, we find the chapter *Books and Reading* (Bücher und Lesen)¹, which establishes frequency of use, books currently being read, and favourite audio books/audio plays. An analogous chapter on "Cinema and Film" would be useful, and could be dedicated to the above-mentioned questions. It would also be desirable for the *Kinder Medien Monitor* to ask about cinema attendance in terms of frequency of use in future, as was the case in its 2019 study, and for the FFA to include six- to nine-year-olds in future studies on cinema audiences.

The results could prove extremely helpful in the fields of material development, film and cinema marketing and, last but not least, in the development of participatory projects.

<sup>1</sup> Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest 2020, pp. 28–31.



### Theory of participation

The word participation is derived from the Latin *pars* (meaning part, section, piece) and *capere* (meaning to appropriate, seize, take over). This word derivation already indicates that participants are not only a part of something passively, they also actively appropriate it or take it over.<sup>2</sup> This brings out clearly that any exclusively presence-related involvement, such as reception by an audience in the theatre, does not correspond to participation.<sup>3</sup> Author Sonja Moser notes that participation itself can be neither taught nor illustrated. Instead, participation focuses on the subjective skills and personal experience/activity of all participants.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, people's interests, goals and experiences during participation must be consciously perceived and taken into account.

Overall, participation implies the active involvement of a subject whose interests, goals and experiences must be taken into account. In order to do justice to the complexity and possible interpretations of the word, numerous models have been developed to reflect the structures of participation. One of these was conceived by Roger Hart, an academic specializing in children's rights, who constructed a step-by-step model specifically for children's participation based on his work. Hart identifies eight levels on the *Ladder of Participation*, with the first three levels belonging to "non-participation", and the subsequent five levels belonging to "participation". The ladder begins at level one, "manipulation", in which children are exploited for specific (political) purposes without being educated about the subject matter and their own actions. The ladder extends to step eight, "child-initiated". There, children

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Piontek 2016/2017, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Unruth 2016, p. 3.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Moser 2010, p. 74.

#### THE LADDER OF PARTICIPATION BY HART

#### **LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION:**



are given independent responsibility for a project and adults are involved only in an advisory capacity.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to Hart's theoretical model, practical criteria also play a part. These are described in detail in the long version of our research report. These quality criteria for children and young people are the basis for any successful participation. They include voluntariness, equality and accessibility, seriousness, comprehensibility, expert guidance, transparency, freedom of subject matter and openness to results and material resources, as well as documentation and evaluation.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, in the long version, exemplary scientific works from the cultural sectors of theatre, museum, music as well as film/television have been employed to present theoretical participation approaches. In the process, it was observed that gaps can also be noted in the scientific field, which are explained in more detail below:

In principle, the active involvement of children and young people with the aid of participatory approaches plays an important part in many cultural institutions, especially in theatres and museums. In addition to the works on children's participation in cultural institutions specifically researched for this report, however, there are many more studies/works of research/surveys on children's and young people's participation in the political context. Children's universal right to enjoy a say in society is still very low today, which is why several authors are addressing this issue. The intention of participatory projects is to make cultural institutions such as theatres, music and museums, as well as the audiovisual industry, more accessible to children and young people.

During the research, however, it was observed that the relevant literature deals predominantly with young people, whereby a concrete age range is not actually shown. In the main, participatory approaches for and with children are missing in the theoretical context. After taking stock of the current state of research, it was also possible to determine that apart from Dr. Astrid Plenk's participatory study Die Perspektive der Kinder auf Qualität im Kinderfernsehen (The Children's Perspective on Quality in Children's Television) from 2014, no theoretical concepts, scientific monitoring and evaluations exist relating to participatory projects in the film and television industry respectively. This does not mean that we can assume there are no participatory projects in the audiovisual industries. As Dr. Plenk already made clear in her dissertation, there are numerous children's and youth juries at film festivals, which in turn participate in the film and television industries via ratings, published film reviews and the awarding of prizes. However, these practical offers are not monitored or researched scientifically, which disclosed the gap in scientific documentation. Moreover, it can be assumed nevertheless that participation by children and young people in the practice of the film and television industries remains an exception to the rule.

<sup>5</sup> Hart 1992

Cf. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2013. |
Rollfing 2018.



## Groundbreaking best practices in reception and participation

These best practices aim to provide important insights into how projects/concepts/institutions can be a preliminary stage of participation, but also how they can work with children and young people at the levels of participation developed by Hart. Our selection of best practices was based on projects from the national and international cultural fields of theatre, museum, music and film/television. The selected examples provide an overall impression of the practical implementation of participation involving children and young people. In the following we will summarize how reception and participation can be designed with and for the young target group. A detailed description of the individual projects is available in the long version of this research report.

Exemplary for the cultural field of theatre, on the one hand the **GRIPS Theater**<sup>7</sup> offers children and young people the possibility to participate actively in the operations of the theatre. On the other hand, they can also learn to stand up for their rights culturally as well as politically there in projects such as the *Kindertheatergesellschaft (Children's Theatre Society)*. Feedback during the development of material and rehearsals in particular can have a positive influence on the views of the producers and consequently on a play. The theatre educators' mediating role between the institution and children/young people is essential, as well as organized supervision and payment of travel and participation costs. In this way, it is possible to bring children from all walks of life together in the theatre.

**Lab.Bode**<sup>8</sup> at the Bode Museum in Berlin is presented as an example from the museum field. Here, children's ideas and opinions facilitate new ways of looking at art objects. In the project *Kinder kuratieren (Children Curate)*, for example, the young target group takes on all the tasks from the initial exhibition idea to its final implementation. The children's creativity

means that exhibition design can be viewed from a new perspective and thus inspire the museums of tomorrow.

The participatory projects of the **Zukunftslabor**<sup>9</sup> such as the *Stadtteiloper* follow the same approach, but in music. Quite incidentally, they also bridge gaps of social disadvantage and those arising due to the different origins of children and young people. Here, music connects all social groups and offers reciprocal enrichment for both the orchestra involved and the young target group.

While in all other cultural fields reference is made to only one example, further best practices represent the full spectrum from reception to total participation in the audiovisual field:

The **Akademie für Kindermedien**<sup>10</sup> and various other offers for filmmakers at festivals show why, for example, the discussion of material with children can be a profitable idea. Producers and screenwriters receive feedback from their target audience at the optimal time. Especially in the script development phase, children's advice can have a real impact.

The inclusion of children in the conception phase also occurs in the field of television, in the case of the media magazine **Team Timster**<sup>11</sup>, which answers children's questions. It thrives on participatory collaboration, especially via the submission of questions but also through a collective evaluation of the respective episodes. Especially in formats that explain things to children, the answers must be understandable for young audiences and relate to their fields of interest. By gaining insight into children's lives, Team Timster can reach its target group in an optimal way.

Larger institutions such as the **European Film Academy**<sup>12</sup> (EFA) also find a way to actively involve young audiences in the phases of conception and decision making. In cooperation with the *Youth Council* and a *consultation group*, activities for children and young people are conceived, discussed and further developed. The EFA team is convinced that project development in co-creation with the target group itself will lead to the best possible network of young European film lovers.

The FBW knows that not only activities for the youngest, but also children's films can be evaluated best by the children themselves: after all, the members of the **FBW-Youth Film Jury**<sup>13</sup> are still living in the world of the respective protagonists. Their ratings are not only more informative for the target group, therefore, but also give adults a better impression.

At **Taartrovers film festival**<sup>14</sup> in the Netherlands things are still at the pre-stage of participation.

In the **Children's House**<sup>15</sup> Rijeka in Croatia, different fields of art and culture are being linked. The approach of making culture for the youngest inhabitants of the city into a light-house project is particularly interesting. This may lead to new sources of funding for needs-based offerings and venues for children and young people. Thinking about the close exchange between different forms of art and culture opens up new potentials for a multifaceted cultural education.

The fundamental, nationwide provision of **film centres** for the reception of film and first attempts at filmmaking, as offered by the National Film Institute in Denmark, creates the ideal conditions for building on this and for further immersion into the world of film with children and young people in a participatory way. In addition, a study conducted in 2016 on the media

education activities of the Danish Film Institute shows<sup>16</sup> that the scientific supervision of practical projects is essential for their continuing, tailor-made development.

Collaboration between research institutions like universities and the audiovisual industry has a further advantage, which is made clear by the project **Kinderfilmuniversität (Children's Film University) Babelsberg**<sup>17</sup> run by the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF. The fact that these workshops offered for children are organized and implemented by students or budding filmmakers and researchers means that they can already make contact with a potential target group. Students can learn from the ideas and concepts presented in the workshops, take them into account in their own work, and so possibly benefit from new ideas.

<sup>7</sup> Hagemeier 2021. | GRIPS Theater 2021. | Kindertheatergesellschaft 2021. | Eitzeroth, Hoch, et al. 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Lab.Bode 2021a. | Lab.Bode 2021b. | Lab.Bode 2021c.

<sup>9</sup> Das Zukunftslabor 2021. | Arend & Komm 2013. | Future Lab Tunisia 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Akademie Kindermedien 2021. | Dittrich, Hohlwein, et al. 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Warnatzsch-Abra 2021a. | Warnatzsch-Abra 2021b. | Hartmann 2021. | KiKA 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Frankl 2021. | Frankl & Higham 2021.

<sup>13</sup> FWB-Jugend Filmjury 2021. | Dittrich, Hohlwein et al. 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Taartrovers 2019. | Oosterhuis 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Vranić & Mišković 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Drotner 2016. | Morch Jensen 2021, pp.10-13.

<sup>17</sup> Kinderfilmuniversität Babelsberg 2021.

CHAPTER 5

## Recommendations for action: Using potentials better

What conclusions and recommendations for action can be drawn from the study of usage behaviour and participation? Chapter 2 illustrates how fact-based **figures on children's reception** are essential, especially with regard to the deficits identified in the existing statistics:

- X Children under ten are not included in research on cinema use.
- X It is not apparent how much time children spend on films as part of their "moving image use".
- The aspects of film and cinema are only touched upon in existing studies on children's media use. There is a lack of studies devoted to the extent and significance of film reception and cinema attendance in relation to young target groups.

The publicly available data is able to provide only a superficial insight into film and cinema use. Not only filmmakers, film industry institutions and funding bodies could gain information from figures about where, when and with whom children watch films, or what are children's favourite films and related topics. Thus, a better targeted collection of data in this area could be an important building block for the development of future film productions.

However, the research report not only shows the potential of data for the target group-oriented development of materials and their market placement, but also the potential of participatory projects. Various best practices from Chapter 4, such as the Academy for Children's Media and pitches to children at festivals, clearly demonstrate the need to exert an influence on the development of material. Besides the positive effect of direct feedback, there is the sustainable aspect of audience building. In all best practices, regardless of the level of

participation according to Hart, young people are brought into contact with (film) culture.

All these observations are covered by the social mandate of politics, the film industry and all the institutions associated with it to make art and culture accessible to every citizen and to facilitate people's democratic right to participate. The audiovisual industry can learn from practical examples from other countries as well as from other areas such as music, theatre and museums. Of course, it should not be forgotten that film, in contrast to other forms of culture, faces a much bigger challenge in the field of tension between economic and cultural assets. However, reaching as many people as possible – and that includes the young target group – should be in the interest of both society and the economy.

Thus, the first question that arises is who has not yet been reached by national audiovisual works outside of the mainstream and by participatory offerings in Germany. It is currently difficult to answer this question due to a lack of surveys. However, a general consensus may be found in the fact that access is particularly difficult for children from socially disadvantaged families. There must be a priority mandate from politics and independent responsibility taken on the part of cultural institutions, which are financed largely by public funds, to aim at addressing young people from all social strata. Participatory projects in the field of culture are particularly suitable for bringing children into contact not only with the relevant content, but also with each other. They can serve as a linking element between children's different origins and different home environments. The Zukunftslabor (Future Lab) of the German Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra in Bremen is an especially positive example of this. A conscious decision to locate the rehearsal home of the chamber orchestra - and the participatory

projects associated with it - in a neighbourhood with families from around 90 countries of origin has established contacts between the institution and the children living there.

It is important to encourage already active projects to expand their levels of participation and to inform and encourage more and more other institutions to implement them. As Chapter 4 illustrates, there are lessons to be learned from best practices that are moving up Hart's participation ladder. In some of them, it is obvious how they are moving up the ladder – increasingly raising the level of participation. It seems reasonable to assume that the mere stimulation of basic participation projects, including the preliminary stage of participation, will lead almost automatically to their further development in the implementing institution itself. The basis for such work, of course, is increasing knowledge and experience during implementation. Three parameters are absolutely necessary in this context:

- X Long-term funding must be assured.
- X Projects must be accompanied by qualified personnel.
- X In order to learn from one another, projects need to be evaluated/scientifically monitored.

These parameters are also important factors in preventing projects from falling back down the ladder due to a lack of resources. Examining the criteria of child and youth participation, at least half of them can be found within these parameters. Acknowledging the seriousness of a participatory project is decisive above all for financial security, but also for the other points.

It is particularly relevant for participatory projects to **evaluate them at the content level**, which should happen immediately

along with the children participating. According to previous research, this is evident in KiKA's *Team Timster* format, among others, in which regular rounds of feedback take place along with the editorial team and the target audience. Furthermore, scientific monitoring and documentation are also essential for active exchange between institutions. Publishing scientific results helps institutions to learn from each other and to create a **network within the cultural sector**. One concrete example here is *Lab.Bode*, which provides digital material boxes, methods and practices of outreach work for other museums, so that they can realise participatory projects at their own locations. In this way, the quality of participation can be co-developed continually, and resources can be deployed in a cost-saving fashion.

In order to make a general deduction for the industry, this research report looks primarily at existing projects and tries to highlight their methods so that they can be applied to future offerings. However, three projects that are currently in the planning stage should also be mentioned at this point:

At the Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, a participatory seminar with students from the screenwriting/directing courses and children from Potsdam schools will take place in the summer semester of 2022. Under the heading "Discovering the Target Group at Eye Level", film material will be developed together in a three-stage module ("Seeing, speaking and experiencing together").

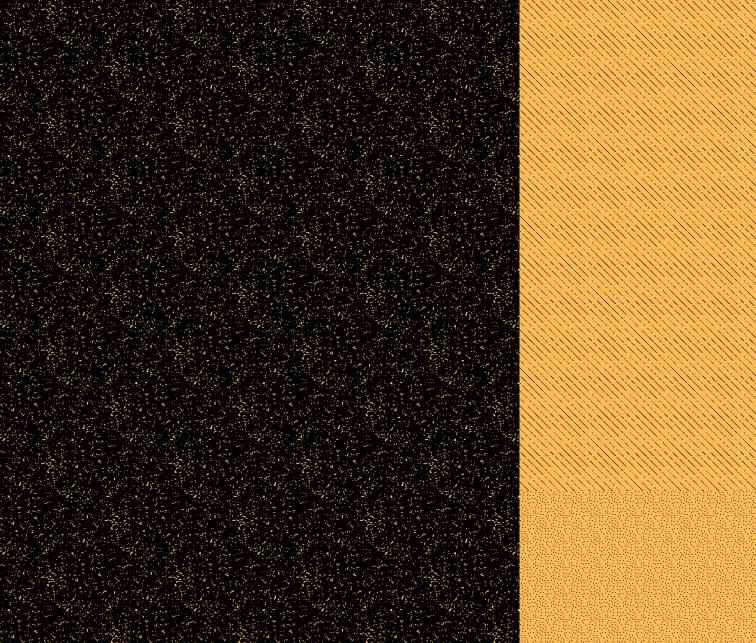
Especially from the point of view of building a network structure and thus exploiting synergy effects, the democracy-promoting project **spots. Bündnisse für Filmkultur, Jugend und Demokratie** run by the German Film Academy and a new, anti-racist and **racism-critical film education** project by

VISION KINO should be mentioned. While the German Film Academy aims to address young people between the ages of 15 and 18, VISION KINO targets children in grades 1 to 6. Both projects are being funded for three years by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and aim to establish sustainable structures throughout Germany. With a view to these recommendations for action, scientific monitoring and evaluation of the projects is desirable in order to make empirical data accessible to other cultural institutions, at the latest in retrospect.

Just as the aforementioned projects represent an important building block in the development of a nationwide network at the regional level, this research report also constitutes only the beginning of further efforts to promote the young target group's participation and reception in the film sector. It is to be understood as an analysis of the status quo, which, with the knowledge gathered, should pave the way for future projects and the provision of important data. This calls for the initiative and support of many institutions from the entire film industry in cooperation with other cultural sectors, as well as the will of politicians.

#### CONCRETE RECOMMEN-DATIONS FOR ACTION:

- X Consideration of children aged six to nine in the FFA's regular surveys on the cinema market and cinema use.
- X Consideration of the cinema as a location in the context of media use in future editions of the KIM-Studie and the Kinder Medien Monitor.
- X Development of a guideline "Co-Creation" in the film industry and for film education at schools and universities.
- X A mapping of workshops with children and young people to make existing knowledge easier to utilize.
- X Initiation of a round table with representatives of institutions that implement participatory projects in the film sector and universities/universities of applied sciences with cultural and media studies programmes that can monitor/evaluate these scientifically.
- Establishing a funding programme for participatory approaches in the film industry. As explained above, serious participation requires financial resources. In this respect, a special measure from the Danish Film Institute could serve as a model for national and regional funding institutions: €500,000 per year is allocated to the model project PublikumsFokus. PublikumsFokus is a new funding pool that can be used for documentaries, New Danish Screen, and feature films, and aims to increase the number of projects that work actively to acquaint audiences more closely with film development and production processes. The initiative will also support interdisciplinary experience-building in audience research and audience development in the film industry.78 Creatives from all sectors and at every funding level can apply and deploy the flexible funding to conceive new ideas and collaborations to accompany development and production. Such funding in Germany could also provide urgently needed impetus for participation by children and young people in all areas of film development, production and exploitation.



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