

Children's Media and Diversity

What's next in Europe?

How do you show diversity in children's content and how can we find ways of making content that has something engaging and entertaining to say about being an informed citizen

Children's Media Conference

Sheffield Research Session 7, 4 & 5 July 2018

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Diversity through the lens of forced migration

- YouGov Poll of 2,142 UK adults in Sept. 2017 found:
 - 81% admitted to knowing 'little or nothing' about the Arab world
 - 70% believe anti-refugee statements by politicians and others risk sparking hate crimes
 - 69% think the UK should take in fewer refugees from Syria and Iraq
- Implication: *“vital role that the media can play in conveying the full scope of Arab news and transformations in the region to the British public”*



Our objectives for this AHRC Project

To alert Europeans to the **media needs, wants and experiences** of young Arabic-speaking migrant children

To create **space for dialogue** between European and Arab stakeholders.

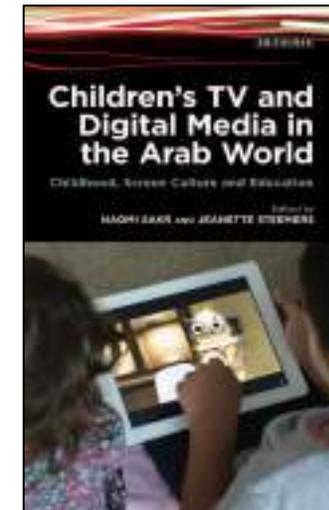
To identify **effective regulation, financing, production and advocacy practice**

To demonstrate how **children's rights** are fundamental to children's future participation as citizens

To prompt **further research** into how screen media can help migrant children develop their identities in new environments



<https://euroarabchildrensmedia.org>



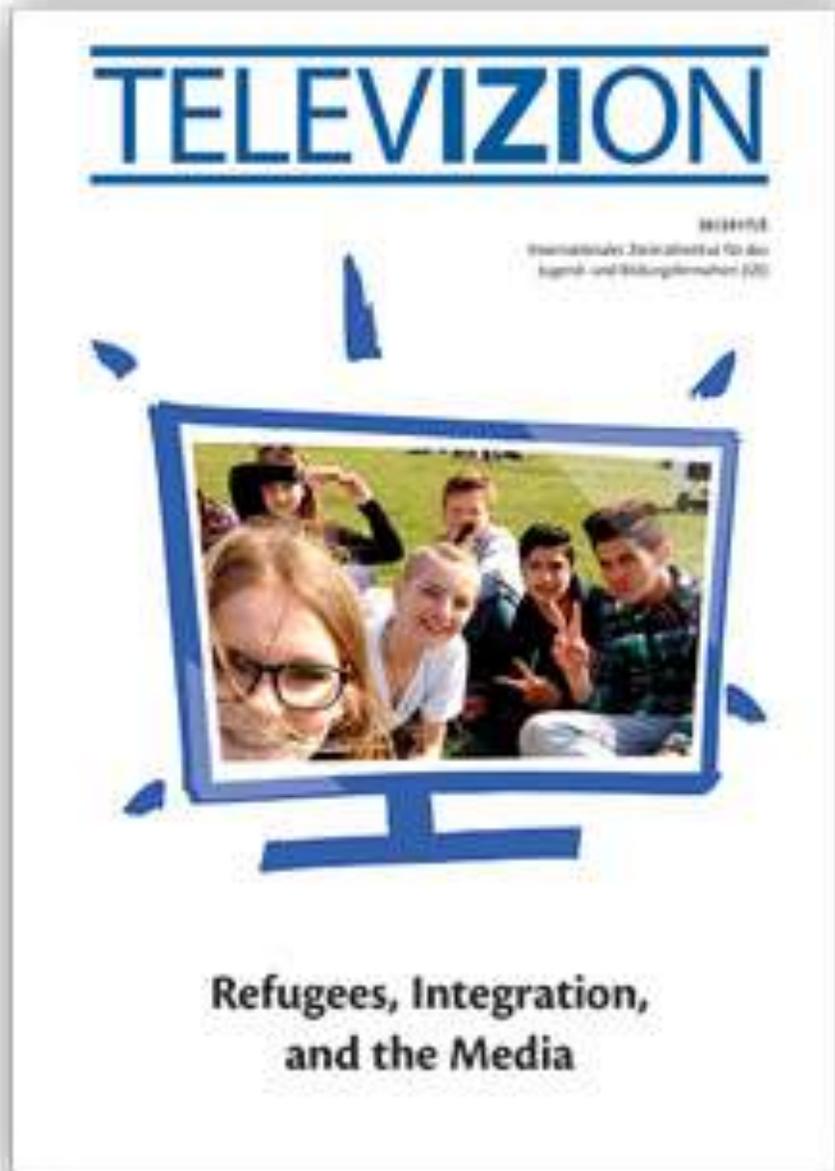
Twitter:
[@EuroArabCM](https://twitter.com/EuroArabCM)

Asylum applications to selected European countries by top country of origin, 2015

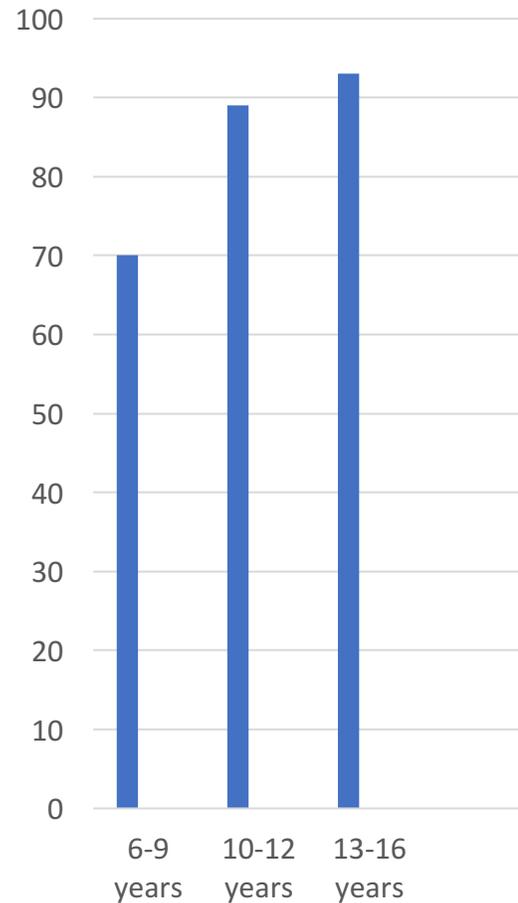
Syria was the leading source country of asylum seekers in 13 out of 30 European countries (i.e. EU-28 + Norway and Switzerland).

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Eurostat data, accessed June 22, 2016

Country of application	Top country of citizenship	% of all applications
Cyprus	Syria	43
Denmark	Syria	41
Finland	Iraq	63
Germany	Syria	36
Greece	Syria	29
Hungary	Syria	37
Latvia	Iraq	26
Luxembourg	Syria	27
Malta	Libya	53
Netherlands	Syria	43
Norway	Syria	35
Romania	Syria	45
Slovakia	Iraq	63
Spain	Syria	39
Sweden	Syria	33



% who get information about refugees from TV



“Whenever refugees come to us, they said they usually die or something. Because they want to come here because ... we have good streets or not as much war or ... there are almost no bad people here”.

Lola, aged 8

What is diversity and why
does it matter?

Multiple layers and facets to diversity

Diversity (ethnicity, disability, class, gender, age) is the gateway to:

- *Informed*, participatory citizenship and self-determination
- Belonging, making a contribution
- Joint decision-making, having a **voice**
- Peaceful co-existence, *tolerance*, self-respect
- Freedom of expression, freedom to be **creative**
- Systems of accountability that serve ordinary people

Arab children get very little first-hand experience of these things

- At school
- At home
- Through locally-produced media

Arab children rarely see themselves on screen

Dominance of imported animation



Diversity issues in local content



“[On TV] adults are always present in the world of children- instructing, teaching and directing.” F. Awan *Occupied Childhoods*, 2016

Anbar, Ashraf and Studio guests
Anbar, Jeem TV Studio (2014)



Bait Byoot, PTV, Palestine (2015)



But...Arab children still choose a Public Service ethos

Creative workshops – in UK, Morocco and Lebanon – in our original project showed:

- Children (unprompted) preferred a varied range of genres (news, drama, factual, comedy, *Kids X Factor*, quizzes, weather) and programme forms (animation, live action), i.e. a **public service sensibility** in which animation plays only a small part
- An innate sense of justice and ethics reinforced by inequalities and injustice



Illustration 6: 'The feelings wheel', excerpt from viewing diary

How much material is out there in Europe, who makes it, for what age groups, and how effective is it?

Single Authored Documentaries – About flight

*Ferie på Flygtningeøen /
Vacation on refugee island* (2017,
Denmark)

Hello Salaam (2017, Netherlands)

- Stories often about children,
rather than for children
- Issues around ethics, intrusion,
privacy and “Othering” of children
as “victims.”



Single Authored Documentaries – About settling in

Een jaar zonder mijn ouders

(A Year Without My Parents, NPO/Zapp, Netherlands, 2017)

Ayham, mein neues Leben

(Ayham, My New Life, SRF, Switzerland, 2016)

- “There are a lot of films ... produced in Denmark focusing on diversity and those films live a very, very lonely life on some internet platforms by an NGO. It really is a little bit of a waste.”
- Festival Films, Education Market



Branded documentary strands about children's lives

“One of the key drivers for us was the sense that a lot of what children see is obviously the news and aid campaigns. That’s all great, but the kind of wider missing context was normal children living ordinary lives, just getting on with it. So we thought it’d be really good to go and film children with their families doing things, going to school, playing with friends and hopefully we achieved quite a lot. You know, it made me very aware of how fearful we all are of each other.” UK Producer



Where in the World: Hamza in Jordan
(Evans Woolfe Media for CBeebies)

My Life: New Boys in Town
(Drummer TV for CBBC)



Infotainment and reality approaches

Berlin und Wir (Berlin and Us, ZDF, Germany, 2018) – International Emmy 2018 for Factual



- Broadcasters need to think about promotion, scheduling and online distribution – particularly for older children.
- “I personally think we are not reaching anyone except middle class kids.”
- “How many docs about newly arrived kids who play football can anyone watch ?...There is a creative crisis that needs to be addressed”

Children's drama in large countries

Dschermeni (ZDF, Germany, 2017)



- Approaches topic of refugees through eyes of a “blonde lonely kid whose parents are too busy”
- Ensemble cast “all the time we are personal with the kids”
- Not afraid to tackle difficult issues - “you confront them with everything they may encounter”
- Challenges of promotion and scheduling.

EBU Children's Drama Exchange

Message in a Bottle

- One-offs – from a wide range of countries including small countries
- Limited language for ease of exchange
- Challenges to collaboration



***Swing* (RTS, Serbia, 2017)**



***Dad* (S4C, Wales, 2016)**



***Nur* (RTV Slovenija, Slovenia, 2014)**

In a rapidly changing market, where we are frequently told that children don't watch "TV" and only want entertainment, how can we find ways of funding and distributing content that has something engaging and entertaining to say about being an informed citizen?

Challenges of Distribution and Funding with the decline of “Flow” TV/Scheduling

“I never met a funder who said: ‘I will not promote diversity’. The problem is distribution.”

“The main issue is the money. How do we get money for the production. We had in mind to make 6 films, but we only got money for 2, so the 3rd one we made for free. Actually the money talk lasted so long that I almost finished the 2 first films, before we got the money from the DFI.”

Asylbarn (Asylum Child, Denmark, 2014)



Pre-School Audiences – Show don't tell

- Everyday activities which deliberately “subvert the stereotypes in terms of who can do what.”
- Linguistic Diversity: “Jonalu doesn't broach the issue of different languages or cultures directly..... Our main reasons to have characters with foreign languages were to show an environment which preschool-kids know from their nursery schools and also to present different “soundscapes”, which can foster awareness of their own language”.



Apple Tree House
Three
Stones
Media for
CBeebies,
2016-)

JoNaLu (ZDF,
Germany, 2018)



Factual content for tweens

- Small productions with small budgets, and lots of episodes.
- Importance of online strategies – an urgent priority at DR Ultra – up to 100,000 views per episode on YouTube.
- Fits with children’s realities, and sparks conversations
- A boy who is strong-willed, funny and wants to challenge himself.



Hassan og Ramadanen (Hassan and Ramadan, DR Ultra, Denmark, 2017)

Drama content for tweens

- First series available on YouTube with lots of episodes.
- " We say it's a show about four friends with nice music" – includes "New Flemings"
- "If I've had a tough day and you give a choice between a story about refugees and another story, I will choose the other, so you need to embed the refugee story in one that they would choose to watch."



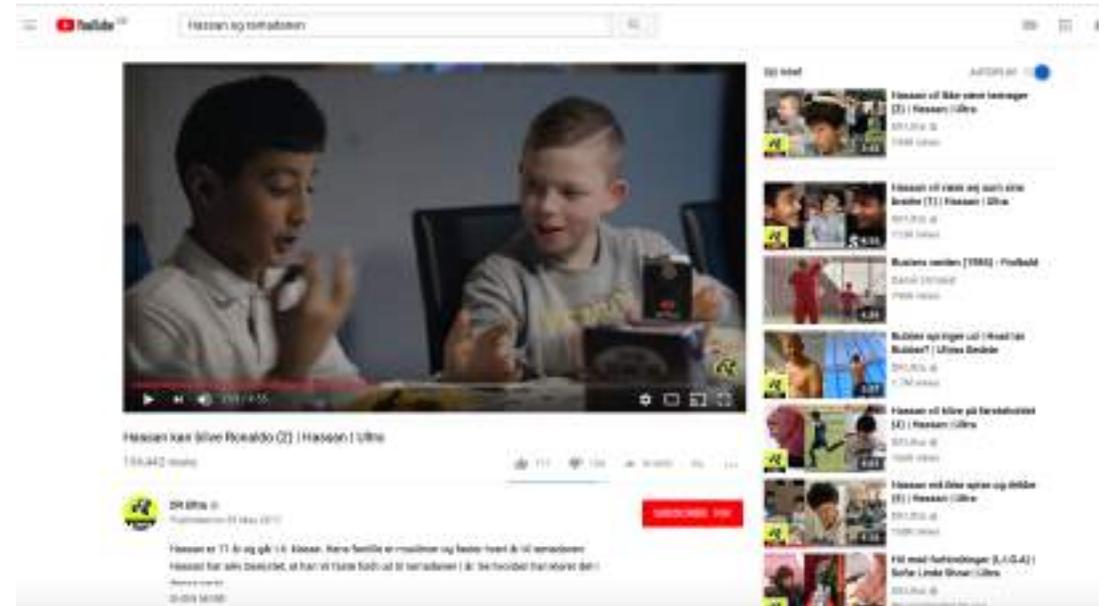
4ever (VRT, Belgium, 2017)

Image Source: <https://4ever.ketnet.be/gesprek/4ever>

Action points – Content and Representations

Show diversity, don't name it:

- Focus on strong local stories, that don't put difference at the heart of the narrative.
- Address the gender gap
- Be conscious of ethics including different conceptions of childhood
- Foster exchanges of cultural, and religious insights. **BUT focus more on similarities and connections (e.g music, sport, friendship, 'kicking a ball and scoring a goal')**



Action points – Structural and Organisational

- Establish a well-planned online distribution strategy that matches the “daily rhythm of children’s lives” rather than “Festival Fodder”
- Diversify production processes to include children (e.g. Junior Editors to propose and test stories) and tap into their dilemmas (agency)
- Try “Deep and local” when US content is “big and glitzy”



Symposium: Invisible Children: Public Service Media, Diversity and Forced Migration

*14th September 10.30- 17.00
including lunch*

*Venue: Anatomy Museum, King's
College London*

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3 Project Reports available from:
euroarabchildrensmedia.org

- Twitter: @EuroArabCM
- Thank you!

