Pregnant with controversy
RTL Television starts a documentary on teenage pregnancies – and gets a lot of attention

Germany
Daniel Schuhmacher straight to number one

Luxembourg
A documentary on Radio Luxembourg 208

France
Journée de l’emploi collects 14,000 job offers

Spain
Grupo Antena 3 committed to the environment
COVER:
Elvir and Nadine, a teenage couple taking part in Erwachsen auf Probe
The *Erwachsen auf Probe* (The Baby Borrowers) documentary project gives teenagers who wish to start a family an opportunity to learn family skills and take responsibility for children, their partner and themselves. In seven episodes, four teenage couples who wish to have kids take part in a social ‘aptitude test’. The teens are given a chance to experience what it really means to have children. The women wear an artificial pregnancy belly and take prenatal classes, while the young men go to work. Later, the couples are given a ‘baby dummy’, a puppy that gives them a first glimpse of what it means taking responsibility for a real baby. Finally, they may be allowed to take care of a baby for four days, then a toddler, a schoolchild and a teenager nearly their own age.

Rarely in the history of German television has a format been so roundly condemned before it was even broadcast, and without critics ever having watched the show. The format has been the subject of heated public debate for days now, with criticism centring on the fact that the teenagers take care of real babies for a certain period of time to find out whether they are suited for parenthood. A number of politicians and staff members at various associations for the protection of children and youths see the very idea – involving children in this type of documentary – as an endangerment of the child’s wellbeing. Some have even publicly demanded that the broadcast be prohibited. The channel in its turn has repeatedly pointed to the topicality of the issue of teenage pregnancies, and to the many precautionary measures taken during the shooting. RTL Television emphasised that the same aspects of the concept which have now come under criticism were reviewed and taken into account in good time before the production of the German adaptation of the format.

RTL Television CEO Anke Schäferkordt says: “We completely understand people’s concern about children being removed from the care of their parents for several days. But we can defuse this concern 100 per cent: this was not the case. The mothers were an integral element in the production workflow, and were in the immediate vicinity of their children the whole time.”

The accusation of having exploited children by having them participate was countered not only by RTL Television, but also by the FSF (Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen e.V.), the voluntary self-regulation association of the German TV industry. RTL had submitted all episodes of the format to the FSF for advance clearance. In its verdict, the organisation attests to the channel’s positive educational
intent, and concludes that at no time during the programme is human dignity violated, explained FSF reviewer Christina Heinen during a debate on 22 May. Quite the opposite: it makes it clear that babies and toddlers are not just “sweet little things,” but personalities with physical, communicative and social needs, concludes the FSF.

“RTL Television is fully aware of the many requirements such a programme has to meet. The show’s participants and our viewers are our priority, and so we won’t be able to please all the critics who have expressed a negative view,” says Schäferkordt. “We will broadcast Erwachsen auf Probe as planned and are fully behind the concept of the show.”

Erwachsen auf Probe is the adaptation of a BBC format: The Baby Borrowers had a successful two-season run in the UK and is used by teachers for educational purposes to this day. Still, prior to its broadcast, there were controversial discussions in the UK and US as well. “There have been concerns recently about babies and toddlers being used in reality TV, but it can be a really enjoyable experience for them if the producers are doing their job properly,” explains Richard McKerrow, Executive Producer of the BBC’s Baby Borrowers, on the BBC’s website. “Some of the criticism was that Baby Borrowers might be giving off the message that it’s okay to give your baby to a stranger. This wasn’t the case at all. We wanted to encourage teenagers to think seriously about whether they were ready to be parents, and whether they were with the right partner, too.” In the US, the network NBC set up an online forum for parents who had made their children or babies available for the show to explain their side of things in sometimes highly personal reports.

Backstage asked Tom Sänger, Head of Entertainment at RTL Television, how he feels about the criticism and what implications it has for the format and the channel.

Erwachsen auf Probe has engendered controversial discussions in Germany before even going on air. How has the criticism of the show affected you personally?

I was concerned about its vehemence and lack of objectivity. I am happy to enter into a discussion – if it remains objective and above all, factual.

Can you tell us about the production of the format? Was it really as dangerous for the participating children as the critics claim?

No, the children’s well-being was the top priority during production and was never at risk.

The critics’ main accusation is that we separated infants from their parents for four days. That is simply incorrect. The fact is that the mothers were an integral element in the production workflow and were therefore always immediately at hand. The 7- to 14-month-old children, their parents and the teens spent a total of three days with each other. Shooting only took place for several hours on these days. There was only a single incidence when a pair of baby twins stayed overnight with a teenage couple, including the nanny. The parents were right next door in the neighbouring house (including sound and video monitoring). All three of the other children spent every night with their real parents.
And then there were a nanny, a paediatric nurse, a psychologist and Katja Kessler on the set to watch out as well. So it was really a kind of ‘supervised babysitting’. In reality, parents have far less control over what happens during babysitting or at a nursery than during Erwachsen auf Probe.

The second accusation was that the babies were ‘taken from their mothers’ arms and just given to teenage strangers’.

The fact is that the parents, their children and the teenagers got to know each other and familiarise themselves with each other; all the experts were present at all times to offer guidance and assistance as needed. According to the mothers and experts, the children got a great deal more positive attention than in their normal everyday routine. The parents made their decision freely and without receiving a high compensation.

On 22 May, you invited critics and journalists to Cologne for a screening of the show. How do you feel it went?
We shared our thoughts and agreed to work more closely with organisations such as the Child Protection Agency – and at an earlier stage – in future.

An association in Lower Saxony has filed charges against RTL Television for bodily harm and maltreatment of dependents. What is your reaction to this?
We are not worried, since we fully met all our responsibilities during production.

What do you personally expect from the programme?
First of all, that its content be the main focus: in this documentary, RTL Television addresses a very topical social issue: teenage pregnancy. Unfortunately, many teenagers are not mature enough to start a family. The Erwachsen auf Probe project is an aptitude test for teenagers who want to have kids, in which they learn family skills and take responsibility for children, their partner and themselves.

Like the BBC, which published a ‘Teacher’s Pack’ to accompany The Baby Borrowers, RTL Television plans to create classroom materials for schools as well.

A format like Erwachsen auf Probe reaches today’s teenagers because the documentary speaks their language and addresses the concerns and worries of their peers, in a format that appeals to teenagers and which they understand.

Will you re-edit the programme in the wake of all this criticism?
All of the aspects, arguments and points of criticism have been considered again in our internal review of the already-completed series. However, many of them are requirements we naturally considered in advance already, since we were very aware of our responsibilities from the beginning.
Chartbreaker

Daniel Schuhmacher, the winner of season six of Deutschland sucht den Superstar, has gone straight to number one in the single charts with his new release Anything But Love.

Germany - 27 May 2009

The singer from Pfullendorf in the German state of Baden-Württemberg has ousted Lady Gaga from first place, where Poker Face held strong for eleven weeks. In fact, Schuhmacher’s single has sold more units in a single week than any other single this year, the market research company Media Control reported on 26 May in Baden-Baden.

On 9 May, Schuhmacher had emerged as the winner of season six of Deutschland sucht den Superstar following an exciting finale, with 50.47 per cent of viewers phoning and texting in their votes for him. This week’s number three in the single charts is Mark Medlock with his single Mamacita. Medlock was the winner of season four of Deutschland sucht den Superstar.
A special birthday present

Just in time for its tenth anniversary, the news website N-TV.de has been given a makeover. The completely revised portal has been online since 25 May.

Germany - 25 May 2009

N-TV.de first went live in May 1999. At the time, N-TV was the first TV channel to offer all of its programming as live-streams on the Internet. Just two years later, in May 2001, N-TV.de won the Grimme Online Award. Several facelifts later, N-TV.de is once again given a new front-end in May 2009: this time with even more news and even more videos.

The new N-TV.de has improved user prompting and a clearer structure. The site's design is more contemporary, brighter, friendlier and modelled after N-TV's on-air design. There is even stronger linking between texts, pictures and videos on the new site, and the new N-TV.de packs a great deal of information into a small space, keeping its headlines short and to-the-point. The launch of the new portal is accompanied by a marketing campaign focusing on TV spots and under the heading 'All the important news in five minutes'.

N-TV.de is one of Germany's most successful news sites, registering as many as 21.2 million Visits and 154 million Page Impressions per month (IVW). The AGOF survey indicates that each month, an average 1.2 million Unique Visitors visit the website, which is updated round the clock by a 40-strong team of editors.
Surprising finale

On 20 May, folk singer Kris Allen was chosen as winner of the eighth season of FremantleMedia North America produced American Idol.

United States - 22 May 2009

Kris Allen, a student from Arkansas, won the eighth season of American Idol on 20 May, dealing an unexpected defeat to singing rival Adam Lambert on the popular US television show. “It feels good, but Adam deserves this,” Allen said to Ryan Seacrest, the presenter of American Idol. “I don’t even know what to feel right now, this is crazy.”

28 million viewers tuned in to watch the finale on Fox and a record high of nearly 100 million votes were cast in the finale. Averagely, 26.3 million viewers followed the contestants through the eighth season of American Idol, thus still making it the most watched prime time programme in the US this season. Allen’s win guarantees him a recording contract. Of the two finalists, Allen was more clean-cut. A devout Christian from Arkansas, he was a newly married college student before landing on American Idol.

Widely considered the frontrunner since early in the season, Lambert dazzled audiences and the show’s celebrity judges with his off-the-charts vocal range and dramatic flair. With his falsetto singing style, black nail polish and daring wardrobe, Lambert earned the nickname “Glambert.” Entertainment Weekly magazine even dubbed him “The most exciting American Idol contestant in years.” The low-key Allen, meanwhile, was often called a dark horse in the competition. On Tuesday night’s final performance show, Idol judge Simon Cowell admitted that he had doubted whether Allen actually belonged in the finale.

American Idol has produced a wide range of music stars from among its winners and losers, including country singer Carrie Underwood, Grammy winner Kelly Clarkson, rocker Chris Daughtry and Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson.
One day on air: 14,000 job offers

Drawing on the success of its two first Job Creation Days (“Journées pour l’emploi”), RTL Radio France repeated its initiative on Monday with a positive show of solidarity.

France - 27 May 2009

According to the station’s Editor-in-Chief, Hervé Béroud, the objective of these Job Creation Days is to “make connections, to bring together those who are looking for work with those who are offering work, thus helping to combat pessimism during the crisis. Job seekers found work by consulting the employment offers posted on RTL.fr and company bosses found the employee that they had not yet managed to recruit. It’s truly satisfying for all of us at RTL.”

Backstage had devoted its weekly newsletter of 7 May to the subject and interviewed Director of Information Jacques Esnous, who had announced: “We intend to repeat the initiative and devote one day every last Monday of the month. It’s really important for us to maintain our efforts over the long term, because our goal really was not to pull off a media coup: the issue is too serious for that. Our approach appeals to citizens, and when I say that we are a radio station of the people, to me that means a radio station that serves citizens and is in touch with their concerns. At the end of May, we will stage the next Job Creation Day, focusing on jobs for young people, because people under 26 years of age are paying a heavy price for the crisis in France.”

Last Monday, once again, RTL Radio France’s full machinery swung into action: not just the editorial team, as you might expect, but also the people in charge of entertainment programmes and the radio station’s online activities.

Throughout the day, company bosses could post their job openings on the RTL Radio France website and by phone. And the record was beaten with almost 14,000 job offers posted.

The employment offers are highly varied: positions in marketing, sales, labour, corporate and hotel management as well as surgical dentistry are waiting to be filled, along with more specialised positions or obscure positions, such as genealogist, goat breeder and domestic culinary consultant.

Thanks to this day, recruiters and job seekers found what they were looking for. And so, an electrician from Créteil will now be able to honour a EUR 250,000 contract that he thought he was condemned to turn down due to a lack of manpower. On Monday, he found the candidate he was looking for on RTL Radio France. The manager of a sewing enterprise who learned of an employee’s resignation one day before found a replacement in the record time of half an hour. As for young people, vocational contracts, alternating or apprenticeship contracts and summer training programmes will allow them to quickly find an occupation.

The Job Creation Days held on 23 March, 27 April and 25 May made it possible to collect more than 31,000 employment positions to be filled (6,000, 11,000 and 14,000 offers respectively).
“The sound of freedom”

A Polish TV Team honours legendary Radio Luxembourg 208 with a documentary about the station, which was broadcast in April on TVP Polonia and TVP 1.

Luxembourg - 25 May 2009

The preparations for the movie began a year and a half ago with an idea for a report on Polish youth in the 1950s and ’60s. During those years, time, Radio Luxembourg 208 rose to cult status among Polish people. A lot of documentaries have since been produced about that generation, but none explicitly about Radio Luxembourg 208.

“Sundays at 23:00 – that was what we would wait for all week and afterwards we would discuss it before Maths and Russian lessons,” says Andrzej Sródka, who was a teenager at the time. There was a kind of “Luxomania”, he says. Almost all young people listened to Radio Luxembourg 208, and in the 1960s, Luxembourg’s DJs practically held rock-star status.

In researching their material, the team led by Piotr Boruszkowski and Zbigniew Sabat, the documentary’s co-directors, traced the radio station’s history from London to Luxembourg. They interviewed Benny Brown, DJ at Radio Luxembourg, and David “Kid” Jensen, a Radio Luxembourg DJ in the ’60s and ’70s, as well as many Polish opinion leaders, to show the station’s importance and influence on the Polish youth during those Communist days.

“Radio Luxembourg 208 was totally different from Radiofonia, the national Polish radio station. It was lively, it was targeted at young audiences, it was up-to-date, and it played contemporary music,” remembers Polish TV and radio host, Wojciech Mann.

Looking back, Andrzej Sródka says: “Radio Luxembourg had great appeal for young people going to Grammar School. We didn’t have any other possibilities. There were no LPs, or only very occasional ones. Everything was hard to get. It was practically impossible to travel to Western Europe.”

David “Kid” Jensen said that on a visit to Poland 40 years later, he met a man who recognised him by his voice. The stranger expressed his gratitude, saying that “for us you were the sound of freedom.” Radio Luxembourg 208 stopped broadcasting on the night of 31 December 1992. The station was shut down mainly due to lack of audience and advertisers. Now, Polish TV honours the radio station with a documentary.

Watched even by Polish juveniles together with their parents who drifted back to the old days the reactions to the documentary were all over positive. It is a piece that cherishes “the sound of freedom” for a young generation which was stuck in the Communism.
Grupo Antena 3 companies are adding a clause to their contracts that obligates suppliers to socially and environmentally responsible conduct.

Spain - 26 May 2009

Essentially, Grupo Antena 3 companies are serviced by two different types of suppliers: production companies and distributors deliver programming content, while other companies supply consumables and services. According to the recently published Corporate Responsibility Report, as part of their contracts, suppliers now pledge that they treat employees equally, do not discriminate, and comply with occupational safety standards. At the same time, they undertake to minimise their impact on the environment and maximise their ecological efficiency.

“We understand CR to be the ability to build trust in the society in which we carry out our activities,” explains Grupo Antena 3 CEO Silvio González in the report. “That can only be achieved through broadcasting responsible contents and advertising, taking care of our employees, promoting social projects, and respect for the environment.”

Grupo Antena 3 itself puts the above policies into practice and is very committed to this. The initiatives have already shown some effect: paper use has been cut by a good 10 per cent or 875,000 pages since 2006; the use of printer/toner cartridges has dropped from 1,186 in 2006 to 925 in 2008. During the same period, the number of fluorescent tubes used was reduced by more than 40 per cent, and CO2 emissions were cut by 24 per cent in a single year.

CR clause in contracts with production companies

“Within the framework of the Corporate Responsibility policy of Grupo Antena 3 companies, and the commitment of Antena 3 Television to the same, the production company declares that in the performances of its functions, it will promote equal opportunity among its employees; will not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, religion, race, or similar criteria, and guarantee the safety of its employees in their workplace. Similarly, the production company declares that in the production of its programmes, it will adopt an approach in favour of sustainability and seek to minimize environmental impacts and maximise energy saving and the efficient use of raw materials (eco-efficiency).

In addition, the production company and Antena 3 Television will jointly study the possibility of including content in the production which is expressly related to the recognition and promotion of universal values which form a part of Grupo Antena 3’s Corporate Responsibility policy such as: the protection of young people and children, individual liberty, the fight against racism, etc. as well as facilitate the accessing of content by those with disabilities.”
Dirk Gerkens still number one in Hungarian media

Dirk Gerkens, CEO of RTL Klub, is the most influential person in Hungarian media, according to a Top 50 ranking published by Marketing and Media.

Hungary - 28 May 2009

Despite the economic downturn which has hit the Hungarian media industry, RTL Klub’s managers remain the most influential people in the advertising sector. The special issue about the top 50 most influential people in Hungarian media was published by Marketing and Media for the second time, and confirms the CEO of RTL Klub in his top rank.

Gerkens wasn’t the only RTL Executive on the list. Tamás Rákosi, owner of IKO Telekom which holds 31 per cent of the market-leading Hungarian commercial broadcaster, is 6th, while Commercial Director Gabriella Vidus is at number ten, which also makes her the most influential woman in Hungarian Media. Deputy CEO Ákos Róbert came in 11th, and RTL Klub’s Programming Director, Péter Kolosi, is 14th on the list.

The biweekly magazine’s editorial team and board members again voted for people they consider to be the most influential in Hungary’s media sector. The results were published at the Media Hungary Conference in Tihany on Tuesday 26 May.
**Children’s birthday parties with Toggo**

Super RTL and McDonald’s have teamed up to offer the perfect children’s birthday party, with exciting games, colourful decorations, presents and meals.

Germany - 25 May 2009

**Search for the UK’s Junior Apprentice**

Talkback Thames and BBC announced that Junior Apprentice is coming to BBC 1 with Sir Alan Sugar at its helm.

United Kingdom - 26 May 2009

**Record audience for Britain’s Got Talent**

On 25 May, the semi-final of Britain’s Got Talent turned out to be the most-watched episode of the show ever – almost two thirds of the British TV audience tuned in.

United Kingdom - 27 May 2009

**Pop rock chords**

Starting 13 June, Philippe Manœuvre, one of the biggest names in rock music in France and a judge on M6’s Nouvelle Star, will take RTL Radio France listeners on a journey of (re)discovery through the greatest pop music on Sundays throughout the summer.

France - 28 May 2009

**A double hit**

On 26 May, 4 million viewers tuned in to M6 for the quarterfinals of Nouvelle Star – representing a total audience share of 16.6 per cent. At 23:05, W9 took over with Nouvelle Star ça continue: with 540,000 viewers and a total audience share of 4.8 per cent, the channel saw its best audience ever in this time slot.

France - 28 May 2009
Markus Steinhoff (40) is taking over as Head of Super RTL’s Business Development department with immediate effect.

In this role he is responsible for all activities in the field of business development as well as Super RTL’s German and international consulting operations. He reports to the General Secretary Jan Paulus. Steinhoff previously served as the channel’s Marketing Manager for Merchandising and as Head of Consulting.

Claude Schmit, Super RTL Managing Director, says: “In future, Business Development will be centrally run as an administrative department that is part of the General Secretariat unit. We are taking this step to do justice to the increasingly changing media landscape into account. It is becoming more and more important for Super RTL to develop new lines of business to ensure its long-term market leadership in the children’s entertainment market. Markus Steinhoff is an experienced man with a good feel for new subjects and lucrative business fields.”
FremantleMedia Enterprises (FME) has appointed Keith Hindle to CEO for the Americas as part of its strategic shift toward a more regional focus to create a structure that will allow FME to move the business forward across its international programme distribution, home entertainment, licensing and new media activities.

As part of his new role, Keith Hindle will develop, set and implement a strategy for FME’s Americas businesses, which include operations in the USA, Canada, Brazil, Latin America and the Caribbean. Reporting directly to David Ellender, Global CEO of FremantleMedia Enterprises, Keith will work to increase FremantleMedia’s position in the Americas as a highly creative, successful production rights expansion company, as well as further FME’s position within distribution and development.

"Keith is an exceptional leader with a track record that demonstrates excellent creative management and business skills. His vision and understanding of the world of rights expansion will help build and develop a more diversified and regional business strategy in the Americas," comments David Ellender.

Prior to his new role, Keith served as Executive Vice President Licensing, FME Americas where he supervised the branded entertainment, interactive, consumer products and live entertainment activities of FremantleMedia brands in the Americas, including sponsorships of American Idol. Keith and his team also helped grow the company’s online and telephony activities, which include brands such as The Price Is Right and Family Feud and launched the company’s live event business and digital content channel, Atomic Wedgie. Prior to joining FME, Keith held various positions at Time Warner, Unilever and Shell Oil.
People

Key appointments to the programming department

United Kingdom - 25 May 2009

Andrew O’Connell, Donna Taberer, and Nan Whittingham – all currently at Sky 1, 2 and 3 – are joining Five in leading positions in the programming department.

Andrew O’Connell, currently the Commissioning Editor for Factual Programming at Sky 1, 2 and 3, is to be the broadcaster’s new Head of Factual. Donna Taberer, currently Commissioning Editor Entertainment and Features, Sky 1, 2 and 3, will become Head of Entertainment. Nan Whittingham, currently Deputy Director of Production at Sky 1, 2 and 3, is to become Head of Production at Five.

Five’s Channel Controller, Richard Woolfe, says: “My vision is to put this channel on the map and with these three brilliant Heads joining the programming team I believe we will make Five the destination channel it deserves to be. All three have tremendous track records in producing and commissioning award-winning series that grab the audience’s attention and will ensure Five’s programming is impossible to ignore.”

At Sky Andrew O’Connell has been responsible for such series as the multi-award winning Ross Kemp on Gangs or Who Killed Diana? He joined Sky One in 2005, after working as a freelance Series Producer and Producer/Director on shows such as The House of Obsessive Compulsives and Lethal Weapons.

Donna Taberer has been at Sky since 2006 where she has commissioned such series as Noel’s Christmas Presents, Sky’s top rating show in 2007 and second highest in 2008. Prior to joining Sky, Donna worked at the BBC for 16 years in a variety of roles, most recently as Deputy Controller, BBC Factual and Learning, in which she was responsible for programmes ranging across factual entertainment, journalism, live events, features, documentaries and leisure. During her time at the BBC, Donna also held a number of key management roles and produced and executive-produced a range of high-profile outside broadcasts and documentaries as well as overseeing series in the consumer, crime and cookery genres.

Nan Whittingham joined Sky in April 2007 as Deputy Director of Production working across Sky output, mainly on Entertainment and Factual Entertainment programmes including Are You Smarter than a 10 Year Old and Hairspray: The School Musical. Prior to joining Sky, Nan worked at a range of production companies including ten years at Talkback Thames as a Production Executive working on a range of series including The Apprentice and How Clean is Your House?
Gabriela Leibl (43), Head of Press and Communications at Vox since 1995, is leaving the company on 1 June 2009 to work as a freelance in the communications sector.

Sonja Harnisch (37), who has served as a press officer at Vox since 2001, will take over the interim management of the department until the vacancy has been filled.

Vox’s Managing Director Frank Hoffmann says: “Gabi Leibl has rendered very valuable services to Vox – both in management and in communications. It is therefore important to us that she will continue to provide support to us in her new role as consultant.”

Leibl served as Vox’s spokesperson for 14 years and has accompanied the broadcaster through some turbulent times. She handled communications during the channel's shift from ‘event television’ to popular ‘series broadcaster’, known for such cult series as Ally McBeal and CSI, and during Vox's corporate changes, such as the change in shareholders in 2000, when the channel became part of what is now Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland.