ENTERTAIN, INSPIRE, EDUCATE
RTL GROUP AND CHILDREN’S TV
“The ideal TV relationship is between children, parents and an enlightened television industry.”
Máire Messenger Davies explains how TV can be good for children – read her views on pages 6 to 9

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Entertain, inspire, educate

CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S STATEMENT

Today, children grow up in a world of choice, with TV still the most popular medium. They have to learn to use and understand media just like they learn to ride a bicycle. This brochure explains how and why RTL Group contributes to this important process.

Yes, TV is popular, and for all ages. And yes, TV is powerful – it addresses people’s hearts and minds. This raises many concerns, especially among parents who simply want the best for their children.

More than 30 years after Sesame Street first went on air and revolutionised children’s programming, many researchers have reached a conclusion: TV is an integral part of our society. Watching and understanding TV is part of our development, and a constantly evolving process.

Many parties should be involved in this process, and complement each other’s duties and responsibilities. Parents must set clear rules and limits for watching TV. Above all, they should discuss with their children what they have seen on the screen. Broadcasters integrate youth protection into their programming process, while regulators set specific rules for children’s programmes.

This approach makes it possible to consider the many positive impacts. Parents have confirmed again and again that their children actively engage with the content – singing, dancing, shouting out answers or copying characters’ actions.

That is also why TV can play an important part in growing up and developing an identity, especially through establishing positive role models such as Bob the Builder or Le Petit Nicolas. Older children develop the ability to exercise critical judgements on programmes, and become more conscious viewers in the process. Just like their parents, children love TV most when it offers engaging, funny, action-packed entertainment.

At RTL Group, we are highly committed to suitable and responsible entertainment for children. We support many initiatives to foster media education and to help children in need. And we make sure our programmes are suitable for their respective target audiences. But at the same time, we are determined to defend ourselves against misguided censorship.

Here’s your chance to make up your own mind… happy reading!

Gerhard Zeiler
Chief Executive Officer
TELEVISION AND CHILDREN: USEFUL TOOL, DANGEROUS DRUG OR JUST PLAIN FUN?

by Máire Messenger Davies

“...television makes people fat, dumb, sad and violent.” These are the words of Ursula von der Leyen, former Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, interviewed in the TV talkshow Maybrit Illner, on ZDF in 2006.

When I was asked to write this article, about how television can be a powerful educational tool and culturally relevant to today’s children, I thought: surely this argument doesn’t need to be put again. Surely, 60 years and at least three generations of children after television became widespread, the debate about children’s culture has moved on. But the quote above suggests that it has not. For some reason, in a world where children have access to many forms of media – books, music, the internet, mobile phones, social networking, computer games – television continues to be a scapegoat.

I have done research with thousands of children about their media experiences and I have been constantly impressed by the ways in which television inspires children. Here’s just one example, recently posted to the message board of the BBC children’s news programme, Newsround: Posted by ‘Black Caramel Frog’ on Monday 25 July 2011: “I think humans should take more responsibility for their actions and impact on the environment. We have made ourselves the dominant species on this planet, and therefore we really should be looking after the environment but that just isn’t happening... We really should try to help the bees, seeing as it’s the humans’ fault that they are dying out in the first place.”

This message is typical of children’s intelligent concern for the environment, prompted by television.
Of course, children do not only watch children’s television. Accusations about ‘dumbness’ and ‘violence’ can refer to children’s liking for adult soap operas, drama series or talent shows. Children also watch adult news, as our research has found. Watching television gives children an entry into their own wider culture, and provides shared family experiences. Discussing information they’d seen on TV with parents was common among the children we talked to.

But it’s not all seriousness. As I prepared this article, I had an entertaining morning, browsing the children’s channels: Dora the Explorer meets a little girl from Denmark and talks about birthdays; Mickey and Goofy give some lessons about shapes; sweet Baby Jake on CBeebies chatters to the little ones – and then I come to a story that has me completely compelled. No switching over, I watch it to the end of the episode.

This was MI High on CBBC. In this story, the MI ‘super-heroes’ (four young teens) were up against a ‘Minister for Schools’ who was allergic to children. The story, as well as being good fun, had several positive messages – the message that children can be a force for good; the insight that a ‘bad’ person’s behaviour can sometimes be explained by childhood experiences. (The Minister had been a child prodigy, never allowed to mix with other children.) The episode also gave a clever lesson in media studies, showing how film of positive events (teenagers helping elderly people), can be represented as negative (teenagers apparently mocking the elderly) by video editing. It showed how media manipulation could be exploited to mobilise public opinion against children – a topically important theme.

Television is now a normal part of today’s children’s lives. Every new medium, when first introduced, from the cinema, to comics, to radio, to TV, and now the internet, initially makes adults fearful of its possible effect on the young. Television was originally seen as threatening because it came directly into the home. But this is not the case today. Research shows that parents trust television more than other media, particularly shows produced especially for children.

Television is not going to be banned and it is not going away. The ideal TV relationship is between children, parents and an enlightened television industry. At a conference for children’s producers in Sheffield in July 2011, delegates heard about ways in which children’s programmes are co-produced between European and Arab nations to encourage international understanding and to help children learn about other cultures. Programmes such as Driver Dan’s Story Train are funny, well-made and entertaining – and of course, their makers hope that they will be financially successful. But they also represent positive moves on the part of the television industry to help make the world a better place for children to grow up in. This is why we need to support the best of the TV medium, not continually blame it for our own shortcomings.

“We NEED TO SUPPORT THE BEST OF THE TV MEDIUM, NOT CONTINUALLY BLAME IT FOR OUR OWN SHORTCOMINGS.”
British Blue Peter and American Sesame Street are the longest-running children’s shows, having first aired in 1958 and 1969 respectively. Sesame Street revolutionised children’s TV, as it was the first programme to use a detailed and comprehensive educational curriculum. By the show’s 40th anniversary in 2009, its numerous independent international versions and co-productions were seen in more than 140 countries.

Sources: TV.com/Sesamestreet.org

De Fabeltjeskrant – a show featuring puppetry and stop motion based on Jean de la Fontaine’s fables – was sold to over 30 countries and is the longest-running Dutch TV series, having been aired from 1968 to 1989 and now since December 2009 on RTL 8.

Source: RTL Nederland

The character Lassie, which was based on a novel published in 1940, has been featured in 11 films since 1943, as well as in three TV series and five TV movies since 1954. Lassie is one of only three animals to have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Sources: NPR.org/Variety.com

In 2010, German children watched an average of 93 minutes of TV per day – well below their parents’ TV consumption of 189 minutes daily.

Sources: Super RTL, AGF/GIK Fernsehforschung

Children’s programming represents an average of 42 per cent of the total video consumption via IPTV on M6 Replay (catch-up TV service watched on the TV screen).

Sources: Groupe M6

With 22 seasons to date and 486 episodes and counting, The Simpsons are the longest-running cartoon broadcast on prime-time US television, having first aired in December 1989 on the Fox network.

Source: Matthew P McAllister/The Museum of Broadcast Communications

European free-to-air broadcasters remain the largest source of funding for children’s programming: in 2010, they spent an estimated €517 million on children’s programmes. This compares to €207 million from pay-TV channels.

Source: Screen Digest

France is one of the most competitive children’s television markets in Europe, with six free-TV channels that carry children’s programming blocks and 20 pay-tv channels.

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Source: Screen Digest
Across its different profit centres and countries of operation, RTL Group produces and broadcasts a wide variety of entertaining children’s programming. Often this has an underlying educational element. Sometimes it is explicitly educational. But the aim at all times is for it to be responsible programming, and suitable for its target audience. Here is a summary of children’s programming across the Group.
GERMANY

Super RTL is RTL Group’s only dedicated children’s and family channel, and is a 50/50 joint venture with Disney. Its stated aim is to be a commercial success by providing high-quality entertainment for families and children. The channel’s children’s slots from 6:00 until 20:15 broadcast under the station’s Toggo and Toggolino brands (see pages 32 to 37). In 2010, Super RTL led the market in this time slot, attracting 22.8 per cent of children aged 3 to 13, and figures for the first half of 2011 were even better. Super RTL has been Germany’s market leader for 13 consecutive years.

“Bob the Builder is the best example of our strategy. He’s loved by kids all over the world and Germany is no different. He’s entertaining but is also known for his social engagement, and he fits with all our 360° activities,” says Super RTL CEO Claude Schmit, referring to the many other non-TV activities the Toggo/Toggolino brands encompass.

Other pre-school favourites are high-quality shows such as Chuggington and Timmy Time, while for the slightly older afternoon age groups, Super RTL has access to the entire library of classical Disney formats. In prime time, weekends are for high class animation films, such as Asterix, while during the week there are some very popular series such as Glee. Claude Schmit cites the show Merlin as the perfect ‘bridging’ show, appealing to children and parents alike.
“OUR SHOWS AREN’T HEAVILY EDUCATIONAL, THOUGH WE DO EXPLORE ISSUES BY BEING CLOSE TO THE KIDS’ DAILY LIVES.”

Morgann Favennec — Head of Children’s Programmes at M6

“M6 Kid launched in 1994 and offers morning entertainment for a target group of children aged 4 to 12, daily from Monday to Saturday. M6 also offers Disney Kid Club at 7:15 on weekdays. M6 Kid screens entirely animated programmes, about 420 hours a year, principally series of 11 to 13 minute episodes.

“Our programming is mostly humour or comedy adventure – no documentaries or science fiction,” says Morgann Favennec, Head of Children’s Programmes at M6. “Our shows aren’t heavily educational, though we do explore issues by being close to the kids’ daily lives. The Disney slot is slightly more educational.” M6 offers series involving heroes that children already know from books, comics and toys. “I’d say 90 per cent of our series are adaptations of popular characters – often evergreen stories that parents can also relate to, and with strong positive values,” explains Morgann Favennec. The major success is *Le Petit Nicolas* (see below), an endearing character who first appeared in newspaper stories in 1959, and whose amusing friends and antics M6 recreated for a 52-part 3D animated series. The series gained the highest ratings of the year for its Sunday time slot. The second season launches in September 2011.

Other timeless characters with series include *Kid Paddle*, *Martin Mystère* and *Martine* – like *Le Petit Nicolas*, a classic book collection, and hugely popular in France. But new characters emerge as well, and September 2011 sees the launch of *Baskup Tony Parker*, about the player coach of a street basketball team, and *Chico Chica Boumba – Pepper School*, which uses entertaining stories to teach 4 to 8-year-olds different dance styles from around the world.

“We involve the other M6 businesses in our work,” says Morgann Favennec. “M6 Web for information and activity related to the shows, M6 Music for the accompanying songs, and M6 Replay, where kids’ programming accounts for 10 per cent of consumption.” Another strand to the business is M6 Studio, the animation production arm of Groupe M6. Aside from the successful production of *Le Petit Nicolas* – which in addition to the hit series, became the number one French film of the year in 2009 – the studio has produced a new feature film, a 3D animation of *Asterix*, for which it will also manage the international rights.
THE NETHERLANDS

Having been popular during the 1990s, RTL Telekids returned to the screens in October 2010, not as a single show this time, but a whole block of programmes for children. It now shows on RTL 8 from 6:30 to 10:00 and 15:00 to 17:00, with a one-hour lunchtime repeat slot on weekdays, plus the morning slot at weekends. It has made a good start, gaining between 5 and 8 per cent of the target audience, and looking to build on this.

The programming is mostly animation for 3 to 9-year-olds, and also includes some live action. “Some is new programming, some from the past,” says Olaf Swinarski, Head of Licensing and Entertainment, “but all in line with our core values. We won’t have violence, and that includes hitting, and excess noise – we’re far quieter and friendlier than most channels.”

Popular shows include Chuggington, a series about trains who learn about life ‘on the rails’, and De Fabeltjeskrant (The Daily Fable) which follows the adventures of 45 different animal characters who live in a wood. As Olaf Swinarski points out: “Its appeal, like Chuggington, is not just the entertaining stories, but the somewhat educational secondary layer beneath, about human life. That’s the sort of show we welcome, and which appeals to parents, too. Of course the parents may remember De Fabeltjeskrant themselves, as it’s been broadcast since 1968.”

“WE WON’T HAVE VIOLENCE, AND THAT INCLUDES HITTING, AND EXCESS NOISE – WE’RE FAR QUIETER AND FRIENDLIER THAN MOST CHANNELS.”

Olaf Swinarski — Head of Licensing and Entertainment for RTL Telekids
FREEMANTLEMEDIA

Sander Schwartz is FremantleMedia Enterprises’ (FME) President of Children’s & Family Entertainment, a division founded in 2009. His objective is: “to establish FME as the world’s leading independent provider of quality content for kids and family across all media.”

“We are looking to bring to market a balanced portfolio in the four major areas of kids’ and family entertainment,” he says, “we are forging new partnerships and cultivating long-term relationships with top producers, networks and other providers of first-class kids’ and family content.”

THE FOUR MAJOR AREAS ARE:

- Pre-school – One of FME’s offerings is the new and unique series, Tree Fu Tom. In addition to its compelling stories and stunning animation, it encourages kids to get up and move their bodies.
- Kids’ Comedy – FME’s new Strange Hill High is a real-time animated comedy starring a cast of Japanese-style vinyl toys.
- Boys Action/Adventure – Monsuno uniquely blends Western storytelling with Japanese anime.
- Teen/Tween Projects – FME’s first launch, My Babysitter’s A Vampire, was this summer’s hit on Disney Channel in the US.

“Our goal is to come up with one or two top-quality projects in each segment annually,” says Schwartz, “then focus on building those into successful entertainment properties with long-term franchise potential.”

In Germany, FremantleMedia’s production company UFA, one of the country’s most successful and historic names in film and TV production, recently marked its return to its rich cinematic roots with the creation of the UFA Cinema division, which in 2010 launched Die Teufelskicker (The Devil’s Kickers). An adaptation of a famous German book series, it’s comedy family fun all the way as the children in the film deal with life’s trials and tribulations – such as parents and school, but also friends and football. The company’s second production was Hanni and Nanni (The O’Sullivan Twins), an adaptation of a classic Enid Blyton tale about young girl twins at boarding school. Part two is currently being filmed.
Club RTL is the second channel of RTL’s Belgian family, launched 16 years ago to meet a growing demand for children’s programmes in French-speaking Belgium. Today the channel focuses on children in the morning, children and their parents in the afternoon, and sports and themed fiction in the evening. The children’s slot is mostly cartoons for children between 4 and 10 years old, which while entertaining, also tend to be educational in nature. As well as a pre-school and mid-morning time slot, Club RTL also broadcasts on Wednesday afternoons as there is no school, and offers extended programming during the school holidays.

The majority of content is supplied by three major partners. Disney is the mainstay but Club RTL also works with Belgian producers Studio 100, whose programmes feature characters popular with the youngest viewers, between 4 and 7 years old. One such character is Musti, a cute kitten curious to learn everything there is to know about the world. The third partner is Universal Music Belgium, whose 3D animated series Les Klumpies offers a mix of action and comedy while conveying fundamental values like respect for others and for the environment.

Each summer, Club RTL and Club Studio 100 also organise the Club des enfants, transforming public parks in various towns into theme parks where 2 to 12-year-olds can meet the stars of the various Studio 100 programmes, while taking part in a series of games and sports activities.
Each episode of Elias focuses primarily on entertainment but also shows children how a coastal society works and teaches them the sense of community.

**HUNGARY**

Saturday and Sunday mornings are for kids at RTL Klub in Hungary. Kölyök Klub (Kids Club) entertains the youngest ones between 07:00 and 10:00 with Hello Kitty and Elias, the little rescue boat, as well as The Smurfs, Garfield and Tom and Jerry, attracting around 20 per cent of the 4 to 12 age group. After 10:00, the older kids can watch Spiderman and Loonatics Unleashed, or popular series such as Glee. During school breaks RTL Klub offers family movies such as Cars, Ice Age, Aladdin, Asterix and Chicken Little.

**CROATIA**

In Croatia, both RTL Televizija and RTL 2 broadcast children’s programmes every weekday morning. On weekend mornings children are treated to an RTL cartoon marathon, while at 19:00 RTL 2 broadcasts feature-length cartoons just for children. During the school year, educational show, Učilica, broadcast on RTL 2, works closely with the Ministry of Education to help children test their knowledge of Croatian, mathematics, geography, history and biology.

The latest Učilica campaign teaches children how to use the internet safely.
YOUTH PROTECTION AT WORK

Dieter Czaja is in charge of RTL Television’s youth protection issues

It’s quite unusual for a broadcaster to have such a large department specifically for youth matters – but then there is a lot of work to be done. “Overall, our purpose is to make sure children and teenagers are not exposed to images or situations they can’t handle or are not ready for,” says Dieter Czaja. “But of course this work is closely related to protecting the reputation of the company, as parents expect broadcasters to offer programmes that are appropriate for children. Then there’s also the matter of helping the company avoid fines for transgressing the laws.”

Here’s where things become a little more complicated. Because as well as EU guidelines (see overview on page 31), there may be supplementary requirements relating to German law, plus different regulators for different media and platforms, such as TV, internet, DVD, cinema and electronic games. “Yes, there’s quite a confusing structure,” confirms Czaja, “and we have to make sure we’re working well with all parties. We check which audience or time slot we think content is appropriate for, then send it to the relevant commission in the voluntary self-regulation association, which takes the final decision. We also maintain a profile with the industry and the public, attending events and conferences to publicise our work and obtain feedback.”

RTL Television’s Standards & Practices department in Cologne employs four staff, all responsible for ensuring the channel’s broadcasts are of a suitable nature, or at a suitable time, for the protection of young viewers. We take a look at their work with the help of the head of department, Dieter Czaja, RTL Television’s Jugendschutzbeauftragter (Youth Protection Officer).
As for the department’s history, RTL Television in fact proposed the role of a youth protection officer, long before it was mandated by German law. The department, or Dieter Czaja’s role, as it was, started in the early 1990s as a form of voluntary self-regulation, though more in response to criticism of the content of private TV. He started reviewing films with the voluntary self-regulation association (FSK), and the principles behind this were transferred to the TV sector where a similar association, the FSF (Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen), was set up in 1994. The FSF now has 25 German channels as members, with Dieter Czaja currently the Chairman.

The work has a different focus now than in those early days, where it was mainly dealing with the ‘classic’ matters of alcohol, sex, smoking and mainly violence. “Now we are dealing more with ethical matters,” says Dieter Czaja, “making judgements about new formats, more light entertainment programmes, less fiction.” It helps, of course, that the programme makers and editors are far more aware of the issues, and take the work of the department seriously: “Some bring scenes or issues to us and ask for advice, though sometimes we still have to step in.” In fact there is a legal requirement for this relationship in the State Treaty, which says the youth protection department should be involved at an early stage in all programme projects where the protection of minors is relevant.

Often a show can be perfectly acceptable at its normal broadcast time, yet include certain scenes that must be regulated for a repeat daytime showing or for availability on a catch-up service. Dieter Czaja describes how the responsibility for protection shifts throughout the day: “There are three parties responsible for monitoring what content is suitable for children: government regulations, the TV company (or our department within it), and the parents. Up to 20:00, parents need to know they can trust the TV company to keep to the regulations and maintain suitable content. After that the balance of responsibility shifts more towards the parents, and from 22:00, they must know the shows may not be suitable for young viewers.”

One might expect the main areas of work to be monitoring films and drama, but the duties cover all content. “The news, for example,” suggests Dieter Czaja, “we need to check the noon news in a different way to the evening news, and the news and magazine people liaise quite a lot with us.”
Entertain, inspire, educate

"IDEALLY, REGULATIONS WOULD BE CONSISTENT ACROSS ALL MEDIA."

Dieter Czaja — RTL Television’s Youth Protection Officer

The Standards & Practices department tries to advise editors and programme makers as early as is practically possible, so time and content aren’t wasted. For films, for example, it may be possible to read the book first to look for areas of potential danger. But there are other areas of contention. Trailers for later shows or films need close monitoring, as do adverts, where the advertisers’ views on appropriate timing may vary significantly from the department’s view.

It’s this variety that makes the job interesting, but also difficult: “TV is more regulated than other media, but the release dates on all media are much closer together now, so the job has become more complicated,” says Dieter Czaja. “We definitely need some sort of ratings for the internet, covering content, language and violence, just to help parents understand. Ideally, regulations would be consistent across all media, but it’s difficult without one law and central body.” However, on a political level, lawmakers are beginning to recognise this need for one standard, and the need to catch up with advances in technology. “I hope the convergence in technologies might make this task easier,” Dieter Czaja concludes.

OVERVIEW: EUROPEAN UNION LEGISLATION ON THE PROTECTION OF MINORS

The European Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive applies a system of graduated regulation to the protection of minors. The less control a viewer has, and the more harmful specific content potentially is, the more restrictions apply.

1. On traditional TV, there must be no content which might “seriously impair” minors, such as pornography or gratuitous violence. Content which is “likely to impair” minors must be encrypted or shown at suitable times.
2. For on-demand TV, content which might seriously impair minors must be protected by use of a PIN code or similar. Material which is likely to impair the development of minors must be preceded by a verbal warning, or contain a continuous visual warning.
3. Minors should not have their inexperience or credulity exploited when goods or services are being advertised for sale or hire.
4. Product placement is forbidden in children’s programmes, and member states may also choose to prohibit the showing of a sponsorship logo.
5. As long as a children’s programme is more than 30 minutes long, it may be interrupted once every 30 minutes for advertising.
6. Television advertising for alcohol should not be aimed at minors or depict minors consuming alcohol. Media service providers should develop codes of conduct for advertising “unhealthy” food and drinks.
7. These initial requirements may be supplemented by member states. They complement the various national child protection laws.
According to Super RTL CEO Claude Schmit, the channel’s aim is “to provide first-class entertainment” for its target group.

For 22.8 per cent of Germany’s 3 to 13-year-olds, daytime television entertainment means tuning in to the Toggo (or Toggolino) slots on Super RTL. But Toggo is far more than a popular TV brand – and has been from the start. Here we examine exactly what Toggo means to Germany’s children, with the help of Claude Schmit, CEO of Super RTL.

“Toggo is the cross-media brand of Super RTL,” explains Claude Schmit. “We want to provide first-class entertainment for children. But there is a commercial imperative. If we’re not a success financially, we would have to close. Thus, profitable entertainment is the name of the game.” This essential point made, Claude Schmit settles down to describe how, from the very start, Super RTL understood that its target group would also have to include the families of children – particularly head of household, as the marketing terminology now has it. Also that its activities would have to include much more than simply TV broadcasting.

“Our plan was to enlarge the scope of Super RTL and consider ourselves not as a TV channel, but a marketing organisation in its entirety, though clearly one with family orientation,” continues Schmit. “So we would be wherever our target audience was, in whatever activity.” He calls this the 360° approach, and it’s certainly one that appeals to advertisers, who are, after all, what generally pays for the entertainment. For these other activities to take off, they needed a recognisable brand. “The Toggo name – and its younger counterpart Toggolino – was created for us by a professional agency,” says Claude Schmit. “Quite simply it meant nothing at the time, so was a blank canvas – we could start from scratch and fill it with what we wanted.”
So from day one, as well as the TV slots, Toggo included internet sites such as Toggo.de and print publications. Both areas continue to grow in importance, particularly the internet, as children are increasingly more active online. As for publications, Super RTL is now one of the largest children’s publishers in Germany, distributing magazines based on different series, or the Toggo/Toggolino brand itself. With reading being such an important life skill, this helps establish Toggo’s positive image among parents, benefiting the TV activity.

It’s this cross-media relationship that helps build all the brand’s activities, including areas such as events. The Toggo Tour is growing in popularity each summer, with the roadshow attracting 450,000 visitors in 2010. These shows give kids the opportunity to meet the TV characters they are so familiar with, as well as taking part in sports, social and learning activities. Other Toggo-themed events include birthday parties, summer camps and exercise contests during school breaks.
One major current commercial outlet that wasn’t really planned from the start, but which has developed as a natural complement, is the brand’s retail activity. Nowadays, with the popularity of characters from the TV, supported by all the other Toggo activities, Super RTL can earn from licences for merchandising and toys based on hit series such as Bob the Builder, or even from brand extensions such as a Toggo mobile tariff for kids. There are other properties that don’t even appear on Toggo TV, but fall within the Toggo remit, such as Pokemon, which features on Toggo websites. “We can reach our target audience if they move away from TV, and this may be on any device or platform, such as with the Toggo app – today’s kids are digital and mobile natives,” says Schmit.

The off-air marketing of the Toggo and Toggolino brands has extended to two subscription-based websites. Toggolino Club for pre-school children attracts 70,000 parents who each pay €69 a year for the entertaining education their children can receive. “This site helps numeracy and literacy using popular characters such as Thomas the Tank Engine,” says Schmit. “The number of subscribers to the site shows its popularity with parents. There is no advertising, so subscriptions are the only form of revenue. But it also helps in transferring the positive image back to the reputation of the TV shows.” With its success, the idea was extended to an older age group, and the Toggo Clever Club for 7 to 9-year-olds now has 60,000 subscribers.

Super RTL has also acquired the children’s educational site, Scoyo, though this will not become part of the Toggo brand. “There is a distinction between education and entertainment here,” says Claude Schmit. “Scoyo is pure education, presented in a fun way.” But isn’t Toggo educational? “Well, yes,” says Schmit, “But with the Toggo brand, while the educational value is important, the over-riding aim is entertainment.” Which brings us back to the start of our story.

"WE REACH MORE CHILDREN THAN ANYONE ELSE IN EUROPE BY PROVIDING THE CONTENT KIDS AND PARENTS WANT."

Claude Schmit — CEO of Super RTL

Popular educational websites Toggo Clever Club and Toggolino Club have 70,000 and 60,000 subscribers respectively
Across RTL Group there has always been an understanding of the specific responsibility television has to children – and to their parents. Aside from using its influence for charitable causes, and ensuring its children’s programming is appropriate and acceptable for its audience, the Group’s TV programmes and initiatives can also play an educational role. This applies not just to literacy and numeracy, but also general social interaction, and an understanding of the media.

**STIFTUNG LESEN**
Super RTL is a member of the Stiftung Lesen reading foundation, which aims to ensure books become a regular fixture in children’s lives. Their *Read to me!* initiative, backed by Super RTL’s pre-school brand Toggolino, supports the idea of parents reading aloud to children. Stiftung Lesen runs a large campaign every year, and provides parents with comprehensive book information online. RTL Television editor-in-chief, Peter Kloeppel, also supports the campaign, attending special bookstore events to read aloud from children’s books.

**MEDIA SMART**
Media Smart is a non-profit organisation that promotes media and advertising skills and understanding among children. The idea originated in Canada and spread to Germany after Super RTL’s CEO, Claude Schmit, became aware of the campaign’s success in Britain. He gathered support and now the German Media Smart is supported by major advertising and media companies and leading brands. It supplies teaching resources, both online and in free packs for the classroom, so teachers and parents can help children deal more knowledgeably with advertising. Advertising is part of our culture and our economic system, and something that children are confronted with every day, so it’s important they recognise the promotional intent behind it, and learn to think about what influences their everyday choices. As Claude Schmit says, “Education experts see strengthening media skills as an important element in counteracting educational disadvantages in our consumerist society.”
Entertain, inspire, educate

THE COM.MIT AWARD FOR INTEGRATION – The RTL Television-sponsored award is for pupils aged 15 to 20 to submit concepts for films dealing with integration and migration. RTL professionals help create the chosen films, which are then judged by a panel of celebrities chaired by RTL’s Peter Kloeppel, who says, “We hope it will inspire young people to look at these important issues using the means of television.”

GROUPE M6 – Along with the other major French broadcasters, Groupe M6 supported the national awareness campaign Talk to your parents about what you saw on television. Other initiatives include helping young girls learn to read and write through La Rose Marie-Claire, and supporting Action Innocence, a campaign to teach children in a fun way about the dangers of the internet. In addition, the popular M6 characters Vinz et Lou, a 12-year-old boy and his impish 6-year-old sister, have teamed up to make parents and youngsters aware of the risks of using the internet – and of not eating up your green vegetables.

PEB & PEBBER – Through the popular puppet characters, Super RTL also helps convey important nutritional information to young children, alongside messages about the value of exercise and family activities. Now in its sixth season, the show is for kids aged 3 to 6 years old.

CRIME SCENE INTERNET – The successful RTL II show teamed up with the organisation Innocence In Danger to build awareness of the risks and feelings involved relating to sexual harassment on the internet. With RTL II’s financial support, the charity distributed 4,000 educational packs to help teachers, parents and children understand and reduce the dangers.

SAFER INTERNET – Super RTL also supports a variety of initiatives and organisations designed to strengthen the protection of youngsters who use the internet. One such is Frag Finn, a search engine which allows children between the ages of 8 and 12 to search within a secure environment of approximately 3,000 ‘white-listed’ sites.

Adopting a healthy and balanced diet is one of the many issues addressed in Vinz et Lou
Presenter Sylvie van der Vaart is committed to helping children with disabilities.
In 2010, the 15th *RTL Spendenmarathon* raised a phenomenal €7,941,398 to support children in need, taking the total raised since 1996 to over €88 million. With RTL Television covering all administration costs through its foundation, all this money goes directly to children’s projects around the world. Twenty-four hours of celebrity auctions, stunts and record-breaking activities were given a full day of programming.

Of course the charity work extends well beyond the day itself, as RTL Television’s Charity Director and presenter Wolfram Kons points out, “If you want to give real and long-term help, you need to work at it 365 days a year.” The work includes supporting 85 major relief projects in numerous locations, including rebuilding an orphanage and two primary schools in Haiti, and providing long-term support to ten RTL Children’s Houses in Germany, as Anja Degenhard from the foundation Stiftung RTL – Wir helfen Kindern explains.

A hugely successful fundraiser, *Télévie* has been running for more than 20 years in Belgium, and in Luxembourg since 2001. In 2011, the events – which ran over a year, but culminated in a whole day of TV programming on 7 May involving celebrities, presenters and volunteers – raised €8,212,537 to support further research into cancer and child leukaemia.

"THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO DEVELOP A CURE FOR CHILDHOOD LEUKAEMIA.”

Arsène Burny — President of the *Télévie* commission

The RTL families in Belgium and Luxembourg have raised over €100 million to date. As Arsène Burny, President of the *Télévie* commission says, “The ultimate goal is to develop a cure for childhood leukaemia.”

Making a triumphant return in 2010, the message from *Idol Gives Back* was clear: “I’m giving back. Are you?” The show opened with President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama encouraging everyone to make a contribution. The event featured some of the biggest acts in show business, including Elton John, The Black Eyed Peas, Alicia Keys, Annie Lennox and Mary J Blige, and raised almost $45 million. The focus is very much on helping children and families, both in the United States and abroad.
IF YOU WANT TO GIVE REAL AND LONG-TERM HELP, YOU NEED TO WORK AT IT 365 DAYS A YEAR.

Wolfram Kons — RTL Television’s Charity Director and presenter

As a channel for children and families, Super RTL arranges many fund-raising initiatives to benefit children. These include donations of toys through its Children Helping Children programme, which also raises funds for Food Banks; plus the Bob Helps Kindergartens campaign where Bob the Builder helps raise money for renovation work in kindergartens, even wielding a trowel himself.

Putting a smile on hospitalised children’s faces is important: the M6 home decoration show D&CO entertained while giving a hospital’s children’s section a refurbishment; in Germany RTL Television entertained sick children through the Clowns In Hospitals project.

RTL Radio in France gave a mother enough airtime to persuade generous listeners to buy a medically equipped vehicle to help her young disabled son go on holiday for the first time ever; while Radio Contact in Belgium works with the Red Cross each year to send 100 disadvantaged children on a summer holiday by the sea.

In Croatia, the goal of RTL pomaže djeci (RTL Helps Children) is to help sick, poor or mentally handicapped children. Since 2006, the campaign has sponsored 130 projects, to a total of €1.2 million, and helped over 190,000 children.