

# Conclusions of the White Paper: Education in the Audiovisual Environment

At the end of 2002, the Catalonia Broadcasting Council (CAC) presented the *White Paper: Education in the audiovisual environment*. A public act announced that the objective of the work was to promote one of the primordial tasks assigned to the Council, namely attending to and protecting children and adolescents.

The Council itself indicated this clearly in its introduction to the work: "This *White Paper* arises from the belief that, in order to achieve an audiovisual environment in line with the ethical and educational values of a democratically advanced society, action must be taken on three complementary levels:

- Protecting children and young people
- Audiovisual policy with regard to children and young people
- Educational policy."

The *White Paper's* desire for integration is highlighted in the very process of producing the work. Work began on drawing up the paper only after having listened to the concerns, questions and preoccupations of the people, groups and institutions that, in one way or another, are related to education, audiovisual media and children and young people: from parent groups to media experts, including educational professionals and legal specialists.

Based on these premises, the *White Paper* is divided into three parts or blocks:

- A conceptual approach, in which the media environment is analysed regarding children and young people, fundamentally focusing on favourable and potentially harmful content for this kind of target.
- A presentation of the problems involved in the relationship between the media and children and young people, problems linked to media consumption by children and young people, the home and family, to the

media industry and the range of programmes on offer and the relationship between educators and the media.

- A number of conclusions and proposals.

Below we reproduced the third block of the *White Paper*, dedicated to its conclusions and proposals. There are twenty conclusions resulting from the analysis carried out previously. The proposals, on their part, are structured around five broad areas: that of knowledge and research; that of information, training and education; that of production and dissemination; that of involvement; and that of regulation and self-regulation.

A justification and goals are provided for each area, presenting the key fields, proposed lines of action and some specific initiatives.

The conclusions of the *White Paper: Education in the audiovisual environment* are reproduced here because, based on the legal and moral authority of the Catalonia Broadcasting Council (CAC), the *White Paper* is the local pragmatic framework for problems related to education in audiovisual communication.

## **Conclusions and proposals of the *White Paper: education on the audiovisual environment***

1. Audiovisual media construct a kind of constant *environment* in the lives of children and young people. They are an undeniable factor in children's socialisation and also education or training.
2. The audiovisual environment is not a natural fact but a product of human and social practices, institutions and customs. It can therefore be transformed and offers the chance to create communication policies with the aim of adapting it to social needs and values.

3. It must be possible to ensure that the values of the audiovisual industry and market do not contradict the values of good citizenship and democratic society. Particularly public television, which must not shirk its statutory duty to protect, support and finance content related to these values.
4. The work must start with shared responsibility, resulting from a dialogue between the interested parties: industrial and operators, the administration and political institutions, educators, families and children and young people.
5. Some audiovisual content can be characterised as *hazardous* content because it contains potential risks that may or may not have direct or indirect consequences on the training of television audiences.
6. The growing and abusive consumption of the media, together with people's lack of training, mean that the impact of *hazardous* content can damage children, especially the most vulnerable among them in social and cultural terms.
7. Not all children or young people live in contexts that guarantee suitable compensation for the power of the media, i.e. an attentive family context or a critical family attitude.
8. Children's consumption of television is extensive and intensive, generally without family control. They consume not only programmes aimed at children but also generalist adult programmes.
9. Although it is believed that families have a great responsibility with regard to their children's consumption of television, it is evident that they cannot assume this responsibility if they lack information, and particularly if the media system does not assume its responsibility, in turn, to protect children.
10. Helping families, or shared responsibility, entails continual efforts to provide information on television content and supervision with regard to the content broadcast during children's viewing times. Good use should be made of those social associations and movements involved in the audiovisual environment.
11. Children are particularly tempting consumers for the audiovisual industry as they are easy to manipulate, which is highlighted in the media and advertising campaigns that accompany television programming in general.
12. Similarly, and paradoxically, there is little specific programming for children and what there is has tended to be replaced by programmes for adults. Catalan television is an exception among the television channels in Spain, as it has a channel dedicated exclusively to children and young people. But this initiative needs more recognition and financial support.
13. Tradition in children's programming in Catalonia should regain the vitality it used to have and must be promoted politically and financially.
14. The production of cartoons in Catalonia does not receive enough support in spite of having achieved highly significant renown abroad. Only 6% of the cartoons broadcast on Spanish television have been made in the country (of which 75% are Catalan). The little attention paid to domestic production in general and that aimed at children in particular does not correspond with the desire to maintain a specific cultural identity.
15. Educational audiovisual and multimedia production per se is almost non-existent. Private or public investment is very poor and a lot remains to be done in order to adapt this sector to teaching as a whole (curricular content and teachers) and to the use of new technologies. Investment in educational content on the internet is also very low. The absence of research on education and the new audiovisual environment is also alarming.
16. There is currently no public channel that is educational per se. Only some television time slots on some public channels in Spain and the autonomous communities offer programmes that support schools. This ratio is highly deficient when compared with most western countries.
17. A split has been observed between television and school that can be summarised in the following points:
  - The values that should be conveyed by education are not those that appear on and are promoted through television.
  - The inertia of traditional pedagogy does not provide appropriate methods for the new audiovisual environment.
  - The unlimited consumption of television will inevitably leave little time for study or sleep.
18. A good education in audiovisual communication must be taken into account in order to overcome this split;

audiovisual education is understood as comprising two inseparable objectives:

- To teach children to understand and express themselves in audiovisual language.
- To train them so that they know how to maintain a critical dialogue with the audiovisual reality and how to consume it in rational doses.

19. The effort and greater involvement of the administration is urgent to ensure that education in audiovisual communication reaches schools in a less voluntary way, both from a purely technological view as well as in terms of training how to interpret the media. The introduction of a new official curriculum should be promoted regarding education in communication.

20. It is vital that research into education and the media is promoted and coordinated. We are very far from having empirical indicators that assure a good knowledge of the field of study.

## Area 1. Knowledge and research

### Justification and goals

- **Justification:** Our community's knowledge of the audiovisual environment and education and of the effects of the media on children and young people is poor and also fragmented. No evidence has been detected of a change in trend in this situation. This means that the fears and hopes, the alarms and demands for calm in these affairs are based, above all, on international references or on voluntary contributions of all kinds rather than on specific studies and on a systematic knowledge of the subject.
- **Goals:** If we wish to raise awareness of the situation and, consequently, promote feasible action strategies, then observation must be encouraged, as well as systematic study and research into the area. This work must be carried out in collaboration with educational and governmental institutions and civil society. It is a question of stimulating systematic, relevant and up-to-date knowledge of the problems, risks and opportunities presented by the media and new technologies regarding education. And particularly to change the current trend ruled by ignorance and insignificance.

### Key fields

- Educational uses of the media.
- Internet, new media and education.
- Hazardous content for children: violent, pornographic and consumerist.
- Effective strategies to protect children and young people.
- Video games, children and young people.
- Audiovisual production for formal and informal education.

### Lines of action

- To promote the creation of permanent observatories in the different fields affected by this issue by means of collaboration right across different institutions and groups.
- To promote research and experiments applied to the area in question.
- To encourage operators to be responsible for this area and to act accordingly.

### Specific initiatives

- Production on the part of the CAC of a periodic report on the area, including specific recommendations.
- Promotion, on the part of the CAC of a permanent seminar that helps to amalgamate the concerns of researchers, teachers, the industry and operators.
- To encourage studies on children and audiovisuals, as well as on audiovisual education based on strategic research plans.
- To ask public and private television channels for an annual report on their compliance with the mandate deriving from the protection of children.
- To assess the application of the Directive on labelling, drawn up by CAC.
- To create an observatory to study the consumption habits and preferences of children and young people of new screens, together with the Department of Youth and the Children's Institute and Urban World.

## Area 2. Information, training and education

### Justification and goals

- **Justification:** Information is almost non-existent on the effect of the media and on the virtual nature of children's, educational and young people's programmes. Parents, tutors and users in general know almost nothing of this area. In general, teachers and trainers feel uncomfortable regarding this aspect but professional training is very scarce. In broad terms, education in communication, generally, does not receive the consideration it deserves, which aggravates the current situation of ignorance and insignificance.
- **Goals:** To promote information, to stimulate training and establish a suitable education strategy. The aim is to provide an opportunity for creating and consolidating new sources of information and consultation on the area and to offer suitable training to media and education professionals and, ultimately, to promote a correct strategy of education in communication in all areas of the educational system.

### Key fields

- Education in communication.
- Public information.
- Teacher training.
- Training communication professionals.

### Lines of action

- Regulate information of the media on the area in question.
- Stimulate the creation of a sufficient information flow aimed at institutions, tutors, parents and users.
- Stimulate the creation of strategies for media education in compulsory education.
- Creation of resource centres for media education.
- Dissemination of programmes on media education and image analysis.

### Specific initiatives

- Stimulate the creation of specialist training programmes in the audiovisual environment and education for media professionals.
- Ask educational institutions for a compulsory and up-to-date programme on the media and its corresponding teacher training plan.
- Regulate the responsibilities of the public media in the area of media education.
- Launch informative campaigns for parents and users and adult training programmes.
- Periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of media education materials.

### Area 3. Production and dissemination

#### Justification and goals

- **Justification:** The crisis in public television and the lack of commercial incentives have led to a reduction in the production of programmes for children and young people and of educational programmes in general. Current broadcasts in this area have therefore become containers disseminating international productions that almost exclusively aim to increase their audience share. Moreover, children's and educational programming is located in marginal broadcasting slots, often incompatible with the habits of their target audiences. This harms both society in general and the industry in particular.
- **Goals:** To stimulate the production of programmes for children and young people and educational programmes, and to ensure a real, effective alternative to these children's programmes in significant time slots for broadcasting. On the other hand, to motivate the multimedia industry aimed at children, young people and education.

#### Key fields

- Educational programmes and multimedia aimed especially at children and young people.
- New technological possibilities in developing new productions.
- Hazardous content and broadcast times.

#### Lines of action

- Production and dissemination of educational programmes and multimedia aimed especially at children and young people.
- Taking advantage of new technological possibilities in developing new productions.
- Supporting the industry dedicated to this field, particularly cartoons and multimedia.

#### Specific initiatives

- Establishing time slots on public and private television channels for children's and educational programming at suitable times.
- Creation of new children's and educational channels.
- Promote the combination of entertainment and education (e.g. by broadcasting cartoons in their original language).
- Setting criteria that allow hazardous content to be excluded at times when children will probably access broadcasts.
- Set criteria for the investment obligations of public media.
- Create specialised committees to communicate with the channels.
- Increase the proportion of subtitled programmes for the deaf and people with hearing difficulties in the protected time slots.

## Area 4. Involvement

### Justification and goals

- **Justification:** Ignorance of rights in the area of minors and the media, the lack of systematic education and the omissions of public and private media with regard to educational programmes for children and young people create a climate of minimal understanding and scarce involvement. Also, no regulatory measure and no initiative to stimulate, motivate or promote will take root if society is not actively involved in these issues.
- **Goals:** The aim is therefore to promote an awareness of the need to involve and to create the appropriate lines so that citizens can take part by debating, giving their opinion and cooperating in the areas that affect them. In order to achieve this, it is vital that the audiovisual debate be included on the political agenda and become an issue of public consideration.

### Key fields

- Public opinion and citizen and media groups.
- Political and educational institutions.
- Educators and trainers.
- Local television stations.

### Lines of action

- Cooperation between the different media, educational and cultural institutions.
- Creation of citizen participation forums.
- Creation of platforms to related educators and the media.
- Cooperation initiatives to produce and carry out joint projects.
- Improvement in the conditions for children, young people and educators to access the media.

### Specific initiatives

- Creation of educational councils in the public media.
- Drawing up a citizen charter of rights related to the media.
- Promoting the Audience Ombudsman (CAC) at schools.
- Studying the possible link between local television stations and the educational system.

## Area 5. regulation and self-regulation

### Justification and goals

- **Justification:** The media system for adults cannot meet the tutoring and protective requirements of children. In this respect, general regulations cannot meet the specific requirements resulting from children's particular sensitivity.
- **Goals:** For this reason, it is necessary to establish specific regulations that define, in an agreed and participative manner, the duties of the media and educators regarding minors and the educational universe in general.

### Key fields

- Analyse the suitability of the "watershed" or protected time slot to the realities of family life.
- Broadcasts of violent and pornographic material.
- Regulate of advertising and propaganda before the watershed.
- Regulate the production objectives of public media.
- Establish special procedures to supervise and act in the area of harmful content for minors.
- Establish production standards.
- Regulate the presence of children in the media.

### Lines of action

- Agreement with television stations to establish their commitments regarding young audiences.
- Citizen consensus on harmful and valuable content.
- Regulation of broadcast times regarding hazardous content for children and young people.

### Specific initiatives

- Encouraging television stations to extend the "watershed" or protected time slot.
- Periodic review of regulations on labelling and evaluation of the effects.
- Drawing up a self-regulatory code for hazardous content or a quality charter for children's programming.
- Regulation of the investment made in this area by public media.
- Study more restrictive regulations for advertising aimed at minors.