Nicole Keeb ZDF

For more than two decades, Nicole Keeb has been a driving force in setting the standard for ZDF’s children’s programming. She spent nine years as commissioning editor for acquisitions and co-productions in the children and youth department at the German public channel before assuming her current role as head of international co-productions, development and acquisitions in 2006. For her role in bringing to the screen shows that are not just entertaining for young ones but also have educational value, Keeb is being honored with the TV Kids Pioneer Award, presented as part of the TV Kids Summer Festival. She tells TVKIDS about what’s guiding her acquisition and co-production strategies today.

By Kristin Brzoznowski

TV KIDS: Tell me about the vital role that kids’ programming plays on ZDF.

KEEB: We are transmitting every week during the weekends, Saturday and Sunday mornings, for a total of eight hours. Saturday morning, it starts at 5:30 a.m. and goes until 10:30 a.m. On Sunday, we transmit from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. on ZDF. And on
“Nicole spearheaded and trusted us with a major international co-production: Find Me in Paris. The show could not have happened without her and ZDF.”
—David Michel, Cottonwood Media

ZDF is a partner on Cottonwood’s Find Me in Paris.

Kika each day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Kika is a joint venture of ARD and ZDF, so we are family. ZDF is obliged to deliver about 35 percent of Kika’s programming. On ZDF itself, we have a children’s brand as well, ZDFtivi, which works like a channel within a channel. We entertain but also inform because we are public television and rely on public funds, so we feel we have to tackle special issues and topics; that’s our task and what we love to do.

Linear TV on ZDF and Kika is still very important; the audience really appreciates it, and the numbers show that. We are scheduling for younger children on the weekends and then get slightly older through the morning.

TV KIDS: What are some of the qualities you look for when buying shows?
KEEB: We are looking for high-profile shows in live action and animation—warmhearted, well-told stories with three-dimensional characters and fresh and funny designs in terms of animation. At the moment, our preschool shelves are quite well packed, but of course, if something is outstanding, we are happy to be part of it anyway. We really appreciate programs for the

Congratulations!

Nicole Keeb

The Animation Team at Gaumont congratulates ZDF’s Nicole Keeb on receiving the 2021 TV Kids Pioneer Award for her many contributions to the children’s programming industry!
“Nicole’s superpower is her ability to identify, create and deliver quality content to ZDF’s youngest viewers as well as kids around the world.”

—Nicolas Atlan, Gaumont, U.S.

whole family; we want kids, parents and grandparents in front of the screen. The topics should show diversity, [as should the programs’] cast and crew.

The formats are flexible—7-minutes, 11-minutes or 24-minutes—as well as specials and movies. It really depends on the project. Having a certain number of episodes helps to create awareness for the program.
TV KIDS: What makes ZDF a valuable co-production partner, and what are some of the recent or upcoming co-pros you can share with us?

KEEB: We not only invest in co-productions, but most importantly, we are giving our editorial input. I see my role as somebody who finds ideas, books, topics and themes that would work perfectly for ZDF and then find the international partners to realize those shows or topics and also bring together German and international partners. This happens very often with the support of ZDF Enterprises, which helps us to make an impact on the market. It's helpful to realize those special series and programs in close connection with bigger and smaller European channels like the BBC and Sky in the U.K., France Télévisions, TF1, Rai Ragazzi and others, but also Disney, Netflix, ViacomCBS, HBO Max and Hulu, with whom we are working as well sometimes. We are open to discussions with everybody.

The results of those connections and long-term partnerships are about 80 projects per year, on different levels; some are acquisitions, some are co-productions, some are prebought or developed from scratch together. I'd like to mention, in live action, the second season of The Bureau of Magical Things.
“Nicole Keeb is so delightful and professional to work with.”
—Alfio Bastiancich, Showlab

from Jonathan M. Shiff Productions, *Find Me in Paris* and *Theodosia* with Cottonwood Media, *Silverpoint* with Zodiac Kids and *Mia and me* (an animation hybrid) with Studio 100. In animation, there’s *Robin Hood: Mischief in Sherwood* and *Pinocchio & The Enchanted Village* with ON kids & family; *Tobie Lotness* with Tant Mieux Prod; *Grisù* with Mondo TV; *Klincus* with Showlab; *Pip and Posy, Zog* and all his sisters and brothers like *The Gruffalo* with Magic Light Pictures; and *Zoom—The White Dolphin* from Marziban Films.

**TV KIDS:** What’s on your current wishlist?

**KEEB:** Since we are so successful with our program selection, we would like to stick to the same strategy. We want to continue to develop shows out of heroes and legends, modern adaptations, free interpretations of big names. One current example is *The Three Musketeers*, featuring three girls. We’d like to do another big hit series with the BBC. We worked together so successfully on *Wolfblood* and *The Worst Witch*, it would be great to find another title that could work for both channels again. Of course, we always hope to continue our fruitful cooperations with our Australian friends and colleagues Jonathan M. Shiff, the ABC, Joanna Werner and Suzanne Ryan, just to name a few.