

# Parental Control of Broadcasting, Film, Audiovisual and On-line Services in Denmark

BIRGITTE TUFTE & THOMAS TUFTE

The creation of better opportunities and settings for children's use of mass media is preferable to restricting them from specific kinds of media content or to limit the media's editorial freedom. – The Committee thus believes that the effort must be directed towards developing the setting for the media use rather than to institute a policy of prohibitions. Because the development of the media, including the many new media, makes it more difficult to enforce prohibitions, and because one must have a basic confidence that children and young people together with their parents are able to evaluate what is quality and what is relevant to them. – This does not mean that, for example, the exhibition of violent behaviour in the electronic media is unproblematic. Some areas may demand continued attention, but total restrictions are and must be reserved for limited areas. (Report No. 1311/Media Committee, 1996: 67)

This recommendation was set forth by the Governmental Committee established in 1994 to prepare the elaboration of the Broadcasting Act which was adopted in 1996. It reflects the guiding principles upon which Danish policy and practice is based referent to media content harmful to children and youth, but also to media policy in general. They are principles also inherent in the Film Act adopted in 1997 and which provides the legal system for Film

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*Royal Danish School of Educational Studies,  
Emdrupvej 101, DK-2400 Copenhagen NV,  
tufte@dpb.dlh.dk*

*Department of Film and Media Studies,  
University of Copenhagen, Njalsgade 80,  
DK-2300 Copenhagen S, tufte@coco.ihh.ku.dk*

and Audiovisual services in Denmark. No legal system exists yet on on-line services.

These historically and culturally founded principles to which the governmental committee recommendation refers are those of awareness raising, dialogue and freedom of expression. They are as such guiding principles for the overall establishment of the modern Danish democracy. This country report will provide insights into how these guiding principles have been applicable with the concern of this study, thus how the legacy of enlightenment and freedom of expression in Denmark influences parental control mechanisms, giving priority to awareness raising initiatives along with a series of rating systems, albeit mostly non-technological mechanisms.

It is important to note that possible initiatives regarding parental control mechanisms should contemplate these historically and culturally founded traditions within the Danish democracy, given that the cultural expectation regarding ratings, acoustic warnings and symbols naturally will be steeped in these traditions.

This country report is structured in the following way: The first part provide general information and analysis, being of a horizontal nature and therefore relevant for the general issue of parental control. These points thus provide insights regarding cultural characteristics, legal systems, relevant institutions and governmental reports and recommendations. The second part treat the individual media separately: film and video, computer games, television and on-line services. Finally, the third part are again of horizontal nature, dealing with issues of relevance to the field as a whole: the issue of moral panic vis-à-vis new technologies and media content, the issue of media education and finally the conclusion and general overview.

## History

### *Public Service and the Legacy of Enlightenment*

Television in Denmark is linked to a long tradition of public service broadcasting, originating back to the beginning of radio broadcasting in the 1920s. Danmarks Radio (DR, at the time called Radiosymfonien) is created in 1925 around the time of the passing of the first Broadcast Act. One of the fundamental criteria in programme production and selection is that they should be of a general enlightening and cultural nature. Radio is seen as a disseminator of high quality programmes with educational aims and influence.

When television is introduced by DR in 1951 the above high brow cultural discourse and subsequent distaste for popular culture remains very manifest (despite DR transmitting quite many popular programmes, including popular music programmes and radio soap). DR's tv monopoly is kept until local tv experiments initiate in 1983, and is ultimately broken in 1988 with the establishment of the second national tv channel TV2.

This organisation of both radio and later television as public broadcasting represents a continuation and development of a strong Danish tradition of popular enlightenment dating back to the early 19th century and strongly linked to the social movement and philosophical ideals of that time. These movements and ideas strongly influenced the writing of the first Danish constitution (1848) and were fundamental for the founding of the Danish democracy. The founding of public service broadcasting in Denmark constitutes an extension of these ideals, at that time reflecting a wish from the political and intellectual elite to promote education for all, to spread information and to democratise culture.

Rooted in this politically broad Danish legacy of enlightenment is the Social Democratic party. Historically, public service television in Denmark is linked to the Social Democratic dominance in politics, from the pre-war era through the entire post-World War II period and all the way up to the early 1980s. For the Social Democrats throughout this period, television is to support the basic principle of socializing and capacitating all Danes to become well informed democratic citizens.

Given this political-ideological context, the mass media must be public, and all forms of commercialization of the electronic media, including the use of advertising, should be avoided. The economical and industrial aspects of this new medium are given scarce consideration. Television is cultural politics,

and in order to secure a correct enlightening use of television, it is established and developed as an organisation under state control.

The trajectory of Danish public service broadcasting demonstrates two particularities which impacted strongly on the more recent media development, also providing the historical background within which to contemplate contemporary possibilities for parental control vis-à-vis both broadcasting as well as film, audiovisual and on-line services. These two particularities are:

1. The slow deregulation process in Denmark vis-à-vis other EU-countries, explained by the specific political and ideological basis on which television was founded in Denmark.
2. A strong political influence on Danmarks Radio, in particular from 1973-1987, an influence and political struggle which largely was a power struggle regarding the future of Danish television: what would and should happen once the monopoly fell?

Today the monopoly is history. The institutional deregulation is largely completed, permitting less state control, liberalizing broadcasting access to the Danish territory, and basing broadcasting on a much larger market orientation and consumer sensitivity. Danish television's political-ideological basis in the legacy of enlightenment, as well as the market orientation characterizing broadcasting today in each their way influence the discussions on media violence and thus on parental control mechanisms: moral concern versus the arguments of wanting to give the mass audience what they presumably want: more dramatic, and violent programmes. The principle of enlightenment – as historically conceived, as a high brow cultural discourse – has been challenged by the deregulation of broadcasting in Denmark and/or to a Danish audience.

### *Freedom of Expression*

The protection of freedom of expression is an element rooted in our democratic tradition and instituted in our current constitution from 1953: Everybody has the right to publish his thoughts albeit subject to the consequences of the law. Censorship and other preventive measures can never again be implemented. It is seen in the abolition of the Obscene Publications Act in 1967. In cultural terms, a broad Danish consensus exists vis-à-vis prohibitive measures, where the general opinion is that prohibitions attract attention, radical actions and feelings, and in

some settings may lead to criminal behaviour. The forbidden fruit is often considered attractive and tempting. Thus, antipathy towards prohibition and detailed regulation is widespread.

In relation to the public service institutions no explicit control mechanisms regulate their programme scheduling. They themselves decide on a self-regulative basis suitability and/or possible harmfulness of programmes.

Nevertheless, censorship is not unknown in Denmark. It was known with for example film censorship (1913-1969) and theatre censorship (1853-1954). Film censorship still exists for children, as will be elaborated on below.

A fundamental aspect of this guiding principle has been the tradition for grassroots movements influencing the political processes in the country. This has been seen in the workers' movement, the feminist movement, etc. The main point is the broad and rather participatory political processes, as is seen in the latest process of revisions of media legislation. The Media Committee set up by the Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in 1994 consisted of 30 people representing a broad spectrum of interest organisations, public and private media enterprises (both workers' and employer's side) within the mass media. Despite a rather large group of personally nominated people (11 out of 30), the Committee was considered representative of the different interest groups.

The development of regulations has been slow and often hesitant and new protective or regulatory measures have normally been initiated due to new (technological) developments. As the initial recommendation by the Media Committee illustrated, the regulative concerns have focused more on cultural and social consequences of media developments than on moral or decency issues. Meanwhile, a new era in the Danish mediascape begins from 1988 onwards with the introduction of a second national television channel, TV2. This initiates a period of deregulation and commercialization. It develops in the 1990s into a situation heavily influenced by internationalization and globalization of the tv-flow and by the rapid technological development. Political initiatives are taken in an attempt to adapt to, and to handle, the new media situation. As will be elaborated below processes of deregulation, increased commercialisation and globalization lead to 1) revision and new legislation, 2) new institutions (and/or revised mandates for institutions) acting in this field and 3) generation of new knowledge in this field.

## Legal System

There are four national laws that are relevant to the issue of parental control broadcasting, film, audio-visual and on-line services in Denmark:

1. *Broadcasting Act of 19 February 1998*. Regulates television (and radio). Contemplates the development of digital television. Will be renegotiated in the year 2000, although some politicians already are pressing for a revision. The main points relevant to the issue of this report are: a) The two national public service broadcasters, Danmarks Radio and TV2 gain increased economical liberty, becoming independent of the Minister of Culture, enabling themselves to determine the budget frame within which they operate; b) Their public service obligations are extended and are to be accounted for in their annual reporting, in order thereby to prove fulfillment of the same. With regard to content regulation, the only regulation regards the country of origin of the programmes.

With explicit reference to the question of harmful content to children, chapter 2, §3 in the Act stipulates as follows:

The possessor of a broadcasting license must secure that no programmes are sent that to any serious degree can damage the physical, mental or moral development of minors, exercising particular control with programmes that include pornography or unmotivated violence. This also counts for programmes that can damage the physical, mental or moral development of minor, unless it is secured – by choice of programming hours or by installing of technical devices – that minors don't watch or listen to the programmes.

With regard to children, all pornographic films are automatically rated to 16 years and above. With regard to the question of violence, the Broadcast Act contains no explicit regulations. Finally, no explicit paragraphs refer to control of programme content.

2. *The Film Act of 12 March 1997*. Here there are explicitly issues relating to parental control, in particular the prohibition of films for minors younger than 7 years of age. The Minister of Culture at the time, Jytte Hilden, had, in preparing the Bill, sought to establish voluntary and guiding regulations regarding children's relation to and access to film. However in the third reading of the Bill an adult accompaniment system was introduced, making all films legal for children above the age of 7 once they were accompanied by adults. Further-

more, prohibition was (re)introduced for less than 7 year-olds' access to some films.

The criterion of harmfulness is reflected upon in Note no. 38 referent to the Film Act, where emphasis is put on whether the film contain scenes presumed to having brutalizing effect on children and youth, namely by weakening their inhibition towards use of violence. It is also taken into consideration whether the film contains sexual descriptions that shouldn't be shown to children below 7 respectively 11 and 15 years of age. The further interpretation of harmfulness is thus left to the MCCY to administer (elaborated under part 6 in this report).

The main issue in this new Film Act is that it states the basic principles, leaving specific details either to the minister in charge, the so-called ministers instruction which can be changed and amended without involving the parliament, and secondly leaving specificity's to advisory bodies such as the MCCY. The lack of explication in the Broadcast Act has as consequence that the media enterprises themselves install mechanisms of self-regulation, although guided by the mandatory demand of conducting yearly public service accounts.

3. *The Danish Marketing Practices Act No. 428 of June 1st 1994.* It establishes the Consumer Ombudsman (§15) who plays an important role in regulating marketing towards children. The Governmental Consumer Office is thus secretariat for the Consumer Ombudsman (see below, point 4).

4. *Paragraphs 234 and 235 of the Criminal Law.* Paragraph 234 states that those who sell obscene pictures or objects to a person below 16 is punishable by a fine. Paragraph 235 states that those who sell (for profit) or in any other way distribute, produce or buy material to sell which contains obscene pictures or moving pictures involving children is punished with a fine or prison for up to 6 months.

## Relevant Institutions

The Ministry of Culture is one of the most central executive bodies with regard to legislation referring to children and media, and in particular to parental control mechanisms. However, also the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Social Affairs have relevant institutions subdued their administration as shall be explained below.

The guiding principles of the Ministry of Culture was stipulated already in 1977 when the Minister of Culture at the time, Niels Matthiasen, presented his Statement for Culture Policy, explicating the four guiding principles in Danish culture policy, under

which the media pertain. These principles are: freedom of expression, decentralisation, cultural democracy and quality. Regarding children and the media, four institutions – two of which are linked to the Ministry of Culture – are particularly relevant:

a) Children and Culture is an advisory body established by the Ministry of Culture already in 1975. Its objectives are the following: to advise and assist the Ministry of Culture in matters concerning children, young people and culture; to keep abreast with developments and pass information and experience on to relevant groups, institutions and organisations through required meetings and the exchange of information as required; to stimulate and support work with child and youth culture throughout Denmark and also contribute to new approaches at both central and local levels; to initiate relevant projects needing special contributions in coordination with relevant authorities, organisations and institutions; to carry out relevant tasks, assigned by the minister, in a co-operative effort with the ministry's other advisory bodies and institutions in general. Their 1998-budget was 5.7 Mio Danish kroner (House of Imagination 1998: 26).

b) The Children's Council is an advisory body established on a provisional basis, in 1994, by initiative of the Minister for Social Affairs. From 1997 it has become permanent, regulated by the Departmental Order no. 2 of 5 January 1998. It is an independent body which has as its objective to promote children's rights and interests in society. The Council has 7 members, a secretariat of 4 persons and a budget in 1997 on 8.2 Mio Danish kroner. The Children's Council was influential on the preparation of the Film Act in 1996-1997, especially on the aspect of establishing a minimum age and the rule of adult accompaniment.

c) The Media Council for Children and Young People (MCCY) was established by the Minister of Culture in April 1997. Chapter 6 in the Film Act of 12 March 1997 establishes the legal setting, outlining the Council's mandate. Simultaneously with its establishment, the State Film Censorship was closed down. The MCCY's activity is regulated by the Departmental Order no. 30 of 16 January 1998. The advisory body is fundamental vis-à-vis regulation toward film, video and computer games on CD-ROM. It also pertains to the mandate for MCCY to maintain a continuous dialogue with the national public service broadcasters, Danmarks Radio and TV2, in order to advise them to follow the stipulated regulations provided by the Broadcaster Act and the subsequent ministerial order.

MCCY's budget is 1.8 Mio Danish kroner in 1998. The expected 1998-income from producers and distributors paying for the evaluation of film is 300.000 Danish kroner.

d) A fourth relevant institution, subordinated to the Ministry of Trade, is the Governmental Consumer Council. It was established in 1994 and is particularly relevant vis-a-vis marketing towards children, emphasizing the need for protecting children against marketing of violent and pornographic material. Increasingly active vis-à-vis the challenges merging with the development of the Internet.

### Reports and Recommendations

Two reports from the mid-1990s constitute fundamental references regarding the question of parental control mechanisms. The first one is the *Report No.1311* written in 1996 by the Media Committee under the Prime Minister's Department. It is referred to in detail under the headline "Television". The other report is *Media Violence – children and young people* written by the Committee concerning Film-, Tv- and Video-Violence established by the Minister of Culture in 1995. This was a comprehensive analysis of the research conducted, nationally and internationally in the area of children/youth and violence. The Committee concluded by formulating a series of recommendations vis-à-vis a series of different constituencies in society. The principal recommendations were:

- a) Parents. The committee recommends increased awareness raising towards parents, informing them of how moving pictures can influence children both in a positive and negative direction. Better informed parents should influence positively on their children by speaking to their children about what they watch, help them find programmes relevant for their age and finally talk with their children about any violence they see and about the function of the violence in the programme.
- b) School, leisure time institutions and kindergartens. The committee recommends to support media education in school in as such that the pupil from the very beginning of school obtain possibilities to work both productively and analytically with moving images.
- c) Social- and Health Policy. The committee recommends to develop preventive and reaching out casework initiatives that socially, in health terms and also economically, can improve the

situation for problem-threatened families and thus for a number of those children and young people that are particularly vulnerable towards violent programmes.

- d) Media Institutions and the area of Media Policy. The committee recommends that serious attention is given to the quantity and quality of violence shown on television, especially within the family programme schedule where there are many infant viewers.
- e) Computer Games and Virtual Reality. The committee recommends that an advisory rating is sought carried out on computer games with a scaring or violent content, corresponding to the rating of video film.

To sum up, within the last 4-5 years a series of bills have been revised, public institutions have been established and national, governmental reports and recommendations formulated. These initiatives have sought to contemplate and respond to the last years' substantial changes in media structures and technological development, characterised by globalization and increased commercialisation. Referent to parental control, a series of mechanisms have been established referring to each medium, which will be elaborated on in the following.

### Film and Video

The organisation which takes care of evaluating film and video for children and young people is the Media Council for Children and Young People (MCCY). The MCCY has 7 members. Three of the council members are child experts, two members have knowledge about the film industry, one member represents cultural and/or media insight while the last member represents consumer interests. The tasks of the MCCY include the work previously carried out by the State Film Censorship in addition to a series of new tasks with information and guidance. The MCCY:

1. Evaluates film
2. Provides guidance and information on film
3. Demonstrates independent initiatives regarding the suitability of films
4. Assists the minister
5. Establishes contact and dialogue with broadcasters and others
6. Participates in Nordic cooperation

Through these tasks, the role of the MCCY is: 1) To protect children and youth, 2) To contribute to developing media awareness and 3) To contribute to the development of competent people that are able to choose.

The principal task of the MCCY is to evaluate films and videos analysing their suitability for children below the age of 7, 11 and 15. They base their evaluations on the criterion of harmfulness that are stipulated in the Film Act, albeit in very general terms. Within the first year of the MCCY's existence substantial time has been spent on formulating and establishing consensus on the criteria for assessing harmfulness in films and videos. Given the ambiguity of the concept, the discussions will continue. The notion of harmfulness changes as does the norms and moral of a society.

It is important to stress that in the evaluation of films and videos, it is the harmfulness and not the suitability the age limits express. It implies that a film may receive the 7-year age classification without thereby being particularly suitable for children. The film may be both difficult to understand and boring for children, however not thereby containing a harmful content. The MCCY's evaluate films from a general perspective including interaction between

the actual story and the special effects. Harmful effects are not an unequivocal concept. The concept changes with norms of the society and moral development. Films harmful for children one generation ago will probably not obtain the same rating today. Furthermore, children and young people today are more familiar with moving images.

The evaluation committee under MCCY have in 1997 evaluated 127 films, 150 trailers, 208 videos and 100 commercials. In compliance with the technological development it has from 15 April 1998 become part of MCCY's practice to evaluate and label Digitale Versatile Discs (DVDs) in accordance with the practice for videos.

The principal purpose of evaluating films is to protect children and young people when they watch films in the cinema or rent, buy or borrow videos. In this respect one can say that the MCCY sets the official standards and limits as to what children and young people ought to – and ought not to – watch. Private performances and films shown on television are not encompassed in the MCCY's work. The MCCY has an evaluative committee that view and classify the films. The committee consists of the chairperson of MCCY and a number of children's experts.



Film Ratings: 1) For all, but not recommended for children under the age of 7, 2) Permitted for children above the age of 11, 3) Permitted for children above the age of 15, 4) Permitted for all.

In accordance with the Film Act of 12 March 1997 it has since its coming into force in April 1997 been permitted for children of the age of 7 and above to watch any film in the cinema, as long as the child is accompanied by an adult. This decision was received with satisfaction within the industry and likewise among parents. MCCY's evaluation is that this rule seems to solve situations that used to create frustration among the audience – the fact that they could not decide themselves what their children were allowed to see. This rule provides the parents and children with the possibility of jointly deciding what the children can or cannot bear to see, thereby putting cinema visits on the same footing as what occurs at home, where it is the adult parent who decides which programme children may watch on television or video.

The problem about this rule of accompaniment is that it can become a pretext for the parents to do nothing. Although an adult accompanies a child, the scaring elements do not disappear in a film. Another problem lies in the confusion that may occur in advertising a film, where the rule of accompaniment is mixed up with the MCCY-evaluation of the film. For example, a violent film with a 15 years age limit can be advertised while – in the same advertisement – it may appear that the film can be seen by children aged 7 and above, as long as they are accompanied by an adult. The audience get confused in this situation. The MCCY maintains a constant dialogue with representatives of the industry, seeking a solution where the rule of accompaniment can be advertised independent of the evaluation of each individual film.

In addition to this work on evaluation of films and videos, the MCCY attributes information, awareness-raising and the formulation of guidelines top priority. MCCY co-operates with other institutions (ie The Danish Film Institute, public libraries, children film clubs) with similar purposes to pass on information to teachers, users and parents about suitable films for children and about the importance of raising awareness among the users.

### **Computer Games**

Computer games constitute an increasing part of children's consumption of media. There are different types of computer games, and children use them either on ordinary computers or on play stations. Parents often have a relaxed attitude to computers and computer games, and they often buy computers in order to enable their children to learn how to use the computers which they think is useful in relation

to the children's future, and parents often consider some of the games such as for instance the strategy games very good for the children. There are gender differences, as it is mainly the boys who are using the games, maybe because most of the computer games produced till now focus on the boys as target group. It should be emphasized, that – although the public debate has been very much focused on the violence of the computer games – there are a great variety of computer games available on the market.

So far not much research has been carried out regarding children's and young people's use of computers. Accordingly, the Media Council has decided to initiate a research project regarding the possible harmfulness of computer games in order to consider the possibility of making a rating system for computer games. The idea is inspired by the recommendations of the Report on Media Violence. The project will be finished by the end of 1999. Another project supported by the Media Council is a survey which investigates a possible categorisation of all computer games within a 12 month period together with an analysis of the distribution of the games in Denmark. This project will be finished by February 1999.

Rating of computer games is more difficult than rating of videos. One of the reasons for that is that the computer games are received in an original foreign package with rating from another country. Seen from a consumer perspective it is confusing to receive a product with two ratings. This problem has not yet been solved.

### **Television**

#### *The History and Role of Electronic Visual Media in Danish Families*

Television is a rather new phenomenon in Denmark. It was introduced in 1951 with one public service channel, and – like in all other countries around the world – tv grew very quickly, and today almost all Danish families are able to watch a great number of international commercial tv channels. At the same time video and computers have become members of the Danish family. The video recorder entered the Danish households in 1981 with a coverage of 4%, growing to 52% in 1992 and 79% in 1995. Recent figures regarding tv, video and computers are presented later. Thus, during the past few years electronic media have been undergoing a change and has become a very important factor in the every day lives of grown ups and children.

In a society characterized by an increasing extent of communication, one-way as well as two-way, children and young people are today surrounded by and using media to an extent that were not expected a few years ago. Thus the electronic visual media are in these years acquiring a socializing and educational function that is new in history.

During the past few years globalization and commercialization of the visual media have had an influence on the content. In order to attract the viewers the tv screen has during recent years presented an increasing amount of entertainment and of violent films. At the same time commercials in the shape of traditional tv commercials as well as product placement and program length commercials have entered the Danish tv screen.

Before the impact on children of these new trends and possible rating system are discussed a summary of recent research regarding children and media will be presented.

In the 1990s various research reports and papers have been published. Report no. 1311, Media Committee 1996 regarding children's and young people's use of media, mentioned earlier, has some crucial results:

Key statements regarding children's and young people's use of mass media:

- Children use less time on media than young people. 7-12 year old children use 3½ hours daily on media. A teen-ager uses 4:45 hours daily.
- Children and young people do not use as much time on media as grown-ups do. The average daily media consumption for 7-18 year olds is 4 hours, whereas a grown-up person uses 6 hours daily on media. Adults spend more time on radio.
- Children and young people spend much more time on electronic visual media than on newspapers.
- Children and young people have in general a more varied consumption of electronic media than adults, and they get more easily used to new media such as satellite tv, video and computers.
- Some children and young people have a remarkably high consumption of specific media. For instance 18% of the teenagers use more than 3 hours daily on tv, and 29% of the teenagers spend more than one hour daily watching video. Another example is that 56% of the 7-9 year old children only read print media in the shape of comics in their free time.

- Some children and young people have a remarkably low consumption of specific media. Every fifth of the teenagers do not at all use print media, and 40% of the children do not listen to the radio.
- There is a vague trend that children and young people do not use print media very much. However, this is a trend which is due to the population in general.
- Children and young people use more or less the same amount of time daily as they did 10 years earlier. However, there is a decrease in relation to radio.
- Those who have access to satellite tv use a considerable amount of their viewing time on satellite tv. The percentage for adults is 37%, whereas teenagers use 48% of their viewing time on satellite tv. (ibid:13)

The same report focuses on two items in relation to children and media i.e. *media violence* and *commercials*.

The conclusions regarding children and media violence are:

- There is a broad spectrum of factors such as for instance the child's social background and family situation that may influence children and make them afraid, aggressive or restless – and that the media play an important role in relation to this
- Some children and young people are more susceptible to influence by media violence than others. These are:
  - a) the youngest children because they to a lesser extent are able to distinguish between fiction and reality
  - b) boys with lower social background who are large-scale consumers of television and video
  - c) children and young people from different social classes but all in lack of loving care, with bad conditions of life, and negative school experiences.

As to commercials the rules for marketing towards children and young people are mentioned. These are in accordance with the EU directive (TWF) but have some more detailed rules.

Seen from a family perspective a new trend in the 1990's is that the family is no longer gathered around tv every night but is splitting up due to the fact that there are several tv sets, video recorders

and computers in the family. The newest research has shown that in the rooms of children and young people the electronic visual media have become part of the furniture.

Figures from 1995 are the following for media equipment in 12-15 year old children's rooms: Radio: 96%, CD/record player: 66%, tape recorders: 95%, tv: 62%, video: 18%, computer for computer games: 17% and home computer: 16%. A characteristic trend is the gender difference, boys having more equipment than girls. (Andersen 1995) The same trend is appearing in the ongoing 5 year research project "Girls' and boys' everyday life and media culture – between a global and a local perspective", which will be finished in the year 2002. So far a pilot report from that project has been published (Christensen & Tufte, 1998).

The most recent Danish published research regarding young people (Drotner et al. 1997, Fridberg, 1997) have interesting figures and conclusions:

- 15-18 year olds spend around 7 hours daily on media with the gender difference that boys in general use half an hour more daily than the girls
- The visual media are the preferred media, boys using a little more than 4 hours daily, girls 3:43 hours daily
- The boys spend almost one and a half hour daily in front of the computer where the girls spend less than the half amount of that time

The young generation is called the "multi-media generation" and it is emphasized that although the average amount of time used on media daily is about 7 hours it is a mix of media, as the young people often use several media at the same time.

Although the computer plays an important role for the young people it does not replace the other media. It has been an important supplement to the total media menu where the visual media play an important role.

As to the content young people prefer tv fiction such as films, soaps and sitcoms, and they watch more foreign fiction than the population in general.

One interesting aspect in relation to some of the above-mentioned research is that apparently family culture is crucial for children, and looking for instance at the content perspective of the children's media use, especially the children's familiarity with international media culture and advertising as well as its possible influence on purchases, it would appear that the gender-specific differences that emerge in the children's preferences are firmly anchored in

the attitudes and values prevailing within the family – at any rate what young children are concerned. Apparently media play a very important role in most Danish families although they are used with different approaches depending on the norms and traditions of the family, and with gender and generation differences.

### *Rating Systems and Parental Control in Relation to TV*

What makes ratings in relation to tv especially difficult is that the viewing takes place in the family where all the members are watching together or – which makes it even more difficult today – that the child watches on its own without the parents being present.

An informal watershed of 21.00 is used by the Public Service Television Danmarks Radio, and there is also a standard provision for all broadcasters that those programmes which are considered harmful to minors can only be shown after midnight. The guidelines used by Danmarks Radio are inspired by EBU (The European Broadcasting Union).

A normal procedure is acoustic warnings before films or tv series that may be harmful to children. And – where trailers for violent films sometimes have happened to be placed in relation to children's programmes – this is not the case any more. Such trailers are now – mainly – placed in relation to programmes for grown ups.

### **On-line Services – The Internet**

So far the discussions in Denmark have to a certain extent been inspired by other countries' approach – and not least have people been afraid that the censorship practiced in other countries may also be a way in Denmark which would not be in accordance with the Danish way of thinking. What is new is the digitalisation of the television technology and the growth of interactive television. It will be interesting to see what the perspectives this will have in the future.

The Internet provides a huge amount of information available to children and young people around the world. On one hand the Internet is an educational and informational opportunity. On the other hand the Internet contains much material which is unsuitable for children such as violence, pornography, racism and other addressed to an adult audience.

The Internet is interesting seen from a gender perspective. Where it has mainly been the boys who have used the computers till now the girls are increasingly getting interested in the Internet, which apparently use very much for chatting.

When children are allowed to use the computers of the school they – if possible – use it for chatting – or they try to find “forbidden” home pages. What do the teachers do ? – According to a number of interviews with teachers they try to appeal to the children to use the Internet for “reasonable” purposes. They are of the opinion that is the only thing they can do, as the Internet has so many possibilities that it is of no use to make certain prohibitions.

The same is due to the libraries. There are no common rules for the libraries as to controlling the children’s use of the computers, but the librarians try to appeal to the children, and some libraries have experiments going on in order to find out how they may use filters or other control devices.

As to the family use, some computer experts have publicly suggested that – even if there are several computers in the family – it should only be on the common family computer that it is possible to use the Internet. In that way parents will have a possibility of a certain control.

The anarchistic character of the Internet makes it different as a media compared to already known media when it comes to approaches to restricting access to material on the Internet which is not suitable to children.

### **The Moral Panic Discussion**

Every time a new media technology has been introduced there has been a public debate internationally and in Denmark. This was due to the radio, to the film, to television and to video, and the main theme has very often been the influence of the specific medium on children, especially what violence, sex and language is concerned.

In relation to tv, focus has been very much on media violence and recently on commercials and marketing strategies towards children more than focus has been on pornography. That debate has mainly taken place in relation to the Internet and it has proved difficult – as already mentioned – to control access to specific home pages on the Internet.

During the spring of 1998 there was a very excited discussion in the Danish media about new marketing strategies towards children where concepts such as the “pester power” of the children towards the parents were criticized as being used by

the advertisers in their aiming at reaching the parents as consumers. It was claimed that it was against the interest of the child to conduct this new aggressive kind of marketing toward minors where children were persuaded to influence the purchase of the family.

What is typical for Denmark is that the public discussion about media violence and pornography has been more liberal than in the other Scandinavian countries and to a lesser extent leading to regulations and legal actions. This may be due to the fact that there is a tradition for dialogue and enlightenment which is supposed to work. Accordingly, education is considered as a means to enlighten – in this case media education.

### **Media Education**

#### *Denmark in the International Media Education Discussion*

As long as the subject “media education” has been on the international agenda, it has been discussed what to call it and how to define it. What the “child” has been called depends very much on different pedagogical traditions and theories in the different countries. It seems, however, as if there is general agreement internationally to call it “media education”.

During the past decades there have been different definitions of its scope as well internationally as in Denmark, and it is a fact that media education still remains at a pioneer stage both in relation to research as well as to teaching. To a very large extent, media teaching relies on enthusiasts in the schools who offer to take on the task of teaching media. They are innovators within a new field, and despite lack of consensus about the definition of the subject area of media education, these teachers are working very hard – often getting ideas from and being inspired by the international media education movement.

Newer media research and recent trends within the area of pedagogical research focus on the audience, the “receiver” of the message. This has influenced the media education in Europe to the extent that it has changed during the last years. Where the media some years ago were considered as big bad wolves influencing children and young people with lies and propaganda, today there is a twofold trend: masse media are still seen as powerful, but on the other hand the audience is considered to be “strong” to a limited extent. One of the consequences of this philosophy is that media teaching is seen as a rela-

tionship between producers, texts and audiences. Perceiving pupils as active producers of meaning who are also vulnerable in their reception of messages, is a way of thinking which has implications for media education. The media competences of children have to be taken into consideration, and the traditional role of the teacher has to be changed.

This new trend is part of what one could call the new media education which is an approach that is no longer based on moral panic. The new way emphasizes a relaxed, pluralistic and cross-curricular approach to media teaching.

### *A Retrospective*

Like in many other countries film was used in the classroom in Denmark from the 1920s, but it was not until the 1970s that media education was becoming a part of the curriculum, mainly within Danish. In the 1980s and 1990s various media education development projects have been carried out, but much of the work done was carried out by enthusiasts or innovators who used many hours of their leisure time to educate themselves within this new area.

Denmark, to a larger extent than the other Nordic countries, tries to let children work with media production themselves, emphasizing the importance of the combination of media analysis, production and theory.

Although an education bill in 1994 gave media education a certain impetus, it is still not an integrated part of the school. What is actually happening in the 1990s is that focus is put so much on information technology, defined primarily as computers, that the technical media equipment for a broader media education including all media is given less resources than some years ago. This seems to be a general international trend.

As has already been said various reports have been published during the 1990s all concluding that media education ought to be a compulsory part of the Danish school. However, there is still a huge gap between the intentions and the political practice and support.

A characteristic aspect of the Danish media education is the grassroot tradition which to a certain extent is excellent and useful in a democracy. However, in the case of media education, it has turned out that (too) much of the teaching has been carried out by the above-mentioned innovators who – if not supported from the top – will get exhausted in the long run.

## **Conclusion and General Overview**

The main objective of this study has been to present the advantages and disadvantages of regulatory frameworks, technological capabilities, cultural contexts and relevant policy concerns in Denmark in relation to film, video, television and on-line services with special focus on television. In order to answer these questions it has been necessary and important to see possible initiatives regarding parental control in relation to historically and culturally founded traditions within the Danish democratic system.

A fundamental aspect of the principles in legislation, guidelines etc. is the idea of freedom of expression which is an element rooted in the Danish constitution. Accordingly, compared to other countries, even our Scandinavian neighbours, Denmark has a tradition for awareness raising initiatives and education and only to a certain extent accepting censorship and regulations. This tendency is also visible in the policy of today. The development of regulations has often been rather slow and new regulatory measures have often been initiated due to new technological inventions. This has definitely also been the case in relation to what has happened within the area of broadcasting, film, audiovisual and on-line services during the past years. Various political initiatives have been taken in order to handle the new media situation – one of the goals being to protect minors from harmful media content. These initiatives can be summarized as 1) new legislation, 2) new institutions and 3) new research areas and issues.

In this country report we have treated film and video, television and on-line services separately trying to conclude in relation to the above mentioned initiatives with – as has been the mandate – special focus on television. Television serves in the daily lives of children and young people as education and socialization. Media violence and child pornography is part of the content on the screen today, be it tv or computer – and – although media violence does not cause real-world violence, international and Danish research results point at the fact that media violence may be one of many factors that can consolidate a negative development among small children who have not yet established norms and values and among children and young people who live in culturally and socially deprived environments.

What is happening in these years is that the media landscape is changing. Many households have a

great variety of media as well in the common rooms of the family as in the rooms of the children. Many children and adolescents have their own television, video recorder and computer which means that they often retire to their own rooms. The “traditional” (at least the last 30 years) gathering of the family around tv every night is no longer the common pattern. Tv viewing has become more individualised. Another new aspect is the digitalisation of television technology and the growth of interactive television the consequences of which is that the content to a large extent is increasingly controlled by the recipients themselves. This of course also has consequences for media policy today and not least in the future.

As has already been mentioned in this report, a public debate has been taking place recently in Denmark about new marketing strategies towards children. The debate is particularly important in relation to projection of children, because advertisers are using new hybrid genres with an increasing amount of aggressive and violent elements in their marketing strategy. What is interesting in this debate is the broad perspective seen from a technological and a content perspective. The legal point of departure is the Danish Marketing Practices Act. The public debate has focussed very much on the fact that children increasingly are considered as a new target group. Marketing strategies work in very sophisticated ways to reach the children in order that they influence their parents to buy specific products. This is what is called “the pester power” of the children. And all media are used i.e. television, computers and comics. This has led to guidelines on “Children, adolescents and marketing” by the Danish Consumer Ombudsman (1998).

On the basis of the above mentioned Marketing Act the guidelines are to be considered as “guidelines to businessmen... telling which rules and principles in force in relation to marketing towards children and adolescents” (ibid.:3). What is emphasized is that it should be possible to define a commercial as a commercial. Other important aspects are that marketing towards children should avoid violence and effects that may frighten the child. Furthermore marketing should not undermine social values.

Talking about media, for example direct mail should not be used addressing children and in competitions promises of gifts to the children should be used with care. The most interesting part regarding media is about tv-commercials and the Internet. As to commercials the Ombudsman refers to a minister-

ial order of the Ministry of Culture regarding advertising and sponsoring in radio and television – with special regulations regarding protection of children and young people.

As far as the Internet is concerned advertising on the Internet with children as a target group is a new phenomenon. It is an interactive kind of advertising consisting of games, toys, painting, language games and competitions, where dolls, animals and trademarks related to the products are all mixed together. The discussion about marketing to children on the Internet sums up in the following guidelines from the Ombudsman:

- There ought to be a distinction between commercials, entertainment (including games) and access to purchase (contract) via the Internet
- There ought to be a clear distinction between marketing towards children and adolescents and marketing towards adults
- Children and adolescents should not be encouraged to purchase goods or make contracts via the Internet
- Measures should be taken so that children and adolescents do not buy or make contracts via the Internet
- Children or adolescents should not be promised prizes or gifts for taking part in activities on a home page
- Parents should be encouraged to participate in or attend their children’s activities on the Internet
- In the marketing links to other pages on the Internet should not be used – if these links do not come up to these guidelines
- Businessmen should always use techniques that enable the parents to limit the material to which their children have access on the Internet (ibid:17)

These guidelines are a kind of ethic appeal to businessmen to respect the Marketing Act and it will be interesting to see to which extent it will be followed in the future.

So, summing up one could say that what is typical for the Danish situation is de facto a horizontal approach in relation to the protection of minors to harmful media content including as well legislation, the work of institutions like the Media Council, the Children’s Council and research and education. In most cases the guidelines, proposals and media edu-

education ideas have more the character of being evaluative and non-deterministic than mandatory.

As a matter of conclusion we would like to comment briefly on the 3 objectives explicated in the template provided by the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy. These are :

1. Requiring new television sets and/or computers to be equipped with technical devices (such as for instance the v-chip).
2. Setting up appropriate rating systems for film, video television, and on-line services.
3. Encouraging family television viewing and on-line service policies as well as other education and awareness measures.

Ad 1 : In relation to the traditions, norms and values of the Danish society and the way family members interact technical use of devices such as the V-chip does not seem to be an appropriate approach. There will be cultural obstacles to a mandatory implementation of technical devices like the V-chip. It is possible that some parents will choose to install and apply the V-chip, but it ought not to be part of an official mandatory system.

Ad 2. As will have been read in this country report various initiatives have been taken recently to develop guidelines, age limits and proposals in relation to the media mentioned. A new area is the computer games. Recently initiatives have been taken to consider the possibility of making a rating system for computer games.

The discussions about control and labeling will no doubt continue during the coming years. The Scandinavian countries have a tradition for cooperation regarding as well production as film classification which could be further developed and maybe even give inspiration to other European countries.

Ad 3. As this study has shown a typical aspect of the Danish democracy is awareness raising approaches and educational initiatives. The philosophy behind it is that children ought not to be controlled and restricted but rather taught about different matters, in this case about the media. Accordingly, media education ought to be supported and further developed on all levels in the Danish Educational system as well as in other member countries of the European Union.

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The article is based on the report *Parental Control of Broadcasting, Film, Audiovisual and On-line Services in the European Union. Country Report: Denmark* by Birgitte Tufte and Thomas Tufte.

The country report is part of study on the parental control of television broadcasting in the European Union. The study is mandated by Article 22b of the *Television Without Frontiers Directive (97/36/EC)* of the European Parliament and Council of 30 June 1997. The study provides a horizontal examination of the television broadcasting, film, video and on-line services in the European Union in consonance with the Council Recommendations on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity in the Audiovisual and Information Services (Adopted 28 May 1998).

The European Commission DG X (Information, Communication, Culture and Audiovisual Media) has commissioned the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP) of the University of Oxford to conduct the study. This country report was sent to PCMLP on 21 November 1998.

The authors wish to thank the following persons who have read and commented upon this report: a) Charlotte Vangsgaard, Ministry of Culture, b) Per Schultz, Danish Broadcasting Corporation and c) Susanne Boe, The Media Council for Children and Young People.

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