

CARTOON FORUM SUCCESSFULLY WRAPPED UP AN EDITION HIGHLIGHTED BY TRANSBORDER COOPERATION INITIATIVES

A new generation of animated series took flight at the 34th edition of Cartoon Forum, which from September 18 to 21 turned Toulouse into the capital of European animation. A number of transborder cooperation efforts set the tone of this co-production forum for animated TV series, including the “Animated UK Meets Europe Initiative” - aimed at triggering co-production between UK creatives and European producers -, and an initiative carried out by European Broadcasting Union (EBU) to promote the development and production of series. 76 new animated series from 16 European countries in search of funding and new partners to accelerate their production and releasing on screens were pitched before the 274 buyers attending the event, about 25% of the total number of participants.

After the Welcome Dinner - a tasting of local produce at the traditional Marché Victor Hugo - Cartoon Forum's new edition opened on September 19 at the Centre des Congrès in Toulouse with welcoming remarks by **Pierre Esplugas-Labatut**, Deputy Mayor in charge of Image of Mairie Toulouse; **Serge Regourd**, President of the Culture Commission of Région Occitanie; **Pierre Siracusa**, Director of Young Audiences and Animation at France Télévisions; and Annick Maes, CARTOON General Director.

Shortlisted from 117 submissions, the selected projects' pitching sessions have provided a snapshot of European animation production's current state and perspectives. France led the line-up with 32 projects, followed by Ireland with 7, Germany and Belgium with 6, and Spain with 5. Italy participated with 4 projects, while Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, and Ukraine presented 2 each. Finally, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, and Netherlands were represented with one each. In terms of regional blocs, Central and Eastern Europe presented 9 projects, while the Nordic countries put forward 6.

Together, the selected projects amounted to 473 hours and a budget of 393.5 million euros, with an average cost of 5.1 million euros per series. Audience-wise, series targeting children aged 5-11 remain the focus of European animation, amounting to 59% of the line-up. The remaining 41% is broken down into Pre-School (21%), Young adults/Adults (14%) and Family (6%). 2D remains on top with 55% of the projects, while adaptations from books, comics, and films stood out with 25%.

LooLoo Kids (Romania), Light Lab (Latvia), Anime Digital Network (ADN)(France), Ribka Publishing (Bulgaria), Carlsen Verlag (Germany), Kidstream (USA), Immersiva (USA), With Bells on Entertainment (Canada), TV Nova and Markiza Groups (Slovakia), Jungler (France) are some of the buyers who attended the Forum for the first time (a 10.5% of the total number of buyers).

The Series of Tomorrow

Cartoon Forum's line-up have shown some of the prevailing trends in European animation, including the topics that are currently catching the creators and producers' interest. Humour, fun, comedy, and core values such as love, friendship, solidarity, loyalty, and respect were addressed in many of the series, resulting in a colourful, sensitive, and powerful selection of projects.

Stories conceived from a female perspective and starring strong female characters continued to gain ground supported by the growing number of female directors or women heading the

creative and production teams. Among other hot topics, environmental issues, diversity and inclusiveness were addressed in several projects.

The three projects co-produced by at least two European countries that raised the most interest among the participants were **“Luce in the Lovely Land”** by Thuristar (Belgium) and La Cabane Productions (France); **“Littlest Robot”** by Toon2Tango (Germany) and V House Animation (North Macedonia); and **“Aquila”** by Zodiak Kids & Family (France) and Tiger Aspect Kids & Family (United Kingdom).

The top-10 of European **co-productions** is rounded off by **“Baby's First Crime Spree”** from Cardel Entertainment (Ireland) and Snafu Pictures (United Kingdom); **“Moka Mera & Atlas”** from Anima Vitae (Finland), Moilo (Finland) and Animoka Studios (Italy); **“Stage Struck!”** from Lighthouse Studios (Ireland) and Dog Ears (United Kingdom); **“My Baby Crocodile”** from Take Five (Belgium) and Sacrebleu Productions (France); **“Happily Never After”** from Heliumfilm (Czech Republic) and Reynard Films (Germany); **“Nip & Lena. Fin Friends”** from Lynx Multimedia Factory (Italy) and Telegael (Ireland); and **“The Princess and the Nightingale”** from La Boîte,... Productions (Belgium) and Les Films du Nord (France).

Regarding the percentage of **buyers** attending the pitching sessions, **“Baby's First Crime Spree”** topped the list followed by **“Littlest Robot”**; **“The Sorcerer's Apprentice”** from bigchild Entertainment (Germany); **“Annie Melting Heart Cake”** from Sacrebleu Productions (France); **“Pig & Andersen”** from Fleng Entertainment (Denmark); **“Delivery Dan”** from JAM Media (Ireland); **“Ray & Ruby”** from Creative Conspiracy (Belgium), **“Freddie - Little Chopin”** from Letko (Poland) and The Fryderyk Chopin Institute (Poland); and **“20 Dance Street”** from Cottonwood Media (France).

“SuperBikes” from Beta Film, Carlsen Verlag and Ulysses Filmproduktion (Germany); **“Mavka”** from Animagrad Studio - FILM.UA Group (Ukraine); **“Pil's Adventures”** from TAT productions (France); **“Dougie Dolittle”** from Caligari Film- und Fernsehproduktion (Germany); **“Boule & Bill”** from Elliott Studio (France); **“Gisele and her Little Monsters”** from Blue Spirit Productions (France), **“Crazy Inventions”** from Badi Badi (Poland) and Beat Shop Sound Studio (Poland); **“Stage Struck!”** from Lighthouse Studios (Ireland) and Dog Ears (UK); **“Monsterberry Jam”** from Yarki (Ukraine); **“Space Aged”** from Studio Meala (Ireland), **“Ursa - The Polar Bear”** from Fabelaktiv (Norway) and Ulvenfilm (Norway); and **“Mortina”** from Cartobaleno (Italy) round off the list of projects that drew the most interest among the buyers.

New talents have featured prominently in this year's selection. Out of the 76 selected projects, 21 were developed by companies presenting their works for the first time in Cartoon Forum, including five projects that have previously participated at Cartoon Springboard, CARTOON's pitching event for young talents: **“9 Million Colors”** (Bionaut – Czech Republic), **“Apocalypse Mojito”** (Passion Paris – France), **“Exit Tales”** (Storyhouse - Belgium), **“Happily Never After”** (Heliumfilm – Czech Republic / Reynards Films – Germany), and **“Toko Loko”** (Submarine Animation - Netherlands).

Two of the projects in the line-up were supported by the Occitanie Region: **“School Monitors”**, directed by Marie-Pierre Hauwelle and Gildas Rigo (Xbo films), and **“Pil's Adventures”**, by Julien Fournet (TAT productions). Xbo's catalogue features more than 30 works including the TV series “Kiwi” and Florence Mialhe's feature “The Crossing” (together with Les Films de l'Arlequin), while TAT is well known for having produced animated series, films, and TV specials such as “The Jungle Bunch”, “Terra Willy”, and “Pil”, which was the starting point for the series presented at

Cartoon Forum. Anoki, Dwarf Animation Studio, Godo Studio, Les Fées Spéciales, and Milan Presse are other studios and companies from the Region that were also present at the event.

Animation Without Frontiers

A joint initiative between EBU (European Broadcasting Union) and France Télévisions created with the aim of co-funding the development of a pilot episode of two of the projects in Cartoon Forum's selection was launched during the event. ARD (Germany), BBC (United Kingdom), DR (Denmark), France TV (France), LRT (Lithuania), LTV (Latvia), NPO (Netherlands), NRK (Norway), RAI (Italy), RTP (Portugal), RTV (Slovakia), RTVE (Spain), RTV SLO (Slovenia), SVT (Sweden), VRT (Belgium), and YLE (Finland) are the EBU's members involved in this effort.

Another transborder initiative hosted by Cartoon Forum was **Animated UK Meets Europe**, which, spearheaded by Animation UK, landed in Toulouse with five projects from UK in addition to the regular selection. Looking for European co-producers, the projects were pitched in partnership with four broadcasters: **"Duck & Frog"** (Sun & Moon Studios – BBC Children's and Education), **"Huggy the Hugasaurus"** (Yamination Studios / Threewise Entertainment - Warner Bros. Discovery), **"Magic Animal Friends"** (Coolabi Productions / Paper Owl Films – Sky Kids), **"Pleasure Beach"** (Nexus Studios - Disney+), and **"The Wolfbjorns"** (BBC Studios Kids & Family – BBC Children's and Education).

With this showcase, Cartoon Forum has recovered a valuable space for European animation after Brexit (since January 2020, UK projects are no longer eligible for Creative Europe's MEDIA programme.) Thanks to Animated UK Meets Europe, 41 production companies from 12 countries engaged in one-to-one meetings with the producers of the projects. This initiative was supported by agencies across the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland Screen, Screen Scotland, Creative Wales, and Film London.

Tributes: From Portugal to France

Companies from Portugal and France were recognised with Cartoon Forum Tributes, the set of awards given annually by European animation professionals in acknowledgement of the outstanding work of broadcasters, investors/distributors, and producers in the promotion and development of European animation. Winners were voted by the 1,051 professionals from 37 countries attending Cartoon Forum. The Broadcaster of the Year Tribute went to Portugal's pubcaster **RTP**, while Producer and Distributor of the Year Tributes stayed in France, awarded respectively to **GO-N Productions** and **APC Kids**. Companies from Germany, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, and the United Kingdom were also shortlisted for the Tributes.

Training for Tomorrow

Cartoon Forum takes pride in engaging in training initiatives such as the **Coaching Programme**. Aimed at students from 12 animation schools and 2 cultural management curriculums in the region, this activity opens up the possibility of discovering both the animation industry and Cartoon's initiatives to promote new talents. This program also includes a mini-pitch workshop, in which students had the opportunity to pitch their project to an audience of regional experts and other students.

The following 14 schools engaged this year in the program: ANATEN Tarbes, BRASSART Toulouse, Campus YNOV Toulouse, e-artsup Toulouse, ENSAV Toulouse, DNMADE ANIMATION. Image & narrative Cahors, ESMA Montpellier, ESMA Toulouse, ISCID Montauban, LISAA Toulouse, Lycée

des Arènes, MJM Graphic Design, TBS Education and University of Toulouse (Master Degree Culture & Communication).

The 6 students' projects pitched during the "mini-pitch workshop" were: "Bestiar" (ISCID Montauban), "Coin-Coin" (ESMA Toulouse), "Herc-Nul" (ISCID Montauban), "Les Lucioles » (ESMA Montpellier), "Rigor Mortis" (DNMADE Animation Image & Narrative, Cahors), and "TER" (LISAA Toulouse).

Cartoon Forum also participates in two initiatives aimed at promoting the animation industry in Toulouse and the Occitanie region: **Les Toons D'ici** and **Les Toons Débarquent**. Organised by APIFA (Association of Independent Producers of Occitanie) in partnership with the Mairie and the Metropole of Toulouse, the former is dedicated to school pupils, who have the chance to explore the different techniques of animation through series, feature-length films and shorts born and bred in Toulouse. This activity took place on September 18-22.

Meanwhile, Les Toons Débarquent – organised by CINEPHILAE (Association of art-house cinemas in South-West) and the Region Occitanie - features screenings in theatres within the region aimed at general public (October 1 - November 5). Some screenings were accompanied by creators of the films: among them, Chiara Malta and Sébastien Laudenbach directors of "Chicken for Linda!" and Arnaud Demuynck, co-producer of the shorts program "La Colline aux Cailloux" and author and co-director of "Va-t'en Alfred" that is one of the shorts of this program.

Cartoon Forum activities wrapped up on September 21st with the traditional Farewell Dinner at the Manoir du Prince estate.

The next edition of the event will be held on 16-19 September 2024 in Toulouse.