

## The new *Maya the Bee* most popular TV character among girls - *SpongeBob* still in the lead

Representative study on the favourite media characters of German preschoolers

Munich, 9 April 2014 – The International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) recently asked children aged three to five about their favourite television characters. For the first time in years, there was a noticeable change in the favourite characters of the girls surveyed: these are no longer pink princesses, but self-determined female TV characters such as *Maya the Bee* and *Bibi Blocksberg*.

373 three- to five-year-old girls and boys from all over Germany were asked about their favourite TV characters. As in the past 12 years, *SpongeBob* is in first place among preschoolers, followed by *Benjamin Blümchen* (Benjamin the Elephant) and *Bob the Builder*. Heroes and heroines from public service television, such as *Biene Maja*, *KIKANiNCHEN* and the Sandman (*Sandmännchen*), made it to places four to eight.

1. <i>SpongeBob SquarePants</i>
2. <i>Benjamin Blümchen</i> , <i>Mickey Mouse</i>
3. <i>Bob the Builder</i>
4. <i>Maya the Bee</i>
5. <i>KIKANiNCHEN</i>
6. <i>Garfield</i> , <i>Sandman (Sandmännchen)</i>
7. <i>Bibi Blocksberg</i> , <i>The Mouse</i>
8. <i>Yakari</i>

Overall favourite characters of preschoolers in 2014

What is new, however, is the girls' favourite characters: since 2005 the top places had been taken by pink princesses such as *Princess Lillifee* and *Barbie*, but in the latest survey they go to the new version of *Maya the Bee*, *Bibi Blocksberg* and *Sally Bollywood*.

“A very pleasing development”, says Dr. Maya Götz, head of the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) and of the Prix Jeunesse. “Girls and

	Boys	Girls
1.	<i>SpongeBob</i>	<i>Maya the Bee</i>
2.	<i>Bob the Builder</i>	<i>Bibi Blocksberg</i>
3.	<i>Benjamin Blümchen</i>	<i>Sally Bollywood</i> , <i>Mickey Mouse</i>

Favourite characters of preschoolers in 2014 by gender

boys need positive role models, showing how children deal self-reliantly with problems and actively shape the world.” Princesses do this too, but of course they live in a world of material wealth,

they conform to conventions, and their physical portrayal often involves hypersexualization and a wasp waist. The physicality of a *Maya the Bee* or *Bibi*

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*Blocksberg*, on the other hand, bears a pleasing resemblance to a child's body, and helps girls in particular to accept themselves and the world they live in.

It is also pleasing to see the popularity of the KiKANiNCHEN or the Mouse (*The Show with the Mouse*). These TV characters represent another important tendency: they are not designed in an explicitly gender-specific way. Girls and boys are, first and foremost, people, and as such, they should be supported in their identity development by children's television.

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