

## Age or Content Based Film Ratings: A Solution Discussed in Poland

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Poland's different media do not have a common standardized film rating system. Film distributors, broadcasters, video shops, and Internet providers use their own different policy.

Cinemas usually follow age-based suggestions of Polish producers or translate ratings attached to foreign film productions into the Polish age based classification. Actually the rating systems' categories of age used in cinemas are: "no age limit", "over 12 years", "over 15 years", and "over 18 years". In fact this is the classification "inherited" from the past.

Because Poland does not have any clear rules, video shops try to follow the instructions, they found on the packages of videocassettes, CDs, DVDs, etc., which were produced outside of Poland. Polish films do not come with any special rating for videos, however some owners of video shops use their own intuitive content-based ratings. Typically, with these Polish films, they differentiate between film contents appropriate for children or adults.

The Internet providers do not limit children's access to any content films and messages. Only one content filter, "Family Filter" is available to Poles.

Broadcast television is the only media in Poland with a system of films classification. It consists of three colorful, graphical labels: (1) a square in a green circle is assigned to films directed to general audience; (2) a triangle in a yellow circle warns parents that children need their parents' permission to watch the film, and (3) a red circle with horizontal line (or a square) inside indicates that the film is for an adult audience, usually due to extremely violent or erotic content and bad language. All shapes in the circles are transparent. Both public TV stations and commercial stations use this labeling system for films, TV shows and other TV programs. Broadcasters are responsible for assigning these labels.

This system resulted from a compromise between age and content based rating system proposed to the Polish broadcasters by the National Broadcasting Council on the one hand and some American and Canadian solutions based on parental and producers ratings proposed to the National Broadcasting Council by the voluntary Association of Polish TV Broadcasters, "*Friendly Media*", on the other hand.

There are two laws, which protect children against harmful impact of broadcasting on their development included in the "Statement on TV and Radio Broadcasting". The first law prohibits broadcasting an adult content between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. The second law (since

2002) obligates broadcasters to label broadcasted films and shows with graphical symbols (pictograms) classifying film or TV show according to its harmfulness to particular ages of juvenile viewers. Broadcasting of any message or scene harmful for psychological development of children, and violence, pornography, or bad language in particular, is prohibited by law. The National Broadcasting Council monitors TV and radio programs, detecting broadcasters, which violate law.

The Polish labeling system is not fully effective in protecting children of harmful impact of TV - according to opinion of Broadcasters, children, parents, and media psychologists studying, how this labeling system functions, think that it is not fully effective. Broadcasters do not keep watershed very often. Debate on a films labeling system in Poland, and its age or content basis, continues.

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## **Some History**

- **Before 1989: censorship for films & The General Committee of Cinematography responsible for age ratings (no limit, over 7, over 12, over 15, over 18);**
- **After 1989: film distributors are responsible for film classification; „inherited” age ratings are used or ratings of a film producer are translated into „inherited” classification;**
- **Specific regulations are established for broadcasting (TV and radio).**

# Age based ratings for films in cinemas

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Without age limits</b>	<b><u>A film is not harmful for children,</u> dubbing for foreign productions</b>
<b>Over 12</b>	<b><u>A film is not harmful for youth,</u> subtitles for foreign production</b>
<b>Over 15</b>	<b>Some harmful content: <u>low violence or erotica</u></b>
<b>Over 18</b>	<b>Content seriously harmful for children: <u>scenes of serious violence or sex</u></b>

# Regulations for Broadcasting

- **Law related to broadcasting (TV and radio): 1992 and corrections: 1994 (watershed);**
- **The Broadcasters' Agreement „Friendly Media’’: 1999;**
- **Statement of the National Council for Broadcasting, 2001 (description of harm corrected);**
- **Statement of the National Council for Broadcasting, 2002 (labeling/pictograms are obligatory).**

# Law

- **Messages harmful for physical, psychological and moral development of minors, especially pornography or unjustified/glorified violence are prohibited;**
- **Broadcasters should protect viewers of inappropriate and rude language;**
- **Watershed introduced: 6.00 a.m. To 11.00 p.m.;**
- **Broadcasters are obliged to develop their own classification rules;**
- **TV Broadcasters are obliged to rate and label films and programs and to inform the audience about how programs are rated (in TV guides).**

# **The Broadcasters' Agreement: „Friendly Media”**

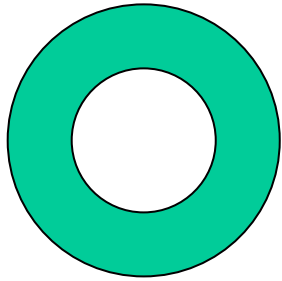
- **Self-evaluation rule;**
- **„Do not harm children and youth” rule;**
- **Scenes of violence, brutality and norm violations should be carefully evaluated and eliminated;**
- **Unified warning system for parents and teaching parents about harmful media effects on minors should be introduced by broadcasters;**
- **The catalog for classification of programs for viewer of various ages on the content basis should be used (the attachment to the Agreement).**



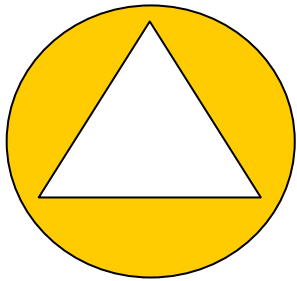
# **The Broadcasters' Agreement: Harmful Scenes**

- **Fearful or with anxiety or disgusting scenes;**
- **Violence, especially realistic scenes of violence combined with sex, violent sex;**
- **Sex and sexual deviance;**
- **Glorification of violence, hate, torture, and mobbing (physical and psychological);**
- **Cruelty towards animals,**
- **Inappropriate play (threatening when modelled by young viewers).**

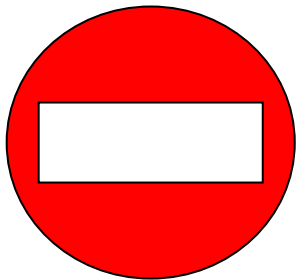
# Ratings for TV Films and Programs



**General audience, no harmful content**



**Parents' permission demanded**



**For adult audience only  
(Violence or Sex or Bad Language)**

# Attitude Toward Rating System

- **The first proposal of rating system combined age and content criteria;**
- **Broadcasters feel that age based ratings or content ratings are inappropriate and very complex;**
- **Broadcasters are dissatisfied with the watershed;**
- **The National Council is dissatisfied with broadcasters (they violate watershed);**
- **Parents, teachers and researchers are dissatisfied with the yellow pictogram, which is used most often;**
- **A national debate on too general rating system continues. Efficiency of age and content related ratings is discussed.**

## Other Media

<b>Media</b>	<b>Regulations</b>
<b>Videos</b> <b>CDs</b> <b>DVDs</b> <b>Video games</b>	<b>No real regulations.</b> <b>For foreign productions foreign ratings are followed. For Polish production age based ratings, if any.</b>
<b>Internet Access</b>	<b>One portal provides a family filter</b>

# Summary

- **There is no unified system of classification in Poland;**
- **Law protects children of harmful TV and radio messages;**
- **Classification rules are based on a good will and professional experience of the film acquirors and distributors;**
- **There is no censorship and partial prohibition (cuts may happen in TV films);**
- **Government executes media law protecting children;**
- **Watershed for harmful contents for children present but sometimes violated;**
- **Broadcasters, teachers and parents complain that existing rating/labeling system is not efficient.**