

[BE] New classification system for films shown in cinemas in Belgium

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The Belgian federated entities recently signed a new cooperation agreement designed to extend the "GoedGezien" (in French "BienVu") film classification system to all films distributed in Belgian cinemas. The agreement harmonises the implementation of film classification throughout the country and regulates the relevant administrative and financial aspects.

The "GoedGezien" system classifies content according to the age of the viewers (all audiences, 6, 10, 12, 16 and 18) and the nature of the content (violence, anxiety, sex, use of addictive substances, coarse language and discrimination). The classifications are represented by a series of pictograms.

Developed by the Flemish-speaking Community and first implemented in 2024, this system previously applied only to Flemish television programmes under the Flemish Government Decree of 19 January 2024 on informing viewers about programmes likely to harm the physical, mental or moral development of minors. Under the Decree of the Government of the French-speaking Community of 5 December 2025 on the protection of minors against television programmes likely to harm their physical, mental or moral development, which will come into force on 1 July 2026, it was recently extended to television programmes made by publishers of audiovisual media services under the jurisdiction of the French-speaking Community. Television programmes are classified by television service providers, subject to monitoring by the respective broadcasting regulatory authority.

From now on, the basic principles of this system and the various pictograms will therefore also apply to films shown in cinemas. A film will be classified by its distributor (or, failing that, by its producer or – as a last resort – by the cinema operator). Classification will nevertheless be monitored by a "secretariat for film classification" set up by the Flemish-speaking Community. This secretariat can also deal with complaints submitted to it by any interested party. Complaints may relate to a classification that is deemed to be incorrect, missing or incorrectly communicated. A "steering committee" may be asked to deal with a complaint if mediation by the secretariat has failed. In principle, the secretariat acts by mediation; however, it is empowered to impose penalties, including fines, on those responsible for the classifications. The steering committee, on the other

hand, has no such prerogative.

An exception is made for the German-speaking Community. Nearly 80 000 people, or less than 1% of the Belgian population, live in this community, where local cinemas are characterised by specific programming influenced by their German neighbours. The cooperation agreement therefore provides for the use of the German classification system for films whose main language is German and for films dubbed in German that are distributed in a cinema located in the German-speaking Community. In other words, German law (Article 14 of the *Jugendschutzgesetz* [Law on the protection of young people]) applies here. However, in the case of Belgian productions or co-productions whose main language is German or which are dubbed in German, the general rules apply. In addition, the steering committee may still require the distributor to classify the film in question according to the Belgian classification system (Article 11(5) of the cooperation agreement).

The cooperation agreement emphasises that age and content ratings are only recommendations.

In 2019, the same parties had agreed to adopt the Dutch "*Kijkwijzer*" system (translated into French as "*Cinecheck*") as the classification system for films shown in cinemas (cooperation agreement of 15 February 2019 concluded between the French-speaking Community, the Flemish-speaking Community, the German-speaking Community and the Brussels-Capital Joint Community Commission on the classification of films shown in Belgian cinemas). This system was provided by the Dutch Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media (*Nederlandse Instituut voor de Classificatie van Audiovisuele Media* – NICAM). The new system should make it possible to no longer depend on a foreign entity for this purpose.

The new cooperation agreement, which will replace the 2019 agreement, will come into force once it has been adopted by the respective parliaments.

Accord de coopération entre la Communauté française, la Communauté flamande, la Communauté germanophone et la Commission communautaire commune de Bruxelles- Capitale relatif à la classification des films diffusés dans les salles de cinéma belges

<https://shorturl.at/ITYY4>

Cooperation agreement between the French-speaking Community, the Flemish-speaking Community, the German-speaking Community and the Brussels-Capital Joint Community Commission on the classification of films shown in Belgian cinemas

Arrêté du Gouvernement flamand du 19 janvier 2024 relatif à l'information des téléspectateurs à propos des programmes susceptibles de nuire à l'épanouissement physique, mental ou moral des mineurs, M. B. 23 février 2024, p. 26723

<https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/eli/arrete/2024/01/19/2024001522/justel>

Flemish Government Decree of 19 January 2024 on informing viewers about programmes likely to harm the physical, mental or moral development of minors, Official Gazette of 23 February 2024, p. 26723.

Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté française du 5 décembre 2025 relatif à la protection des mineurs contre les programmes télévisuels susceptibles de nuire à leur épanouissement physique, mental ou moral, M. B. 18 décembre 2025

<https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/eli/arrete/2025/12/05/2025009484/justel>

Decree of the Government of the French-speaking Community of 5 December 2025 on the protection of minors against television programmes likely to harm their physical, mental or moral development, Official Gazette of 18 December 2025.

Accord de coopération du 15 février 2019 conclu entre la Communauté française, la Communauté flamande, la Communauté germanophone et la Commission communautaire commune de Bruxelles-Capitale relatif à la classification des films diffusés dans les salles de cinéma belges, M. B. 4 juin 2019, p. 54937

https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/article.pl?language=fr&sum_date=&lg_txt=f&cn_search=2019021523

Cooperation agreement of 15 February 2019 between the French-speaking Community, the Flemish-speaking Community, the German-speaking Community and the Brussels-Capital Joint Community Commission on the classification of films shown in Belgian cinemas, Official Gazette of 4 June 2019, p. 54937.

