[ES] Co-regulation agreement establishes unified age-rating system for audiovisual content

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In June 2026, Spain formalised a co-regulation agreement for the age classification of audiovisual programmes and content, marking a key milestone in the implementation of the General Audiovisual Communication Law (*Ley* 13/2022 *General de Comunica*ción *Audiovisual* – LGCA). The agreement was signed by the National Commission on Markets and Competition (*Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia* - CNMC), the Ministry for Digital Transformation and Civil Service, and a broad range of stakeholders representing the Spanish audiovisual ecosystem.

The initiative aims to reinforce the protection of minors and improve the information available to users, reflecting both the evolution of audiovisual consumption patterns and the regulatory objectives set out in the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (Directive (EU) 2018/1808).

The LGCA significantly modernised Spain's audiovisual regulatory framework, particularly in relation to the protection of minors. Articles 97 and 98 impose core obligations on audiovisual service providers, including the provision of clear information on potentially harmful content through visual descriptors and the implementation of parental control or access restriction mechanisms.

In addition, Article 98 establishes the obligation for certain providers, notably linear television operators, to participate in co-regulation schemes agreed with the CNMC. This obligation forms part of a broader legislative approach that promotes co-regulation and codes of conduct (Articles 12, 14 and 15 LGCA) as complementary tools to traditional regulatory enforcement.

Prior to the LGCA, the protection of minors relied mainly on the 2004 self-regulatory Code on Television Content and Children. While relevant in a linear broadcasting context, that framework proved insufficient in the digital environment, characterised by on-demand services and platform-based content distribution.

The co-regulation agreement is the result of a process spanning more than two years, involving extensive stakeholder consultation and inter-institutional coordination. The CNMC conducted two public consultations, in 2024 and again in October-November 2025, engaging audiovisual providers, platforms, consumer

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organisations, child protection bodies and civil society.

Regional audiovisual authorities were also actively involved, reflecting the decentralised distribution of competences in Spain. This collaborative process is consistent with the co-regulatory model envisaged in the LGCA, which seeks to combine public oversight with industry participation.

The agreement establishes a unified system of age ratings and content descriptors applicable across multiple audiovisual services, including linear television, on-demand platforms and certain online content providers

The system combines age classification categories with standardised descriptors identifying potentially sensitive elements such as violence, inappropriate language, sexual content, gambling references or dangerous behaviour.

Its key features include:

- a harmonised classification system, ensuring consistency across television channels, streaming platforms and digital services;

- cross-platform application, covering both traditional audiovisual services and newer forms of content distribution;

- the inclusion of high-impact content creators and influencers (*Usuarios de especial relevancia* – UERs), extending classification obligations to those meeting certain audience and revenue thresholds. The inclusion of UERs marks a significant expansion of the regulatory perimeter, aligning with the LGCA's objective of ensuring regulatory equivalence across different content distribution models.

- improved usability of parental controls, facilitated by consistent labelling and descriptors across services.

The agreement establishes a hybrid implementation model combining mandatory adherence and progressive territorial rollout.

For audiovisual service providers operating at national level, participation in the co-regulation scheme is mandatory. The CNMC may initiate sanctioning proceedings against providers, including UERs, that fail to join from the day following the signing of the agreement.

At regional level, the system is implemented progressively. Once an autonomous community adheres to the agreement, providers under its supervision (primarily regional and local broadcasters) may join the scheme. At the time of signature, authorities in Catalonia, Andalusia, the Valencian Community, Castilla-La Mancha and Navarra had already acceded.

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The governance structure reflects the co-regulatory nature of the framework. The CNMC acts as the central supervisory authority, while industry organisations and self-regulatory bodies, including AUTOCONTROL, contribute to implementation, guidance and dispute resolution.

In addition, the system provides for a public complaints mechanism enabling users to report potential inaccuracies in age ratings or misuse of descriptors, thereby enhancing accountability.

The agreement reflects a dual institutional architecture combining regulatory oversight by the CNMC with policy coordination at ministerial level. The participation of both the CNMC President and the Secretary of State for Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence at the signing ceremony highlights the alignment between regulatory enforcement and broader digital policy objectives.

More broadly, the framework illustrates the Spanish approach to co-regulation as a governance model involving public authorities, industry stakeholders and civil society organisations.

The agreement marks Spain’s transition from a voluntary self-regulatory model to a structured co-regulatory framework with enforcement mechanisms. It fills the regulatory gap that existed following the entry into force of the LGCA in 2022, during which transitional classification categories remained in use.

Ley 13/2022, de 7 de julio, General de Comunicación Audiovisual (LGCA)

https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2022-11311

Law 13/2022 of 7 July, the General Law on Audiovisual Communication (LGCA)

Acuerdo de corregulación para la calificación de programas y contenidos audiovisuales (CNMC, Ministerio para la Transformación Digital y sector audiovisual, 2026)

https://www.cnmc.es/prensa/acuerdo-corregulacion-audiovisual-20260611

Co-regulatory agreement on the classification of audiovisual programmes and content (CNMC, Ministry for Digital Transformation and the Audiovisual Sector, 2026)

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