[IE] Computer Games - New Initiative

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The legislation in Ireland, which regulates the content and supply of videos, is the Video Recordings Act 1989. That Act designated the Film Censor's office as the regulatory body to deal with videos as well as films. The Film Censor has power to classify videos according to age and to refuse certificates for the supply of videos if their content is such that they may inter alia corrupt viewers or incite to crime. The Act, however, does not extend to video games. Initially, this omission did not pose a problem. More recently, developments in the content and range of video games have given rise to concerns regarding their suitability for children. In response to those concerns, Sony Playstation and other video games distributors, at the end of the year 2000, undertook voluntarily to introduce an age-rating system as a guide for parents.

The availability of the ELSPA (European Leisure Software Providers Association) rating system, applied to all computer games distributed in Europe, will be highlighted as a means of giving clear information to parents regarding content. Prominent symbols will appear on both the packaging and the games themselves. In addition, the Distributors have recommended to their members that all games which are rated in either of the age categories "Over 15" or "Over 18" should be submitted to the Film Censor for classification and certification.

Earlier last year the Minister for Justice had responded to concerns that laws such as the Censorship of Films Acts 1923-70 and Censorship of Publications Acts 1929-67 were out-of-date in many respects. He announced a wide-ranging review of the entire area of censorship across all media. A discussion paper on this topic is expected in 2001. The Minister's key concern is the protection of children.

Speech by Mr. John O'Donoghue, Teachta Dala (Member of Parliament), Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform at the Launch of a New Information Initiative in Relation to Computer Games Age Rating Symbols, 6 November, 2000

http://www.irlgov.ie/justice/Speeches/Speeches-2000/sp-0611.htm

The texts of the Acts mentioned are available at

http://www.irlgov.ie/ag/

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