[RO] New Rules for TV Violence Warning Signs

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Decision No. 57 of the Consiliul National al Audiovizualului (National Audio-visual Council CNA) , the regulatory authority for electronic media in Romania, published on 13 March 2003, tightens the regulations on the labelling of audio-visual productions in order to protect children and young people from violent content. In order to help parents and guardians decide what minors should watch, broadcasters are now obliged to provide the public with acoustic and visual warnings concerning programme content. The aim is to improve measures to prevent scenes of violence harming the moral, mental and physical development of minors.

The portrayal of smoking or alcohol consumption, vulgar language or sexual innuendo is therefore restricted in programmes aimed at minors. Ridiculing of physical disabilities is also banned. Furthermore, trailers for programmes containing scenes of violence, sex, vulgar language or other elements unsuitable for minors may not be broadcast between 6 am and 10 pm. TV news bulletins, reports and talk shows must not contain detailed descriptions of ways to commit suicide.

In the TV sector, licence-holders are responsible for classifying TV productions according to the degree of risk to minors. The proposed criteria for the different categories are as follows: a) the number and nature of violent scenes as well as their relevance to the content of the TV production concerned; b) the use of violence to resolve problems and its role in relation to the content of the production; c) the way in which the violent scenes are portrayed and staged, how realistic they are and whether or not they are accompanied by sinister, frightening music; d) the number of nudity and sex scenes; e) the psychology of the characters and the moral conclusions that might be transmitted to minors; f) the typology, aims and propensity to violence of the main characters; g) the presence and role of children in scenes of violence; h) the portrayal of women in degrading situations; i) the number and intensity of scenes of domestic violence; j) the quality and typology of language; k) the genre and theme of audio-visual productions.

On the basis of these criteria, the following six programme categories are suggested, according to the degree of risk to minors: 1.) those accessible to all viewer categories, requiring no restrictions or warning signs; 2.) those that may

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be seen by minors aged under 12 only with their parents' permission or in a family situation (relatively few violent scenes with low intensity, little nudity, few obscenities, etc.); 3.) those prohibited for minors under 12 (physical or psychological violence of medium intensity and duration, domestic violence and sex scenes, cruelty to people or animals, suicide scenes, drugs and alcohol consumption, antisocial behaviour that may be easily imitated, scenes in which children are abused or women are portrayed in degrading situations); 4.) those prohibited for minors under 16 (frequent, intensive scenes of physical or psychological violence, sex, detailed portrayals of criminal techniques, vulgar language, productions showing high levels of cruelty); 5.) those prohibited for minors under 18 (erotic films, horror films, sadistic scenes and other types of production that, for various reasons, are considered unsuitable for minors under 18 in the USA and other European countries); 6.) other productions prohibited for minors under 18 (pornographic films and TV programmes).

The type of productions mentioned in point 2 may not be broadcast immediately before or after programmes aimed at minors and must be marked with a visual warning sign consisting of a circle containing the letters "AP" (standing for " acordul părin ilor ", parental consent) in white against a red background. The warning sign should measure 30 pixels and be shown for 5 minutes at the beginning of the broadcast and for 3 minutes after each commercial break. For productions that are not interrupted by advertisements, the warning sign must be shown for the first 5 minutes and then repeated at regular intervals during the broadcast for a further 10 minutes in total.

Similarly, the productions mentioned under point 3 should be marked with a circle containing the number 12, those under point 4 with the number 16, and those under point 5 with the number 18. Productions mentioned under point 6 may not be broadcast by TV companies operating under Romanian jurisdiction, not even in the form of so-called re-broadcasting.

If a programme falls into any of these categories, the broadcaster is also obliged to provide an acoustic and visual warning regarding its content before it is transmitted. The broadcaster must also include the relevant visual warning sign in TV programme listings.

Decizia nr. 57 din 13 martie 2003 privind protectia minorilor in cadrul serviciilor de programe

http://www.cna.ro/decizii/d05703.html

National Audio-visual Council Decision No. 57 of 13 March 2003

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