[IE] Irish Film Censor's Office Bans Video Game

IRIS 2007-8:1/24

Sharon McLaughlin
Faculty of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway

On 18 June 2007, *Manhunt 2* became the first video game to be banned by the Irish Film Censor's Office (IFCO) under the Video Recordings Act 1989 (see IRIS 2001-2: 13). The game was banned due to its high level of "gross, unrelenting and gratuitous violence". The IFCO stated that "in certain films, DVDs and video games, strong graphic violence may be a justifiable element within the overall context of the work however, in the case of *Manhunt* 2, the IFCO believes there is no such context, and the level of gross, unrelenting and gratuitous violence is unacceptable".

Video games are expressly exempt (s.1.1.) from the regulatory procedure established under the Video Recordings Act 1989 (s.4), unless they fall under one or more of the exceptions listed (s.7). The Film Censor is empowered to issue an order proscribing the supply of a video game if, having viewed the work, he is of the opinion that it "(i) would be likely to cause persons to commit crimes... or (ii) would be likely to stir up hatred against a group of persons in the State or elsewhere... or (iii) would tend, by reason of the inclusion in it of obscene or indecent matter, to deprave or corrupt persons who might view it" (s.7.1.a), or if, having viewed the work, he is of the opinion that it "depicts acts of gross violence or cruelty (including mutilation and torture) towards humans or animals" (s.7.1.b). A prohibition order prohibits the "supply" of the game in Ireland, including its "sale, letting on hire, exchange or loan (s.1.1)."

Ireland relies primarily on the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) rating system for the classification of video games. The PEGI rating system, designed and implemented by the games industry itself, is used voluntarily by the majority of EU member states. In countries where legislative provisions exist concerning the classification of video games, such as Ireland, PEGI requires video game producers to investigate whether their product is subject to legal requirements in these countries. IFCO request that all video games classified "18+" by PEGI be submitted to the Censor's Office. There is no legal basis for compliance with this request but video game distributors generally oblige.

Manhunt 2 has yet to be rated by PEGI however, game publishers, aware of the likelihood of the game receiving an "18+" age rating, routinely submitted the game to the IFCO for review. The game has also been refused classification by the British Board of Film Classification in the UK (see IRIS 2007-7: 14).

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Press Release from the Irish Film Censor's Office, 18 June 2007

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