

[DE] Child Protection on German Television - The Voluntary Television Review Body (FSF)

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On November 23rd 1993 the biggest private television channels in the German federal republic took the decision to set up a voluntary review body - "Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen e.V." (FSF). This organisation, which is managed by the broadcasters themselves, seeks to control violence and sex as portrayed on television, following a recent public outcry on this matter.

The aim of the association, which came into being officially on April 1st 1994 in Berlin, is to limit the portrayal of violence and sex on television in such a way that they are not prejudicial to the moral, spiritual and mental development of infants and young adults. This aim should ensure child protection over and beyond the limits set down by the law. The association is also seeking to collaborate with regional media bodies, the film industry voluntary review body and the federal assessment body for texts likely to be damaging to children and young adults (cf. Article 2 of the FSF statutes). Although state bodies are not permitted to make assessments before programs are broadcast because of the ban on complete censorship, a voluntary review body can already start its work at this time. When programs are assessed by the youth protection officers from each television broadcaster, the FSF can also offer guidance in youth protection issues. Rulings made by the examining committee which can include recommendations on broadcasting times, orders to cut certain sequences or warnings against broadcasting, are compulsory (Art 7 No. 4 of the FSF statutes). An appeal committee can be called upon to act against the assessment of the first committee (cf. art. 7 of the basic assessment principles of the FSF). The assessment report is made available to the regional media bodies. Assessment procedures and content are monitored by an independent board of experts.

