

Brussels, 22 April 2008

## **Video Games: Commission welcomes progress on protection of minors in 23 EU Member States, but asks for improvement of industry codes**

*The European video games sector is dynamic, with expected revenue of € 7.3 billion by the end of 2008. However, public concerns that video games can cause aggressive behaviour, heightened by school shootings such as in Helsinki (Finland, November 2007), have led several national authorities to ban or block video games such as "Manhunt 2". In response, the European Commission has surveyed existing measures protecting minors from harmful video games across the 27 EU Member States. 20 EU Member States now apply PEGI (Pan European Games Information), an age-rating system developed by industry, with EU support, since 2003. In the Commission's view, industry must invest more to strengthen and in particular to regularly update the PEGI system so that it becomes a truly effective pan-European tool. Also, industry and public authorities should step up cooperation to make classification and age rating systems better known and to avoid confusion caused by parallel systems. A Code of Conduct for retailers should be drawn up within two years on sales of video games to minors.*

*"Video games have become a strong pillar of Europe's content industry and are experiencing booming sales across Europe. This is welcome, but implies greater responsibility for the industry to ensure that parents know what kind of games their children play", said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for the Information Society and Media. " PEGI, as an example of responsible industry self-regulation and the only such system with almost pan-European coverage, is certainly a very good first step. However, I believe it can be greatly improved, in Europe and beyond, by making the public more aware about its existence and fully implementing PEGI Online. I also call on Member States and the industry to govern the sale of video games in shops to respect the fundamental need to protect minors."*

*"All consumers need clear, accurate information to make informed choices. But this is particularly about children – some of the most vulnerable consumers in society. And our clear message today is that industry and national authorities must go further to ensure that all parents have the power to make the right decisions for themselves and their child," added Meglena Kuneva, the EU Consumer Commissioner.*

According to the Commission survey, the PEGI system is currently applied by 20 Member States. 2 countries (Germany and Lithuania) have specific binding legislation while Malta relies on general legislation. However, 4 Member States (Cyprus, Luxembourg, Romania and Slovenia) have no system in place. 15 Member States have legislation concerning the sale of video games with harmful content to minors in shops, although the scope of laws varies between Member States. Until now, 4 countries (Germany, Ireland, Italy, UK) have banned certain violent video games.

Adopted in 2003, PEGI labels provide an age rating and warnings such as violence or bad language, empowering parents to decide which game is appropriate for their children, as well as adult gamers to better choose their games. PEGI is supported by the major console manufacturers in Europe. PEGI Online was launched in 2007, co-funded by the EU's Safer Internet Programme ([IP/08/310](#)), in response to the rapid growth of online video games.

The Commission has called for several measures to converge approaches in the Single Market:

- Regular improvement and better advertising of PEGI and PEGI Online by the video games industry.
- Member States should integrate PEGI into their own classification systems and raise awareness of PEGI, particularly parents and children.
- Cooperation on innovative age verification solutions between Member States, classification bodies and other stakeholders.
- A pan-European Code of Conduct on the sale of games to minors within two years, agreed by all stakeholders.

#### **Background:**

Video games are increasingly accessible via internet and mobile phones, which are expected to make up 33% of total revenues for video games by 2010. The European video gaming sector is already worth half as much as the entire European music market and exceeds the cinema box office.

The Commission already supports self-regulation at European level to protect minors using mobile phones ([IP/07/139](#)). Self-regulation strengthened by cross-border cooperation has also been pursued for audiovisual services under the Television Without Frontiers Directive ([IP/07/138](#)).

#### **Commission Communication "On the protection of consumers, in particular minors, in respect of the use of video games":**

[http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/minors/video/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/minors/video/index_en.htm)

#### **The EU's Safer Internet programme**

<http://ec.europa.eu/saferinternet>

#### **PEGI**

<http://www.pegi.info/>

<http://www.pegionline.eu>

Labels of PEGI (Pan European Games Information)

## Age Ratings



## Content descriptors

Results of the Commission survey

Member State	Age Rating System	Civil and criminal laws covering the sale of video games
Austria	PEGI (partly)	Specific Legislation
Belgium	PEGI	Specific Legislation
Bulgaria	PEGI	No
Czech Republic	PEGI	No
Cyprus	No	No
Denmark	PEGI	No
Estonia	PEGI	Specific Legislation
Finland	PEGI	Specific Legislation
France	PEGI	Specific Legislation
Germany	Specific Legislation	Specific Legislation
Greece	PEGI	Specific Legislation
Hungary	PEGI	No
Ireland	PEGI	Information not provided

<b>Italy</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>
<b>Latvia</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>
<b>Luxembourg</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Malta</b>	<b>General Legislation</b>	<b>General Legal Provisions</b>
<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>
<b>Poland</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Information not provided</b>
<b>Romania</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Information not provided</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Information not provided</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>PEGI</b>	<b>Specific Legislation</b>