



Video Games Consultation Questions

Option 1 Hybrid classification system

The BBFC would rate all games that are 12+ or higher, with PEGI continuing to rate all 3+ and 7+ games.

The BBFC logos would appear on the front of all boxes, with the PEGI logos on the back.

This system will work best if BBFC and PEGI come to an agreement on their logos and age classifications so that a more integrated approach can be adopted. The BBFC would extend its statutory powers to cover games from 12+, bringing it into line with the classification system used for DVDs/videos and building on parental awareness and understanding of what those ratings mean.

<p>Q1: What is your overall assessment of whether this option would work and why?</p>
<p>CEOP could endorse dual systems, but the key is that the system needs to be enforceable. As good and as informative as PEGI is, it is the BBFC which has the teeth.</p>
<p>Q2: What are the key flaws with this option and how could it be adapted to overcome them?</p>
<p>See answer to Q1 above.</p>
<p>Q3: What are the key advantages with this option and why?</p>
<p>It enables Government to side step the issue of enforcement.</p>
<p>Q4: How do you think this system would work for the following key stakeholders:</p>
<p>(i) the consumer?</p> <p>Still leave them confused.</p>

<p>(ii) the games industry?</p> <p>Increased difficulty with marketing to their target audience.</p>
<p>(iii) the retail industry?</p> <p>Problems with display issues e.g. do retailers display the back of games boxes containing games for under 12?</p>
<p>Q5: What suggestions do you have to improve the system for any of the key stakeholders?</p>
<p>Q6: Do you think this system addresses the evidence on potential harms raised by the Byron review and if not why not?</p> <p>Not as effectively as Option 2. One of the most significant trends that we have seen this year is that of convergence, both in terms of technology and behaviour. The traditional types of online environments are now merging as social networking, online gaming, instant messaging and photo sharing technologies are becoming component parts of larger ‘social sites’. Even where the boundaries can still be identified, children are using these environments with little or no distinction between them and the line between online and offline is becoming increasingly blurred. Whereas last year we stated that the terms ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ worlds should no longer be used, this year we should accept the complete integration of online activities into the lives of children and young people. Unfortunately for children, this kind of environment presents new kinds of risks, with offenders taking advantage of the information that is readily available to them. The application of offline grooming techniques is made far easier in such environments, as offenders are able to build a range of contacts and express shared interests and opinions with children who are increasingly used to having the world as their audience in online forums. Equally, as more and more social sites incorporate instant messaging – a medium which facilitates the establishment of private relationships – an increase in reports of grooming in these environments is anticipated. In terms of technology, last year we had concerns around virtual worlds and roleplaying games. The popularity of such games and the increasing numbers of ever younger children involved have led to increased risks to children in these environments, including inappropriate contact from adults. In addition, the convergence in technology has meant that the integration of online gaming with other technologies, for example instant messaging and Voice Over IP (VoIP) – used to transmit phone calls over the internet – creates an even greater risk. We see this as a key issue for the coming year.</p> <p>Online gaming is increasingly prominent in reports of abuse. To some</p>

extent this is likely to be due to the burgeoning popularity of online gaming services and the fact that the majority incorporate a number of social functionalities (e.g. chat, forums) which facilitate contact with previously unknown persons. Observed offending behaviours in these environments are similar to those in other online environments popular with children, e.g. requests for children and young people to perform sexual acts on webcam, requests for personal details and requests to meet offline. At the same time, intelligence indicates that some suspect online gamers issue requests for sexual chat and sexual acts on webcam in return for virtual money and virtual items craved by children and young people.

As the popularity of online gaming sites increases amongst children and young people, so too will it increase with those who have a sexual interest in children. Of note, the development of gaming environments for an ever younger demographic – e.g. Club Penguin (aimed at 6-10 year olds) and Disney XD – has identified a requirement for awareness raising amongst younger children, prompting the development in the current reporting period of CEOP education resources for 5-7 year olds (Hector's World) and 8-11 year olds (Cybercafé).

Q7: How do you think this system will last into the future?

Q8: Do you think this option would work in the online environment?

(i) If so, what would be the benefits?

Nearly all new off the shelf games include an online element, but are seen as a single brand or package. Equally, it is widely agreed that developers are designing with the online environment much more in mind, as in a few years' time the majority of gaming will be done online, with a minority offline. So the question really should be, is there really much point in having a classification system which doesn't take this into account? CEOP would advise that however difficult it may be to enforce online age classifications, that the recommended age is clearly signposted in online gaming environments by way of a reminder and/or possible deterrent....if only to maintain consistency with the offline product. We can't, for instance have a situation where there is a classification offline, but none online. In short, given the thrust of our work we would press for a stronger emphasis on online protection. CEOP would also ask this consultation to take account of the recent EC Background Report on Cross Media Rating and Classification and Age Verification Solutions - (Safer Internet Forum September 2008) - which showcased age verification options and practices.

(ii) If not, what would be the problems and do you have any solutions?

See response to Q6 above.

Q9: Is there any other information that you think Government should take into account when considering the monetary costs of this option?
Should take into account that it is government stated policy that this is a child centred policy development and the safety of the child always has priority.
Q10: Do you think having different age classifications on the front and back of the box is a significant problem? If so, do you think the solution offered here is the right one or can you suggest an alternative?
Yes, as it leads to confusion for the consumer and display issues for the retailer.
Q11: Do you think this option would be more or less costly to the games industry and if so what evidence do you have of this?
Q12: What are the likely implications (including costs) for games producers of having a classification system that does not automatically translate across to some other European countries?
Q13: It would be helpful to have your views on whether this option would affect games developers based outside Europe, such as those in Japan or US; namely, how this option might affect them and the extent, if any, to which it may affect them.
Q14: What do you think should be the determining factors or characteristics in deciding whether a game becomes subject to statutory classification at 12+? [see following section]
The descriptors should have both a correlation and alignment with the age appropriate sex education curriculum and is not seen as encouraging sexual activity experimentation below the age of consent .

Option 2 – Enhanced BBFC system

The BBFC would act as the statutory classifications body for all video games, applying its ratings from U to 18. It would retain its power to refuse to classify games it feels are potentially harmful based on its public consultations.

Q15: What is your overall assessment of whether this option would work and why?
We can embrace dual systems, but the key is that the system needs to be enforceable. As good and as informative as PEGI is, it is the BBFC which has the teeth.
Q16: What are the key flaws with this option and how could it be adapted to overcome them?
Capacity of the BBFC to deal with the increased volume of work. This can be dealt with through sub contracting work to the PEGI (with the BBFC retaining quality control) and increased support from Government.
Q17: What are the key advantages with this option and why?
The key is that the system needs to be enforceable and simple for consumers to understand. As good and as informative as PEGI is, it is the BBFC which has the teeth. CEOP would also ask this consultation to take account of the recent EC Background Report on Cross Media Rating and Classification and Age Verification Solutions - (Safer Internet Forum September 2008) - which indicated a preference for national approaches for rating systems as well as showcased age verification options and practices.
Q18: How do you think this system would work for the following key stakeholders:
(i) the consumer?
Less confused and already understands the BBFC classifications and has confidence in the Brand.
(ii) the games industry?
As long as they do not incur either too much extra costs or more importantly their products do not incur extra delays to the process they will only raise minor objections and will want to maintain the status quo.
(iii) the retail industry?

Very well.
Q19: What suggestions do you have to improve the system for any of the key stakeholders?
See response to Q16 above.
Q20: Do you think this system addresses the evidence on potential harms raised by the Byron review and if not why not?
This option addresses issues around potential harm better than the other options. See response to Q6.
Q21: How do you think this system will last into the future?
Very well.
Q22: Do you think this option would work in the online environment?
(i) If so, what would be the benefits?
Yes. Will be using a 'Brand' that is well recognised and has the confidence of the consumer. One central information, reporting and monitoring and point. See also response to Q8 (i) and Q17 above.
(ii) If not, what would be the problems and do you have any solutions?
Q23: Is there any other information that you think Government should take into account when considering the monetary costs of this option?
See response to Q9 above.
Q24: Do you think this option would be more or less costly to the games industry than both the current system and the hybrid system and if so what evidence do you have of this?
Q25: Which of the following options do you think would work best in the online environment and why?
(i) BBFC symbols recognised as part of PEGI Online; or
(ii) BBFC.online (separate from the PEGI system)

<p>PEGI symbols recognised as part of BBFC Online, if the option for the BBFC to subcontract some of the classification work to PEGI is taken up.</p>
<p>Q26: What are the likely implications (including costs) for games producers of having a classification system that does not automatically translate across to some other European countries?</p>
<p>Q27: This option could be complicated by differences across Europe if games are purchased elsewhere. We are interested to know whether there is evidence that might support or disprove this. (Please refer to Paragraph 2.16)</p>
<p>CEOP would refer this consultation to the recent EC Background Report on Cross Media Rating and Classification and Age Verification Solutions - (Safer Internet Forum September 2008) - which indicated a preference for national approaches for rating systems as well as showcased age verification options and practices.</p>
<p>Q28: We would be interested in evidence to demonstrate whether this option creates additional burdens to online games developers and whether this could be confusing to parents. (Please refer to Paragraph 2.25)</p>
<p>Q29: It would be helpful to have your views on whether this option would affect games developers based outside Europe, such as those in Japan or US; namely, how this option might affect them and the extent, if any, to which it may affect them.</p>

Option 3 – Enhanced PEGI system

A UK-based organisation (possibly the Video Standards Council) would be the designated statutory classification body for video games, applying the PEGI ratings. The VSC (or other UK body chosen) would need to sign up to this new role and any legislative changes required. All video games would be rated using the PEGI system and there would be no role for the BBFC in classifying video games.

Q30: What is your overall assessment of whether this option would work and why?
Less effective than Option 2, because VSC is not a brand recognised by the consumer.
Q31: What are the key flaws with this option and how could it be adapted to overcome them?
Legislative changes and large investment in a raising awareness campaign to promote the VSC and its role.
Q32: What are the key advantages with this option and why?
A system that is backed by legislation and is therefore enforceable.
Q33: How do you think this system would work for the following key stakeholders:
(i) the consumer?
See response to Q30.
(ii) the games industry?
(iii) the retail industry?
Q34: What suggestions do you have to improve the system for any of the key stakeholders?
Q35: Do you think this system addresses the evidence on potential harms raised by the Byron review and if not why not?
Not as effectively as Option 2. See also response to Q6 above.
Q36: How do you think this system will last into the future?
Q37: Do you think this option would work in the online environment?
(i) If so, what would be the benefits?

Please see response to Q8 (i) above.
(ii) If not, what would be the problems and do you have any solutions?
Q38: Is there any other information that you think Government should take into account when considering the monetary costs of this option?
See response to Q9 above.
Q39: Who do you think would be the right body to take on the role of statutory classifier of video games and why?
The BBFC. See responses to Option 2 and Q30 above.
Q40: Do you think the body given in answer to Q39 would be able to set up the systems required to carry out this statutory function and why? But if not, why not?
See response to Q16 above.
Q41: Do you think this option would be more or less costly to the games industry than both the current system and the hybrid system and if so what evidence do you have of this?
Q42: Do you think the BBFC should continue to rate all content (games and video) of discs which contain film or video content not integral to the game and why? [please refer to footnote 5 in answering this question]
Yes, in conjunction with the PEGI.
Q43: Do you think PEGI should rate the game content, while the BBFC rates the film/video content and why?
(i) If so, should both symbols be on the box?
Yes.
(ii) In the event of different age ratings, should only the higher symbol prevail?
Yes.
Q44: It would be helpful to have your views on whether this option would

affect games developers based outside Europe, such as those in Japan or US; namely, how this option might affect them and the extent, if any, to which it may affect them. (Please refer to Paragraph 2.36)

Option 4 – Voluntary Code of Practice

There would be no changes made to the legislation so the BBFC and PEGI would continue to classify games as they currently do. The Government would ask retailers and suppliers to sign up to a voluntary Code of Practice to secure adherence to the classification system when selling or supplying video games to children aged 12 or above, even though a statutory offence would not be committed if they broke the code. This Code of Practice would focus on classification and consumer protection and would follow the guidelines outlined in the review. If tougher measures were called for, this could be backed up with statutory legislation calling on the industry to consult and agree on a Code of Practice, breach of which could then be taken into consideration during a prosecution.

Q45: What is your overall assessment of whether this option would work and why?

CEOP do not support this option.

Q46: What are the key flaws with this option and how could it be adapted to overcome them?

Children would be put at higher risk.

Q47: What are the key advantages with this option and why?

Q48: How do you think this system would work for the following key stakeholders:

(i) the consumer?

(ii) the games industry?

(iii) the retail industry?

Q49: What suggestions do you have to improve the system for any of the key stakeholders?
Q50: Do you think this system is sufficient to reflect the evidence on potential harms raised by the Byron review and if not why not?
Q51: How do you think this system will last into the future?
Q52: Do you think this option would work in the online environment?
(i) If so, what would be the benefits?
(ii) If not, what would be the problems and do you have any solutions?
Q53: Is there any other information that you think Government should take into account when considering the monetary costs of this option?
Q54: Do you think industry would sign up to such a code?
Q55: Would this incur any additional costs to industry (games or retail) and can you provide evidence of this?
Q56: Do you think that this would work in practice on the ground?
Q57: It would be helpful to have your views on whether this option would affect games developers based outside Europe, such as those in Japan or US; namely, how this option might affect them and the extent, if any, to

which it may affect them.

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