



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.

Q1: What is your overall assessment of whether this option would work and why?

This is The Salvation Army's preferred option.

It is important that there is a single definitive source of classification for video games as well as DVDs / videos.

By this means, those considering purchasing video games and films will know that the age classification is not arbitrary or (necessarily) voluntary.

For this reason, The Salvation Army considers it important that the hybrid system is made to work, and recognises that this means that both PEGI and BBFC will need to change their practices, roles and responsibilities. However, in our opinion, the benefits from the hybrid system merit the cost associated with change.

Q2: What are the key flaws with this option and how could it be adapted to overcome them?

None
Q3: What are the key advantages with this option and why?
Single definitive source of classification / rating leading to less confusion in the market.
Q4: How do you think this system would work for the following key stakeholders:
(i) the consumer?
Single point of reference
(ii) the games industry?
implementation arrangements must be worked out and harmonised
(iii) the retail industry?
No change
Q5: What suggestions do you have to improve the system for any of the key stakeholders?
Place ratings information and description of the front of the game, near the title
Q6: Do you think this system addresses the evidence on potential harms raised by the Byron review and if not why not?
Yes
Q7: How do you think this system will last into the future?
Could lead to UK taking a lead on game ratings e.g. for PEGI
Q8: Do you think this option would work in the online environment?
(i) If so, what would be the benefits?
Yes, as it sets all users' expectations. More easy to monitor / enforce as appropriate.
(ii) If not, what would be the problems and do you have any solutions?
Potentially problem internationally e.g. UK 12 year olds playing online with older children / adults from other countries.

The solution is to do with communication / harmonisation across jurisdictions, though this is not necessarily achievable in the short term.

Q9: Is there any other information that you think Government should take into account when considering the monetary costs of this option?

We suggest a co-ordinated marketing campaign providing information about video games for adults / parents e.g. PTA / ESRB "Parent's Guide to video Games, Parental Controls and Online Safety" and MediaWise "Video Game Report Card Parent Shopping Guide".

This information should be freely available / publicised in video game outlets, packaged with games, available online etc.

There are also considerations from the influence of violent media on children and adolescents - e.g. where a public health approach is undertaken. See, for example, The Lancet article of the same title from 19 February 2005.

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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?

This is a significant problem which leads parents to consider the age rating is arbitrary. The alternative is a single game rating on the front of box / disc itself with a description of the content leading to the rating awarded. The size of the information should be increased e.g. along the lines of the "smoking kills" campaign.

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?

We expect the cost to the industry to increase, whilst the cost to the government will decrease e.g. provision of information for parents / guardians versus reduced costs of crime, mental and physical well-being etc.

We have no evidence for this assumption.

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?

No comment
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.
We would expect global developers to take the UK market into consideration when developing game content. As the UK is one of the core markets it would seem sensible for games to be developed which are in keeping with public / legislative / statutory / industry requirements.
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]
We prefer the existing BBFC guidance because it provides a clearer description than PEGI.

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?
No further comment