

## COMPUTER GAMES

### SCOPE

Computer games, including labelling and classification of computer games: computer games in a compact disc format and other formats; computer games available for purchase or public rent; requirements for places of sale and rental points; requirements for internet rooms, computer saloons, internet cafes and other similar institutions providing the possibility to play computer games for charge; requirements for advertisement and public demonstration of computer games; provisions for distribution of computer games on the Internet.

In Latvia one has the right to distribute computer games which have been lawfully produced or put into circulation in one of the European Union Member States or in Turkey without additional labelling or which have been legally produced in one of the countries of the European Free Trade Association which is a Contracting Party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

### LATVIAN REGULATIONS

Cabinet Regulation No. 452, adopted June 6, 2006 "[Rules for the dissemination of computer games](#)" (hereafter – Cabinet Regulation no.452).

The implementation of these Regulations shall be controlled by the State Police, the local government police and the Consumer Rights Protection Centre.

### PRIOR AUTHORISATION

Not required

**CONTACTS****AUTHORITY RESPONSIBLE FOR REGULATIONS**

Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia\*

Web: [www.lm.gov.lv](http://www.lm.gov.lv)

Phone: +371 80205100

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\*The Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia shall provide material-technical assistance for the operation of the expert commission

**MARKET SURVEILLANCE AUTHORITY**

Web: [www.ptac.gov.lv](http://www.ptac.gov.lv)

Phone: +371 65452554

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Decides regarding the conformity of the computer game or the non-conformity of the computer game with the labelling or classification, taking into account the opinion of the expert commission on computer game labelling and classification.

## **MAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR ECONOMIC OPERATORS**

### **Classification and labelling of computer games**

The manufacturer of a computer game, authorised representative of the manufacturer, seller or service provider shall indicate on the computer game or its packaging, if the computer game is available in the form of a CD or cassette, the following content information:

- the name of the computer game;
- the type of computer game in conformity with Paragraph 4 of these Regulations;
- the name and address of the manufacturer of the computer game;
- the year of manufacture;
- a brief statement of the content of a computer game in the official language;
- age limits for computer game users;
- the warning statement "Computer game may cause addiction. If you have an addiction or other health problems, ask your family doctor for advice".

The following types of computer games shall be distinguished according to the content of a computer

- an action computer game (a game that develops the speed, reflexes and reaction of a computer user);
- an educational computer game (a game that a computer user uses for educational purposes);
- a simulation game (a game by which the user of the computer simulates the driving of a technical means (for example, a car, an aircraft);
- a strategy game (a game that develops the strategic thinking of a computer user);
- a sports game (imitation of a sports game);
- an adventure game (a game in which characters move according to a game scenario and, using different objects and communicating with other characters, address logical tasks);
- table game (imitation of a table game).

Depending on age limits, computer games shall be classified in the following age groups for users of computer games (Annex 1 of the Cabinet Regulation no.452):

- 3 +;
- 7 +;
- 12 +;
- 16 +;
- 18 +.

no.	Explanations	Age group				
		3+	7+	12+	16+	18+
1.	General explanations	Computer game to be distributed to a person at least 3 years of age	Computer game to be distributed to a person at least 7 years of age	Computer game to be distributed to a person at least 12 years of age	Computer game to be distributed to a person at least 16 years of age	It is prohibited to distribute a computer game to a minor

2.	Content	Restrictions on the distribution of computer games promoting cruel behaviour, violence, erotica and pornography	Restrictions on the distribution of computer games promoting cruel behaviour, violence, erotica and pornography	Restrictions on the distribution of computer games promoting cruel behaviour, violence, erotica and pornography	Restrictions on the distribution of computer games promoting cruel behaviour, violence, erotica and pornography	No restrictions
3.	Language	Uncensored words should not be used	Uncensored words should not be used	The use of uncensored words must be rare and justified in context without any reference to sexual, psychological, physical and other violence	Use of uncensored words without references to sexual, psychological, physical and other violence is allowed	No restrictions
4.	Nudity	Nudity is allowed, but in a sexual context such scenes must be displayed without an accent on detail	Nudity is allowed, but in a sexual context such scenes must be displayed without an accent on detail	Nudity is allowed, but in a sexual context such scenes must be displayed without an accent on detail	Nudity is allowed, but in a sexual context such scenes must be displayed without an accent on detail	No restrictions
5.	Sex	Individual indirect references to sexual behaviour (e.g. a kiss or a hug of fairy tale characters) are allowed	Individual indirect references to sexual behaviour (e.g. a kiss or a hug of fairy tale characters) are allowed	Content-justified sexual behaviour without an accent on details (e.g. a kiss or a hug of fairy tale characters) is allowed	Display of content-justified sexual behaviour without an accent on details is allowed. Sexual communications should be depicted in such a way as to give an adequate	No restrictions

					picture of their potential consequences (e.g. pregnancy).	
6.	Violence or cruel behaviour	Individual, indirect, content-justifiable references to violence or cruel behaviour (such as fairy tale themes in computer game) shall be admissible. Presentation of details (blood, injury, pain, torture, suicide) is not allowed. The resolution of scenes must be positive (the good always wins the evil)	Content-justified references to violence or cruel behaviour (e.g. historical warfare, sports games, fiction) are allowed. Presentation of details (blood, injury, pain, torture, suicide) is not allowed. The resolution of scenes must be positive (the good always wins the evil)	Content-justified references to violence or cruel behaviour (e.g. historical warfare, sports games, fiction) are allowed. Presentation of details (blood, injury, pain, torture, suicide) is not allowed.	Content-justified references to violence or cruel behaviour (e.g. historical warfare, sports games, fiction) are allowed. Presentation of details (blood, injury, pain, torture, suicide) is not allowed.	No restrictions
7.	Imitation weapons of	Only content-justified references to the use of weapons (e.g. historical warfare, sports games, fiction) are allowed	Only content-justified references to the use of weapons (e.g. historical warfare, sports games, fiction) are allowed	Only content-justified references to the use of weapons (e.g. historical battles, sports games, duels) are allowed	Only content-justified references to the use of weapons (e.g. historical battles, sports games, fiction, duels) are allowed	No restrictions

8.	Horror	Horror effects are not allowed	Presentation of details (blood, injury, pain, torture, suicide) is not allowed. The resolution of scenes must be positive (the good always wins the evil)	Short horror scenes are allowed if they are content-wise justified (e.g. fiction). Presentation details (blood, injury, pain, torture, suicide) is not allowed	Short horror scenes are allowed if they are content-wise justified (e.g. fiction). Presentation of details (blood, injury, pain, torture, suicide) is not allowed	No restrictions
9.	There are references to the use of alcohol, tobacco products or narcotic substances	Certain short references to the use of narcotic drugs, tobacco products or alcohol are allowed, but must be content-justified (e.g. fairy tale themes). User guide elements are not allowed	Certain short references to the use of narcotic drugs, tobacco products or alcohol are allowed, but must be content-justified (e.g. fairy tale themes). User guide elements are not allowed	Certain short references to the use of narcotic drugs, tobacco products or alcohol are permitted, but must be content-justified (e.g. educational purposes) and must indicate the hazards of such behaviour. User guide elements are not allowed	The use of drugs, tobacco products or alcohol may be demonstrated but must be content-justified (e.g. educational purposes). Open details of the instructions for use shall not be allowed. A computer game in general must not advertise or promote the use of narcotics, tobacco products or alcohol	No restrictions
10.	Imitation of gambling	Gambling cannot be rendered	Gambling cannot be rendered	Gambling cannot be rendered	Gambling cannot be rendered	No restrictions

If a computer game contains sexual scenes, horror sights, violence, discrimination, views encouraging the use of alcohol, tobacco products or narcotic substances, or uncensored words have been used in a computer game, in addition to the information referred to in Paragraph 3 of the Cabinet Regulation no.452, the computer game manufacturer, his or her authorised representative, seller or service provider shall ensure the labelling of a computer game with any of the warning signs specified in Annex 2 to the Cabinet Regulation no.452 or, if technically impracticable, with an indication of an appropriate content warning. The warning mark must not

be less than five square meters and the warning must not contain less than 10% of the total area for information on computer games.

Annex 2 of the Cabinet Regulation no.452:

picture no.1 – there is violence in the computer game;

picture no.2 – uncensored words are used;

picture no.3 – includes horror scenes;

picture no.4 – depicts sexual scenes;

picture no.5 – there are references to the use of alcohol, tobacco products or narcotic substances;

picture no.6 – there are scenes which may encourage discrimination.

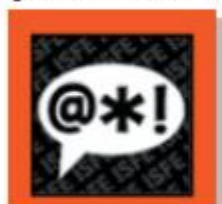
1. Datorspele ir vardarbība.



4. Datorspele ir seksuālas ainas.



2. Datorspele lietoti necenzēti vārdi.



5. Datorspele ir norādes uz alkohola, tabakas izstrādājumu vai narkotisko vielu lietošanu.



3. Datorspele ir šausmu skati.



6. Datorspele ir ainas, kas varētu rosināt uz diskrimināciju.



### The selling and public rental of computer games

Only licensed and classified and labelled computer games in conformity with the requirements of Chapter II of Cabinet Regulation no.452 shall be transferred to trade and public rental.

Public rental of computer games means a contract under which a merchant transfers a computer game on rent for a limited time to an unlimited range of persons.

The seller or renter of a computer game shall be prohibited from selling or renting out a computer game to a person who has not reached the age indicated on the computer game or the packaging thereof.

In order to ascertain the age of the buyer (rentee), the seller (renter) has a duty to request that the buyer (rentee) presents a personal identification document or any other document attesting to his or her age. At the request of the seller (renter) or control authority, the buyer (rentee) has a duty to produce a personal identification document or any other document attesting his or her age.

At the request of the buyer (rentee), the seller (renter) shall present the buyer (rentee) with the text of these Regulations.

The seller (renter) shall place the text of Annexes 1 and 2 to the Cabinet Regulation no.452 at the point of sale or public rental of a computer game in such a way that it is easily visible and read by the buyer (rentee).

In addition to the requirements referred to in Paragraphs 18, 19 and 20 of the Cabinet Regulation no.452, the owner of an Internet room, computer saloon, Internet cafe and other similar institutions, in which the possibility to play computer games for charge, shall ensure that:

- a warning statement regarding the prohibition of a child who has not reached the age of 16 to be in the computer saloon during the night (specified in the relevant local government's binding regulations), as well as during school hours without the written permission of the educational institution's administration, shall be placed at the entrance to the computer saloon;
- the warning statement "Computer game may cause addiction. If you have an addiction or other health problems, ask your family doctor for advice!" shall be placed in a visible location in the premises of the computer compartment;
- the user of a computer game shall play computer games that are in conformity with his or her age;
- users of computer games shall be provided with the possibility to familiarise themselves with the list of computer games installed in this computer systems of the computer saloon in the official language. in conformity with the requirements referred to in the section "Classification and labelling of computer games".

#### Advertising and public demonstration of a computer game

Public demonstration of a computer game is a demonstration of a computer game for advertisement, informational or educational purposes in a public place for an unlimited number of persons using an appropriate technical device (cinema, video and television screens, including broadcasting and retransmission on television and cable television programmes, or via satellite and Internet).

The following information shall be indicated in the official language in the advertisement or public demonstration of computer games:

- the name of the computer game;
- the type of the computer game in conformity with Paragraph 4 of the Cabinet Regulation no.452;
- the age limit for computer game users;
- the warning statement "Computer game may cause addiction. If you have an addiction or other health problems, ask your family doctor for advice!";
- other information which the advertiser (distributor) or the demonstrator of a computer game considers necessary and the provision of which is not prohibited by regulatory enactments in the field of advertising, copyright or media.

#### The availability of a computer game on the Internet

A computer game shall be deemed to be available on the Internet if:

- a computer game or hyperlink to it shall be located on the Internet;
- a computer game or hyperlink to it has been sent via the Internet;
- a hyperlink to a computer game can be found using a search engine.

It shall be prohibited to distribute a computer game using electronic means of communication (electronic mail, SMS service, multimedia message service or other technologies), if:

- the consent of the recipient has not been received;
- the circle of recipients cannot be determined;
- the recipient has not been provided with the possibility to refuse further consignments;
- - prior to that, the recipient has not been alerted to the content of the computer game and the age restrictions for the users of the computer game.

### **MONITORING AND CONTROL**

An expert commission on computer game labelling and classification, established by the Minister of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia, has to review written applications submitted by the computer game distributor, computer game user and parent or guardian, (if the user of computer games is a child) regarding the conformity of the content of a computer game with the labelling and classification requirements.

The expert commission shall consist of 12 members, including two representatives of non-governmental organisations, two IT specialists, one psychologist, one doctor-narcologist, as well as one representative from the Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice.

The expert commission shall send a decision giving the relevant opinion about the computer game to the Consumer Rights Protection Centre of the Republic of Latvia following the meeting of the expert commission. Considering the opinion received from the expert commission the Consumer Rights Protection Centre has to decide regarding the conformity of the computer game or the non-conformity of the computer game with the labelling or classification.