

**Austrian Board of Media Classification**  
**(ABMC)**

**The Austrian Board of Media Classification (ABMC) is a service organisation of the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.**

**The ABMC is active in the interest of the provincial governments of Austria, the media providers and media users.**

**The Board's work is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the European Council Recommendation concerning the protection of minors with respect to audiovisual media.**

**The aim is to ensure observance of national standards concerning the classification of media products and to participate in establishing such standards at the international level.**

### **General objectives of the Board:**

- Age rating of media products, in particular films shown in cinemas or on television.
- Positive rating of media products suitable for minors in terms of content and formal criteria to offer guidance to parents, guardians, teachers, children and young people.
- Information of the public about the concerns, objectives and matters of the protection of minors in the media sectors.
- Cooperation with media providers with a view to producing special media products for children that are tailored to the needs, requirements, forms of perception, abilities and characteristics of adolescents and their respective stages of development.
- Creation of a forum for critical social discourse regarding media content considered harmful.
- Promotion of a media culture adjusted to the needs, requirements, forms of perception, abilities and characteristics of adolescents in line with their respective stages of development.

### **Regulatory framework:**

Based on the principle of federalism laid down in the Austrian Constitution, responsibilities for the protection of minors regarding the media rests with the provincial governments of Austria.

As a result, there are nine different provincial laws on the cinema sector, with partly diverging age rating provisions.

The Board is a service panel set up within the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Vienna. It makes recommendations regarding the suitability of cinema feature films for adolescents. Those recommendations do not have legally binding effect on the individual provincial governments.

In practice the provincial governments make however frequent use of the service provided by the Austrian Board of Media Classification.

### **Historical data:**

Upon request of the cinema industry, the so called “Board of Film Classification” (BFK) had been set up in 1948. The committee of the board examined films submitted by distributors for examination before being shown to the public in Austria and was responsible for age rating. The recommendations made by the board offered guidance to the provincial governments when releasing films shown in cinemas for specific age groups.

Besides age rating, the ABFC had the task to advise the public on content and quality of the films examined by issuing information material. In the late 90s, the ABFC rated about 240 films annually.

As a result of the requirements of a changed media industry, the ABFC redefined its programmes and tasks in summer 2001.

Subsequently, the ABFC was restructured, reorganised and renamed “Jugendmedienkommission” (JMK), i.e. Austrian Board of Media Classification (ABMC).

### **The new Austrian Board of Media Classification (ABMC):**

The Austrian Board of Media Classification (ABMC) was set up by resolution of its Panel of Experts at a meeting held in July 2001.

### **Composition of the ABMC:**

- a) Panel of Experts
- b) Managing Director
- c) (Head of the Division “Protection of Minors regarding the Media” in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture)
- d) Chairpersons of the examination committees
- e) Members of the examination committees
- f) Committee of appeal

The Panel of Experts is made up of 15 members. Its task is to serve as an advisory body to the Minister, stimulate basic discussions in this field as well as to develop guidelines and monitor their observance.

The members of the Panel of Experts, the chairpersons as well as the members of the examination committees of the ABMC are experts in youth work, media and film industry, pedagogy and social work. They are members of youth and parents’ organisations, religious communities or provincial organisations, with some of them meeting several of the above criteria.

The new ABMC examines the suitability of cinema films for adolescents by order of the distributors – a task previously performed by the JFK. In addition, it examines films broadcast by the Austrian broadcasting corporation ORF. Tasks regarding the examination of new media, for which the former ABFC was not responsible, will be added successively, e.g. interactive CD-ROMs, PC games and game consoles.

### **International cooperation:**

In 2000 JFK hosted the International Annual Conference of European Film Examination Institutions. The ABMC maintains international contacts with European and non-European countries, with the aim of a professional exchange and the development of common European media standards.

Film examiners are exchanged at a regular basis with the Germany-based Organization for the Voluntary Self-Regulation of the Film Industry (FSK).

### **Examination reports:**

The ABMC's examination reports contain:

- a) a summary of the content of the film examined and reasons for the rating given;
- b) the recommended age rating;
- c) a voluntary positive rating.

The below catalogue of criteria developed by the ABMC supports examiners in decision-making. It has to be interpreted by trained experts taking into consideration the overall context of the film content.

### **Catalogue of criteria:**

- duration of film
- mental and emotional development
- intellectual-cognitive development
- social-ethical and moral development
- detrimental effect on religious feelings
- detrimental effect on the democratic and civic attitude

The following age ratings may be given to films:

- unrestricted

- 6 years plus
- 10 years plus
- 12 years plus
- 14 years plus
- 16 years plus

In addition, so-called “positive ratings” are possible:

- very recommendable as ..years plus
- recommendable as ..years plus
- acceptable as ..years plus
- not recommendable

To obtain publications and further information on the ABMC's work, please contact the below address:

**Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture**

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