

# CREATING A SPACE FOR CHILDREN

## Volume 2

### Children's Film and Television in Central and Eastern Europe

*By the International Centre of Films for Children  
and Young People (CIFEJ)  
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CIFEJ is an international non-governmental organization whose goal is to promote quality films, television programs and videos for young people around the world. It has 149 members, from broadcasters to media education groups, in 53 countries worldwide. Below are brief notes, taken from the CIFEJ report *Creating a Space for Children: Children's Film and Television in Central and Eastern Europe, Volume 2* (1997), on the policies and legislation regarding media violence in 21 Central and Eastern European Countries.

[Albania](#) / [Azerbaijan](#) / [Belarus](#) / [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) / [Bulgaria](#) /  
[Croatia](#) /  
[Czech Republic](#) / [Estonia](#) / [Georgia](#) / [Hungary](#) / [Latvia](#) / [Lithuania](#) /  
[Macedonia](#) /  
[Moldova](#) / [Poland](#) / [Romania](#) / [Russia](#) / [Slovak Republic](#) / [Slovenia](#) /  
[Ukraine](#) / [Yugoslavia](#)

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#### **Albania**

##### **Film:**

Albanian film producers have long been self-regulating, practising "autocensorship and following unwritten laws" with respect to what is and what is not appropriate content for children. A law on public and private radio and television broadcasting states that films not appropriate for minors under 14 cannot be broadcast before 11:00 p.m.

##### **Television:**

Albania's national public broadcaster is self-regulating with respect to appropriate material for young viewers. It ensures that violent and erotic programs are not aired at times when children might be watching. The network broadcasts children's programs every morning (60 minutes), afternoon (30 minutes), and evening (30 minutes). Albanian TV creates about 550 hours of children's programming annually.

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## **Azerbaijan**

### **Film:**

In Azerbaijan, films for children are produced by a state run and financed film company. The Penal Code addresses violence in films: "For public protection, the distribution of films promoting violence and cruelty is liable for a prison term of up to two years or a fine of the equivalent of 700-800 times minimum wage." Although Azerbaijan has no formal rating system and no censorship regulations, it controls the access of children to cinemas through "normative" documents issued by the state-run film company.

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## **Belarus**

### **Film:**

There is no special structure in Belarus for the creation of films for children. As well, there is no special legislation regulating the distribution of films for children and youth. However, a law concerning children's rights states that "any use of mass media, literature, shows, etc. which includes pornography, the worship of violence and cruelty, or anything which may offend the human dignity and influence children in any harmful way by encouraging them to break the law is punishable by the law." Films and videos must be classified under a state registry which determines the procedure for their public exhibition as well as the age categories of the viewers to whom the film can be shown. The exhibition, rental, and sale of film/video productions without the above-mentioned certification is prohibited.

### **Television:**

There is no special legislation regulating the creation and distribution of TV programs for children and youth in Belarus. However, television films and programs are subject to the classifications outlined above for film and video. The public broadcaster is the National State TV and Radio Company, which has a production unit dedicated to providing programming for children and young people. Shows are broadcast in

blocks on weekday (mornings from 9:30 to 10:10 and afternoons from 3:15 to 4:00) and weekends (morning and afternoon for about one hour each).

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## **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### **Film:**

Since the country's independence, production of films for children has been curtailed due to post-war economic stagnation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the production and distribution of films for children is not governed by legislation. According to a Ministry of Information official, children have unrestricted access to cinemas and there is no rating system for films or videos.

### **Television:**

No special laws exist to regulate children's television in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the war of 1992-1995, the Children's Department of the Yugoslavian Radio and Television managed to continue with its children's programming. It produced four hours monthly of documentary programs about children in Sarajevo as well as live and educational programming. Under less extreme conditions, it produces approximately 60 hours annually of children's programs "in-house." Children's programming is broadcast weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and rebroadcast from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Bedtime stories and cartoons are broadcast evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. After that time, it is widely understood that children are to go to bed or be away from the television sets, because the programming that follows is geared towards adults. Although no ratings system governs television programming, the country's public broadcaster places priority on the protection of children from sex, violence, and foul language. The editor-in-chief of children's programs has the authority to censor on the spot.

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## **Bulgaria**

### **Film:**

At present, there is no law in Bulgaria, a nation of about nine million people, governing the production and distribution of films for children. One commission of the National Film Centre is responsible for overseeing the distribution of films and other audiovisual works. All films produced in Bulgaria, as well as foreign films distributed there, must receive a rating. The six rating categories are: "A" (for all); "B" (the film does not in any way contradict the generally accepted moral standards of the country, but is not rated "A"); "C" (not recommended for children under 12 who

are not accompanied by an adult; some erotic or violent scenes or improper language); "D" (forbidden for those under 15 because of a significant number of erotic scenes and violence); "E" (forbidden to those under 18 because the film is predominantly erotic and shows violence in a demonstrative way); "X" (cannot be distributed for commercial release in state theatres; applies to pornographic films or films that propagate violence and race hatred). Yet despite the existence of this rating system, and the fact that 90 per cent of cinemas are state-owned, cinema "access is practically unlimited," according to the country's Children's Book and Film Foundation.

### **Television:**

The Law for Radio and Television protects the interest of minors, stating: "In programming scheduled between 6:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. it is not permitted to include shows potentially harmful to the psychological, physical and moral development of children and young adults." The primary producer of television films and videos for children is Bulgaria National Television, which broadcasts 15 hours of children's programming each week on two channels.

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## **Croatia**

### **Film:**

According to the Ministry of Culture in Croatia, children have unrestricted access to cinemas, and there is no rating system or classification for films or videos.

### **Television:**

The Law on Croatia Radio and Television states that [broadcasters] "must not offend the public morality, must not show pornography, accentuate violence or provoke racial, religious and ethnic hatred, and must not abuse the credulity of listeners and spectators; must not broadcast a programme which could negatively influence the physical, mental or moral development of children and youth up to the age of 18." Croatia Radio-Television, the country's public broadcaster, has adopted an internal regulation requiring that shows not suitable for children be aired late at night. Its children's programming is broadcast weekdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:55 p.m. to 3:50 p.m., as well as at various intervals on the weekends.

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## **Czech Republic**

### **Film:**

Film production for children, like all film production, has diminished in the Czech Republic due to the privatization of state-sponsored studios and rising production costs. However, the number of feature films for children produced by Czech Television has increased. In the Czech Republic, films and videos are subject to legislation stating that "audio-visual works, the content of which may imperil the moral formation of minors, [Convention of the Rights of the Child] shall be identified as unsuitable for viewers less than 15 or 18 years of age." Producers and distributors are also required to establish and identify categories of suitability for audio-visual works, and must not see or lend such works to persons younger than the applicable age limits. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for enforcing these laws.

### **Television:**

Broadcasting in the Czech Republic is overseen by a Broadcasting Council whose members are elected by Parliament. Children's programming is an important part of the broadcast schedule for Czech Television, the public broadcaster. Children's shows are broadcast in blocks during the afternoon, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and during the early evening. The most popular programs are short bedtime fairy tales, broadcast daily at 7:10 p.m. The broadcasting of programs promoting violence and sex is prohibited by internal regulation at Czech Television, which has set up an Ethics Panel to make recommendations in these matters.

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## **Estonia**

### **Film:**

The Law on the Protection of Children states that "it is forbidden to produce or demonstrate to children any printed matter, films, videos, or any other implements which propagate cruelty and violence."

### **Television:**

The Children's Department of Estonia's public broadcaster provides shows weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Timeslots are also reserved on weekends for children's programming.

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## **Georgia**

### **Film:**

While film-making *for* children has languished due to the current "tense economic situation" in Georgia, film-making *by* children is still going strong. The Pioneer Film Studio gathers together young people aged from 10 to 16 to write their own scripts and produce and make their own films

using young actors. In Georgia, children are protected by law from viewing pornographic or violent films.

**Television:**

The above-mentioned law also applies to television. Georgian TV is the public broadcaster, whose Children's Department produces most of the country's children's programming. Children's programs are shown three nights a week between 8:45 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

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## **Hungary**

**Film:**

In the past few years, one to three full-length features for children have been produced annually in Hungary. Most of these are adaptations of Hungarian literary works or popular folk tales.

**Television:**

The far-ranging Hungarian Media Law addresses the needs of children and young people in several sections. Specifically, the law states that prior to the broadcast of visual or sound effects which are violent or likely to disturb in any other way, as well as to the broadcasting of any program items whose content may be harmful to the personality, mental or physical development of minors, the audience must be warned of this fact. Also, it prohibits the broadcast of images or sounds depicting violence as an example to be followed in programs intended for minors. Programs depicting the self-justified application of violence as an image of conduct may only be broadcast between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. The law also targets advertising, stating that advertisements must not depict children in a violent situation and must not promote violent conduct.

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## **Latvia**

**Television:**

Television broadcasting in Latvia is overseen by the National Radio and Television Council, which consists of nine members elected by Parliament. The council issues licences to public and private television stations. Broadcasters are subject to the Electronic Mass Media Act, which provides for the protection of children. It stipulates that programs capable of inhibiting the normal physical, mental or moral development of children be broadcast between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., unless technical protection (encryption) is provided. This means that during those hours, programs containing violence (physical or psychological) in visual or

textual form, homicidal, or horror-inciting scenes are prohibited. The Media Act also stipulates that advertising shall not promote violence. The national public broadcaster states that "Latvian television shall deliver programmes for children every day. In addition, there shall be a longer programme on Saturday and Sunday mornings."

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## **Lithuania**

### **Film:**

Lithuania's Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child seem to correspond closely to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in providing for a protective net for the rights and freedoms of children. It states: "The demonstration, sale, propagation and rentals to children of toys, movies, audio and video recordings, literature, newspapers, magazines and other publications which directly promote and propagate war, cruel behaviour, violence, and pornography, or otherwise harm the spiritual and moral development of the child, shall be prohibited."

### **Television:**

Lithuania's public broadcaster is governed by the Law on National Radio and Television. The law prohibits the broadcasting of pornography or violence or encouraging national, racial, and religious hatred. Children's programs are broadcast weekdays from 6:50 p.m. to 7:20 p.m. and weekends from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

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## **Macedonia**

### **Film:**

The Ministry of Culture of Macedonia is currently preparing a law on cinematography, which will stipulate measures to protect children.

### **Television:**

The Broadcasting Law contains articles aimed at protecting children from viewing programs that may be harmful or have a negative influence on them. It prohibits the broadcast of programs with indecent content, and in particular with pornography or violence. Broadcasting of programs which might have a negative influence upon the physical, psychological and moral development of children and youth shall be broadcast between 12:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m. only. A Broadcasting Council, which oversees television networks, ensures compliance with the laws concerning program contents. Macedonia Radio and Television is the sole

public broadcaster in Macedonia. It provides about 730 hours of programs for children annually, with a daily mix of film, entertainment, musical or animated shows and 90 minutes daily of educational programs.

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## **Moldova**

### **Television:**

The public broadcaster in Moldova has adopted internal regulations prohibiting the screening of sexual material and violence. The company broadcasts programs for children in three timeslots on weekdays, with additional showings on Friday and weekends, for a total weekly broadcast of 7.3 hours of children's shows.

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## **Poland**

### **Film:**

The State Committee of Polish Cinematography helps finance feature film production, including films for children. Of the approximately 20 feature films made annually with the Cinematography Committee, two or three are children's films. There is no legislation in Poland on film censorship, and no body regulating or classifying films for this purpose. Although they are not required to do so, film distributors often set the age rating for films, usually deferring to the rating assigned by the film's country of origin.

### **Television:**

The Act on Radio and Television regulates the content of television programming in Poland. It states that programs which may be hazardous to the mental, emotional and physical development of children and youth shall not be broadcast between 6:00 a.m and 11:00 p.m. The act provided for the establishment of a National Broadcasting Council, which has guidelines for protecting children against violent programming. These guidelines restrict the transmission of programs which portray brutality and violence, especially pictures of assault, torment or other vicious scenes. They also require broadcasters to inform their viewers about programs which may negatively affect the psychological, emotional, or physical development of children and teenagers. Advertisements for these programs cannot be transmitted during the broadcasting hours from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Polish Television, the sole public broadcaster in Poland, requires that such shows be accompanied by a caption indicating "only for adults." It includes the protection of children in its mandate, recognizing that "special care and responsibility is required while making children's and youth programs since young viewers very often cannot

discern between good and evil, nice and ugly." Also operating within the framework of Polish Television is the TV Theatre and Film Production Agency, which produces feature films and series for children and youth. It produces works based on Polish and foreign theatre plays and literary works for broadcasting in a timeslot known as the *Theatre for Children and Young People*.

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## **Romania**

### **Film:**

In the five years preceding 1990, Romania annually produced an average of four feature-length films for young people and 40 animated films for children. Subsequent to 1990, no features for children have been shot.

### **Television:**

Romanian broadcasting laws state that the broadcasting of programs must not prejudice the protective measures of youth. Consequently, it requires that programs whose content threaten the psychological or moral developments of children cannot be broadcast from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The National Audio-Visual Council prohibits advertisements containing extremely violent or shocking scenes, which might exert a negative influence upon young viewers' emotional condition, during children's programming. It also prohibits the distribution of programs that might impair the development of minors by their violent nature, be it physical, psychological or linguistic violence. The council has recommended that broadcasters establish their own classification system for film and other audiovisual productions in order to set protective broadcasting standards. Romania's public broadcaster produces two, one-hour children's shows (Saturday and Sunday at 10:00 a.m.) and a five-minute tale is broadcast each weekday.

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## **Russia**

### **Film:**

Russia has a long history of state subsidized participation in children's culture and media, including magazines and films. Prior to liberalization, upwards of 30 dramatic films for children along with many documentary and educational films were produced annually. Since then, production figures have dropped. The specialized children's cinemas that for decades distributed children's films still exist, but their numbers have been reduced. Recent federal legislation entitled State Support of Cinematographic Art (1996) states "the primary measure of the state support of cinematographic art are aimed at creating national films

including films for children and young people." Children in Moscow are being provided a unique opportunity to learn about film through the Moscow Children's Fund (MCF). This non-profit organization operates the film studio Animafilm, which brings together professional film-makers and children, the latter to learn the principles and skills of animation film-making. In the area of youth protection, film distributors in the Russian Federation must apply for a state distribution licence for theatrical productions or videos. Distributors getting a licence take upon themselves the responsibility for showing only films with distribution certificates. While there is general compliance to these regulations, there is some overlooking of them in the video rental market.

### **Television:**

The protection of children and youth is addressed in two federal laws: The Law on Mass Media (1991) and the Law on Advertising (1995), in addition to the regulation discussed above. The Law on Mass Media states that using the media for "igniting national, class, social or religious intolerance or dissension, or for war propaganda, is prohibited." Erotic broadcasting must be contained between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m., at a time when children and juveniles would not normally be watching television. The Law on Advertising states that commercials must not induce aggression and violence, or actions which may be dangerous and harmful to the health of citizens or threaten their safety. Russian television broadcasters are self-regulating in the area of protection for young audiences. The Russian State Teleradio Company, for instance, does not broadcast violent, erotic and other materials that may be harmful to children. It broadcasts children's programming weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., and on weekends from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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## **Slovak Republic**

### **Film:**

Film and video production distribution in Slovak Republic are subject to the Audiovisual Law (1995). It requires that cinema operators, video rental outlets and producers and distributors of audiovisual works specify the age limit of access on works which are potentially damaging for the development of minors below age 15 and adolescents below age 18. The industry is prohibited from using and distributing audiovisual work containing violence, brutality and pornographic contents, particularly works containing child pornography. Under this law, advertisers are not allowed to promote alcoholic beverages, narcotic, psychotropic and other habit-forming substances, poisons, and violence. The Ministry of Culture has the authority to impose fines on violators of these articles of the law.

Slovak Republic does not have special quotas for the production or distribution of children's films

**Television:**

All broadcasting activities in the Slovak Republic are regulated by the 1993 Television and Radio Broadcasting Law and overseen by the Council for Radio and Television, appointed by Parliament. The Law aims to protect children and youth from violent programming through certain provisions, namely (1) programs that might endanger the moral or psychological development of children and young people cannot be shown between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.; and (2) programs that might promote war and describe cruel or other inhuman acts in such a way as to minimize, excuse, or approve them must not be broadcast. Other Acts on Radio and Television Broadcasting specify that an operator who "broadcasts a program which could endanger the mental or moral development of children and youth in the time before 10:00 p.m." is liable for fines. Recent laws on advertising also stipulate protective measures for persons under the age of 18. The Slovak Republic's public broadcaster has no internal regulations on programming for children. Approximately 15 per cent of its broadcast time is devoted to programming for children or young people. Of course, when applying for their broadcast licence, TV stations may be reminded by the Council for Radio and Television of their responsibilities to provide children's programs. Recently, the Council issued a directive about movie trailers screened on TV, requiring that trailers containing violence be broadcast only after 10:00 p.m.

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**Slovenia**

**Film:**

In 1995, a new state organism, the Slovenian Film Fund, became operational. Its main objectives are: "co-financing film production of all genres as well as film events, festivals, film-related publications; promoting Slovenian films at home and abroad, selling films, etc." The Film Fund does not allocate a certain portion of its budget to children's films, but it has co-financed episodes of animation series for children. There is no rating system for cinema access or for video films that protects minors from viewing violent or pornographic films. Exhibitors decide on their own if some films are not suitable for children under 15, and provide warnings as necessary.

**Television:**

Slovenia's public broadcaster, RTV, has a Children's and Youth Department, which falls under the umbrella of Cultural and Artistic programmes. Children's programs are broadcast on TV1 weekdays at 5:10

p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and two hours on Saturday and Sunday. TV2 broadcasts a children's show on Monday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:10 p.m. The 1994 Law of RTV Slovenia states that it must "protect children and young people faced with contents which could inflict damage to their moral and physical development." The broadcasting of erotic programming is prohibited before 11:00 p.m.

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## **Ukraine**

### **Film:**

Currently, there are, according to the Ministry of Culture and Arts, no special laws on cinematography for children and youth in Ukraine. A state agency called Children of Ukraine produces and buys the best foreign films and TV shows for children, and every regional city has special cinemas for children.

### **Television:**

The Ukrainian Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting (1993) states that "programs (films) that can damage the physical, psychological or moral development of minors are forbidden."

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## **Yugoslavia**

### **Film:**

The five or so feature films for children produced in the past decade in the former Yugoslavia (all before the political upheavals of 1990) were produced by private companies. There are very few film companies contributing to the creation of films for children.

### **Television:**

The public broadcaster is the Serbian Broadcasting Corporation (RTS). In 1996, its Children's Department produced 80 per cent of the programming for children on the network, with reruns and foreign acquisitions (cartoons and dramas). Programs acquired in the Balkan Pool for Children's Television Programmes made up the other 20 per cent of programming. Children's shows are broadcast weekdays for 2.5 hours split between afternoon and evening, and on Saturday and Sunday for two hours split between morning and evening. There is no legislation in Yugoslavia addressing children and the media; RTS, however, has internal regulations to ensure that children do not view violent or pornographic shows.