

PUBLIC OPINION ON UNIFIED TV CONTENT RATING SYSTEM

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Abstract: Even though program rating was primarily a matter of broadcaster's choice which depended solely on their own will to tag or not to tag the programs, nowadays there exists a unified content rating system in most of European countries. Mostly, it works based on country specific ratings of self-regulation that differ from country to country. Slovak Republic is one of the first Central European countries who introduced their own content rating system applicable nationwide at the beginning of third millennium. The article deals with Slovak viewers' point of view concerning the topic in three different time frames. It gathers public opinion expressed throughout the last 18 years.

Keywords: Children. Pictogram. Programs. Content Rating System. TV.

Introduction

In spite of development of new technologies and the Internet, TV remains a "favorite" friend of many children. The opinion that they spend little time watching TV would be considered mistaken. Children spend a great deal of their free time watching TV. This may have significant impact on how they absorb knowledge on cognitive, ethical and emotional level. The fact was acknowledged long time ago and society took various actions to protect childish against potentially maleficent media contents. The article deals with Slovak content rating system which is in place couple of years now and its main aim is to protect childish viewers both from legislative perspective and based on knowledge of public.

1 What is "unified content rating system", referred to as TV CRS?

Unified content rating system of programs was introduced in Slovakia back in 2001. Not only television channels but their viewers, too, had to get used to a wide system of TV content rating signs. The flagship of the system is well known by older viewers as long ago, Slovak public broadcaster started to use "a star" while broadcasting programs which were not suitable for infantile viewers (under the age of 18). Next steps in regulation were taken no sooner than in 1997 when private broadcaster TV Markíza started to notify viewers by means of short call signs which introduced programs inappropriate for infantile viewers ahead of them. Another private broadcaster VTV (Vaša TV broadcasted in between 1995 and 2000) introduced their own system, a system of square signs of different colors, by means of which they tagged age groups whom the program content was not appropriate for. Slovak public broadcaster started to rate their programs in 1999 based on their agreement with supervising bodies. A unified system of content rating which might have been used by all TV channels was still missing, though. Professionals specialized in the field started to create a concept of unified rating system under supervision of *The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission* before 2000. The Council wanted to create rules for pictograms usage. Later on, usage of pictograms became mandatory for all TV broadcasters. [1]

1.1 Legal boundaries of unified TV content rating

Unified system of TV content regulation is set according to Act of Law No. 308/2000 on broadcasting and retransmission. The fifth part of the law stipulates that conditions and exceptions of tagging are in scope of *The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission*. The law prohibits broadcasters from such broadcasting that could infringe psychological or moral development of minors. Possibly menacing programs should not

be broadcasted from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., or even 10:00 p.m.. The broadcaster must inform of age impropriety of programs for youngsters under 7, 12, 15 or 18 years old.

Convention on the Rights of the Child introduced by General Assembly of the United Nations back in 1989 stipulates in the article 18: „States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. ...For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities...” [2]

The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission acknowledge this article while creating the content tagging system of programs. CRS methodology indicates appropriateness of broadcasted TV programs for certain age groups based on graphic indicators which flash in the screen corner during the broadcasting. This concerns primarily programs meant for childish viewers (green symbols) and red symbols should appear once a program is inappropriate for certain age group. TV channels use an indicator for programs appropriate for viewers from 15 years of age as the leveling for viewers to 12 years and from 18 years old was insufficient. Real cases have shown that even though the rating system is legally bounding, the scaling of symbols is solely subjective and varies from TV channel to TV channel. TV programs are rated (scaled) by TV channels themselves.

Web portal mediálne.sk claims that even if unified TV CRS tries to define which programs are unambiguously appropriate for childish viewers, at the end, it all depend on parent's subjective point of view and set family values. According to methodology at *The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission* web site, no program of dark or obscure colors should be broadcasted to children under 7 years old. The same applies for programs which are too loud or include unforeseen sound-related changes. This, for example, is that much explicit that all fairy tales should be excluded from broadcasting for children younger than 7 years old as the part where negative characters appear usually is depicted in dark and obscure colors. In case of programs appropriate for children up to 12 years old, the limit is set in reference to nudity imagery. The formulation referring to nudity expressed otherwise than of common situations in public or family life, especially nudity which is presented in provocative way leading to interest in sexual relationships that may possibly invoke premature sexual instincts of minors can be interpreted in multiple ways according to individual set of rules within the family and it enables certain maneuvering space for its interpretation in terms of what is "common" and what is not. [3]

Conditions of controlled access are realized by means of:

- Setting a program structure in day time from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. so that so-called *safe space* is granted (§ 20, art.4).
- Respecting so-called "*drop-scene*" - a time frame closing the safe space. According to Act of Law No. 308/2000 § 20 art. 3, it is a time set to 8:00 p.m. (for viewers under 15) or 10:00 p.m. (for viewers under 18).
- Scheduling programs classified as inappropriate or inaccessible for minors after 10:00 p.m. (§ 20 art. 3).
- Classifying programs by means of pictograms. Program tagging is a result of this classification based on presence of menacing and inappropriate elements and subsequent categorization of programs based on their age appropriateness. (§ 20, art. 5)

Broadcasters have to take into account following factors addressed in the ordinance of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic on Unified TV CRS:

- a) depiction of parent-child relationship menace or menace in terms of family relationships;
- b) physical, psychic or verbal violence;
- c) sexual relations and scenes;
- d) nudity in sexual context;
- e) verbal aggression, expressiveness in speech, vulgar language, vulgar gestures;
- f) animal abuse;
- g) drug addiction, gambling or other addictions, consumption of alcohol and cigarettes smoking;
- h) presence of imagery or displays invoking fear;
- i) depression, helplessness in terms of perception and cognition of signs possibly leading to inadequate interpretation of media messages or possible imitation of such a behavior, especially among children from 0 to 7 or from 0 to 12 years old;
- j) depiction of unnatural, sudden or unexpected changes of living creatures or depiction of paranormal or other extra-sensational happenings.

Based on level of individual factors occurrence within a media message a pictogram of a bear and numbers 18, 15, 12, 7, or none, are attributed to the program. [4]

1.2 Actual broadcasting challenged changes in Unified TV CRS

The first change comprised of classification scale enlarged by programs inappropriate for minors younger than 15 years old. This happened without prior approval of *The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission*. This change was introduced by TV channels themselves. The Council not only accepted but also highly approved of it, though, the change was not legally bounding at the time. Neither the law nor the ordinance counted on it. If the set of rules were to be interpreted strictly, the programs tagged by this very pictogram could have been penalized and considered to violate the Unified TV CRS. The broadcasters have initiated one more change in regards to the topic- new visual of the pictograms. Until 2005, a frown face smiley was attributed to the number sign. Then, TV Markíza came with a different suggestion. The new norm used nowadays stipulates a new pictogram consisting of a number in circle and childish viewers programs are tagged by a bear sign, now. Ahead of new visual symbols to be accepted, TV Joj had already started using them on screen. This was another violation of set of rules applicable at the time, though, the TV got out of it all with no fee. [5]

The second change was bigger and more complex. The system of tagging was introduced by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic in 2008. They have introduced a new ordinance stipulating all details of unified system of audio-visual art works, audio recordings of works of art, multimedia pieces of art and other TV programs or TV program service tagging and the way it was used. It was for the first time that such a thing was dealt with by a ministry and not by the council or TV station themselves. This movement did not come neither as a result of any commitment to the European Union. Slovak Republic was faster than Czech Republic in terms of having introduced laws related to the topic. The main aim of the ordinance was to unify not only TV broadcasting but PC games and DVD platforms, too. One of great pros was that previously applicable pictograms have stayed effective, only that new ones were introduced. The biggest negative was that based on lobbying of various broadcasters, broadcasting of programs inappropriate for minors under 15 was allowed also throughout the day, once again. [6]



Picture 1: New pictograms used in Slovak TV channels. Source: Ordinance of Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic No.589/2007 Act of Law, on unified CRS.

The License Council (nowadays called *The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission*) originally forbade contents inappropriate for children under 15 from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., though, the ministry cancelled this regulation by their ordinance. Violent acts ending in one's death or serious consequences, animal cruelty, sexual scenes as part of the story, downplayed presentation of addictions or expression of approval of addiction, violence without caution of its possible risks- broadcasting of all of these has been allowed in full day light once again. TV channels immediately seized their opportunity. In February 2020, a month after the ordinance became effective, TV Markíza offered 25 hours and TV Joj 60 hours of programs tagged as inappropriate for children under 15 before it was 8:00 p.m.. RTVS-STV has never broadcasted such a content in day time. TV Joj was satisfied that they are no longer limited to certain time frames. „It enables us to profit from our library in a more effective way,“ claims Tatiana Tóthová, the spokesperson of TV Joj. [5] The department of media research of SRo did a research for the Council concerning public opinion on pictogram “15”. “87% of asked people think that such programs should be broadcasted after 8:00 p.m. and a third of respondents believe such programs should be broadcasted after 10:00 p.m.,” states the final report. A step needed to re-schedule programs inappropriate for minors under 15 back to late evening time frames is that the ordinance has to be changed or the Act of Law must be amended and prior competencies should be returned to the License Council.

The Act of Law was amended again in 2010. The amendment prohibited broadcasting of programs inappropriate for children under age of 15 from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and this time frame was named the first-time circuit. The second time circuit from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. was introduced when it is prohibited to broadcast programs inappropriate for children under 18.

The last amendment dates back to 2013 and became valid in 2014. Two changes were introduced. The first one was a slight change in paragraph 1 and the second one was introduced to deal with teasers for TV programs so that these are classified based on their appropriateness as they might refer to a program scheduled for different time circuit (and are not allowed for the current one). [6]

An interesting fact related to Unified TV CRS is that even though the system of pictograms (signs in the corner of the screen) functions since 2008, four of these pictograms will most likely never appear on screen. It is so because no broadcasting of educational character is present in TV schedule. Talking about conditions of the Slovak Republic school system that is connected to children, media education is realised in three basic forms. First, it may be a separate subject, the second form of media education is implementation of media education into Slovak language, Ethics or other subjects. The third way is integration of students into the creation and management of media content – creation of school media. [7] Educational character of a program is a condition for usage of a green sign tagged as 7, 7+, 12+ or 15+. “The basic condition for programs classification as appropriate or inappropriate for individual groups of minors is that they must be tagged by their producers to be used for educational purposes. Such programs are produced by field experts,” states the ordinance. For the purpose of being tagged as appropriate, TV programs should be in fact classified as inappropriate. Even if a program contains some attributes (such as it not being appropriate for children under 7) but it was created for educational purposes only, it is after all

classified as appropriate for minors under the age of 7. Another issue related to these 4 pictograms is that programs must be tagged by them but it is not clearly stated if the pictogram should be present on the screen during the whole program or for a couple of seconds at its beginning. *The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission* plans to take into account legislator's intention and chooses an analogical way of tagging to the one with a bear and red pictograms. The fifth new pictogram „U“ goes even further. It is stated in the ordinance that “*audio-visual works of art, programs or other elements of TV program structure classified as appropriate for certain age groups of minors can be tagged by the green letter „U“.*” Facultative character of the pictogram caused that it has not yet been used by any TV channel. [5]

2 Research methods

The article deals with TV CRS as a tool to protect children against violent TV contents in Slovakia. It happens quite often in Slovak households that parents do not know what their children watch or that they allow their children to watch even the programs classified as inappropriate for their age group. Current tendency has manifested in increase of violence in media culture, comprising TV. As a result of it, defensive measures against violent media contents must be taken. Children whom have been repeatedly exposed to violent media content could consider violence to be a natural and common part of their lives and world around them and it is less likely that those children would be able to successfully fight against violence in real life. [8] There exist certain legal norms trying to reduce the amount of violence in media contents so that it is less accessible to childish viewers. Undoubtedly, one of them is TV Content Rating System (CRS) functioning in Slovakia since 2001. CRS has undergone several more or less consolidated changes that lead to its current form. There arises a question; does the society know TV CRS and individual pictograms which are used? Does the public acknowledge the need for content rating classification?

To be able to provide responses to these questions, we will profit from three different researches run in different time frames. All three of them are quantitative researches run by means of questioning chosen sample of Slovak population with help of surveyors or via an electronic survey form. Minors and adults were surveyed to find out if they follow CRS, have knowledge what it actually is about or if they profit from built-in systems in their TV sets which enable them to regulate their watching TV. In the last survey, we also wanted to find out if people acknowledge individual pictograms, not only the fact if parents follow CRS guidelines but also if they know what the rounded pictograms in their TV corner mean.

- Two years after having introduced the Unified TV Content Rating System, The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission (at that time known as the License Council) run a public opinion survey. They wanted to get to know how the society responds to changes in TV programs tagging. The survey was organized by OMV from November 11th to November 17th 2003, 3.362 respondents were questioned.
- In 2014, FMK run a research in regards to actual state and current trends of media literacy of Slovak adult population. The otherwise quantitative research comprised 10 unified CRS related questions. The object of quantitative research was the viewer of TV programs. The actual research sample was chosen to represent Slovak population, too. Given the number of Slovak inhabitants, 1.828 respondents would be sufficient to represent the Slovak population, though, for the purpose to ensure higher accuracy, the number was increased to 2.815 of respondents aged from 16 to 83. The actual research was run by means of PAPI method (Paper and Pencil Interviewing). The research was run from March to June 2014. All gathered answer sheets were statistically processed via SPSS software.
- The last survey on Unified CRS was run in spring 2020. We used survio.com as an online platform for survey execution. The survey link was published via social

networks in various group pages, usually concerned with the topic of parenthood, motherhood, family, etc. The survey was run from March 25th to April 30th 2020. 1.360 respondents from 15 to 65 years old took part in the survey. The same questions were asked as in 2003 and 2014. Three more questions with depicted pictograms were added to verify if people are really familiar with what CRS signs stand for. Survio business account generated systematic summary and result charts for our survey.

Based on this information, we can try to specify a few research questions:

1. Do parents watch media contents on television with their infant children?
2. Do people (parents) notice and follow TV Content Rating System signs, so - called CRS signs located in the corner of TV screen?
3. Are parents familiar with so-called parental lock in TV sets? Do they profit from it?
4. Is society familiar with the meaning of CRS pictograms?

3 Results

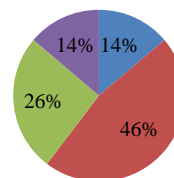
3.1 The first CRS acknowledgement survey (2003)

Up to 78% of asked respondents fully or partially agreed with the idea that tagging makes it easier for parents to choose programs for their children. Slightly less, 64%, agreed that television channels pay more attention to what they broadcast. 20% chose the “*probably not*” option and the option “*certainly not*” was chosen by 10% of the respondents.

The question also turned out in favor of TV content tagging for TV broadcasters who use symbols dealing with appropriateness of TV programs correctly. Overall, 57% of people thought that attributed tags are mostly adequate, 10% find them always appropriate, 17% mostly unreasonable and 2% always inadequate. Only 14% of respondents were unable to comment on the issue. The public did not respond one question clearly and that was whether when choosing television programs for their child or grandchild, they take into account the symbols of appropriateness for given age group. The question did not anyhow concern up to 40% of respondents and 2% could not judge it. 8% always followed the pictogram and 27% of people mostly followed it. On the contrary, they were mostly not noticed by 15% of respondents and 8% of asked people did not notice the sign at all.

If you watch TV with young viewer or viewers, do you follow the pictograms located in the corner of TV screen?

■ always ■ mostly yes ■ mostly not ■ not at all



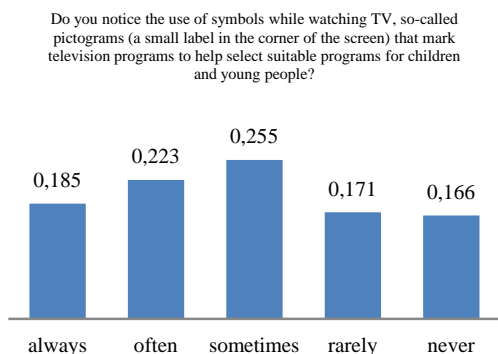
Graph 1: Taking pictograms into account when watching programs with adolescents (2003). Source: Own processing.

One issue was addressed very clearly by the respondents and it was whether it is necessary to tag all audiovisual products on our market with symbols of appropriateness for children and youngsters. Almost half of the respondents - 49% were definitely for it and opted for answer “yes”, 27% opted for “*probably yes*” and 15% considered it “*probably useless*”, 6% “*certainly useless*” and 3% could not take a stand.

3.2 Second CRS acknowledgement survey (2014)

We investigated who do Slovaks watch television with the most frequently. 45,5% of surveyed parents watch television with their children "sometimes, often and very often." 44,2% of all asked respondents did not get involved in watching TV with their children and only 8% of respondents answered that they do not watch television with children at all. Based on the results, it can be stated that almost half of the respondents watch television with their children. This is also valid from the opposite side. Even with younger respondents, up to 65,9% claimed that they watch TV programs with their parents "occasionally, often and very often". We can only assume why these numbers are different. It may also be because of the fact that many young people still live with their parents. According to TNS survey run in early 2013, on a sample of 6.488 respondents "aged up to 20, 95% of young people still live with their parents, which is understandable, because at this age they are still high school students. It is 3/4 up to age 25 and almost 50% of young people live at home by the age of thirty. In the age category of 31-35 years, 1/3 of young people live with their parents." [9] Therefore, we can assume that several respondents of our questionnaire still live with their parents and watch television together. However, parents no longer consider them to be minors in regards to what they watch on TV.

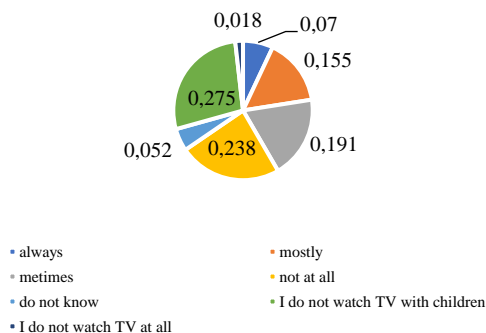
Awareness of television programs tagging by pictograms turned out well. 25,5% respondents notice these symbols in the corner of the screen just "occasionally". 22,3% of respondents "often" notice pictograms and 18,5% "always" notice these. 17,1% of respondents are "rarely" attentive to these symbols and 16,6% never notice them. So we can say that almost 2/3 of the respondents somehow noticed the pictograms.



Graph 2: Awareness of marking television programs with pictograms (2014). Source: Own processing.

Another question dealt with the fact whether parents perceive the pictograms when watching programs with adolescents? As it comes to choosing the level of appropriateness of programs for children, 7% of respondents always follow these symbols. 15,5% of respondents follow them mostly. As it comes to choosing what the children are supposed to watch, the tags sometimes help to 19,1% of respondents. 23,8% of respondents do not follow them at all. 5,2% of people could not answer this question. 27,5% do not watch TV with children and 1,8% of respondents do not watch television at all.

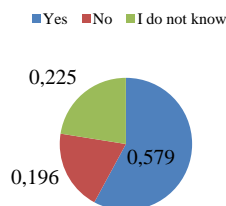
If you are watching TV with a young viewer or viewers, do you follow the pictograms located in the corner of the TV screen when selecting a program?



Graph 3: Taking pictograms into account when watching programs with children (2014). Source: Own processing.

The survey did not only verify whether people follow TV CRS, but also their opinions regarding functionality of this system, as well as how this system helps parents and grandparents to choose the right programs. Up to 57,9% of respondents in 2014 thought that this system helps with programs selection. Only 19,6% thought that it does not help and 22,5% were unable to answer the question.

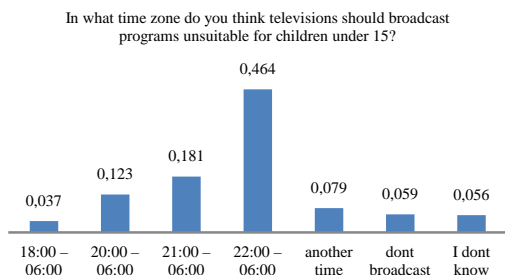
Do you think that marking programs with pictograms dealing with suitability or unsuitability of a broadcasted program for children and young people makes it easier for parents to choose programs for children, grandchildren, etc.?



Graph 4: Opinions on suitability of pictograms as tools for selection of programs suitable for adolescents (2014). Source: Own processing.

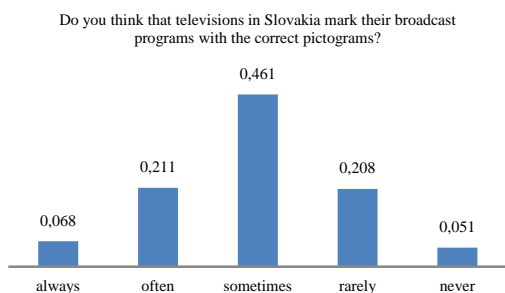
In total, up to 63,6% of respondents were convinced that a unified content rating system should work for other products (such as DVDs, etc), too. Only 12,1% think not, and 24,2% could not express themselves clearly and answered "I do not know".

CRS proclamation defines 2 so-called time circuits. One is for "under 15" broadcasting from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and second time circuit is meant for children "under 18" from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Respondents (46,4%) expressed the opinion that programs inappropriate for children "under 15" should be broadcasted after 10:00 p.m. Only 12,3% of respondents opted for the time zone being used recently. For example, 18,1% think that programs for children "over 15" can be broadcasted only after 9:00 p.m. Only 3,7% answered that such programs could be broadcasted as early as from 6:00 p.m. The public (almost 46,4% of respondents) has thus clearly expressed support for the idea that the first time circuit should be moved from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.



Graph 5: Opinion on time zones related to broadcasting of programs unsuitable for children under 15 (2014). Source: Own processing.

The survey also addressed the issue of perceiving broadcasters and their pictogram labelling by the public. Television channels label their programs by themselves and therefore sometimes there may be a situation where the program is marked incorrectly and the broadcaster faces a penalty from the Council. Only 6,8% of respondents thought that television channels "always" label their programs with the right symbol of age appropriateness. The fact that they "often" label them well was thought by 21,1%. However, most respondents, up to 46,1%, were convinced that the television stations label content correctly only "occasionally". The answer "rarely" was chosen by 20,8% of respondents and "never" by 5,1%.



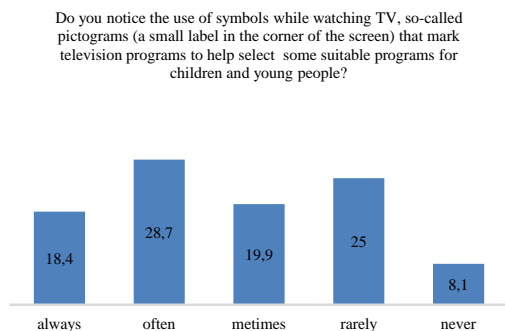
Graph 6: Opinion on correctness of marking broadcast programs with appropriate pictograms (2014). Source: Own processing.

The last area examined was use of so-called parental lock - feature that all TV sets have. It is a function that locks TV and makes it work again after entering the correct password. Almost 78,8% of respondents were familiar with this function and the fact that the television sets are equipped with. Only 21,2% did not know a parental lock existed. Most of respondents, up to 47,4%, answered that minors did not live in their household and therefore they have no reason to use it. In 2014, only 9,1% of respondents, where children lived, used the parental lock. On the other hand, 14,6% of respondents did not use the parental lock functions, even though minors lived in their household. A total of 1,1% of households where children lived could not say whether they use a parental lock or not.

3.3 No. 3 CRS acknowledgement survey (2020)

The rise of various streaming services such as Netflix, HBO Go, Apple TV+ etc., caused a minor revolution in television viewing. Besides the fact that today's households own even more TV sets than in 2014 (not only a TV set but also a laptop, a tablet or even a mobile phone are used today for watching TV). As a result, up to 94,6% of respondents watch TV "always" or "occasionally" alone. As it comes to parents, 8,1% "always" watch TV programs with their children regularly and 40,4% follow the tag "occasionally".

Pictograms are "always" noticed by 18,4% of respondents in TV program and 28,7% of viewers notice the tags "often". 19,9% of respondents notice the tags "sometimes", compared to 33,1% of respondents who "rarely" or "never" notice the signs (tags).

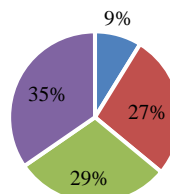


Graph 7: Awareness of tagging television programs with pictograms (2020). Source: Own processing.

8,8% of respondents "always" follow these pictograms while watching television programs with the youngsters. 27,2% follow it "mostly", 29,4% "occasionally" and only 1/3 of respondents (34,6%) do not follow the tags at all.

If you watch TV with young viewer or viewers, do you follow the pictograms located in the corner of TV screen when selecting a program?

• always • mostly • sometimes • never

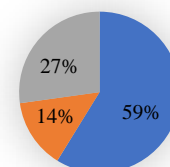


Graph 8: Taking pictograms into account when monitoring the youth programs (2020). Source: Own processing.

More than 58,8% of respondents think that tagging programs with pictograms in terms of their appropriateness for children and youth makes it easier for parents to choose programs for children, grandchildren, etc. On the contrary, only 14% think that this system does not help them and 27,2% could not take a clear standpoint on the issue.

Do You think that tagging the programs based on their appropriateness for children by means of pictograms does facilitate the parent's their choice?

■ Yes ■ No ■ I do not know

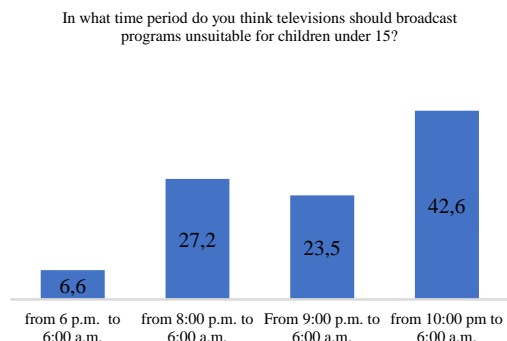


Graf 9: Opinion on appropriateness of pictograms as a tool to choose the right TV program for minors (2020). Surce: Own processing.

Sixty-one per cent of respondents were in favor of tagging all audio-visual products on our market (e.g., video games, etc.), 24,3 % think that it may be necessary and only 9,6 % are convinced that it is not necessary at all.

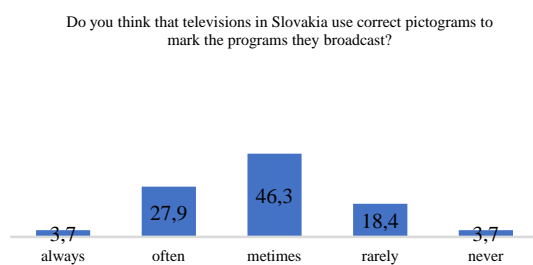
There have also been interesting opinions on the time circuit for children under 15 years of age, which is currently set by

legislation from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. However as much as 42,6 % of respondents think that this time circuit should be extended to 10:00 p.m., which coincides with the opinions of people from 2014. Another 23,5 % think that this time circuit for children under 15 should also be extended, but only to 9:00 p.m. In addition, 27,2 % think that the time circuit by 8:00 p.m. is just appropriate and even 6,6 % would cut this time by 6:00 p.m.



Graph 10: Opinion on time periods for broadcasting of programs not suitable for children under 15 (2020). Source: Own Form

Opinions of people on whether televisions mark their programs with appropriate symbols did not favor televisions. As many as 46,3 % of respondents think that televisions tag programs correctly only "occasionally". Only 3,7 % thought that televisions "definitely" tag their programs "correctly" while 27,9 % of respondents thought that they "often" tag them correctly. 3,7 % were convinced that programs are "definitely" tagged "incorrectly" and 18,4 % of respondents thought that programs are only "rarely" tagged "correctly".



Graph 11: Opinion on correctness of marking of broadcast programs with relevant pictograms (2020). Source: Own Form.

Also in 2020, we asked respondents about the use of parental control as a function to prevent watching inappropriate media content offered by televisions. As many as 80 % of respondents knew what the function of parental control was. Only 11,8 % did not know what the function was and 8,1 % said they might know. Only 11 % of households with little children use the function of parental control, compared to 20,6 % of households with little children not using the parental control.

The following are questions which were not included in previous surveys and which were added in 2020 because the aim was to find out whether, in addition to knowing what TV CRS is, parents also understand its meaning. Therefore, we selected 4 pictograms and asked respondents about their meanings. Pictogram 7 was deliberately chosen because it appears as -7, +7, and 7 in the red circle. The question of what the *green pictogram -7* means was answered correctly by 75 % of respondents. Some of them, 19,9 % thought that it was an unsuitable program for juvenile children under 7 years of age and 5,7 % of them thought that it was a program suitable for juvenile children older than 7 years.

However, there was no clarity regarding the *green pictogram 7+*. Only 46,3 % of respondents correctly mentioned that this was an educational program for juvenile children from the age of 7. More than half – 51,5 % – incorrectly thought it was

a program suitable for juvenile children older than 7. Only 2,2 % incorrectly stated that it was a program unsuitable for juvenile children under 7.

As for *red pictogram 7 in the circle*, more than 93,4 % of respondents stated correctly that this was a program unsuitable for juvenile children under 7. As for other respondents – 3,7 % of them mistakenly believed that it was an educational program suitable for juvenile children under 7, and 2,9 % thought that it was a program suitable for juvenile children older than 7 years of age.

The last pictogram examined was that of *green teddy bear*. Up to 76,5 % of respondents mistakenly believed that it designated a program suitable for juvenile children under 7. Only 18,4 % could answer correctly that it was a program suitable for juvenile children under 12; 5,1 % also incorrectly claimed that it was a program suitable for juvenile children under 15 years of age.

4 Discussion

All three surveys show how people's views have changed in the nearly two decades since the introduction of television labeling. While in 2003, 78 % of the population was convinced that pictograms made it easier for parents to choose a program for children, in 2014, the percentage fell to only 57 %. This was similar to the year 2020 when the percentage is 59 %. There has been some decline in the belief that the symbols really help. It can only be assumed that the reason for this is precisely because of a change in habits when watching a television program. Nowadays, many people prefer to watch television programs through other devices. Today, television is watched with parents certainly much less than in the times when there was one or at most two television receivers.

Also answers to question whether people think that televisions label programs correctly differed significantly, with answers in 2003 being considerably different from those in 2014 and 2020. Two years after the introduction of television programs' labeling, up to 67 % of the population thought that televisions "always" or "often" label their television programs correctly. Eleven years later, only 27,9 % of the population thought so, and in 2020, 31,6 % of the population had the same opinion. If one looks at the development of fines which televisions may receive for incorrect labeling, the years 2008 (since the Ministry of Culture's Ordinance) to 2014 were really turbulent. Television channels were still learning how to implement the new ordinance when tabbing programs, which could have been perceived negatively by the parents themselves – television viewers. Later, the fines dropped significantly, which is why in 2020, confidence in labeling by televisions has started to grow again. Correspondingly, in 2003, people thought that only 19 % of programs were always tagged incorrectly, in 2014 this was as high as 25 % and in 2020, it fell slightly again to 22,1 %.

In 2003, up to 35 % of respondents always and often followed the pictograms; in 2014, this trend fell to 22,5 % but in 2020, it rose again to 36,2%. Also this can lead to an improvement in the discipline of program tagging by television broadcasters as they label programs themselves. In addition, considering current opportunities to watch television through any device, it is the parents who at least notice the suitability of a program for children when they no longer watch the whole program with them.

From the point of view of the author, the most sophisticated system for tagging media products, the Dutch NICAM, is the best and most used by countries also because it tags all audiovisual products on the market – not only television programs but also video games or movies etc. Thanks to this system, parents who know the meaning of pictograms are able to distinguish between the suitability and unsuitability of other than just television products. To find out the public opinion, the respondents were asked whether they would be in favor of similar uniform labeling of audiovisual products in Slovakia as well. And the results were clear in each survey. In 2003, 49 % of respondents were "definitely in favor" and 27 % of them were

"maybe in favor". In 2014, 63,6 % of respondents were unequivocally "in favor" and in 2020, the percentage of those in favor of unified tagging system of audiovisual products on the Slovak market rose to 66,1 %.

Other questions were found only in the 2014 and 2020 surveys. These were questions such as whether parents watch television with their children, whether they even notice pictograms while watching it; other questions covered time curtain of programs and parental control in TV receivers. When asked if parents watch televisions with their children the data provided the following answer: a total of 45,5 % of surveyed parents watched television with their children "occasionally, often and very often" in 2014. Six years later, 8,1 % of parents "always" watch TV programs with their children and 40,4 % of them watch TV programs with their children only "occasionally". It can be stated that the parents' habits slightly improved. It is interesting to note that in 2020, as many as 94,6 % of respondents "always" and "sometimes" like to watch television on their own.

In 2014, 40,8 % of respondents "often" and "always" noticed the small symbols about the suitability of the program placed in the corner of the television screen; however, 33,7 % of respondents noticed them only "rarely" or "never". In 2020, the situation has slightly improved. 47,1 % of respondents answered "often" and "always" compared to "rarely" or "never" answered by 33,1 %. There has been a certain slight improvement which may also be due to the fact that the young generation who knew the system has grown up and a new generation is growing up being aware of the fact that televisions use TV CRS.

What is really interesting are the opinions on the time curtain for television content unsuitable for children under 15 years of age. Currently, the time curtain is between 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. We asked the public what they thought about this time period. The results are always the same in both surveys – in both 2014 and 2020, people were convinced that this time circuit should be shifted to 10:00 p.m. just like the second time curtain for children under 18 (approximately 47 % of respondents in 2014 and almost 43 % of them in 2020 agreed with it). Even though the public has apparently been in favor of shifting the first time circuit for years, as evidenced by surveys, this has not happened. However, there is the public and its views which are in stark contrast with lobbying and advertising business by broadcasters who do not want to lose the target group 15+ in their "prime time" from 8:00 p.m. Even though, it is mentioned that traditional TV and Home Video will remain the most unprofitable media industries, also with Newspapers and Consumer Magazines and also Online Advertising and TV Advertising are seen as separate media industries because of their different production and managerial processes. [10]

What was most shocking for the author was the fact that the public does not use the function of parental control even though they know what this function means. In 2014, as many as 78 % and in 2020, as many as 80 % of respondents knew what a parental control was but, nevertheless, in 2014, only 9,1 % of households used it and in 2020, it was only 11 % of households. It is an effective regulatory tool which can be used mainly by parents to prevent inappropriate programs to be watched by children. Today's more advanced parental controls allow one to set certain time when the TV should be locked and the time it should be unlocked again. It is thus possible to ban children from watching television for example in the evening.

Generally, the research questions regarding the knowledge of TV CRS in Slovakia could be answered as follows:

1. Do parents watch media contents on television with their juvenile children?

It can be stated that almost half of parents watch television with their children.

2. Do people (parents) notice and follow the system for labeling television programs, the so-called TV CRS, which is located in the corner of TV screen?

Nearly half of the people (on average 44 %) notice the pictograms about the suitability or unsuitability of television content for others. On the other hand, the question is whether they really follow them. Both children and parents as well as the elderly expressed their opinions within the examined survey. On average, one third of the population tries to follow these symbols.

3. Are parents familiar with the so-called parental control in their TV receivers?

For many years, television manufacturers have been installing a system for the protection of juvenile children, the so-called parental control, in their facilities. Based on the found out facts it can be stated that the data show that more than three quarters of people are aware of the function of parental control. On the other hand, the public does not use parental control even if they know what its function is.

4. Is society familiar with the meaning of TV CRS pictograms?

The public does not clearly know the meanings of all pictograms from the TV CRS ordinance. Therefore, it would be good to prepare an information campaign by the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission to increase the awareness of these symbols.

Thanks to the research analysis, some interesting findings were detected such as, for example, those that people would accept labeling with the same symbols also on other audiovisual products such as, for example, cinema films or video games. Based on the analysis of the labeling systems, the NICAM system in the Netherlands has been recognized as the most suitable labeling system. It also refers to other audiovisual works on the media market, such as video games or cinema films. The society should ideally go in this direction and place the same symbols that people know from the TV screen on the packaging of video games and on all materials related to a film before it is shown in cinemas. However, the scope of the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission would have to be extended to enable it to exercise control and impose sanctions also in media parts other than radio and television. In addition, the ordinance of the Ministry of Culture on TV CRS would need to be extended to these segments of audiovisual products by amending.

Furthermore, based on the analysis of compliance with section 20 of Act. No.308/2000 Coll., it has been found out that the poor labeling of programs with pictograms is one of the most common problems with the compliance with the above mentioned section. The solution of the Dutch system is to have a joint commission whose members are broadcasters as well as NICAM members – experts, who jointly label programs. In our country, current practice is that programs are labeled by broadcasters themselves. Therefore, if we were to assign this competence to the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission we could avoid unnecessary violations of this section. Much in the same way as was done in the Netherlands, at least one television representative and experts from the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission would be members of this team in charge of labeling the programs.

In addition, four of the pictograms specified by the ordinance will probably never appear on the screens of commercial stations. This issue has been outlined in the introduction of the publication. Commercial stations do not use such labeling because they do not broadcast any educational programs. A condition for a program to be marked with the green sign -7, 7+, 12+ or 15+ is its educational nature. It is bizarre that in order to be suitable the programs must necessarily be unsuitable. Even if the program contains the criteria of unsuitability "unsuitable for children under 7", but the special condition is met that the program is created exclusively for educational purposes, such a

program is classified as suitable for the age group of juvenile children under 7. The fifth new "U" pictogram has even been worse off. The ordinance states: "Audiovisual works, programs or other components of the television program service classified as suitable for all age groups of juvenile children may be labeled with the letter "U" in green color." "U" has not been unveiled on any television station yet. Therefore, these pictograms could be cancelled. As a result, there will be fewer pictograms and their use will be clearer for parents (as the research has shown, people do not know the meaning of all symbols) for whom only the information on the age under which a TV program, video game or film is not suitable will be sufficient.

There is little doubt about the importance of TV CRS. We believe that the future will also bring its improvement or unification within the entire European Union.

5 Conclusion

Thanks to the results of three different research studies carried out several years apart, it is possible to observe changes in the behavior and views of the Slovak population in relation to the uniform system of labeling television programs. However, the strong influence of the Internet and streaming services is still being forgotten. It is therefore desirable, even necessary, for this agenda to be taken over by the European Parliament and to extend its scope and effectiveness to the whole Europe. The labeling system will be the most effective if television, on-demand services, the Internet, games, and entertainment production will be covered within one legal norm.

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