



Press Release

Stop toying with our health!

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A significant number of notifications related to toys and to chemical risks has been revealed with today's release of the 2012 RAPEX¹ Annual Report. Despite the efforts of market surveillance authorities, this increase again shows that children in the EU are not receiving the protection they deserve. ANEC repeats its call to policy makers to strengthen chemical requirements for toys and adopt a coherent horizontal approach to chemicals in products.

At the moment, there is little – if any – regulation of hazardous chemicals in products at the European level, be it in toys, childcare articles, textiles, construction products, electrical equipment or other articles. Even from the date of its full implementation - on 20 July 2013 - the revised Toy Safety Directive² will still permit the use of certain dangerous chemicals³, despite potential risks to children's health.

¹ RAPEX is the EU rapid alert system on measures taken to prevent or restrict the marketing or use of products posing a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers (except food, pharmaceuticals and medical devices) http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/rapex/docs/2012_rapex_report_en.pdf

² Directive 2009/48/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the Safety of Toys

³ E.g. carcinogenic, allergenic and hormonal disrupting substances

The regulations that do exist are either vague or include so many exemptions that the result is the same: consumers continue to be exposed to hazardous chemicals contained in everyday articles.

Stephen Russell, ANEC Secretary-General, commented: "We welcome the efforts of market surveillance authorities to check chemicals in toys and we encourage them to continue to do so. Consumers can detect mechanical deficiencies in toys, but they cannot see, feel or otherwise sense whether a toy complies with the chemical requirements. The number of RAPEX notifications related to toys and to chemical risks is perhaps the tip of an iceberg".

Future rules should aim to eliminate these substances. For example, ANEC has asked for a dynamic migration procedure that takes into account the usual child behaviour of licking or sucking - at least for toys intended for children under 36 months. The European Commission's scientific committee, SCHER, in its opinion on "Risks from organic CMR Substances in Toys" concluded that "The effect of mechanical actions (e.g. sucking, chewing) may increase migration to unexpected migration levels". Only recently, ANEC opposed the adoption of the draft European standard EN 71-12 'Safety of toys - Part 12: N-nitrosamines and N-nitrosatable substances'⁴ as it relies on a static procedure inadequately reflecting the behaviour of small children and the release of chemicals from such products.

Stephen Russell said: "The need to address the gaps in existing product legislation has become urgent. ANEC repeats its call for policy makers to take the health of children more seriously. The Toy Safety Directive needs further strengthening if our most vulnerable consumers are to receive the protection to which they are entitled".

ENDS

⁴ EN 71-12 specifies requirements and test methods for N-nitrosamines and N-nitrosatable substances for toys (and parts of toys) made from elastomers and intended for use by children under 36 months, intended to be placed in the mouth, and for finger paints for children under 36 months. Examples of toys made from elastomers are balloons and teethers. N-nitrosamines can endanger human health owing to their toxicity.

About ANEC

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and conformity assessment, as well as related legislation and public policies.

ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and is open to the representation of national consumer organisations in 33 countries.

ANEC is funded by the European Union and EFTA, with national consumer organisations contributing in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.



Raising standards for consumers

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