



COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE
PRESS RELEASE

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Consumers' wish for Santa: Safer toys for Europe's kids

Just as every year, Christmas approaches and family and friends rush to the shops to buy toys for the children. Often spoiling the festive mood is the doubt in the minds of many consumers as to the safety of the toys they buy. ANEC and BEUC warn that the entry into force of the revised Toy Safety Directive earlier this year should not camouflage worrying flaws in the safety of toys sold in Europe.

Inadequate market surveillance

Recent tests by consumer organisations reveal serious shortcomings in toy safety¹: from the exposure of children to risks such as choking on small parts, to strangulation by cords on toys and to health problems arising from the use of hazardous chemicals.

Stephen Russell, Secretary-General of ANEC said: "The present level of resources committed by Member States to customs inspections and market surveillance is not enough to ensure that unsafe products do not reach the shops. At Christmas, we have particular concern at the safety of toys. We repeat our call for further resources to be made available at national level and the creation of a European framework as demanded by the European Parliament²."

Danger: Toxic toys

Consumer groups welcome improvements since July's revision of the Toy Safety Directive such as better visibility of warnings on toys, but deplore that the requirements for chemicals apply only from 2013.

Monique Goyens, BEUC Director-General said:

"It is unacceptable that the toys our children put in their mouths or sleep with in bed can still contain high doses of dangerous chemicals. To add insult to injury, the limits set in the legislation are not ambitious enough. What we need are specific limits on chemicals that can harm children's health, alter their hormonal system or damage their future fertility."

Ten toy safety tips³

Though a consumer should not buy a toy without the CE marking, it does not tell the full story. The CE marking is a self-declaration by manufacturers that they have respected their safety obligation, not a safety mark confirming that the product has been independently tested. Some tips for shoppers to buy safely include: Never buy toys with small detachable parts for children under 3; always follow a toy's age recommendation; only buy toys from trustworthy shops and outlets.

ENDS

¹ In November 2011, Stiftung Warentest, tested 40 toys and found 1 out of 6 to be insufficient. UFC Que Choisir, also in November 2011, tested 30 toys for several chemical substances.

² European Parliament Resolution of 8 March 2011 on the revision of the General Product Safety Directive and market surveillance

³ 'Toy Safety Tips', by ANEC and BEUC in cooperation with the European Commission, member states, manufacturers and retailers. Click here: <http://bit.ly/rSN5ql>

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