

ANEC in brief

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending and representing consumer interests in the development of technical standards, in the application of certification schemes to standards and in the creation or revision of legislation on products and services. ANEC brings together national consumer organisations from the EU Member States and EFTA countries in order to define European positions on matters affecting consumer protection and welfare. ANEC receives funding from the European Union principally and EFTA. It relies too on the participation of volunteer experts which is considered a contribution in kind.

Consumer participation in standardisation is crucial. Consumer representation complements the business view, and goods and services based on standards developed with effective consumer participation can be more easily accepted in the market place. In the EU context, consumers ensure that the public interest is represented in the standardisation work that complements European legislation and broader public policy initiatives.

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Raising Standards for Consumers



*Rear facing –
Turn away from danger*

➤ Background

Injuries to children can be significantly reduced if they use a suitable child restraint. All child restraint systems (car seats) sold in the EU must conform to the United Nations Regulation R44¹.

Through the Mass Group classification in R44 European legislation implies that travelling forward facing from 9kg is safe. On the other hand, the technical community appears unanimous that rear facing restraints offer the best protection until the child is around four years old (as demonstrated in the ANEC accident study of the Performance of Restraints Used by Children Aged Three Years and Under²).

It is clear that a wide gulf has developed between the conclusions of the technical community, based on accident and test experience, and the guidance provided to consumers via legislation.

➤ In an accident...

In a frontal collision, the head, neck and spine of the young child in a forward facing CRS are unprotected, which often result in serious damages to the brain, spinal cord injury or internal decapitation (due to the tremendous force the neck is subject to - equivalent to 300-320 kg).

Whereas, in a rear facing car seat, the back of the CRS absorbs the bulk of the crash force and spreads the load. Thus, there is little or no force applied to the head, neck and spine.

Consumers in Nordic countries are aware of the danger of early forward facing due to more stringent tests³. Therefore larger rear facing CRS are available on the market and the tradition is to keep children rear facing until they are three or four years old, whereas in the rest of Europe children are turned forward facing at one year or even less.

ANEC urges consumer organizations:

- to promote the use of rear facing CRS for older children (ideally until the child is 4 years old)
- to inform consumers that Group I forward facing seats should not be used as early as 9 kg, instead of 13 kg
- to inform consumers that rear facing Group 0+ CRS should be used until the child reaches 13 kg (or until the top of the child's ears are above the top of the seat)
- to recommend to the consumer to insist on rear facing seats Group I for older children (as in Nordic countries) to be made available throughout Europe

ANEC urges regulators and manufacturers:

- to rapidly take necessary steps to expand the new I-size regulation to belted CRS
- to provide a wider (market) supply of existing or new rear facing seats for older children throughout Europe
- to promote the development of more Isofix rear facing CRS that accommodate older children
- to clearly inform consumers in the instructions and marketing / advertising for Group 0+/I CRS that it should not be turned forward facing once the child reaches 9 kg, and that it is safer to keep the CRS rear facing until the child is 13 kg

ANEC welcomes the new UNECE Regulation on Universal Isofix Child Restraint Systems (I-size), which is under development in the UNECE GRSP (Working Group on Passive Safety), which

- will fit in any I-size ready car and thus, due to the Isofix connection, will reduce misuse
- will not allow forward-facing before 15 months
- contains a side-impact test procedure (missing in the current regulation)
- provides clear and less ambiguous information for consumers as classification will be based on stature and not mass groups

¹ Uniform Provisions Concerning the Approval of Restraining Devices for Child Occupants of Power-Driven Vehicles ('Child Restraint Systems')

² <http://www.anec.eu/attachments/ANEC-R&T-2008-TRAF-003.pdf>

³ Former T-standard, replaced by the new voluntary "Plus test", that tests how force to the neck is handled in accident situations