

Safety Gate: The EU reveals that chemical substances top its annual list of non-food hazardous products

On 13 March 2023, the European Commission published its annual report on the Safety Gate, the rapid alert system for consumer products and products for professional use excluding pharmaceuticals, medical devices, food and feed, used by a network of 30 participating countries (EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein).

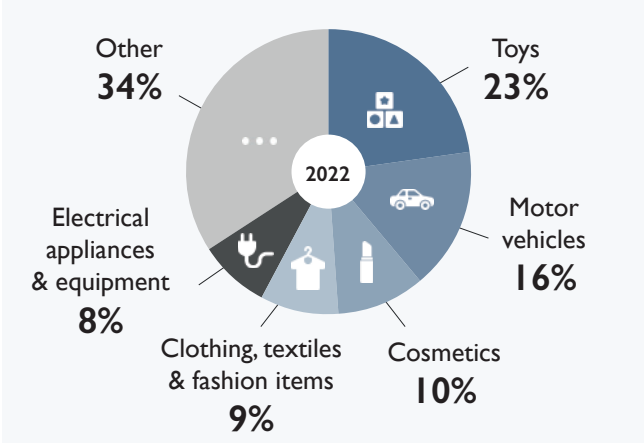
The 2022 report covers both dangerous product alerts and follow-up actions taken by national authorities throughout 2022. While the number of validated alerts across the 30-country network remained on track with levels recorded over the past five years, major changes were noted within some individual Member States. This was notably the case of Portugal and Germany, where alerts fell by more than 22%. This drop is likely explained by the decrease in motor vehicle sales registered last year.

While motor vehicles topped the list in 2021, toys now represent the product category with the most alerts (23%). 2022 was also marked by an increase in notifications of chemical risks, in particular in cosmetic products but not only, as toys were also concerned.

A few figures

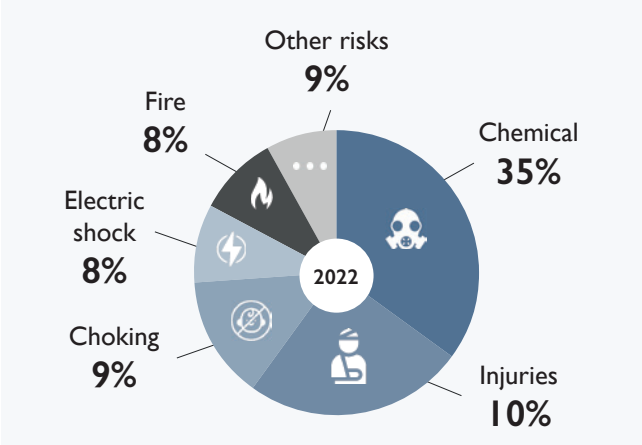
2,117 alerts were received in the system corresponding to measures taken against dangerous products and 3,932 follow-up actions were taken. Although it marks a small dip from last year's figure of 2,142 alerts, it is still in line with the general trend that can be observed over the past five years of use of the safety gate platform. In 2022, 50 new alerts and follow-up actions were circulated through the system every day.

Compared to 2021, the five most frequent product categories in safety gate alerts have somewhat changed, with the arrival of cosmetics and clothing textile & fashion items. Motor vehicles have also fallen to second place, with toys being top of the list:



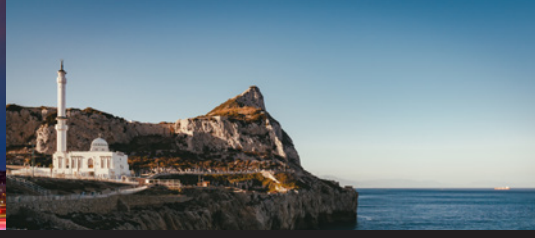
In France, the three most frequently alerted product categories broke from the broader network-wide trend, as motor vehicles (35%), toys (16%), and chemical products (10%) came in at the top three spots.

As for the types of risks concerned by the alerts, 2022 was marked by a strong increase in notifications of risks related to chemical substances, injuries and choking. This phenomenon can explain the arrival of cosmetics in the top three product categories concerned. However, chemical risks were identified in many categories of products, such as toys.



As aforementioned, 3,932 follow-up measures were circulated in Safety Gate in 2022, marking a significant drop from 2021's 4,965 follow-up measures. However, 84% of follow-ups included





additional measures taken by Member States, a positive sign for Member State participation and utilisation of the Safety Gate system.

What next - Safety Gate in the context of the new EU General Product Safety Regulation

The replacement of the former Directive with the new Regulation lays the groundwork for what is announced to be the development of a coherent and efficient system of product safety enforcement and market surveillance in the EU.

The Safety Gate Portal is set to play a large role in this development. The new Regulation presents the Safety Gate with new and broader uses for the cause of consumer protection in the EU. For example, in the presence of the growth of online marketplaces for both new and second-hand goods, providers of online marketplaces must designate a single point of contact concerned with market surveillance. In turn, this contact shall be made accessible on the Safety Gate Portal for both consumers and market surveillance authorities to access.

It is explained that a large motivation behind the new Regulation are the safety needs posed by the risks of online sales, especially through the growing model of third-party vendors selling products on platforms operated by separate providers.

Over the past years, the Commission has created various tools such as the Product Safety Pledge and the e-surveillance "web crawler" (both of which have served to the identification and removal of dangerous products from online marketplaces) to complement the online consumer protection measures of the Safety Gate. For instance, from December 2021 to May 2022, the 11 Member State signatories of the Product Safety Pledge were able to mobilise national authorities in collaboration with the Commission leading to the removal of **159,784 unsafe product listings**, all based on **2,315 governmental notices**.

As a statement to the efficacy of the system, 98% of the listings were removed within two days of governmental notices. The Product Safety Pledge hence demonstrates the potential that Union-wide voluntary measures have towards optimising consumer protection and safety along with the Safety Gate.

The Safety Gate has also served as a highly useful tool for international cooperation in product safety. The collaborative exchange between the EU's Safety Gate and Canada's RADAR database has proved a fruitful way for the two similarly-structured regulators to share best practices on online market surveillance and awareness-raising measures. In fact, a youth-led social media campaign regarding safe online shopping was led by the two authorities in August-September 2022. The Commission also continues to work with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Chinese economic operators, and the UN Working Group on Consumer Product Safety to advance consumer protection and market surveillance on the international scale.

The Safety Gate website is accessible to all and can be subscribed to by both individuals and companies. Product safety alerts are updated daily, based on information from relevant national authorities and can be accessed in any EU language, as well as Ukrainian, Arabic, Norwegian, and Icelandic. Economic operators concerned with the sale of products in the EU or the European supply chain should ensure they are taking advantage of this tool in order to stay informed about product safety news in the European market.



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