

Food imitation child-appealing products

The presence of food imitation child-appealing products may give rise to serious risks for children that confuse them with food. Two main risks are associated with such products:

- Small parts can detach when a child chews or sucks such a product (e.g. a candle or a piece of soap). The child may swallow the parts that may in turn block the airways of the child leading to choking or suffocation.
- Shampoos that can be confused with yoghurt or other milk products often contain dangerous substances that may cause poisoning or chemical pneumonia if swallowed.

The RAPEX statistics shows that the Member States issued 40 RAPEX notifications in 2009 on such products plus another 51 products that were notified "For information only".

Children's Fancy Dresses

Two main risks for children's fancy dresses are addressed in this part of the Joint Action, flammability and chemical risk:

- Toy disguise costumes often don't meet the flammability requirements because the fabrics are thin and decorations are attached to the clothes. Furthermore, the probability that such costumes accidentally get in contact with flames is significantly higher than for ordinary children's clothes as they are likely to be used under circumstances where flames (from candles) are present.
- The chemical risks are associated with azo-colorants, formaldehyde and phthalates in the dresses. Azo-colorants may form aromatic amines that are known to be carcinogens and can be absorbed through the skin. Formaldehyde may cause irritation (watery eyes, irritation in nose, and throat, coughing and skin irritation among others) and is classified as a carcinogen. Phthalates are suspected to have adverse effects on the health of children. When these substances are present in clothes that are in direct contact with the skin of the user, the exposure and the probability for experiencing the adverse effects increase. This is particularly worrying in the case of children's clothes as children are in general supposed to be more sensitive to exposure from these chemicals.

Neither of these risks can be assessed by the consumers themselves. Therefore the consumers are unaware of the health risks that these clothes pose to children if they do not comply with the legislation.

The RAPEX statistics shows that the Member States since 2005 have submitted 26 RAPEX notifications on products because of contents of azo-colourants.

Laser Pointers

Non-compliant and dangerous laser pointers (and other laser products) can cause safety problems such as serious and permanent eye damages, temporary blinding and skin burns during skin care treatments.

the member states assume their responsibilities of Member States as described in Chapter V of the GPSD.

In the final analysis all the activities should support the primary objective of the GPSD as expressed in Article 1(1) of the GPSD – to “ensure that products placed on the market are safe and meet the applicable legislation in question.”

- Specific objective

The overall action seeks to co-ordinate the product-specific market surveillance activities in the most efficient manner and provides an opportunity for evaluating the best practice being developed in EMARS II. This will include improving co-operation with customs, outreach to China and international collaboration.

The objectives of the product-specific activities are:

- Food imitation child appealing products
The primary objective of the action is to ensure that no food imitation-child appealing products are on the EU market.
- Children’s Fancy Dresses (chemicals in textiles)
The primary objective of the action is to ensure that all toy disguise costumes for children on the EU market are safe.
- Laser Pointers
The primary objective of the action is to ensure that laser products available on the EU market for consumers are safe, classified correct and carry the appropriate warnings and instructions.
- Ladders
The primary objective of the action is to build knowledge about the market for ladders, the standards applied and to what degree the ladders on the market comply with the standards.
The secondary objective is to generate information on e.g. safety requirements to go into the standardisation work on ladders presently undertaken by CEN.
The tertiary objective is to raise the awareness within the Member States for the need for increased safety and harmonisation in the area.
- Visibility clothing & accessories
The primary objective of the action is to ensure that visibility clothing and accessories (e.g. visibility tabs) on the EU market comply with the requirements in the European legislation.

- Follow-up on non-compliant products and exchange information on follow-up activities.

The Member State authorities will follow up towards the economic operators in their countries, i.e. consult the economic operators on the results from the risk assessment, agree on appropriate measures and follow-up that these are followed through. The resulting measures will be reported to the Joint Action and shared with all participants (not only the ones taken place in that particular product-specific activity).

The following five sections describe the foreseen activities for each of the product-specific activities:

Food imitation child appealing products

The participants will carry out coordinated market surveillance in their national markets. The proposal comprises 6 project meetings (including a 2-day kick-off meeting), a final conference to disseminate the results, laboratory assessment of 30 products, and a 5-day awareness-raising tour for the project leader, the coordinating consultant and one Member State representative.

Two key concerns are identified for this group of products. Firstly, the experience from the “For info”-notifications indicate that many Member States struggle with carrying out a proper risk assessment for this class of products. Furthermore it seems useful to develop a set of guidelines on assessing what is food-imitating and child appealing. The Joint Action plans to explore these two issues in “desk top assessments” featured in the project meetings. (This approach was developed and successfully applied in the Joint Action on Cords and Drawstrings in Children’s Clothes. The idea being that the participants bring products to the table and agree on an assessment.)