



Saving lives every day

2019 results of the
Rapid Alert System
for dangerous non-food products



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers

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Unit E.4 Product Safety and Rapid Alert System

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Commissioner's foreword

"I am extremely proud to present the results of the rapid alert system for dangerous products for 2019.

Confirming a sustained trend of more than 2,000 alerts a year, last year more than 2,200 alerts were circulated among all Member States, enabling quick action across Europe to keep dangerous products out of our Single Market.

Each of these alerts concerns products found to be dangerous following special tests by national authorities. These products could be present on the market in several EU countries. They could be slime toys for children containing certain ingredients that could lead to infertility in later life, toys with loose parts that could cause choking, or specific models of laser pointers that could damage your eyesight. Our system triggers swift action where carcinogenic or mutagenic substances are found. Not all toys or products are dangerous of course, but our goal is to ensure that those that do not reach consumers – and especially vulnerable consumers, such as children.

I am happy that a record number of follow-up notices – 4,477 in total – were communicated by the national authorities about the actions they took in response to the alerts in the EU rapid alert system. Every authority functions as an EU-level Authority whenever it takes action against a dangerous product, thus preserving the integrity of the Single Market and protecting the safety of all EU consumers.

Consumer safety requires constant vigilance whether products are sold in physical shops or online. Member States have increased checks on products available to EU consumers online and have been working closely with the online marketplaces that signed the EU Product Safety Pledge. We have also been increasing our work on coordinating the testing of products, enabling Member States to pool and share resources. This allows the latest trends to be identified swiftly and the results of testing to be shared across the EU.

My team is in daily contact with the national authorities in order to support them in their market surveillance activities, and with border control authorities in order to close as many entry points as possible to dangerous products. All information on the alerts is freely available on the EU Safety Gate website. I encourage businesses and consumers alike to learn about the risks and witness the work of the authorities in protecting our safety.

I am proud that our work is building a common front to keep dangerous products from causing harm. I will continue to strive for better EU cooperation on product safety to keep consumers safe."



Didier Reynders,
EU Commissioner for
Justice and Consumers

1. What is the rapid alert system and what is the Safety Gate?



The Rapid Alert System works non-stop every day. In case of urgent alerts, national authorities can submit “emergency measures”. These are circulated and published immediately. This procedure was used only twice, in 2012 and in 2014. Nowadays the system has been modernised and under certain circumstances specific alerts can be prioritised and processed immediately at arrival, such as alerts on unsafe face masks in April 2020, in the context of the Corona virus.

The rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products was set up in 2003, based on the General Product Safety Directive (Directive 2001/95/EC). This directive laid the basis for the development of administrative cooperation between the Commission and the Member State authorities responsible for product safety. The RAPEX Network, as it is called, aims to facilitate the exchange of information and cooperation on product safety. More particularly, it seeks to maintain the rapid circulation on information about dangerous non-food products among the network of national authorities in the Single Market countries.

In 2010, the scope of the rapid alert system was enlarged to include alerts on products posing other risks than for health and safety (such as risks to the environment) as well as products exclusively for professional use. The system has also adapted to new technologies and to the digital age. As a result, communication between all involved is now much easier and quicker.



Every day, national authorities responsible for product safety send alerts through this system to the European Commission, reporting on measures taken against products posing a risk. These alerts contain information about the product, the risk it poses and the measures taken by the economic operator or ordered by an authority. The Commission checks all the information and publishes it on the ‘Safety Gate’ website. This site is the public face of the rapid alert system and enables consumers to be informed about dangerous products.

Each alert can concern a wide range and quantity of dangerous products. For instance, the recall of one sales article may cover several thousand individual products.

Member State authorities also follow up on each other’s alerts, allowing them to trace the dangerous products on their own markets more easily and take rapid measures to stop such products.

The system does not include food, pharmaceutical products or medical devices.

Today the database contains around 25,000 alerts and almost twice that number of follow-up notices. This is the result of more than 15 years of successful collaboration among the Member State authorities and the European Commission and a model for other similar systems around the world.

2. Who are the people behind this system?

Everybody who buys, sells, tests, compares or distributes products can contribute to product safety. Nonetheless, it is primarily the responsibility of businesses to place safe products on the market and of national authorities to check that businesses comply with their obligations.

National authorities responsible for product safety conduct regular inspections and sampling of products for testing. With the collaboration of certified laboratories and scientists specialised depending on the type of product and the specific legislation, they decide whether a product is dangerous or not.

Businesses have to make sure that they only place safe products on the market. If they find that a product could be harmful, they have to inform consumers of any risks associated with it and provide clear information on what to do through a fast and effective recall action. Businesses should report any dangerous product to the national authorities. The European Commission has set up a specific tool, the Product Safety [Business Alert Gateway](#), to facilitate reporting by businesses.

National authorities enforce product safety legislation and rules. They apply sanctions or order businesses not following the rules to take specific measures. National authorities can also implement corrective measures themselves when a dangerous product is found. Such measures can include banning sale of the product, destroying or modifying it, or recalling products back from the users. Border control officials also cooperate to stop dangerous products coming in from countries outside of the Single Market.

Finally, consumers can also play a role in product safety. It is in their interest to be attentive to information about recalls of dangerous products and to react to them, either by looking for the product at home and following the recall instructions or by letting others know about it. Consumers can also report dangerous products to [national authorities](#).



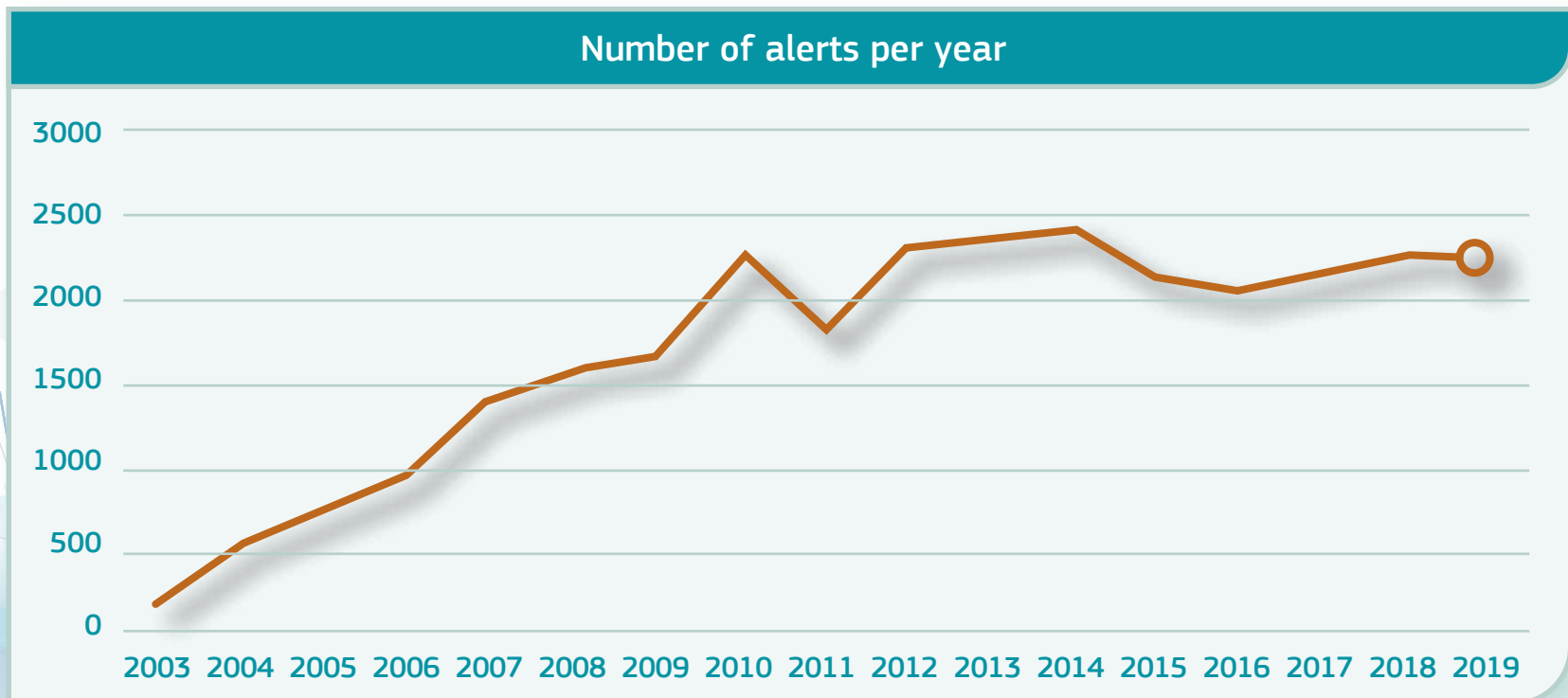
The Product Safety Award was implemented in 2019 to commend businesses who do a particularly good job in placing consumers at the heart of the production of their products. Eight companies won awards for exceptional effort in product safety of childcare products. More information on [Product safety award webpage](#)



3. How has the system performed in 2019?

3.1. Alerts

The number of alerts sent to the system has increased progressively over the years and since 2012 has stayed just above 2,000 alerts a year. In 2019, a total of 2,243 alerts were circulated in the system.



3.2. Product categories and risks

Regarding the different product categories and types of risk, results have been stable over the years. The numbers in 2019 confirm that authorities prioritise action against toys over other categories of products to protect the most vulnerable consumers: children. Clothes and shoes for children are also very common subjects of alerts.

As for risks, the risk of injuries and chemical risks are those most often mentioned in connection with the dangerous products. The prevalence of the risk of injuries is linked to the numerous alerts on motor vehicles, children's clothes and toys. Chemical risks are mainly associated with certain toys, jewellery and clothes.

5 most notified products

29%



Toys

23%



Motor vehicles

8%

Clothing, textiles
and fashion items

8%

Electrical appliances
and equipment

6%



Cosmetics

5 most notified risks

27%



Injuries

23%



Chemical

13%



Choking

10%



Electric shock

7%



Fire

3.3. Follow-ups

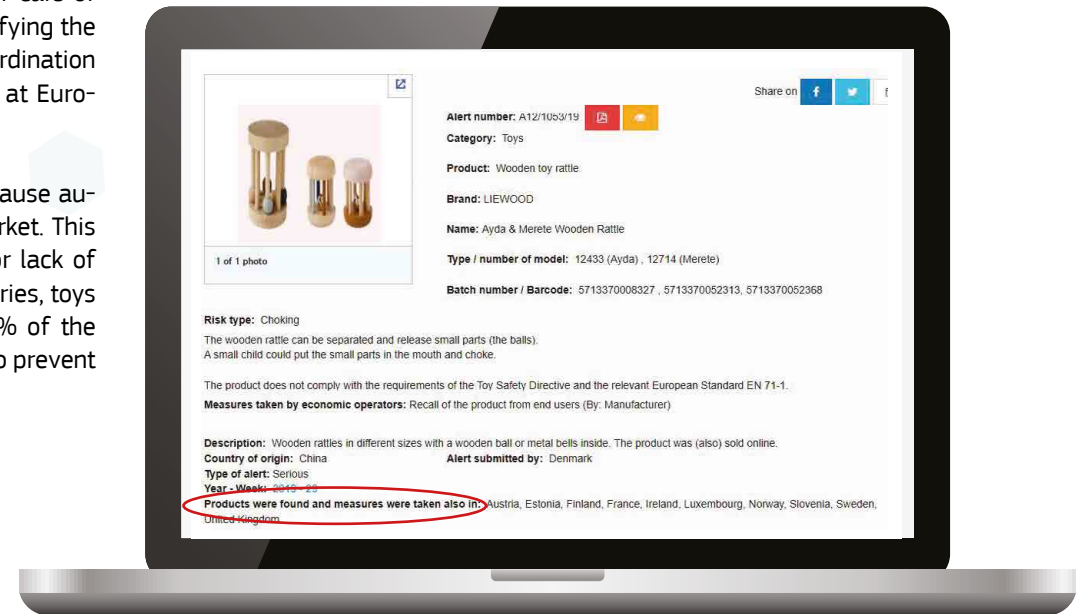
It is essential that Member States follow up on alerts of dangerous products. If they do not, a dangerous product that has been stopped in one country could enter other national markets and continue circulating inside the Single Market.

The number of follow-up actions submitted in the rapid alert system has been increasing significantly. In 2019, 4,477 follow-ups were registered.

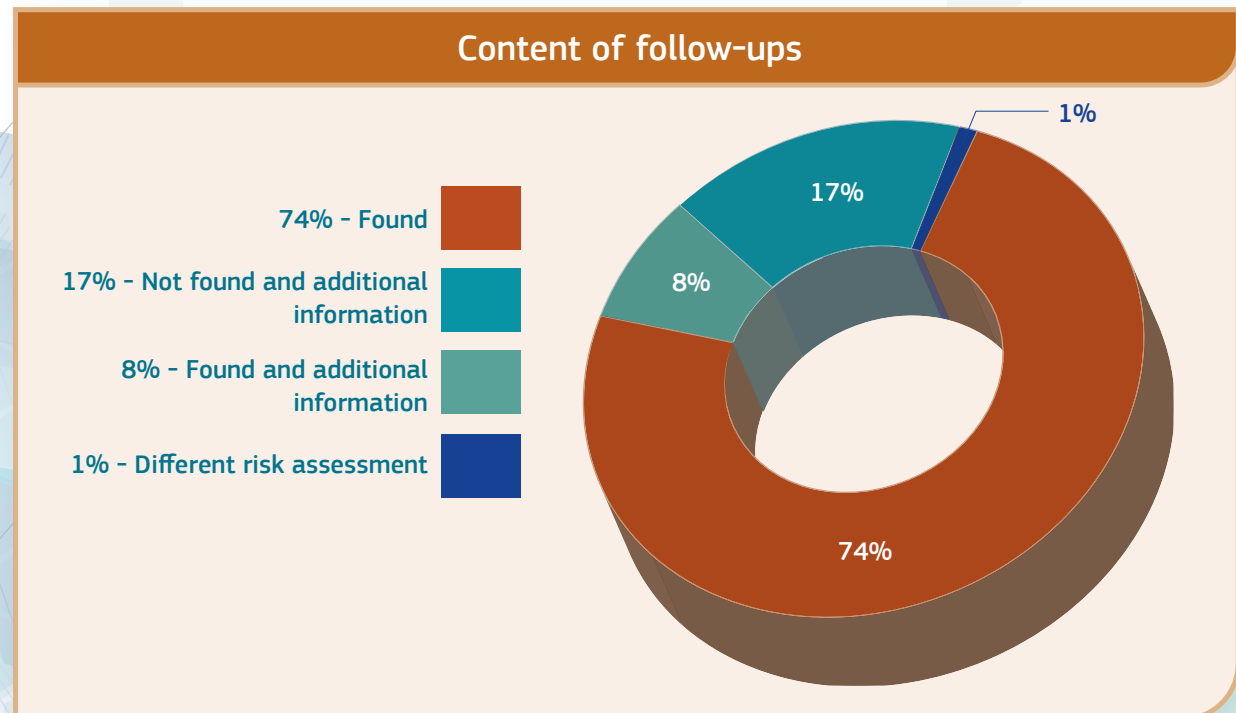
Over 80% of the follow-up actions in 2019 concerned recalls of cars or their parts. This is due in part to the ease in most cases of identifying the owners of recalled vehicles, as well as to the high level of coordination among car manufacturers and distributors in recalling products at European level.

There is generally less follow-up in other product categories because authorities have more difficulty tracing those products on their market. This can be due, for example, to poor identification of the product or lack of information about the manufacturers. Among these other categories, toys is the category most commonly followed up (accounting for 7% of the follow-up notices). This confirms Member States' determination to prevent as far as possible the entry of toys which might harm children.

The countries that have followed up a particular alert, found the same dangerous product and taken measures are indicated on the Safety Gate website. In general, Member States perform follow-up actions in a balanced way. In 2019, the Finnish, Polish and Danish authorities sent the greatest number of follow-up notices, each representing 9% of the total of follow-ups.



Most follow-up actions report cases where countries have found the product on their own market and inform about further measures taken. In some of these, further information is added to that provided in the alert. In some cases follow-up notices report that the product was not found. Occasionally a national authority may not agree with the evaluation of the product as stated in the initial alert. In these situations, the European Commission facilitates discussions in order to reach an agreement between authorities.



3.4. Countries of origin

The European Commission holds every two years an International Product Safety Week. The event gathers stakeholders from all over the world to discuss and find responses to global product safety challenges.

[International Product Safety Week](#)

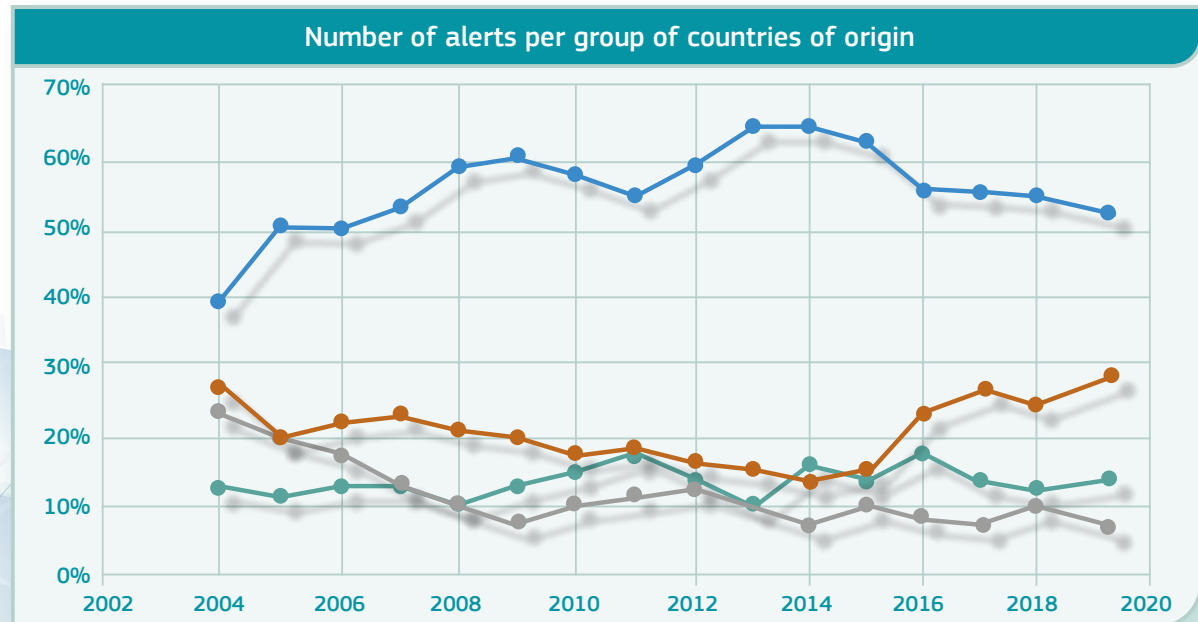
Because markets are global, dangerous products that generate alerts originate from and can be found not only in Europe but all over the world.

In recent years about half of the alerts on Safety Gate have given China as the dangerous product's country of origin. This is mainly due to the volume of Chinese products imported into Europe. The European Commission has had formal cooperation on product safety with the Chinese authorities since 2006. The Chinese authorities follow up on dangerous products from China notified in the rapid alert system and regularly inform the Commission of the actions they take.

In addition, exchanges of information on dangerous consumer products started with the Canadian authorities in 2019 under the EU-Canada Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA). The exchanges will help EU Member States better target their enforcement efforts and identify emerging product safety risks.

The Commission also has regular meetings on product safety with other countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally in the OECD and UNCTAD.

- China, including Hong Kong
- EU-25/27/28 and EEA
- Unknown
- Other



4. Challenges in 2019

4.1 Chemical risks

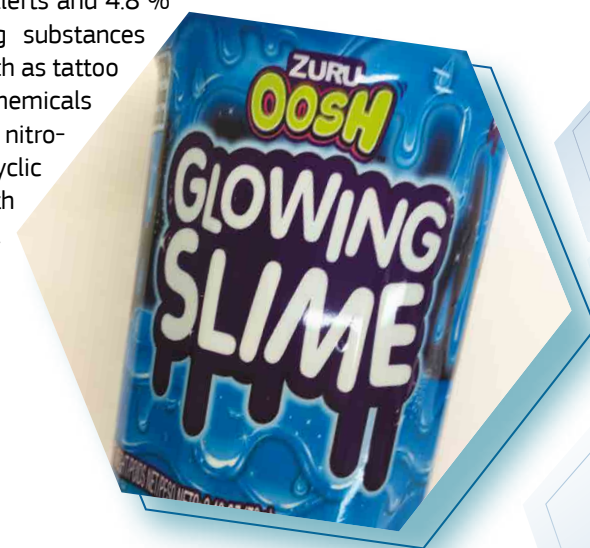
Every year alerts on chemical risks are prominent on the Safety Gate. They concern a large series of chemicals which are banned because they pose serious risks, with children especially vulnerable.

In 2019 again, a large proportion of alerts on the Safety Gate showed that dangerous chemicals were found in toys (47% of alerts about toys signalled a chemical risk). The presence of phthalates in the plastic of dolls has been observed for several years. In 2019 there were in addition many alerts on slime toys with boron. Both chemicals can harm the health of children by damaging their reproductive system.

Amongst the potential health effects, carcinogenicity remains a significant hazard. Compared to 2018, slightly fewer alerts reported on the Safety Gate in 2019 (18.4 % of chemicals-related alerts and 4.8 % of all alerts) involved products containing substances which may induce cancer in the long term, such as tattoo inks, cosmetics and certain toys. Among the chemicals frequently detected, aromatic amines and nitrosamines, nitrosatable substances and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which interfere with DNA, remain a major source of concern. Cadmium is becoming equally critical.

Alerts signalling risks linked to button batteries in toys should also be stressed. In 2019 the European Commission organised information campaigns to increase awareness about the danger these small batteries pose if children get hold of them. They are present in many objects at home and in some cases the battery compartment can easily be opened without the use of any tools or the toy can easily break, leaving the button batteries within children's reach. Because of their small size and round shape, a child can put these batteries in their mouth and swallow them. This will cause a reaction in the child's digestive tube or stomach leading to rapid and serious damage. Immediate medical intervention is needed in such cases.

More information about this on the Safety Gate webpage on [Button Battery Safety](#)



EUROPE'S BEATING CANCER PLAN
LET'S STRIVE FOR MORE

#EUCancerPlan

European Commission's
plan to fight cancer
https://ec.europa.eu/health/non-communicable-diseases/cancer_en

Besides toys, national authorities have detected dangerous chemicals in other products that can result in serious risks to consumers' health and safety. For instance, 10 alerts in 2019 concerned cosmetic products containing mercury. This accumulates in the body, can damage the kidneys, brain and nervous system and may affect reproduction.



Other common alerts relate to tattoo inks. Tattooing is more and more common but needs to be done with care. Tattoo inks can contain a series of different chemical components, some posing risks to the health of both the tattooed person and the person handling the tattoo products. Chemicals detected in tattoo inks can include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, benzo[a]pyrene, cadmium and lead, or a mixture of several chemicals. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and benzo[a]pyrene may cause permanent changes in people's genes, interfere with reproduction and may cause cancer. Cadmium accumulates in the body, can damage the kidney and bones and may also cause cancer. Lead accumulates in the body, can cause damage to the nervous system during its development and may also affect breast-fed or unborn children.

4.2. Dangerous products sold online

Member State authorities increasingly check on products sold online. 16% of the alerts in 2019 mentioned that the dangerous products were found online. Checking on dangerous products sold online can be challenging, especially if the seller is located outside the EU.

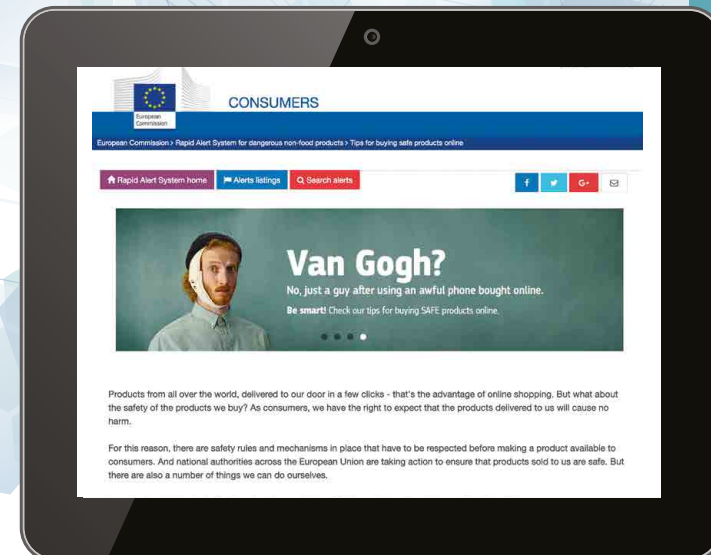
To improve the safety of products sold online to consumers the European Commission has been cooperating with online platforms. By signing the [Product Safety Pledge](#) in 2018, four online marketplaces (Alibaba, Amazon, Ebay, Rakuten France) have committed to regularly check the EU Safety Gate portal and remove dangerous product listings from their websites when identified.

These online marketplaces submitted their first progress report to the Commission in July 2019. They reported that 87% of the product listings flagged to them by the authorities were removed within 2 working days. The report also showed that there is room to improve preventive and awareness-raising actions addressed to traders, cooperation with market surveillance authorities and use of new technologies in detecting unsafe products.

The Commission organised a workshop in November 2019 to improve cooperation between authorities, online marketplaces and consumer organisations. Discussions took place on what online marketplaces can do to prevent dangerous products being offered on their websites, how they can fight repeat offenders and how recall processes can be improved.

A fifth company, Cdiscount, joined the pledge in July 2019. The European Commission strongly encourages other online marketplaces to sign the Product Safety Pledge in order to further improve the safety of products sold online to consumers in the EU.

More information on the Safety Gate in all EU 23 official languages with [tips for consumers to buy safely online.](#)



4.3. Making product recalls effective

17% of alerts circulated in the system concern products which had to be recalled from users. This is an extreme measure to be taken when the product is already in the hands of the consumer.

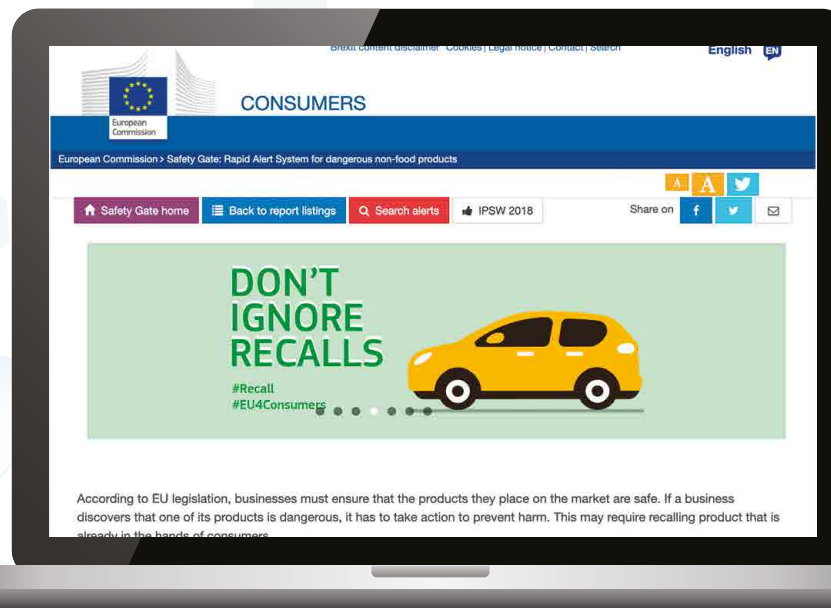
A recall can prevent harm only if consumers return or at least stop using the recalled product. Unfortunately, however, the reality is that most recalled products remain in consumers' hands. This is because consumers either are not aware that a product they own is being recalled or fail to react when seeing a recall announcement.

In order to improve recall effectiveness, it is crucial to understand what drives consumers' behaviour in the recall process and what obstacles they face. That is why in 2019 the European Commission conducted a first EU-wide survey on the issue. Among other things, the survey made the following discoveries.

- A third of EU consumers carry on using dangerous products even when they see a recall notice. To improve consumer response, recalls need to become easier to implement and more transparent.
- Six out of ten consumers are not aware that registering a product allows them to be contacted in case of safety issues. At the same time, consumers are willing to share their personal information if they get a clear assurance that it will not be used for marketing purposes.
- Consumers appreciate and reward businesses' transparency with increased trust and confidence.

The study was followed by an expert workshop bringing together policy-makers, stakeholders and academics from around the world to reflect on how to make recalls more effective.

For more information about the survey and recalls see the [page dedicated to effective recalls](#) on the Safety Gate



4.4. Improving checks on products and testing approaches

The European Commission helps market surveillance authorities responsible for the enforcement of non-food consumer product safety across Europe work together, pool resources and share best practice. It does so by organising coordinated market surveillance and coordinated activities on the safety of products (CASP). These projects provide European authorities with the financing tools needed to jointly test products, determine their risks and take the necessary measures against any identified dangerous products in order to keep all European consumers safe.

During CASP2019, the 2019 edition, authorities from all over the EU analysed soft-filled toys, slime toys, personal transporters, children's bicycle seats, batteries and chargers.

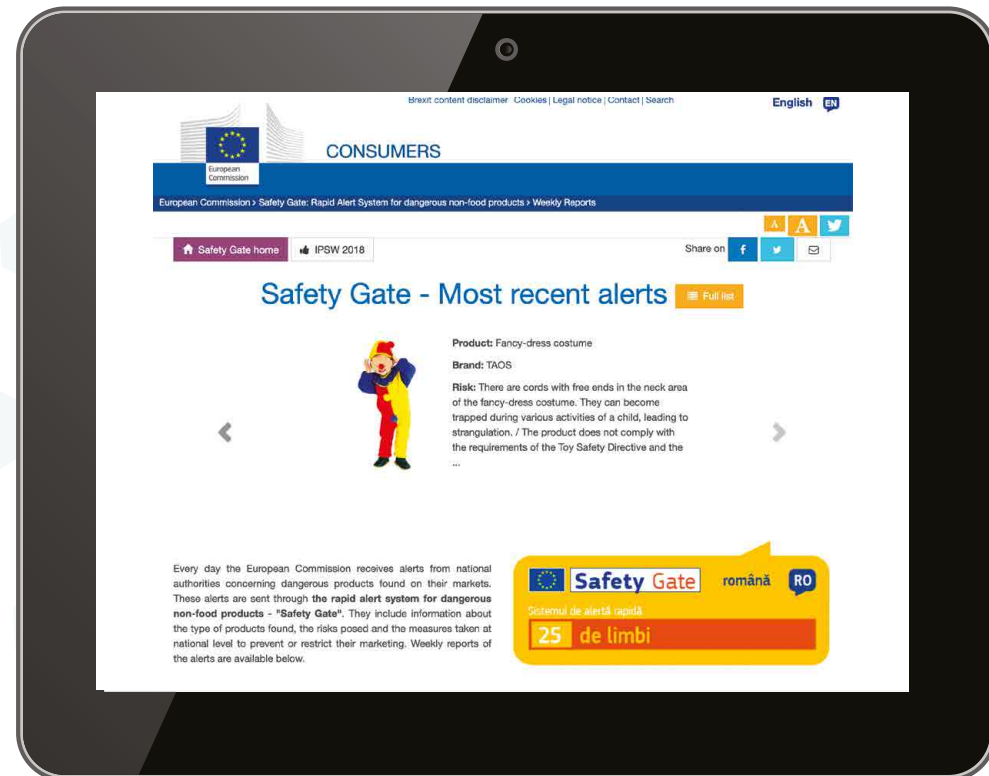


More information available on the Safety Gate website, on the page dedicated to [CASP activities](#)

5. Find your way around the Safety Gate

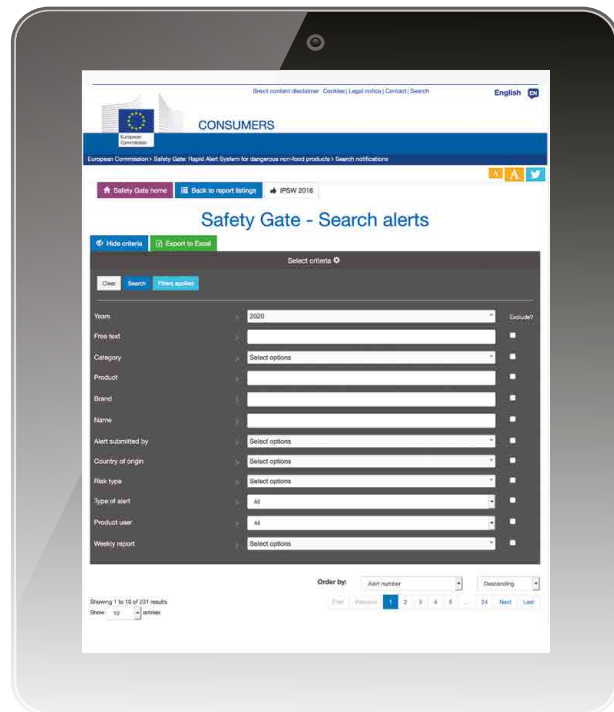
You can see information about the latest alerts, or have a list of alerts published by week.

You can select your preferred language in the list of languages. The page will change to that language and alerts will be displayed in that language, with machine-translated product and risk descriptions. In case of unclear translations, please always refer to the original English version.



You can search for specific alerts by different criteria

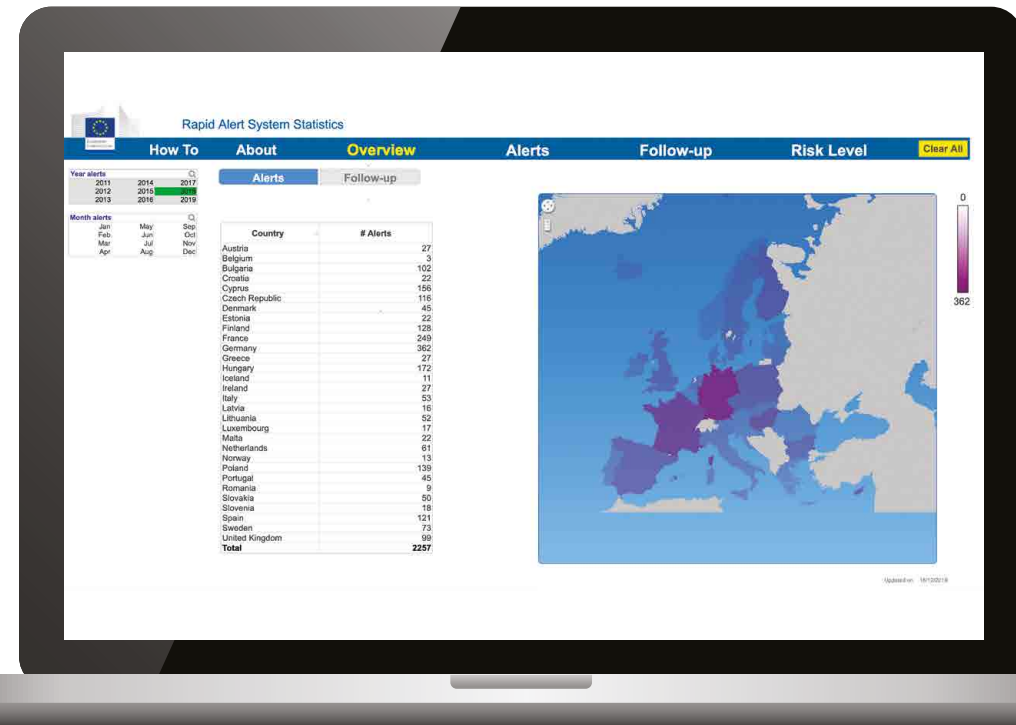
You can select your preferred language to search for alerts and the page will change to that language. Alerts will be displayed in that language, with machine-translated product and risk descriptions. In case of unclear automatic translations, refer always to the original English version.



If you want to see the numbers and make your own statistics according to different criteria, [on the alerts webpage](#), click on the button:



This will direct you to a specific space where you can extract statistics and produce graphs and Excel sheets according to your needs. User instructions can be found on the 'How to' tab.

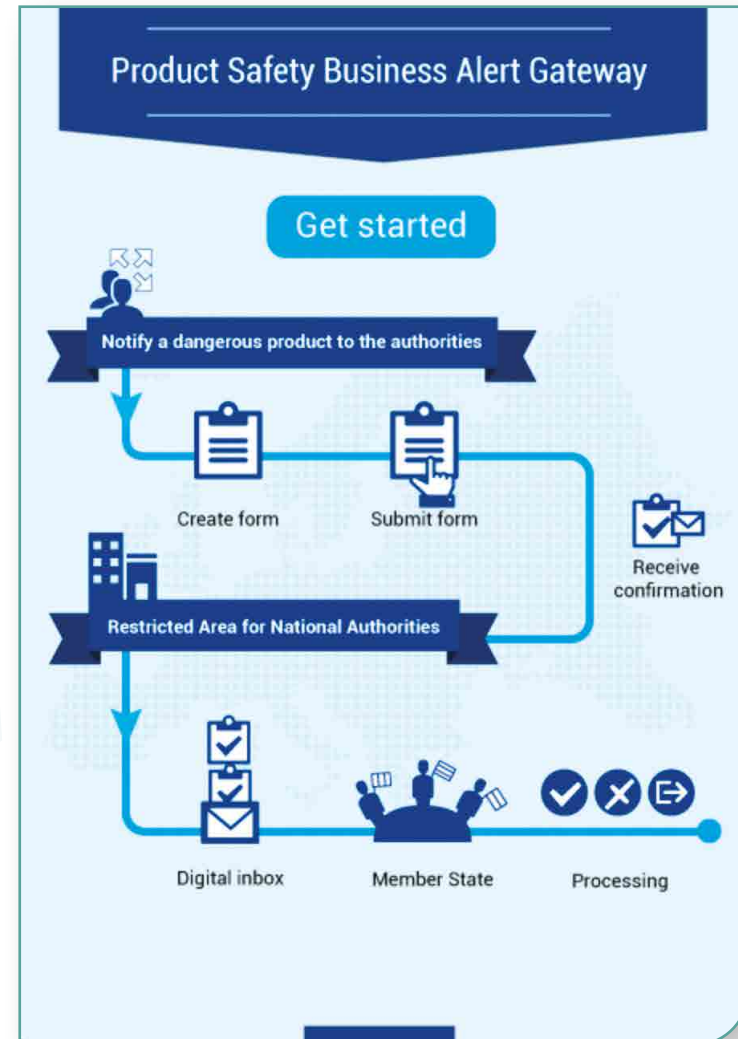


Report to a national authority about a dangerous product you have taken measures against, by using **Business Gateway**

What's in it for your company?

Consult our legislation webpages to know more about product safety requirements:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/product-safety-and-requirements/consumer-product-safety/standards-and-risks-specific-products_en



6. About this report

The data in this report relates to information received from national authorities on measures taken against unsafe non-food products. It includes various risks identified by these authorities, including mostly risks to the health and safety of consumers and risks to the environment. The report also takes into account information exchanged among the Member States but not published on the website. It should be noted that this report presents statistics on the functioning of the Rapid Alert System. It does not, in any way, represent a comprehensive picture of all dangerous

products existing on the Single Market, nor does it give an overview of all market surveillance efforts undertaken by the authorities participating in the network.

Due to the dynamic nature of the system, data may change depending on the date of its extraction from the system.

Glossary

Alert: An alert submitted by a country participating in the Rapid Alert System concerning a measure taken against a consumer or professional product which has been considered by the national authorities to pose a risk.

Follow-up: Feedback received from countries participating in the Rapid Alert System on actions they have taken concerning the products that are the subject of alerts.

Market surveillance authorities: Authorities designated by each Member State as competent to monitor the compliance of products with the general safety requirements and to take the appropriate measures according to the [General Product Safety Directive](#) (GPSD). They also have the obligation to inform the European Commission of any dangerous products found. The Commission passes on such information to the other Member States through the Rapid Alert System.



Contacts

Contacts in the Member States:

https://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers_safety/safety_products/rapex/alerts/repository/content/pages/rapex/docs/rapex_contact_points_en.pdf

Contacts in the Member States for businesses:

https://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers_safety/safety_products/rapex/alerts/repository/content/pages/rapex/docs/rapex_appointed_authorities_en.pdf

Key documents:

[*Directive 2001/95/EC on general product safety \(GPSD\)*](#)

[*Guidelines for the management of the rapid alert system on general product safety and its notification system*](#)

[*Instructions for using the Business Gateway for producers and distributors*](#)

[*Product Safety Pledge*](#)



