

Fewer toxic toys and textiles in EU stores

May 8 2012

Europe last year saw its first drop in the number of toxic toys and skin-irritating textiles stacked on its supermarket shelves, more than half of them made in China, the EU said Tuesday.

Thanks to better policing and improved cooperation with China and others, the number of unsafe products banned, withdrawn, or recalled from consumers, dropped 20 percent in 2011 to 1,803 items compared with a 13 percent increase the [previous year](#).

"The fact that fewer dangerous items enter the EU market is good news for consumers, but we must remain committed," said Health Commissioner John Dalli on presenting the European Union's latest report on efforts to enforce [product safety](#).

Removing life-threatening goods from the EU is achieved under a 2004 rapid alert system known as RAPEX, enabling information on dangerous products to circulate swiftly across the 27-nation bloc, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Up to 100 million euros (\$130 million) and 6,000 inspectors have been committed to the bid to remove dangerous non-food products that resulted in 2011's first-ever noted drop in notifications.

While more than half the items reported as potentially dangerous came from China, notifications on Chinese items too dropped, representing 54 percent of all notifications in 2011 against 58 percent the previous year.

But the [European Commission](#) underlined that "this still very high number" was linked to China's high market penetration in Europe.

"The consistent intensification of contacts with the Chinese administration and businesses is yielding significant returns," it said.

While the majority of risky products were made outside Europe, in China and Turkey, 19 percent were EU-made, including three percent that were of French origin, three percent of German origin and two percent from Italy.

The most frequently reported dangerous goods were clothing, textile and fashion items -- accounting for 27 percent -- followed by toys at 21 percent and motor vehicles at 11 percent.

A total 16 countries reported fewer dangerous products last year, but five nations accounted for 47 percent of all reports to RAPEX -- Spain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany and Britain.

Did this mean there were more unsafe [products](#) in those countries?

"There may be many reasons", the EU report said. "European countries which have the biggest markets and the greatest number of imported goods, and which also have the highest number of inspectors, find more dangerous goods."

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