



Press Release

2 December 2009

Unsafe Christmas Lights

ANEC, the European Consumer Voice in Standardisation, believes the findings of the European Commission report into the safety of decorative Christmas lights, published today, provide further evidence that market surveillance activities in the Internal Market need to be strengthened and better resourced.

According to the report, unveiled by Meglena Kuneva, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, 30% of Christmas lights present an obvious and direct risk of fire and electric shocks. The report is based on conclusions of a joint market surveillance project involving authorities from five Member States - Hungary, Germany, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Netherlands - as well as the European Commission. Testing was carried out between November 2007-May 2009 at different intervals on 196 random samples of lighting chains across the entire price spectrum. The samples were checked against over 20 administrative and technical requirements. Many lighting chains failed to meet several requirements.

ANEC Secretary-General, Stephen Russell, commented, "the European Commission report shows that market surveillance activities are most effective when undertaken jointly by several countries. Unfortunately for European consumers, most surveillance activities are undertaken exclusively and individually by Member States at the national level. This leads to inconsistencies and, above all, sees too few resources chasing too many products. As a result, the consumer expectation for safe products is not always met".

On 22 April 2009, ANEC and ORGALIME (the European Engineering Industries Association) published a common position paper calling for the creation of a European framework for market surveillance in order to ensure both a coherent approach to surveillance activities among all 27 Member States and adequate resourcing.

Stephen Russell added, "the ANEC-ORGALIME position paper¹ has been well-received and there is growing support for an initiative to be taken at the European level. There is a better understanding now that there is no point creating legislation unless its enforcement is effective. But there is still a long way to go and this latest Commission report is further evidence that unsafe products will find their way on to the market all too easily in the meantime".

¹ ANEC-ORGALIME 'Call for an effective pan-European market surveillance system'

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ANEC in brief

Raising standards for consumers

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, promoting, representing and defending consumer interests in standardisation and conformity assessment as well as in related legislation. ANEC was set up in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and represents national consumer organisations from the 27 EU Member States and 3 EFTA countries. It is funded by the European Union and the EFTA, while national consumer organisations contribute in kind. The ANEC Secretariat is based in Brussels.

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