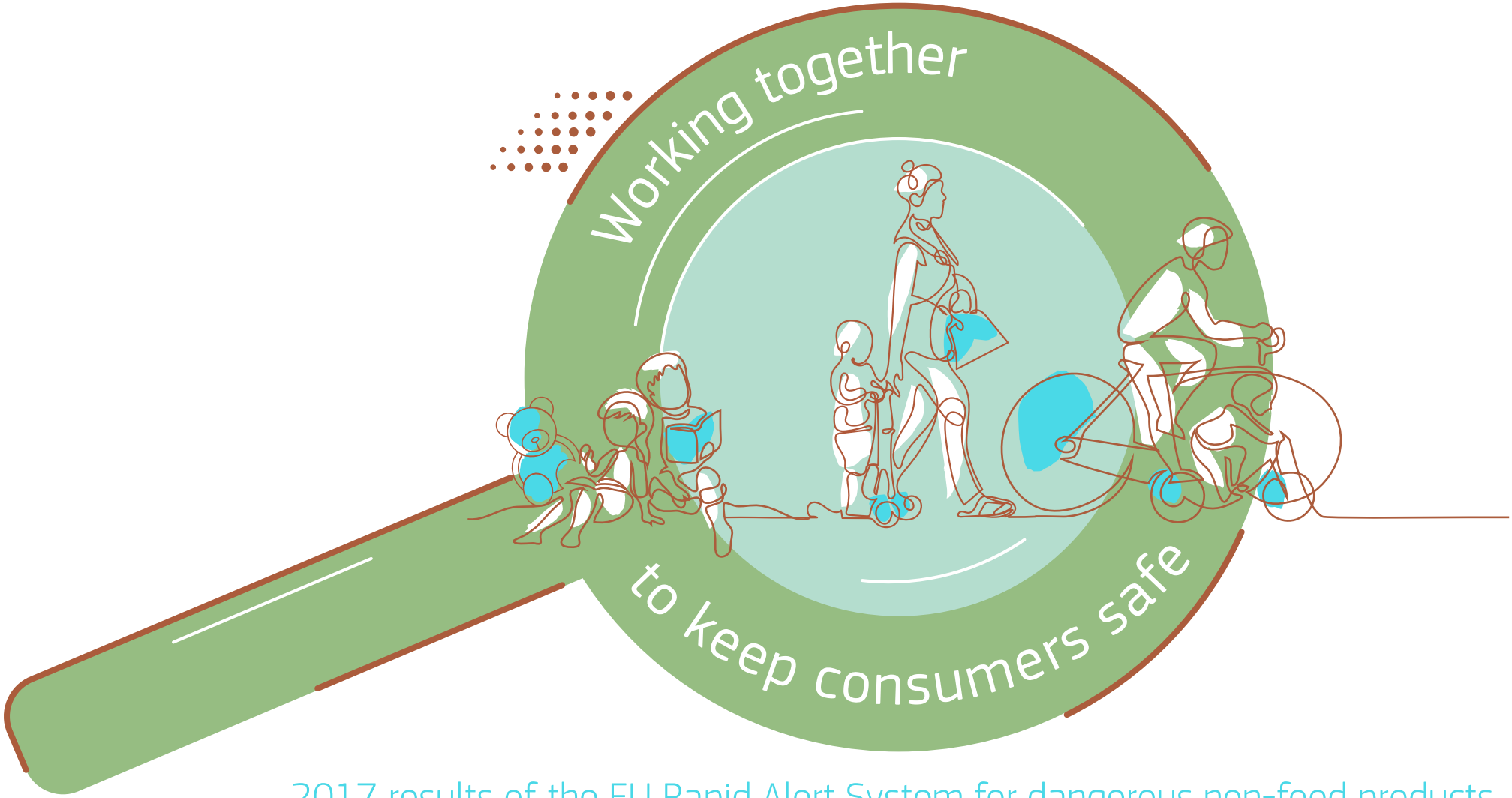
European Commission



2017 results of the EU Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products

Justice and Consumers

More information on the European Union is available on the internet (http://europa.eu).
Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

EN BOOK	PRINTED/Volume_01	DS-02-18-313-EN-C	ISBN 978-92-79-80422-9	doi:10.2838/018284
EN PDF	PDF/Volume_01	DS-02-18-313-EN-N	ISBN 978-92-79-80423-6	doi:10.2838/031929

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COMMISSIONER'S **FOREWORD**

European Consumers enjoy the best levels of protection. We have really good legislation, but we also have a unique system of informing each other about dangerous non-food products – the Rapid Alert System.

Every day, product safety specialists, stakeholders, manufacturers, border officials and scientists from countries all over the European Union, as well as Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, share information in order to help track down dangerous products and remove them from the market, carry out safety tests, improve standards and develop common rules. All the people involved, wherever they are and whatever their job and responsibilities, have only one aim: to keep dangerous products from entering the market and keep consumers, particularly children and the elderly, safe.

The latest results are very telling: in 2017, 2 201 alerts circulated in the Rapid Alert System concerning products posing all kinds of risks. This enabled national authorities to detect and stop them from reaching consumers. These alerts were followed by almost 4 000 actions taken by national authorities in other countries, who then looked for the same products on their markets and took relevant measures. This cooperation ensures that the safe Single Market remains a reality of life in the European Union.

Every day, new alerts are published on the web, so that anybody can find information on the dangerous products circulated in the system. The Rapid Alert System website is however much more than just a list of alerts. It provides a whole range of tools to enable anyone to consult and retrieve information and select alerts according to different criteria and their different needs.

This annual report shows the main trends and results achieved by the Rapid Alert System in 2017. As we constantly strive to improve the system, I am happy to share with you some good news: a new statistical tool is available on the website which allows everyone to retrieve statistical data according to their own needs.

Turning now to the next steps, in order to keep consumers safe, it is crucial that as many people as possible fully understand the content of the alerts. That is why my team is investing a lot of work to make alerts information available in all EU languages. We will launch this new feature gradually so that by end of 2018 all the EU languages are available.

Věra Jourová
Commissioner for Justice,
Consumers and Gender Equality

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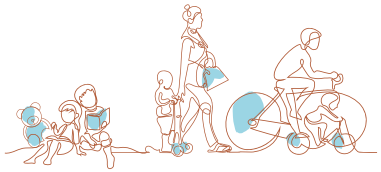


HIGHLIGHTS

Do you take product safety for granted? Well, you may be surprised to learn that every day hundreds of people work to make sure that you are protected from dangerous products. In the European Union, this happens also thanks to the Rapid Alert System. Since its creation in 2003, new Member States have been added to the network, procedures improved and communication tools modernized. The system is stabilizing at a regular rate with approximately 50 alerts published each week on the European Commission's website and just over 2 000 alerts published per year.

This is due to the efficient cooperation between the European Commission and the Member States participating in the Rapid Alert System who, independently of their country or language, all share one common goal: to stop dangerous products entering the market.

However, members of the Rapid Alert System know that the market is a global affair and shopping online is becoming more and more popular with consumers. This is why the Rapid Alert System team is working closely with large international markets to exchange information and increase cooperation also at the level of online platforms (see Chapter 5 of this report for further information).

THE RAPID ALERT SYSTEM FOR DANGEROUS PRODUCTS: HOW DOES IT WORK?

First, some basic information on applicable EU legislation: according to the General Product Safety Directive, a product is safe if it meets all statutory safety requirements under European or national law. It is the responsibility of businesses and national authorities to ensure that only safe products are sold.

Businesses have a responsibility to:

- place only safe products on the market
- inform consumers of any risks associated with the products they supply
- make sure that any dangerous products present on the market can be traced and swiftly removed if necessary to avoid putting consumers at risk

Appointed national market surveillance authorities have a responsibility to:

- check whether products available on the market are safe
- ensure product safety legislation and rules are applied by manufacturers and business chains
- take appropriate action in case a dangerous product is detected on the market

When a dangerous product is identified, authorities or economic operators take measures, such as ordering its withdrawal from the market, ordering its destruction or recalling it from end users.

By circulating information about these measures through the Rapid Alert System, all national authorities responsible for market surveillance in the countries belonging to the network[1] cooperate to keep consumers safe.

Secondly, funding: the European Union consumer programme includes a budget line of 2.5 million euro for the support of coordinated actions to test products available on the market. The national authorities visit manufacturers, importers or retailers to inspect and collect products. The products are then tested in an accredited laboratory. Risk assessments are carried out for each of the samples. For this exercise, coordination and harmonised opinions are important to make sure that similar products are assessed in the same way by all Member countries. In the case of any samples found to be unsafe, relevant measures are taken by the national authorities and, as mentioned above, these measures are then reported through the Rapid Alert System.

GLOSSARY

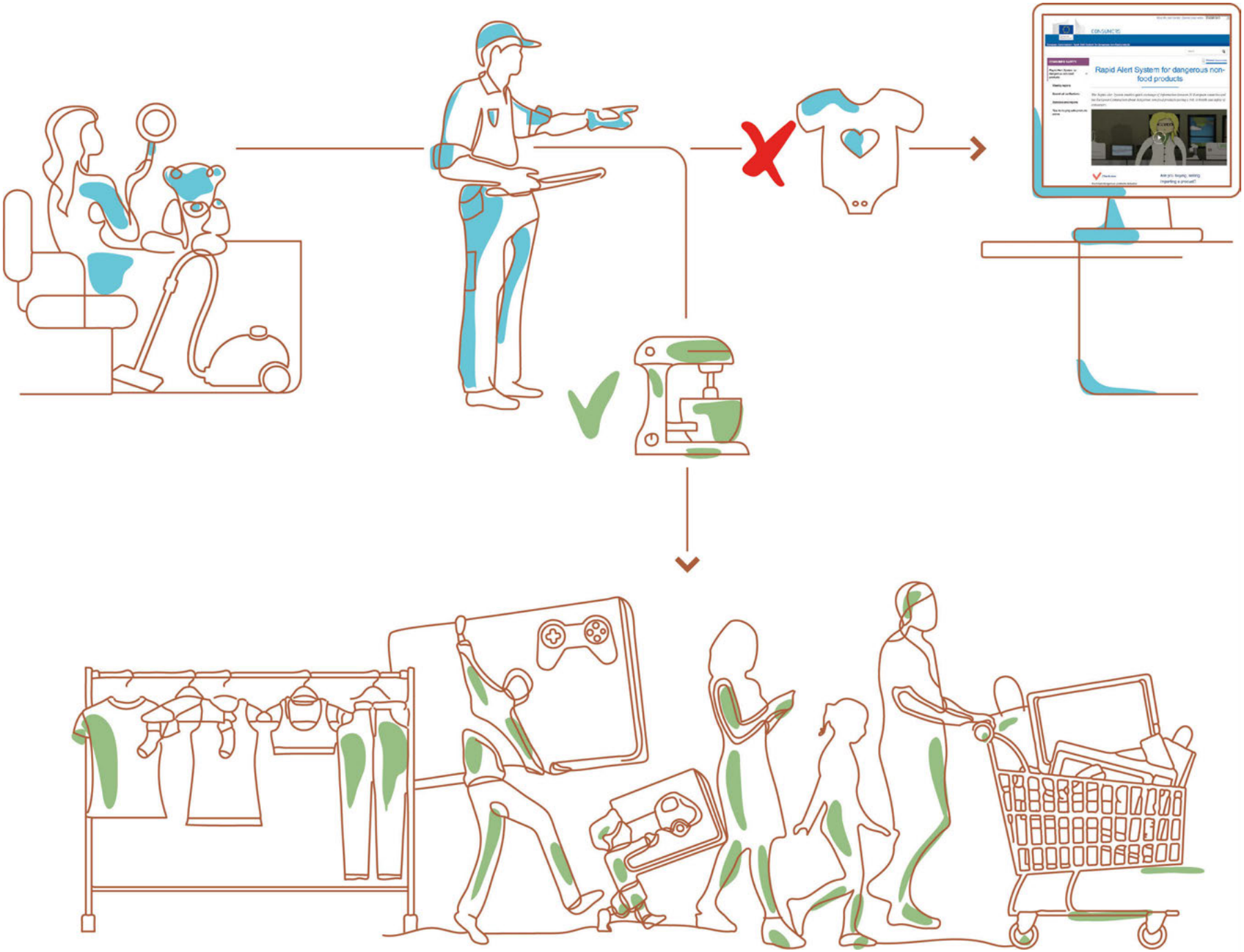
Alert: Information submitted by a country participating in the Rapid Alert System concerning a measure taken towards a product placed on the market which poses a risk to consumers' health or safety.

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

Market surveillance authorities: Official national institutions responsible for monitoring the market for dangerous products.

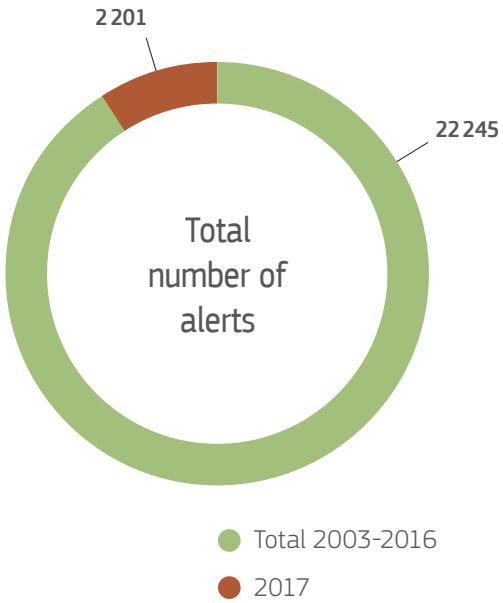
Economic operators: All businesses involved in the production, selling or resale of a product: e.g., manufacturers, distributors, retailers, etc.

1 31 countries including the European Union's 28 Member States, plus EEA/EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.


CONSUMERS
Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products

RESULTS

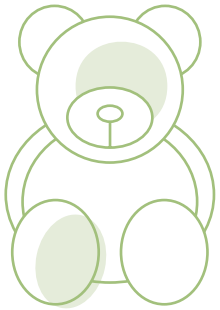
A first structure for information exchange between Member States on dangerous products was set up in 2003. Since 2010, the Rapid Alert System also covers professional products and products posing risks other than those affecting health and safety. Since then, the level of notifications has stabilized at a level of just over 2 000 alerts per year. In 2017 alone, a total of 2 201 alerts were circulated. In 15 years, the Rapid Alert System has assembled close to 25 000 alerts.



1/ **2017** ALERTS

PRODUCT categories / The 5 most notified products

29 %



TOYS

20 %

MOTOR VEHICLES

12 %

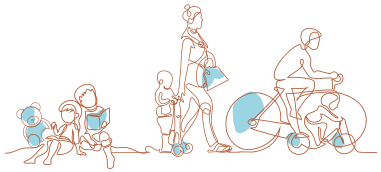
CLOTHING, TEXTILES AND FASHION ITEMS

6 %

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT

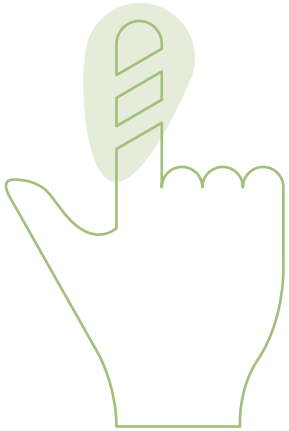
5 %

CHILDCARE ARTICLES AND CHILDREN'S EQUIPMENT



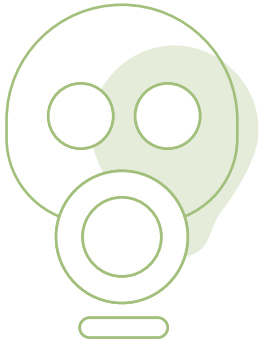
RISK categories / The 5 most notified risks

28 %



INJURIES

22 %



CHEMICAL

17 %

CHOKING

10 %

ELECTRIC SHOCK

6 %

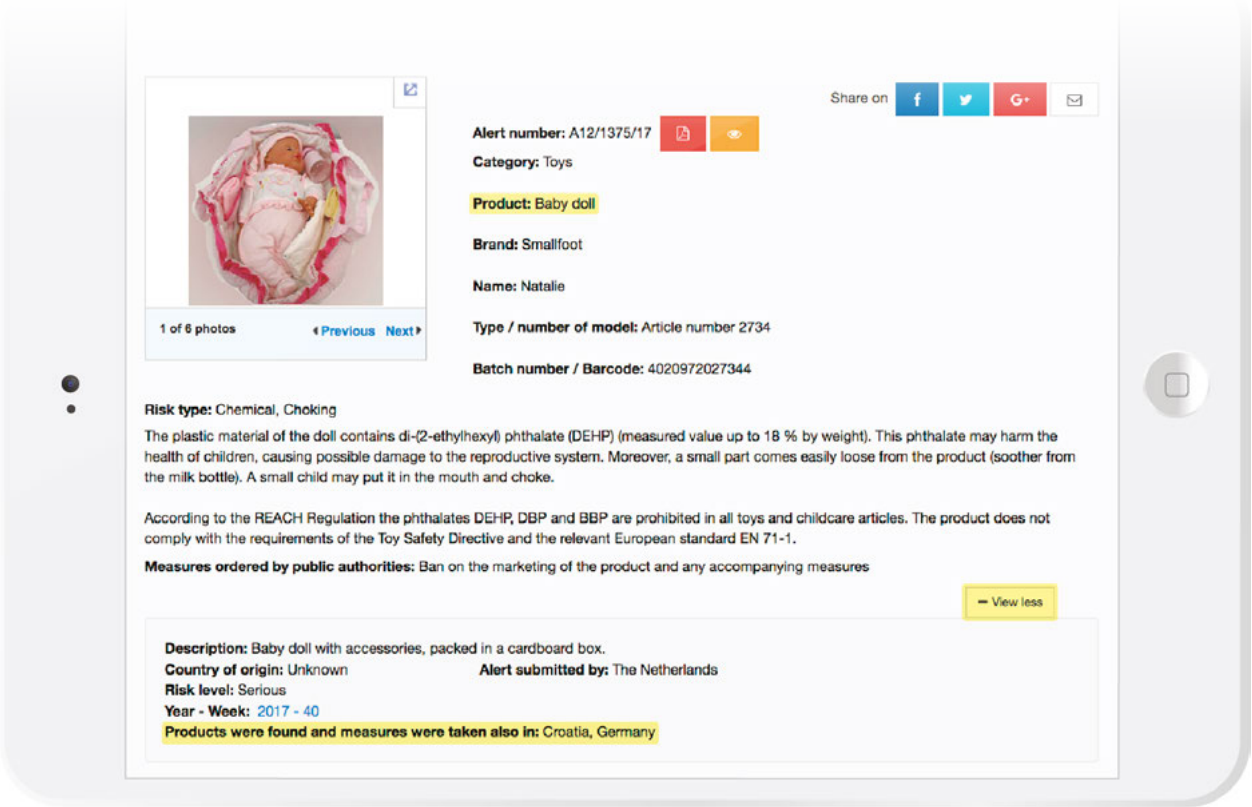
FIRE

2/ **2017** FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

National authorities have also an obligation to follow up on the information circulated in the Rapid Alert System on dangerous products detected. If they find the same product on their national market, these authorities should take measures and send this information through the system so it is also circulated.

What if an authority in another country has a different assessment of a risk posed by a product, or takes different measures according to the situation in which the products are found? In such cases, the European Commission provides the conditions to try to find a settlement which can set a reference to all countries participating in the system.

On the European Commission's website where the alerts are published, it is possible to see which other countries have found the same dangerous product by clicking on the "view more" button next to the alert:



PRODUCT categories followed up

79 %

MOTOR VEHICLES

6 %

TOYS

3 %

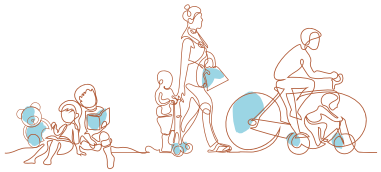
CHILDCARE ARTICLES AND CHILDREN'S EQUIPMENT

3 %

CLOTHING, TEXTILES AND FASHION ITEMS

1 %

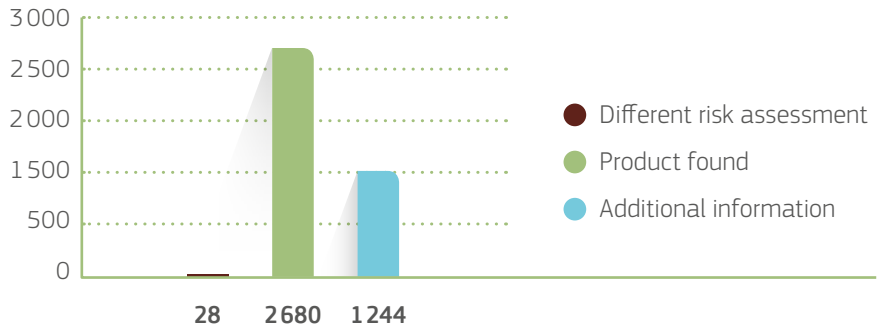
ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT



RISK categories followed up

72 %	10 %	6 %	3 %	2 %
INJURIES	FIRE	CHEMICAL	CHOKING	STRANGULATION

TYPE of follow up



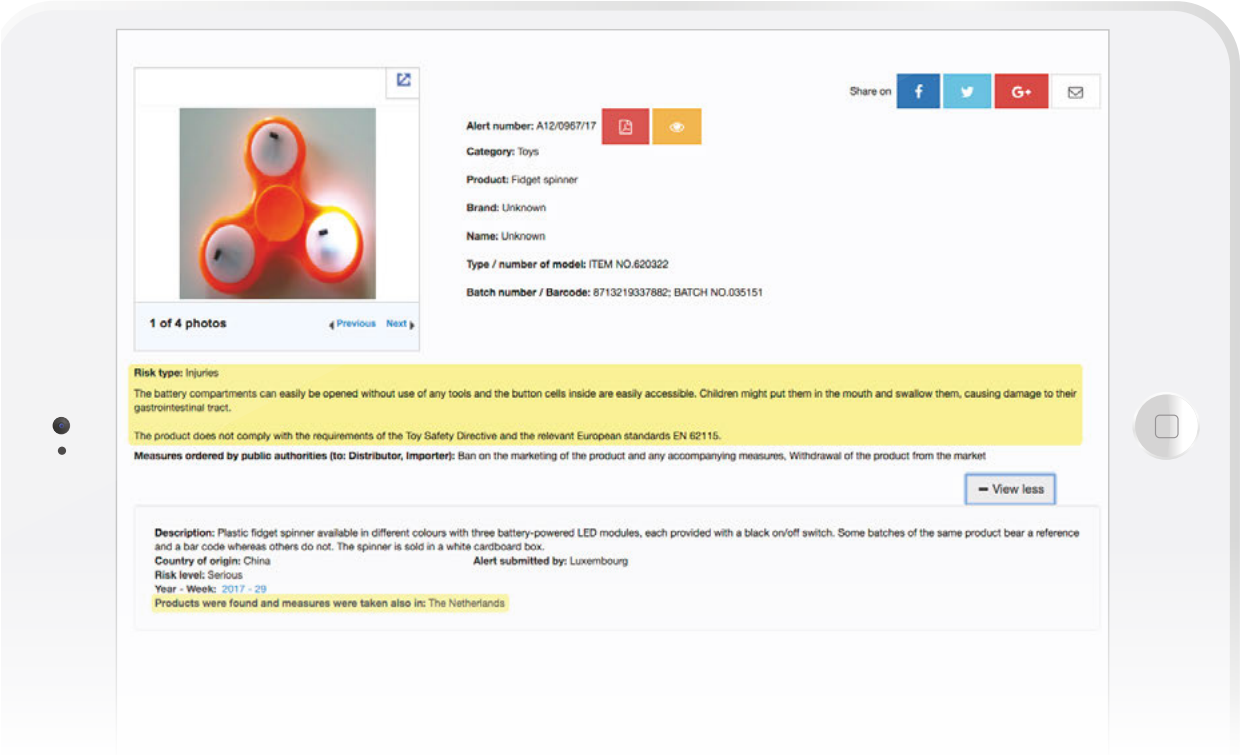
3/ CHALLENGES FOR NEW PRODUCTS: TRACKING DANGEROUS FIDGET SPINNERS

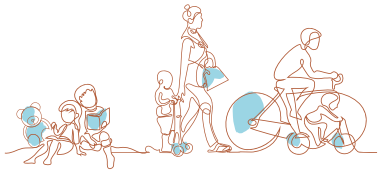
In 2017, a new toy caught the attention of all children and parents: the fidget spinner – a small plastic object, placed on the fingers, which spins around a central bearing. Simple toys, but they quickly became very popular, particularly since they are also promoted as a toy to reduce anxiety.

Checks on some samples of fidget spinners quickly revealed problems, in particular those containing button batteries. This type has an extra appeal as when the toy spins, they light up. However, button batteries are small flat batteries which, if swallowed, can cause burns to the oesophagus and intestines. A number of fidget spinners were also found to have easily detachable small parts, namely the central cover which is the most attractive part of the toy and this can pose a risk, especially to small children, who may put it in the mouth and choke. A number of concerns have been raised due to accidents involving small children, who have either swallowed broken parts of the toy or ingested button batteries. In these cases, hospital intervention is necessary and urgent.

As a result of the findings, national authorities have had to react quickly. The Rapid Alert system has helped to put in place a means for the quick exchange of information about risks related to the product, the manufacturers concerned, distribution chains, etc. Consequently, dangerous fidget spinners have been tracked down, stopped at borders and ports, or destroyed.

Below is an example of an alert concerning a fidget spinner which could cause injuries:



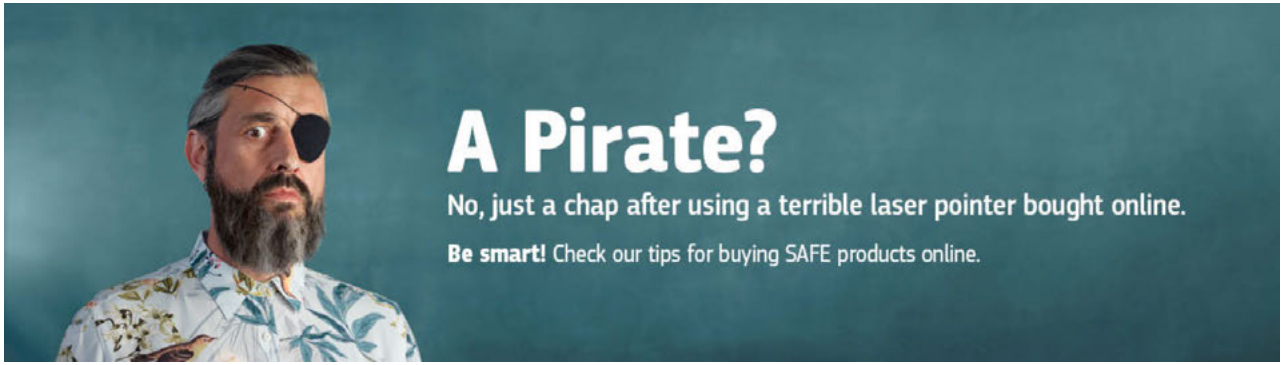


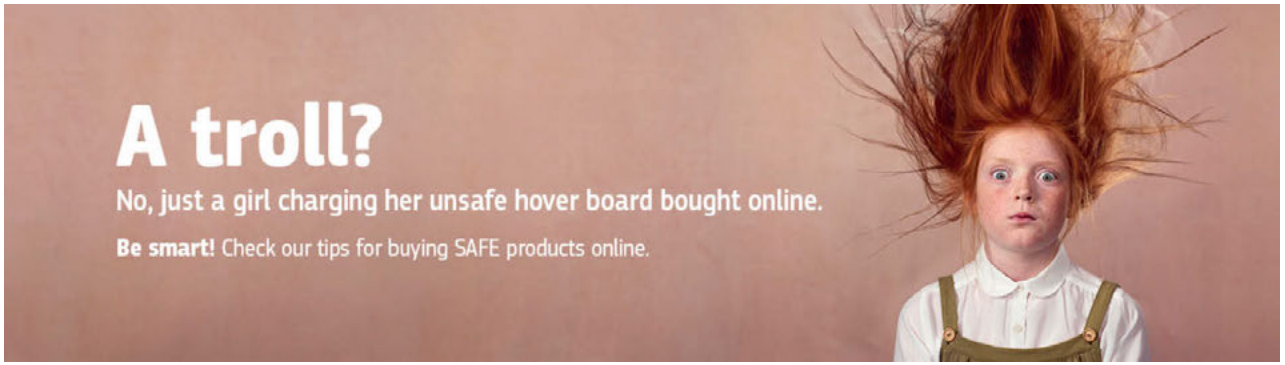
4/ **GROWING** ONLINE MARKETS

It is becoming more and more common for European consumers to buy products online. Some of these products may not comply with relevant legislation and could be dangerous, so national market surveillance national authorities are required to develop tools and invest in further specialised resources to monitor online sales. In support of these actions, the European Commission has issued a Guidance document to help national market surveillance authorities better control products sold online. It also clarifies the roles of economic operators and other stakeholders in cases where consumers buy online. Moreover, the European Commission is also supporting market surveillance authorities via the "E-enforcement Academy" project with a view to create common tools and methods to face the challenges of products sold online.

The European Commission has also launched an information campaign in all official languages of the EU with tips for buying safe products online.

Besides, the European Commission has continued its cooperation with online platforms to improve the safety of products sold online. While in 2017 some platforms provided specific single contact points for national authorities to notify unsafe products, the European Commission is now in conversations with them so they take further voluntary commitments to improve product safety going beyond their legal obligations.





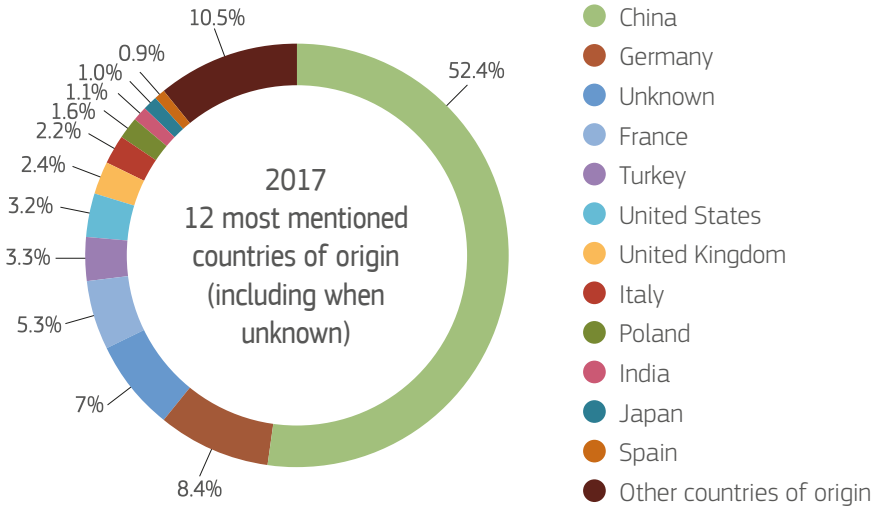
5/ **BEYOND EU BORDERS:** GLOBAL COOPERATION MAKES THE SYSTEM STRONGER

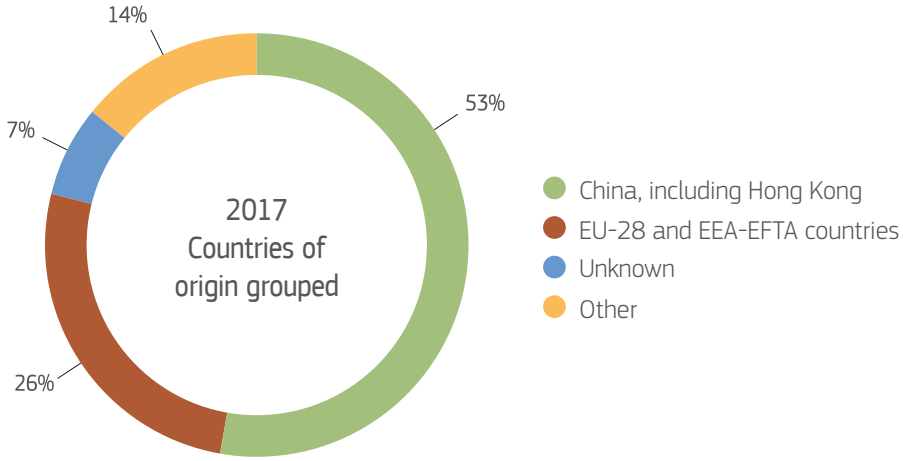
Product safety challenges are becoming more and more global: as is demonstrated by the number of online sales, international product recalls and the appearance of new connected devices on the market. To make sure that we do not miss any emerging issues and to find the best solutions, the European Commission communicates and cooperate with countries such as the USA, China, Canada, Japan and with international organisations such as the OECD.

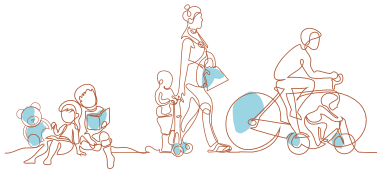
The European Commission regularly discusses emerging risks with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. It also organises Trilateral Summits together with the US counterpart and the Chinese authorities to address common challenges, such as the safety of products sold online.

To allow effective market surveillance and to ensure that unsafe products detected on the market are swiftly removed, information concerning the entire supply chain is very important. Since the creation of the Rapid Alert System, China has been identified as the country of origin in more than 50 % of all registered alerts. To address this, specific arrangements are in place to cooperate with Chinese authorities and to receive feedback on identified cases. The European Commission also meets regularly with the Chinese authorities to discuss cases and implement actions such as training and exchange of good practices in the area of product safety.

The Rapid Alert System is also one of the most important sources of information for the OECD's Global Recall Portal. The European Commission and the OECD regularly organise awareness-raising campaigns on product safety, like on button batteries or laundry detergent capsules which can be easily accessible to children.





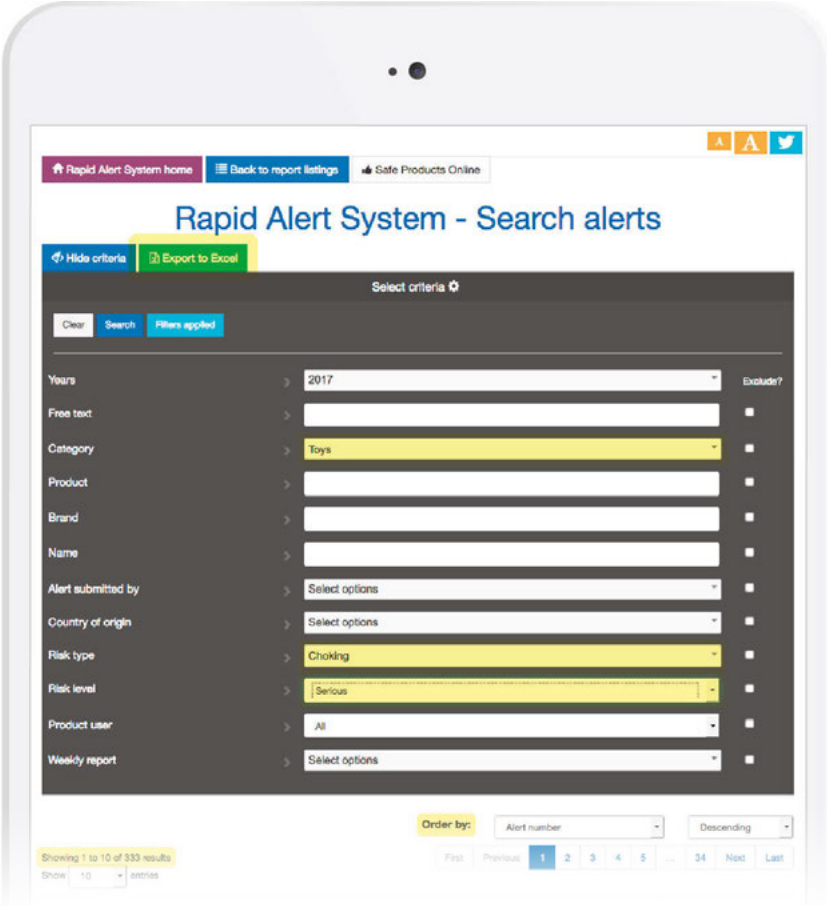


6/ WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU AS A CONSUMER?
A GUIDE TO THE RAPID ALERT SYSTEM

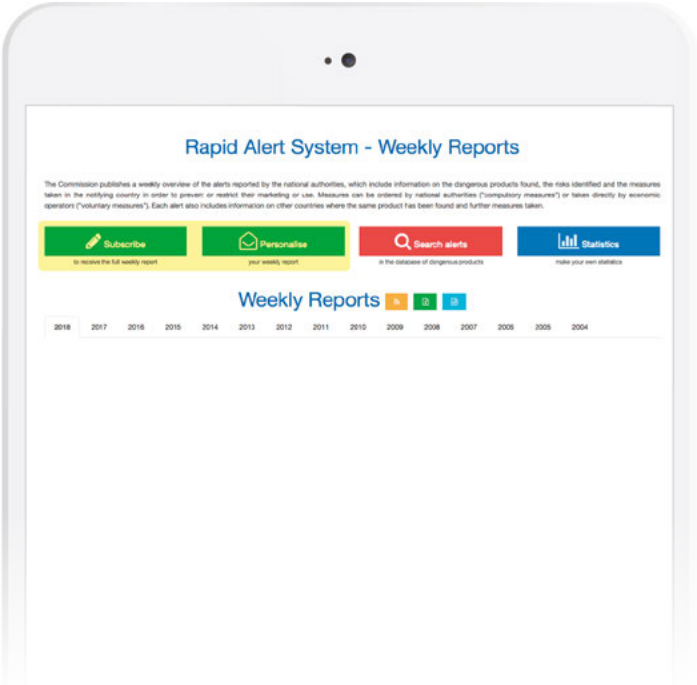
The Rapid Alert System has a dedicated public website ec.europa.eu/consumers/rapid-alert-system where you can find a brief explanation of how the system works and read information on related legislation.

A specific section provides access to alerts and there is a search tool which enables selection, downloading and exporting of alert information according to your needs.

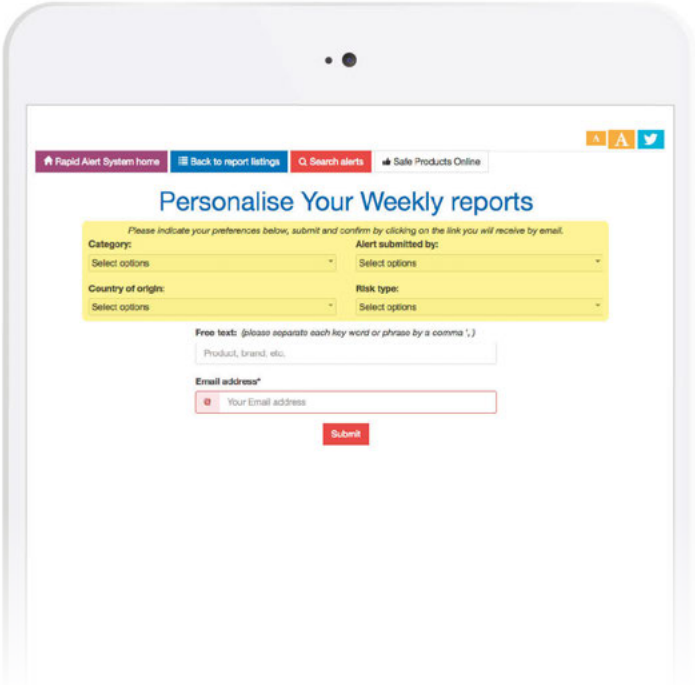
Here an example of a search selection:

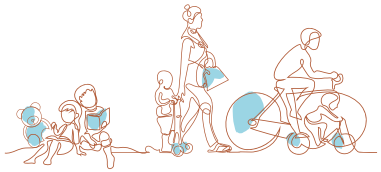


There is also the possibility to subscribe to a weekly email, either with a full list of latest alerts or a selection, according to your preferences.



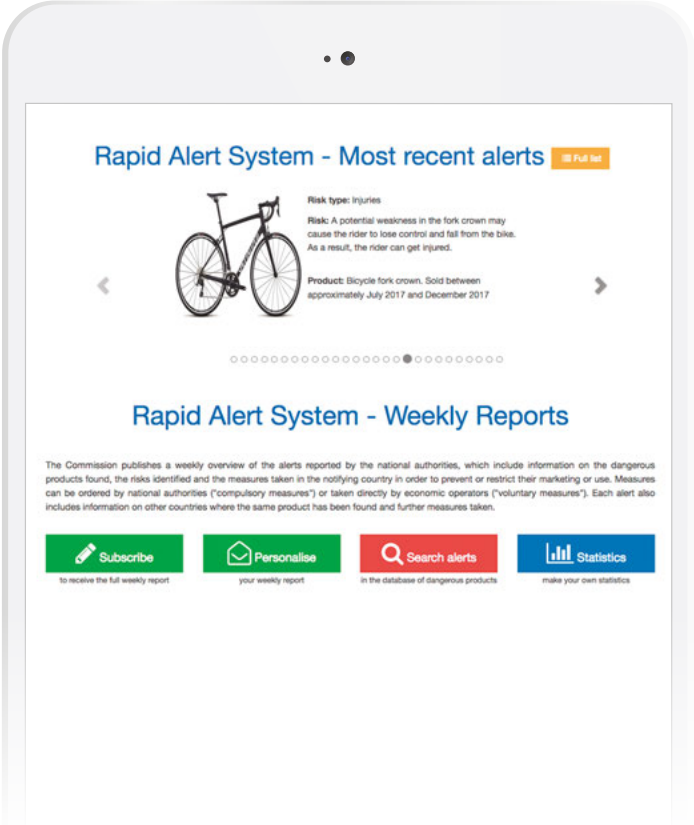
If you select **"Personalise"**, you can select the type of alerts in which you are interested





LATEST FEATURES:

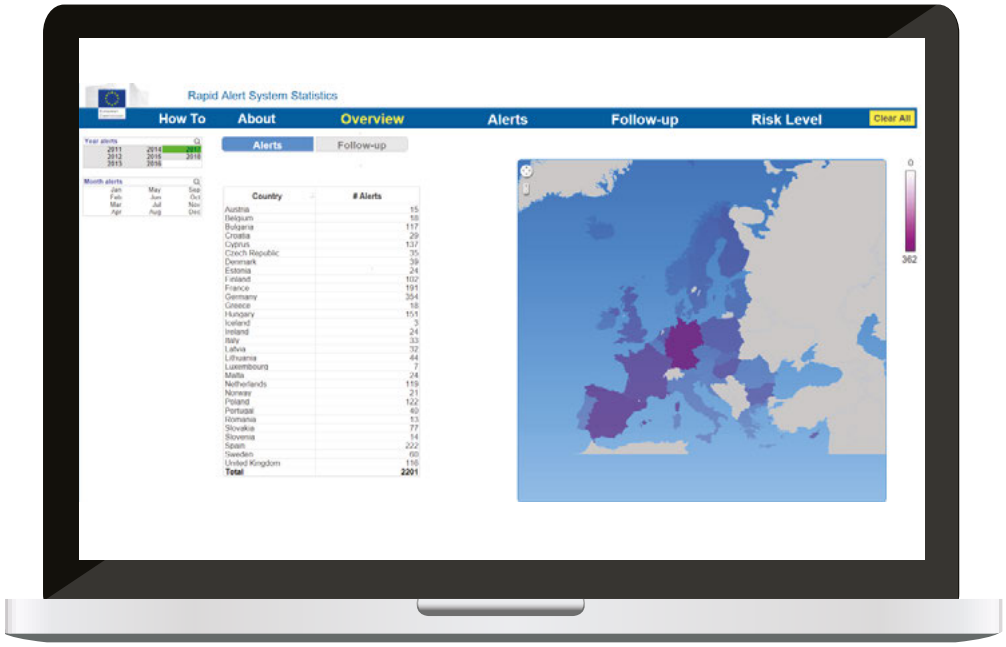
How can you see the latest alerts received in the system? Visit the alerts webpage. The most recent alerts are displayed across the top of the page. Further down the same page you can find the lists of weekly reports of alerts.



How can you retrieve statistics, for example, see how many alerts per country for a specific product category in a given year? Go to the alerts webpage, and click on

This will lead you to a specific application which will enable you to retrieve statistics, produce graphs and Excel sheets according to your needs.

On the tab "How to" of this application, you can find instructions on how to use the tool.



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

KEY DOCUMENTS:

- Directive 2001/95/EC on general product safety (GPSD)
- Commission Decision of 16 December 2009 laying down guidelines for the management of the Community Rapid Information System 'RAPEX' established under Article 12 and of the notification procedure established under Article 11 of Directive 2001/95/EC (the General Product Safety Directive).
- 2004/905/EC: Commission Decision of 14 December 2004 laying down guidelines for the notification of dangerous consumer products to the competent authorities of the Member States by producers and distributors, in accordance with Article 5(3) of Directive 2001/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council.

DON'T FORGET

The data in this report relates to information received from national authorities on measures taken against unsafe products. The data cover all risks noted by national authorities, either risks to the health and safety of consumers, or other types of risks. It also includes information that is circulated among Member States but not published on the website, namely notifications submitted "for information". These cases are only made available to the responsible national authorities participating in the Rapid Alert System and are not published in the weekly web reports.

It should be noted that this report presents statistics on the functioning of the Rapid Alert System and does not, by any means, represent a picture of all dangerous products on the market, nor does it give an overview of all market surveillance efforts undertaken by the market surveillance authorities participating in the network.

DS-02-18-313-EN-N

Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-79-80423-6
doi:10.2838/031929