





Contact: Laura Degallaix (BEUC) – environment@beuc.eu Tania Vandenberghe (ANEC) – Tania.Vandenberghe@anec.eu Ref.: X/062/2008 – ANEC-CHILD-2008-G-063

BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation 36 avenue de Tervueren, 1040 Bruxelles - +32 2 743 15 90 www.beuc.eu





# Toys: Find (and understand) the warnings!

BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation, ANEC, the European Consumer Voice in Standardisation, and their members across Europe, are worried about the increasing use of warnings and labels as substitutes for requiring a manufacturer to put safe products on the market.

In our view, warnings and labels should be only complementary to strict safety measures: manufacturers should be obliged to ensure that a toy does not present any avoidable risks to children.

There are however situations where a warning would be needed. For example, a toy which is safe for a child of ten years might not be safe for a child younger than three years. In this case it should be labelled with a warning.

Warnings should catch the buyer's attention, and be present on both the toy itself and the packaging whenever possible. They must always be preceded by the word "Warning!".

Warnings should always provide information on both the inherent hazard of the toy and the risks related to its use as well as the ways of avoiding them. For instance, a warning must inform consumers about the fact that the toy contains small parts and that it may pose a risk of choking. Information about how to use the toy safely is also necessary ("Not suitable for children under 3", "Do not put in the mouth").

In addition, some warnings ("Not suitable for children under three", "Not for children with a body weight of more than 20kg,") should be visible before purchase in order to allow consumers to assess whether the toy is safe for the child in question. Other warnings which consumers need to be aware of during the whole life of a toy ("Do not use in deep water", "Only for domestic use") need to be permanently displayed on the toy.

In the following pages, you will find examples of warnings that can be found on toys or their packaging currently sold on the European market. Some of the warnings are barely visible, difficult to read and/or difficult to understand.

#### IMCO vote on 6 November

The revision of the Toy Safety Directive presents a unique opportunity to clarify the issue of warnings. This can be achieved through supporting a series of amendments:

Warnings should be clear, accurate, in a language that consumers understand and prominently (conspicuously) displayed:

- *⇒* Support IMCO amendments 13, 86, 88, 146, 182, 183, 184, 189 and 201.
- ⇒ Reject IMCO amendment 87.

Warnings should be preceded by the word "Warning!" in order to catch the buyer's attention:

⇒ Support IMCO amendments 364, 365 and 366.

Warnings which are necessary for a safe choice of toys should be visible before purchase, on the toy packaging, at the point of sale and on web pages:

*⇒* Support IMCO amendments 182, 186, 188, 190, 191 and 194.

Warnings that are necessary for a safe use of the toy, and need to be remembered during the whole life of a toy should be permanently marked on it:

⇒ Support IMCO amendments 182, 192, 193, 195 and 196.

Warnings should provide consumers with information on both the inherent hazard of the toy and the risks related to its use:

⇒ Support IMCO amendment 181.

Warnings should be self-explanatory in order to ensure that consumers understand them and take the necessary protective measures:

- *⇒* Support IMCO amendment 276, 284, 369, 371, 372 and 373.
- ⇒ Reject IMCO amendment 370.

A warning stating that the toy is not suitable for a particular age group shall not be applied on a toy which is clearly intended for children of that age group. Currently, manufacturers often put such warnings on toys in order to avoid having to comply with the stricter requirements foreseen for such toys:

⇒ Support IMCO amendment 85, 146, 367 and 368.

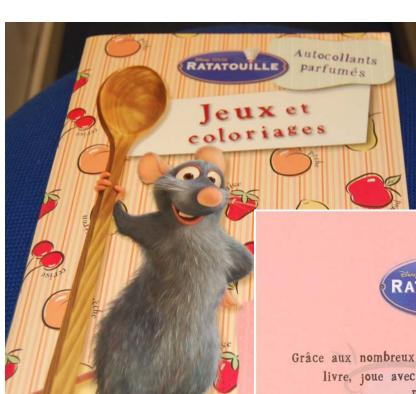
The presentation of warnings on toys should be improved and harmonized *⇒* Support IMCO amendment 185, 187 and 197.

### Examples of bad warnings<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The examples in this book are only shown in order to illustrate our demands on warnings in the context of the revision of the Toys Directive. The inclusion of these examples does not automatically imply that the toys do not comply with the legislation, nor that they pose risks for children.







Grâce aux nombreux autocollants contenus dans ce livre, joue avec les personnages du film Ratatouille!

Ensuite, en grattant certains autocollants, tu découvriras des odeurs différentes.

Il te reste des autocollants? Super! Tu pourras décorer tes livres et tes cahiers!

The warning is not horizontally displayed and in very small print. It is therefore almost invisible and barely readable.



Collection: Disney/Pixar-Ratatouille-Activités «Gratte et sens»

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## The warning is not legible.



The warning is displayed in 32 can not be read.



Waterballonnen Wasserballons ballons d'eau Globos de agua Palloni ad acqua Balónky na vodu Balões de água Bomby wodne Водные шарики Su balonları Vandballoner Vattenballong Vizi bomba Μπαλόνια νερού

Only to be used outdoors. Alleen buiten te gebruiken.

Nur draußen gebrauchen

Emploi: uniquement dehors.

Sólo para usar afuera. Solo per uso esterno.

Je určena pouze k venkovnímu použití. Somente usar fora.

Używać jedynie na wolnym powietrzu.

Разрешается пользование факелом

только вне помещений.

Sadece disarida kullanılır.

Kizárólag kültéri használatra



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The warning is not explicit.

There are also no use

instructions even though

water balloons are known to

present high risks. The 0-3

years symbol is rather well

displayed but the other

symbol labelled beside it is

barely understandable.

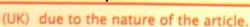


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The text accompanying the 0-3 years symbol is barely legible. There is no information about the fact that the toy contains sweets.





The warning is not legible.

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The only warning is the 0-3

years symbol. It does not
years symbol. It does not
provide any information about
provide any information are
the risks of small parts.
The batteries are not
the risks of small parts.
The batteries are
the batteries and
incorporated in the toy and
could easily be swallowed.



No warning is present on the front of pack. Also, the claim "safety tested for children" is highly misleading for consumers as it suggests that the chemical content of the toy has been specifically tested (which is not confirmed on the back of the pack).



"Safety tested formulated for children. See back of package for additional information."

The toy does not bear a warning familiar 0-3 symbol.



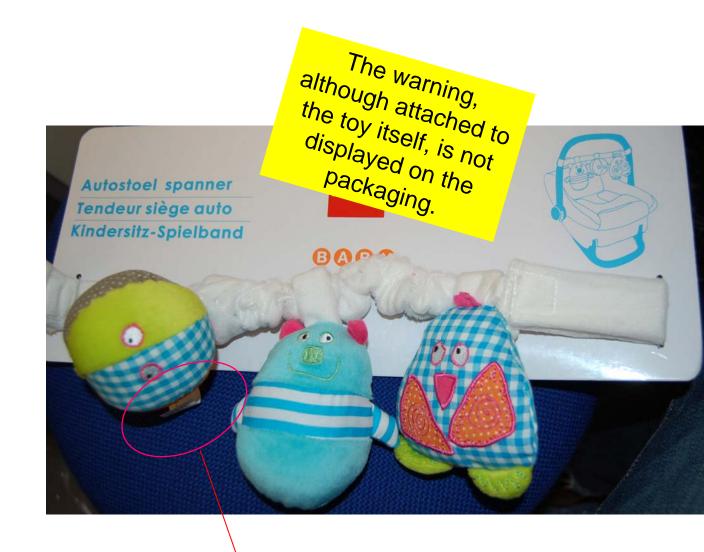


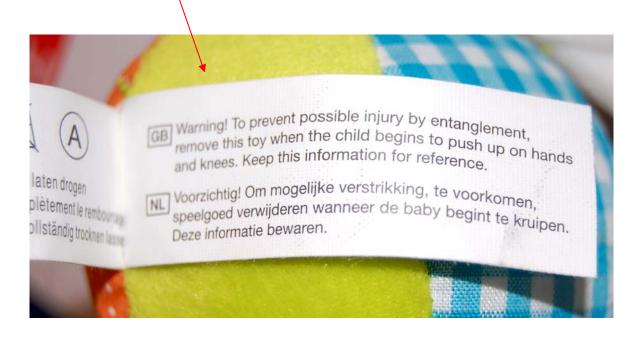
Not recommended for children under 3 years. Non consigliato a bambini di età inferiore ai 36 mesi. La conformité du présent produit, aux normes françaises obligatoires, est garantie par le fabricant ou l'importateur. Ne convient pas aux enfants de moins de 36 mois.

The words "Don't swallow it" on the lid do not draw the buyer's attention as readily as if they were preceded by the word "Warning".













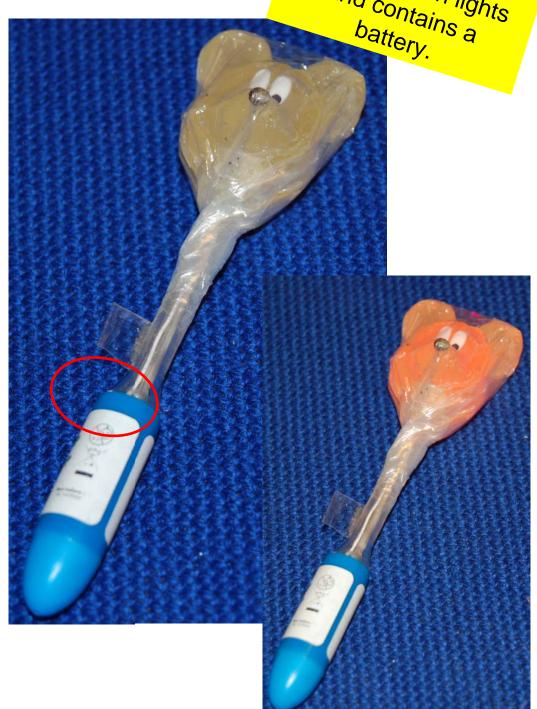
For ages 3 and up



WARNING! Childre balloons. Adult su balloons at once. is recommended. M

n under eight years old can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken ervision required. Keep uninflated balloons from children. Discard broken seep balloons at a safe distance from the eyes. The use of a balloon pump the of maral rubber latex. Keep packaging for information.

The 0-3 years symbol is barely visible.
There is no clear choking risk as it is a lollipop which lights battery.

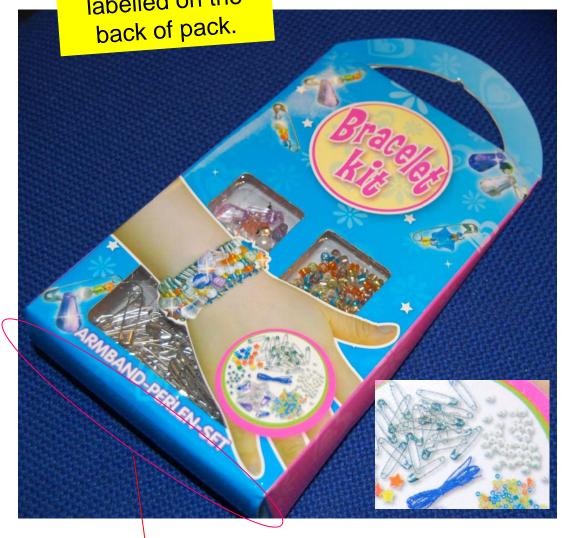




The design and name of this toy which is not intended for children under three is highly confusing for consumers.

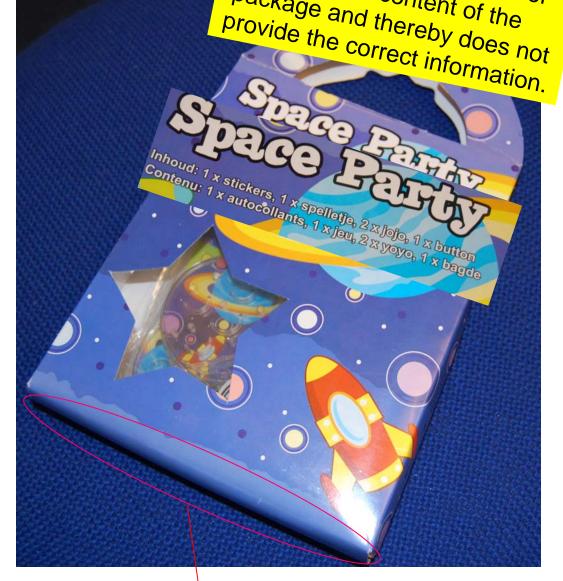


The text is neither visible nor legible.
The 0-3 years warning is only labelled on the back of pack.





The warning is not visible to the buyer. More importantly, the text ("take off all stickers before giving the stuffed toy to the child") is totally irrelevant for the actual content of the package and thereby does not provide the correct informatic



ATTENTION: Contient de petites pièces. Ne convient pas aux enfants en dessous de 3 ans.
Retirer toutes les étiquettes avant donner la peluche aux enfants.



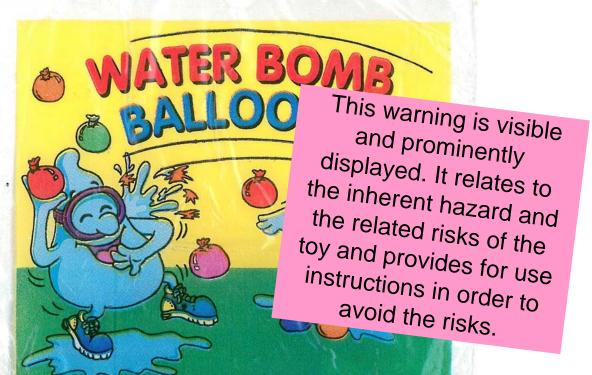
The only warning is the 0-3 years symbol. There is no warning which indicates that it contains a blinking light with a battery.



This teddy bear was offered as a gift in a pack of laundry detergent. It bears no visible warnings or any other kind of information.



## And finally, an example of a good warning...





CHOKING HAZARD - CHILDREN UNDER 8 YEARS CAN CHOKE OR SUFFOCATE ON UNINFLATED OR BROKEN BALLOONS.
ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED.
KEEP UNINFLATED BALLOONS FROM CHILDREN.
DISCARD BROKEN BALLOONS AT ONCE.

MADE IN CHINA