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EU makes first, significant step towards better product safety law

The European Commission today [presented a proposal](#) to reform the bloc's main product safety law, called the General Product Safety Directive [1]. Consumer groups welcome that the Commission proposes to improve the law in light of today's product safety challenges, while retaining the spirit and strong points of the existing law.

Monique Goyens, Director General at The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), commented:

"We must remember that the safety of day-to-day products is the most basic consumer right. Keeping safety legislation up to date is therefore paramount. This EU proposal is a significant step to improve the safety of products, especially as it recognises that the concept of 'safety' in 2021 must encompass 'cybersecurity'."

Stephen Russell, Secretary-General of The European Consumer Voice in Standardisation (ANEC), said:

"We welcome the Commission's recognition that accidents & injuries related to unsafe products cost consumers and broader society 11,5 billion euros annually, not forgetting the physical and emotional pain suffered. However, it is not clear whether the proposal will support our call for the creation of a pan-EU accident & injuries database to help identify where preventive measures – including European standards – are needed and assess their effectiveness."

The reform of the current product safety law is very important, [as it no longer reflects the reality of today's market](#). Today's proposal addresses this (see examples below). The proposal's weaker element concerns the role and responsibilities of online marketplaces in the supply chain, where we fear loopholes due to the interactions between this legislation and the still to be finalised Digital Services Act. As the proposal will now be scrutinised by the European Parliament and Member States, this should be further clarified.

This legal proposal by the European Commission contains many good elements, such as:

- Bringing the law in line with innovation in consumer markets by including 'cybersecurity' as a requirement for products to be considered 'safe'.
- Making all products benefit from the same – upgraded – market surveillance rules. This includes more powers for market surveillance authorities (such as the ability to do online mystery shopping) and better traceability of products in the supply chain (by demanding contact details of producers and importers).
- Strengthening the possibilities for international cooperation, and with consumer organisations.
- Maintaining the spirit and strong points of the original law: one that is based on the precautionary principle, and that can be used when sector-specific laws – such as toy safety legislation – do not address new safety challenges.

[1] The reformed law will be called the General Product Safety Regulation.

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