

Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No chemical substances in our children's toys!

Women's environmental organization (WECF) calls on the EU for a total ban on health disrupting substances in toys.

Utrecht/Munich/Brussels, 25th of January 2008:

Today the European Commission presents a draft proposal for the revision of the European toy safety directive. The revision is a good step in the eyes of WECF, because it covers and restricts for the first time hazardous chemicals in toys. But it's by far not enough, according to WECF.

This summer a string of scandals concerning recalls of large amounts of toys gained a lot of attention in the media, culminating in the worldwide recall of millions of Mattel toys after their products had been found with too high levels of lead in their paint.

These recalls lead to the disappearance of many hazardous chemicals and to a better quality control of toys. WECF greets this development with optimism, but states that although the revision of the Toys Directive is a step in the good direction, because it covers and restricts for the first time hazardous chemicals in toys, it is by far not enough to sufficiently protect the health of the most vulnerable, children.

A total ban

WECF demands a total ban on all health disrupting substances in toys. The new toys directive will not be enough to control these dangerous chemicals as it does not cover all hazardous substances.

„Children are our future and they should be protected. Toys are for fun and not meant to harm their healthy development”, states Sascha Gabizon, director of WECF. “The proposal for the new Toys Directive does not sufficiently protect Europe's most vulnerable citizens. In the revision only a certain group of dangerous substances is addressed and banned, the so-called CMR's; Carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances, which can cause cancer, change genes or form a risk for reproduction. Even the CMR's are not completely banned, as exemptions are foreseen by the Commission. Hormone disrupting substances and neuro-toxic substances, which can cause damage to children's brain development and can lead to learning impairment, are not covered at all. Many of the chemicals concerned, including phthalates and synthetic musks, can potentially disrupt hormone functions, harm reproduction and build up or persist in the environment, food chain and in the fatty tissues in our bodies. That is why WECF asks for a total ban on all hazardous substances, as it is unacceptable that a toy contains dangerous chemical substances”.

WECF hopes that the European commission will come up with concrete measures to ensure that children won't be exposed to dangerous toys. The women's organisation demands from the European commission a ban on all hazardous substances and not only those that are cancerous and to make no exception at all. Given that there is not sufficient data on the risks posed to children, and that they are an especially vulnerable group, the only acceptable solution is to ban all.

Consumer goods aimed at children contain high levels of toxic substances that could potentially damage their development and health

Small children

Small children and babies are at particular risk from toxic chemicals in products around them. Their small bodies are more susceptible to toxic chemicals because their developing systems are immature. They have narrower airways and smaller lung capacity which means the dose of pollutants they receive is more concentrated than in adults. Their skin is also five times thinner than that of an adult and can absorb ingredients from topically applied creams, wipes and baby toiletries. Some products, materials and ingredients, which are actually supposed to make everyday life easier or funnier, as in the case of toys, turn out to be a health risk and even dangerous.

Teddy Bears

"Take for example teddy bears", says Sascha Gabizon. "Children hug them all the time and put them in their mouths. Research has shown that they can accumulate potentially toxic air pollutants and teddy bears contain a broad range of chemical substances, because they are sprayed with flame retardants during manufacturing. Breathing these substances can lead to serious damage over a longer period of time in children's health".

Parents need to know they may be inadvertently putting their children at risk. To provide them with answers WECF recently launched a new website www.projectnesting.org which helps parents-to-be create a healthy surrounding for their child and provides comprehensive information for creating a safe living space for baby.

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