



European Commission

Questions and Answers - RAPEX in 2012

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Table of Contents

1. What is RAPEX?.....	2
What type of measures can be taken?	2
What is covered by RAPEX?	2
What are obligations of national authorities?	2
What are the obligations of producers?	2
2. RAPEX in 2012	3
What were the most significant developments in 2012?	3
3. RAPEX results 2012	3
What were the main findings in 2012?.....	3
Why did the number of notifications for dangerous goods increase in 2012?	3
Which EU countries notified most cases?.....	4
What are the main risks detected through the RAPEX system?	4
What does it show when a country makes a lot of notifications – is it that there are more dangerous products on that particular market?	5
What measures did the national authorities take in response to the dangerous goods that they found?.....	5
Where did the largest amount of dangerous products come in from 2012?.....	5
Is there an increase in the number of notifications on products of Chinese origin?	5
Product Traceability - What does the Commission do for better product identification and consequently for better follow-up of RAPEX notifications?	6
4. Safety at point of entry – cooperation with customs.....	6
What in particular is being done at point of entry?	6
Can you explain how RAPEX is linked to work at customs?	6
Which customs authorities are most active?	7
5. Cooperation with China	7
Does the Commission get feedback on how the Chinese authorities follow up on the information sent through the "RAPEX-CHINA" application?	7
How many RAPEX notifications has AQSIIQ investigated since the establishment of the "RAPEX-CHINA" application?	7

Contacts :

[Aikaterini Apostola](#) (+32 2 298 76 24)

[Frédéric Vincent](#) (+32 2 298 71 66)

1. What is RAPEX?

RAPEX is a European rapid alert system for dangerous products. It ensures that information about dangerous products withdrawn from the market and/or recalled from consumers anywhere in Europe is quickly circulated between Member States and the European Commission, so that appropriate action can be taken everywhere in the EU. **Thirty countries** currently participate in the system. The participating countries are all the European Union countries and the EFTA/EEA countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

What type of measures can be taken?

The most common measures are: ban/stop on sales; withdrawal of a dangerous product from the market or its recall from consumers; import rejection by the customs authorities.

What is covered by RAPEX?

The scope of RAPEX covers dangerous **non-food products** intended for consumers (e.g. a toy, a cosmetic, clothing) and for professionals (e.g. a power drill, a machine, a construction product) which pose a serious risk to various public interests, such as 'health and safety of consumers', 'environment' (risk for trees, water, air, soil, etc from dangerous chemicals contained in a product), 'health and safety at the workplace' and 'public security'.

The RAPEX system covers the **majority of non-food products**. Other categories of products, such as food and feed, pharmaceuticals and medical devices are excluded from its scope as they are covered by other specific alert systems, similar to RAPEX.

What are obligations of national authorities?

National authorities ensure that businesses respect their obligation to place only safe products on the market. They must designate authorities which can take measures to prevent or restrict the marketing or use of dangerous products. Each country designates a national [RAPEX Contact Point](#) which coordinates the system at national level and submits information to the Commission about dangerous products found on its own market. The information received and validated by the Commission is rapidly circulated to the national Contact Points for appropriate action. The results of these activities are reported back through the system.

What are the obligations of producers?

Producers (i.e. manufacturers and importers) are responsible for placing only safe products on the market. Once aware that a product is dangerous, a producer must immediately take measures to prevent further risks to consumers. National competent authorities must also be informed about the safety problem, clearly identifying the product in question, the risks it poses and the information necessary to trace it. This information is then conveyed via the RAPEX system to the Commission and other countries participating in the RAPEX system if the product poses a serious risk.

2. RAPEX in 2012

What were the most significant developments in 2012?

Despite the difficult economic context, budget cuts and subsequent constraints in the national administrations, RAPEX successfully fulfilled its mission and contributed to the protection of European consumers, with **2278 notifications sent** on dangerous by the Member States. Unlike in 2011, when there was a 20 % decrease as compared with the previous year, the number of RAPEX notifications continued the previous upward trend with an increase of 26 %, returning to around the 2010 level.

The **main achievements** were:

- More notifications on dangerous products
- earlier detection
- better market surveillance and product safety enforcement by national authorities, including through specific projects;
- better risk assessment by authorities;
- more focus on quality and usefulness of notifications;
- growing co-operation with customs authorities;
- continued network-building and training coordinated by the European Commission.

In 2012, with financial support from the Commission, market surveillance authorities across the EU have continued their joint efforts to improve cooperation on enforcing product safety rules and taking effective action against dangerous and non-compliant products. Under the umbrella of the Product Safety Enforcement Forum of Europe (Prosafe), the new project in 2012 focused on child-care articles, fireworks, lawn mowers and battery chargers.

Customs authorities are increasingly involved in product safety surveillance and the number of measures initiated by the border controls and notified in RAPEX has risen steadily over the past few years.

3. RAPEX results 2012

What were the main findings in 2012?

In 2012, a total of 2.278 notifications on dangerous products posing risks to the health and safety of consumers were submitted through the RAPEX system by Member States. This constitutes 26% more notifications than in 2011 (1.803 notifications). Of the 2.278 notifications, 1.938 notifications concerned products which posed a serious risk to consumers. Other notifications refer to moderate risk or information only.

Why did the number of notifications for dangerous goods increase in 2012?

Unlike in 2011, the number of RAPEX notifications continued the previous upward trend with an increase of 26 %, returning to around the 2010 level. (2011 was the only time since the start of the current Rapex System , in 2004, that a decrease was registered).

This increase testifies to the tireless determination of the Member State authorities and the Commission to remain vigilant and pro-active in the protection of consumer safety.

The increase in the number of notifications increases the safety of consumers since more dangerous products have been removed from the EU market.

The **RAPEX system has now reached a level of stability and maturity** and that the more active use of the risk assessment guidelines has led to the streamlining of notifications, with improvements in their quality.

Member States are also using the system more efficiently since it is now clearer where and how it is most relevant to act. Particular attention is given to providing more detailed information in the system such as details regarding economic operators, which allows the authorities to better trace the products.

Which EU countries notified most cases?

The following five Member States accounted for 56% of all RAPEX notifications on products posing a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers last year:

- Hungary (294 notifications, 15 %)
- Bulgaria (271 notifications, 14 %)
- Spain (199 notifications, 10 %)
- Germany (167 notifications, 9 %)
- United Kingdom (146 notifications, 8 %).

In 2012, half of the participating countries notified more dangerous products than in 2011.

The most frequently notified products in 2012 were:

- Clothing, textiles and fashion items (668 notifications, 34 %)
- Toys (366 notifications, 19 %)
- Electrical appliances and equipment (205 notifications, 11 %)
- Motor vehicles (149 notifications, 8 %)
- Cosmetics (86 notifications, 4 %).

These categories accounted for 76 % of all products notified. The two most notified product categories ('Clothing, textiles and fashion items' and 'Toys') together account for more than half (53 %) of all notifications distributed through the RAPEX system.

What are the main risks detected through the RAPEX system?

The risk categories most often notified, which accounted for 81% of all alerts on products posing a serious risk, were:

The five most frequently notified risk categories were:

1. Injuries (587 notifications, 25 %)
2. Chemical (419 notifications, 18 %)
3. Strangulation (401 notifications, 17 %)
4. Electric shock (308 notifications, 13 %)
5. Choking (194 notifications, 8 %).

What does it show when a country makes a lot of notifications – is it that there are more dangerous products on that particular market?

The number of notifications made by a particular Member State cannot be directly linked to the level of safety of the products on its market. There may be many reasons why some Member States may have more notifications than others: large market, large import volumes, experienced inspectors, etc. In general, it follows that the European countries which have the biggest markets and the greatest number of imported goods, and which also have the highest number of inspectors, find more dangerous goods and thus notify through RAPEX more often than smaller countries.

What measures did the national authorities take in response to the dangerous goods that they found?

The most frequently taken measures with regard to dangerous consumer products in 2012 were: withdrawal from the market, sales ban, recall from consumers, import rejected by the customs authorities, and corrective actions.

Where did the largest amount of dangerous products come in from 2012?

According to the RAPEX Report, the majority of dangerous products posing serious risks to the health and safety of consumers notified through RAPEX came from outside the EU – China and Turkey amongst others.

China (including Hong Kong) was indicated as a country of origin for 58% (1126 notifications) of notified products.

Dangerous products of European origin accounted for 330 notifications (17%), including 60 products of German origin (3%), 49 products of Italian origin (3%) and 45 products of Bulgarian origin (2%). In 2011, in case of 19% of all notifications involving serious risk was the country of origin in the EU.

In 2012, the number of cases with an unidentified country of origin has increased to 11% (205 notifications) from 8% (128 notifications) in 2011. Although this number is higher than in the previous year this figure should still be seen as a **significant improvement in the operation of the RAPEX system**, in particular compared to the 2004 figures when it was as high as 23%. Nevertheless, the aim is to decrease the number of notifications with unknown country of origin. Checking the traceability data is helpful to authorities in other countries and ultimately in finding the country of origin and final source of the product.

Is there an increase in the number of notifications on products of Chinese origin?

Yes, there was a slight increase in the number of consumer products (posing a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers) of Chinese origin notified via RAPEX **in 2012 - to 58% from 54% in 2011**. In total 1126 notifications concerned products manufactured in China (including Hong Kong).

Although higher than in 2011 (54 %), this still remains in the range of the average observed over the last few years. The high number is due to the significant market penetration of Chinese-manufactured consumer products in European markets. Products are checked according to the same, stringent safety requirements regardless of their origin, usually on the basis of typical risks associated with the product category. The steady intensification of contacts with the Chinese administration and businesses is bearing fruit in terms of improved product identification and traceability, allowing more effective corrective measures. This cooperation will continue.

Product Traceability - What does the Commission do for better product identification and consequently for better follow-up of RAPEX notifications?

In 2011 an expert group on product traceability was established. The aim of the group is to address the following questions:

- what is the state of the art in product traceability?
- what is the state of play for some key non-food consumer products?
- what potential areas are there for improvement in this area?

The group will develop recommendations which will allow stakeholders, particularly businesses and market surveillance authorities, to improve product traceability. The final report of the group is expected for September 2013. The recommendations it gives will be non-binding but will help to establish guidelines for best practice. The work of the group is available on the EUROPA website.

4. Safety at point of entry – cooperation with customs

What in particular is being done at point of entry?

In the last years more attention has been paid upstream including with **customs authorities** and this work represents important progress. Market surveillance authorities **continue to develop this co-operation with customs authorities** who play an important role in the area of product safety. Their responsibility for import controls put them in a prime position to assess whether products to be placed on the market are safe.

Can you explain how RAPEX is linked to work at customs?

There is a requirement at EU level that customs authorities co-operate with market surveillance authorities. In some countries there is very direct involvement in product safety checks. In 2012, there were notifications in RAPEX from 12 countries where measures had been adopted directly or initiated by customs authorities (Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Finland, Portugal, Slovakia, United Kingdom). In 2011, only seven countries customs authorities took such measures. This stops the dangerous products already at the border, making the enforcement system more efficient.

Over the past few years the links have been developed between RAPEX and RIF¹ (customs alert) systems.

¹ RIF = [Risk Information System in the customs area](#)

Which customs authorities are most active?

Customs authorities are increasingly active and notifying through RAPEX more often.

In 2012, 144 notifications were initiated by customs authorities on serious risk (11% of the total compulsory measures taken).

Spain and Finland are the countries with the highest number of RAPEX notifications initiated by customs authorities (55 and 29 notifications). The top categories for these notifications were: toys, cosmetics; electrical appliances and equipment; and clothing, textiles and fashion items.

5. Cooperation with China

The EU and China are the **biggest trade partners in the World**; China is the EU's first supplier and its second customer after the USA. The EU is China's first customer and second supplier after Japan.

The Commission has been working ever more closely with the Chinese authorities and this co-operation is yielding good results. This co-operation is developed around the following:

- trilateral co-operation EU-US-China.
- joint action
- RAPEX-China

Does the Commission get feedback on how the Chinese authorities follow up on the information sent through the "RAPEX-CHINA" application?

Cooperation in the framework of the RAPEX-China system is well-established, as ACSIQ submits quarterly reports to the Commission with the conclusions of the follow up actions undertaken with regard to the data provided through the "RAPEX-CHINA" system.

The information provided in the reports allows the Commission and Member States to monitor and analyse the follow-up market surveillance activities carried out by the Chinese authorities on their territory, and as a consequence allows them to identify and address weak points in the cooperation system. So far, 24 quarterly reports have been provided to the Commission.

How many RAPEX notifications has ACSIQ investigated since the establishment of the "RAPEX-CHINA" application?

ACSIQ has ensured follow-up action with regard to 2.216 RAPEX notifications. Analysis of 23 quarterly follow-up reports (24th report is in translation) shows that over a three-month period ACSIQ investigates on average 96 RAPEX cases. In 1268 cases (57%) investigations resulted in preventive or restrictive measures being adopted either by ACSIQ or voluntarily by the Chinese manufacturer/exporter (for ex. export stop or strengthened supervision), while in 948 cases (43%) no measures were taken mainly due to the fact that the Chinese company responsible for manufacturing and/or exporting products to the EU could not be found.

For more information:

- Product Safety: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/news/index_en.htm
- Weekly RAPEX reports or specific data: www.ec.europa.eu/rapex
- RAPEX national contact points: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/rapex/contact_points.pdf
- Product Safety and Market Surveillance Package: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-13-93_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-93_en.htm)
- OECD GlobalRecalls Portal: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-12-791_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-791_en.htm)
- Product Traceability: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/projects/ongoing-projects_en.htm