

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4670/07  
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to the Commission

Subject: Imports from China harmful to health

The customs authorities of many Community and non-Community countries have been confiscating goods manufactured in China. A leading company in the sector recently decided to withdraw large quantities of children's toys produced in China from the market in 11 Member States. Defective goods or products containing high levels of toxic substances continue to evade controls when they enter the Union and are thus currently on sale in Europe and constitute a serious threat to public health. Proper consumer information and safety is priority for a European Union in which the citizens, especially the most vulnerable sections of the population, should be able to ascertain and feel confident that they are being protected.

Since the beginning of this year the Member States have notified, via the RAPEX system, more than 1 000 cases of action taken in response to the entry onto the market of defective goods or products constituting a danger to public health, more than half as many again as were notified in the whole of 2006. All this is evidence of an emergency situation that neither the Member States nor producers are able to prevent and shows that the current legal framework does not guarantee a high level of public health protection.

Furthermore, the RAPEX system is not an adequate solution, since it operates after a product is placed on the market, rather than before. In view of this, can the Commission say what measures it will take to ensure appropriate and targeted checks on imports throughout the production chain, both before and after they are placed on the European market, in order to ascertain that they actually comply with Community standards? Can it also say how it intends to ensure that there is an efficient system for the control of goods along the whole external border of the Union and that the officials responsible are properly trained and that their training is constantly updated? Can it ensure that inspections of production sites outside the Community are carried out systematically, without there having to be a suspicion that they do not conform to Union law, in order to ensure that consumers can feel confident that they will find the same high levels of safety and quality in imported goods as in European products, especially as regards products intended for children?