Question for written answer E-001186/2011
to the Commission
Rule 117
Anja Weisgerber (PPE)

Subject: The Toys Directive: limit values for heavy metals and the introduction of a quality label

The new Toys Directive has been the object of repeated criticism ever since it was adopted in December 2008. Experts believe that the limit values for heavy metals in particular are not strict enough. Back in December 2009, the Parliament had called upon the Commission to reassess the limit values. In December 2010 during a discussion with the Parliament, Commissioner Tajani announced amendments to the limit values of two heavy metals: lead and cadmium. The limit values for these two heavy metals are to become much stricter.

According to expert opinion, however, limit values for other heavy metals are not strict enough either if account is taken of the precautionary principle. These include antimony, arsenic, barium and mercury. A comparison of the old Toys Directive with the new one also shows that the new limit values are not as strict.

1.   Does the Commission plan to amend the limit values for the other heavy metals listed above (antimony, arsenic, barium, mercury)? If so, when can specific results be expected? If not, why does the Commission refuse to introduce stricter limit values?

     The CE mark is still not fully understood by many consumers – it is often mistaken for a quality label and the product is assumed to have been tested by the relevant authorities. In actual fact, products are generally tested by manufacturers themselves. Consumers want a reliable quality label. During the discussion with Parliament in December 2010, Commissioner Tajani announced the intention to further develop the CE mark with the aim of introducing a quality label.

2.   Do plans already exist to develop the CE mark into a quality label? If so, what form will this development take? If not, does the Commission plan to introduce a labelling system in addition to the CE mark that also guarantees the quality of a product?