

WRITTEN QUESTION P-4229/07  
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to the Commission

Subject: Chinese clothing containing formaldehyde

Concern among the citizens of Europe about product safety, in particular products made in China, has reached record levels this summer. As reported in the Repex 2006 report, the number of products identified as dangerous has increased by 32% this year and China is the country of origin in almost half (48%) of all the cases notified.

Following the alarm raised by the US authorities about Chinese fish products, the case of toxic toothpaste under a counterfeit Colgate label found in Italy and the case of shoes containing chromium, further alarm was caused in August this year by toys found to be toxic because of lead paint (Mattel announced it was withdrawing 1.5 million toys of very well-known brands from the world market), and reports have now come in from New Zealand about clothing containing formaldehyde. According to reports in the international press, it emerged from a television investigation, during which samples of textiles from China were tested, that the quantity of formaldehyde (a powerful toxic bactericide used in the manufacture of clothing) in the material analysed was as much as 500 times higher than the limit laid down by the WHO (World Health Organisation). Quite apart from the economic damage that European businesses are suffering for the umpteenth time - because they have to reject dangerous goods imported from China - it is becoming increasingly clear that the frightening increase in the cases of counterfeit goods and the failure to respect the standards set by the European Union are now becoming a serious public health and consumer protection issue, especially as regards children.

In view of all this and the fact that the Chinese authorities evidently find it difficult to ensure reliable checks on goods exported to Europe, does not the Commission consider that the time has come to take drastic measures to protect European consumers, such as preventing the importation of dangerous products?