

## Large consumer survey reveals: 2 out of 3 products ordered on online marketplaces are unsafe.

Brussels, 24 February 2020 - In the last decade, online marketplaces have increasingly become the shopping venue of choice for European consumers. The reasons are simple. Online shopping delivers competitive prices, a large selection of products and convenient methods of delivery. Yet despite these advantages, even the most renowned platforms are often guilty of selling unsafe products to consumers.

### Out of 250 products ordered online, 2 out of 3 are not safe

Research and testing conducted in 2019 by Euroconsumers, together with four other organisations across Europe<sup>1</sup>, on 250 products from 18 categories ordered online showed that 2 out of 3 of them did not respect European safety standards and are therefore illegal. Well-known platforms such as *AliExpress*, *Wish*, *eBay*, *LightinTheBox* and *Amazon* all offered faulty products such as children's toys with toxic chemicals, inoperative smoke alarms, phone chargers prone to melting and non-compliant clothing apparel.

<b>Out of 12 USB chargers, 12 powerbanks and 12 adaptors (36), 26 products were found to be inflammable</b>	<b>In 9 out of 29 children's toys, illegal quantities of phthalates were found</b> (up to 200 times the legal limit)	<b>All ordered smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors (11) failed the test.</b>	<b>14 out of the 16 ordered children's clothing apparel did not respect European standards.</b>	<b>7 out 10 teeth-whitening products had a quantity of hydrogen peroxide exceeding the European limit</b> (14 to 70 times the limit)
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*"Our research not only reveals the presence of too many unsafe products on online marketplaces, it also clearly demonstrates that the current regulatory framework cannot adequately protect the fundamental rights of consumers in the digital age. Euroconsumers recognises that no single entity can correct the structural imbalances of the digital ecosystem. Therefore, we call on all willing stakeholders to work with us to promote healthier digital markets for the sake of consumers."* **Marco Pierani, Director of Public Affairs at Euroconsumers**

<sup>1</sup> Consumentenbond (Netherlands), Which (UK), Stiftung Warentest (Germany) and Forbrugerrådet Tænk (Denmark)

## **We need more liability, more agility and more enforcement**

Although they are the primary interface for consumers, platforms are merely intermediaries under current European law. As such, they are not legally required to prevent harmful products from going up on their websites. This leaves consumers in a vulnerable position.

Legislation must be amended to make sure that platforms are liable for the products that are offered for sale on their catalogues. This way, e-Commerce platforms would be encouraged to prevent harmful products from appearing on their websites.

Online marketplaces also need to ensure unsafe products are removed within 24 hours once they are identified. Due to ambiguous legislation, this often does not happen. Platforms should also be required to inform consumers of safety issues, ensure effective recalls and prevent unsafe products from being re-listed.

Finally, strong oversight and enforcement are crucial to effectively police websites based in and outside the EU. Public bodies should be given the appropriate resources, skills and intelligence to monitor online marketplaces when consumers are put at risk. Additionally, it is crucial that platforms and public bodies collaborate in a constructive way.

## **Euroconsumers as partner for regulators, authorities and marketplaces**

Not only do the vast amount of unsafe products sold on online marketplaces create tangible problems for consumers. The presence of unsafe products on online marketplaces also erodes consumers' trust; a crucial element without which platforms can scarcely survive. Clearly, a strong answer is paramount, and this is precisely what Euroconsumers wants to deliver.

Euroconsumers is fully committed to work with all relevant stakeholders to protect the interests of consumers online. We will encourage European lawmakers to strive for strong and future-proof legislation. We will ensure that public authorities are given the adequate tools to effectively safeguard consumer rights. Finally, we will collaborate with all willing marketplayers to guarantee product safety and restore trust for consumers on online marketplaces.

*“For consumers the risk of buying unsafe products on online marketplaces is very real. So is the need to join forces to safeguard product safety and trust for consumers. Every regulator, authority or online marketplace that wants to contribute to the protection of consumers online will find in us a strong partner.”* **Ivo Mechels, CEO at Euroconsumers.**

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Gathering five national consumer organisations and giving voice to a total of more than 1.5 million people, Euroconsumers is the world's leading consumer cluster in terms of innovative information, personalised services and defence of consumer's rights. Our organisations work closely with BEUC and Consumers International to ensure safe, fair and honest relations between consumers, businesses and public authorities.

