

HIGHLIGHTS

Market Study Launch Event - Consumer Goods in the EU: Persisting Safety Issues

On Wednesday 15 March, TIC Council hosted a hybrid panel to announce the publication of the 2022 Market Study, titled: “**Consumer Goods in the EU: Persisting Safety Issues**”

Speakers:

- **Hanane Taidi**, Director General, TIC Council
- **Marcello Manca**, Management & Strategy Consulting
- **Kristýna Deiberová**, Team Leader for the General Product Safety Regulation, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission
- **Els Bedert**, Director, Product Policy & Sustainability, EuroCommerce
- **Alfredo García**, Director General, CQR/ KIWA Colombia and President of the Board of Directors, ASOCEC
- **Karin Athanas**, Executive Director TIC Council Americas

Moderator:

- **Martin Michelot**, Executive Director Europe Region, TIC Council

Martin Michelot kickstarted the event by setting the framework from the discussion of the study and the various measures that need to be put in place to increase the degree of safety that consumers can expect from the EU Single Market.

Then he gave the floor to **Hanane Taidi**, Director General, TIC Council, who presented the organisation and highlighted the importance of improving the safety of the products that consumers regularly buy from the market.

Marcello Manca, Management & Strategy Consulting, explained the reasons behind the three TIC market studies, whose objective was to assess the enforcement of EU product legislation and the degree of safety that consumers can expect from the EU Single Market and to deliver insights into the impact that different approaches to conformity assessment can have on compliance outcomes, and, thus, consumer product safety. The past studies indicated that products that were neither inspected nor tested by TIC bodies were grossly non-compliant. Over 70% of the products tested showed non-conformities, and 17% showed dangerous non-conformity, i.e., faults likely to cause bodily damage to consumers, fires, or property loss. For the 2022 study, 120 samples were randomly selected from national retailers in 7 EU countries.

Kristýna Deiberová, Team Leader for the General Product Safety Regulation, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission gave an overview of the market

surveillance regulation in place in the EU. She explained the functioning of the Safety Gate, the rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products established after the General Product Safety Directive. She then went on to describe the upcoming Regulation on General Product Safety, which will modernise the current framework for the safety of non-food consumer products and ensure level-playing field businesses. The GPSR will address the safety of products linked to new technologies, the challenges posed to product safety by the growth of online sale, it will ensure better enforcement of the product safety rules, provide a more efficient and even market surveillance, and make product recalls more effective.

Els Bedert, Director, Product Policy & Sustainability, EuroCommerce brought the point of view of the retail sector. This sector is particularly affected by all the issues related to product safety and compliance, and she explained that their main interest is to reduce the percentage of dangerous products circulating in the single market, to protect consumers. She shared the same concerns as Kristýna Deiberová on the dangerous products increasingly coming from online marketplaces and online retail, and agreed with Marcello Manca on the fact that an holistic and comprehensive system needs to be implemented with a reinforcement of market surveillance activities.

Alfredo García, Director General, CQR/ KIWA Colombia and President of the Board of Directors, ASOCEC presented an overview of the product safety regulation situation in Colombia, since the changes of 2008. Among other things, he highlighted the importance of involving new actors in the quality infrastructure system, like the Quality Intersectoral Committee, where regulations and safety requirements are carried out by different parties; second, the homologation of regulatory practices with the Regulatory Impact Assessment; thirdly, the participation of all evaluation bodies in the processes of surveillance, regulations and relationships with the producers. Besides these improvements, he stated that the main challenges today for the system in Colombia remain smuggling and the maintenance of the common database.

Karin Athanas, Executive Director TIC Council Americas, explained that, in the US there is no single regulatory programme for the oversight and approval of conformity assessment bodies, as well as no single mark like in the EU. The framework includes mandatory and voluntary government programmes, and private sector voluntary programmes, driven mainly by market demands. Consumers can pursue a legal action if a product doesn't meet claims made by manufacturers and retailers. Thus, insurance providers may require that certain industries obtain certifications or have their products tested, or companies may seek third-party certification to reduce their liability if consumers are harmed by products. She then followed to give some examples of cases when mandatory rules for the safety of products have been established by US governmental agencies, and cases where voluntary programmes used third party conformity assessment. The new risks for consumers in the US are now cybersecurity, which is considered as a privacy issue, not as a safety issue, artificial intelligence and

anti-counterfeiting. She concluded by announcing the 2023 Market Study, which will be conducted on US products.