



Heavy metals in toys Harmonising safety standards

Protecting children from harmful substances in toys

The EU has put into place legislation which aims at protecting children from harmful substances in toys, as well as harmonising standards to enable the free movement of toy products.



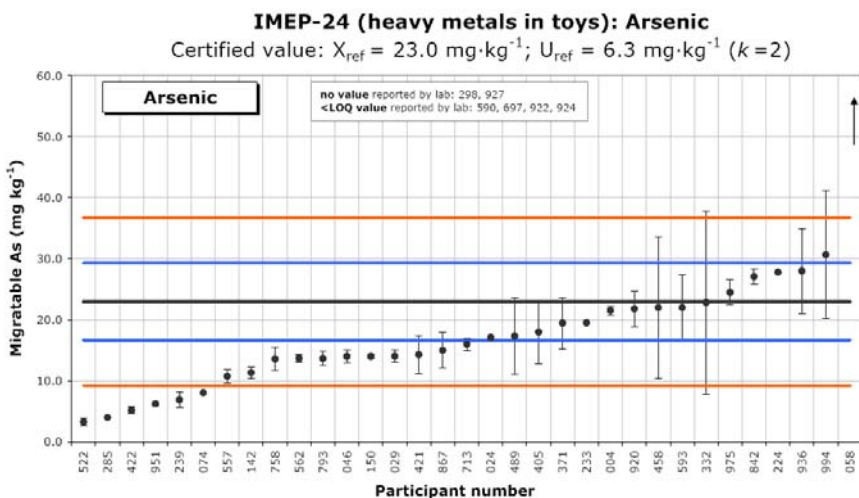
Background information

The Toy Safety Directive (88/378/EEC) was adopted in the context of the internal market and to guarantee an harmonised level of toy safety across the whole Community. Technological developments in the toys market have raised new safety issues. On 30 June 2009, the new Toy Safety Directive (2009/48/EC) was published. It further increases consumer protection by widening the range of restricted or banned substances in toys. The new directive came into force on the 20 July 2009, and will become a legal document in all Member States once it has been implemented into national legislation (by 20 January 2011).

Can laboratories measure accurately?

JRC-IRMM organised a proficiency test in the frame of the International Measurement Evaluation Programme (IMEP). The test aimed at benchmarking laboratories measuring eight heavy metals whose safety limits are set out by the Toy Safety Directive and specified in the harmonised European Standard EN71-3:1994.

The exercise raised questions about how the participants would interpret their results to approve or reject a toy product for entering the market. In around a third of cases, participants were interpreting their own measurement data incorrectly either by erroneously accepting a value or by rejecting it unnecessarily. An example of the laboratories' test results is shown below, for arsenic. The Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry is now liaising with standardisation bodies to improve the measurement methods in collaboration with JRC-IRMM. For more info: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/toys/index_en.htm.



International Measurement Evaluation Programme (IMEP) for heavy metals in toys.

Each dot on the graph is a measurement value determined by an individual laboratory. The graph shows the spread of values around the reference value, in this case for arsenic.