



European
Commission



RAPID ALERT SYSTEM FOR DANGEROUS PRODUCTS

Working together to keep consumers safe
2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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Commissioner's foreword



Věra Jourová
Commissioner for Justice,
Consumers and Gender Equality

I am proud to present the results of the Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products for 2016. The results confirm that there is healthy cooperation at European level to ensure that if any dangerous products are found on our markets they are quickly removed to keep consumers safe.

The Rapid Alert System, established in 2004, is operated by an experienced network of 31 national authorities assisted by the European Commission. Every week, around 50 alerts are registered and **published on the web**. Our efforts are now focusing on further modernisation of the system based on feedback received from system users: consumers, businesses and authorities. Important changes are already being made to our webpages, such as allowing users to customise the information according to their needs. Further changes will be made to the system in 2017, in particular by focusing more on spreading information through social media. Last year's case of 'exploding' phones yet again demonstrated the importance of the rapid exchange of information on product safety.

This year we marked 10 years of official cooperation with the Chinese authorities in the area of product safety. China is one of Europe's key trading partners and an important supplier of consumer goods. This steady cooperation with the Chinese authorities in charge of import and export inspection of consumer products (AQSIQ ⁽¹⁾) has facilitated the monitoring, supervision and withdrawal of unsafe products produced in China that were destined for the EU market and it has helped trace economic operators involved in the trade of unsafe products.

In 2016, we also focussed on the challenges of e-commerce and its implications for consumer safety. The rapid growth of e-commerce requires a tailor-made approach to ensure that products sold online and shipped directly to consumers are safe. Based on extensive analysis and consultation, the Commission is preparing a set of guidelines to help national authorities and businesses cope with these challenges. In parallel, the European Commission has been working with online platforms regarding cooperation in detecting dangerous products. The safety of products sold online remains a key issue for the coming years.

⁽¹⁾ General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine in China.

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About this report

The Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products enables quick circulation of the information sent by national authorities on the measures taken against products posing a risk to consumers' health and safety. This allows enforcement authorities in the countries that are members of the network to swiftly follow up on the notifications and to screen their markets for the possible presence of these unsafe products. Since 2010, the Rapid Alert System also covers professional products and products posing risks other than those affecting health and safety (such as risks to the environment).

The present report covers strictly the Rapid Alert System's activity related to **consumer products posing a risk to the health and safety of consumers**. In 2016, this concerned **2044 notifications and 3824 reactions**.

The Rapid Alert System has a dedicated public website ec.europa.eu/consumers/rapid-alert-system which provides access to weekly updates of alerts submitted by the national authorities participating in the system. It is possible to search, select and download individual notifications from these webpages.

This report is based on the information available in the system on 4 January 2017 and the figures may slightly change over time as a result of subsequent withdrawal of notifications or modifications based on justified requests from the notifying countries. The published figures include 227 cases that were not published on the web because they did not fulfil required criteria (i.e., confidential cases and cases classified as being 'for information').

It should be noted that this report presents statistics on the functioning of the Rapid Alert System. It does not, by any means, represent all dangerous products on the market, nor does it give an overview of all market surveillance efforts undertaken by the market surveillance authorities participating in the network.

TERMINOLOGY:

Notification: An alert submitted by a national authority participating in the Rapid Alert System concerning a measure taken against a product placed on the market which poses a risk to consumers' health or safety.

Reaction: Feedback received from national authorities participating in the Rapid Alert System on follow-up actions they have taken concerning the products that are the subject of notifications.

Notification 'For information': An alert that does not meet the criteria for a 'notification' but which includes information of interest (for example, a product for which the risk level cannot be established, or a product that lacks sufficient traceability information). These cases are only made available to the responsible national authorities participating in the Rapid Alert System and are not published in the weekly web report.

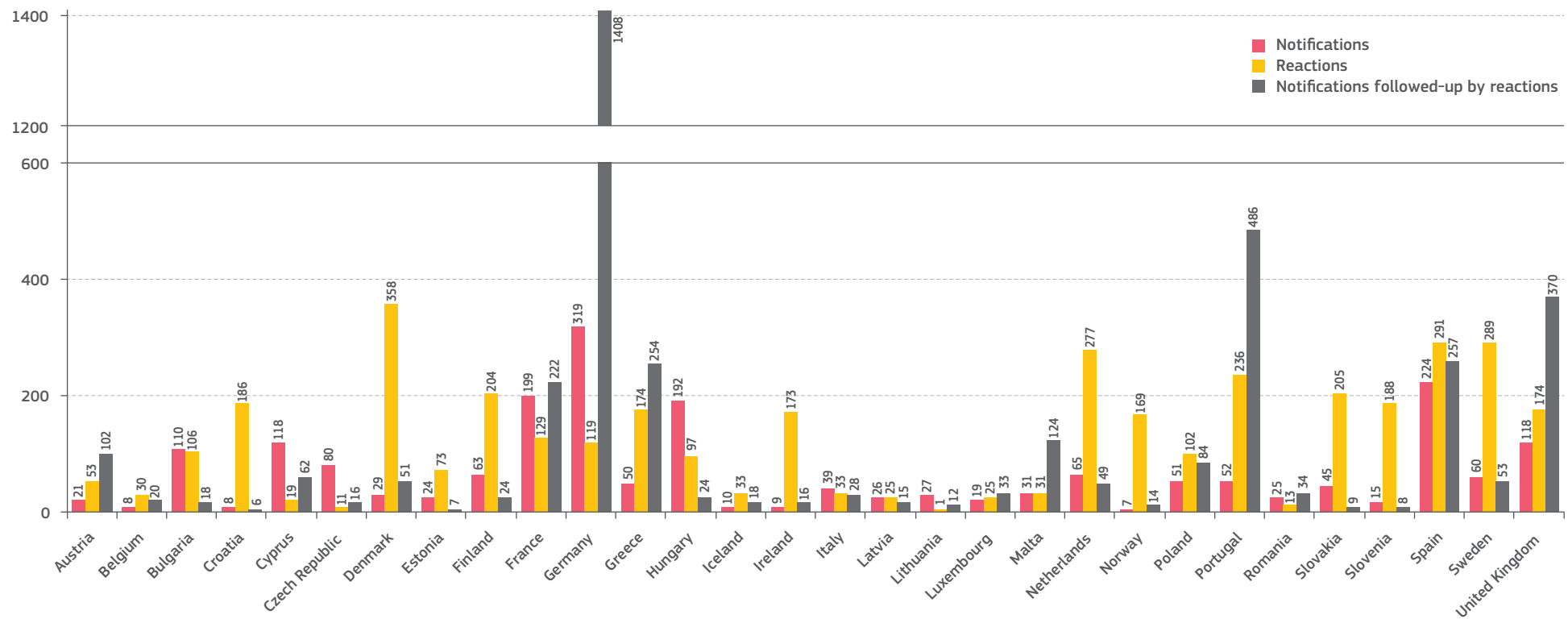
1. General statistics by Member State

The following graph shows the difference by Member State between the number of notifications and reactions submitted in the Rapid Alert System in 2016. This year Germany was the largest contributor of notifications and Denmark was the Member State that sent the most reactions.

respect, notifications submitted by Germany received the highest number of reactions in 2016. This is mainly linked to the size of the car manufacturing industry in Germany. Due to a broad sales network, when a safety issue is detected in a certain car model, there are multiple recalls in the other countries where that model is available.

The graph also shows how many notifications were followed-up by other national authorities, i.e., were the subject of a reaction. In this

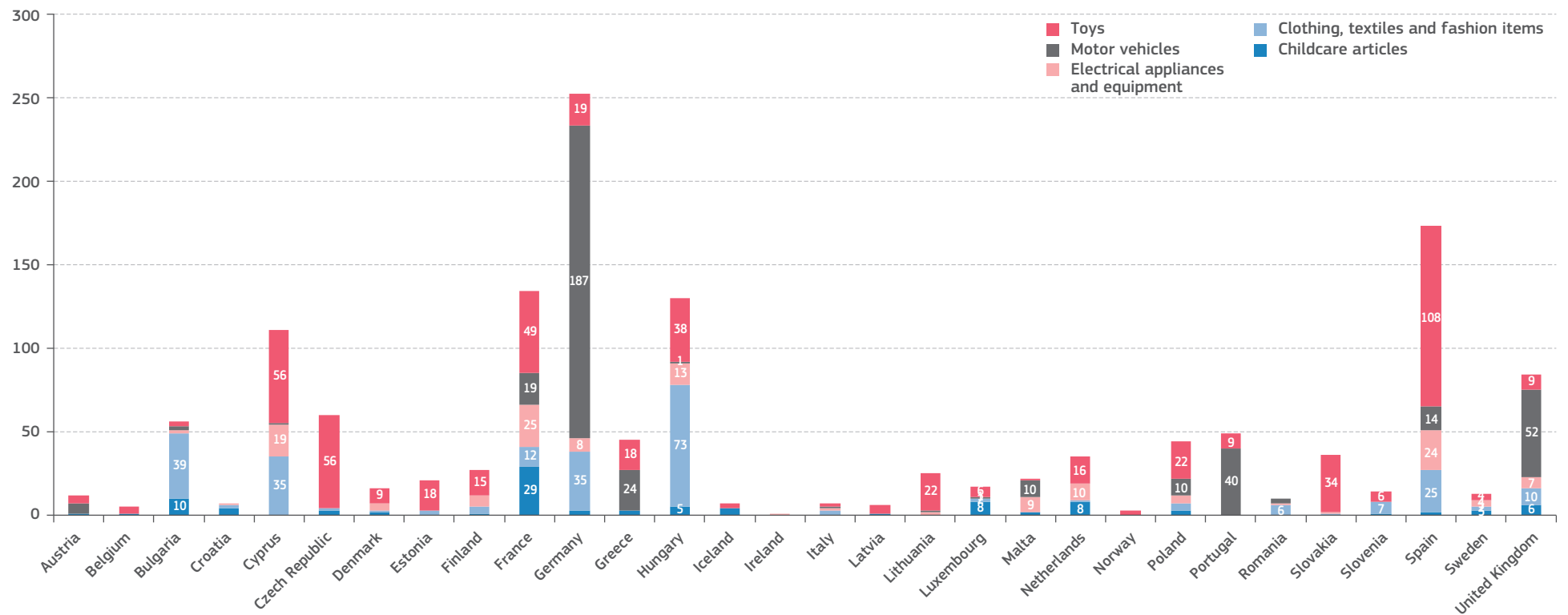
GRAPH 1 Total number of notifications, total number of reactions and total number of notifications that were followed by a reaction in 2016, by country



The following graph provides information on the distribution by Member State of the main product categories in notifications. We can see that most countries notified products belonging to categories 'toys'

and 'clothing, textiles and fashion items'. Some countries appear to concentrate more on 'motor vehicles', such as Germany, Greece, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

GRAPH 2 The 5 most often notified product categories by Member State in 2016



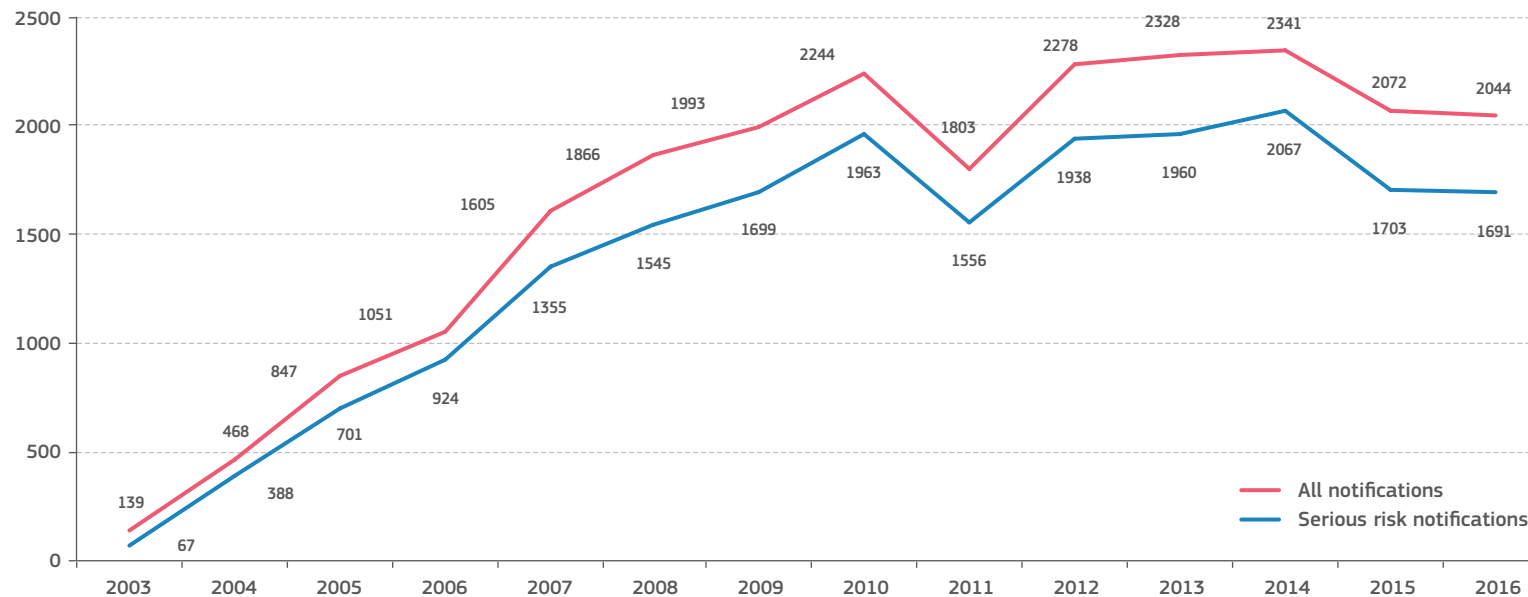
2. Notifications

2.1. Total number of notifications concerning products posing a risk to consumers' health and/or safety

A structure for information exchange between Member States on dangerous products was set up in 2003 but it received a real boost with the entry into force of [Directive 2001/95/EC on general product safety](#) (GPSD) in 2004. At that stage, an IT tool and supporting instruments were introduced to facilitate the process. In parallel, active cooperation

with national authorities, businesses and stakeholders has contributed to the improvement of the alert system's content and quality. Since 2012, the number of notifications has stabilised at a level of just over 2 000 notifications per year.

GRAPH 3 Overview of the total number of notifications and the number of notifications reporting a serious risk (2003-2016)⁽²⁾



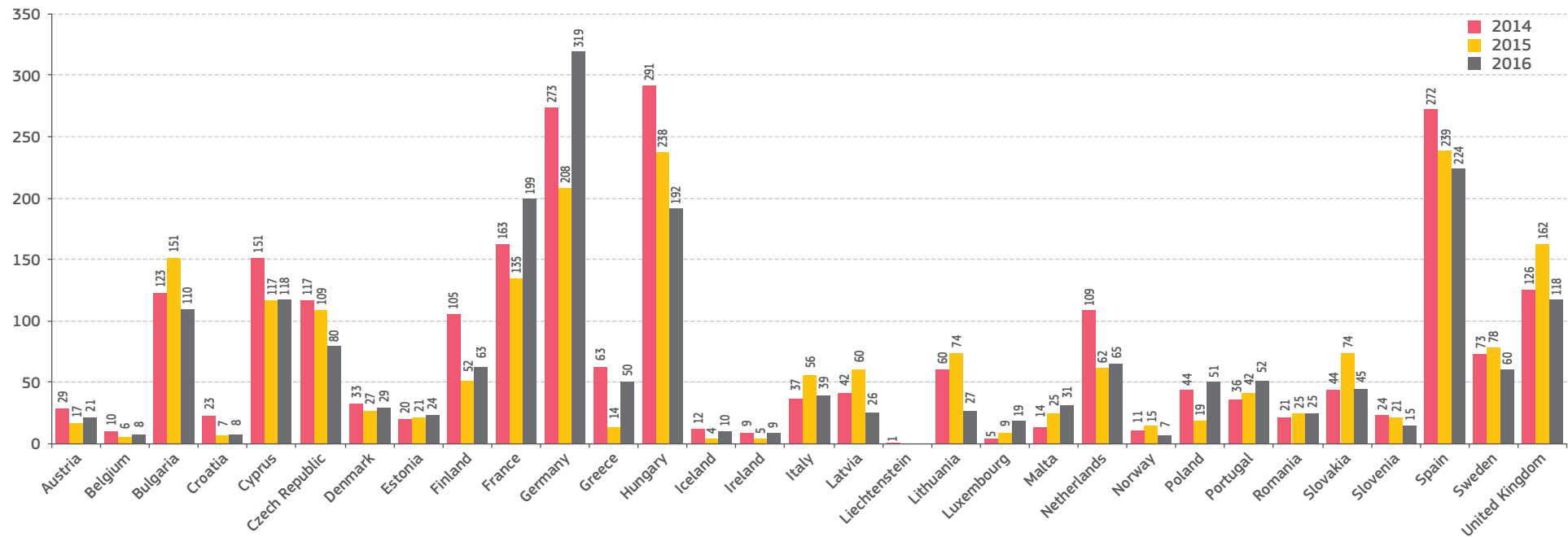
⁽²⁾ 2013 data according to statistics retrieved in January 2017

2.2. Which countries sent information to the Rapid Alert System about measures taken against dangerous products?

The network is composed of 31⁽³⁾ national authorities responsible for product safety and the European Commission, which has a coordinating role and ensures that the notifications submitted by the national

authorities comply with the requirements of the GPSD before they are validated and published on the web. Germany and Spain notified the most cases in 2016.

GRAPH 4 Total number of notifications from 2014 to 2016 by notifying country (absolute values)



⁽³⁾ National authorities of the 28 EU Member States and the EEA/EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

2.2.1. Cooperation with online platforms

Ensuring that products circulating on the internal market, including those sold online, are safe for consumers is a basic objective of EU consumer policy.

Many of the dangerous products notified in the Rapid Alert System are also sold on online platforms. In 2016, this was the case for 244 notifications. To address this phenomenon, several national authorities have already set up specialised teams to monitor webpages and trace dangerous products that are sold online. In addition, when such products are identified, EU regulatory authorities can quickly contact the relevant online platforms to take action if needed.

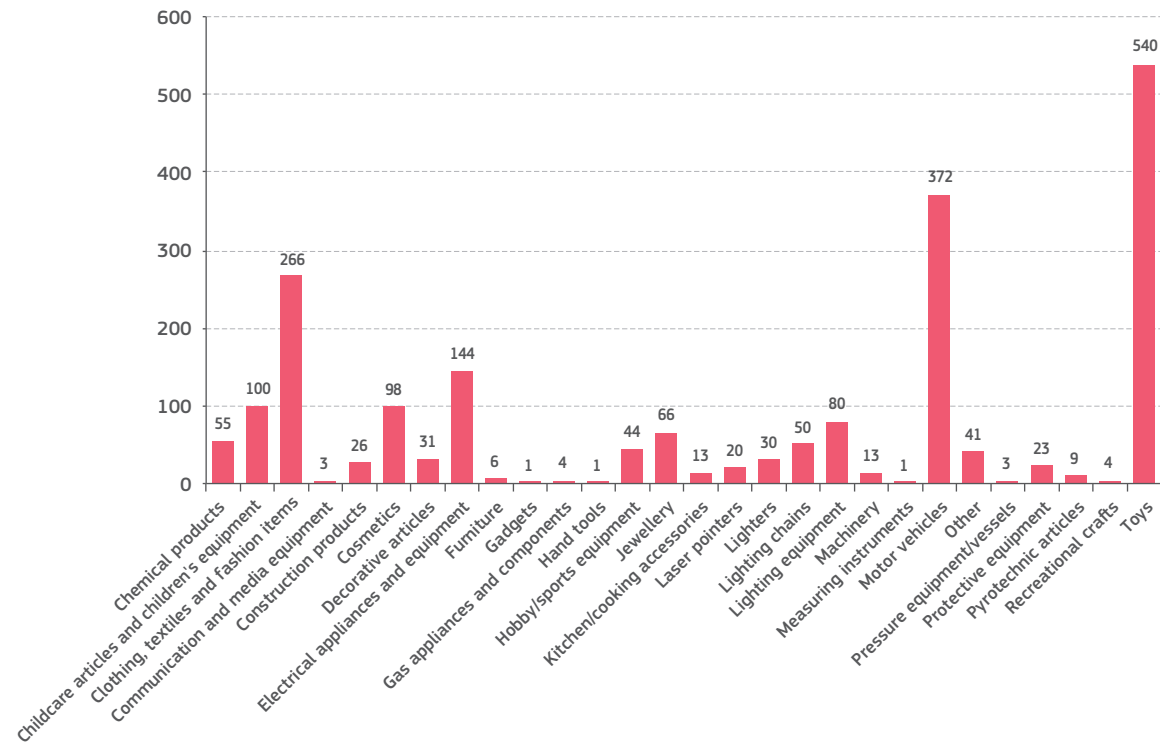
TABLE 1 Number of notifications in 2016 where notifying countries indicated whether or not the product had been sold online

No	137
Unknown	1663
Yes	244
TOTAL	2044

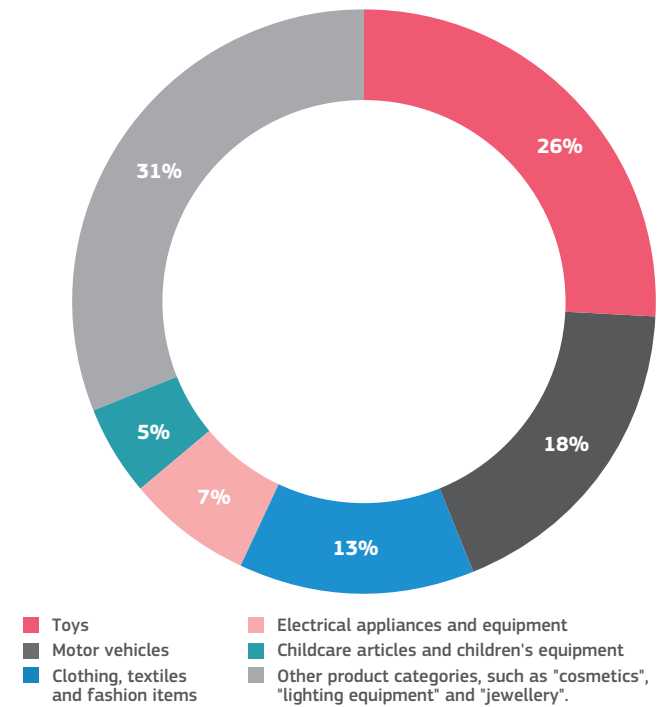
2.3. What products were the subject of notifications?

In 2016, 'Toys' was the most notified product category. The category 'Motor vehicles' has grown in importance compared to 'Clothing', which was more prominent in the past.

GRAPH 5 Number of notifications in 2016 by product category (absolute values)



GRAPH 6 The five most notified product categories compared to other product categories in 2016



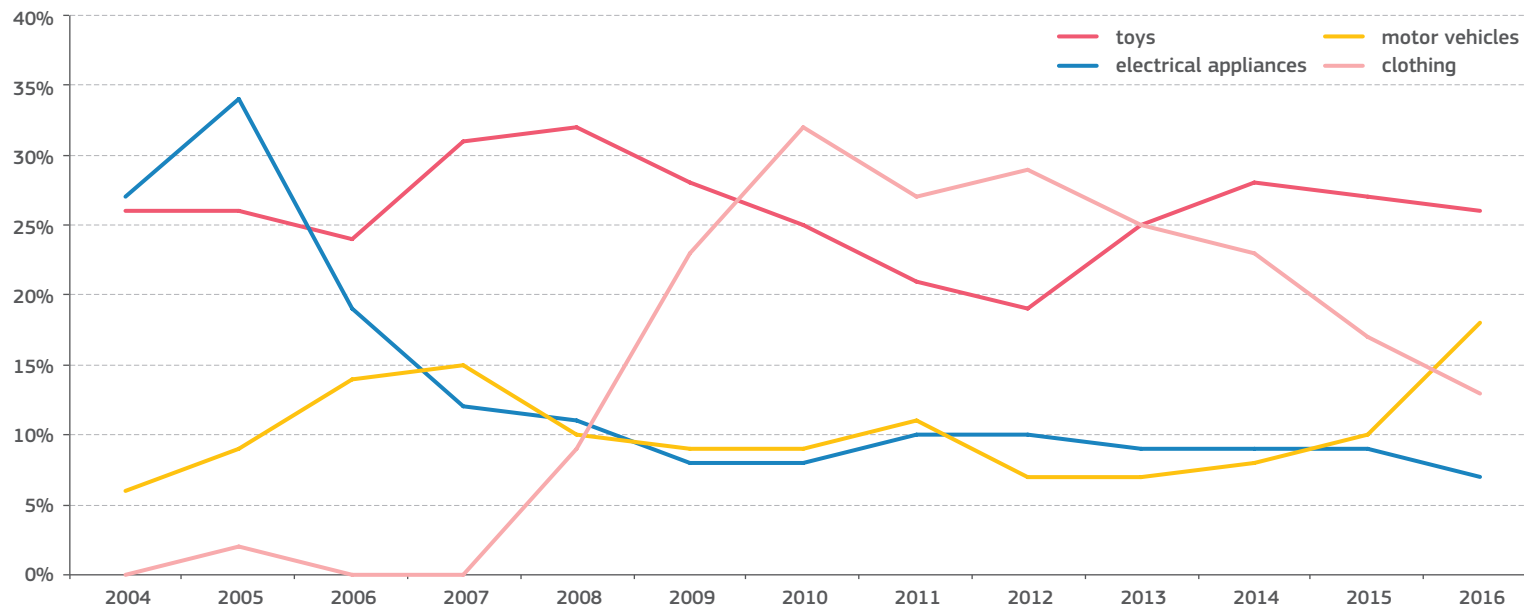
2.3.1. Keeping European children safe

The safety of products intended for children is a priority for product safety authorities since these products have particularly high safety requirements to help protect this vulnerable group of consumers. The category 'Toys' has therefore always been at the top of the list of most notified products, together with 'Childcare articles' and 'Clothing, textiles and fashion items' (most of the notifications in this last category relate to children's clothing).

The amount of notifications per product category has remained fairly stable over the years, with the exception of the category 'clothing', which showed

a significant increase between 2008 and 2010, followed by a gradual decrease since then. The increase in notifications of this product category was partly due to the coordinated efforts of market surveillance authorities who concentrated on the screening of the market for the presence of certain chemicals in some textiles and also for the unauthorised presence of cords and drawstrings that can cause injuries and strangulation. This shared effort was repeated between 2013 and 2014 as the results show a growing awareness of the safety requirements for children's clothing by manufacturers.

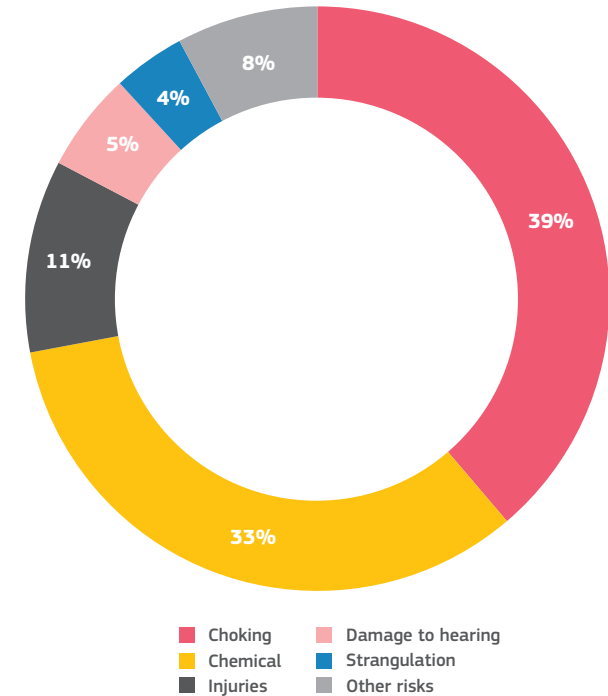
GRAPH 7 Evolution of the share of the four most representative product categories compared to total notifications between 2004 and 2016



Chemical risks are not always visible and they may have a long-term impact on consumers' health. A good example is the risk posed by phthalates, often used as a softener for plastic. Phthalates can often be found in toys, childcare articles and even in clothes. Other examples are azo-dyes that release nitrosamines which, when in direct and prolonged contact with the skin, may be absorbed and cause cancer, cell mutations or affect reproduction. Chromium (VI) is another chemical that is often detected in leather articles and that can trigger allergic reactions.

The most common risks linked to children's toys are 'Choking' and 'Chemical' risks. A toy intended for small children should not contain any small pieces or parts that can easily detach. Batteries that are easily accessible, or small enough to be put in the mouth or swallowed, should be avoided. **Button batteries are particularly dangerous because, apart from posing the risk of choking, they can also cause damage to the gastrointestinal tract of the child if swallowed.** Particular care should be given to user instructions, product contents and warning signs, such as the 'not suitable for children under 3' pictogram.

GRAPH 8 Risks most often linked with 'Toys' in 2016



2.4. Coordinated market surveillance in Europe: an extra boost to achieve a safer market

Each year the European Commission co-finances a number of coordinated market surveillance activities (joint actions) assembling the network's Member State authorities. A budget of EUR 2.5 million is available every year to co-finance enforcement activities related to non-food consumer products on our market. The activities include a number of product-oriented, coordinated, market surveillance actions. On the

basis of a list of products agreed by national authorities, specialised laboratories are selected to test the products and assess if they are dangerous. These actions often lead to submission of notifications to the Rapid Alert System. Several notifications concerning dangerous products for children, such as cots, scooters, safety gates and acoustic toys, were notified in 2016 following a joint action.

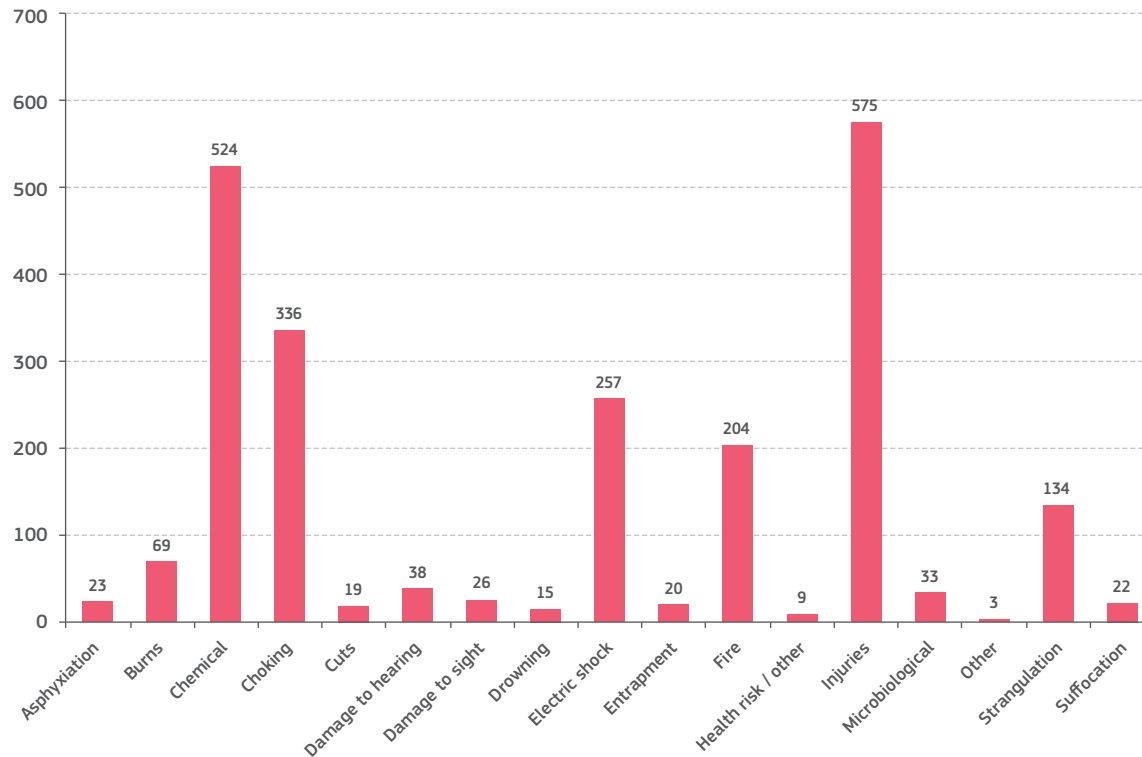
TABLE 2 Joint action programmes

	Focus of the joint action	Participating Member States
Joint Market Surveillance Action on Consumer Products 2013	Toys intended for children under 3 years	Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal
	Childcare articles: Cots	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal
	Chemicals in clothing	Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain
	Kick scooters	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Malta, Slovakia
	Smoke detectors	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal
Joint Market Surveillance Action on Consumer Products 2014	Child care articles - Safety barriers	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovakia
	Acoustic toys	Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania
	Lighting chains and LED lamps	Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden
	Fireworks	Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia
	Power tools: angle grinders	Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia
Joint Market Surveillance Action on Consumer Products 2015	Childcare articles: Soothers and soother holders	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia
	Plastic toys: chemical risks	Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden
	Household appliances: mixers	Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden
	Playground equipment	Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia
	Power tools (particularly those with cutting blades)	Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal
Joint market surveillance action on consumer products (2016)	Baby carriers	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal
	Electric toys	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden
	Electrical appliances	Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden
	Handheld power tools: impact drills	Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland
	Climbing equipment	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway

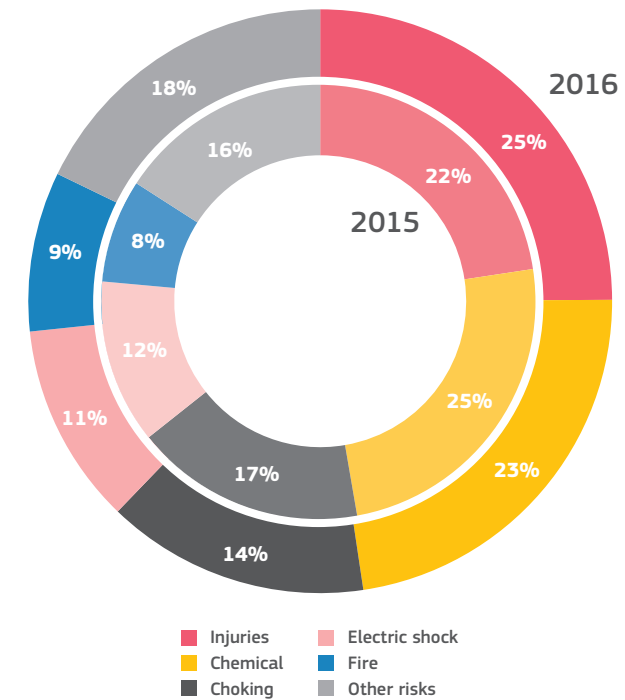
2.5. What risks were signalled in the notifications?

In 2016, the most frequently notified risk was 'injuries' (i.e. physical injuries); 'Chemical' risk, which was the most notified risk in 2015, moved to second place. This change in rank is linked to the higher proportion of notifications concerning the product category 'motor vehicles' in 2016, which are mostly associated with the risk of injuries.

GRAPH 9 Number of notifications in 2016 by type of risk (absolute values)



GRAPH 10 The five most notified types of risk in 2016 compared to 2015



3. Reactions

3.1. Reactions to notifications

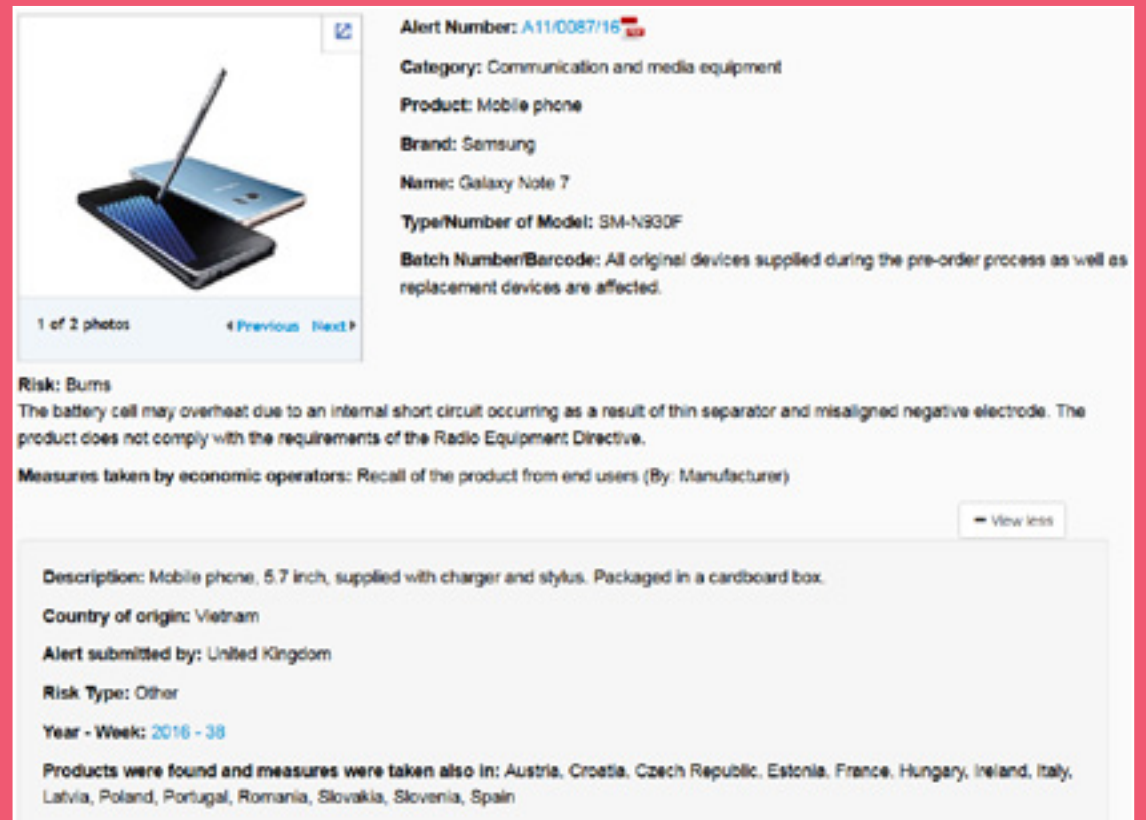
National authorities scrutinise notifications in the Rapid Alert System to check if the product is also available on their markets and, if so, they provide feedback by submitting a 'reaction' in the Rapid Alert System. This practice ensures EU-wide follow-up to prevent those dangerous products from causing further harm to consumers. Since 2009, the names of reacting Member States, i.e., those that have sent a reaction to inform the network that they have also found the notified product and taken measures in their own country, are added next to the notification on the public website.

In 2016, the number of reactions was almost double the number of notifications. This means that national authorities are, more than ever, systematically following-up notifications that are circulated in the system.


THE CASE OF THE SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE 7 MOBILE PHONE: AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

This product was widely reported in the media to have a dangerous battery cell which overheated, thus causing serious burns to consumers. The United Kingdom authorities notified through the Rapid Alert System the measures they had taken to recall and stop the sale of the product. This triggered

an exchange of information inside the system on the number of devices found, the measures taken, the economic operators involved and the number of incidents reported. Although no accident was reported by the authorities, the product was identified as posing a high risk of burns.



The screenshot displays a notification entry for a Samsung Galaxy Note 7 mobile phone. It includes a photo of the phone with its stylus, a list of technical details, a risk assessment, and a list of countries where the product was found.

Alert Number: A11/0087/16 

Category: Communication and media equipment

Product: Mobile phone

Brand: Samsung

Name: Galaxy Note 7

Type/Number of Model: SM-N930F

Batch Number/Barcode: All original devices supplied during the pre-order process as well as replacement devices are affected.

Risk: Burns
The battery cell may overheat due to an internal short circuit occurring as a result of thin separator and misaligned negative electrode. The product does not comply with the requirements of the Radio Equipment Directive.

Measures taken by economic operators: Recall of the product from end users (By: Manufacturer)

Description: Mobile phone, 5.7 inch, supplied with charger and stylus. Packaged in a cardboard box.

Country of origin: Vietnam

Alert submitted by: United Kingdom

Risk Type: Other

Year - Week: 2016 - 38

Products were found and measures were taken also in: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain

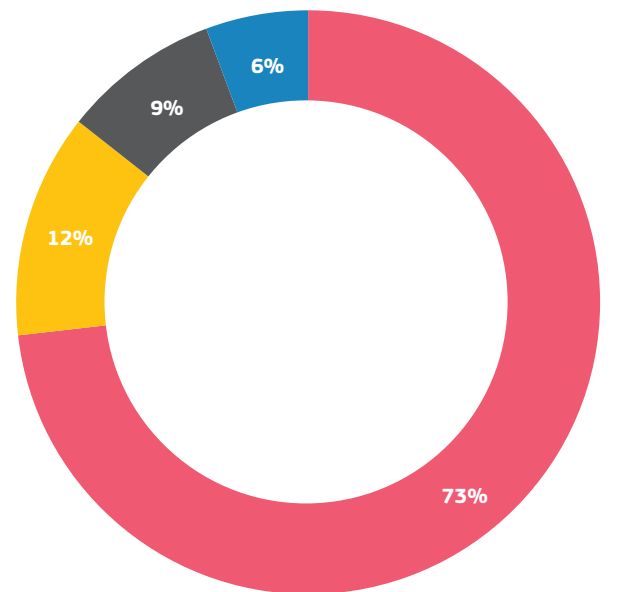
3.2. Tracing dangerous products

Identifying the product

The more information about the product provided in the notification, the easier it is for the other national authorities to find the dangerous product and take appropriate measures. In 2016, most of the

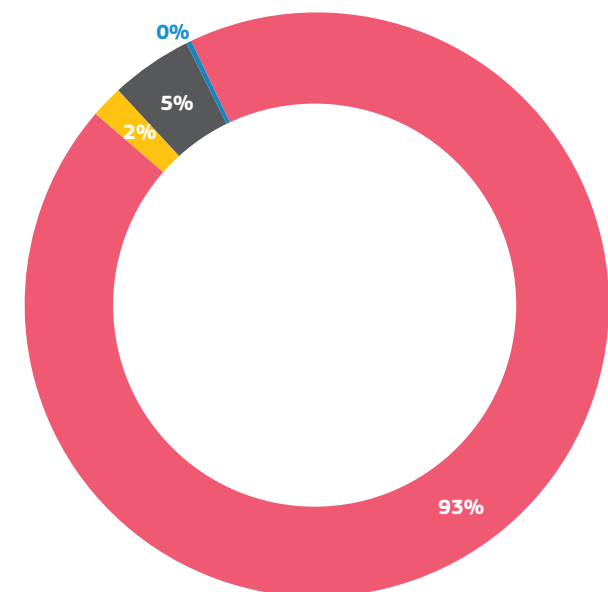
notifications were properly identified with information about the brand, type or model. Understandably, reactions are more frequent for well-identified products.

GRAPH 11 Notifications in 2016 by level of identification



■ Brand Known + Type/number of model Known
■ Brand Unknown + Type/number of model Known
■ Brand Known + Type/number of model Unknown
■ Brand Unknown + Type/number of model Unknown

GRAPH 12 Reactions in 2016 by level of identification of the corresponding notifications



■ Brand Known + Type/number of model Known
■ Brand Unknown + Type/number of model Known
■ Brand Known + Type/number of model Unknown
■ Brand Unknown + Type/number of model Unknown

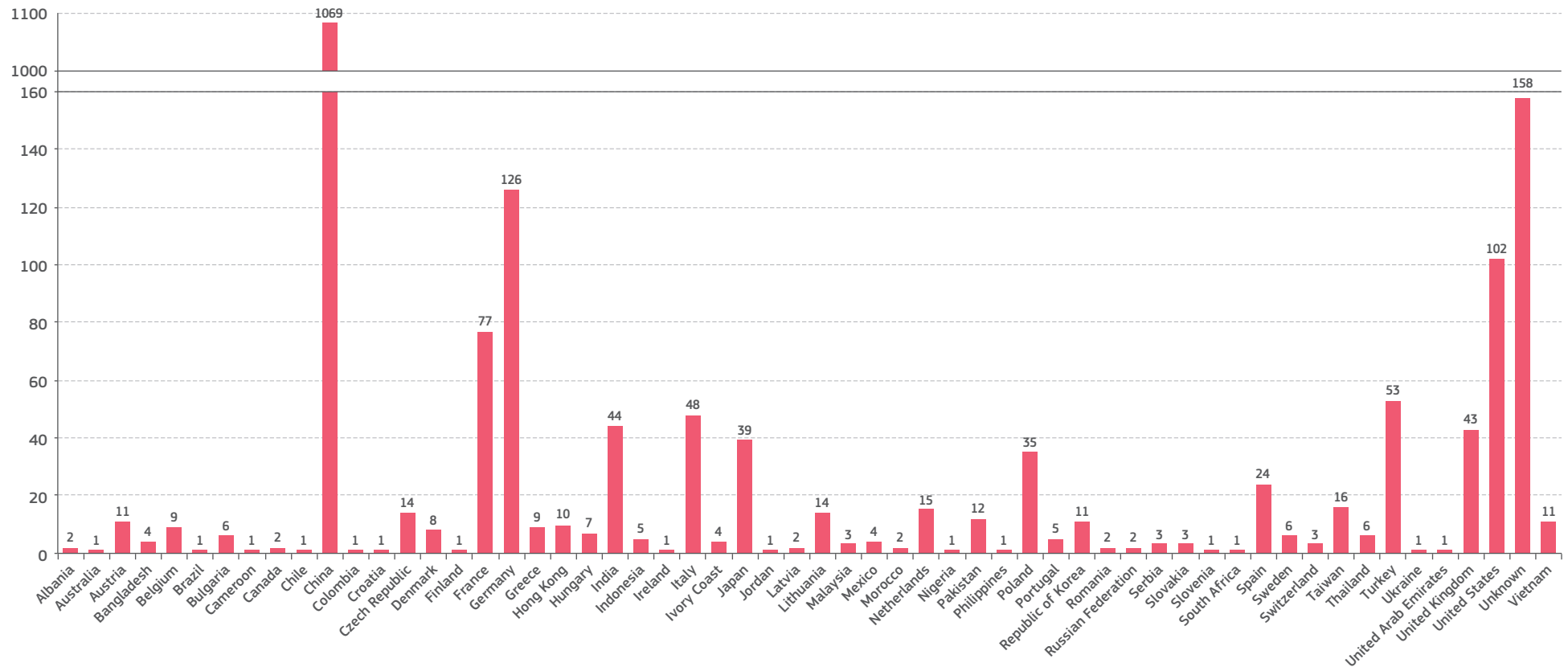
Identification of the source

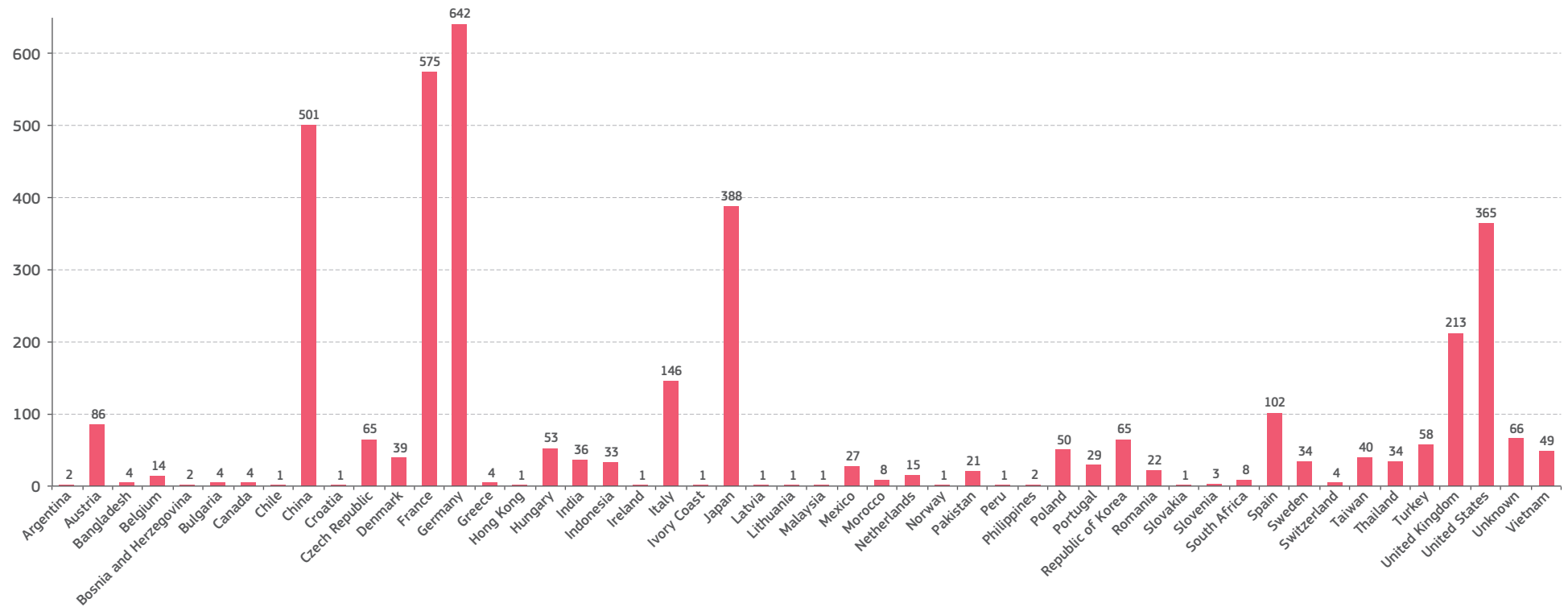
Knowing the country of origin contributes to tracing the dangerous product back to the source and identifying the manufacturer or any other economic operators, such as importers, distributors, etc. Measures are more effective once the concerned actors are identified. The product safety authorities in the country of origin may also take measures

themselves. This could be by issuing a fine but could also be in the form of providing the necessary training and information.

When the notifying authorities are not able to determine the country of origin, this field is marked as 'unknown' in the Rapid Alert System.

GRAPH 13 Notifications in 2016 by country of origin



GRAPH 14 Number of reactions in 2016 by country of origin of the dangerous product

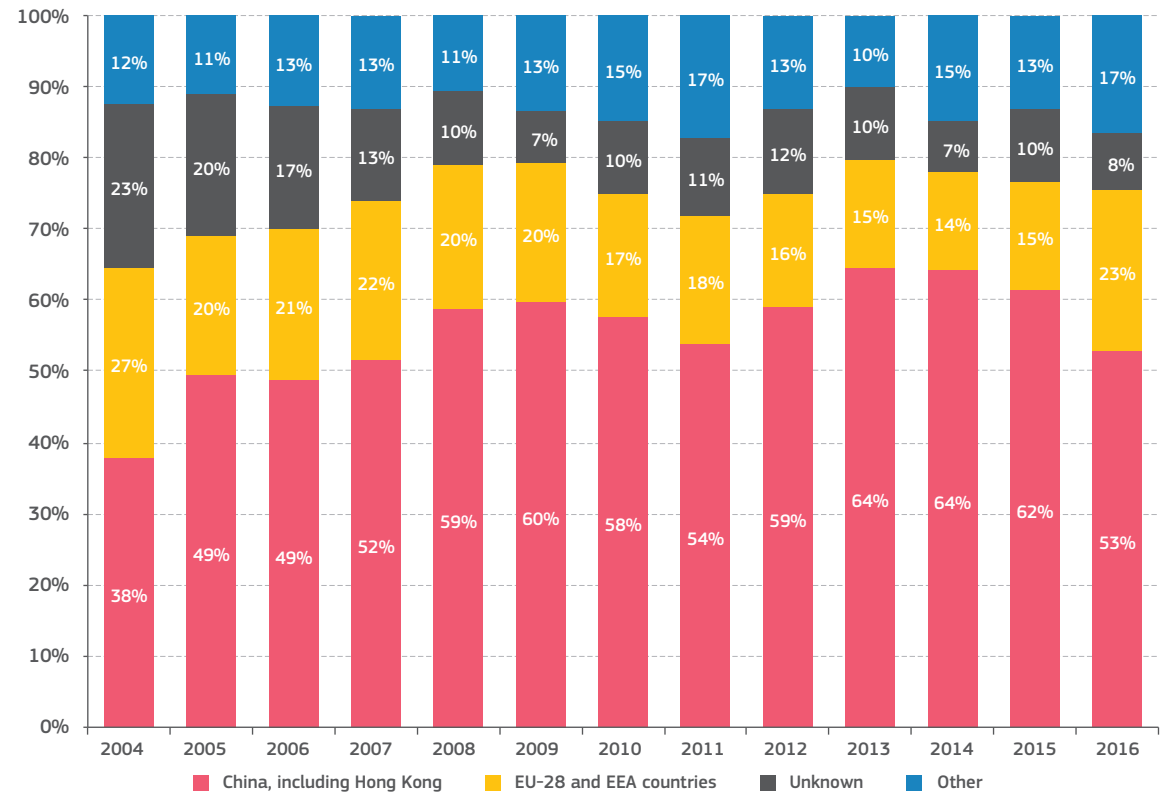
3.2.1. RAPEX-China: a 10-year old partnership



Notifications included in the Rapid Alert System concern dangerous products produced all over the world. China remains the number one country of origin but figures have gradually been going down since 2013. In 2016, the percentage of notifications for which China (including Hong Kong) was indicated as country of origin went down to 53%, a drop of 9% compared to 2015.

2016 marked 10 years of close collaboration with China aimed at reducing the presence of unsafe products on our markets. To facilitate this collaboration, a specific module of the Rapid Alert System has been created to allow for swift flagging of notifications concerning unsafe products from China. **The Chinese authorities investigate these cases in order to trace back the manufacturers, exporters and businesses concerned** with the aim of making them aware of product safety rules in Europe. Where necessary, they take further measures to ensure that those products are no longer produced and shipped to Europe.

GRAPH 15 Notifications by groups of countries of origin (2004-2016)

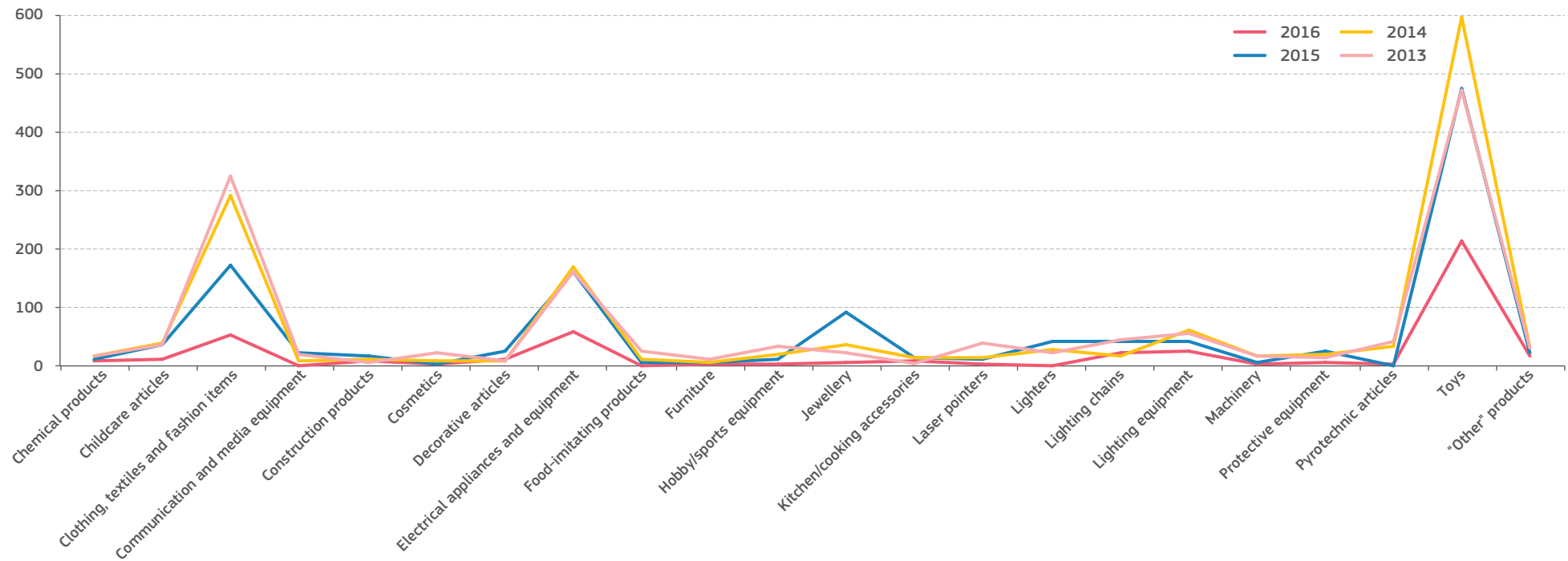


The information provided by the Chinese authorities shows that in 44 % of the notifications that were traceable. These measures included export bans, the strengthening of inspection frequency of certain companies, changes in design, recall of the product, withdrawal, destruction of the product and production bans. The

figures amounted to 36% in 2014 and 37% in 2015. No data is available for the year 2016 as yet.

Over the years, the most notified product categories originating from China have remained stable, and mainly concern clothing articles and toys.

GRAPH 16 Evolution in number of notifications flagged to the Chinese authorities, by product category (product categories with less than 10 notifications a year excluded) (2013-2016)

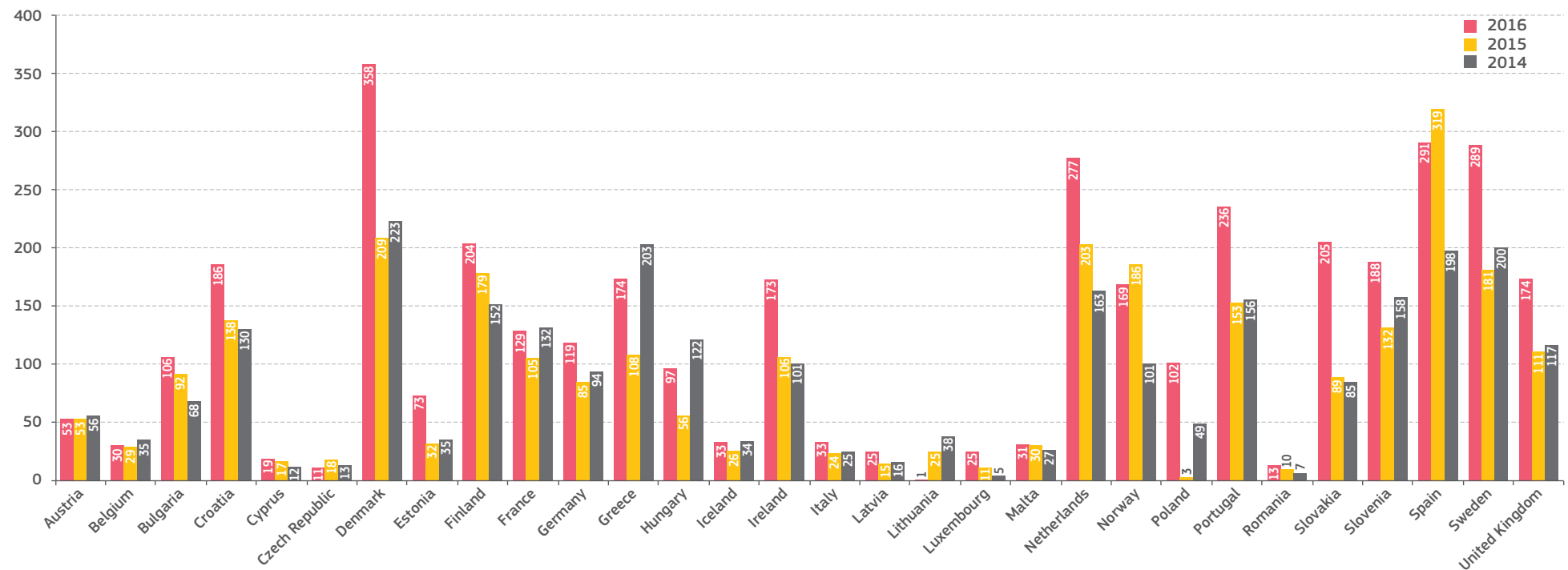


3.3. Which countries sent reactions?

All countries participating in the Rapid Alert System must provide feedback if they find a notified product on their market or have relevant information to add to the case. They do this by submitting a 'reaction' through the system. The number of reactions registered shows

a substantial increase in most countries, with the highest increases registered in Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden, mostly due to reactions concerning notifications on motor vehicles.

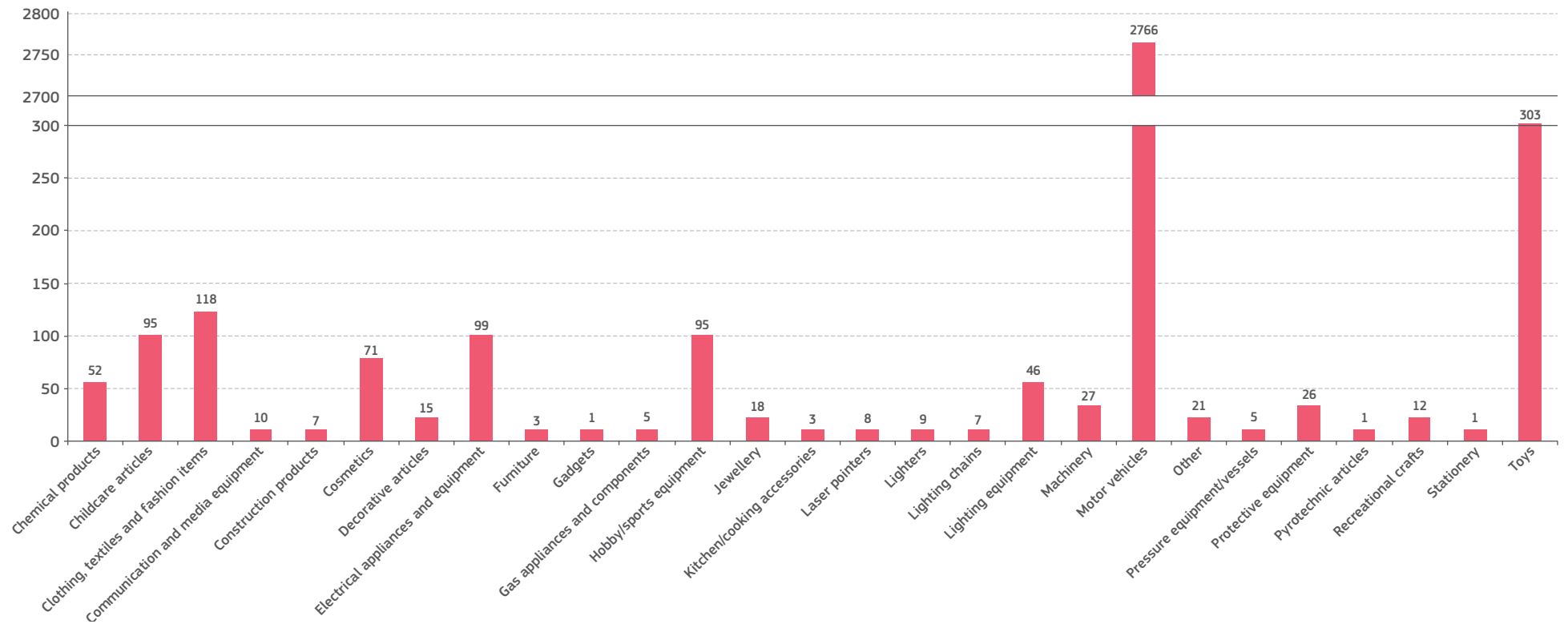
GRAPH 17 Number of reactions from 2014 to 2016 by reacting country



3.4. What dangerous products received reactions?

As in previous years, most reactions in 2016 concerned notifications about 'Motor vehicles'. This category of products is systematically traceable thanks to motor vehicle registration rules.

GRAPH 18 Number of reactions in 2016 by product category (absolute values)

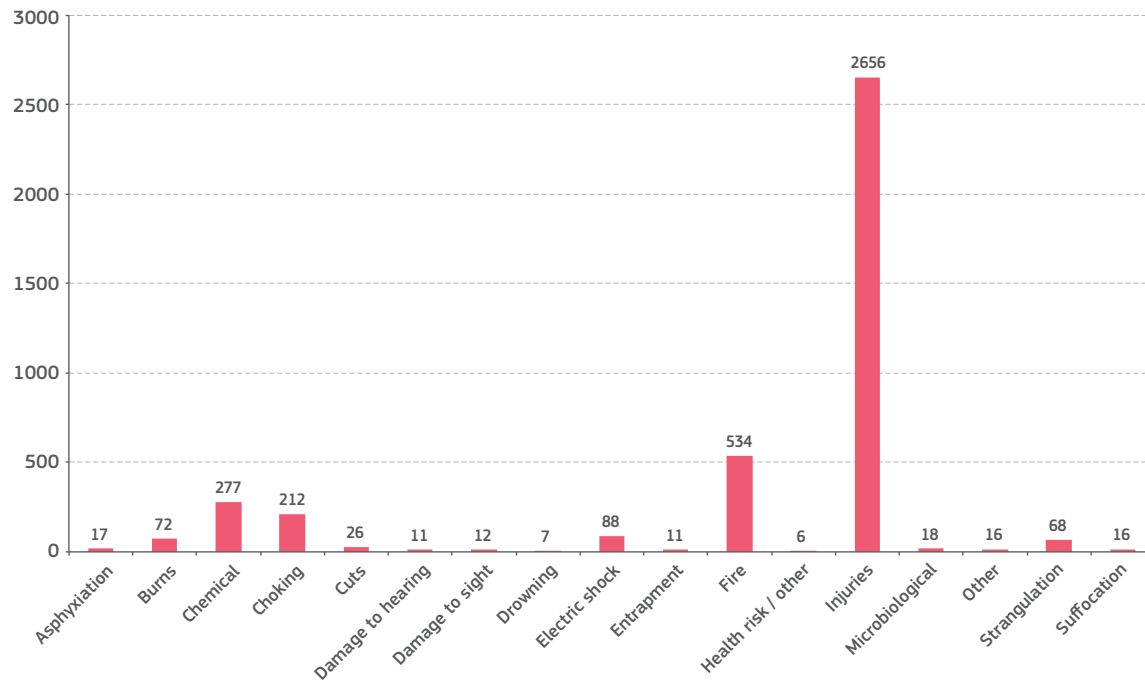


3.5. What were the risks signalled in reactions?

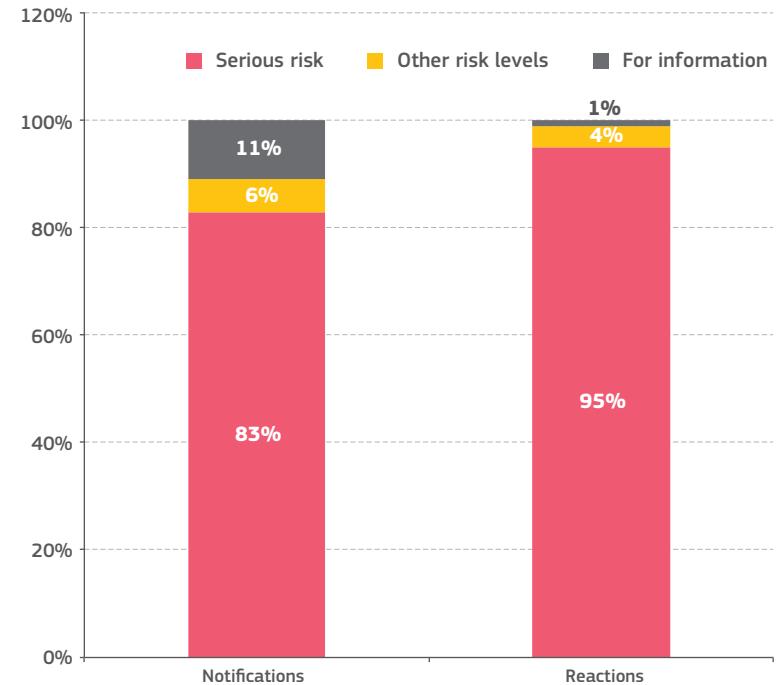
As reactions tend to concentrate on ‘Motor vehicles’, the most reported risk is ‘injuries’. This trend has been constant in the Rapid Alert System. The number of reactions per risk category can be higher than the total number of reactions received as there may be more than one risk signalled in the same notification or the reaction may indicate an additional risk.

Reactions mostly relate to notifications signalling a serious risk and are less common when the notifications are circulated ‘For information’ only.

GRAPH 19 Number of reactions in 2016 by type of risk (absolute values)



GRAPH 20 Risk level identified in notifications and reactions in 2016



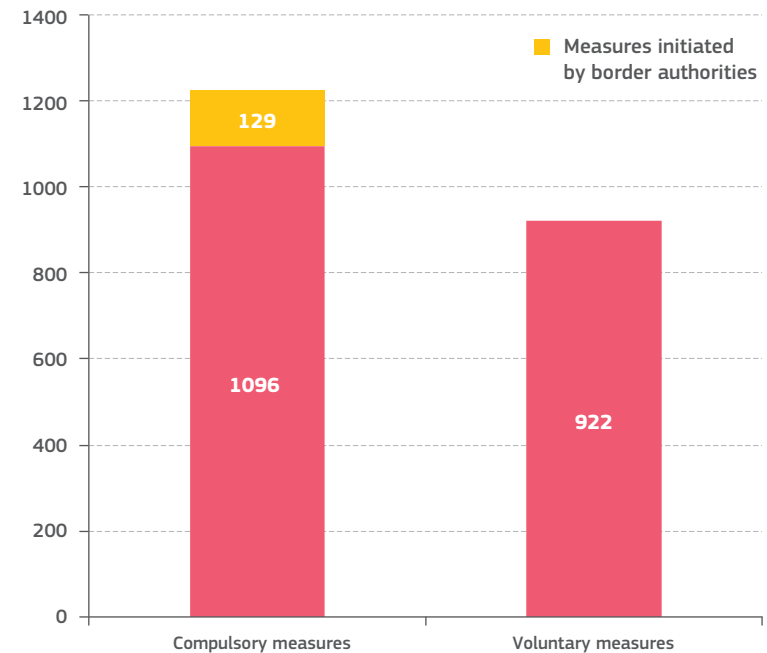
3.6. What measures were reported?

Measures can include the withdrawal of dangerous products from the market, sales bans, corrective actions, rejection of imports, etc. When the measures are ordered by national authorities, they are referred to as 'compulsory measures'. Measures initiated by the economic operator (the manufacturer, authorised representative, importer or distributor) are referred to as 'voluntary measures'.

Economic operators must ensure that they only place safe products on the market and that they inform the national authorities when they have identified a safety problem relating to a product they are selling. To inform authorities of such cases, economic operators may use the [Business application](#) tool.

The number of voluntary and compulsory measures has been balanced over the years, which shows that both national authorities and businesses have been working together to improve product safety in Europe. The role of customs authorities has also been reinforced over the years, particularly since the entry into force of [Regulation \(EC\) No 765/2008](#) on 1 January 2010, which strengthened the involvement of customs authorities by introducing a specific section on controls of products entering the EU market. [Guidelines for import controls](#) in the area of product safety and compliance were also developed to help customs authorities to facilitate this task and to ensure a common approach at EU level.

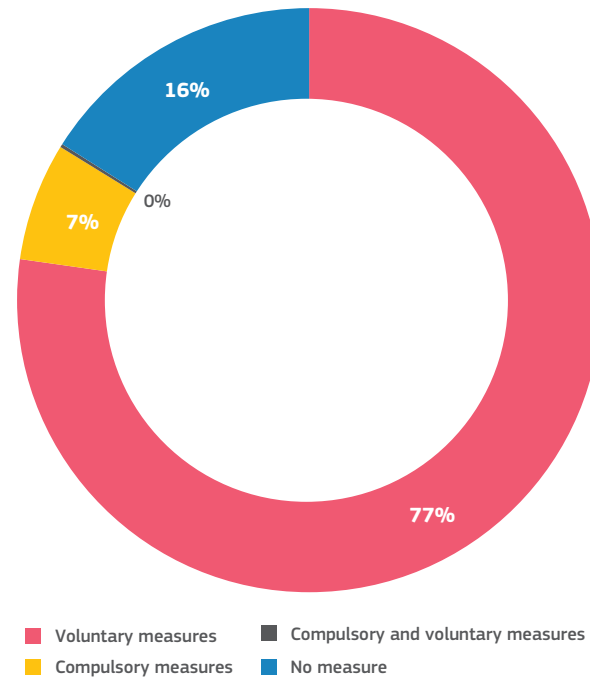
GRAPH 21 Number of notifications in 2016 by type of measure, and compulsory measures initiated by border authorities (absolute values)



As in previous years, most of the reactions in 2016 concerned follow-up actions to voluntary measures. This means that distributors, manufacturers or importers in Europe follow each other by recalling the dangerous products notified in the Rapid Alert System.

In some cases, reactions reported that no further measures were taken. This may be because the product was not found (even if an enquiry took place) or because the national authority did not consider it necessary to take measures.

GRAPH 22 Reactions in 2016 by type of measure taken

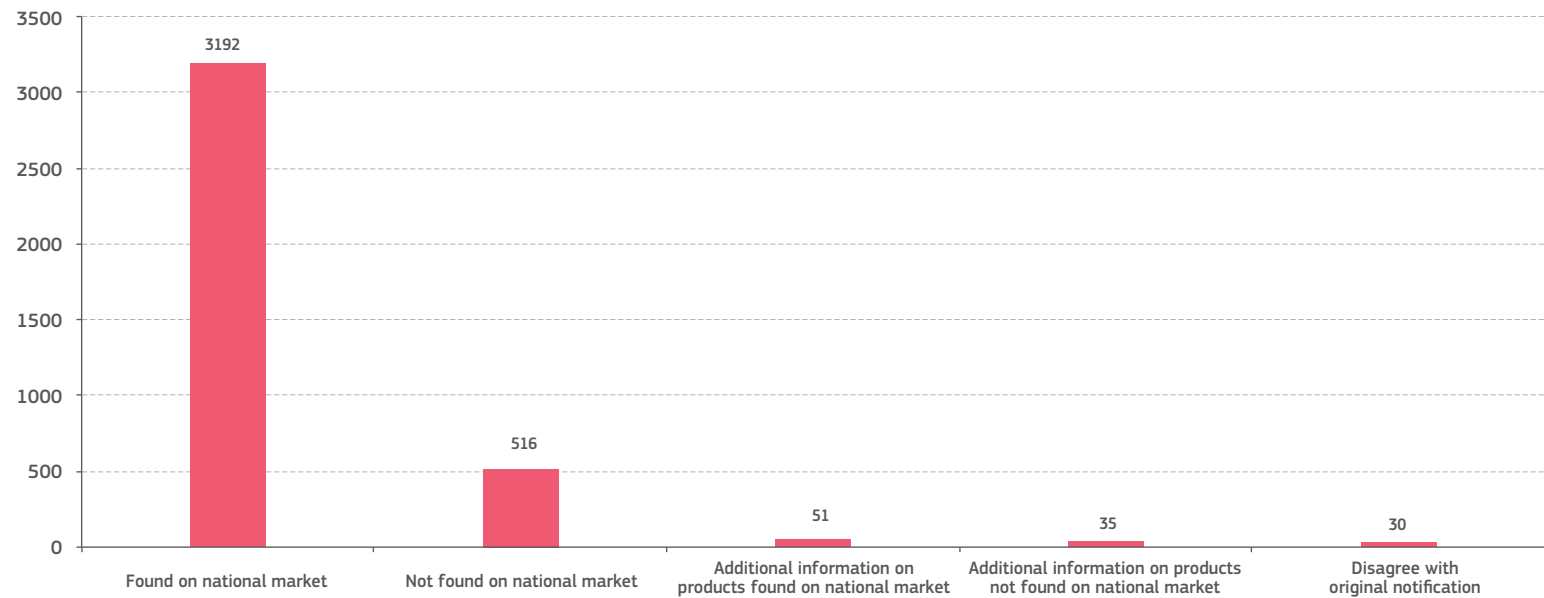


3.7. What information was provided in the reactions?

Also reflecting a constant trend, most reactions in 2016 confirmed that the notified dangerous product had been found on the market of the reacting country and that follow-up measures had been adopted. Some reactions provided further information to that already contained in the notification. In a few cases, national authorities sent a reaction to state that they disagreed with the risk assessment of the notifying authority.

In cases of diverging opinions, the European Commission launches a discussion inside the network in order to take a final decision on the product's level of risk and, depending on the outcome, the notification may be withdrawn from the system. In such cases, the withdrawal is reported in the following weekly update published on the website.

GRAPH 23 Reactions in 2016 by type of information provided by the national authority



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