



7th International Safety Conference

How to ensure product safety in a global market?

On 8 November 2016, CEOC, ETICS, EUROLAB and IFIA organised the 7th International Safety Conference at The Stanhope Hotel in Brussels. This year's conference focused on the question of how to ensure product safety in a global market. The event brought together more than 100 participants from the European institutions, consumer, retailer and industry associations and the TIC sector to address issues related to consumer product safety and to shape solutions with all the actors involved.

During his opening speech, **Simo Hassi (President, CEOC International)** highlighted the importance of working together with different stakeholders to reduce the number of non-compliant products on the market, thereby to increase the safety of consumers significantly. **Drewin Nieuwenhuis (Secretary General, CEOC International)** introduced the three speakers of this year's event.

James Woudhuysen (Professor of Forecasting and Innovation) gave a keynote speech on 'Key consumer issues, 2016-21, and what to do about them'. He drew attention to that fact that the Chinese investment in key infrastructure, distribution points and consumer goods in the West has been increasing. He thus highlighted the need for each company to centre its culture more on China as well as to invest in equipment, office facilities and R&D. He also focused on developments in IT, manufacturing, cars and food, making recommendations about how to best prepare for the future.

The conference continued with the presentation of the 2016 IFIA-CEOC market study results by **Marcello Manca (Vice-President, Government and Industry Affairs, UL)**. He explained that the presentation is the cumulative result of the market studies conducted by IFIA and CEOC over the past five years, whereby a vast sampling of high-selling electrical consumer goods were randomly purchased across Europe, and tested for compliance with EU directives at an independent laboratory. This year's results highlight once again the marked difference between products for which compliance is self-declared by the manufacturer, versus those that were certified by an independent third-party body. The percentage of serious non-conformities, in the 'self-declared' case, is extremely high and worrisome – 16% of them showed dangerous faults versus only 1% of the third-party certified products. He called on all relevant stakeholders to engage in a dialogue and to take actions to improve the current situation.

Pierre de Ruvo (Secretary General & CEO, ETICS) gave a presentation on the present and future e-compliance model in the electrotechnical sector. He presented the aim and the scope of ENEC, the European Mark for electrical products that demonstrates compliance with European standards. He explained that the scope of ENEC essentially covers the overall electrotech-





nical sector. However, its aim is to expand into other sectors. He also presented the characteristics of the future digitalized ENEC Mark, which will have, among others, strong anti-counterfeit features. A common centralised database is foreseen, which will allow Consumer, Retailers, Buyers, Custom Officers, Market Surveillance Authorities and any other Stakeholder, by scanning the QR-C, to consult/verify/investigate the status of the product, the Certification Body that has issued the certificate, the scope and extent of the compliance. A different level of access to the database will be established.

The three presentations were followed by a panel discussion moderated by **Laura Shields (Director, The Media Coach)**. The panellists – **Hans Ingels (Head of Unit, DG GROW, European Commission)**, **Stephan Schmitt (Chief International Officer, TÜV Rheinland Holding AG)**, **Nicolaas Olie (Executive Director, PROSAFE)** and **Massimiliano Guzzini (Vice-President, iGuzzini illuminazione S.p.A & President of ASSIL)**, addressed the issue of how to ensure product safety in a global market with the aim of finding common grounds of understanding and collaboration.

The discussions centered on the following: the **current level of compliance of products highlighted by the IFIA-CEOC market study results** and the **need for harmonised safety standards applicable to all products placed on the EU market**.

While most of the economic operators comply with the safety requirements, there is still a worrisome number of non-compliant products entering the EU market. The panellists stressed the need to adopt a holistic approach to address the issue of non-compliance – the main issue in the internal market where different key players intervene. They discussed the advantages of the system in the EU (Supplier's Declaration of Conformity) and US (third-party testing); the legal and financial consequences for those bringing non-compliant products to the EU market; and the different performance of the market surveillance authorities in the EU Member States. The panellists highlighted the need to ensure that the same quality and safety specifications apply to all products in the EU market, especially to those coming from outside Europe. It was reminded that importers and distributors are also responsible for ensuring that only safe and compliant products are placed on the market.

The panellist made the following **conclusions and suggestions**:

- Safety and compliance of products could not be achieved only through market surveillance activities. There is also a strong need for prevention through independent testing.
- Market surveillance needs stricter targets from the legislators e.g. market surveillance authorities should target manufacturers whose products are repeatedly not in compliance. The cross-border co-operation between market surveillance authorities should be improved.
- There is a strong need to educate consumers, retailers, distributors and importers about product safety and quality. They should become fully aware of how important it is to ensure that only safe and compliant products reach the internal market.

The conference was concluded by **Álvaro Silva Ribeiro (President, EUROLAB)**. He underlined the need to educate all relevant stakeholders about the added value of quality.

All presentations are available for download from the ETICS website. For more information, please contact us at info@etics.org

