

The importance and challenge of co-ordination across the relevant policy areas is fully appreciated by the Commission and the necessary inter-service collaboration has been put in place, to facilitate a coherent overview and approach.

(¹) COM(97) 128 final.

(98/C 304/79)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0229/98
by Hiltrud Breyer (V) to the Commission
(5 February 1998)

Subject: Baby-walkers

Despite the fact that articles used by infants are not supposed to put them in additional danger, baby-walkers tend to cause serious accidents. Babies in them can reach speeds of up to 10 km/h. All the tests carried out have shown that these devices do not assist movements connected with the normal development of a baby's walking ability.

1. Does the Commission see a need for action, in view of the fact that baby-walkers do not provide any benefits, but actually constitute a grave danger which has already led to numerous accidents?
2. Is the Commission aware that none of the baby-walkers tested by the consumer organizations complies with the draft European safety standard (pr en 1273) or meets product information requirements?
3. Does the Commission agree that dangerous and completely nonsensical products, especially for babies, should not be approved for sale?
4. How does the Commission feel about a total ban on baby-walkers?

Answer given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(9 March 1998)

The Commission shares the concerns expressed by the Honourable Member. Indeed, the reported facts form part of a study which has been made possible through co-financing provided by the Commission.

Directive 92/59/EEC on general product safety (¹) is intended, among other things, to guarantee the safety of consumers, and in particular of children. To that effect, it requires the Member States to adopt the measures necessary in order to ensure that only safe products are placed on the Community market (Article 2b).

It is therefore firstly the responsibility of the Member States to take action in the face of products which represent a health or safety risk for consumers through the adoption of the necessary measures (including the possible withdrawal of the product from the market), providing that these measures comply with Community law and in particular with Articles 30 et seq of the EC Treaty.

In the present case, the Commission, after having obtained the agreement of the Member States, has already given the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) a mandate to develop a standard which takes into consideration the various hazards presented by baby-walkers, including those revealed by the study mentioned above.

Finally, in order to be sure that the consumer's point of view is taken into account in the process of European standardisation, the Commission supports ANEC, the European association created to co-ordinate and represent consumer interests within the European (and international) standardisation organisations.

(¹) OJ L 228, 11.8.1992.