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EU Surveillance Exposes High Chemical Non-Compliance Across Online Marketplaces



A sweeping European enforcement investigation has uncovered widespread chemical safety and labeling failures across e-commerce platforms, with 61% of inspected products and online offers breaching EU regulations.

Under the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) Forum's REACH-EN-FORCE-13 (REF-13) project, authorities across 27 European Economic Area (EEA) countries evaluated 5,281 substances, mixtures, and articles sold on online marketplaces and web shops. Inspectors checked compliance against the REACH, CLP, and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) regulations.

Key Regulatory Violations Identified

While these risk-based inspections targeted suspicious listings—meaning the 61% failure rate does not represent the entire EEA online market—the findings highlight critical compliance gaps:

1. **Missing Hazard Information (CLP):** Of 2,206 substances and mixtures checked, 62% omitted mandatory hazard disclosures in their online advertisements.
2. **Restricted Chemicals (RoHS):** 51% of inspected E&E articles failed at least one restriction requirement. In the optional RoHS checks, lead was the leading cause of non-compliance, highlighting risks associated with solders, cables and flexible plastic components.
3. **Restricted Chemicals (REACH):** Among 3,126 articles and mixtures inspected, 56% failed REACH restrictions due to carcinogenic, mutagenic, or reprotoxic (CMR) substances like lead and borates, alongside PFAS, phthalates, cadmium, and nickel. Jewellery remained a major violation hotspot for excess cadmium, nickel, and lead.
4. **Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs):** 14% of inspected products exceeded permitted limits, primarily for short-chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs) and PFOA.

High-Risk Channels and Supply Chains

The investigation revealed clear risk hotspots: non-compliance was significantly more prevalent on third-party online marketplaces than on brand web shops, particularly involving non-EEA traders and articles manufactured outside the region. Following national enforcement actions, ECHA urged online platforms to strengthen seller controls, remove non-compliant listings, and prevent banned items from reappearing

Takeaways for E&E and Consumer Goods Suppliers

For electrical and electronics (E&E) and consumer goods suppliers, these results signal heightened scrutiny at EU borders and on digital storefronts. Companies entering the EEA must tighten supply-chain controls around PFAS, phthalates, heavy metals (lead, cadmium, nickel), SCCPs, and PFOA.

How SGS Helps Manufacturers Ensure Chemical Safety and Regulatory Compliance

Navigating strict EU chemical regulations requires proactive verification before products reach online shoppers. SGS delivers end-to-end testing, inspection, and certification solutions to help manufacturers, brands, and e-commerce sellers maintain uninterrupted EEA market access:

1. **Targeted Chemical Testing:** Accredited laboratory screening for REACH restricted substances (lead, cadmium, nickel, phthalates, borates, and PFAS) and POPs (SCCPs and PFOA) across E&E, jewellery, and consumer articles.
2. **CLP & Online Listing Verification:** Expert review of hazard classifications, Safety Data Sheets (SDS), and mandatory digital disclosures to prevent listing takedowns.
3. **Supply Chain Risk Management:** Upstream supplier audits and bill-of-materials (BoM) assessments to detect high-risk non-EEA components before shipment.

Ensure your electronics meet chemical regulations and sustainability standards with tailored testing, certification and compliance support from SGS.



FOR ENQUIRIES

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