

## PRODUCT SAFETY

**Fireworks to be made safer in EU**

By Sophie Musca

Safety rules for fireworks are set to be harmonised and tightened up in the EU soon. Members of the European Parliament adopted (667 to 15, with seven abstentions), on 22 May, a report by Zuzana Roithová (EPP, Czech Republic) on the European Commission's proposal of November 2011 updating the current Directive 2007/23/EC on the placing on the market of pyrotechnic articles.

The new rules are meant to ensure easier market access and a higher level of protection to life and property. They reduce administrative formalities for economic operators and introduce market surveillance improvements and clearer labelling rules for consumers.

**"LEANER RULES"**

This update of the 2007 legislation is part of a package of nine directives on the "new legislative framework" (NLF), adopted in 2008, aimed at harmonising directives related to the safety of industrial products (see box).

"EU product legislation is starting to take on a more uniform look, leading to reductions in administrative burden and costs," commented Antonio Tajani, commissioner for industry and entrepreneurship. "Common rules for industrial products allow manufacturers to have

more legal certainty. They can better organise their manufacturing processes, enhance the quality and safety of products and invest in innovation. Leaner rules for more sectors will follow soon, so that the single market will be further strengthened helping businesses to grow."

The products concerned by the update are those containing explosive substances designed to produce heat, light, sounds, gas or smoke or a combination of these effects through an exothermic chemical reaction. This includes fireworks, articles used in film or theatre productions, and automotive pyrotechnic articles, such as gas generators used in airbags.

**CLARIFICATION**

The directive will clarify the responsibilities of manufacturers, importers and distributors when they sell such products. For administrative formalities, manufacturers will be able to use electronic means to provide evidence of product conformity. A traceability system to identify dangerous or defective products, clearer rules and stepped up monitoring of conformity assessment bodies will ensure greater consumer safety. Labels, for example, will have to show the manufacturer's postal address and website.

Products in conformity with the safety

rules will bear the 'CE marking' showing that they meet all the requirements laid down in the legislation.

National market surveillance authorities will be better equipped and trained so as to sanction failures to abide by the rules and to stop imports of dangerous products from third countries. ■

**Package of nine directives**

The directive on pyrotechnic articles is the first text to be adopted in the legislative package of nine industrial products directives requiring an update. The package is meant to reduce the complexity of existing legislation through harmonisation and clarification of texts in force, which are difficult for economic operators and public authorities to understand. This Commission initiative aims to remove obstacles to the single market for products. Also concerned are the directives on non-automatic weighing instruments, measuring instruments, simple pressure vessels, lifts, explosives for civil uses, electromagnetic compatibility, low-voltage electrical equipment and equipment used in explosive atmospheres.

Discussions are under way between the Council and Parliament on the other eight texts.