



European
Commission



2023
Product
Safety
Award



*Justice
and Consumers*



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FOREWORD FROM THE COMMISSIONER



Didier Reynders

European Commissioner for Justice

The European Commission is constantly working to enhance consumer product safety. With the entry into force of the EU General Product Safety Regulation last June, our rules will much better respond to current challenges. Yet, it is just as important to encourage and honour best practices that go above and beyond legal requirements and can serve as an inspiration for others. That is what the EU Product Safety Award is about. When it comes to safety, there should be no limit to innovation or improvement.

This third edition is even more special because it rewards outstanding initiatives by both businesses and researchers in the area of consumer product safety. It is crucial to ensure that we base our policy decisions on the best available evidence.

Throughout my mandate, I have been delighted to see how many stakeholders dedicate themselves to improve and innovate in product safety. This year, once again, I was impressed by the quality of the submitted projects, and the attentive care they showed towards consumers. To see such talented innovators go the extra mile for the safety of consumers makes me feel confident and optimistic for the future of consumer protection.

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About the EU Safety Product Award

The EU Product Safety Award was launched in 2019 to reward innovative business initiatives that go beyond the requirements set out in EU legislation and supporting standards.

In 2023, the award celebrates business initiatives that make a difference for the safety of teenagers. For the first time, the initiative also honours researchers working on consumer product safety.

By showcasing these best practises, the European Commission wants to inspire further companies and researchers to go the extra mile for consumers, thus raising the level of protection across the EU.

The award also aims to raise consumer awareness about product safety and to encourage more informed purchasing choices.



What's in it for the winners?

The award offers the winners widespread recognition and positions them as product safety champions. The winning companies may use the Product Safety award logo in their promotional activities and the winning researchers have the opportunity to present their work at the flagship International Product Safety Week. The initiative does not include a financial award.

“The award has had a positive impact on our product development and reassures consumers that they have made a good choice when buying our products.”

MAM Baby, Special Mention Award 2019

“Winning this award has significantly improved our credibility and reputation within the industry. This Award also demonstrates to consumers that our company is committed to their safety and to their wellbeing.”

TO.TEM, Gold Award 2021

“This prestigious recognition from the European Commission has enhanced our brand’s reputation and increased consumer’s trust, which are factors that ultimately drive sales growth. Overall, having a recognised organisation such as the European Commission giving us this award, had a very positive impact on us as a brand.”

Dorel Juvenile, Silver Award 2021

What were the categories in 2023?

The award was open to companies and researchers from all 30 countries of the **European Economic Area** (27 EU Member States and Iceland, Lichtenstein, and Norway). A distinction was made, respectively, between **SMEs** and **large companies** and between **early career** and **senior researchers**.

The competition for businesses focused on initiatives that have an impact on the **safety of teenagers**. For example, this could include initiatives which improve the safety of products or shopping channels commonly used by teenagers, or awareness-raising initiatives focused on product safety risks faced by this age group. Teenagers are an interesting group from a policy point of view. They are vulnerable consumers, exposed to heavy and targeted marketing, but at the same time have the capacity to understand product safety information, if properly framed, and to make conscious purchasing decisions. In addition, teenagers are potential consumers of a wide range of products which can pose a variety of safety risks.

The competition for researchers was open to research concerning any aspect of product safety and representing any academic discipline (including, but not limited to; law, political science, business and marketing, engineering, communication).

What were the main steps?

All applicants could apply online during a three-and-a-half-month timeframe.

The award information and application forms were made available in 22 European languages to encourage participation.

Entries received from 12 countries were evaluated in two phases. Following the first screening by the European Commission in consultation with national market surveillance authorities, a high-level Jury selected the finalists in each category. The shortlisted businesses were additionally examined against internationally recognised corporate social responsibility (CSR) criteria. The winners received their awards at a gala ceremony in Brussels, hosted by Didier Reynders, the EU Commissioner for Justice.



ISABELLE PÉRIGNON

Director for Consumers, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission

"The EU Product Safety Award is a distinction to those who make a difference for consumers and serve as an inspiration for others. We want to motivate more companies and researchers to make product safety a priority and thus raise the bar for consumer protection across the EU. I look forward to seeing how the rewarded initiatives foster further innovation, research, and engagement in consumers' safety."



MONIQUE GOYENS

Director General, European Consumer Organisation (BEUC)

"People expect companies to put consumers' health, safety, and security at the heart of their concerns. I was encouraged by the efforts undertaken by the winners to address the specific vulnerabilities of teenagers when designing their products. I also welcome the expansion of the Award to a new category of stakeholders: researchers. An important part of business innovation finds its source in scientific research."



TANIA VANDENBERGHE

Senior Programme Manager, European Consumer Voice in Standardisation (ANEC)

"ANEC highly appreciates the extension of the Award to researchers working on enhancing consumer product safety. The results of their research will for sure underpin upcoming EU standardisation and legislative initiatives! Moreover, as a Juror, I was delighted to see that this year's business initiatives also invest in the mental health and wellbeing of the young generation."



JOSE IGNACIO VITÓN ASENJO

Coordinator, Directorate-General for Consumer Affairs, Spanish Ministry of Consumer Affairs

"The Product Safety Award encourages companies to view safety as an opportunity for continuous improvement and increases consumers' awareness of the importance of product safety. Furthermore, I found it a great idea to reward advances in product safety research, as it supports the notion that safety is not just something static, that can be taken for granted, but must keep pace with the needs and changes of our society."



TIINA VYRYLÄINEN

Member of the European Economic and Social Committee

"Product safety should be in the heart of all product design and business operation. Consumers have the right to expect products and services to be safe. I was delighted to see that so many companies - large and small - are willing to go the extra mile and how they produce not only safe but also innovative and inspiring products for teenage consumers that were in the focus of this year's award."



THE
WINNERS
SMEs

Gold Award

PUKY(Germany)

EIGHTSHOT
BICYCLES

Mountain bike designed specifically with teens' safety in mind

PUKY has been involved in child-friendly mobility devices since 1949. Within the brand *Eightshot*, they created a new bicycle frame which combines fun and dynamic products with a safe design. "*Eightshot's bikes promote safe physical activities for teenagers*", noted the Jury.

The bicycle is designed specifically for children aged 10 to 14 years – it is not just a regular mountain bike in smaller size. Children's bicycles available on the market are often too heavy or not sufficiently durable to cater for their actual use. The developers of this unique product considered that, despite lower body weights, children and youngsters tend to ride much more frequently and sportily than adults, which influences the product's use.

The mountain bike has been designed for sustained use and longevity. Each bike undergoes a rigorous test process which takes account of foreseeable product misuse such as riding stairs or a second child on the luggage carrier. In addition, all PUKY products carry an extended 10-year warranty.

PUKY also fosters effective communication with its customers and documents every complaint received, to continually calibrate and improve their products.

► **More information:** www.eightshot.com



Silver Award

Onanoff (Netherlands)



Offering a healthier entertainment alternative to screens

Onanoff's *StoryPhones* was created to provide children with fun and healthy entertainment away from screens. Stories and music are played directly on the headphones using swappable discs that attach to the ear cup, making the product easily portable. Some of the audio content could also appeal to teenagers, including the ZenShield which plays soothing sounds.

Diverting children away from screens can help to prevent the development of vision problems, improve their sleep quality, as well as leave more time for physical activities and social interactions. This could also help to decrease feelings of isolation and depression amongst youngsters. Beside the benefits to eyesight and mental health, it is proven that listening to audio promotes literacy and comprehension.

Onanoff's mission focuses on providing a safe audio experience for youngsters. Their products come with volume-limiting features to protect young ears from harmful noise. The company is also committed to spreading awareness about safe listening habits on their website, social media posts and product packaging.

Although the headphones are not classed as a toy, and thus not required by law, the company has gone the extra mile to pass a strict list of toy safety and quality tests, as well as conducting destructive testing of the design. *"In its initiative, Onanoff considered both the chemical and mechanical aspects to maximise safety for children and teenagers,"* noted the Jury.

► **More information:** www.storyphones.com



Bronze Award

TerrainQ Solutions (Germany)



Product safety rating algorithm, allowing consumers to identify safe offers when shopping online

Designed to improve product safety online, the “Cart Guard” safety rating algorithm facilitates identification of online offers’ safety by businesses and consumers alike.

The algorithm is primarily designed as an internal monitoring mechanism for online marketplaces, who can additionally integrate it into their interfaces to provide safety ratings to consumers. *“The algorithm developed by TerrainQ Solutions for online shopping is particularly suited for teenagers, who are the primary customers of virtual shopping,”* highlighted the Jury.

The information is communicated through a unique, user-friendly traffic light system for each product which indicates green – safe; yellow – insufficient data available; and red – unsafe. The ratings are based on thorough evaluation, including the technical documentation required by relevant legislation, alerts in the EU Safety Gate system, national market surveillance databases and Customs as well as keywords in product references.

Customer concerns are fed back into the algorithm, which also enables online marketplaces to block or remove non-compliant listings.

► **More information:** www.terrainq-solutions.com





THE
WINNERS
**Large
companies**



Gold Award

VARTA (Germany)



Power banks with advanced safety technology

Teenagers use power banks in their daily life, but incorrect handling or poor-quality lithium cells can lead to serious accidents. The advanced technology launched by VARTA has a range of additional safety features which make the power banks perfectly safe against external influences, as well as against unintentional misuse.

The result is a long lasting, sustainable, and safe product for the teenage consumer whose daily activities involving the power banks and other devices may be careless, and who might not be informed sufficiently about the dangers of mishandling. This includes even the simplest things like putting the power bank close to a metallic object in their pocket or charging it with the wrong power supply.

"Power banks, when used carelessly, are risky products. Introducing additional safety features is always valuable," remarked the Jury.

VARTA also focuses on educating consumers and informs them about risks as well as safe handling tips via their website and social media threads. The company investigates returns from the market and aims to make potential recalls as easy as possible for consumers.

► **More information:** www.varta-ag.com



**ADVANCED SAFETY
TECHNOLOGY**



Silver Award

Essity (Sweden)



Combining sustainability and safety for teenage girls - period pants and related awareness-raising

Essity has developed a range of secure, non-leak, washable period pants for girls starting their period journey. The products are designed for young teens, to give them peace of mind. The product stands out from other comparable products on the market, owing to the extensive chemical evaluation and comprehensive testing performed.

The entire product is made with Oeko-Tex® certified material to ensure chemical safety and is designed for all types of bodies and cycles. The pants are available in assorted styles and tailored for different flows to cater for teen consumers' daily activities and lifestyles.

No biocides are added to the product, and the range focuses on sustainability and reducing environmental impact which are primary concerns of teen consumers today.

The company has developed a concept called "Befriend your Body" alongside educational videos, Tik-Tok films and a starter kit to educate and help young teens to understand and navigate the changes to their bodies including starting periods.

"The initiative is focused on raising awareness. The product is sustainable, certified for chemical safety, and specially targeted at teenagers," concluded the Jury.

► **More information:** www.libresse.com



Bronze Award

Mega (Greece)



Promoting safety among teenage girls through sanitary pads innovation, and original educational campaigns.

The *EveryDay* range was specifically designed to meet young teenagers’ increased needs for hygienic care. Mega has developed innovative and skin-sensitive products to offer proven safety and excellent performance under conditions of extended use. Product sizes such as XL pads, the “Center Plus” technology (which ensures increased absorbency in the centre of the pad) and the “Double Dry” corereduces the risk of leaks and the associated embarrassment.

All products in the range undergo very strict Quality Assurance procedures and monitoring. *EveryDay* was the first brand to be recommended by the Greek Union of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians and also the first feminine care brand in Europe to successfully acquire the Oeko-Tex® standard 100 certification. The company is also among a handful in Europe to have installed inspection cameras in all production machines and uses mannequins to simulate actual use.

Furthermore, the company collaborates with teenage medical experts to inform and raise awareness amongst teenage girls and their families about health and hygiene issues, relationships, online risks, and how to become healthy adults. *“Besides being skin-friendly, the Mega initiative also promotes the preservation of young women’s mental health through their education campaigns,”* noted the Jury.

The company also tackles period poverty by donating menstrual products (over 1 million, to date) to disadvantaged girls.

► **More information:** www.everyday.gr/en/





THE WINNERS
**Early career
researchers**



Gold Award

Eduard Fosch-Villaronga and
Hadassah Drukarch¹



Innovative research on diversity in robot design, testbed, and safety standardisation

There is a clear need for data on diversity considerations in consumer products to make sure that they meet the requirements of as many users as possible.

This piece of research focuses on the safety standard for personal care robot lower-limb rehabilitation exoskeletons - ISO 13482:2014.. It underlines significant deficiencies in incorporating gender, age, and health considerations in robotics development. Consequently, and despite developers adhering to existing standards, these products can still cause harm to users. For example, even though current exoskeletons are adaptable to different body sizes and shapes, they do not fit female bodies (with wider hips and breast measurements) which may cause physical or mental safety concerns ..

The evidence presented clearly outlines safety risks to users' safety caused by overlooking diversity considerations during product development and testing. The paper concludes with concrete recommendations for both standards makers and manufacturers to reflect better the broad diversity of users of personal care robots.

"The Commission is committed to promoting gender inclusiveness in standards, and this research is really a prime example of it," noted the Jury.

Please read more about the research project [here](#)



¹ Leiden University, the Netherlands



THE WINNERS
**Senior
researchers**



Gold Award

Frederik Dijkers, Tjark Ebels,
Frans Ooms and Marnix Wagemaker²



Patented invention for self-extinguishing button batteries

Button battery ingestion is a major product safety issue. If swallowed and in only a few hours, button batteries can cause electrochemical burns to the oesophagus that could be fatal.

Every year, many children worldwide die or experience serious injuries due to accidentally ingested button batteries. There are often no immediate symptoms when a child swallows a button battery and at the point of realisation, it is often too late to prevent the consequences. Button batteries are present in many children's objects including toys, books, watches, and flashing shoes and clothing, in addition to household items such as remote controls, calculators and thermometers.

The researchers have designed a fused button battery whose current shuts off following ingestion and contact with saliva. Stopping the current of the ingested battery reduces the problem to that of an inert object, such as a coin. This means that these batteries will no longer cause internal burns. The researchers obtained a patent for their technology in 2022.

"This technology is groundbreaking. If adopted, it would prevent deaths and severe injuries, in particular amongst young children," concluded the Jury.

Please read more about the research project [here](#)



² University of Groningen and the Technical University of Delft, the Netherlands

Silver Award (ex aequo)

Max Fuchs, Amit Jadhav, Advaith Jaishankar, Caroline Cauffman and Gerasimos Spanakis as well as Andreas Stöckl, Anna Maschek, Robert Bauer and Johanna Trauner-Karner⁴

Detection of product safety issues based on consumers' online reviews

Market surveillance of products has become increasingly difficult in the vast world of e-commerce, resulting in heightened risk of harm to consumers. At the same time, the large number of reviews left by online customers provides an important new source of product information. Both teams of researchers have harnessed online consumer reviews (derived from one of the big online marketplaces) to monitor the occurrence of safety-related issues in relevant product categories.

The work conducted by **Max Fuchs, Amit Jadhav, Advaith Jaishankar, Caroline Cauffman and Gerasimos Spanakis** combines online safety reviews with EU Safety Gate reports to produce an end-to-end framework, with specific application to consumer electronics. Annotations include a list of search terms ('smoke words') associated with unsafe products, and identification of the legal framework that each product should comply with. The dataset and the annotations will be open sourced in the near future to stimulate further research.

The work conducted by **Andreas Stöckl, Anna Maschek, Robert Bauer and Johanna Trauner-Karner** uses software that automatically downloads selected reviews into a database and harnesses natural language processing techniques to analyse the data quickly and efficiently. The GPT-3 artificial intelligence language model was applied to identify and summarise the safety risks and the BERTopic clustering algorithm was used to group the problems identified.

The two sets of research possess clear potential to improve consumer product safety. *"The frameworks developed to analyse consumer online complaints are of practical use for both companies and authorities,"* agreed the Jury. They are a useful tool for companies to monitor the safety of their products and to incorporate safer future designs. Furthermore, they can help policymakers to prioritise resources in terms of enforcement and to take more proactive measures.

Please read more about the two research projects [here](#) and [here](#)



³ Maastricht University, the Netherlands.

⁴ University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, and the Austrian Road Safety Board (KFV) Austria.



The EU Product Safety Award encourages and honours innovative business initiatives and research that make a difference for consumers. It's for those who put safety at the heart of what they do, setting an example that can inspire others.



European
Commission

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