



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on October 11, 2011

## New EU Child Safety Rules Govern Balloons and Whistles

Under a new European Union (EU) edict on toy safety, unsupervised children below the age of eight will no longer be permitted to blow up balloons due to choking hazards, according to Britain's Daily Telegraph. Balloons and other toys — including magnetic fishing games, toy lipsticks, and recorders — have been added to the expanding catalog of Euro Zone regulations that are further empowering the region's nanny state government.



The directive's official guidance [reads](#): "For latex balloons there must be a warning that children under eight years must be supervised and broken balloons should be discarded." Further, the EU's legislation uplifts restrictions on the loudness of noisy toys, like rattles or musical instruments; likewise, all teddy bears marketed for children under three-years-old must be fully washable, as to prevent spreading of diseases and infections. Critics note that such regulatory authority means the popular "Lots O' Hugging Bear" will be facing a ban if it does not undergo strict and costly new guidelines.

Despite their decades of entertainment, party toys such as small whistles and magnetic fishing games will be regulated, and possibly banned, because of small parts or dangerous chemicals that are allegedly hazardous to children's health. Indeed, the popular "paper tongue" whistle blowers, commonly used at birthday parties, are now "unsafe" for all children under the age of 14, due to the possibility of a child swallowing and choking on pieces of the whistle.

An EU official insisted that the government's safety experts know best, while an EU spokesman asserted that the "safety standards have been agreed by the UK together with the other EU member states in order to prevent every parent's worst nightmare." Another official stated, "You might say that small children have been blowing up balloons for generations, but not anymore and they will be safer for it."

Frank Furedi, a sociology professor at the renowned University of Kent, signaled that toy safety bans are a burgeoning legislative trend to micro-manage children's lives, while discounting their right to learn, explore, and develop both socially and independently. "Toys and activities, such as blowing up balloons, are part and parcel of the type of children's play that helps them become independent and self-reliant," Furedi averred. "These bans diminish the experience, both of having fun and learning, by



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turning play into a danger zone with rules that stifle life and adventure for children.”

Paul Nuttall, who retains a seat on the European Parliament’s consumer safety committee, called the EU’s authority a “kill joy” for children’s well-being. “I would say that this is crackers but [I’m] sure children are banned from using them too. EU party poopers should not be telling families how to blow up balloons,” he contended.

But such regulatory power not only robs children of their freedoms, but also the parents of EU children. Must the government circumvent a parent’s authority in protecting their children, critics ask? Is preaching to parents about the dangers of eating marbles really necessary, or for that matter, judicially moral?

Although EU officials have noted that governmental authorities cannot regulate how products are used in the home, the mere act of regulating will manipulate what retail stores are able to supply, as certain products will be lifted from the market due to inflated supply and manufacturing costs. Although not a direct “ban,” the aftereffects will surely lead to products being eliminated from the market.

For toy products that remain on the market, opponents suggest that the directive will undoubtedly hike consumer prices, due to new research and development needed to meet regulatory requirements. Suppliers have already warned that they will be increasing prices this Christmas to offset the costs of new tests mandated by the EU legislature. Clive Shelton, an expert on toy safety, [asserted](#), “The new provisions for suppliers to keep detailed technical information about their products are proving to be very challenging” — not to mention, very costly.



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