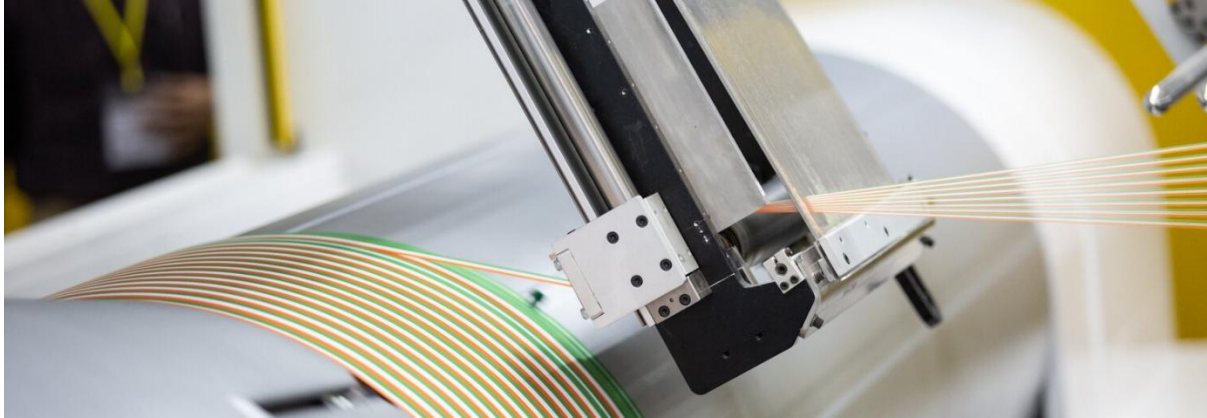


European textile machinery industry: Plea for stricter market surveillance



Enforce EU machinery related legislation.

The EU textile machinery industry appeals to EU authorities and member states to take market surveillance for textile machinery seriously, all over Europe. Textile machinery should be higher on the priority list for dedicated market surveillance actions given the safety risks for factory workers and threat to free competition on the EU market.

Demands

With vast and well-established EU machinery related legislation (e.g. MD, LVD, EMC, ATEX, Eco-design, REACH, GPSD, ...), the EU textile machinery industry demands EU authorities:

- Increase market surveillance efforts on textile machinery entering the European Internal market at important entry points like ports. Machinery exhibitions are another good place too. Inspectors can view hundreds of machines in one place. In addition, suspected cases are brought to them on a plate by European machinery producers.
- Member states with low activity levels should increase that level to match that of countries like Germany or Czech Republic to preserve the good functioning of the Single Market.
- As foreseen in the EU Market Surveillance Regulation, the European Commission should monitor and stimulate the uniformity of applied market surveillance procedures in the member states.
- The strikingly low level of inspections triggered at custom's requests, shows that here more work is required to inform and train customs to capture the signals of non-compliance in machinery. The Commission must step up to support customs. The development of the ICSMS is good step forward.

- End-users buying non-compliant machinery are frequently unaware of their responsibilities when installing & using such machinery. The Commission & member states should better inform end-users of the risks and repercussions they face when commissioning non-compliant machinery.
- Violations of the rules should be sanctioned. Manufacturers from third countries that import textile machinery found uncompliant with the EU machinery related legislation, should be obliged to undergo prior certification by a third-party body.
- Communicate to stakeholders how to and facilitate to inform market surveillance authorities of observed non-compliant machinery present in the market.
- Support the cooperation between industry, industry associations on the one hand and market surveillance authorities & customs on the other hand to increase efficiency of market surveillance operations. The installation of the Administrative Co-operation Groups (AdCos) is much appreciated.
- Establish an EU Market Surveillance Authority to better coordinate market surveillance across Member States, ADCO groups, testing laboratories and industry stakeholders with uniform priorities, , IT, testing and training for the different groups involved.

Unfair competition on the European market

To ensure that unsafe machines do not come onto the market and, as durable equipment endanger employees over a prolonged period of time, the industry expects from the legislators they prevent EU27 market access for not compliant machines.

In their endeavour to comply with EU regulations, the European textile machinery industry stretches itself. Developing, producing and putting on the market machinery that complies with the highest standards & regulations is expensive and translates in higher sales prices. At the same time, more machines from overseas are put on the EU27 market and European factory workers still encounter unsafe conditions.

To identify origins and types of non-compliant machinery, a survey among European textile machinery producers shows that China, Türkiye, and India are consistently identified as the main origins of non-compliant machinery. Braiding machines, calenders, compactors, digital printers, garmenting machines, spinning machines, squeezers and washing machines were highlighted as problematic. Noncompliant situations occur because of for example: missing covers for gear boxes, insufficient protective devices, presence of unsafe machine access, lack of overload monitoring, absence of safe speed, inadequate electrical systems and improperly implemented emergency stop systems.

As properly implementing safety measures on a machine easily adds 10% to 30% to the production cost, improperly implemented safety measures can give rise to unfair competition to the detriment of the safety of EU textile factory workers.

Market surveillance – progress for consumer goods, how about industrial goods?

Recent initiatives of the Commission like the update of the Market Surveillance regulation, the installation of the EU information and communication system for market surveillance (ICSMS) platform, the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products (Safety Gate) and the installation of the Administrative Co-operation Groups (AdCos) all contribute to a more effective market surveillance, though clearly, the focus is on consumer goods.

Meetings with national market surveillance authorities support our observations that market surveillance on textile machinery is no priority. Market surveillance authorities refer to the responsibility of employers when they purchase and install unsafe & non-compliant machinery in their textile factories and to the responsibility of the importer of overseas machinery. Unfair competition seems not to come into play.

The latest published assessment of the functioning of market surveillance activities for machinery, dates from 2013¹. The data indicates that machinery inspections by market surveillance authorities are always reactive, either after warning from peers, customers or substantiated complaints by industry concerning unfair competition. That aligns with our industry's perception that textile machinery is only inspected if a substantiated complaint is filed. In 2013, the number of machinery inspections were negligible in comparison to consumer products like toys or ...

No recent change ...

Recent ICSMS and Safety Gate searches seem to indicate that the 2013 attitude of market surveillance authorities has not changed. Industrial goods inspection still lags far behind consumer goods. Also, the Coordinated Activities on Safety of Products focus on consumer products.

ICSMS² data shows three out of 4 inspections detect non-compliant machinery. Such a high detection rate shows that a lot of free riders escape through the net and that the current level of market surveillance inspections on machinery is insufficient to assure a level playing field on the EU27 market.

Also, the difference in activity levels of the member states' market surveillance authorities remains. Where Germany, Czech Republic, Sweden and Spain have increased the number of investigations sharply, countries like Italy and France are lagging.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/13909/>

² https://single-market-scoreboard.ec.europa.eu/business-framework-conditions/market-surveillance_en

Global online marketplaces for reselling used-machinery

The well-established and increased growth of global online marketplaces for reselling used-machinery like Alibaba, Exapro and Kitmondo or online auctioneers is making it easier for used-machinery from outside the EU may to find its way to EU textile mills. Those machines as well need to be compliant with EU regulations and therefore, increase the workload on market surveillance for what, it needs to be prepared for.

Taking the matter in their own hands

Given the influx of noncompliant textile machinery from overseas, the European textile machinery industry has taken initiative.

To help customers making an informed purchase, ITMA the largest international textile machinery exhibition in the world, held every 4 years in Europe, adjusted its general terms for rental contracts for space at the exhibition with a procedure to uphold EU legislation on machine safety. In line with the legislation, exhibitors are forced to transparently communicate with visitors on the level of safety of their machines. In addition, a procedure is installed whereby a notified body is present during the exhibition to detect noncompliant issues. The procedures were installed in 2019, and the number of detected noncompliant issues has risen in the 2023 edition. Mostly non-compliant issues with CE markings and declarations are detected with overseas exhibitors. While a good procedure to deter foul play and imposing a level playing field at an exhibition, it is a drop on a hot plate.

Link with other industry initiatives.

Cematex supports the Orgalim Action plan for more effective market surveillance³ and hopes that EU authorities & member state make that work. Developing regulations without improper enforcement gives rise to unfair competition.

Cematex

Cematex (Comité Européen des Constructeurs de Machines Textiles) represents the interests of the European textile machinery industry. That industry counts over 850 manufacturing companies in Europe and includes SMEs as well as multinationals. They produce machines, parts and accessories for the complete textile production chain. In 2024, they exported machinery worth of 6 billion € to extra EU 27.

Contact at CEMATEX: Federico Pellegata, CEMATEX Secretary General (secgen@cematex.com)

³ <https://orgalim.eu/wp-content/uploads/Orgalims-Action-plan-for-more-effective-market-surveillance.pdf>