EU swimming aids/toys requirements

There are several requirements for “swimming aids/toys” in the EU. Due to their intended use products require a different safety approach. What are the requirements you have to comply with? For clarification we list the definitions and requirements:

1) Buoyant aids for swimming instruction: Personal protective equipment (89/686/EEC)

For buoyant aids intended for swimming instruction and to be worn on the body the standard EN 13138-1: 2003 is applicable.

Buoyant aids to be worn as defined in EN 13138-1 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garment</th>
<th>Collar</th>
<th>Arm bands (pair)</th>
<th>Chest belt or Ring</th>
<th>Backpack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Garment Image]</td>
<td>![Collar Image]</td>
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The EU Standard specifies safety requirements for construction, performance, sizing and marking for swimming aids intended to assist users with movement through the water whilst learning to swim or whilst learning part of a swimming stroke. It also gives methods of test for verification of these requirements.

Buoyant aids intended for swimming instruction to be worn are regarded as Personal Protective Equipment (89/686/EEC). The PPE directive is a new approach directive requiring CE-marking. Buoyant aids intended for swimming instruction to be worn are classified as category II Personal Protective Equipment. This implies that the products must be EC type-examined by a Notified Body. SGS Bradford in the UK is a Notified Body for Personal Protective Equipment.

2) Buoyant aids for swimming instruction to be held: General Product Safety Directive (2001/95/EEC)

Other buoyancy aids for swimming instruction NOT to be worn on the body but held (like foam boards) are excluded as PPE according to the PPE Guidelines published by the EU Commission (for more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/mechan_equipment/ppe/index.htm) For these products standard EN 13138-2:2002 applies. EN 13138-2: 2002 “Safety requirements and test methods for buoyant aids to be held” is published under the General Product Safety Directive. if a product complies with EN 13138-2 it is presumed to be safe.


Floating seats are designed to support babies while enjoying the water with their parents. They must be used under constant adult supervision, preferably within arm’s reach. The EC Commission Expert Group on Toy Safety has defined floating seats as: “Floating seats are learning devices, and not toys. The General Product Safety Directive covers them”. Floating seats may not be confused with toys. Child appealing decorations like on the shown examples are not allowed in the EU. See also EC guidance document no 2. http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/toys/eg_guidance.htm
Standard EN 13138-3: “Safety requirements and test methods for swim seats” applies for floating seats, but is not published under the General Product Safety Directive. It can be used as a voluntary standard as part of a risk assessment procedure.


An aquatic toy is any product, whether inflatable or not, intended to bear the mass of a child and used as an instrument of play in shallow water.

Aquatic toys must bear a warning instructing parents that the toys must be used in water in which a child is within its depth and under supervision of an adult. Other products like large inflatable boats which because of their size and design are intended to be used in deep water, are not considered as toys. For France the size of toy boats and mattress is limited to a maximum of 120 cm (there is no size limit for big toy animals).

Aquatic toys must comply with the EU toy directive 88/378/EEC and the relevant standards EN 71. The toy directive is a new approach directive requiring CE-marking.

SGS can help you to fulfil EU requirement on swimming aids/toys.

For information, please contact our large network of toy laboratories in Asia, US and Europe, among which 4 Notified Bodies:

♦ SGS UK (Bradford)
♦ SGS France (Clichy)
♦ SGS NL (Spijkenisse)
♦ SGS DE (Tüv Saarland)

For EC-type examination, please note our UK laboratory in Bradford is also Notified Body for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).