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Standards for playground surfaces should better reflect the balance between play and protection against falls

Falls from playground equipment were the focus of an international conference hosted yesterday by TÜV AUSTRIA, a third party inspection, testing & certification body, and ANEC, the European consumer voice in standardisation.

Children fall everywhere: most often at home; when cycling, skiing or skating; and when using playground equipment. The European playground standards, EN 1176 and EN 1177 set a balance between the need to offer learning and leisure challenges, and the need to keep children safe from serious injuries. Both standards are now about to be revised.

During the conference, experts presented and discussed critical aspects of safety and new findings from tests for all types of playground surfaces, in front of a high-level international audience comprising representatives from manufacturers, playground operators and inspectors, standards bodies, consumer organisations, test houses and public authorities.

Stephen Russell, ANEC Secretary General, commented: "Play is vital in a child's development. Regrettably, still too many serious injuries are caused by falls in playgrounds. Many could be prevented by the technical measures now available. Hence the performance of playground surfacing must be reconsidered during the revision of the standards".

As Rolf Huber from Canada stressed, "Surfacing is like an airbag in cars – a passive safety system: in the case of an impact from a fall it will absorb part of the energy and reduce the injuries".

Adolf Russold, TÜV AUSTRIA, and convener of CEN TC 136 SC1 WG1¹, stressed the need for post-installation inspections of the impact attenuation surface, prior to its first use. He said: "A risk benefit analysis, to reach a balance between safety and offering a sufficient level of challenge and stimulation to all groups of users, remains an essential part of the improvements needed in our standards".

[Link to the conference web page and program](#)

¹ CEN TC 136 SC1 WG1 is a working group within CEN, the European Committee for Standardization, which deals with European standardization for playground equipment and surfacing.

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Raising Standards for Consumers

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ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and conformity assessment, as well as related legislation and public policies.

ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and represents consumer organisations in 33 European countries.

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