

Experiences with annual statistics on dangerous technical products

Monitoring of product-deficiencies

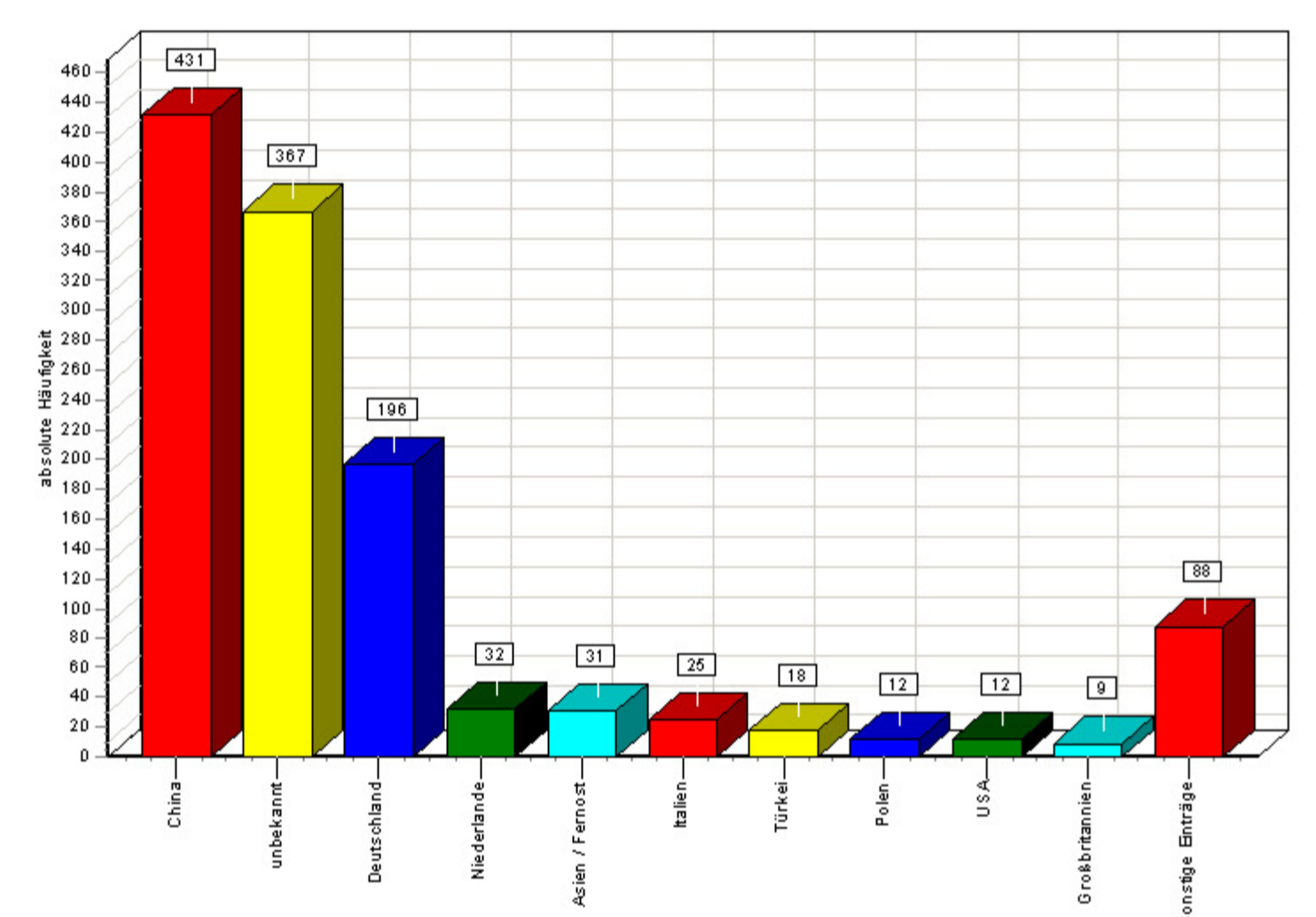
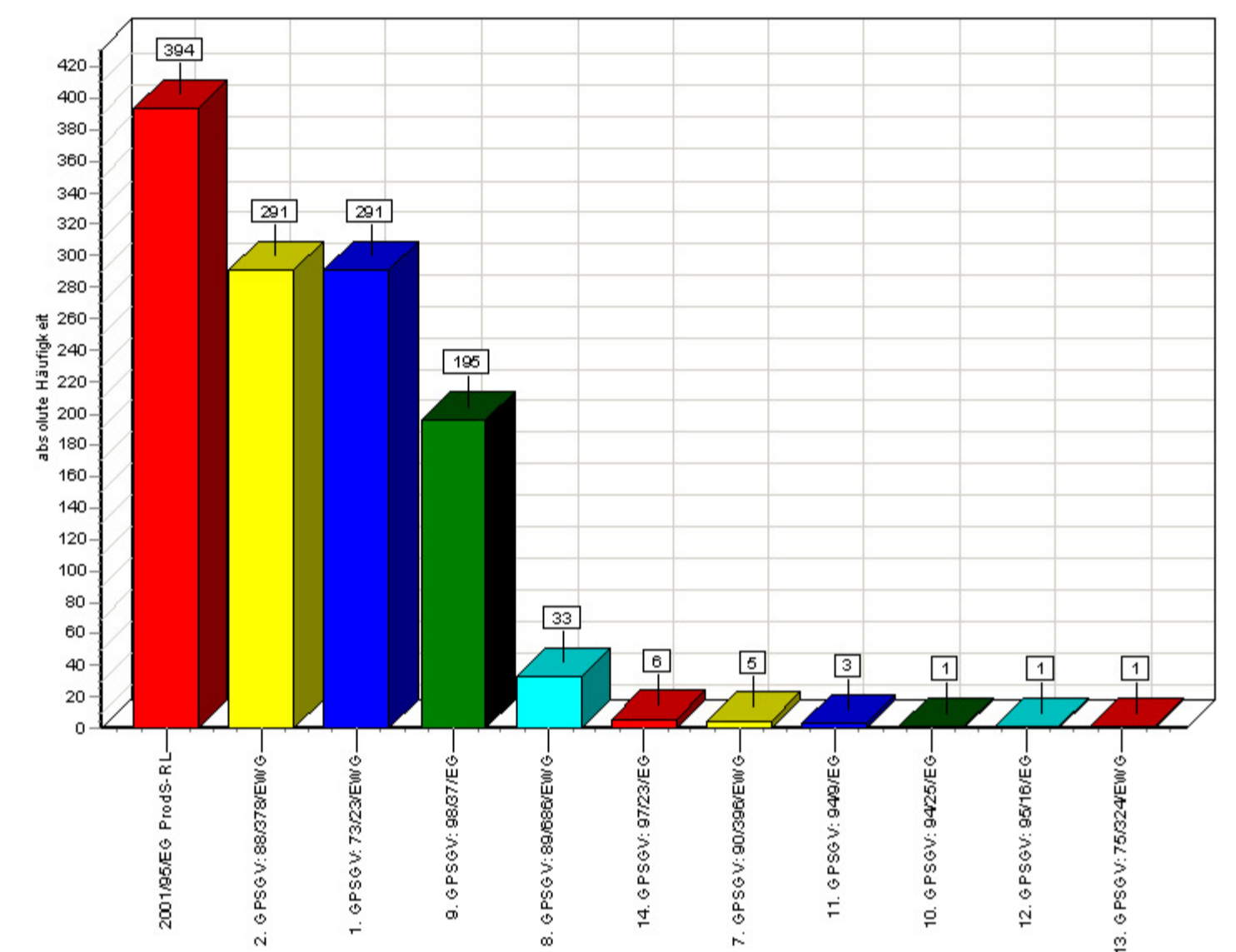
In the German „Act on Technical Work Equipment and Consumer Products –GPSG“ the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA), is designated as the national “delegated body”.

Among others this means primarily that BAuA has to run the national “focal point” for dangerous products and is responsible for the just-in-time- RAPEX and Safeguard Clause-information- exchange between the other EU-memberstates and the German market surveillance (via EU-Commission).

This focal point function also gives good opportunity for BAuA to support the authorities by conducting scientific and statistical analyses of deficiencies on nearly all technical products found in Germany by the market surveillance authorities.

So BAuA is analyzing permanently the collected data from the following sources:

- National RAPEX- notifications
- National notifications on fatal accidents at work in conjunction with technical products
- Daily newspaper- reports on incidents with technical products in Germany and publishes it regularly in an own „information service“.



Questions to be analyzed:

The analysis of the data include several questions, eg.:

- to which directives belong the notified dangerous product? (see figure above right, data from 2007)
- which hazards or risks occur with the product?
- from which country does the dangerous product come from? (see figure middle right, data from 2007)
- which product- subgroups are the most dangerous?
- what is the presumed reason of the accident/incident?

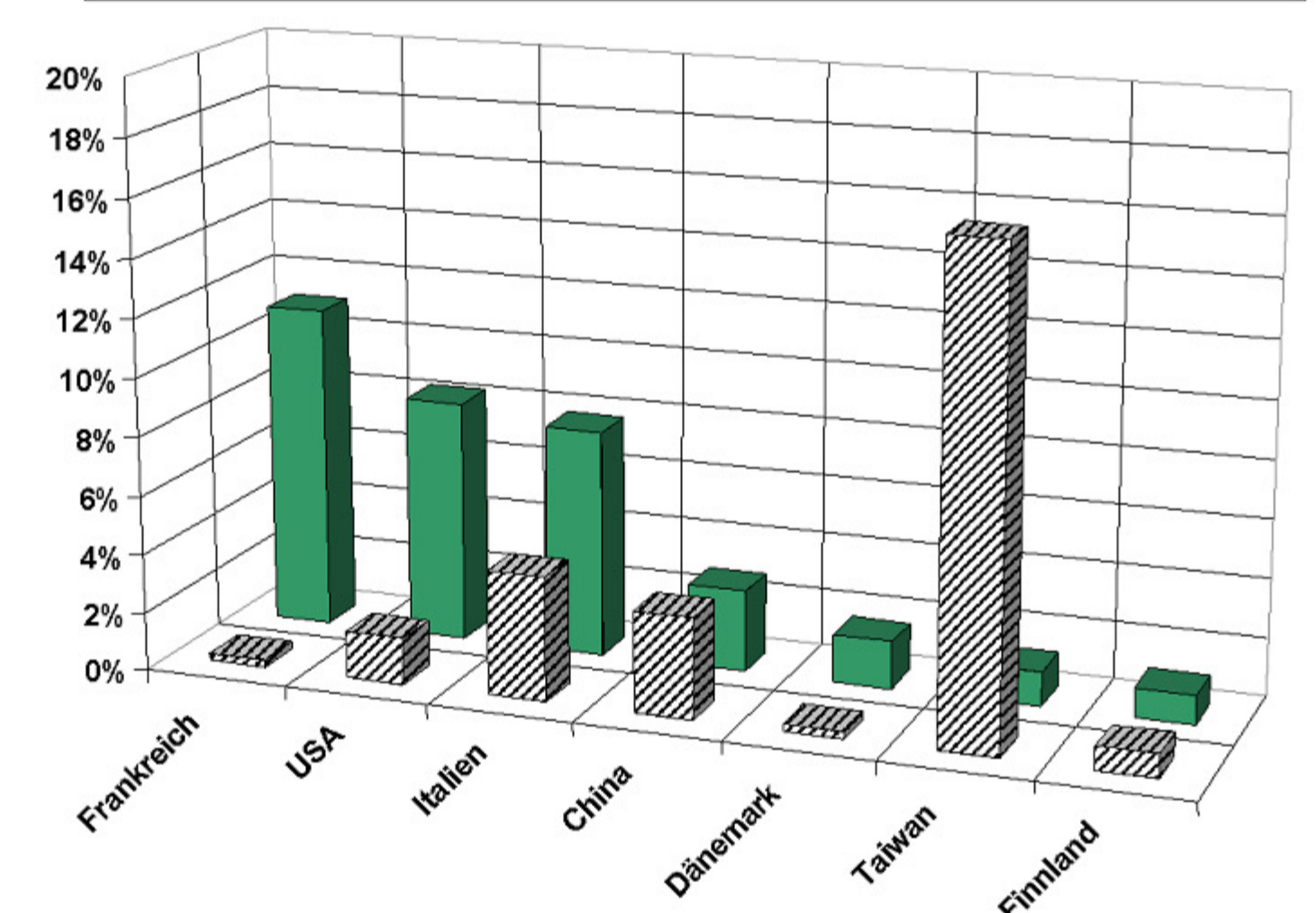
Computerized statistics or „brain support“

Although there are existing computer based automatic analysis-routines (e.g. in ICSMS) the additional “brain”-support done by safety-experts will never be superfluous.

Reasons:

- Depending on different brand or product-names used by different companies for the same product-type an automatic system will generate also different product-categories instead of one single.
- The descriptions of the type of the dangers, risks and hazards are very often a “mixture” between the source and the consequences.
- At present time it is impossible to run an automatic product classification and -definition system (Thesaur) which is harmonized between the different authorities involved.
- Some results about the origin of certain dangerous products may cause unserious political or emotional discussions (e.g. poor safety of imported products).
- Risk classification of the same product-type varies from one expert to another

■ Anteil an den Einfuhrwerten nach Deutschland in 1998
▨ Anteil an den Untersuchungsverfügungen in Deutschland von 1993 bis 1999



Conclusions

Statistics of product deficiencies can be a very helpful mean for the market surveillance authorities when planning eg. their annual action- and prevention programs.

But for its adequate use it will be very important to know more about the risk-reality, specifically:

- by checking the circumstances why, when (and by whom!) the information about a dangerous product was generated,
 - by including the market volume in the risk assessment procedure, (see figure below right)
 - by using harmonized risk assessment methods (eg. from the RAPEX-Guidelines).
- and last but not least:
- BY ASKING THE ADEQUATE QUESTIONS