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High-Tech Gifts Under the Christmas Tree: VDE Offers Tips on Safety and Sustainability

Millions of low-cost electronic products from platforms such as Temu, AliExpress, and Wish find their way into European households during the Christmas season. The VDE recommends not focusing solely on price when making a purchase. Independent certification marks, transparent manufacturer information, and durable products provide important guidance regarding safety, quality, and sustainability.

(Frankfurt am Main, November 27, 2026) The pre-Christmas season is traditionally one of the strongest sales periods for online retail. Electronics and electrical products, in particular, are increasingly being sold directly to consumers via international online platforms such as Temu, AliExpress, or Wish—not just on and around Black Friday. These products, also known as “Fast Tech,” are often characterized by one feature: a very attractive price. “A low price can result in problems with a product’s safety, quality, or lifespan,” says Hendrik Schäfer of the VDE Institute. “Whether an electrical or electronic product is safe, durable, and reliable often only becomes apparent in everyday use.”

According to figures from the European Commission, in 2024 approximately 4.6 billion small shipments with a value of less than 150 euros reached the EU, predominantly from China. This corresponds to an average of about 12 million shipments per day.

From the perspective of VDE expert Hendrik Schäfer, products that plug into the mains, chargers, battery-powered products, and devices with high electrical power deserve special attention. Defects in design, material quality, or electrical safety can not only impair the product’s lifespan but, in the worst case, also lead to property damage or endanger people.

“Especially when it comes to electrical and electronic products, independent certification marks provide an important indicator of quality and safety,” says Hendrik Schäfer. Certification marks

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such as the GS mark or the VDE certification mark confirm that a product has been tested by an independent body and meets specified requirements. “Certification marks provide consumers with reliable guidance when making a purchase.” According to Schäfer, complete and transparent information about the manufacturer and importer, as well as return and warranty conditions, is also a good sign, as are German-language operating and safety instructions.

European manufacturers are increasingly investing in sustainability, repairability, and product safety. For consumers, this often pays off in the form of longer-lasting products and better repair options. Many particularly inexpensive electronic products offer neither replacement parts nor repair options. “The old adage our grandparents knew still holds true here: If you buy cheap, you often end up buying twice,” says Schäfer. Consumers should therefore check for available replacement parts and repair options before making a purchase. Indicators here can include, for example, screw-fastened (rather than glued) casings, as well as the use of standardized parts such as a USB charging cable.

“Not only during the holiday season, it’s worth asking what’s really behind a supposed bargain,” Hendrik Schäfer summarizes. “Those who pay attention not only to price but also to safety, quality, and transparent documentation are not only making a decision about a single product but are also supporting sustainable consumption, fair competition, and a strong European economy.”

VDE Checklist for Buying Electronics

- Is there a GS or VDE certification mark?
- Are the manufacturer and importer clearly identified?
- Is there a German user manual?
- Are the warranty and return conditions clear?
- Are replacement parts and repair options available?

About the VDE Institute:

The VDE mark is synonymous with safety and quality in electrical devices, components and systems for more than 100 years. The VDE Institute - a subsidiary of the VDE Group - is a worldwide partner for industry customers, business, government authorities, the electrical trade and consumers. More than 100,000 devices per year are subjected to product, quality and safety tests by the VDE Institutes independent testing engineers before they receive the VDE mark. Around the globe, VDE experts monitor more than 7,000 production facilities. Cooperation agreements with more than 50 countries ensure that the tests performed by the VDE Institute are internationally recognized. 200,000 types of products with millions of model variants bear the VDE mark worldwide. The VDE Testing and Certification Institute GmbH, a non-profit organization, employs more than 500 people in Offenbach am Main.

For more information, visit www.vde.com/institute

About VDE:

VDE, one of the largest technology organizations in Europe, has been regarded as a synonym for innovation and technological progress for more than 130 years. VDE is the only organization in the world that combines science, standardization, testing, certification, and application consulting under one umbrella. The VDE mark has been synonymous with the highest safety standards and consumer protection for more than 100 years.

Our passion is the advancement of technology, the next generation of engineers and technologists, and lifelong learning and career development “on the job”. Within the VDE network more than 2,000 employees at over 60 locations worldwide, more than 100,000 honorary experts, and around 1,500 companies are dedicated to ensuring a future worth living: networked, digital, electrical. Shaping the e-dialistic future.

The VDE (VDE Association for Electrical, Electronic & Information Technologies) is headquartered in Frankfurt am Main. For more information, visit www.vde.com

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