



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health
Health information and integration in all policies

Luxembourg
SANTE.DDG1.C.2/GG/527982

Ms Pernille Schriver
Biologist
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Per e-mail:
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Dear Ms Schriver,

Commissioner Kyriakides would like to thank you for your email of 19 December 2021 on the Nordic Appeal from 11 NGOs and has asked me to reply on her behalf.

While acknowledging your concerns, I feel that the fact that exposure limits for the general are 50 times lower than the emission levels for which health effect may start to be seen (according to WHO estimates) should provide reassurance. These exposure limits have been in place since the adoption of the Council Recommendation of 12 July 1999, which sets out basic restrictions and reference levels for the exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (EMF).

The restrictions in place and the safety assessments are not regarded as being set in stone, but would be considered up for revision should the scientific evidence indicate that revisions were called for. To date, this has not been the case. All of the scientific assessments have concluded that the existing limits are extremely conservative and more than adequately protect the health of EU citizens.

Specifically, I am referring to the Scientific Opinions published by the Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks (SCHEER) and its predecessor, the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR), who conduct assessments at the request of the European Commission. All of the Opinions confirmed the validity of the reference levels of the 1999 Council Recommendation, which are based on the 1998 guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

Committee members working on these Opinions are independent and free from any bias that might preclude them from taking on this responsibility. Committee members must declare any conflict of interest that may prevent them from being impartial, and the Commission goes to great lengths to cross-check the members' activities and background. Any violation of full disclosure would lead to permanent expulsion from the Committee and would seriously discredit the violator's professional reputation.

You may also be happy to learn that the Commission also actively supports research on the potential health effects of EMF. A call for proposals has been recently launched with an indicative budget of €30 million under the new Research and Innovation Framework Horizon Europe¹.

In June 2021, the Commission mandated the SCHEER to provide a new Opinion on the need for a technical revision of the annexes to the Council Recommendation 1999/519/EC for the frequency range 100 kHz to 300 GHz in view of the latest scientific evidence available. In addition, the Commission is currently exploring the option of mandating the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (Scientific Advice Mechanism-SAM) to deal with the wider and longer-term study of EMF aspects and fill any scientific gaps.

Yet another valuable resource should be implemented by March of this year, the “*Connectivity Toolbox*”². This is a toolbox of best practices put together by Member States in line with *Commission Recommendation EU 2020/1307*³ that promotes continuous scientific research on EMF and targeted communication to inform and educate the European citizens on 5G implementation. It also aims to inform the public about the compliance of radio base stations, including 5G base stations, with the applicable EMF safe levels.

The research promoted in the above mentioned Toolbox is science-based and peer-reviewed, and conducted at the highest levels. But while this research is continually ongoing, so are efforts to fight against widespread disinformation. The Commission, together with the Member States, is also developing further ideas to fight disinformation on the internet and on social media, focusing the debate on scientific facts, to properly inform citizens on the state of protection against EMF exposure. In this vein, the Commission issued a Guidance⁴ (in May 2021) on strengthening the “*EU Code of Practice on Disinformation*”.

With regard to technology developments, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that usage of EU-harmonised frequency bands for 4G and 5G (below 6 GHz) is subject to mean power limits for mobile terminals (including smart phones).

It is also important to note that the Commission’s integral policy on incentivising deployment of Very High-Capacity Networks (both fibre and 5G), has recently borne fruit in the adoption of the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC)⁵. Therefore, fibre deployment should be accomplished to the utmost (economic) extent possible, e.g. fibre to the home and in particular fibre to the base station, in order to ensure high network capacity but also to minimise EMF exposure.

¹ [HORIZON-HLTH-2021-ENVHLTH-02-0](#): Exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF) and health

² <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/connectivity-toolbox-member-states-agree-best-practices-boost-timely-deployment-5g-and-fibre>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32020H1307>

⁴ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/guidance-strengthening-code-practice-disinformation>

⁵ [Directive \(EU\) 2018/1972 \(EECC or ‘the Code’\)](#).

I hope that this very brief summary of our activities in this field reassure you that protecting EU citizens against any potential health effect of EMF is of paramount importance for the European Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Philippe ROUX
Head of Unit