



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Public Health and Risk Assessment
Risk assessment

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON EMERGING AND NEWLY IDENTIFIED HEALTH RISKS (SCENIHR)

1ST PLENARY MEETING

*Held on 27 March 2009
in Brussels*

MINUTES

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY THE COMMISSION

The Secretariat opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Prof. P. Hoet and Prof. K. Schulze-Osthoff. The Secretariat chaired the first part of the meeting until the election of the Chair and Vice Chairs was concluded.

All participants briefly introduced themselves, presenting their professional background, affiliations and areas of scientific expertise.

It was agreed to add a presentation on working practices and on working conditions. Furthermore, it was agreed to combine the ongoing and forthcoming activities and the preliminary work programme into one item on the agenda.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Secretariat explained that templates for the annual declaration of interests will be sent to members after the meeting. These should be completed, signed and returned to the Secretariat. However, members were asked to declare at the meeting interests on issues which are on the agenda such as the new mandates.

Prof. M.-O. Mattsson declared that in relation to the discussion on electromagnetic fields (EMF) he had in the past received funding on health effects of mobile phones via the government (*Bundesamt für Strahlenschutz*, Germany) that was co-financed by industry. At present, he is receiving governmental funding for research on health effects of extremely low frequency (ELF) EMF (*Bundesamt für Strahlenschutz*, Germany). Furthermore, he is currently an external advisor for *Wissenschaftsbeirat Funk* in Austria, an independent expert group financed by a governmental ministry. Financial compensation is received on an hourly basis for preparing background material for a consensus report. In addition, he is advising two Swedish private companies (TeliaSonera and Pelagia AB) on health effects of mobile communication and environmental toxicology. No financial compensation is received except for expenses in relation to meetings.

In relation to the discussion on antimicrobial resistance Dr. J.-M. Pagès mentioned his participation as Chair in a COST-Action (BM0701) on antibiotic resistance and bacterial efflux mechanisms.

Taking into account the nature of all the declarations, the Committee decided that they did not constitute a conflict of interest and that Prof. Mattsson and Dr. Pagès could participate in the discussions on those matters.

Following a general discussion on the interests to be declared, members were reminded that high quality of scientific expertise is by nature based on prior experience and that therefore having an interest does not necessarily mean having a conflict of interest. However, for the sake of transparency members are asked to be as detailed and comprehensive as possible when declaring their interests. In particular, interests related to funding from industry and a decision making role in companies should be declared.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE PROCEDURE FOR THE ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIRS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Secretariat explained that as required by Article 10 of Commission Decision 2008/721/EC of 5 September 2008 setting up the current Scientific Committees in the field of consumer safety, public health and the environment, the committee should elect a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen by simple majority of the members that make up the committee.

Candidates could either nominate themselves for consideration or be nominated by another member of the Committee.

4. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIRS OF THE COMMITTEE

A record of the election procedure is included in Annex II.

The candidates made a short motivation statement. Prof. J. Bridges was elected as Chairman. Prof. P. Hartemann and Dr. W. de Jong were elected as vice-Chairmen.

The re-elected Chairman and Vice-Chairmen thanked members for their confidence. The Chairman briefly illustrated the principal areas of activity of the Committee.

5. WORKING PROCEDURES AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEES

It was agreed to add a presentation on working practices and on working conditions. Furthermore, it was agreed to combine the ongoing and forthcoming activities and the preliminary work programme into one item on the agenda.

5.1. Working Practices

The Secretariat presented the process of developing a scientific opinion by the non-food Scientific Committees. The presentation addressed the various steps in the process, starting from a mandate to a final opinion, including a description of the roles of the various players involved, relevant working procedures, and practical issues.

5.2. Working Conditions - Expenses and indemnities

The Secretariat outlined the modalities for reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs. Members, scientific advisors from the Pool and external experts are entitled to a special indemnity for attendance at meetings as set out

in Annex III of Commission Decision 2008/721/EC. Furthermore, Rapporteurs are entitled to an indemnity as set out in the same Annex.

6. PRESENTATION BY THE COMMISSION OF THE ONGOING AND FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES / PRELIMINARY WORK PROGRAMME OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 2009

The Secretariat presented the preliminary work programme, in particular the mandates already received, planned submission of mandates on other topics and other activities involving SCENIHR. In particular, the following two activities were discussed:

6.1. Scientific Hearing on Nanotechnologies

In support of the future work of the Committee, following the scientific opinions of SCCP and SCENIHR, the European Commission would organise a one-day scientific hearing on 10 September 2009 in Brussels. The aim is to identify future issues that might be addressed by EU Risk Assessment Committees and Bodies. In preparation for this hearing, the Commission would launch a public consultation.

The outcome of the consultation will be presented at the Scientific Hearing.

The public consultation is available at the following webpage:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihhr/scenihhr_cons_10_en.htm

6.2. EFSA - Guidance document on food decontamination¹

Upon request by EFSA, one of the members of SCENIHR who was participating as an expert in the relevant Working Group had been designated to represent the SCENIHR in this work. He provided an update on the discussions to members.

7. NEW MANDATES

7.1. Mercury Sphygmomanometers

Representatives of DG ENTR provided information on the background of the request. In accordance with Directive 2007/51/EC (point 3 of entry 19a on mercury), the Commission is asked to review the availability of reliable safer alternatives for mercury containing sphygmomanometers and other measuring devices. A good balance between protecting the general population from adverse effects of mercury through the environment and protecting patients' health requiring accurate blood pressure measurement would need to be achieved. Following a request by the European Parliament and the Council, the

¹ Revision of the joint CEF/BIOHAZ guidance document on the submission of data for the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of substances for the removal of microbial surface contamination of foods of animal origin intended for human consumption. (EFSA-2009-Q-00196)

Commission should review the issue by 3 October 2009. To support this review the SCENIHR was asked to prepare an opinion on this matter.

Members discussed the mandate and provided feedback to Commission services. The SCENIHR set up a Working Group and appointed a Chairperson. Members also identified additional expertise that would be needed for the task. This and the need for a call for information would be further discussed in the first WG-meeting. Given the deadline of the request, it was agreed that no Public Consultation would be carried out.

The final version of the mandate is available at the following webpage:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_q_018.pdf

7.2. Research Priorities on electromagnetic fields (EMF)

A representative of DG SANCO provided information on the background of the request. In line with Council Recommendation 1999/519/EC, the Commission has monitored the state of science to assess whether the proposed exposure limits are adequate for public health protection. This task has been performed successively by independent Scientific Committees, the last two by SCENIHR. The latest SCENIHR-opinion delivered in January 2009 confirmed the conclusions of the previous assessments, i.e. there is so far no scientific evidence that calls for a revision of current exposure limits. However, the SCENIHR also referred to certain limitations in the database available. More research is needed to resolve the uncertainties leading to scientific debates and unreasonable calls for the application of the precautionary principle.

As a result, and in order for the Commission to be in a position to propose the most relevant topics on this issue for funding in the next calls of 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) and other funding schemes, the Committee is requested to propose a research strategy on this issue.

Members discussed the mandate, set up a Working Group and appointed a Chairperson. Members also identified additional experts in the Pool of Scientific Advisors and the Database of Experts to support the task. Given the short deadline of the request, it was agreed that no Public Consultation would be carried out.

The final version of the mandate is available at the following webpage:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_q_017.pdf

7.3. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) focussed on zoonotic infections

A representative of DG SANCO provided information on the background of the request. Conclusions of the Council, adopted in June 2008, call upon the Commission and Member States to act in the area of healthcare associated infections, monitoring and control of AMR in humans and animals/food. To get an overview about the scientific state of play in the area of AMR, EFSA, EMEA, ECDC and SCENIHR are requested to provide a common scientific report on a set of related questions. These should consider also the scientific reports that were recently published by European and international scientific bodies.

SCENIHR nominated members to participate in this joint work. Further questions on the Terms of Reference and the organization of this work would be discussed in the next meeting with the other bodies. SCENIHR expressed their concern about the deadline which was considered quite short.

The final version of the mandate is available at the following webpage:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_q_019.pdf

7.4. Tobacco Additives

A representative of DG SANCO provided information on the background of the request. Article 12 of the Tobacco Products Directive (2001/37/EC) invites the Commission to submit a proposal providing a common list of ingredients authorised for tobacco products, taking into account, inter alia, their addictiveness.

In its comments to a Green Paper², the European Parliament invited the Commission to propose an amendment to the Tobacco Products Directive (2001/37/EC) including an evaluation and authorisation procedure for tobacco additives and an immediate ban on all additives that are addiction-enhancing. In its 2nd Report on the implementation of the Tobacco Products Directive the Commission stressed the need for further work on addictiveness. DG SANCO would like to obtain a better understanding of the criteria based on which an additive can be considered (classified) as addictive and/or attractive, the role of additives in tobacco products and the role of design features in the attractiveness and addictiveness of a tobacco product. Therefore, a related request to SCENIHR is currently in preparation. The Committee is asked as a first step to provide guidance and feedback on the draft terms of reference. The SCENIHR set up a Working Group and appointed a Chairperson. The topic and practical arrangements would be further discussed at the next meeting.

8. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT MEETINGS

The following meeting dates were agreed for 2009:

28 May, 6 July, 23 September, 25 November 2009.

Members were asked to develop their ideas on potential emerging issues and send them to the Secretariat for the next meeting. To this end, a template will be sent to all members.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members expressed their wish to systematically publish the opinions of SCENIHR in appropriate fora (e.g. journals) and ask the EC to provide the necessary resources.

The international activities to collaborate on emerging issues should be discussed at the next plenary meeting.

Annex I: List of Participants.

Annex II: Election of Chair and Vice-chairs

² "Towards a Europe free from tobacco smoke: policy options at EU level" (see http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/health_forum/docs/ev_20071128_rd03_en.pdf)

Annex I

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS OF THE SCENIHR:

Prof. A. AUVINEN, Prof. J. BRIDGES (Chair), Prof. K. DAWSON, Dr. W. DE JONG (Vice chair), Prof. P. HARTEMANN (Vice chair), Dr. T. JUNG, Prof. M.-O. MATTSSON, Dr. H. NORPPA, Dr. J.-M. PAGÈS, Prof. A. PROYKOVA, Prof. E. RODRÍGUEZ-FARRÉ, Dr. J. SCHÜZ, Prof. D. STAHL, Dr. M. THOMSEN, T. VERMEIRE

EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

SCENIHR Secretariat (DG SANCO):

Mr. L. BONTOUX, Ms. K. BROMEN, Ms. N. FOUVEZ, Mr. A. GARKOV, Ms. A. KANELLOPOULOU, Mr. P. MARTIN.

Other Commission staff:

Mr. A. BOENKE (DG ENTR) Ms. I. DEMADE (DG ENTR), Mr. K. DE SMETS (DG SANCO), Ms. T. PEETSO (DG SANCO), Mr. S. PICKERING (DG ENTR), Ms. M. PUOLAMAA (DG ENTR)

Annex II

Election of Chair and Vice-chairs

Appointed members of the Committee were asked to express an interest of candidature for (vice) chairmanship in writing prior to the meeting. In addition, during the meeting members were given an opportunity to announce their candidature or to nominate other members. Nominated candidates were asked whether they agreed to stand in the election. Candidates were invited to give a short motivation statement. The chair and two vice-chairs were elected in separate, secret votes.

Chairman

Prof. Jim Bridges was the only candidate for chairmanship. He was unanimously elected as the Chairman. The members voted by secret ballot.

Vice-Chairmen

Prof. Philippe Hartemann and Dr. Wim de Jong expressed their interest in vice-chairmanship. Both were elected as Vice-Chairmen in two separate votes by majority of members. The members voted by secret ballot.