

Further research into Electromagnetic Fields is necessary, scientific committee concludes

The European Commission has published today an opinion of the scientific committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENHIR) on the possible health risks of Electromagnetic Fields (EMF). The opinion does not reveal new evidence of risks but makes recommendations for further research to be carried out in certain areas. The Commission will follow-up on this recommendation in research work planned under the 7th Research Framework Programme. The opinion by SCENHIR focuses primarily on whether health effects occur at low exposure levels, and in particular in relation to long term exposure. The opinion concludes that no health effects have been consistently demonstrated for radio frequency fields (e.g. for mobile phones) below the limits set in Community legislation, although the data available is limited. For intermediate frequency fields (e.g. for video display units), the data is sparse and proper evaluation of possible long term effects is important. For extremely low frequency (ELF) fields (e.g. household appliances or nearby power lines), the opinion confirms the conclusion from its 2001 opinion that ELF magnetic fields are possibly carcinogenic, mostly based on occurrence of childhood leukaemia. The opinion concludes that an association with heart disease and breast cancer is unlikely and with neurodegenerative diseases and brain tumours is uncertain. The existing data for static fields (e.g. in hospital applications) is inadequate and developments require risk assessments in relation to occupational exposure. On environmental effects, there is insufficient data to identify whether a single exposure standard is appropriate to protect all environmental species. In view of the gaps in knowledge identified in the opinion, the SCENHIR proposes further and appropriate research to be conducted, which will be taken into account by the Commission. The opinion can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihir/04_scenihir_en.htm