

# **Scientific Committee for Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR)**

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# Nature of SCENIHR activities

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**Mandate.** Emerging or newly identified risks, broad, complex or multi-disciplinary issues requiring a comprehensive assessment of the risks to the safety of consumers and/or to public health

**Questions.** All questions come from the Commission. Many involve several DG's. As a consequence there may be a delay in formulating the question(s)

# Functioning of the SCENIHR

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- **Plenary meetings 7-9 per year**

SCENIHR has 12 Members with expertise in: toxicology, environmental health, epidemiology, public health, biology, physics, chemistry, engineering, veterinary and human medicine, microbiology, haematology/ immunology

- **Working groups.**

Used for each question. Each working group is comprised principally of external experts.

# **SCENIHR relies on published scientific information to address the questions**

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## **Sources**

- provide from the Commission archives,
- collected by members themselves
- supplied by stakeholders as a result of calls for information

# Areas dealt with by SCENIHR

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- new technologies (e.g. nanotechnologies)
- medical devices, tissue engineering, blood products
- chemical and biological hazards
- physical hazards eg electromagnetic fields
- health trends eg fertility reduction
- methodologies for assessing new risks eg interactions

# Current and new issues for the SCENIHR work on risk assessments

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## Current work

- Nanotechnologies
- EMF
- Smokeless Tobacco Products
- Plasticisers in medical devices

## New work

- Dental amalgams
- Biocide resistance

# **Example of a SCENIHR Opinion on a broad question:**

## **Safety of engineered nanoparticles**

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### *What are the risks from nanomaterials?*

- The available literature on human and environmental health risks has been analysed
- A risk assessment methodology (human and environmental health) has been proposed which appears to have widespread support.
- Priorities for research have been identified that address major areas of uncertainty
- Through this and related work, the EU has established a lead role worldwide in safety aspects of the nanotechnologies

# Example of SCENIHR Opinion on a precise question : Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)

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***Do the exposure limits set in 1998 need to be changed***

**RF fields.** No scientific reasons to change the exposure limits. Nonetheless particular precautions should be taken to protect young children as they may be more sensitive to EMF from mobile phones

**IFR fields.** The data is inadequate to identify a safe level

**ELF fields.** Possibly carcinogenic based on 1990's epidemiology data on childhood leukaemia.

**Static fields.** The data are inadequate to identify a safe level



# Challenges for the SCENIHR and for the Commission

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- To demonstrate independence and transparency in all SC activities
- To attract and retain the leading specialists for SCENIHR and its working parties
- To harmonise with the methodology across the EU scientific committees
- To obtain relevant data held by other parts of the Commission.
- To establish effective procedures for communicate with stakeholders

# Conclusions

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- The work of SCENIHR is very challenging and interesting. It requires an input from many specialists
- SCENIHR has produced highly influential reports across a broad range of health issues. It has an ongoing brief on various questions such as nanotechnology and EMF.
- There is good co-operation with other scientific committees.

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