

Tunisia

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Background

The republic of Tunisia covers a land of 162 155 sq. Kms.

July 1st, 2009	Population estimated (millions)	10.434
2008	Life expectancy age (year)	74.3
	Population national growth (%)	1.19
	Urban population share (%)	65.8
	Electricity connection rate (%)	99.4
	Drinking water supply rate (%)	97.8
	Sewage network connection rate (communal areas) (%)	82.4
1900	Introduction of fixe telephone	
1992	Introduction of mobile telephone	

Tunisia was ranked 1st in Africa and the Maghreb and 39th internationally by the 9th Global Information Technology Report (GITR) for 2009-2010 which is made by the Davos Global Economic Forum and the European Business Administration Institute (INSEAD).

Tunisian government has implemented an e-administration strategy into two complementary objectives:

- The improvement of the citizen administration relationship.
- The development of the Tunisian enterprises competitiveness.

Evolution of the legislative and statutory framework

- **1988:** Creation of national body in charge of technical control and homologation of telecommunication equipments (research and studies telecommunication center).
- **1999:** Creation of national body in charge of health risk assessment and coordination between all structures in charge of control (ANCSEP).
- **2001:** Creation of national body in charge of regulating telecommunications (national instance of telecommunication).
- **2001:** Creation of national body in charge of frequency management (national agency of frequencies).
- **2001:** Promulgating the Telecommunications Code and its implementing regulation texts in order to further optimize the use of the means offered by this sector, and enhance Tunisia's integration within the information society.
- **2002:** Establishing a national frequencies plan by ministerial decree.
- **2009:** The number of subscribers to mobile telephone network is around 9.754 millions.
- **2010:** Three operators of mobile telephone network.

Policies and measures regarding the exposure to EMF and EMF risk management

- **1998:** Interdiction of mobile phone using when conducting vehicles (by decree).
- **2001:** Creation of a national technical committee for potential health risks protection linked to EMF at the ANCSEP. This committee is in charge of:
 - ❖ Following and sitting up scientific publications.
 - ❖ Promoting the legislation to prevent potential risks.
 - ❖ Communication and information.
 - ❖ Claims management (claims from citizens about BTS and other EMF sources).

- ❖ Answering public inquiries related to EMF health exposure.
- ❖ Set up the procedures concerning BTS installation and define the role of each stakeholder.
- **2004:** Publication of the first inter ministerial circular {Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Communication Technologies} fixing the measures to install BTS [July 31st, 2004] and adopting the limits of ICNIRP to GSM and DCS [900 and 1800 MHz] exposure and fixing the immediate distances of security. The circular adopted the **precaution principle**.
- **2008:** The previous circular was followed and substituted by a three inter ministerial circular {Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Communication Technologies, Ministry of Interior and Local Development} on October 23rd, 2008 to clarify more the procedure for all the intervening authorities and adopting the limits of ICNIRP for all radiofrequencies
- **2007:** Elaborating a study by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development according to health and environmental risks of EMF of mobile phones, BTS and high voltage lines. Then, a data base was elaborated regrouping all the BTS and high voltage lines installed throughout the national territory.
- **2008:** Elaborating bibliographic study about pacemakers and exposure to mobile phones.
- **2009:** Initiating a communication program to stakeholders teams [health, telecommunication, media, justice, territory management ...] and citizens by :
 - ❖ Organizing an information seminar on July 14th, 2009 with the WHO support to inform all partners and stakeholders about news in the domain EMF risks.
 - ❖ Organizing sessions and developing articles with media, TV and Radio to inform public.

Research activities related to EMF

- Few research activities related to EMF exposure and health risks are conducted in Tunisia until now. The technical committee is using the scientific researches provided by WHO and other national and international agencies and bodies.
- ANCSEP is conducting bibliographic studies and publishing technical opinions and advises to the departments upon request or without referral to take measures to prevent potential health risks.

Public concerns

Tunisians are always complaining about health problems. They also complain for their security, noise, urban esthetic and to avoid BTS installation on the urban areas. These concerns are probably due to global mediation of this issue and are enhanced by **the scientific uncertainties on potential risks**. The number of claims of citizens about BTS installation has increased since 2004 and it is increasing following an unexpected way since 2009. Already, some cases are addressed to courts.

Status of potential EMF risk management in Tunisia is characterized by:

- The high risk perception of citizens whom live near BTS.
- The sensitivity of citizens regarding the adoption of "precaution principle" (which confirm their understanding).
- The classification of ELF fields as possible carcinogen to human by the IARC (there is usually confusion between radiofrequencies and ELF fields).
- Limits and security distances are not harmonized in the different countries.
- Results of scientific studies are often contradictory.

Current activities

- Developing legislation fixing exposure limits to EMF from 0 to 300 GHz based on ICNIRP guidelines.
- Developing legislation fixing security measures to install telecommunication and high voltage installations and equipments and to reduce human exposure to EMF.
- Elaboration and the execution of the communication program with stakeholders and the consumer organization.
- The ANCSEP comes forward to translate to Arabic the WHO communication document.