

Italy

Report on EMF Activities

10th International Advisory Committee on EMF

June 2005

Research

The National project entitled “Protection of the population and the environment from electromagnetic emissions” officially ended in May 2004. The main results were presented at a National conference held in Rome on October 25-27, 2005. Details on the project, as well as intermediate and final reports, are available (in Italian) at the website <http://www.emprotect.enea.it>. Although the scientific balance was very positive, no new national project is expected in the near future. Due to the increasing economic difficulties of the Country, substantial cuts have been made to scientific research, and strong concern has been expressed that Italian research could substantially slow down.

Participation in international studies and projects continue, in particular within the 5th Framework Program of the European Commission. Italy is the only country participating in all projects that were approved and funded by the EC. Some projects are still ongoing experimentally, while for others, whose budget was closed, analysis and publication of data is in progress.

Regulations

On August 28 and 29, 2004, two decrees were enforced, on the protection of the population against high- and low-frequency electromagnetic fields, respectively. These decrees were issued in compliance of the “framework law” enforced in 2001. English translations of all the above regulations are available online in the standards database of the EMF International Project.

The decrees follow only in part the approach of the framework law, which is based on concepts such as exposure limits, attention values and quality goals rather than the two-level system (basic restrictions and quality goals) of international guidelines. As an example, in the frequency range 0 Hz – 100 kHz the whole set of the ICNIRP recommendations apply, with the only exception of magnetic fields from power lines, where exposure levels, attention values, and quality goals are established (equal to 100, 10, and 3 μ T, respectively). A further example of internal inconsistency is in the high frequency range (100 kHz to 300 GHz), where the Italian approach (with e.g. an attention value and a quality goal for the electric fields both equal to 6 V/m independently of frequency) is only adopted for fixed telecommunication systems, whereas in all other cases the ICIRP guidelines are followed. Such inconsistencies have raised much criticism.

No decree on the protection of workers has been issued, considering that a European Directive was in preparation. The text of the Directive was approved by national delegations in September 2003, under the Italian Presidency. The Italian delegation provided strong support for the adoption of the ICNIRP guidelines. Legal procedures to transfer the Directive into a National standard have been started.

Control of compliance

Verification of compliance of power lines, base stations, broadcasters and other telecommunication systems with the exposure limits set by the Italian regulations is a responsibility of the Regional Agencies for Environmental Protection (ARPA). A summary of the extensive surveys carried out in 2003 can be found in the annual report of the National Agency for Environmental Protection (APAT), that is available (in Italian) at the website www.apat.it. The 2004 report has not yet been issued.

Monitoring of electromagnetic fields

A nationwide monitoring of radiofrequency electromagnetic fields is being performed, under the technical supervision of the Ugo Bordonni Foundation, a technical body linked to the Ministry of Communications. A total of 1250 automatic stations for the continuous measurement of electromagnetic fields will be distributed to all the 20 Italian regions and installed at selected sites for periods typically lasting 2-3 weeks, after which they will be moved to other sites. The stations are in part wide-band, in part narrow-band for measurements at some selected frequencies. Over 300 stations have already been set in place. Over 10 million measurements have been recorded in more than 75,000 hours of overall monitoring. The data are available on line at the website of the Bordonni Foundation (www.fub.it).

Information to the public

Though the framework law requires that about 500,000 euros per year be spent for the information to the public on electromagnetic fields and related risks, no such action has been promoted so far directly by the government.

An intense activity is carried out by Elettra 2000, a consortium jointly created and managed by the Ugo Bordonni Foundation, the Guglielmo Marconi Foundation, and the University of Bologna. Actions, mainly carried out through the website of the Consortium (<http://www.elettra2000.it>) include the periodical release of Newsletters, dissemination of scientific documents issued by relevant Italian and international bodies, expert answers to questions from the public, access to all the main reports published by expert committees, scientific institutions, and health authorities world-wide.

All fact sheets of the WHO Project are translated into Italian by the National Institute of Health. The booklet "Establishing a dialog on the risks of electromagnetic fields" has also been translated and printed in 50,000 copies, distributed, among others, to national and local authorities, and to the mayors of all Italian municipalities.

The Italian translation of the ICNIRP guidelines, as well as of a basic document on the approach of ICNIRP to the development of standards, are available at the ICNIRP's website (<http://www.icnirp.org>).

A special initiative promoted by the Bordonni Foundation is the so-called Blu Bus. The initiative aims at creating a "travelling" information campaign that involves the use of a bus equipped with field meters and monitoring systems. During the bus stops, visitors are provided with pamphlets and information about electromagnetic fields and about the national plan for monitoring their levels. More details are available at the website <http://www.fub.it/blubus.php>. So far, the bus has stopped in about 100 towns, a small proportion of the total. Therefore, while such initiative is proving successful at the local level, the overall impact is limited and controversies remain very high in Italy, especially for base stations of mobile telephony.

Agreement between mobile phone operators and municipalities

An agreement between the Ministry of Communications and the Council of Italian Municipalities was signed in December 2003. The parties agreed on a set of basic criteria for concerted decision on the siting of radio base stations. In particular, the responsibilities of operators on one side, and of municipalities on the other, are clearly stated. The original document and the English translation are available at the website of the EMF Project and can be downloaded from http://www.who.int/entity/peh-emf/project/mapnatreps/italyanci_memo_italian.pdf and http://www.who.int/entity/peh-emf/project/mapnatreps/italyanci_memo_eng.pdf, respectively

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