

National Report of the Netherlands
WHO EMF Project, International Advisory Committee meeting, 19-20 June 2008

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1. New standards, legislations and ordinances

There have been no new activities in this area.

2. Research activities

In the fall of 2006 a national research program on Electromagnetic Fields and Health was started, which is managed by the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) (see <http://www.zonmw.nl/en/programmes/all-programmes/electromagnetic-fields-and-health-research>). It encompasses the frequency range of 0 – 300 GHz and it will focus on research in the Netherlands, but international collaboration is stimulated. The total budget for the 8-year program is € 16.6 million, fully provided by the ministries of Economic Affairs and of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment.

The aims of the program are to keep track of new and existing EMF applications; to enhance the Dutch knowledge infrastructure in the field of EMF and health; to ensure that the Netherlands has one or more authorities in this field; to clarify positive and negative EMF health effects; and to make substantial contribution to international research efforts.

There are three areas of research: sociology / epidemiology; biology; and technology. Each of them will have a chair established. These will be the focal points of EMF research in the Netherlands and be closely involved with the other projects. The chair on epidemiology was granted April 2008 (to Dr Hans Kromhout, University of Utrecht), while the chairs on biology and technology are still pending.

Five projects were funded in 2007:

- Individual EMF exposure
- Hotspots: calculation and measurement using MRI
- Development of model to calculate EMF exposure & absorption in children
- Factors involved in perception of EMF risks
- Influence of EMF on immune system

Another five projects were funded in April 2008:

- EMF effects on morphogenesis and gene expression during embryo development
- Pooled community-based cohort study on health effects of exposure to EMF (COSMOS)
- Non-specific physical symptoms in relation to the actual and perceived exposure to EMF and the underlying mechanisms; a multidisciplinary approach
- Modulation of immune response through LF EMF exposure
- Symptoms, acute and chronic health effects of exposure to MRI-related EMF

3. Public concern and ways to deal with them

In parallel to the research program a Knowledge Platform Electromagnetic Fields and Health has been established.

Collaborating in the Knowledge Platform are the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), the Telecom Agency of the ministry of Economic Affairs, the Organization of Municipal Health Services (GGD), KEMA technical consultancy and ZonMw, the organization that hosts the EMF research program. In collaboration with the EMF Committee of the Health Council of the Netherlands reports on scientific issues will be written aimed at informing local authorities, health professionals and the general public. Recently a website has been opened (www.kennisplatform.nl).

4. Other topics of related interest

The Health Council of the Netherlands has published in November 2007 two letter reports, one on power line issues and one on mobile telephony issues. In January 2008, another letter report on power line issues was published. These reports are not (yet) available at the Health Councils website (www.healthcouncil.nl) but can be obtained from the author (eric.van.rongen@gr.nl).