

PORTUGAL

Report on EMF Activities 10th International Advisory Committee Meeting on EMF June 2005

1. General Research activities in Portugal related to EMF health

In April 2003 a multi sector working group, by request of the Government, published a report containing several proposals on EMF research and priority recommendations regarding public exposure to electromagnetic fields in Portugal.

REN – Rede Eléctrica Nacional, is responsible for the electricity transmission in Portugal. REN is developing research concerning ELF exposure and health.

2. New policies and legislations regarding EMF exposure

The European Recommendation 1999/519/CE was adopted in Portugal last November 2004 (Portaria nº 1421/2004, 23 November).

A specific legislation for the installation radio communications facilities (including base stations) exists since January 2003 (Law Decree nº 11/2003, 18th January). According to this law, the Mayor of each municipality should give permission for the installation of base stations by the means of a guarantee given by the operators that the legislation concerning the EMF exposure levels is accomplished.

Two different project Regulations were worked out by ANACOM, the National Communications Authority. ANACOM is the regulator, supervisor and representative of the communications sector in Portugal. One of the Regulations refers to "Establishing rules to identify and signalize the radio communications stations". The other one deals with "Monitoring and measurement requirements of the electromagnetic fields levels arising from radio communications stations". These Regulations are expected to be published soon.

Concerning ELF, there is regulation for the siting of power lines, named "Regulation on power line installation security" (Law Decree nº 180/91, 14th May), where certain safe distances are defined. For power lines exceeding 110kV, an Environmental Impact Assessment process is requested and a project guarantying the fulfillment of the Council Recommendation 1999/519/CE is compulsory.

3. Areas of public concern and national responses

The widespread of wireless communication technologies in Portugal has raised public concern in the last few years, regarding the likelihood of potential health effects of EMF exposure, namely from the use of mobile phones, the installation of base stations, the wireless networks and of electromagnetic interference with medical devices. The siting of power lines has also given rise to fear among the public.

Nevertheless, by the end of 2004 the mobile phone penetration rate in Portugal had reached 95%, which was higher than the same average within the European Union (88%).

The evaluation of electromagnetic environments is an activity under development by ANACOM, whose aim is to efficiently respond to requests for on-site assessment of electromagnetic fields intensity levels. The levels of EMF measured are well below the ICNIRP standards.

During 2004 the Portuguese Ministry of Health (General Directorate of Health, GDH) settled an action plan in order to provide advice to regional and local public health authorities about hazards arising from EMF exposure and any needed preventive measures that should be taken by the public health services, concerning base stations and mobile phones. Therefore, two different seminars addressed to the health services were held in Lisbon by the end of 2004. Dr. Mike Repacholi kindly accepted the invitation from GDH to attend one of the meetings and gave a presentation on EMF health effects and EMF standards. A member of the Agence Nationale des Fréquences (France) was also present.

Two different service instructions were provided by GDH to the public health services in Portugal, related to the installation of mobile phone base stations and to the possible adverse effects related to the mobile communications systems.

4. New public information activities

The General Directorate of Health plays a major role in the risk communication process, regarding EMF exposure and health. Because of the need to improve risk communication, different documents are being prepared through 2005, in order to provide better information to the public.

The GDH has also carried out short educating videos (15 minutes each) about "scientific evidence and risk management on environmental health", aimed at providing information to the public and the health services about different areas of concern, which are expected to be concluded in the next months. One of these is dedicated to "mobile communications and health effects".

As a consequence of the development of mobile communications in Portugal, a project was created at Instituto de Telecomunicações/Technical University of Lisbon, named the monIT Project, with the aim to provide general public with relevant information on electromagnetic radiation produced by mobile communications. The information provided includes the results from systematic measurement campaigns carried out by the project team near the base station antennas in public areas chosen all over our country -Portugal. The monIT site intends to make available this information by publishing measurement results obtained in public zones scattered over the country. Studies on electromagnetic radiation are focused embracing both mobile phones and base station antennas of GSM and UMTS.

Cristina Amaral

General Directorate of Health / Environmental Health Department

camaral@dgsaude.min-saude.pt