

International EMF Project
23th International Advisory Committee Meeting
19 - 22 June 2018

National Report Switzerland

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1. General Research Activities

The Swiss Research Foundation for Electricity and Mobile Communication (FSM)

FSM is a non-profit foundation, founded in 2002, sponsored mainly by industry, but supported by government, NGOs and research organisations. The aim of the FSM is to promote innovative research projects in the mobile phone sector and distribute the resulting research findings to scientists and the public. Following research areas are covered: basic research, risk perception & communication and technology & applied research. The annual research budget amounts to 550'000 basically. Information on the FSM as well as on the research projects can be found under <http://www.emf.ethz.ch/en/>

The Foundation for Research on Information Technologies in Society (It'Is)

It'Is is a non-profit research foundation that has been founded in 1999 with the aim to create a flexible and dynamic research institution capable of addressing the research needs of society in the explosively expanding field of information technologies. Information on the It'Is and on their research projects are available under: www.itis.ethz.ch

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH)

The Swiss TPH is a public organization of the Basel-City region. The Swiss TPH has become a world-renowned institution for teaching, research and services in the field of international health development.

2. New Policies and Legislations

Ordinance to the Federal Act on Protection Against Hazards Arising from Non-Ionising Radiation and Sound (O-NIRSA)

The Parliament adopted the Federal Act on Protection against hazards arising from non-ionising radiation and Sound (NIRSA) in June 2017. After that, the FOPH elaborated the corresponding ordinance. The ordinance regulates the use of sunbeds. It prohibits the use of sunbeds of minors (<18yr) and establishes the duties of the operators. Furthermore, it establishes that a certificate of competence is necessary for treatments with products that emits ultrasound, light or radiofrequency. The ordinance was in public consultation from February 14 until May 31. After evaluation and if necessary adaption of the ordinance, the federal council will enact the regulation in the first half of 2019

Ordinance relating to Protection from Non-Ionising Radiation (ONIR)

A parliamentary motion demanding a weakening of the precautionary emission limitations for mobile phone base stations has been rejected by the Swiss Parliament, therefore the precautionary installation limit values in the ONIR remain at 4-6 V/m for this type of installations.

3. Areas of public concern and national responses

Wireless power transfer (WPT) is an emerging, innovative technology to transfer energy over a certain distance without wires through electric, magnetic or electromagnetic fields (EMF). Near-field WPT is increasingly applied in a variety of occasions, including wireless solutions for charging mobile devices, home appliances, or medical devices. Initial research by the IT'IS Foundation/ETH Zurich and collaboration with industry alliances (Airfuel, 2017) (Wireless Power Consortium, 2017) has revealed that current far-field measurement methods, i.e., the measurement of the electric and magnetic fields around the WPT systems in air, are not suitable to show compliance with current safety guidelines. Analyses showed that the presence of implants can result in local exposure enhancements at the implant extremities of up to a factor of 100. In other words, field levels considered safe by current guidelines would put wearers of implants at severe risk.

The Federal Office of Public Health, the Federal Office of Environment and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO clarified the legal situation of this challenge and came to the conclusion that the legal basis exists in Switzerland.

4. New public information activities

FOEN - Swiss expert group on electromagnetic fields and non-ionising radiation (BERENIS)

The FOEN has nominated a consultative group of Swiss experts from various disciplines with scientific competence regarding electromagnetic fields and non-ionising radiation, which has commenced its work in July 2014. The group is called “BERENIS”, based on the acronym of the respective German term. The BERENIS experts regularly screen the scientific literature, and use defined criteria to assess the publications, which they consider as relevant for the protection of humans from potentially adverse effects. The evaluations are published in quarterly newsletters in English, German and French.

After a three-year pilot phase, the Federal Council has nominated the BERENIS for a four-year period (2017-2021).

The newsletters are available online:

<http://www.bafu.admin.ch/elektrosmog/15188/index.html?lang=en>

<http://www.bafu.admin.ch/elektrosmog/index.html?lang=de>

<http://www.bafu.admin.ch/elektrosmog/index.html?lang=fr>