Public health: limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields 0Hz-300GHz. Recommendation

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OBJECTIVE: to provide a common framework concerning a high level of protection against exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz-300 GHz). CONTENTS: Given the ever-growing involvement of the Community in various industrial sectors likely to increase exposure of the population to electromagnetic fields and the concern over their effects of decision-makers, health professionals, interest groups and members of the public, the Commission has decided to establish common principles in this field at Community level. This common framework will be implemented under the Council recommendations in Article 129 of the Treaty and covers the general principles of limitation to exposure in order to prevent damaging effects to the health. The common framework proposed is based on a set of basic restrictions and reference levels developed internationally by the foremost experts in this field. It concerns exposure of individual members of the public and not emissions from specific devices or equipment and does not apply to occupational exposure and exposure of patients and volunteers during medical procedures. Council's recommendations do not address problems of electromagnetic compatibility and interference with medical devices. The restrictions are directly based on established health effects only. The reference levels are recommended to be used for practical exposure assessment purposes. Respect of reference levels will ensure respect of the relevant basic restriction. It is recommended that when an exceedance of reference levels occurred, an assessment of the exposure situation should be carried out. It will be up to the Member States to arrange for assessments and follow-up actions. The assessment will take account of criteria such as: - the duration of exposure, - the exposed parts of the body, - the number of exposed members of the public, - the age and health status of these members of the public. Follow-up actions will need to be decided by the Member States with respect to the specific exposure situation which might call for measures such as the provision of information for the public exposed, the establishment of minimum distances to be kept from the source of exposure or changes in the use, design or installation of the source in question. The Member States will also have to decide to consider cost-benefit aspects when such an action is undertaken. Finally, in order to take timely stock of the regulatory and actual exposure situation and any scientific or technological developments that may require a prompt response, the Commission proposes that the Member States prepare reports on their measures and guidelines in the field covered by the recommendation, and indicating how the latter has been taken into account. The Commission will then present an overall report based on the reports of the Member States.