Basic information

1998/0166(CNS) CNS - Consultation procedure Recommendation	Procedure completed
Public health: limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields 0Hz-300GHz. Recommendation **Subject** 4.20 Public health	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection	TAMINO Gianni (V)	21/07/1998

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ENER Research, Technological Development and Energy	SCAPAGNINI Umberto (PPE)	03/09/1998

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	2196	1999-07-12
Health	2188	1999-06-08
Health	2131	1998-11-12

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
11/06/1998	Legislative proposal published	COM(1998)0268	Summary
15/07/1998	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
12/11/1998	Debate in Council		
18/02/1999	Vote in committee		Summary
18/02/1999	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	A4-0101/1999	
09/03/1999	Debate in Parliament		
27/05/1999	Modified legislative proposal published	COM(1999)0247	Summary

12/07/1999	Act adopted by Council after consultation of Parliament		
12/07/1999	End of procedure in Parliament		
30/07/1999	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1998/0166(CNS)
Procedure type	CNS - Consultation procedure
Procedure subtype	Legislation
Legislative instrument	Recommendation
Legal basis	EC Treaty (after Amsterdam) EC 152-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading		A4-0101/1999 OJ C 175 21.06.1999, p. 0006	18/02/1999	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		T4-0168/1999 OJ C 175 21.06.1999, p. 0099-0133	10/03/1999	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Legislative proposal	COM(1998)0268	11/06/1998	Summary
Modified legislative proposal	COM(1999)0247	27/05/1999	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2008)0532	01/09/2008	Summary

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

Non-binding act 1999/0519
OJ L 199 30.07.1999, p. 0059 Summary

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

1998/0166(CNS) - 12/07/1999 - Final act

PURPOSE : to provide a common framework aiming at a higher level of protection against exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz to 300 GHz). COMMUNITY MEASURE : Council Recommendation on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz to 300 GHz) CONTENT : this Recommendation aims to establish a Community framework on exposure to electromagnetic fields. This recommendation has as its objective the protection of the health of the public and it therefore applies, in particular, to relevant areas where members of the public spend significant time in relation to the effects covered by this recommendation. The common framework draws on a large body of scientific documentation and is based on the opinions and the most recent information on the subject. It consists of basic restrictions and reference levels concerning the exposure to such fields which serve as a basis to set the reference levels in the Member States. It is left to the Member States to provide for detailed rules and basic restrictions including reference levels from the framework provided in the Annexes of the recommendation (Annex I, II and III, in particular) as well as the procedures for the use and classification of conditions in which the individuals are exposed, and if they are workplace related or not. The conformity to the recommended restrictions and reference levels should result in a higher level of protection for individuals. Only the adverse effects on health have been used on which to base the recommended limitation of exposure. Member States are free to provide stricter rules if they wish, as long as the basic restrictions are respected. The restrictions and the reference levels apply to all the rays emitted by electromagnetic fields, with the exception of optical rays (which still require the scientific confirmation) and ionising radiation for which Community measures already exist. A certain number of criteria should be taken into consideration when setting the reference levels in the Member States, in particular the length of the exposure, the parts of the body exposed, the age and the state of health of the public. At the same time, the Member States are called upon to strengthen public awareness regarding the risks and protection measures against electromagnetic fields by supplying appropriate information on the impact of these fields. In addition, the Commission is called upon to work towards the establishment of European standards in the area and to encourage research into long and short term effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields in the current framework programme for research and technological development. A review of this recommendation is also foreseen in order to keep it up to date. A Report is also awaited within 5 years which will take into account the reports of the Member States and the latest scientific data and opinions on the subject. ENTRY INTO FORCE : 12.07.1999.

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

1998/0166(CNS) - 27/05/1999 - Modified legislative proposal

In its amended proposal, the European Commission accepted 9 of the 17 amendments adopted by the European Parliament in its first reading. The main ones relate to: - the introduction of normative measures aimed at limiting the exposure of workers to electromagnetic fields; - the establishment of a Community framework regarding exposure to electromagnetic fields with the objective of protecting the public via recommendations to the Member States (this Community framework should be based on existing scientific documentation and and be regularly re-evaluated); - the review of scientific knowledge in this field at regular intervals should also take account of research done in the widest possible range of research sources. The Commission provides for an exception regarding exposure for medical purposes where the risks and benefits of exposure, above the basic restrictions, must be properly weighed. The Commission, however, did not take up the Parliament's amendments in regard to: - the potentially dangerous effects of fields; - the respect for the precautionary principle so as to cover all eventual risks for public health; - the principle of a uniform method to measure conformity of products in the area of electromagnetic rays, - the maximum protection of the public where they live or where they pass most of their time, - the setting of minimum safety distances between certain electricity infrastructures and the public. Nor did the Commission agree with the amendments that sought to provide by 01.01.2000 for a new system of review of machinery generating electromagnetic fields, as well as for a comparative list of the limites applies in the Member States. it also rejected any possibility of harmonisation in the area via, for example, the drawing up of Community safety criteria for electrical equipment likely to produce electromagnetic fields. Lastly, the amendment seeking to review the proposal before 2001 was also rejected.

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

1998/0166(CNS) - 10/03/1999 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

At first reading under consultation procedure, the European Parliament approved the proposal for a Council regulation on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields 0 Hz - 300 GHz subject to amendments, notably in the following areas: - making reference to Treaty provisions for protecting the health of workers and the rights of consumers, with particular reference to the safeguard principle and the ALARA principle; - requiring that, in accordance with the precautionary principle, the proposed Community framework with regard to exposure to electromagnetic fields must eliminate any possible public health hazard; - deleting reference to the guidance in this area provided by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and instead recommending that any advice in this area should be regularly reviewed and

reassessed in the light of increased usage of devices which may increase exposure to electromagnetic fields; - noting that there is no uniform measurement at European level for product compliance and that there is a need to prevent new technical barriers to trade; - making more detailed provision with regard to minimum safety distances; - recommending that, in promoting and reviewing research relevant to EMF and human health, Member States should take account of research recommendations and efforts from the widest possible range of sources; - recommending that every effort be made to incorporate the implications for human health of the very extensive research carried out by many military experts throughout the world in this field; - inviting the Commission to propose, by 01/01/2001, a system of continuous review of devices generating electromagnetic fields with a view to protecting public safety; - inviting the Commission to produce a comprehensive comparative list of the limits applied in EU Member States and other major countries; - inviting the Commission to submit a proposal for the revision of directives 90/270/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment and 73/23/EEC and 92/75/EEC with a view to laying down safety criteria for electrical equipment capable of producing electromagnetic fields and to labelling such products for the benefit of consumers; - inviting the Commission to adapt the proposed recommendation by 2001 to take account of long-term effects in the light of the whole body of scientific literature, existing standards in the Member States and the precautionary principle; - underlining that the basic restrictions set out in the proposed recommendation include large safety factors only with respect to the thresholds for acute effects.

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

1998/0166(CNS) - 01/09/2008 - Follow-up document

This report is the second implementation report (2002-2007) on the application of Council recommendation of 12 July 1999 (1999/519/EC) on the limitation of the exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields ((0 Hz to 300 GHz). It purpose is to provide a EU framework for national policies and measures to ensure a high level of protection of the population and for EU legislation and standards on EMF exposure from electric /electronic products and devices.

The public is exposed to electromagnetic fields (EMF) generated by an increasing variety of electrical and electronic devices and installations. EMF may have biological effects under certain conditions. It is the Member States' responsibility to protect the populations from potential health risks.

The Council Recommendation has established a set of basic restrictions and reference levels to provide guidance to the Member States and to create a basis for EU product safety legislation. They are as laid down by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). The Recommendation invites the Commission to keep the possible health effects of EMF under review. In 2002, the Commission presented its first report. This is the second one, relating to the situation in EU-27, based on the information received from the Member States, and presenting an update on initiatives taken by the Commission to review the available scientific knowledge.

To ensure that the Recommendation remains based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence, it is reviewed periodically. In 2007, the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) reviewed the scientific knowledge on potential health effects of EMF and found no consistent scientific evidence showing a need for revising the basic restrictions and reference levels set out in the Council Recommendation. Nevertheless, the SCENIHR identified gaps in the relevant scientific knowledge and areas where further research is needed, both at the national and European levels. The SCENIHR recommendations have already started to be reflected in the calls under the 7th Framework Programme for Research.

The European Commission has monitored the implementation of the Council Recommendation in the Member States. Most of them have implemented it either via legislative acts or decrees or via voluntary recommendations. In general, measures in countries where the Council Recommendation is not yet fully implemented are being improved. However, specific implementation measures vary significantly between countries.

A Eurobarometer survey on citizens' perception of the EMF issue shows considerable dissatisfaction in terms of information and communication. Most people would like to receive more information on the potential health effects of EMF through the TV, press and radio, while today most of this information is provided through Internet sites and specialist publications.

On another level, the Commission has also established a working group of government experts to improve the exchange of information and identify ways of improving coordination and cooperation between Member States. This group will support the initiatives of the Commission to strengthen the research on exposure of the general public and on potential health effects and to identify which aspects of the Recommendation require more effort.

In conclusion, the Commission intends to continue monitoring closely the application of this Recommendation, promoting the development of scientific knowledge on key aspects of the potential health impact of EMF, re-assess the validity of the Recommendation in the light of any relevant new scientific development and take appropriate action should the need arise.

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

1998/0166(CNS) - 11/06/1998 - Legislative proposal

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.