CORA-Description of the SCENIHR-Report 2015

1. About

Source
SCENIHR (Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks). Health Effects of Exposure to EMF. 27 January 2015
Link
http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/emerging/docs/scenihr_o_041.pdf
Supporting information
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/documents/ev_20040907_rd01_en.pdf

2. Content and Mandate

Objectives
(i) update of previous opinion, (ii) particular atteintion on: nervous/neurobehavioral issues, mechanisms, co-exposures, (iii) review of potential health effects of THz fields, (iv) make research recommendations.
EMF spectrum covered
Static magnetic fields, extremely low frequency fields, intermediate frequency fields, radiofrequency fields, THz fields, combined fields
Status of report and authorship
Independent Scientific Committee
Funding
European Commission
Accountability
European Commission
Summary
Scientific evaluation of (peer-reviewed) research about biological effects of EMF (including THz frequencies) and associated health risk assessments. Clear organisation and mandate: Independent expert group SCENIHR was requested by EC to update its 2009 opinion in light of newly published research.

3. Authorship

Selection of Members
Standing members appoint external experts according to adopted rules of procedure that are required by Commission decision of March 2004
Composition (institutional)
2 SCENIHR members, 10 external experts
Composition (expertise)
Required: Radiation Biology, Epidemiology, Engineering/Dosimetry, Toxicology, Human Studies Missing in the group: none
Impartiality
All members have to fill in a declaration of interest that is published. The rules of procedure include chapters on independence, transparency, confidentiality, and relations with stakeholders to assure impartiality
Disclosure
Full disclosure of names and of selection procedure
Summary
Members are appointed (no open call), official rules of procedure assure impartiality. Required expertise for the mandated task is backed by own research of the group members.

4. Assessment Process

Literature search
Explained in a method section: papers 2009 – June 2014, mainly peer-reviewed, selection criteria published in a Memorandum in 2012, all relevant topics according to objectives.
Quality assurance
Yes; criteria relating to the quality (e.g. dosimetry, statistics, biases, etc.), but not to the outcome of the study (presence or absence of effects)
Weighing of evidence
Formal criteria for 5 evidence categories. Categorisation seems to be based on communicative validation.
Consultation activities
Public consultation of draft at 27 March 2014. Results have been published: http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/emerging/docs/followup_cons_emf_en.pdf
Consensus finding
Yes. But no minority opinion expressed
Summary
Description of literature selection and evaluation points towards careful risk assessment, weighing of evidence procedure disclosed, but not fully described. In contrast to 2009 Opinion, this document did undergo a stakeholder consultation.

5. Communication

Differentiation between biological and adverse health effects
Yes
Unbiased descriptions
Yes. The report evaluates all research outcomes of acceptable quality and identifies remaining uncertainties
Evidence-based conclusions
"Abstract" and "Executive Summary" adequately reflect the analysed material and conclusions drawn by the committee.
Plain language summary
"Abstract" and "Executive Summary" of the report can be regarded as summaries for the general public. The executive summary is not free of technical jargon.
Unbiased summary
Yes
Summary
Balanced description on the analysed scientific data. Identification of inconclusive data and evidence. Executive Summary, Opinion and Abstract adequately reflect the information given in the report for both experts as well as non-specialists.