ITALY

Present status of EMF Activities
11th International Advisory Committee Meeting on EMF
7-9 June 2006

Research

No national research program has been launched after the completion of the project “Human and environmental protection from electromagnetic emissions”, that lasted three years and ended in May 2004. No other national programs are expected in the next future.

The few research projects in progress include: CRES (Cartilage Repair and Electrical Stimulation), founded by Regional government of Emilia-Romagna with European budget, expected to end in December 2006; ANGIOSKIN, a 6th Framework program project on electroporation gene transfer through the skin, started in May 2005 and due to last 48 months; EMFNEAR, a study on potential adverse effects on hearing due to UMTS electromagnetic fields, started in December 2004 to last 30 months

Some activities of the international projects funded by EC within the 5th Framework Program are also still ongoing, mainly related to data analysis and finalization of papers.

An epidemiological study on childhood lympho-haematopoietic tumours in relation to some environmental agents, including ELF magnetic fields is in progress. About 1,000 cases of leukaemia, neuroblastoma, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma have been collected, together with an equal number of controls. Data analysis is still in progress.

Regulations

No new regulation has been issued after two decrees on the exposure of the general public to low- and high-frequency EMF were enforced in 2003. In view of the adoption of the EU Directive on the protection of workers (by April 2008), a couple of well attended seminars have been organized by the two scientific Institutes of the Ministry of Health (National Institute of Health - ISS, National Institute for Protection and Safety at Work - ISPESL) jointly with the Italian Radiation Protection Association – AIRP. However, legal procedures to transfer the Directive into a National standard seem to proceed slowly.

Control of compliance

Verification of compliance of power lines, base stations, broadcasters and other telecommunication systems with the exposure limits set by the Italian regulations is a responsibility of the Regional Agencies for Environmental Protection (ARPA). Controls are carried out through either theoretical calculations or experimental measurements. The most recent available data (see refer to 2003, when about 1,600 controls where performed on power lines, about 7,000 on mobile phone base stations, and about 1,600 on radio- and TV-broadcasters. In addition, the same authorities are requested to provide preventive estimates of exposure for new plants, in view of their authorization. Again in 2003, about 1,300, 12,500, and 860 such advices were provided, respectively, for the three categories mentioned above. The data are available at http://www.apat.gov.it/site/it-IT/APAT/Pubblicazioni/Annuario_dei_dati_ambientali/Documento/annuario2004.html (in Italian).
Evaluation of science

In 2002, an International Committee was appointed by the Italian Government to provide advice on the health risks of EMFs and on related policies. In its final report (available, in Italian and English, at www.apat.gov.it/site/it/IT/APAT/Pubblicazioni/Miscellanea/Documento/serie_speciale_2002.html), the experts recommended that “The Italian Government should identify or establish a single authoritative scientific body responsible for providing advice on current knowledge about possible health risks of electromagnetic fields. Such a body could be similar in scope and function to bodies already established in some other European Union countries” Following this recommendation, a special Project “Health and Electromagnetic Fields” was launched by the Ministry of Health and started in March 2006, to last 3 years. The main goal of the project is to create, at the Ministry of Health, a group of experts acting as the unique reference for the Government, health authorities, and the public.

Monitoring of electromagnetic fields

In addition to the measurements mentioned above, nationwide monitoring of radiofrequency electromagnetic fields is being performed, under the technical supervision of the Ugo Bordoni Foundation, a technical body linked to the Ministry of Communications. A total of 1250 automatic stations for the continuous measurement of electromagnetic fields have been distributed to all the 20 Italian regions and installed at selected sites for periods typically lasting 2-3 weeks, after which they are moved to other sites. The stations are in part wide-band, in part narrow-band for measurements at some selected frequencies. Almost 4,000 sites have been monitored up to now, with about 27 million measurements recorded 2.3 million hours Over 10 million measurements have been recorded in more than 75,000 hours of overall monitoring. The data are available on line at the website of the Bordoni Foundation (http://www.fub.it).

Information to the public

Information to the public is expected to be provided by the already mentioned National Program Project “Health and Electromagnetic Fields”. The project has taken in charge the translation of WHO Fact Sheets, that was formerly carried out by the National Institute of Health.

An intense information activity is also performed by Elettra 2000, a consortium jointly created and managed by the Ugo Bordoni Foundation, the Guglielmo Marconi Foundation, and the University of Bologna. Actions, mainly carried out through the website of the Consortium (http://www.elettra2000.it) include the periodical release of Newsletters, dissemination of scientific documents issued by relevant Italian and international bodies, expert answers to questions from the public, access to all the main reports published by expert committees, scientific institutions, and health authorities world-wide.

A special initiative promoted by the Bordoni Foundation is the so-called Blu Bus. The initiative aims at creating a “travelling” information campaign that involves the use of a bus equipped with field meters and monitoring systems. During the bus stops, visitors are provided with pamphlets and information about electromagnetic fields and about the national plan for monitoring their levels. More details are available at the website http://www.fub.it/blubus.php. So far, the bus has stopped in about 100 towns. In the last year, another action started, called Blu Shuttle (http://www.elettra2000.it/blushuttle/bs.htm). A compact car travels through urban centres, together with the Blu Bus or independently, performing measurements and providing information in a more direct and distributed way.

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