

# EMF: Is there a need for precautionary action?



*Laurent BONTOUX, PhD*  
*DG SANCO*  
*European Commission*

Occupational exposure to EMF: paving the way for a future EU initiative  
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# Structure

- **Legal basis**
- The Precautionary Principle
- Recommendation 1999/519/EC
- Review of exposure limits
- Conclusions

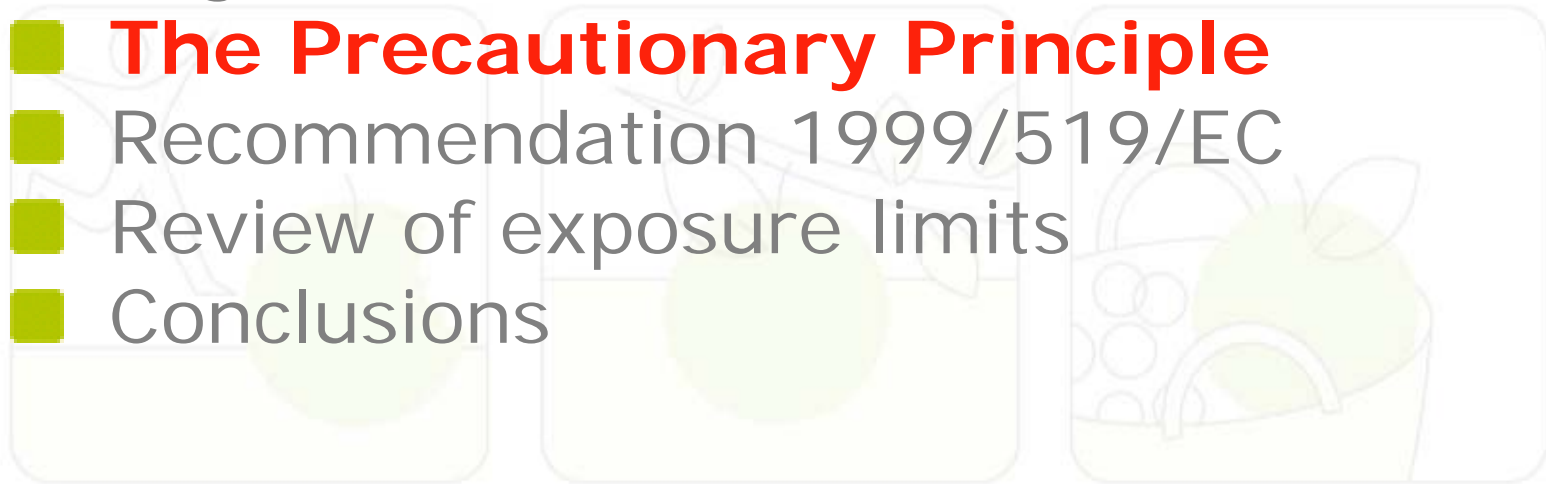
# Legal basis: the EU Treaty

## Internal Market and Public Health

- **Article 95 § 3:** *“The Commission, in its proposals... will take as a base a **high level of protection**”.*
- **Article 152 § 1:** *“A **high level of human health protection** shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Community activities and policies”.*
- **Article 152 § 4** provides for the adoption of recommendations by the Council *“with a view to complement national policies for **improving public health, preventing human illness and diseases, and obviating sources of danger to human health**”.*

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# The Precautionary Principle - 1

- Prescribed by the Treaty specifically for the environment
- Framework needed for its use:
  - How to address dilemmas
  - Action principle
- COM(2000)1 final

# The Precautionary Principle - 2

- Applied in practice:
  - « *Where preliminary **objective scientific evaluation** indicates that there are reasonable grounds for concern* »
  - When potential hazards may be inconsistent with the « *high level of health protection* » chosen for the Community.
- Requires criteria to be met

# The Precautionary Principle - 3

- To be considered within a **structured approach** to risk analysis
- Its use **must** follow a **scientific evaluation** based on **enough data** to establish a possibility of occurrence
- Applying the PP is **risk management**
- Requires to examines **costs and benefits**
- Proportionality of action

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# Recommendation 1999/519/EC

- Based on Article 152 § 4 of the Treaty
- Establishes a **Community framework** for the exposure of the general public – **not binding**
- Defines **restrictions** with the aim:
  - to ensure a high-level of protection for all population groups
  - to provide the basis for monitoring the situation in various conditions of exposure

# Recommendation 1999/519/EC

## ■ Reference framework for EU legislation on

- products and devices emitting EMF
- occupational health

## ■ Basis for national policies to limit exposure of the general public

## ■ Requires that Basic Restrictions and Reference Levels be based on the **best scientific evidence** of the health effects of EMF

# Recommendation 1999/519/EC

- The current BR and RL derive from the 1998 ICNIRP guidelines
- These guidelines use a **safety factor of 50**
  - a factor 5 (reduction of public exposure vs occupational exposure)
  - a factor of 10 to cover variations of sensitivity and exposure conditions

# Role of Member States

- They are responsible for the protection of the public against potential risks from EMF
- They may apply more stringent exposure limits
- The Council Recommendation asks the MS
  - to implement a framework of Basic Restrictions and Reference Levels
  - to ensure that adequate health protection measures are taken
  - To ensure that the general public is adequately informed.

# Implementation


- All MS have implemented a protective framework at least equivalent to 1999/519/EC
- MS are free to choose the means of implementation
- Some apply more stringent limits (e.g. BE, GR)
- There is public demand for better communication

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# Review of exposure limits

- The Recommendation requires that Basic Restrictions and Reference Levels be based on the best scientific evidence

 Therefore, **independent scientific reviews**

- SSC 1998 [http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/ssc/out19\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/ssc/out19_en.html)
- CSTE 2001 [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_risk/committees/sct/documents/out128\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/sct/documents/out128_en.pdf)
- SCENIHR 2007 [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_risk/committees/04\\_scenihr/docs/scenihr\\_o\\_007.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_o_007.pdf)
- SCENIHR 2009 [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_risk/committees/04\\_scenihr/docs/scenihr\\_o\\_022.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_o_022.pdf)

# Latest Outcome

## ■ RF

- Unlikely to lead to an increase in cancer
- No evidence of other health effects

## ■ IF

- Mostly occupational exposure
- Too little data to draw conclusions

## ■ ELF

- Epi link to childhood leukaemia/Alzheimer's
- No support from other lines of evidence

## ■ Static fields

- More research needed

# Follow up

- No scientific rationale to modify the Council Recommendation

- Research projects under FP7

- MOBI-KIDS

- SEAWIND

} Ongoing

- SCENIHR opinion on research strategy

- Adopted July 2009

- [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_risk/committees/04\\_scenihr/docs/scenihr\\_o\\_024.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihr/docs/scenihr_o_024.pdf)

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# Conclusions 1

- ✓ As enshrined in the Treaty, the Commission strives to ensure a **high level of health protection** for the EU public
- ✓ It applies the **Precautionary Principle** according to Communication 2000/1
- ✓ A **protective framework** is already in place for EMF
- ✓ Exposure limits are under **regular scientific review**



# Conclusions 2

- ✓ So far, **no scientific rationale** for modifying the exposure limits proposed by the Recommendation
- ✓ The Commission recognises the need for **quality research** for **science-based policy making**
- ✓ **Gaps** in the scientific data base being addressed
- ✓ The SCENIHR **recommendations for research** are an important input in this respect, for both public and occupational exposure



**Thank you for your attention!**

[laurent.bontoux@ec.europa.eu](mailto:laurent.bontoux@ec.europa.eu)