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Brussels,
Ares(2015)

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Dear Mrs Nilsson,

Thank you for your email to Commissioner Andriukaitis of 2 September 2015 in which you raise concerns about the latest Opinion of the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) on potential health effects from electromagnetic fields (EMF). The Commissioner has asked me to reply to you on his behalf.

The European Commission is committed to ensuring that science and innovation are firmly at the service of European citizens.

The scope of SCENIHR opinions is to provide risk assessments for EMF by analysing research results, weighting relevant scientific evidence and drawing conclusions.

First, let me clarify that the composition of the SCENIHR and the different working groups fully complies with the Rules of Procedure¹ on the functioning of the Scientific Committees. Before being appointed as members of the SCENIHR or a working group, experts must submit declarations of interest, commitment and confidentiality to the Commission. If the Commission services conclude that no conflict of interest exists, the expert in question may be appointed in a personal capacity, provided he/she possesses the expertise required.

Working Groups are formed for each individual Opinion taking into account the particular area of expertise needed. The selection of the members of the working group for the last EMF Opinion was performed according to the Rules of Procedure, following an open call for external experts launched in August 2012².

¹ Rules of procedure of the Scientific Committees, April 2013

http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/docs/rules_procedure_2013_en.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/consultations/calls_experts/scenihr_exp_03_en.htm

Such working groups within SCENIHR work in a collegial manner. The draft Opinion on EMF was discussed at three meetings and subsequently agreed upon in writing by all members of the Working Group on electromagnetic fields.

In addition, Opinions are adopted by the members of the full Committee (SCENIHR) after discussion and examination of the draft prepared by the Working Group experts. All current SCENIHR members are qualified to perform risk assessment including risk assessment in the area of electromagnetic fields.

With regard to the scientific studies, let me specify that the preliminary Opinion was published for public consultation on 4 February 2014 until 16 April 2014, and received 186 contributions. All contributions received were considered by the Committee for the finalisation of the Opinion, and evaluated in line with the SCENIHR methodology on the weight of evidence described in chapter 3.2 of the Opinion.

Moreover, the literature review for this Opinion was extended to take into account all the studies suggested in the public consultation. Altogether, the final Opinion is based on more than 700 recent studies, most of them published after 2008, and up to 30 June 2014.

Finally, concerning the alleged conflict of interest of SCENIHR and working group members, Commissioner would like to draw your attention to the fact that after the publication of the preliminary Opinion on 4 February 2014, the relevant Commission services have re-examined all declarations of interest of all members of the Working Group and the SCENIHR, and requested some additional clarifications, without finding any evidence that would substantiate any allegations on conflict of interest. All specific allegations reported in annex 1 of your letter were part of this examination and were subject of a specific inquiry by the European Ombudsman.

With regard to your specific questions and suggestions, I would like to point out that:

1. The 2015 Opinion on EMF has been prepared in accordance with the Rules of Procedure. SCENIHR is an independent Committee and the Commission can neither interfere in the outcome of Opinions nor decide on the approval or annulment of their Opinions.
2. The working group on potential health effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields has been dismissed after the conclusion of the Opinion. Moreover, the current term of the SCENIHR expires in 2016. A new Committee has been created by the recent Commission Decision C(2015)5383³. New members will be selected following a public call for expression of interest. This call was recently published⁴ and will stay open until 2 November 2015.
3. In the future, a new working group will be created to review evidence on EMF, following the Rules of Procedures of the Scientific Committees.

The Commission, as in the past, will strive for a balanced composition, selecting qualified experts who represent different scientific views and covering all the scientific areas of the Opinion.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/docs/call_2015_5383_decision_with_annexes_en.pdf

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/call_experts/call_exp_2015_en.htm

4. Since 2011, the stakeholder group on EMF was convened in February 2013 and March 2014 on the occasion of the hearing of the EMF preliminary opinion in Athens. With regard to scientific Opinions, stakeholders are consulted via a public consultation and a public hearing.

Moreover, meetings between specific stakeholders and the Commission service responsible for EMF or the Scientific Committees' Secretariat were held several times in the past years.

I trust that this addresses all the issues you raise in your e-mail.

Yours sincerely,



Arūnas Vinčiūnas