

European Parliament
Mrs. N. Fontaine, President
Bureau AFP 11B11
Rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels
Belgium

27 November 2001

Re.: Electromagnetic Fields and Human Health - Joint letter from ICNIRP, EBEA and COST-281 action to the European Parliament

Dear Mrs. Fontaine,

We are writing to you jointly on behalf of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), the European BioElectromagnetics Association (EBEA) and the COST-281 action to inform you of the scientific advice that is available from our three organizations on the subject of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and human health.

Over recent years the possibility that adverse effects on health could result from exposure to EMFs has grown to become one of considerable scientific, political and economic importance. Our three organizations therefore consider it vital that decision-makers such as yourselves are aware of and have access to the best available and most up-to-date scientific advice.

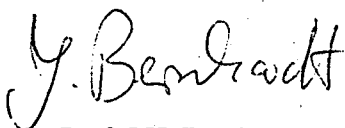
We are aware that individual opinions on possible adverse effects of EMFs on human health have been expressed and that these opinions have been promulgated as "expert advice". We find that some of these opinions are contrary to the views of the overwhelming majority of scientists in the field. A number of international expert panels have carried out comprehensive scientific reviews of the topic. These reviews have concluded that there is no convincing evidence of adverse health effects at levels of exposure below those recommended in international and European exposure guidelines but that more research is needed in particular to follow up contradictory reports and to assess the possible health impact of emerging technologies. Several national expert review panels have come to similar conclusions.

Our three organizations recognise that the absence of direct evidence of harm should not be regarded with complacency. Motivated by some unconfirmed scientific indications supporting the possibility of adverse health effects our organizations have called for extensive research efforts to further explore the issue and have set out and prioritised research needs. In this respect, we very much welcomed the initiative of the European Commission in supporting such research under the EC 5th Framework Research Programme and would like to strongly support to include this research field also into the upcoming 6th Framework Program. In addition, many national research projects covering different aspects of EMF and health, including possible effects of the use of mobile telephone technology, are currently underway.

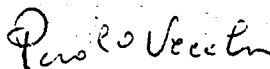
We appreciate that elected bodies, such as the European Parliament, must consider social, economic and political as well as scientific evidence in developing policies to address this issue. For example, under certain circumstances such bodies might deem it appropriate to implement a policy of precaution as it has been formulated in the Commission paper COM 2000(1). We recognise the political imperative for this but recommend that, if it is done, it should be based on sound scientific advice and should not introduce arbitrary limits of exposure based on fragmentary scientific evidence or the scientifically unrepresentative opinions of a few individuals. Adequate risk communication cannot be replaced by setting arbitrary limits.

We hope that the information contained in this letter is of help to members of the European Parliament in formulating policy on exposure to EMFs and human health. The sources of information cited below will provide you with a balanced scientific view that prevails as the consensus of scientific opinion.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. J.H. Bernhardt
ICNIRP Vice-Chairman



Dr. P. Vecchia
EBEA



Prof. N. Leitgeb
COST-281

Encl.: List of Publications

Cc.: Members of the Presidency Bureau
Members of the STOA Panel
Directorate-General for Research and Documentation Directorate A, -STOA
EC Directorate-General for Research
EC Directorate-General Health and Consumer Protection
EC Directorate-General Enterprise