

Dutch NGOs urge Europe to install cellphone antennas far away from dwellings

Worries and uncertainties - but what about the sufferers?

The Hague, The Netherlands (October 11, 2005) - 'Give preference to places where people don't live or work, ensure that citizens have full information of all different sources of electromagnetic radiation and set up research, particularly cohort studies into effects on people in the vicinity of antennas'.

Dutch NGO's yesterday published these urgent recommendations to the European Union and the government of The Netherlands.

The NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) are represented by the 'Platform Gezondheid en Milieu', the Dutch Platform for Health and Environment (1). Though the brochure (2) is dated September 2005, it was released only yesterday. 'Do not install masts at or near sensitive places such as nurseries, schools, hospitals and homes for the elderly. Avoid antenna forests created by providers on top of inhabited buildings' says the leaflet. 'The scope of the investigation should include children and adults who think they are susceptible to the harmful effects of electromagnetic radiation, as well as to the cumulative effects of radiation of different sources.' Though the brochure focuses on GSM and UMTS (3G) antennas, the other sources of radiofrequency radiation (DECT, WIFI, WLAN, TETRA, DVB-T and many others) are implicated in the recommendation 'Map the different sources of radiation'.

Information by four experts

The brochure is based on information by four heavy experts. They are dr. John Bolte of the RIVM, prof. dr. ir. Peter Zwamborn of TNO-FEL, drs. Wim Zwart Voorspuy of the GGD and dr. Eric van Rongen of the Dutch Health Council (3). Strikingly, the brochure does not ask for recognition of people who suffer from the radiation. The NGOs do not even recommend aid to people who lost their jobs, had to leave their homes, live in shielded rooms or developed illness. Also they do not mention the risk of the permanent and intermittent exposure of the general population, leading to the absorption of radiation by each individual. The chance of quite small biological effects is 100%, so the risk (consequences multiplied by chance) seems high. The individual chance of a severe 'chain of effects' is estimated only one in many thousands. The consequences however are serious, so the risk is high. The brochure does not go into these matters.

Insomnia and dizziness

The brochure focuses on worries and uncertainties. 'Many people living in the vicinity of GSM and UMTS masts suffer from complaints such as headaches, insomnia or dizziness', it says. Fatigue should be added. So, the well-being (part of health) of many people is decreased. The brochure also mentions heart palpitations and loss of concentration. Burning skin, eye problems and a lot of complaints should be added. A simple way to check if the complaints are related to electromagnetic radiation is, to remove the radiation or to stay somewhere else for some time, where the radiation is much lower. The brochure of the Dutch NGOs however concentrates on the worries of the general population and residents near masts, and the uncertainties of scientists. Thus, the question remains: who speaks for the people who suffer from the radiation? Who looks after their interests?

(1)

The 'Platform Gezondheid en Milieu' represents:

- INCHEs, International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety, <http://www.isde.org/> (choose Links, choose Links to networks in which ISDE participates)

- MNGM, 'Meldpunten Netwerk Gezondheid en Milieu', Monitoring Network Health and Environment, <http://www.mngm.nl>
- NVMM, 'Nederlandse Vereniging voor Medische Milieukunde', Dutch Association of Environmental Medicine, <http://web.inter.nl.net/users/nvmm/>, member of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE), <http://www.isde.org>
- NVR, 'Nederlandse Vrouwenraad', Dutch Women's Council, <http://www.nederlandsevrouwenraad.nl>, member of the International Council of Women
- Stichting Ecobaby, <http://www.ecobaby.nl>, partner of Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)
- Stichting Goede Waar, Foundation for human-, animal- and nature-friendly consuming, <http://www.goedewaar.nl>
- Stichting Natuur en Milieu, Foundation for Nature and Environment, <http://www.natuurenmilieu.nl>
- Stichting Viba-Expo, Foundation for human-friendly and ecological building, living and working, <http://www.viba-expo.nl>
- Vereniging Leefmilieu, Association for the Environment, <http://www.leefmilieu.nl>
- Vusse Milieadvies, <http://www.vusse.demon.nl>
- WEO, 'Werkgroep Elektrische Overgevoeligheid', Working Group Electrical Hypersensitivity, <http://www.electroallergie.org/>

(2)

The brochure can be downloaded here:

<http://www.gezondheidenmilieu.nl/documents/PDFstraling.pdf>

(3)

The experts who gave information to the Platform 'Gezondheid en Milieu' are:

- Dr. John Bolte, researcher, RIVM, 'Rijks Instituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu', National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, <http://www.rivm.nl> (primarily advising the Dutch Government)
- Prof. dr. ir. Peter Zwamborn, researcher and radiation expert, TNO-FEL, TNO Physics and Electronics Laboratory (integrated into Defence, Security and Safety), <http://www.tno.nl>
- Drs. Wim Zwart Voorspuy, medical environmentalist, GGD, 'Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdienst Dienst Den Haag (OCW/AGZ)', Municipal Health Services The Hague, <http://www.denhaag.nl/smartsite.html?id=24979>. Wim Zwart Voorspuy is president of the NVMM, 'Nederlandse Vereniging voor Milieukunde' (according to the website <http://www.isde.org>), a member organisation of the 'Platform Gezondheid en Milieu'. The NVMM is the Dutch member of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE). The NVMM is associated with 'GGD Nederland', the association of 40 municipal health services departments in The Netherlands.
- Dr. Eric van Rongen, radiation expert, secretary of the 'Beraadsgroep Stralingshygiëne', Standing Committee on Radiation Protection, of the 'Gezondheidsraad', Health Council of The Netherlands, and secretary of the 'Commissie Elektromagnetische Velden', the Electromagnetic Fields Committee, of the 'Gezondheidsraad', Health Council of The Netherlands, <http://www.gr.nl>

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