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20/01/2015 - EESC EHS Opinion - plenary vote January 2015

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The [Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society](#) (TEN) of the [European Economic and Social Committee](#) (EESC) has now produced its [final draft opinion](#) that we reported on recently. It would have represented a giant step forward in the recognition of electromagnetic hypersensitivity and the need in society to dramatically alter our approach to supporting sufferers of the condition. However today, the 21st January 2015, a Counter-Opinion was proposed and voted on before the EHS Opinion and the Counter Opinion was passed by plenary vote. That means that the good TEN 559 EHS Opinion was dismissed.

The Adams Counter-Opinion was voted on first and was passed 136 votes to 110 votes with 19 Abstentions. We do plan to do a short report on the meeting which was live-streamed.



If anyone wants to replay the meeting, then Mast-Victims has archived the [audio from the meeting](#)

Opposition

[Richard Adams OBE](#), a member of the TEN committee and someone who has worked hard over many years to make the world a better and fairer place, has written a [strongly worded alternative](#) to the document, that seems to completely miss the very purpose of the formal opinion, and also goes beyond its scope by evaluating the scientific and medical evidence (something the original was updated to avoid doing in its later iterations). His Counter-Opinion submission has been co-signed by 17 colleagues, mostly with industry/commercial/economic associations and experience.

He also very strangely and unjustifiably has criticised Lennart Hardell for a "lack of scientific and academic credibility", despite Dr Hardell's long and distinguished career record of publishing relevant work in peer-reviewed journals and inclusion in the IARC RF assessment panel as a renowned expert. Professor Hardell and Michael Carlberg have produced a [detailed rebuttal](#) of Adam's defamatory comments. Adams also made similar unjustified comments about the excellent BioInitiative Reports.

We note that Mr Adams is a Trustee of UK Charity Sustainability First which promotes the Smart Grid and Smart Meters (which use RF to transmit data). The Charity is sponsored by BEAMA (which represents 300 electrotechnology firms and claims to have significant influence over UK and international political, standardisation and commercial policy), Cable & Wireless, Consumer Futures, British Gas, EDF Energy, Elexon E-Meter (Siemens), EON UK, National Grid, Northern Powergrid, Ofgem (the UK electricity industry Regulator), Scottish Power Energy Networks, and UK Power Networks. He is also a member of the Corporate Responsibility Stakeholder Council at RWE AG (one of Europe's five biggest electricity and gas utilities). There is nothing wrong with this, but as all these organisations are promoting the installation of RF emitting Smart Meters and as he is strongly opposing the TEN group EHS Opinion, we see this as a potential conflict of interest that should be declared.



As a continuation of the above point, the counter-opinion proposed by Richard Adams demonstrates an apparent lack of understanding behind the reason the committee was producing the opinion in the first place. It is not his role to argue one side or the other of the scientific debate, but to provide pragmatic and practical options for managing the social and economic impact of electromagnetic

hypersensitivity. There is at least as much published support that "removal of EMF exposure" is as effective for sufferers as other treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy.

The EC and Member States have signed up to applying the Precautionary Principle. The most recent interpretation document from the EC is the [Communication on the precautionary principle COM\(2000\)](#). This includes:

- Recourse to the precautionary principle presupposes that potentially dangerous effects deriving from a phenomenon, product or process have been identified, and that scientific evaluation does not allow the risk to be determined with sufficient certainty
- Decision-makers need to be aware of the degree of uncertainty attached to the results of the evaluation of the available scientific information. Judging what is an 'acceptable' level of risk for society is an eminently political responsibility
- Decision-makers faced with an unacceptable risk, scientific uncertainty and public concerns have a duty to find answers. Therefore, all these factors have to be taken into consideration.

It will be very disappointing if his counter-opinion is giving much merit or weight in any future voting processes, as he has failed to offer any such options, arguing instead that the symptoms are unrelated to EMFs. He recommends that symptoms are addressed separately from EMFs, despite the lack of literature supporting the efficacy of such treatments, and that treatment should be designed around alleviating the concerns of these individuals about environmental exposures generally.

» An excellent new document on RF fields and health regarding '[Scientific proof](#)' versus '[observation](#)' and '[experiences](#)' by Dr Leendert Vriens is well worth reading in our opinion.

Key extracts from the existing document

1.5 » The EU should assist currently affected groups and limit exposure fields in light of the recommendations set out in this opinion, especially with respect to recognising this exposure as a cause of functional disability and environmental illness. Steps should also be taken to prevent the number of sufferers from gradually increasing in the future due to the expansion of devices using these technologies.

2.2 » It is now believed that electromagnetic hypersensitivity syndrome, which is one aspect of what is known as Idiopathic Environmental Intolerance (IEI), attributed to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) from such everyday devices as mobile phones and Wi-Fi, can lead to permanent disability since there are reasonable indications that it could cause anatomical and functional disorders for sufferers to the point that it limits or prevents their capacity to work. The International Agency for Research on Cancer, a specialised WHO body, examined the potential carcinogenic risk of radiofrequency fields produced by mobile phones. Two international bodies have drawn up guidelines on exposure limits for workers and the general public (ICNIRP and IEEZ) (*sic*), *should be ICNIRP and IEEE*.

2.8 » There are more and more people suffering from electromagnetic and environmental hypersensitivity syndrome. In addition, these people may sometimes suffer the incomprehension and scepticism of doctors who do not deal with the problem professionally. That is why measures to stem the increase in the numbers of those affected and prevent those suffering becoming socially excluded are so important.

3.2 » However, people affected by electromagnetic waves display no symptoms whatsoever when not exposed to electromagnetic fields. This leads to the conclusion that any recurring radiation-induced conditions that diminish or disappear when the sufferer moves away from the source constitute electromagnetic hypersensitivity, even when according to some doctors, scientific evidence of a direct causal link is lacking. The present opinion addresses the implications of their situation for those affected rather than its causes.

3.3 » Electromagnetic hypersensitivity sufferers experience a serious deterioration in their quality of life, not only because of the physical symptoms it usually entails, but also because their lives are totally disrupted by the need to avoid exposure. In practice, it means that they not only have to avoid almost all public facilities such as transport, hospitals and libraries, but even their own homes, in order to escape adverse health effects, which is a breach of rights that are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

8.1.1 » The EESC believes that the EU should assist current sufferers and take steps to limit exposure fields in order to prevent the number of sufferers from gradually increasing in the future due to the expansion of devices using these technologies. It also supports the creation of white zones as an emergency measures for people worst affected by this syndrome.

8.5 » Electromagnetic safety thresholds for the use of products should be regulated and rules concerning the planning of electric power lines and relay antenna base stations should be established by adopting legislation on:

- a safe distance between high-voltage power lines and other electrical installations and homes;
- maximum permissible exposure levels and effective and transparent control mechanisms;
- requirement for spatial planning tools to include public and private EMF-free zones (i.e. "white" zones, which would have to include housing, and public spaces that were free of electromagnetic pollution, such as health centres, hospitals, libraries, workspaces, etc.).



This collection of extracts from the final opinion make a number of points clear, and elucidate the purpose of the committee's opinion. It is not their remit to discuss the scientific controversy between electromagnetic hypersensitivity and causation by electromagnetic fields, nor to discuss its medical diagnosis. It does recognise the existence of the syndrome, its recognition as a condition in some form or another, the increase in its prevalence, and the need to address it as a real societal issue preventing people from working and living normal lives. As such, the recommendations that are made in the document are focused on how best to manage the social and economic impacts of electromagnetic hypersensitivity and offer solutions that have been demonstrated to be the most effective, such as providing places and areas where sufferers can live and work.

Links

- » [European Economic and Social Committee \(EESC\) website](#)
- » All the documents regarding the EHS [opinion\(s\)](#) (scroll down to the TEN/559 section of documents)
- » Final version of the [TEN opinion document](#) on electromagnetic hypersensitivity
- » Richard Adams' individual [counter opinion](#) to be presented alongside the official committee document
- » [Future agenda](#) for the section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN)
- » Lennart Hardell's [response](#) to Richard Adams' defamatory comments

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