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**Eileen O'Connor**
**UK Radiation Research Trust**

"Why people are worried about EMF: a UK perspective"

European Commission
Brussels

11 - 12 February, 2009
Workshop on EMF and Health: Science and Policy

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**The EM Radiation Research Trust**
Reg. Charity No: 1106304
http://www.radiationresearch.org

The Radiation Research Trust (RRT) are leading supporters of the precautionary approach to Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) and as such advocate release of substantial research funds from Government and Industry while offering immediate protection and advice to the public.

The RRT gained charitable status in 2003 and is supported by MPs and MEPs from each of the UK political parties.

We are also indebted to Independent Scientific, Public Health and Technical Advisors.

We receive no government funding so we rely solely on voluntary donations to fund our vital work

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Slide 3 **Why am I here?**

I had suffered for years with sleep problems, headaches, dizzy spells and vertigo only to be told by my doctors that It was stress or a virus. I eventually developed breast cancer at the age of 38 and discovered that I was living in a cancer cluster.

We now understand that we are not alone, there are many other people living in cancer clusters around phone masts in the UK and throughout the world. I had been living 100m from a phone mast and I now realise the symptoms reported to my doctor are known as a condition called electro sensitivity.

My colleagues Brian Stein, Liz Lynne MEP and Professor Olle Johansson recently visited residents living in a cancer cluster around a base station with 18 antennas in Kingswinford where 14 people have died of cancer and a further 20 people in the area have contracted the disease.

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Slide 4 **Why am I here?**

People are truly suffering ill health and I believe this situation is very real. Evidence from ordinary people should be taken seriously as it ties in with much of the published scientific research and this is why it should be given some credence. *Quote from Sir William Stewart at the RRT Conference, 2008*

Since 2000 there has been a mass of publications, reports, observations, and views purporting at the very least to implicate phones/base stations as a cause of adverse health effects. At a time of uncertainty when more information is required, non-peer reviewed articles should not be ignored. Doing so is ridiculous. They may be right but unproven and/or offer pointers to be thought about and followed up.

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Slide 5 **Pros and cons of "progress"**

Wireless communication offers a large number of real and practical benefits to society but are the downsides being adequately considered?

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Slide 6 **The Debate** **RRT Conference 2008**

In order to address the issues surrounding this debate the Radiation Research Trust organised a major conference on the 8th & 9th September, 2008 entitled:

**'Electromagnetic fields and health - a global issue'**

This took place at the Royal Society, London.

The RRT invited speakers from ICNIRP, WHO, the Russian National Committee on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection and national bodies such as the UK Health Protection Agency and the MTHR. They were joined by scientists, politicians, lawyers and concerned citizens, each offering differing viewpoints in order to encourage discussion around risk assessment.

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Slide 7 **Scientists presenting at the RRT conference reported children at risk**

Example: *"The potential risk to children's health is very high and a completely new problem. Use of mobile phones for those under 18 or pregnant should be restricted. Children have a unique vulnerability as they grow and develop; there are 'windows of susceptibility' periods when their organs and systems may be particularly sensitive to the effect of certain environmental threats. The existing standards cannot guarantee the safe, healthy development of the next generation."*

**Professor Yury Grigoriev, Chairman of Russian National Committee on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection**

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Slide 8 **International advice on children and mobile phones**

**Toronto's Department of Public Health** advised that children under eight should only use mobiles in emergencies and teenagers should limit calls to less than 10 minutes.

**The Russian Ministry of Health** says that young people under 18 should not use the devices.

**UK Government Department of Health** says children and young people under 16 should only use mobile phones for "essential purposes".

**Israel's Health Ministry** has advised caution.

**Recently the French Government and Finnish** governmental authority for the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) recommended restricting the use of mobile phones by children.

Whilst there is still such a degree of uncertainty on health effects, it is very concerning to see organisations such as BECTA and corporations such as Samsung promoting wireless communications onto children.

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Slide 9 **Who is responsible for public health and policy in the UK?**

The UK Health Protection Agency (HPA) scientists are advisors to the UK Government.

The UK Government say they must rely on advice from the Health Protection Agency (HPA).

HPA Chairman – Sir William Stewart headed up the Stewart report and provided advice to the Government in May, 2000.

All UK agencies refer back to the HPA

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Slide 10 **Advice from the May 2000 Stewart Report**

People can vary in their susceptibility to environmental hazards. It is not possible at present to say that exposure to RF radiation, even at levels below national guidelines, is totally without potential adverse health effects, and that the gaps in knowledge are sufficient to justify a precautionary approach. Base stations sited within or near school grounds, should not have a beam of greatest intensity that falls on any part of the school grounds or buildings without agreement from the school and parents.

**In 2004 Sir William stated that he believed that the evidence for possible harm has become stronger in the (almost) 5 years since the publication of his original IEGMP Report. He recommended that young people should be encouraged to minimise their use of mobile phones, and that children under 10 years old should not have one.**

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Slide 11 **UK Government funds received from mobile phone industry**

The UK government netted £22.47bn from the auction of mobile phone licences.

The sector generates over £15bn a year in UK taxes.

**The Government has put around £6 million back into mobile telecommunication research to date. This represents just 0.04% of the tax revenues from a single year of operation – this seems totally disproportionate considering the level of concern for health effects.**

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Slide 12 **UK Planning Laws**

**National Planning Guidance to telecommunications is set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG8).**

"It remains central Government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guide-lines for public exposure, it should not be necessary for a Local Planning Authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them." [PPG8, para 98]

Accordingly, PPG8 states that if the proposed development meets the ICNIRP Guidelines, it should not be necessary for the Planning Authority to consider the health effects further. There is no requirement to provide an emissions profile; nor any requirement to question the need for the installation.

**The decision is therefore the responsibility of the Government.**

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Slide 13 **Urgent guidance needed to protect public health**

The rapid growth rate of mobile phones, phone masts, tetra and wireless communication systems, alongside various reports of possible adverse effects on health, has caused increased concern around the world over the potential effect of electromagnetic pollution on health and the environment.

**At present the technology is being increasingly used with almost no precautionary guidance to the public.**

**Who is responsible for public health in the UK?**

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Slide 14 **Is ICNIRP responsible?**

**Paolo Vecchia, Chairman for ICNIRP presented at the RRT conference in September, 2008.**
**In his presentation, he made it very clear that:**
**"the ICNIRP guidelines are neither mandatory prescriptions for safety, the "last word" on the issue nor are they defensive walls for Industry or others."**

**This statement makes it clear that the decision to adopt these guidelines into national legislation as "sufficient to protect public health" is political.**

**The government's misuse of ICNIRP is the primary issue.**

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**ICNIRP level = 42.5 - 61 V/m depending on frequency**

**The constitutional court in Brussels** recently dismissed the phone companies and government appeals in order to avoid the risk of irreversible damage to the environment and public health.
**2009 Decision taken to adopt 3V/m**

**Liechtenstein – Environmental Protection Law**
Exposure for standards based on the state of science or experience. Sensitive use where ever people regularly spend lengthy periods of time. e.g. apartments, schools, offices, hospitals & playgrounds.
**2008 Decision taken to adopt 0.6 V/m**

**Salzburg** – Inform public on dangers of mobile phone use in information campaign.
**2008 Decision taken to adopt 0.06 V/m**

**Italian Decree Areas where people stay for 4 hours & more.**
**2003 Decision taken to adopt 6 V/m**

**Swiss ordinance for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection**
Places of sensitive use are where ever people regularly spend time.
**1999 Decision taken to adopt from 4V/m – 6 V/m**

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Slide 16 **Other reasons for concern**

- An international working group of scientists, researchers and public health policy professionals produced the 2007 BioInitiative report. The report provides detailed scientific information on health impacts when people are exposed to electromagnetic radiation hundreds or even thousands of times below the ICNIRP guidelines.

- The authors reviewed more than 2000 scientific studies and concluded that the existing public safety limits are inadequate to protect public health. From a public health policy standpoint, new public safety limits, and limits on further deployment of risky technologies are warranted based on the total weight of evidence.

- In September 2008, MEPs voted 522 to 16 to urge ministers across Europe to bring in stricter radiation limits and said: "The limits on exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) which have been set for the general public are obsolete.

The European Parliament "is greatly concerned at the Bio-Initiative international report which points in its conclusions to the health risks posed by emissions from devices such as mobile telephones, UMTS, WiFi, WiMax and Bluetooth, and also DECT telephones".

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Slide 17 **The danger of relay antennas to health finally recognized**

Paris - February 5, 2009. This press release and the original court decision have been provided courtesy of Next-Up in France.

**The Greens Senators welcomed the decision of the Versailles Court of Appeal to order the dismantling of an antenna** relay Bouygues Telecom in Tassin la Demi-lune in the **Rhone.**

This decision comes to confirm the condemnation pronounced by the Court of Nanterre in opposition to the corporation Bouygues Telecom considering that the presence of an antenna relay of mobile communication nearby of dwellings constitutes an abnormal disturbance of neighbourhood réparable by the dismantling of the antenna.

**This ruling gives legal recognition to the risks posed by the masts or mobile phones on human health, which may result in serious disorders such as cancers.**

**The decision rests in particular on the BIO 2007 Initiative which was created by a group of independent scientists, industrialists and mobile operators, and which requires public authorities of each country to review the exposure standards electromagnetic fields.**

**It is now up to the Government to take responsibility for setting new standards to protect the health of the population and thus avoid a new health catastrophe from happening.**

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Slide 18 **Wifi research project in schools**

Eight members of the Health Protection Agency's EMF Discussion Group voiced concerns about health effects from wifi which were summarised in a memo and sent to the HPA at the end of 2007 following the announcement of research, costing about £300,000 of public money.

The purpose is to assess typical exposures in classrooms with WiFi, with the aim of verifying that these are below the existing guidelines as set by ICNIRP. (Remember what Paolo Vecchia said about ICNIRP.)

We believe this to be irrelevant as **it does not examine chronic exposure and its possible impact on health**. The HPA have chosen **not to respond** to these concerns.

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Slide 19 **Are EHS numbers increasing?**

An Austrian telephone study of a cross section of 526 people showed that an increasing number of people suffer from non-specific health symptoms such as headaches, sleep disturbances, difficulties in concentrating etc and attribute their ill health to electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS) and electromagnetic pollution. It showed an EHS prevalence of 3.5% compared with 2% estimated in 1994.

In 2007, a UK survey aimed at a randomly selected group of 20,000 people found a prevalence of 4% for symptoms attributed to electromagnetic exposure.

UK Doctors are not trained to recognise the condition and could be misdiagnosing patients and treating them with medication for conditions such as headaches, sleep problems and depression.
**EHS people deserve respect and immediate attention.**

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**The way forward**

**Call on the EU Commission and Member States:**

- 1**)** Call for immediate EU funding to support a new research effort to study the effects of microwave and electrical pollution on public health, wildlife, birds, bees and the ecosystem while trying to find a safer way forward. Scientists involved in such projects must be free of any influence from Industry or government considerations and the funding needed for the work should be covered 100%.

- 2) Call for the immediate publication of the INTERPHONE studies which have been postponed since 2006, the purpose of this international epidemiological study being to establish whether there is a link between use of mobile phones and certain types of brain cancer/tumours.

- 3) Call for protection of whistle blowers and show appreciation for the vital role of such scientists and journalists for both the health of science and democracy.

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- 4) Call to produce public awareness for citizens on the possible health risks of exposure to EMF radiation. While the UK & other Governments advise children not to use mobile phones unless it's an emergency, Industry should not be allowed to market their products and warning labelling on wireless technology are very important. Advocate public transparency of uncertain risks and their potential implications to public health, so that an informed public have more options to exercise precaution.

- 5) Call for protection and human rights for people suffering with electrosensitivity in line with Sweden's recognition of people who suffer EHS which falls within a proper definition of disability, therefore the condition is officially recognised as a functional impairment. When being in contact with EMF sources which can include mobile phones, wifi and phone masts. Call to protect vulnerable members of society following the UN 22 Standard Rules on equal opportunities for people with disabilities**.**

- 6) Call on the European Commission and Member States to set new biologically based guidelines, since standard setting is ultimately based on political decisions. To avoid the risk of irreversible damage to the environment and public health. To start, follow the Liechtenstein legislation with an exposure limit of 0,6 V/m for mobile phone transmitting antennas for sensitive areas like homes, schools, work places etc. to be under constant review in light of new research.

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- 7) Call for legislation to implement a federal and European database on all radiofrequency transmitting sites e.g. GSM, UMTS, WIMAX, Wi-Fi, Radio, TETRA, TV, RADAR including all data that are needed to calculate radiofrequency exposures including their changes over time and to make the database available to health environment authorities and the public**.**

- 8) Call to develop a policy of prudent avoidance when it comes to radiofrequency exposures. E.g. to promote wired /fibre optic cables technologies for data communication instead of radiofrequency or microwave based wireless technologies in homes, schools, hospitals and workplaces. Wired networks are more secure, faster and more reliable than wireless networks and so should be used in preference. Wifi should not be allowed in schools. Schools need to provide safe environments for all children, irrespective of their susceptibilities to different diseases or genetic make ups. Children deserve a safe environment to learn, play, develop and thrive. Schools therefore have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for all children whilst in their care.

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**Final statement**

**Call for immediate emergency EU funding and international co-operation**

We need to find a way of moving on from stating opposing views to find a way of understanding and reconciling them.

The RRT conference was a useful starting point and we hope that we can encourage all sides of the debate to work together.

We need to urgently encourage a small group of influential moderates to come together, in order to move the issue forward as a matter of urgency.

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**Thank you for listening**

*Thank you to Laurent Bontoux and the EU Commission for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Radiation Research Trust .*

**Quote:**
***"Science is about ensuring that facts and evidence are never twisted or obscured by politics or ideology. It's about listening to what our scientists have to say, even when it's inconvenient - especially when it's inconvenient."***

***Barack Obama, 44th President of the United States***