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Alliance for MRI Reacts to Revision of EMF Directive

Threat from Council to Proposed Derogation for MRI

On November 8, a reception of the Alliance for MRI was jointly hosted by MEP Elisabeth Morin-Chartier and MEP Sylvana Rapti at the European Parliament. Since the adoption of the European Commission proposal for a new EMF-Directive in June 2011, it has become clear from the discussions in Council that there is opposition from a number of member states to the proposed derogation for MRI from the limit values. Mr. Jerzy Galeziak, representing the Polish Presidency, outlined that the objections are primarily ideological, as there is a reluctance to grant an exemption to any category of worker from the EU health and safety legislation.

Dr. Patricia Reilly, representing Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn, DG Research, emphasised that the proposed derogation for MRI is crucial to boost the use and further development of MR technology without compromising the safety of workers and patients. She outlined the European Commission's commitment to fostering the development of the technology within the context of the EU 2020 strategy. MRI has been in use for over 30 years and MR research in Europe is vital to improve diagnosis and treatment for Europe's patients.

Ms. Morin-Char tier MEP, Rapport eur of the European Parliament's repor t, outlined that she will seek to achieve the best solution for Europe's patients in the new Directive prior to the expiry of the April 2012 postponement deadline of Directive 2004/40/EC.

Ms. Morin-Char tier explained that she planned to work closely with the Presidency of the Council in finding a workable solution, taking into account concerns regarding worker safety whilst ensuring the future of MRI. She concluded by assuring the Alliance for MRI that she will work to bring about a satisfactory solution for Europe's patients. Ms. Sylvana Rapti MEP stressed the importance of taking all views into account in order to find the best solution to ensure unhindered patient access to MRI in the future.

ESR Vice-President Welcomes Commission Proposal

Prof. Gabriel Krestin, Vice President of the European Society of Radiology, welcomed the European Commission's proposal to address the unintended impact of the current Directive on MRI. It is based on sound scientific evidence, which must be taken into consideration in the current discussions. He explained that the derogation would exempt MRI from the exposure limits only, not from the legislation, and MRI workers are already protected in other ways, including existing international standards relating to equipment safety and that MRI is used in a very controlled environment. He outlined that the MRI Community welcomed the development of European guidelines to support t the current Directive.

Stephen Pickard, representing the European Parkinson's Disease Association (EPDA) pleaded for decision-makers not to forget the importance of unhindered access for patients to MRI. He outlined the progress which had been made with the European Commission in explaining the need for workers to accompany patients near the scanner and the importance of research in this technology in order to find ways to treat and cure major neurological diseases. MRI offers new insights into serious and widespread conditions such as bipolar depression. Whilst the EU adopts 2013 as the European Year of the Brain, it must not curtail the use of such a vital technology, which is used so effectively to improve and save lives.

Alliance for MRI's Position

- The Alliance for MRI requests that the new Directive provides for a derogation for MRI from all limit values for all workers including medical, research, maintenance and cleaning personnel.
- The Alliance fully supports the development of binding user guidelines for MR workers for all EU countries.
- The Alliance does not see any possibilities for compromising on this position without putting the use of MRI for the benefit of Europe's patients in danger.

Alliance for MRI Campaign needs your Help Now!

This Directive is complex and there is still disagreement about the scientific basis for the exposure limits. There is also a clear lack of understanding regarding MRI technology and how the scanners are developed and used to ensure the safety of patients and workers. It is our mission to ensure the unhindered use of this technology which is at the cutting edge of patient care and the diagnosis of life threatening diseases in Europe. It has been used for over 30 years with no evidence of harm to patients or workers.

The Alliance will be pleased to:

- Provide expert witnesses to support discussions on the rationale for a derogation
- Support all our members who can write letters to their MEPs, ministers of health and ministers of social affairs/ health and safety to communicate the importance of this derogation

We would like to thank all members who attended the reception and look forward to working with you.

For information on the Alliance for MRI please visit www.alliance-for-mri.org or contact the Alliance Secretariat at euaffairs@myesr.org

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