

# **New German Working Group Bundles EMF Science Issues to Provide Public Information Services and Advisory Functions**

Frank Gollnick\*, Gabi Conrad, Franz Büllingen, and Karl-Heinz Neumann

Working Group “EMF and Environment”, WIK – Scientific Institute for Infrastructure and Communication Services GmbH, Bad Honnef, Germany

\*Corresponding author e-mail: f.gollnick@wik.org

## **INTRODUCTION**

The licensing of UMTS frequencies in the autumn of 2000 seemed to stimulate public controversy about the potential health consequences of high-frequency electromagnetic fields (RF EMF). As a consequence of public concern, Germany has experienced substantial economic losses, including a significantly delayed network rollout, resources expended in protracted searches for acceptable mast locations, loss of revenue from cell phone services, countless court cases, and an expensive and sophisticated RF EMF research program (German Mobile Communication Research Program, DMF). Further, the public image of network operators has been tarnished and some citizens have lost confidence in a suitable response by government. Today, Germany offers almost complete coverage by 3rd generation (UMTS) mobile networks. Even so, as new technologies are introduced, emotions and public debate can be expected to continue. Technological development is essential for maintaining reliability and improving performance, and circumstances will again shift with the introduction of 4th generation (UMTS/HSPA, LTE) technology, the proliferation of wireless devices, and the large-scale auction of additional frequency spectrum for mobile communication in 2010. Overall, these developments underline the need for a balanced and informed public discourse on potential risk, and outline the challenges that the WIK Institute has started to address with a new working group.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN**

In January 2010, the Scientific Institute for Infrastructure and Communication Services GmbH (WIK) [1] has launched a new program to provide clear up-to-date and background information as well as effective communications on research about the potential health consequences of EMF and its interaction with the environment, mainly focused on RF EMF. Encouraged and backed by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, WIK has established a Working Group on “EMF and Environment” [2] to monitor scientific advances and developments in the public debate within Germany and abroad. WIK is committed to improving the public dialogue regarding possible health risks or impact on the environment from RF. This major contribution is needed if Germany is to have a more objective and informed public debate, and thus prevent a further splintering of RF-related discourse.

To meet this challenge, and to fill a void created by the closure of the German Forschungsgemeinschaft Funk e.V. (FGF) [3], the Working Group has established an early warning system, offers an array of clear, accurate informational materials, and fulfills networking and communication activities. In addition to its own expertise, WIK has strengthened its qualifications with the addition of two former FGF employees. The WIK Institute is not new to these issues. It is active and is well positioned in the field of risk communication. Recently, it has undertaken a number of studies and advisory activities in the field of risk communication, e.g. for the Federal Office for Radiation Protection, or for

the German Bundestag. WIK also participated in the annual reports for the evaluation of the German Mobile Communication Research Program (DMF).

## **MAIN TASKS AND METHODS**

To achieve the objectives and to offer a bundle of services, the working group has started to:

1. Monitor EMF science through continuous analysis and evaluation of research results,
2. Develop information and discourse functions,
3. Continuously manage, bundle, and document information,
4. Serve as a point of contact for EMF information,
5. Perform public relations (periodic dispatches of printed information and electronic newsletters, information offered on a website),
6. Coordinate information exchange and sustain networking amongst scientists, stakeholders, health officials, and authorities,
7. Organize scientific workshops, informative events and reviews on certain EMF topics.

Moreover, it is planned to solicit ideas from colleagues in other organizations to continuously improve the goals and products. The project is open in any direction for cooperation with organizations, official bodies, companies, etc. The weekly and quarterly information on a broad range of EMF topics ("EMF brief" and "EMF and Environment" Newsletter) can be subscribed free of charge at [2].

## **EXPECTED OUTCOME**

Services and advisory functions will be provided to all those who in some way are involved in the EMF debate, and have diverse needs for support. In particular, the Working Group "EMF and Environment" will offer a point of contact and a cooperative partner for those who have lost a valuable platform formerly provided by the FGF. The group's independence and expertise make it a key contact for different parties searching for reliable information and advice in the field of EMF science.

The group is led and supervised by the Managing Director of WIK GmbH, Dr. Karl-Heinz Neumann, and by Dr. Franz Büllingen, Head of the Department of "Communication and Innovation".

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] [www.wik.org](http://www.wik.org)
- [2] [www.emf.wik.org](http://www.emf.wik.org)
- [3] [www.fgf.de](http://www.fgf.de)