

# CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

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## **Resolution 115 (2001) on mobile telephone base stations and local/regional authorities**

The Congress,

### 1. Considering that:

*a.* there is a public health concern over the presence of electromagnetic fields emanating from telecommunications equipment and a lack of consensus among the experts about whether and at what levels electromagnetic fields can affect humans;

*b.* although exposures of people in the vicinity of mobile telephone base stations are expected to be well within guidelines, in most countries there is no independent audit to ensure that this is the case, and very often there can be indirect adverse effects on people's well-being;

*c.* there is also a visual and noise impact of telecommunications installations, particularly masts and antennas, on the landscape, on people's enjoyment of the landscape and on the ecology of areas, on public and residential quarters;

*d.* the information made available to consumers on mobile phone products and technologies is limited and variable. There are a lack of clear protocols which take into account public interest prior to any base station being built and operated, and there are significant variations in the extent to which mobile phone operators consult the public on the siting of base stations;

*e.* there are areas that should be considered as sensitive from an environmental health point of view, including residential quarters, schools, nurseries and hospitals, and the siting of base stations in such areas can cause considerable concern and distress;

### 2. Convinced that:

*a.* there is scope for the development of a more sensitive approach to the siting and design of telecommunications equipment. Open communication and discussion between the mobile telephone operator and the public during the planning stages for a new antenna can help create mutual understanding;

*b.* planning is best done through a collaborative effort involving all parties interested in the issue – public and private, local and regional. Local and regional authorities should be prepared to assist communities in making sure that new cellular communications towers are planned to minimise negative impacts;

*c.* an effective system of health information and communications among scientists, governments, the industry and the public may help raise general awareness of mobile telephone technology and reduce any mistrust and fears, both real and perceived,

### 3. Calls on local and regional authorities to:

*a.* elaborate a local/regional telecommunications policy, using a precautionary approach and bearing in mind the framework of the national telecommunications policy;

*b.* work out a development plan that will include the identification of sites and the establishment of criteria for acceptable sites for telecommunications installations; This may also facilitate negotiation on the replacement of existing structures with more suitable structures in terms of environmental impact;

*c.* make sure that selecting sites for new mobile phone base stations is done in consultation with the population concerned:

*i.* maintain an up-to-date list of all notifications, which should be readily available for public consultation;

*ii.* seek the input of the local community through appropriate consultation mechanisms, for example educational workshops and forums at which planners, industry representatives and local residents can discuss the operation of mobile networks in their area;

*d.* establish a hierarchy of preferred locations for telecommunications equipment that, where possible, avoid more densely populated areas such as residential areas and weight towards more sparsely populated areas such as industrial areas;

*e.* conduct an inventory of existing structures suitable for use as antenna support platforms, such as communications towers, tall buildings, water tanks and inactive chimneys. As part of the inventory, identify existing or planned public facilities and lands upon which antennas might be mounted or towers constructed;

*f.* maintain a database and map of inventoried existing structures, potentially available public facilities and land, as well as preferred land use areas;

*g.* exercise control over the siting and appearance of individual mast installations, whether through consideration of a full planning application or determination of a "prior approval" application;

*h.* develop criteria for new mobile telephone base station approval, which can be used at the regional level or adapted for local use. These should cover the issues of tower siting and design, preferred construction materials, safety zone requirements, height restrictions, accessory equipment location, fencing, access road criteria, co-location capacity, certification and lighting requirements;

*i.* require all telecommunications network operators to notify the local authority of the proposed installation of a

base station, indicating its location, the height of the antenna, the frequency and modulation characteristics and details of power output. Any change to an existing base station which increases its size, or the overall power radiated, should be subject to the normal planning and/or notification processes as if it were a new development;

*j.* make sure that each planning application for a telecommunications installation is accompanied by a risk assessment report on the health impact of the proposal, demonstrating that exposures of employees and the general public comply with the relevant guidelines. It should assess any risk to health and safety which may arise, including an assessment of likely exposure levels;

*k.* require developers and operators to minimise the environmental and amenity impact of telecommunications installations by encouraging site sharing and/or mast sharing, careful positioning, design solutions and specific landscape treatment around telecommunications equipment. When submitting a planning application, the telecommunications developer or operator should be required to demonstrate that options for site sharing or mast sharing have been explored prior to proposing the erection of masts on new sites;

*l.* develop incentives to encourage good tower design and site sharing. Incentives might include an expedited review

and approval process for masts proposed within preferred land use areas, using existing facilities, or co-locating with other providers;

*m.* require operators to provide periodic reports from an independent and suitably qualified public agency as to whether or not telecommunications facilities which are installed within the area comply with the relevant standard for electromagnetic radiation;

*n.* establish a comprehensive and consistent local/regional register of telecommunications installations, incorporating all existing facilities, planning approvals and new developments as they take place;

*o.* develop interauthority co-operation at a regional scale: mobile phone providers plan their networks from a regional perspective, therefore it makes sense for the authorities to plan for the siting of telecommunications facilities at the same scale - instead of each locality seeking to plan for tower siting independently of neighbouring communities.

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1. Debated by the Congress and adopted on 31 May 2001, 3rd Sitting (see Doc. CG (8) 12, draft resolution presented by Mr M. Bucci, rapporteur).