Answer given by Mr Busquin on behalf of the Commission

(8 April 2003)

The potential impact of mobile phones, and more specifically of electro-magnetic fields (EMF) on human health has been the object of a number of research projects funded under the Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources Programme of the Fifth European Research and Technological Development (RTD) Framework Programme. These projects focus on a number of theoretical health endpoints including development of cancer, impact on hearing, and on the central nervous system. One of those projects, which started in January 2002 and due to run three years, deals specifically with possible health impacts on the nervous system and particularly on the brain (1). To date, the focus of this project has been on dosimetry and fine scale calculation related to the human head.

The total Community contribution in the Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) to these projects amounted to nearly EUR 11 million. Further research co-ordination is supported through COST (COST Action 281) which links research funded primarily at national level (2). In May 2002, a workshop was devoted to discuss the impact on children. A specific short term mission is working on this item since then and another workshop is already planned in November 2003 in Budapest where specific attention is given to the impact of mobile phone use on the human brain.

As part of the 6th European RTD Framework Programme (2003-2006), the Commission intends to further promote this extensive research effort through the establishment of a policy oriented research network. The aim of the network will be to bring together many of the major EMF and health research projects with other stakeholders (industry, regulators, health community, non-governmental organisations, special interest groups) to consider the outcome of research actions. This topic was the subject of the first Call for research proposals of the 6th Framework Programme and should provide a cost effective framework to review aspects of long-term use of cellphones.

The latest scientific results on the potential health impacts of EMF are kept under review by the European Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment (CSTEE) (3). This Committee has confirmed the validity of the recommended exposure levels in Council Recommendation 1999/519/EEC of 12 July 1999 on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz to 300 GHz) (4) as giving adequate protection against exposure to EMF.

Through this combination of research funding, promotion of scientific co-ordination and regular scientific expert review, the Commission will play its' part in the important debate concerning the use of cellphones.

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(2) http://www.cost281.org.
(3) Details of which can be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sc/index_en.html.

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(2003/C 268 E/113)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0581/03

by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(28 February 2003)

Subject: Return of toxic-dust-generating waste after processing into building blocks and synthetic pellets to fill concrete walls

1. Is the Commission aware that the Dutch steel manufacturer Hoogovens, which is located on the coast between Velsen and Beverwijk and is currently part of the British-Dutch concern Corus, has been engaged since 1993 in processing chemical waste — mainly fly ash — into pellets, which can be used as a filling for concrete and in the manufacture of cementless pressed building blocks, which are marketed as ‘green bricks’?
2. Is the Commission aware that this material is widely distributed and that its traceability is minimal, given that different combinations of chemical waste from industry, electricity generating stations and domestic waste incinerators are incorporated in it, unidentified waste is imported from Poland, India, Taiwan and Israel, and the daughter company HTS E&E (Hoogovens Technical Services, Energy and Environment) sells HTS-Aardelite installations, which can produce this material, in the Netherlands and elsewhere?

3. Is the Commission aware that in the process of manufacture a great deal of toxic matter is released and that people who work in the industry are afflicted by, among other things, scabs and fungal infections of the skin, memory loss coupled with black patches on brain scans, hair loss, headaches, uncontrolled speech, laughing attacks and an unsteady gait, while the women in their families suffer early menopause and the children display high concentrations of arsenic, cadmium and aluminium in their bodies?

4. Is the Commission aware that occupants of new houses where pellets are incorporated in the concrete walls or which have been built from pressed building blocks cannot drill their walls without releasing toxic dust into their homes, or possibly inhaling it into their lungs?

5. What is the Commission doing to remove this dangerous product, which does not remove toxic waste definitively, but puts it back into circulation, as was once the case with asbestos and creosote salts/arsenic acid as a wood rot preventive, from production and to withdraw it from sale?

Source: Katholiek Nieuwsblad, 15 November 2002.

**Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission**

(22 April 2003)

1. The Commission is not aware of the alleged activities of the company referred to and distribution of so-called 'green bricks'. However, Council Directive 75/442/EEC of 15 July 1975 on waste (1) as amended and Council Directive 91/689/EEC of 12 December 1991 on hazardous waste (2) as amended provide that Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that waste is recovered or disposed of without endangering human health and without using processes or methods which could harm the environment. These Directives also request, inter alia for the purpose of implementing the above-mentioned obligation, that establishments and undertakings carrying out waste disposal or waste recovery operations must obtain a permit.

2. The Commission is not aware of the imports of these wastes. Under regulation (EEC) No 259/93 of 1 February 1993 on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the Community (3), the competent authorities designated by the Member States are required to ensure that the management of the shipped waste is undertaken in compliance with Community legislation on waste management.

3. The chemical properties and consequently the potential risks of production and use of the products in question are not known to the Commission. However, the Union legislation in the field of the protection of the health and safety of workers at work in particular Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (4) and Council Directive 98/24/EC of 7 April 1998 on the protection of the health and safety of workers from risks related to chemical agents at work (5) and imposes on the employer the obligation to assess the risks to the safety, health and hygiene of workers. In carrying out this obligation the employer must establish a programme of technical and organisational measures to reduce or eliminate those risks.

4. The Commission is not aware that these green bricks are used in new houses and pose a health threat to occupants who would drill their walls. Proper application of the Community legislation on waste management referred to under point 1 should ensure that there are no such risks when recycled materials are used for their intended use.
5. The Commission will inform the Dutch authorities of the alleged practices of this company and request that a proper investigation is undertaken on the alleged practices and on the application of European legislation on waste management in this specific case.


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WRITTEN QUESTION E-0619/03
by Chris Davies (ELDR) to the Commission

(3 March 2003)

Subject: People's Mojahedin Organisation

Has the Commission any evidence that members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation (MKO or PMOI), which is affiliated to the National Council of Resistance of Iran, present any threat to the security of the world outside Iran?

Is the Commission aware of the support for the MOK/PMOI publicly voiced by 331 British MPs and 122 peers, and 150 members of the US Congress?

Given the allegation made on 12 February by a Member speaking in the European Parliament that the MKO is made up of criminals who ‘continually kill and destroy the innocent among us’, has the Commission any evidence that members of the MKO have done any such thing outside Iran?

Given that this criticism of the MKO reflects the views of the authorities in Iran, might this be a case of one person’s terrorists being another’s freedom fighters?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(25 March 2003)

The Commission notes that the term terrorist list refers to the list attached to the Common Position 2001/931/CFSP (1) and the list of persons, groups and entities whose funds and assets should be frozen in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 2580/2001 (2). The Common Position and the Regulation were adopted pursuant to Resolution 1373(2001) of the Security Council of the United Nations.

The Council takes its decisions to list persons, groups and entities by unanimity of its Members without the need for a Commission proposal. As the deliberations in the Council are secret, it is standing policy that the Commission does not comment on the inclusion of any persons, groups and entities in these lists.

The Commission finally notes that the Common Position contains a number of criteria that have to be met and as a result the Mujahedin e Khalq have been included on the list in May 2002 while the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) continues to be specifically excluded.