

The jury is still out on health risks of mobile communication radiation

Comment by Franz Adlkofer

To this day most governments in Europe and beyond do not attach the importance to radiation protection of the people it deserves according to the state of scientific research. They obviously ignore that over the years the number of scientists who consider radiofrequency radiation a potential human health risk has steadily increased. In the meantime, critics of the radiofrequency technology and its advocates who are convinced of harmlessness of the radiation balance each other out. On Tuesday April 24, 2012, the journalist Nina Lakhani summarized the reasons for this development and the consequences in *The Independent*, a British daily with international prestige: A close call. Is a rise in brain tumours linked to the radiation sources we hold close to our heads? Experts can't agree on the answers.

(<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/a-close-call-why-the-jury-is-still-out-on-mobile-phones-7670543.html>)

Nina Lakhani's article – its objectivity honours the name of the newspaper – differs widely from the playing down rhetoric related to the potential health risk due to mobile communication radiation especially in German media under the influence of the mobile communication industry and the government. In German newspapers – notably in those that rate themselves especially elitist – compliant journalists instead taking the trouble to carry out their own investigation repeat – occasionally even verbally – what they have been told by the scientific 'experts' of the mobile communication industry. Thus, people are pretended a safety of the mobile communication technology which is not at all in line with the state of scientific research. In the article Lakhani wrote on the occasion of a conference in London on cancer in children, she explains why the jury is still out on the health risks of mobile communication radiation. About the reasons she refers to research results from independent scientists and especially to the many hidden warnings from the mobile communication industry itself. In particular she emphasizes the fact that in the meantime 50% of all scientists in this area of research regard mobile communication radiation a potential human health risk.

It is true, that at present with worldwide five billion people using mobile phones – the most powerful of all radiation sources – the largest experiment in biophysics takes place in the history of mankind – and this with an uncertain outcome. Lakhani points to the fact that a year ago the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified mobile communication radiation "possibly carcinogenic" following the vote of 29 invited scientists. This decision was mainly based on epidemiological studies. They did not consider the results of basic research that had previously demonstrated radiation-induced genetic damages in isolated human cells. Then, classification into the next and higher category 'probably carcinogenic' would have been inevitable – and steps required from politics to protect people against the radiation, too. As reported by Lakhani, also Professor Dariusz Leszczynski from the Radiation and Safety Authority in Finland, a member of that IARC working group, meanwhile admitted that the available laboratory data would indeed have justified this higher classification already then. Consequently, he calls – as many other scientists do – for precautionary measures by governments, especially for children.

In Germany, the federal government defends its doubtful radiation policy with the results of its Mobile Telecommunication Research Programme (DMF) – jointly funded with the mobile communication industry – that purports to prove the existing exposure limits reliably protect people against health risks. The awareness that essential results of the DMF are based on pseudo-research and that the exposure limits fundamentally contradict the laws of biology is shrouded by so called 'experts' it selected as advisers – obviously assisted by the mobile communication industry. The most striking feature of these „experts“ is that scientific expertise is replaced by the firm belief in the harmlessness of mobile communication radiation and the willingness to defend this belief by all means. So we should not wonder when one day the federal government must pay tribute with "sincere and deepest sympathy" to the families of those longstanding mobile phone users who died of a brain tumour. There is every reason for this, as for too long it relied on advisers proven to be closer to the interests of the mobile communication industry than to the welfare of the people.