



EMF Policy Facts: Austria

Radio Exposure Limits

Since 2006 the reference levels and basic restrictions published by ICNIRP and recommended in the 1999 EU Council Recommendation have been mandatory throughout Austria. The reference levels are 4 W/m² for LTE 800, 4.5 W/m² for GSM 900 MHz, 9.0 W/m² for GSM 1800 and 10 W/m² for UMTS and for LTE 2600.

The Radio Exposure Limits From A Legal Perspective

The Austrian constitution has assigned sole authority to the federal parliament for the specification of limits for exposure to electromagnetic fields. The official bodies assigned with the enforcement of these laws are also exclusively federal agencies. There is no leeway for diverging rules or enforcement at the provincial level. Thus, the Austrian EMF exposure limits are the same as recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO), ICNIRP and the European Union¹.

This means that the operators of mobile communications networks in Austria are also legally required to comply with the established exposure limits. In Austria: the Telecommunications Act² mandates the protection of the health of the population in a general provision³. This requirement is defined in detail by the respective technical standards (for the protection of people: ÖVE/ÖNORM E8850).

The "Salzburg Milliwatt" Is Not A Limit, But Just A Political Demand

The political demand from the city of Salzburg to introduce a new limit of 0.001 W/m² (= 1 mW/m², the so-called "Salzburg milliwatt") was brought before the parliament but was rejected by a large majority in both the Health Committee on 25 January 2001 and in parliament session on February 1, 2001.⁴ Further bills aiming at the same goal were rejected as well.⁵

Status Assessment By The Swiss Federal Office Of Communications In Salzburg

In 2001 the Swiss Federal Communications Commission (ComCom) asked the Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) to provide a report on the feasibility of the "Salzburg model" as a precautionary measure against the possible effects of non-ionising radiation.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:199:0059:0070:en:PDF>

² Telekommunikationsgesetz 2003 (TKG 2003), see also information from Rundfunk & Telekom Regulierungs-GmbH at http://www.rtr.at/web.nsf/deutsch/Telekommunikation_Telekommunikationsrecht_TKG+2003

³ § 73 TKG 2003

⁴ http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXI/I/I_00467/index.shtml;
http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXI/NRSITZ/NRSITZ_00056/TO.html
http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXI/I/I_00913/index.shtml

The Swiss OFCOM came to the following conclusion in its report: "The study shows that a limit of 1 mW/m², recommended by the city of Salzburg on behalf of the precautionary principle, could not be achieved by the existing networks".⁶

Furthermore, the Swiss authority stated that 3D computer simulations of the exposure levels clearly indicate that in the case of heavily populated areas, exposure values at the neighbouring sites of GSM antennas are to be expected between 0.01 and 0.2 W/m².

UMTS Roll Out In Salzburg

Because of public and political resistance against the further expansion of the mobile communications networks, the implementation of UMTS technology in the city was severely delayed, and came to a standstill in 2003.

In 2004, after local elections were held, the city of Salzburg and the network operators arrived at an agreement to ensure the installation of UMTS networks. Key provisions in this agreement included the following:

1. A clear and full commitment to the installation of UMTS networks on the part of the city council of Salzburg,
2. the disclosure of the plans for the mobile communications networks to the city of Salzburg,
3. the participation of the city of Salzburg in the selection of station sites,
4. assistance with the installation of the arranged sites from the city of Salzburg and
5. no further discussions about introduction of lower exposure limits between operators and policy-makers.

The LTE roll out started in 2012 without noteworthy problems.

September 2014, prepared by Mobile Manufacturer's Forum, Brussels⁷
in cooperation with Forum Mobilkommunikation, Austria⁸

⁶ <http://www.bakom.ch/dokumentation/zahlen/00545/00547/00548/index.html?lang=en>

⁷ The MMF is an international association of wireless communications manufacturers established to support scientific research in relation to mobile telephony and health, for further information: www.mmfai.info

⁸ The Austrian Industry Association FMK answers all questions on mobile communications and mobile communication infrastructure. It functions as a mediator between mobile network operators and municipalities to achieve joint solutions: www.fmk.at