

Client Alert

April 2015

Will the European Commission Begin to Focus More Intensely on Possible Risks of New Technologies?

A European Commission scientific advisory body requests “more attention” to emerging risks caused by graphene, 3-D printing, electromagnetic fields, e-cigarettes, nanomaterials used in medical imaging and ultrasound in cosmetic devices.

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals, combined synergistic effects of chemicals, and nanotechnology are already on the European Commission’s radar screen as emerging risks. The *Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks* (SCENIHR), a scientific committee advising the European Commission, now recommends that several other possible risks be considered by the Commission. Specifically, in a recent position statement, SCENIHR identifies as “new emerging risks” graphene, 3-D printing, electromagnetic fields, e-cigarettes, nanomaterials used in medical imaging and ultrasound in cosmetic devices.

SCENIHR’s Tasks and Composition

SCENIHR was set up by the European Commission to provide scientific opinions on emerging risks. Recent opinions, all issued at the request of the European Commission, cover synthetic biology, electromagnetic fields, and bisphenol A and nanomaterials in medical devices.

The committee is composed of scientific experts from academic institutions in the EU. Industry is not represented on it.

Emerging Risks Reviewed by SCENIHR

In 2014, SCENIHR drew a list of emerging issues. This list was prepared behind closed doors, without involvement from stakeholders, and it is unclear how this list was drawn up and on what basis risks have been listed.

Further, SCENIHR’s list is a positive list of emerging risks. No information is made available on potential risks that have been considered but not included on the list.

The list includes the following emerging risks and indicates a “preliminary conclusion” on the impact of each:

Emerging Risk	Preliminary conclusion (estimate of impact, hazard and/or exposure)
3-D video	Moderate impact
3-D printer	Large impact
Cyanotoxins risk (haemodialysis and drinking water)	Large impact
Use of nanomaterials for medical imaging and drug delivery	Very urgent issue

Electromagnetic fields	Issue limited to risk communication and coordination
Direct current ultra-high-voltage power lines	Urgent issue
High-focused ultrasound for cosmetic use	Widespread use
E-cigarettes	Large impact
Bio-based fuels	Potentially large impact
Graphene	Urgent issue
Faecal transplantation	High coverage by the media

SCENIHR's Recommendation

SCENIHR intends to discuss this list with the European Commission and will request a formal mandate from the Commission for it to conduct a full scientific assessment of these emerging risks.

The European Commission has not yet indicated whether it will respond to this recommendation, and, if so, how.

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