

RISCOM Process

Case Study The Swedish Radiation Protection Authority (SSI)
mobile phone project

Country Sweden

Date of Latest Update: August 2013

Background Information

The third generation (3G) of cellular phones caused much discussion in Sweden. The time table and the level of ambition in terms of access to the system all over the country were agreed at the highest political level at an early stage in its introduction. This however caused opposition and controversy as there were concerns over radiation risks from the aerial masts. Resistance groups emerged, and there were municipalities wanting to establish zones free from masts. In 2005, industry, authorities, municipalities and critical groups agreed to form a joint Transparency Forum using the RISCOM Model. The stakeholders agreed on a structure to approach the problem and on the format and contents of a series of three seminars that followed this.

Phase of decision making process

The third generation (3G) of cellular phones caused a great deal of discussion in Sweden. The timetable and the level of ambition in terms of access to the system all over the country were agreed at the highest political level at an early stage in its introduction. This however caused opposition and controversy as there were concerns over radiation risks from the masts and telephones. Resistance groups emerged, and there were municipalities wanting to establish zones free from masts. National regulations were in question and municipalities had a problem with principles for permits for antennas and base stations.

Formal framework of decision making process

A large number of Swedish authorities were responsible for different parts of the mobile telephone system. Of central importance at the time of the project was the Swedish Radiation Protection Authority (SSI), now merged with SKI to the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (SSM), which defines the regulations and guidelines for non-ionizing radiation, often based on recommendations by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). Also in focus at the time of the project were municipalities that were responsible for the authorisation of permits for building masts and base stations.

Objectives of process

The aim of the project “Transparency Forum for mobile telephones” was to improve the dialogue regarding exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields in Sweden. A particular focus was on the development and roll-out of the third generation mobile telephone system (3G), including a mutual understanding of the roles of different stakeholders.

Which tool was used?

The SSI project had three seminars as core elements, following the structured dialogue format. The seminars had a gradually increasing amount of stretching, supported by various means such as group work, expert group with prepared questions, a well prepared moderator etc.

Levels for meaningful dialogue were agreed by the reference group early on in the project. They were important for defining the scope and aim of project activities and they provided the logic for the choice of issues dealt with in the three seminars.

Arguments were in favour of or against proposals. Experts to be invited were presented with a guide to the agreed structure, which made the debate less polarized than had previously been the case.

Status

Complete

Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement

The aim of the project was to improve the dialogue regarding the exposure for radiofrequency

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electromagnetic fields in Sweden, with special focus on the development and roll-out of the third generation mobile telephone system (3G) including mutual understanding of the roles of different stakeholders. Agreement on a structure to approach the problem and on the format and contents of a series of three seminars that followed this.

The levels for meaningful dialogue were important for defining the scope and aim of project activities. Dialogue and transparency about the issues improved. Knowledge and understanding of roles improved among participants. A certain lack of clarity as regards roles and responsibilities of different actors was revealed.

The project challenged, and contributed to a change of, established traditions of very limited external dialogue characterizing some agencies. An independent evaluator believed it was important to find ways to sustain the process that had been initiated through the project.

Involved Stakeholders

Experts invited to the seminars by Reference Group agreement, were researchers in academia and other research institutes. The Swedish Radiation Protection Authority (SSI), a number of other Swedish authorities responsible for regulations and guidance and officers from two municipalities were also involved, as were NGOS critical to the 3rd generation of mobile telephone systems, telephone producers, network providers, one parliament member, as well as individual citizens. Reference group members numbered about 20. Another 100 participants were recruited by open invitation through national and local media.

Implementer of the participation process details

In 2005, industry, authorities, municipalities and critical groups agreed to form a joint Transparency Forum using the RISCOM Model. SSI funded the project, an SSI employee was chair person and SSI drafted meeting minutes. A group of consultants including RISCOM model developers were involved in a working group.

Financing

Details not available

Points to consider

Only a limited part of the foreseen project could be carried through due to lack funding. This was because only SSI funding, and no industrial shared funding, was accepted by the participants. SSI, as the driver of the project, has in practice a special responsibility to maintain continued dialogue and to actively demonstrate that it has listened to other actors. The evaluator believed SSI should act to create some kind of forum for continued dialogue, drawing on the experience from Transparency Forum.

Further tools used in this case study

The project had three seminars as core elements, following the RISCOM structured dialogue format. The seminars had a gradually increasing amount of stretching (thus approaching the RISCOM hearing format), supported by various means such as group work, expert group with prepared questions, a well prepared moderator etc.