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## Europe delays accidental ban on MRI scans

By [Lucy Sherriff](#)

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The European Commission has [suggested](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1610&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en) (http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1610&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en) that it should delay implementing legislation that would have imposed serious limits on when and where MRI scans could be used.

The draft legislation covering workers' exposure to electromagnetic fields will now be sent back to the drawing board for a further four years. Meanwhile, the commission says, it will get on with establishing what limits might be useful and how the law should be drafted to avoid making it illegal to check on the internal workings of the human body.

"The commission remains committed to the protection of the health and safety of workers. However, it was never the intention of this directive to impede the practice of MRI," said Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

"Postponement of the transposition will allow time to review the current directive and amend those provisions which have been shown to be problematic by recent scientific studies. While this review is ongoing, the commission recommends that Member States put the transposition of the current directive on hold."

According to the Institute of Physics, the Physical Agents Directive was going to place "excessively low limits" on the level of electromagnetic radiation that occupational physicians and researchers could be exposed to at work.

Along with other science bodies in the UK, including the Royal College of Radiologists and the British Institute of Radiology, the IoP mounted a campaign to have the directive halted. It argued that the proposed limits were based on "theoretical speculation", rather than solid research.

Professor Peter Main, director of education and science at the IoP, said: "While it is of

course crucial that people working with MRI scanners are protected from any harmful effects, it would be disastrous if people were denied the possibility of early diagnosis via MRI because of unfounded speculation.

"Over the next few years, alongside other scientific bodies, we will ensure that the European Commission has all the latest research to make a truly informed decision and assert the limits appropriately."

According to reports, the World Health Organisation is in the process of revising its guidance on exposure to EM fields, as is the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). The revisions are expected to make recommended limits to exposure much less stringent. ®

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