

Poland's National Institute of Public Health recommends two kilometre minimum distance of wind turbines from homes

Poland's National Institute of Public Health (NIZP-PZH), the principal public health research institution in the country since 1923, has just published its official position "regarding the minimum distance of wind farms from residential developments". The recommended setback is two kilometres.

The Polish document is dated 8 March 2016 and can be found on the NIZP-PZH's official website here: <http://www.pzh.gov.pl/stanowisko-narodowego-instytutu-zdrowia-publicznego-panstwowego-zakladu-higieny-w-sprawie-farm-wiatrowych/>. About the Institute see: <http://www.pzh.gov.pl/en/>

It is quite fitting that the Institute chose to first announce its findings publicly at a national conference of the Polish Wind Power Association.

In the context of the legislative proposal for the national setback of 10 x turbine height to be considered by the Polish Parliament, we would like to underline that the Institute states in part that:

"(...) the legal provisions currently in force in Poland (which in practice deal only with noise levels as risk factors) are not only inappropriate for such structures as wind turbines, but also fail to provide sufficient guarantees that public health is protected. The currently used methodology to assess impacts of wind farms on the environment (including human health) cannot be applied at wind speeds above 5 m/sec. Moreover, the full frequency spectrum (especially at lower frequencies) and annoyance levels are not considered." (our own translation from the Polish).

This conclusion should be contrasted with recent statements of Polish and European wind industry spokesmen who indicate that proper setbacks of wind turbines from people's homes are 400 to 600 metres. These spokesmen also deny that currently applicable regulations in Poland are in any way deficient or fail to protect public health.

We hope that, following this pronouncement of the premier Polish public health research authority, responsible journalists, either in Poland or internationally, will be wary of making opinions expressed by wind industry spokesmen on the public health impacts of wind turbines or sufficiency of regulations applicable in our country appear somehow authoritative in scientific terms or untainted by self-interest normally expected from business operators.