



# 15 years of mobile phones – 15 years of research efforts

Dear ladies and gentlemen,  
when I was elected to the Board of Directors of the FGF two and a half years ago, I felt it was more than remarkable that at the beginning of the mobile phone era in Germany the promotion of an engaged and sustainable research were launched.

Today I'm very delighted being in the position to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Forschungsgemeinschaft Funk with you, after we celebrated the 15th anniversary of mobile phones this summer.

Certainly, the change of mobile phones from the models of the year 1992 to today's devices with their huge spectrum of features got more attention than the research into possible biological effects of radio fields and the changes in this field.

I think, however, that the changes in the field of research – and the deliverables of the Forschungsgemeinschaft Funk as well – are not less significant and spectacular.

In 1992 the situation was different:

- there was no flow of information to the public
- a number of unresolved scientific questions and
- exposure systems enabling interexperimental comparison were in their beginnings.

Regarding these questions the Forschungsgemeinschaft Funk was and still is an important pioneer. In 2006 nearly 100,000 visitors of the FGF internet services were counted in average per month.

The signal generator from the first UMTS project of the FGF became the de facto standard, which is used in nearly all UMTS projects of the German Mobile Telecommunication Research Programme.

The FGF can be proud having promoted the first multi-generation study on UMTS signals with Dr. Buschmann's project at the Fraunhofer Institute in Hannover, at a time, when demands for projects on long-term effects were rapidly growing.

The list could be extended and, hopefully, this celebration will give us the opportunity to do so.

At this point let me express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Friedrich, his team at the Administrative Office and especially the colleagues of the Working Groups "Public Relations" and "Research" on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Without their dedication and commitment the Forschungsgemeinschaft Funk and the research promoted by this association would not have this high level of reputation as it has today.

But I wish to have a look at another aspect of this change as well, which is not wholly positive from the perspective of the FGF.

What does this mean:

The large research projects are launched at the end of the nineties with the expansion of UMTS networks on a European and National level resulted for the FGF in becoming from one of the bigger research promoters to a less bigger one from a financial point of view.

Of course the relevance of these programmes for answering the open scientific questions within the EMF Project of the World Health Organisation cannot be denied and must be welcomed also regarding the scope of the FGF's activities. But for the FGF this also meant that some long-standing members have terminated their membership.

Sure, in some cases the reason may have been that the production of mobile phone or radio devices was stopped. But also in considering the large international EMF research programmes they did not find it necessary to be a member of the FGF any longer.

I do not share these thoughts.

In my view, the FGF is still needed in the future, because we have to answer the questions, like

- What will happen regarding public perception after the results from the research programmes have been published?
- Who will evaluate and explain the results and make them available to interested circles in Germany?

- Who will maintain consistency and sustainability after the large programmes are finished?

I see an important mission of the FGF here. But change is required as well.

This change and the corresponding repositioning of the Forschungsgemeinschaft Funk has already started.

In recent years, the Forschungsgemeinschaft Funk did not only initiate and commission research projects, but also has become an important platform for dialog of scientists and stakeholders in organising adequate workshops.

The workshops e.g. on the “Blood-Brain Barrier“, “Genotoxicity“ or “Sleep Disturbances“ addressed important questions and issues. Hence, the FGF was positioned as a partner in cooperation with the European COST initiative and the World Health Organisation. This is also an important contribution made for the networking of German and international EMF research.

In my view, future research promotion of the FGF will have four important foundations:

### 1. Providing transparent information on EMF research to the members of the FGF and the interested public in Germany

Examples for this are the internet and intranet services of the FGF, its publications and also the supporting of the EMF portal at Aachen University, reviewed by the WHO, which was launched as a project of the FGF and has since been supported by it, together with many others.

### 2. Platform of dialog with important stakeholders

My colleagues and collaborators, but also researchers repeatedly confirm that the project presentation and workshops of the FGF enable just the contact

and conversations needed to obtain information on emerging technologies at an early stage or to facilitate the critical constructive discussion of different research approaches.

### 3. Workshops on scientific opinion formation

This work was already successfully triggered by the FGF in organizing the workshops mentioned above. And it will continue to play an important role regarding the discussion of results from ongoing research programmes. In my view, it is important that such workshops take place just here in Germany, in order to get German scientists more strongly involved in the debate on EMF risks.

### 4. Promotion of original research

Last, but not least the promotion of experimental and epidemiological research projects as a FGF core task, of course. Only who actively promotes research, maintains the competence to assess current research.

In conclusion, let me stress the importance of these four future core tasks of the FGF. I am convinced that the FGF with this positioning will make an important contribution to an objective and responsible handling of radio technologies for the members and the interested stakeholders.



Since January 2007, Karl-Wilhelm Siebert, Director Regional Network & Operations Branch West, Vodafone D2 GmbH, is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the FGF.