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A Judge bans a GSM phone mast because of the health hazard

On 18 May the district court of Ghent gave a judgment banning the installation of a phone mast in the suburb of Drongen.

In reaching the verdict, the judge took into account the uncertainty about its effects on human health, accepting that this validates the objection of the plaintiffs, who live close to the construction site of the planned mast.

The action group [Beperk de Straling](#) ("limit radiation") hopes that this verdict represents a step forward in the recognition by the Belgian courts of the potential threat to public health posed by relay antennas.

The plaintiffs, two couples who live near the station in Drongen, have been fighting against this phone mast, planned by the SNCB (Belgian national railways).

According to Jan Allein, the group's spokesman and one of the plaintiffs: *"The place where they planned to put the mast was not well chosen – it is close to a residential area, a primary school, and a hall for the local scouts and other youth groups."*

"The court has now clearly decreed that the authorities have to take account of health hazards and environmental issues, and not only of the visual criteria, when they make a decision about a planning application."

In its judgment, the court recalled a decision taken by a Justice of the Peace in 2000, who declared: *"As long as it has not been scientifically proven that radiation is without danger, it should be considered that it is probably dangerous."*

The action group hopes that this verdict will set a precedent for other courts. In addition to the uncertainty about the effects on health, the court also took into account the negative visual impact that the mast would have, and the depreciation in value of nearby properties. (belga/mvl)

