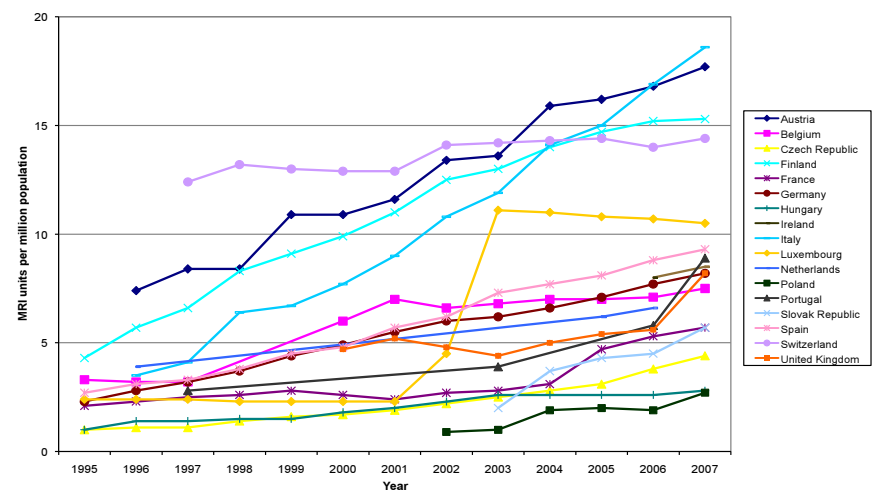


**The use of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) in Europe**

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is an imaging technique designed to visualise internal structures of the body. MRI is based on the principles of nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), a spectroscopic technique. Hydrogen nuclei contain a single proton, which possesses a property called spin. The spin can be thought of as a small magnetic field. When hydrogen atoms are placed in a strong magnetic field their activity can be interpreted as an NMR signal. The signal is recorded and processed by a dedicated computer to produce the images of the body structures.

Table 1 shows the availability of MRI in Europe.

**Table 1: The numbers of MRI units in selected EU countries**



MRI units per million inhabitants, selected countries (Source: OECD 2009). The data shown in the above presentation was retrieved from OECD Health Data.

The way in which data is collected may vary over time and between countries. The figure recorded for The Netherlands for 2005 represents the number of hospitals reporting they have an MRI unit. In Spain the data relate only to devices available in hospitals, they do not include equipment in other healthcare facilities. Therefore, the numbers presented for this country may be underestimated. The data shown for the UK might be influenced by the changes to the reported area: prior to 2002 the reported area only included England; in 2002 and 2003 it included all of Great Britain; from 2004 it included the UK.