



# EIONET Noise Newsletter

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## 1. Editor's Note

Dear EIONET Noise Newsletter Members,

The outcomes of the European Commission's Copenhagen Conference are already about 8 months old and the preparation of the new EU Noise Policy is progressing at full speed. The working groups (WGs) created in Copenhagen are now fully in action. One (WG1 : Indicators) has almost finished its work, WGs2-5 (dose/effect, computation/measurement, mapping and abatement respectively) are proceeding according to their timetables. Meanwhile, two more working groups (WG Cost/Benefit and WG Research) have been established, reaching a total of seven WGs with approx. 70 European experts trying to develop something that until 3 years ago seemed to many a dream : Harmonised European Noise Assessment, Mapping, Planning and Control!

Furthermore, almost a month ago in Brussels, there was a very important meeting where the Member States were brought up to date by the Commission on the progress of the various WGs. Meanwhile, the first position paper on the harmonization of the European noise indicators appeared together with a draft Framework Directive.

The European Information and Observation Network (EIONET) is now well established in several areas. The EEA is ready to serve in the direction of connecting the people involved from all the different parts and places in Europe to help towards achieving the enormous and complex task of European noise information harmonisation. To this end, the Agency working with Member Countries and the Commission must take the necessary actions to ensure the exchange of reliable and comparable European information on noise issues so as to provide a sound basis for reference and decision making.

To achieve that we will need your cooperation and support, so on behalf of the EEA, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our network and to invite you to participate in this promising way ahead.

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## 2. About the European Environment Agency and the EIONET

The main objective of the Agency as specified in Article 2 of the Regulation 1210/90 is: To achieve the aims of environmental protection and improvement laid down by the Treaty and by successive action programmes on the environment, the objective shall be to provide the Community and Member States with:

- objective, reliable and comparable information at European level enabling them to take the requisite measures to protect the environment, to assess the results of such measures and to ensure that the public is properly informed about the state of the environment,
- to that end, the necessary technical and scientific support.

The goal of the Agency is to develop and deliver the best available environmental information to policy makers, public authorities and socio-economic agents, and to the public, particularly the environmentally minded and active elements in civil society.

The Agency's mission statement emphasises the production and dissemination of "timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information".

The European Environment Agency is the environmental information reference centre of the European Union.

Its main instrument is a large network, called EIONET (European Environment Information and Observation Network). EIONET is both an organisational and telematic network.

The EIONET include :

- National focal points (NFPs)

Typically, these are representatives of national environmental authorities (Ministries or EPAs), in charge of cooperation with the EEA and the national coordination of activities relating to the Agency Work Programme. They are appointed by the Member States.

- Main component elements (MCEs)

Main institutions or organisations of the national networks which at a national level are regular collectors and suppliers of environmental data and/or possess relevant knowledge regarding environmental science, monitoring or modelling.

- National reference centres (NRCs)

Institutions, generally a subset of the Main Component Elements, which may be nominated by Member States to play a lead role on technical coordination within their countries and with the Agency on specific themes.

- European topic centres (ETCs)

Institutions or organisations which are contracted by the EEA, after rigorous selection procedures overseen by the Agency's Management Board, to execute particular tasks identified in the Multiannual Work Programme. Nine Topic Centres are currently working for the EEA (Inland Waters, Marine and Coastal Environment, Air Quality, Air Emissions, Nature and Conservation, Land Cover, Soil, Waste and Catalogue of Data Sources). Until now there is no ETC for noise but EEA is exploring the option of extending an existing ETC to cover noise issues.

The EEA is delivering a range of products and services through its Multiannual Work Programme. Our reporting approach to the causes and solutions to environmental problems is comprehensive, focusing on the DPSIR assessment framework (Drivers, Pressures, State of the environment, Impacts and Responses). We aim to provide the best available information on the DPSIR elements and their inter-connections.

For more information, please visit our EEA website: <http://www.eea.eu.int> or the EIONET website : <http://www.eionet.eu.int/> or contact directly the editor of "EIONET Noise Newsletter": [kyriakos.psychas@eea.eu.int](mailto:kyriakos.psychas@eea.eu.int)

### 3. EU Noise Policy News

#### 3.1 The preparatory work for the new EU noise policy is progressing

A month ago in Brussels, (17-3-99) approx. 40 representatives from 15 European countries and several EC services (DG-XI,VII,XII,III,and the EEA) participated in an important meeting.

This meeting marked the transformation of the Noise Policy ad-hoc group of national experts to the Noise Policy Steering Committee Group which will be responsible for the control of the Noise Policy Working Groups as well as the feedback to the Member States and the development of policy discussions.

The main issues on the agenda were the presentation of progress reports from the chair/co-chair persons of the seven Working Groups (WGs) created to prepare the new noise directive:

- WG1 : indicators (chairman M. van den Berg -NL, co-chairman I. Flindell -UK)
- WG2 : dose/effect (chairman J.Lambert -FR, co-chairman B.Berglund -SW)
- WG3 : computation and measurement (chairman D.Gottlob -DE, co-chairman J.Kragh-DK)
- WG4 : mapping (chairman C.Bouland -B, co-chairman J.Hinton -UK)
- WG5 : abatement (chairman S.L.Paikkala -FIN, co-chairman W.Talasch -AUS) and the newly formatted
- WG6 : cost/benefit (chairman T. Worsley -UK)
- WG7 : research (chairman P.Kruppa COM, DGXII)

$L_{Aeq}$  in decibels to serve towards both the harmonisation of the national noise assessment methods and the strategic mapping and planning purposes. You can read the executive summary of this position paper (as it appeared) in the following pages. Member States can send their technical comments to DGXI-D3 until 15 May 1999.

Another important issue at the meeting was the circulation of a draft framework noise directive on environmental noise prepared on which, again, Member States should send their technical comments until 15 May 1999 (attention Brian Ross, DGXI-D3).

The overall perception of this long and lively meeting was that nearly all national delegations expressed positive remarks. However, now the size and the complexities of the issues involved, are more evident. A very challenging future indeed.

#### 3.2 WG1 Position Paper : EU Noise Indicators - Executive Summary (unedited)

##### Executive Summary (recommendations)

Working Group 1, Indicators, was established on the first of April 1998 by the European Commission to recommend: "*physical indicators to describe noise from all outdoor sources for assessment, mapping, planning, and control purposes and to propose methods of implementation*". This position paper reports the progress of the Working Group and sets out the first set of recommendations to the Commission for the *European Environmental Noise Indicators*.

The objective of the European Environmental Noise Indicators is to indicate outdoor noise for use in noise maps and for strategic planning and assessment. It is not intended to indicate sound generated at source. Neither is it intended for the indication of personal noise exposure or noise indoors for which different methods may apply.

There are two fields of application of the European Environmental Noise Indicators: the first is to harmonise the national methods of noise assessment where this is both feasible and worthwhile; the indicators are described in the section called general; the second is the strategic comparison of noise exposure between and within Member States; the indicators are described in the section called strategic mapping and planning purposes.

The precise requirements for these two fields of application can be slightly different.

The European Environmental Noise Indicators are primarily addressed to the control of annoyance and sleep disturbance. As such, it is anticipated that they will also be useful for the control of any other noise-related health effects.

The recommendations are as follows;

### **General**

The European Environmental Noise Indicators shall be based on the average A-weighted sound pressure level  $L_{Aeq}$  in decibels.

The indicators shall be expressed separately for each specific outdoor noise source present (the specific noise sources for this purpose would normally be one or more of road, railway, aircraft, industrial noise or other man made sources).

The basis for the indicators shall be expressed separately for 12 hour day, 4 hour evening, and 8 hour night periods. The beginning and end times for each of these periods shall be defined by each Member State in the light of local circumstances. The default value is 07.00-19.00 hrs, 19.00-23.00 hrs and 23.00-07.00 hrs local time.

The indicators shall be representative of the calendar year adopted for assessment. An additional representation for Sundays is a recommended option.

The indicators shall be determined for conditions representative of noise exposure outside dwellings, where the effects of reflections at the surface itself at the assessment point shall be excluded; thus the incident sound level is determined. For the precise estimation of noise abatement measures like screens or isolation, the height of the assessment point will have to be selected to take into account the noise sensitive receiver point.

The indicators are intended for general purposes; from time to time there may be additional factors which should be taken into account in any assessment (see section called additional factors below).

### **Strategic mapping and planning purposes**

For this specific field of application the Working Group recommends two strategic indicators: for the assessment of the overall noise impact, the day, evening and night levels are to be combined into one level with a weighting of 5 dB for the evening and 10 dB in the night: this is the  $L_{EU}$  for the assessment of night time noise impact, the  $L_{EU,N}$  is to be used.

The strategic indicators shall be determined at a height of 4 meters.

### **Additional factors**

In practice, human responses may be influenced by additional factors to noise level expressed as one of the recommended European Environmental Noise Indicators alone:

- a) the type of noise source can influence the response. This will usually be important where comparisons are made between noise from different sources;
- b) the variation in noise level over the time period indicated can influence the response. Noise sources which operate for less than 20% of the day or for less than 20% of the days in a year or in situations where there are less than 1 events per hour over the averaging period for the indicator may require special attention;
- c) where there is significant tonal or impulsive content this can increase the annoyance response, and special efforts should be made for the elimination of these features where practicable. Where these features are present this should be separately noted;
- d) where there are other acoustic features such as low frequency noise present the annoyance response can be significantly affected. In this case the use of the linear or C-weighted  $L_{eq}$  is recommended.

All such additional factors that may need to be taken into account shall be separately noted or otherwise indicated. The working group notes that there are various methods available for applying adjustments to the basic indicator of physical noise to take some of these additional factors into account. Although for strategic mapping and planning purposes it is necessary to

harmonise to a larger extent, for more local use other considerations may prevail. Where adjustments are applied additional to or different from the basic *European Environmental Noise Indicators*, then these should be clearly indicated.

#### **Quiet areas**

The Working Group acknowledges the need to visualize and control quiet areas especially near cities. For this purpose the same indicators can be used as the ones already described.

#### **Aggregation of noise from different sources**

Where there are two or more specific outdoor noise sources present, and if it is desired to aggregate the values of the *European Environmental Noise Indicators* in some way to derive an indicator of the total noise, then the method of aggregation shall be stated. The working group cautions that the total will not always give a proper representation of the likely effects considered in aggregate.

#### **Implementation**

The working group recognises that there are many different noise indicators and systems of noise regulation in use throughout Europe. Wherever there is direct conflict between the *European Environmental Noise Indicators* and an existing system, then the WG suggests that the European Environmental Noise Indicators replace the existing system on a future date to be set by the Commission. Where there is no conflict, the existing systems can remain in place for the time being.

The Working Group anticipates that there will be many questions arising regarding the adoption of these recommendations. This will require further work. The working group recommends that it should continue its activities under a new title: Working Group 1, Implementation.

The Working Group thanks all its readers for their continued forbearance.\_

## **4. Other news**

- EEA is going to launch in the summer 1999 the "Environment in the European Union at the turn of the century" report which contains an assessment of the state of the acoustical environment in EU based on 1998 road traffic and aircraft data.
- Much of the background information related with the Commission's Green Paper on Noise (COM(96) 540) can be found in the DGXI-D3 website :  
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg11/noise/home.htm>
- INTERNOISE 2000 : The Inter-noise series of meetings sponsored by the I-INCE (International Institute of Noise Control Engineers) are important events in the field of noise. The major topic of the INTER- NOISE 2000 Congress (August 2000, Nice, France) will be : Transport and Community Noise,

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\*The list is indicative, please help us to make it bigger.

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