EIONET Noise Newsletter

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1. Editor's Note

Dear EIONET Noise Newsletter Members,

This summer we had the launching of the Agency's report "Environment in the European Union at the turn of the century" contemporaneously in almost all the European capitals.
Up to now, what has been missing has been an assessment of whether the actual economic, sectoral and environmental policies over the next decade or so will bring improvements, or whether there are trends and developments pushing us off target and seriously challenging progress. Despite 25 years of Community Environmental Policy - which has been successful in its own terms - general environmental quality in the EU is not recovering significantly, and in some areas is worsening. This 446 page report aims to provide important information to all those who frame and implement effective environmental policies, and other measures which could affect these policies.
Several of the chapters in this report address different issues on environmental noise. As you all know, assessing the European noise situation is definitely not simple or easy. Until proper harmonization is achieved, it cannot be very accurate either. However, current methods can provide rough estimates and show the probable trend.
Many EIONET members (Noise experts from many MS, NFPs and Noise NRCs) helped a lot by providing information, advice or comments to develop these issues in the report, so today it is my pleasure to be able to publicly thank you all for your contributions.

At the end of this month (22-23 September 1999) an important Steering Committee Group Meeting in Brussels will decide on the way ahead, towards the development of the new EU Noise Policy.

Back to our Newsletter, it was decided to keep publishing the contact points for two reasons : there are always changes every 4 months between editing of the newsletter, and our list is expanding with time covering more organisations and people. From the next issue we will try to start presenting the work done in various institutions throughout Europe dealing with noise problems.

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2. The "Environment in the EU at the turn of the century" report

2.1 Main findings of the report

The general environmental quality in the European Union (EU)[1] is not recovering significantly; there has been real progress in some areas, e.g. river quality and acidification but it is getting worse in others, e.g. waste. Environmental policy can not alone provide the sustainable development set up as a goal in the Amsterdam Treaty. Economic sectors have to change and carry their part of the responsibility for sustainability.

The present report analyses that situation and documents the current and future unsustainable development of some economic sectors - transport, energy, agriculture, household consumption and tourism. This is the major barrier to environmental improvement, even when considering policies in place or in the pipeline by 1997.

If no additional action is taken, the EU environment will remain under serious pressure from a range of activities, many of which are forecast to increase the pressure – transport, industrial production , leisure activities and even from individual life style. Because they are interconnected, they will have a knock-on effect on each other:

- EU economic growth[2]: We have seen some progress in eco-efficiency - less pollution per GDP. But production and consumption will increase more and in general demand more natural resources and generate more pollutants and waste. We can expect the increase in waste (10% from 1990) to continue. This development has already started eroding gains from environmental policy initiatives e.g. air quality Directives. Economic growth therefore necessitates speeding up efforts towards better integration of environment into all policy areas.

- Despite a growth in energy efficiency, EU's energy consumption (1995-2010) will increase by 15% from 1995 to 2010. With more households, more mobility and more transport, 30%increase is foreseen in passenger car transport and 50% in freight transport. This causes in particular a rise in emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, making climate change issues difficult to tackle. The EU target to reduce GreenHouseGasses (GHG) emissions by 8% between 1990 and 2008-2012 will not be met under pre-Kyoto action. Instead a 6% increase is expected. The share of renewable energy, now 6%, is increasing, though only modestly; it is unlikely that the target of 12% by 2010 will be met.

- Tourism is growing rapidly and significantly. A 50% increase in international tourist arrivals is expected between 1996 and 2010, rising transport and energy demand. There is also an on-going increase in urban sprawl, with up to 120 ha/day in land-use changes in some countries. Together this means a serious challenge to rural assets and sensitive areas such as coastal zones, 85% of which are already at high or moderate risk from various pressures.

- Total chemicals production is on a rising trend while minimal risk-assessment analysis is not carried out for 75% of the large-volume chemicals on the market. Emissions of some chemicals such as cadmium and copper and some pesticides - from industry, road transport and agriculture - are expected to rise, other emissions such as lead and dioxines to decrease.

- Progress in the integration of the environment into sectoral decision-making and policies is real but slow. Major progress is seen in industry, using environmental management and audit schemes. Environmental impact assessment and economic instruments such as eco-taxes are still being applied on a small scale. There is great potential for expanding integration policies and instruments into other economic sectors.

What has been achieved, in what areas and what is the outlook?
Assessment of progress over the past 5-10 years and trends up to 2010 (2050 for Climate Change and Ozone Depleting Substances). The indications about the pressures show how

factors are changing, such as emissions of pollutants or land use, which give rise to the problems. The information about state and impacts indicate how these pressures are changing environmental quality.

PRESSURES		Environmental Issues	**STATE & IMPACT**	
Present	*Future*		*Present*	*Future*
😐	☹	**Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change**	☹	☹
☺	😐	**Ozone Depletion**	☹	😐
😐	☹	**Hazardous Substances**	😐	?
😐	😐	**Transboundary Air Pollution**	😐	😐
😐	😐	**Water stress**	😐	😐
☹	☹	**Soil Degradation**	☹	?
😐	☹	**Waste**	☹	☹
😐	?	**Natural and technological hazards**	😐	?
😐	?	**Genetically Modified Organisms**	?	--
☹	☹	**Biodiversity**	😐	?
😐	😐	**Human Health**	☹	?
😐	😐	**Urban areas**	😐	😐
☹	☹	**Coastal and Marine Areas**	☹	?
☹	?	**Rural areas**	☹	--
☹	?	**Mountain areas**	☹	--

Legend:

☺	positive development
😐	some positive development but insufficient
☹	unfavourable development
?	uncertain (partial quantitative/expert analysis available)
--	no quantitative data available

From the above summary table, we can see significant and positive cuts in ozone-depleting substances, a reduction of emissions contributing to acidification and of phosphorus discharges to rivers. Progress in reducing other pressures on the environment has remained largely insufficient. Only air polluting emissions have shown a significant decoupling from GDP since 1990. By contrast, there has been only a relatively small decoupling of carbon dioxide and waste. The outlook foresees these trends to continue to 2010 with future emissions increasing in problem areas that have appeared difficult to tackle: greenhouse gas emissions, chemicals and waste.

In the main economic sectors, polluting emissions have declined significantly in energy, transport and industry sectors, and less so in agriculture. But for transport and agriculture, energy use and carbon dioxide have either continued to grow in step with output or have only

decoupled slightly. There is no indication of significant eco-efficiency gains in these two critical sectors up to 2010.

These pressures feed through into an equally troubling story about the state of the environment foreseen in 2010. In particular, impacts from climate change and waste generation are expected to worsen. Positive developments are anticipated for the impacts of transboundary air pollution, where ecosystems with acid deposition levels above their critical loads will fall from 25% in 1990 to 7% in 2010, water pollution, where further reduction of phosphorus and organic matters discharges is expected, and air quality in cities , where continued improvement is foreseen.

There remain, however, considerable uncertainties. Due either to a lack of data in some areas, such as soil, biodiversity, or pesticides in groundwater, or to uncertainties about future socio-economic developments, it is difficult to clearly evaluate the direction in which we are heading. It is particularly difficult to assess the prospects of important emerging issues, which are also of rising public concern: Human health issues, where particulate air pollutants are involved in perhaps 40.000-150.000 extra adult deaths of respiratory diseases in cities/year; the effect of chemicals such as dioxine and GMOs in food.

However, there are small but rapidly-growing positive signals in various countries. There is a growth in wind energy; cycling is taking higher percentages of some cities' traffic; pesticide-free areas or municipalities are being declared; a significant growth is seen in organic agriculture; many companies are embracing sustainability as a feasible and profitable process and many municipalities developing their own local Agenda 21 programmes.

Finally, the report documents the challenge and opportunities of the EU Enlargement. Some Accession Countries have more environmentally sustainable economic activities, and also more extensive areas of natural habitats. However, in the transition to EU membership, there is a danger that their environment will suffer if they follow the same development path of the EU15. When convergence with the present EU implies accelerated economic growth in the Accession Countries their challenge is to ensure that they do not repeat the two decades of environmental neglect that occurred in western Europe - which eventually, in the 1970s, prompted a crash programme of remedial action at European and national level.

As Domingo Himenez Beltran, the EEA executive director, put it during the presentation of the report to the EU Environment Council on 24 June 1999 : "The situation of EU's environment and the progress towards sustainability is not satisfactory and it can even deteriorate before we get the conditions right for improvement. There are positive signs, still small, showing that a change is feasible and rewarding, that the objective conditions are building up and so do the opportunities for the EU, in particular the reduction of greenhouse gases and the enlargement process "

1) 'Environment in the European Union at the turn of the century' reports primarily on the state of the environment in the 15 EU member states. Discussing also the EU enlargement issues, the report also covers 11 Accession countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Cyprus). Finally, EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) are treated where appropriate.
The report diagnoses and measures the situation for the most recent years available, and also assesses future trends - thereby evaluating past and likely forward progress against EU and international targets and policy objectives, taking account of expected pressures, including economic and other developments.

2) The report uses a baseline scenario (based on OECD and European Commission socio-economic business-as-usual scenarios) under which a 45% increase in economic growth is expected between 1990 and 2010 and a projected 50% increase in final consumption between 1995-2010.

For those who want more information on the report :
You can visit our web site http://www.eea.eu.int/frnew.htm where you can download the executive summary and the appendix to the summary with fact and figures per environmental issue, or contact Mr Ronan Uhel the EEA Project Manager for Reporting on the Environment, e-mail address : ronan.uhel@eea.eu.int or tel. +45 - 33367130

2.2 The Noise issues

Noise is considered many times across the report but it is presented in more detail in :
a. Noise in chapter 3.10 : Human health issues, and
b. Urban noise issues in chapter 3.12 : Urban Areas

Chapter 3.10 : Human health issues, Noise

Noise can have a variety of effects which depend on the type, duration and timing of the noise and the susceptibility of the recipient (Box 3.10.6).

Box 3.10.6. Noise: some exposure/effect relationships

Exposures

Noise remains a serious environmental problem: estimates of its costs range from 0.2 to 2.0% of GDP (Quinet, 1993), and it is estimated that about 32% of the EU15 population (approx. 120 million people) are exposed to road noise levels over 55 Ldn dB(A) at house facades and that approx. 3 million people in Europe are exposed to aircraft noise (see chapter 3.12) Perceptions of the various types of transport noise differ between individuals and impacts can depend on the type of noise, e.g. From rail or aircraft.

Effects: Public

- Annoyance;
- Interference with speech communication ;
- Sleep disturbance effects (more than 'awakenings'),
- Effects on performance and productivity (reading acquisition, learned helplessness, etc.);
- Effects on residential and social behaviour (opening windows, use of dwelling area, etc.);
- Psychophysiological effects (the stress complex, hypertension, ischaemic heart disease, aggressiveness, etc.);
- Mental health effects (hospital admissions, etc.);
- Dose-effect for joint effects (e.g. annoyance + sleep disturbance + hypertension?);
- Vulnerable groups (children, hearing impaired).

Effects: occupational

- Noise-induced hearing dysfunctions (e.g. tinnitus, temporal threshold shifts, deafness, 'impulse sounds')

Reports from recent scientific research on the precise health effects of nocturnal traffic noise reveals that night-time traffic noise not only disturbs sleep but also encourages psychosomatic illnesses, shortens the period of deep, dream-rich REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, lengthens the phase of light slumber, and may cause cardio-circulatory problems.
There may be some segments of the populations at greater risk of adverse effects of noise. Young children, (especially during language acquisition), the blind, the hearing-impaired and hospital patients are examples of higher risk groups.
Noise affects more than our health and quality of life; it even influences social behaviour and cognitive development. In 1997, studies carried out around Munich airport found that children exposed to frequent aeroplane noise do not learn to read as well as other children. Excessive background noise caused the children to tune out human voices and interfered with their language acquisition. The psychologists who conducted the study speculated that as a result of noise pollution, parents and teachers were also less willing to speak or read aloud.

Community noise needs to be assessed with respect to risks for both human health and well-being. Intensity, frequency, reversibility and avoidability are pertinent criteria for the severity of noise effects.

The knowledge about harmful impacts of noise exposure has to be transformed into environmental standards. There is also limited evidence for noise impacts on birth weight congenital effects, and the immune system. However, estimated thresholds are available for only a limited range of noise impacts for which there is more substantial evidence of noise causation (Table 3.10.1).

Table 3.10.1. The long-term effects of noise exposure for which there is sufficient evidence

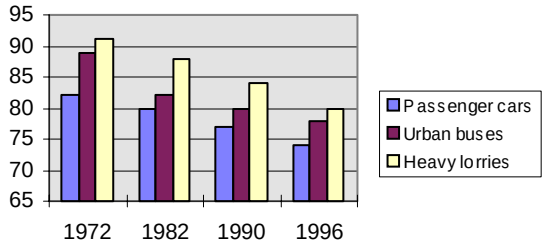
	Observation threshold			
Effect	**Situation**	**Noise metric**	**Level in dB (A)**	**Inside/outside**
Hearing damage	work	LAeq, 8hr	75	inside
	sport	LAeq, 24hr	70	inside
Hypertension	work	LAeq, 8hr	<85	inside
	home	LAeq, 6-22hr	70	outside
Ischaemic heart	home	LAeq, 6-22hr	70	outside
Annoyance	home	Ldn	42	outside
Awakening	sleep	SEL	55	inside
Sleep stages	sleep	SEL	35	inside
Self-reported sleep quality	sleep	LAeq, night	40	outside
School performance	school	LAeq, day	70	outside

Source: Health Council of The Netherlands, 1994

Chapter 3.12 : Urban noise issues

Noise remains a serious environmental problem: it is estimated that about 32% of the EU-15 population (approx. 120 million people) are exposed to road noise levels over 55 Ldn dB(A) on house facades ; this is despite reductions in vehicle noise limits by 85% for cars and 90% for lorries since 1970 (Figure 3.12.8) Estimates of noise-related costs range from 0.2 to 2.0 % of GDP (Quinet 1993).

Figure 3.12.8 : Noise stand : Development of EU Noise Standards, 1972-1996



The latest reduction of 74 dB(A) for cars and 80 dB(A) for lorries has led to significant applications of low noise technology. Aircraft and rail noise levels also cause annoyance although the aircraft noise footprint for modern jets around an airport has been dramatically reduced by a factor of nine compared with aircraft from 1970.

Based on data from 35 major European airports that accommodate about 85% of the total air traffic, it is estimated that approx. 3 million people in Europe are exposed to aircraft noise over 55 Ldn dB(A).
However, a complication is that perceptions of the various types of transport noise differ between individuals. For example for the same noise value of Ldn 60 dB(A) the sensitivity can be different: typical proportions of highly annoyed people are: aircraft noise 15%, road traffic noise 10% and railway noise 5 %.

In spite of the considerable sharpening of EU-type testing limits since 1972 the actual effect on the reduction of noise emission by motor vehicles was negligible. Although the reasons for that inadequacy are known and mentioned in the Green Paper on Noise COM(96)540 little progress has been made so far to improve the state of the urban acoustical environment.

5.1 Where do we stand?

A contemporary trend in urban planning is to direct through traffic to ring roads and away from already congested urban areas. Many ring road systems and urban highways have noise barriers and tunnels; such measures are also promoted by the EU environmental impact assessment procedure.

However, anti-noise measures are hampered by a lack of harmonisation at European level (indices, methodologies and limit values) and international standards for the calculation and measurement of transportation noise, as well as inadequacies in testing methods for vehicles, tyres and road surfaces. The cost of mitigating existing noise problems can be very high, although it should not be underestimated the noise reduction potential through traffic management, traffic calming, parking policies and other low cost measures that can shift mobility from private car to walking, biking and public transport. In fact the improvement of the modal split in favour of the low noise/low emission transport modes is considered one of the best ways to tackle the urban traffic noise problem.

Incentives are needed to motivate manufacturers to develop vehicles and aircraft with even lower noise emissions, and - importantly - for local administrations to promote anti-noise resurfacing of roads.

5.2 What does the future hold?

Under the baseline scenario, noise levels adjacent to major European road networks **are** expected to worsen towards 2010 because of growth in traffic, especially freight **transport** (see Chapter 2.2). The same applies to aircraft noise, particularly after 2010 when air **traffic** is projected to increase while major technological improvements in aircraft appear unlikely.

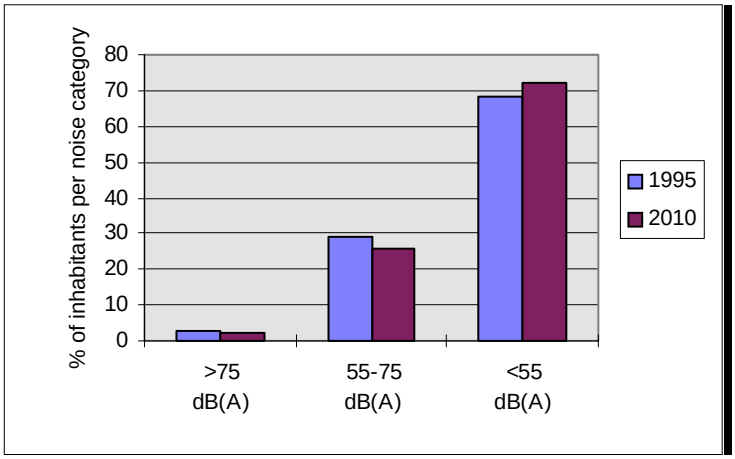
Box 4.1 noise: Grim reminder of the issue

Noise is defined as unwanted sound because it affects people in both physiological and psychological ways. We are exposed to noise before birth and throughout life and it is a problem that affects everybody. At levels over 40 dB(A) it starts to influence our well being, at levels over 60 dB(A) it may well be detrimental to health (Berglund and Lindval,1995).

Modern life style has resulted in increased mobility, with more vehicles, more roads and more travelling, and although noise is associated with all human activities it is caused mainly by the various transport modes i.e. road, rail and air traffic. So noise is spreading both in duration and geographical coverage in European cities.

Population exposure to traffic noise is therefore unlikely to diminish significantly. This is shown by estimated projections for three European cities : Amsterdam, Madrid and Munich (figure 3.12.9), and corroborated by expert estimates of noise reduction potential (Nordic Council of Ministers 1994). These expert estimates suggest no significant reduction at speeds exceeding 60 km/hr where tyre noise is dominant ; and 2 dB(A) and 1 dB(A) reductions at speeds between 0-40 and 40-60 km/hr respectively due mainly to decreased engine noise, Traffic noise exposure will increase markedly in the Accession Countries, from rapid growth in road traffic (including freight) and public transport decline.

Figure 3.12.9 : Percentage of inhabitants exposed to Ldn noise categories for Amsterdam, Munich and Madrid (1995 and 2010)

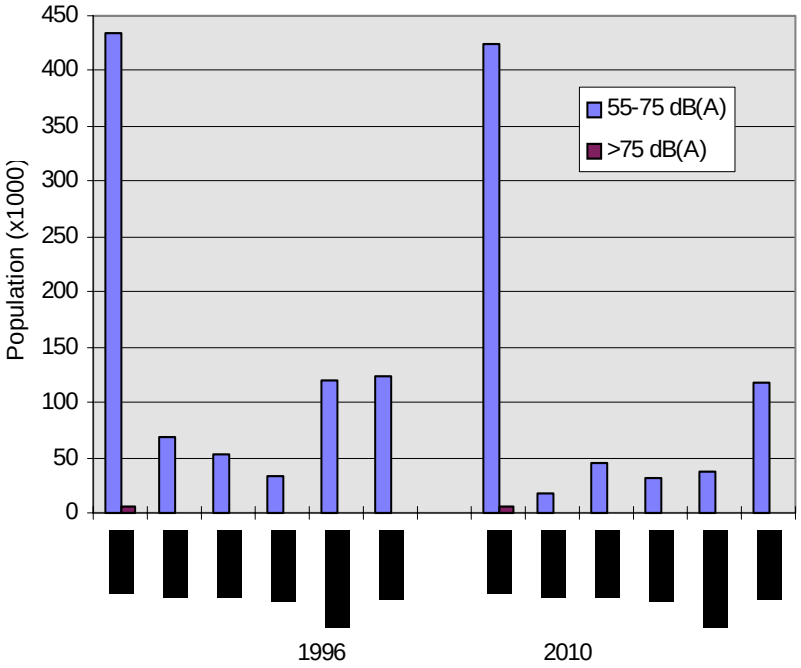


New vehicle standards have a lead time of several years, and require compliance by around 90% of the vehicle fleet (which can take 7 -15 years) before there is a significant effect on measured road noise levels. Regulations could secure a 3 dB(A) cut in emissions from road tyre noise although the effect would not be noticeable until after 2010. Reductions in road surface noise by 5-7 dB(A), depending on the operating speed, can also be cost effective (Miljønyt nr. 30, 1998).

Aircraft noise exposure at major European airports is unlikely to increase up to 2010 mainly due to phasing out of noisier aircraft, scheduled fleet renewal and noise optimisation of flight procedures and air strip geometry. At Paris CDG and Amsterdam airports significant

improvement is expected with the introduction of new runways, with flight paths away from populated areas (see Figure3.12.10)

Figure 3.12.10 : Population in Ldn 55, 65 and 75 dB(A) contours around 6 studied airports (London-Heathrow, Amsterdam-Schiphol, Copenhagen-Castrup, Madrid-Barajas, Paris-CDGand Hamburg-F). Existing situation and 2010 forecasts



However, noise exposure may increase at European regional airports, which are anticipated to accommodate a considerable proportion of the expected growth in aircraft operations, and in the Accession Countries due to air-traffic growth and more frequent use of noisier aircraft.

Ongoing research programs, in Europe and the US, are trying to develop low noise aircraft technology with the objective of a 10 dB reduction in aircraft noise by the end of the century. However, even after new technologies are sufficiently developed to be introduced into service, it will take many years to incorporate these technologies into the commercial transport fleet.

5.3 Action to combat noise

Some local action to deal with individual noise sources are presented for Athens and Amsterdam (Box 3.12.8). In Germany, local noise abatement plans are enforced by national law and since 1990, 300 German cities have started implementing such plans.

Box 3.12.8 Examples of local action

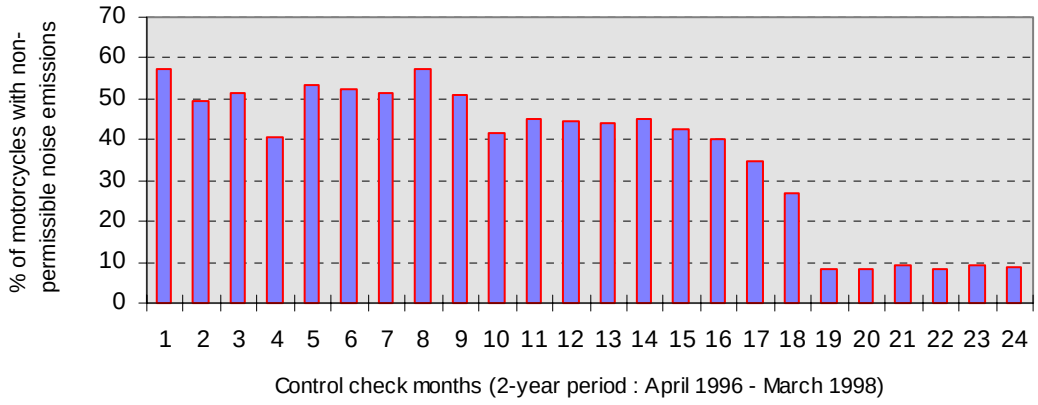
Athens urban traffic noise control

Due to car restrictions on the city inner ring-road many Athenians have turned to motorcycles and mopeds as their daily transportation mode. The noise problems from the motorcycles and mopeds, especially due to tampering and lack of maintenance were enormous.
As a consequence, the Ministry of the Environment and Athens Police Force jointly began spot measurement controls on motorcycle noise in April 1996. Results available until March 1998 show the potential benefit from the controls according to EU 78/1015/EEC Directive stationary motorcycle noise method.

Apart from receiving heavy fines, offending drivers had to prove that they had dealt with the problem of their vehicle in a re-examination process usually 2 week later. The sample covered about 30.000 motorcycle checks.

The trend shows that initially (for a nine month period) over 50% of the noise emissions were found to exceed the permissible limits. After another nine month period the percentage had dropped to a quite constant 9%. (Figure 3.12.11) Source : Ministry of the Environment, GR

Figure 3.12.11 Effects of measurement control on motorcycle noise



Amsterdam: Application of low noise two-layer drain asphalt on major road segments

In 1996 the central city council of Amsterdam decided that when they examine renewals of major roads, they should investigate the feasibility of low noise two-layer drain asphalt application. Such a surface can significantly decrease traffic noise levels at low city speeds, without jeopardising safety and durability.

Until mid -1998, eight street sections of major roads, with intensity of more than 15.000 vehicles, undergoing major renewal, were examined and in seven cases low noise road surface was selected, about 15 km in total. The result was that 9,000 inhabitants exposed to noise levels 5 dB less than before. It should be mentioned here that a 10 dB reduction in noise, is perceived as a 50% reduction.

The costs per km, comprising the costs of the road surface, the rain-water drainage system and the yearly maintenance costs over a period of 15 years, were estimated to be about 350.000 ECU. The extra costs involved are financed by the central city council.
Source : M+P Consultants

Nevertheless, action is also needed at European level, to supplement local and national measures - “the local nature of noise problems does not mean that all action is best taken at local level” because “generally the sources of environmental noise are not of local origin” (European Commission, 1996a, Box 3.12.9). Furthermore, single market requirements can inhibit national regulation, because any measures involving trade barriers will be unlawful unless they can be “justified by considerations of public health and environmental protection." (see European Court of Justice Case C-389/96, which upheld Germany’s stricter noise limits for aircraft engines than those specified in EU legislation). To date, European Community noise policy has essentially consisted of directives, primarily concerned with single market or social policy objectives, fixing maximum sound levels for vehicles, aeroplanes and machines.

These directives can be grouped into three main areas:

- Vehicles (and tyres): noise emissions from motor vehicles and motorcycles are covered by two directives introducing sound level limits under specified test circumstances and continuously updated to be in line with technological developments.
- Aeroplanes: this category comprises three directives. The first two, which are amended once, lay down limits on noise emissions for aeroplanes registered in the territory of the Member States. The third prohibits the use of Chapter 2 (ICAO noise category) aircraft after 2002.
- Others: machinery, construction plant equipment, lawn mowers and household appliances: permissible noise emission limits and limits on the operators position.

At EU level, the basic strategic noise policy actions have been the following :

- The 5th Environmental Action Programme (5EAP): in 1993 the 5EAP set out a strategic approach by setting out a number of targets for noise exposure levels to be achieved by 2000, and outlined action to be undertaken by the major actors; a recent proposal on the review of the 5EAP announced the development of a noise abatement programme for action to meet these targets. The 5 EAP target of stabilisation of the fraction of EU population exposed to >65 dB(A) and avoidance of exposure to >85 dB(A), is realistically attainable, although differences between countries in procedures on noise exposure appraisal will make it difficult to assess progress in achieving the target.
- The 1996 Green Paper (European Commission, 1996a) outlining a possible step by step approach to the development of a new framework for Community noise policy. The orientations for the future European policy on noise and the proposed response to the Green Paper have been developed bearing in mind that the objective is to identify the noise problems and to put in place the necessary framework needed to remedy them.

Box 3.12.9 Policy developments on noise issues

The future EU strategy for noise policy (Copenhagen Conference, September 1998), to be established in a coherent system of directives consisting of a framework directive for environmental noise and directives on noise emission could provide what has been missing until now, a co-ordinated approach. Working Groups have already started dealing with issues that need to be clarified and harmonised throughout Europe such as indices/indicators, dose/effect relationship, computation and measurement, noise maps, noise abatement and emission control. The following action plan was agreed:

1999 : common indices/indicators proposed by Working Groups
proposal of the Commission for a Framework directive on Noise, obligation to assess with existing methods, obligation to fix national or local targets, actions in case of exceedance of targets
2001 : harmonised methods and EU targets
2002 : Framework Directive in force
2006 : harmonised methods in force
2006+: EU targets in force

The EC had to ensure that hush-kitted chapter 2 (ICAO noise category) aircraft cannot be added to the registers of the European Union and the reason is the potentially high number of those aircraft on Third country registers. For these reasons, the EC decided to propose a directive to ensure that hush-kitted chapter 2 aircraft cannot be added to the registers of the European Union as from 1 April 1999.
A proposal (COM (97) 680 final) has been prepared by European Commission on vehicle tyre noise, meanwhile European Commission and ISO technical groups study the modification of the standard test method for the noise production of vehicles. Other proposals such as (COM(98)46 final) deal with the emission of noise by equipment used outdoors. It is intended to replace 9 existing directives for 7 families of equipment and to extend the number of families of equipment to more than 50.

3. EU Noise Policy News

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

The September Review of EU Noise Policy

One year after the Copenhagen Conference on EU Noise Policy progress has been achieved in some activities (harmonised indicator) and Working Groups have been created in the areas of Research and Cost/Benefit. From the institutional point of view the Commission has decided in accord with Member States to create a Steering Group on Noise and the inaugural meeting will take place on 22 September 1999 in Brussels. This Steering Group meeting has been scheduled to coincide with the early autumn meetings of the working groups, enabling annual reports to be generated and presented. Importantly all WG members will be able to contribute to the presentation of the harmonised indicator. The meeting is organised by DGXI-D3. More news on that event in our next issue.

The WGs are developing websites :

- The WG5 has a public website : http://www.kfs.oeaw.ac.at/noise/web_001.htm

- The WG4 is in the process of developing one within the European Environment Agency's website.

4. Other news

The European Academy of the Urban Environment - in co-operation with LÄRMKONTOR GmbH - published the "Noise abatement in European towns and cities : Strategies, concepts and approaches for local noise policy" Responsible Editor : Hanns-Uve Schwadler, Scientific Consultant : Christian Popp.
This publication aims primarily to present, discuss and disseminate in particular successful examples of comprehensive and integrated noise abatement strategies for road traffic. This policy handbook and its recommendations are based on three elements :

- a survey conducted in more than 30 European cities which was then evaluated and analysed
- the conference "Noise abatement in European towns and cities" which was held from 5-7 November 1998 in Berlin and Potsdam, and
- policy guidelines recommending priorities for managing and implementing noise abatement strategies at local level

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The Centre d' Information et de Documentation sur le Bruit (CIDB) in France has created a very good and informative website.
You should visit them in :
http://www.cidb.org

5. Contact Points

5.1 EIONET National Reference Centres (NRCs) for Noise

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