



28.9.2012

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition 0243/2012 by Walter Worsch (German), on preventing and reducing noise pollution caused by motorcycles

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner calls for European regulation to reduce noise pollution caused by motorcycles. He advocates, amongst other things, tough penalties for breaching noise standards, a gradual tightening of these standards in Europe and a ban on riding motorcycles at the weekend on specified roads.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 21 June 2012. Information requested from Commission under Rule 202(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 28 September 2012

Reducing noise from motor vehicles has been part of the EU objectives since the 70s when the first type-approval EU legislation¹ on noise from cars and commercial vehicles was adopted.

According to Directive 97/24/EC², strict noise limits shall be met by each motorcycle put on the EU market. Therefore, new motorcycles do not emit excessive noise and their noise level is comparable to other means of road transport. However, the noise problem arises when

¹ Directive 70/157/EEC of the Council of 6 February 1970 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the permissible sound level and the exhaust system of motor vehicles (OJ L 42, 23.2.1970, p. 16).

² Directive 97/24/EC of the European parliament and of the Council of 17 June 1997 on certain components and characteristics of two or three-wheel motor vehicles(OJ L 226, 18.8.1997, p. 1).

motorcycles are subsequently tampered, or fitted with bad replacement silencing systems or components that do not comply with the requirements of the directive.

This is why Directive 97/24/EC also includes requirements to prevent tampering, as well as requirements to ensure that replacement exhaust pipes do not increase the noise level of the original motorcycle. The Commission reviews the effectiveness of such legislation on a regular basis and it is for instance envisaged in the future to introduce a new international test method that will better represent real-life noise emissions and should better deal with the tampering of exhaust systems.

Furthermore, the Commission recently proposed¹ that motorcycles be subjected to a road worthiness test as it is the case for cars and commercial vehicles. This should lead to better maintenance and less tampering. This proposal is now to be discussed by the Council and the Parliament.

Finally, as proposed by the petitioner, one of the most efficient measures to tackle noise from motorcycles is the enforcement of the traffic legislation. Much noise comes from the modification of the motorcycle or from the driver behaviour (high acceleration in cities, etc). Due to the subsidiary principle, all these measures are of the responsibility of Member States and not of the European Union.

Conclusion

Motorcycles placed on the EU market do not emit excessive noise. In most of the cases, the noise comes from the modification of the vehicle or the behaviour of the driver. This is why most of the proposals from the petitioner actually relates to the enforcement of traffic rules (fines, sanctions, road side checks, traffic restrictions, etc). Under the subsidiary principle, these are matters under the responsibility of Member States. With regard to EU law, the Commission recently proposed that motorcycles be subjected to a road worthiness test. Furthermore, the Commission should propose in the near future additional measures to improve the type-approval tests and to cover off-cycle noise emissions.

¹ COM (2012) 380 final. See: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/12/555&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>.