

22 May 1997

A4-00183/97

REPORT

on the Green Paper on future noise policy (COM(96)0540 - C4-0587/96)

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

Rapporteur: Mrs Carmen Diez de Rivera Icaza

PE 221.530/fin.

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By letter of 5 November 1996 the Commission forwarded to Parliament its Green Paper on future noise policy.

At the sitting of 15 November 1996 the President of Parliament announced that he had referred the Green Paper to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection as the committee responsible and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy, the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy and the Committee on Transport and Tourism for their opinions.

At its meeting of 17 December 1996 the committee decided to draw up a report and appointed Mrs Carmen Diez de Rivera Icaza rapporteur.

It considered the Commission Green Paper and the draft report at its meetings of 26 February, 15 April and 21 May 1997.

At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously with 1 abstention.

The following took part in the vote: Ken Collins, chairman; Dybkjær and Lannoye, vice-chairmen; Graenitz (for Diez de Rivera Icaza, rapporteur), Blokland, Breyer, Correia (for Apolinario), Estevan Bolea (for Valverde Lopez), Flemming, Florenz, Hulthén, Jackson, Kirsten Jensen, Kokkola, Kuhn, Lange (for Bowe), Needle, Oomen-Ruijten, Pollack, van Putten, Riis-Jørgensen (for Eisma), Roth-Behrendt, Schleicher, Schnellhardt, Tamino, Virgin and White.

The opinions of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy and the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy are attached. The Committee on Transport and Tourism decided on 26 February 1997 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 22 May 1997.

The deadline for tabling amendments will appear on the draft agenda for the part-session at which the report is to be considered.

A
MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

Resolution on the Commission Green Paper on future noise policy (COM(96) 0540 - C4-0587/96)

The European Parliament.

- having regard to Article 130r of the Treaty on European Union,
 - having regard to the Commission Green Paper on future noise policy (COM(96) 0540 - C4-0587/96)(),
 - having regard to the Commission's 1996 work programme (COM(95)0512)(),
 - having regard to the Fifth Action Programme on the Environment(),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection and the opinions of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy and the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy (A4-0183/97),
- A. whereas over 50% of the EU population is constantly exposed to single-source noise levels of between 55 and 65 dB(A) and whereas over 20% are exposed to levels exceeding 65 dB(A),
- B. whereas, because of the cross-border nature of noise nuisance, there is a need for an ambitious European noise-reduction policy in view of the fact that noise has a serious effect on health and detracts from the quality of people's lives,
- C. whereas it is important, not least from the point of view of competition, to encourage noise-reduction measures,
- D. whereas the Fifth Action Programme on the Environment states that people should not be exposed to noise levels which jeopardize their health and their quality of life,
- E. whereas a comprehensive, integrated ambient noise reduction programme should include a framework directive incorporating binding practical measures which will provide a response to the constant increase in the number of noise-related complaints from the general public,
- F. noting that existing statistics and econometric estimates concerning the real economic consequences and external costs of noise to society,
- are inadequate and are not always available from the Member States,
 - are not based on a uniform methodological approach,

(^b) OJ C ...
(^b) OJ C ...
(^b) OJ C 138, 17.5.1993.

- correspond to accumulative methods of measuring noise in industrial zones,
- G. noting that national policies for addressing the problem vary substantially and need to be coordinated. There is also a frequent lack of coordination between the various Community policies and initiatives regarding the environment, industry, the regions, etc.,
- H. noting the lack of reliable, comparable data regarding the situation of the various noise sources,
- I. whereas there is a need for integration and coordination between the measures adopted in this area both at Community level and at local, regional and national level,
- J. discerning a reluctance on the part of the Commission to propose to the Member States specific measures for preventing and repressing noise,
1. Expresses its support for the Commission Green Paper on future noise policy, and continues to urge that, in the near future, specific measures and initiatives should be laid down in a framework directive on the reduction of ambient noise, in accordance with the Commission's 1996 legislative programme;
 2. Supports the Commission's decision to launch a genuine noise abatement programme, taking a first step towards doing so by submitting its Green Paper;
 3. For this purpose, urges the Commission to promote the establishment of common methods for measuring and evaluating noise and common exposure indices, relating to both daytime and night-time;
 4. To seek, and support the development of, uniform methods for measuring and assessing the external costs of noise to society in all Member States, following the example and using the experience of the most advanced states in this sector.
 5. To coordinate national policies and to provide guidance and technical assistance to the Member States so that they can organize their policies in respect of noise and control the implementation of the measures which they adopt.
 6. To determine more clearly, within the framework of regulations which it shall propose in future, its methods of tackling noise and to coordinate its various policies in this connection.
 7. To refrain from adopting legislative provisions, with direct or indirect economic consequences for the state, citizens and industry, without first carrying out a cost-benefit assessment and ensuring that costs are proportionate to the benefits.
 8. With a view to approving in future the funding of projects by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to control whether the proposed projects meet the required standards for noise prevention and repression together with other environmental standards.
 9. In accordance with Community policy on access to information and in view of the general public's enormous sensitivity to noise, calls for 'noise maps' to be drawn up in the Member States for the benefit of the general public and for people's views on the matter to be taken into account;

10. Stresses that an effective ambient noise reduction policy must not be restricted to establishing maximum limits; attempts must also be made to reduce noise at source;
11. Believes that the Commission's legislative proposals on noise abatement should include an obligation on the industries concerned to draw up a plan for minimizing the noise produced by their establishments, where appropriate as part of their environmental management system;
12. Calls on the Commission to lay down the requirement that, should maximum noise levels be exceeded, the Member States must take practical action to reduce them;
13. Calls on the Commission to encourage the harmonization of minimum standards of sound insulation for the frontages of buildings, including windows, in accordance with the activities carried out therein and the area in which they are located;
14. Calls on the Commission to pay special attention to low-frequency noise as it is disturbing even at levels that can hardly be heard;
15. Calls on the Commission to encourage proper territorial planning which is both compatible with the various possible uses to which land can be put and independent of the action to be taken at source, including research and development programmes, the introduction of new technologies, etc.;
16. Calls on the Commission to draw up a plan for the exchange of research and experience in Member States in the field of noise abatement;
17. Also calls on the Commission to look into the prospects of an effective control system to reduce the noise generated by different sources;
18. Firmly believes that, in order to achieve these objectives, the Commission will have to cooperate closely with the local, regional and national authorities of the Member States;
19. Calls on the Member States to address the problem of noise, in cooperation with industry, in a planned and responsible manner, given that the cost of such an exercise is not excessive, while an improvement in working conditions and in the quality of life of citizens will lead in the long term to a reduction of costs and benefit society as a whole;
20. Calls on the Commission to carry out a study into the actual cost of the damage caused by noise, including health costs;
21. Calls for the European Environment Agency to be given the task of collating the 'noise maps' drawn up by the Member States and for it to assess such data regularly and analyse the trends therein;
22. Urges the Commission to include back-up measures in its legislative provisions on noise abatement, such as negotiated agreements with the rail sector or the automobile or aircraft industries, noise-level labelling of tools and equipment, reference to standards, information and awareness-raising programmes amongst the population at large, noise-minimization plans in industrial and other activity, preventive measures to reduce noise in the building of the new high speed train networks, speed limits where appropriate, soundproofing measures inside buildings, taxes and economic incentives, etc;

23. Calls for framework legislation for noise abatement planning. This could determine areas in which noise has now, or is expected to have, a damaging environmental impact. This assessment can then be used to develop an integrated approach to noise abatement by selecting the appropriate measures;
24. Agrees with the Commission's view that economic instruments (such as staggered noise taxes) are effective ways of encouraging noise reduction;
25. Urges the Commission to consider further measures and to take further corrective action to reduce traffic noise, which has been the principal source of noise over the last ten years; calls on the Commission to pay particular attention, in this respect, to tyre noise;
26. Stresses that noise limiting in this field should be based on reducing the enormous increase in the volume of transport, a better spatial and urban planning, effective mobility management and transport logistics, and the transfer to non-motorized individual modes of transport (e.g. pedestrians and cyclists) in combination with collective and/or public transport;
27. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to seek, in the future strategy to reduce road traffic noise, an immediate reduction in the limit values for engine and rolling noise and the greater use of low-noise, durable road surfaces;
28. Calls on the Commission to include in the proposal for a framework directive provisions on limiting the noise level of transportable music reproducers (e.g. walkman) and stationary music reproducers;
29. Calls on the Commission to lay down and standardize obligatory standards for aviation to limit aircraft noise and noise levels in the areas around airports, in the light of air transport liberalization and the increasing size of aircraft;
30. Calls on the Commission to submit a proposal for a directive on obligatory standards and the planning of airports on the basis of a European noise pollution system;
31. Calls for all airports to be closed at night and for any exceptions to this rule to be subject to public consultation;
32. In view of the enlargement of the European Union, urges the Commission to submit once again, within the current year, a directive on rail transport involving a reduction in noise from railways on existing, heavily used lines, with particular regard to the transport of goods;
33. Urges the Commission, in view of the growing impact of road traffic on ambient noise levels, to incorporate noise assessment into all transport-related strategies or programmes;
34. Urges the Commission to devote greater efforts to the 'noise education' of the general public in the Member States, both in schools and by means of information campaigns in the media and to encourage, in addition, a reduction in noise levels within private dwellings;

35. Asks the Commission to ensure that the Fourth R&TD Framework Programme in the field of industrial and materials technologies and of Standards, Measurements and Testing should devote particular attention to reducing noise from equipment and tools used in the building industry;
36. Calls on the Commission to submit, during the current year, the framework directive announced in its 1996 work programme, concerning integrated approximation of the noise emissions of equipment used outdoors;
37. Calls on the Commission to submit comprehensive legal requirements, for the protection of individuals, on emission limit values for machinery used out of doors, to ensure the general labelling of all relevant machinery and equipment with the guaranteed noise emission value;
38. Calls on the Commission to establish a series of standards applicable to road surfaces, tyres, noise level measurement, anti-noise screens, air conditioning equipment, fridges and other equipment with regard to noise abatement, and asks the European Standards Committee (ESC) to carry out the requisite work;
39. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that current noise abatement measures are complied with and monitored;
40. Calls on the Commission to create a suitable framework in the fifth R&TD framework programme for the development of noise prediction and assessment techniques, as a field of pre-legislative research of particular relevance to EU legislation;
41. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

B **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

I. INTRODUCTION

In its work programme for 1996 the Commission announced a directive to establish a legislative framework for implementing and initiating future measures to reduce noise in the European Union, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 5.5, table 12, of the Fifth Community Programme of Policy and Action in relation to the environment and sustainable development (COM(92)0023)(¹).

In the Green Paper, the Commission drops its former **undertaking to introduce legislation** in favour of a noise abatement programme (COM(95)0647)(²)

) 'which will address comprehensively the provision of information to the public, common noise exposure indices, targets for noise quality and noise emission from products'. The Green Paper is also intended to stimulate public

In the conclusions to the Green Paper, the Commission 'invites comments on these ideas from the Council, Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee on Regions and other interested parties by 31 March 1997'.

This strange procedure would seem to reflect the difficulty or reticence on the part of some Member States as regards firm commitments on this matter, or at least it would appear so on the basis of recent experience in fields such as tourism.

Having said that, any public debate is always welcome provided it leads to clear commitments, firm legislative measures and the political will needed to put them into practice.

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON NOISE

In all industrialized countries, noise is considered a serious impediment to **the quality of life**, especially in urban areas. The main source of environmental noise is passenger and goods transport, particularly road traffic(³).

Apart from impairing the quality of life, noise also has obvious **effects on health** (stress, insomnia, cardio-vascular problems, etc.), it being recommended, for example, that in order to ensure sleep the **maximum** levels of sound pressure should not exceed 45 dB(A), although disturbance of sleep begins with levels of 30 dB(A)(⁴).

(¹) OJ C ...

(

) 'which will address comprehensively the provision of information to the public, common noise exposure indices, targets for noise quality and noise emission from products'. The Green Paper is also intended to stimulate public

) OJ C140, 11.5.1996, p. 5.

(²) 'Definitions of technical and administrative bases for the regulation of environmental noise', V. MESTRE.

(³) A passenger car travelling at 50 km/h at a distance of 7.5 km generates a noise level between 60 and 80 dB(A) and a level of 45-55 dB(A) when idling.

III. THE NOISE SITUATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

It would be no exaggeration to say that noise pollution has scarcely figured among the concerns of Community environment policy over the last 25 years, despite the growing number of **complaints** from European citizens regarding noise().

The low priority given to noise was justified on the grounds that it was a **local problem**, a consideration which overlooked its effects on health, as well as the fact that many sources of sound pressure are not of local origin.

The introduction of the internal market and the liberalization of transport(), the increase in the number of cars, new sources of noise from mass leisure and tourism activities, major stadiums and sports centres, the increase in in

Today it can be said that, with the exception of a number of privileged areas, the urban culture of our century has become a **culture of noise** and that an overall reduction in sound pressure must be one of the main ambitions as the third millennium approaches.

IV. TOWARDS A GLOBAL FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR NOISE ABATEMENT

The directives currently in force() and the subsequent amendments to them reflect the **poverty** of what has been achieved in more than 20 years of Community noise policy.

Some of these directives have even been seen as a joke or a waste of time in countries with little tradition of respect for the environment and hence no sensitivity to this issue. The directive on noise emissions from lawn-mowers is a case in point().

The legislative policy so far followed by the Community has focused mainly on setting maximum noise levels with a view to **harmonization of the single market** and introducing a certification procedure including the noise level of the product, but with no reference to reducing noise emissions at source.

A glance at Annex I will reveal the **inadequacy** of this legislation and the need for an overall environmental abatement reduction policy which must of necessity include zoning, where this does not already exist, in order to allocate maximum sound emission levels for different uses of land.

(¹) Noise appeared in fifth place in the 1995 Eurobarometer and was the only problem to register an increase in complaints by the population since 1992.

() , the increase in the number of cars, new sources of noise from mass leisure and tourism activities, major stadiums and sports centres, the increase in industrial estates and defence installations and other factors have helped

() Forecasts for the year 2010 show that goods transport by road will almost double and air traffic will increase by more than 180%.

(¹) and the subsequent amendments to them reflect the) See Annex I.

(¹) Directive 84/538/EEC
Despite some successes, mainly as a result of technical progress, the data covering the last 15 years show no satisfactory improvements because of the increase in road and air traffic. It can therefore be said that night-time noise in Europe is increasing all the time, mainly because of the

lack of **regular inspection procedures** and the absence of Community or international standards for some sources of noise.

This state of affairs has obliged the Commission to attempt to establish a new framework for the reduction and control of sound pressure with the publication of its Green Paper, which puts forward a number of possible measures which will require **shared responsibility** if global efforts to combat noise pollution are to be successful.

The first step must be to **determine objectives and options for action**, once the priority noise sources have been established, so that progress can then be monitored and the accuracy and standardization of data improved.

The Green Paper stresses that once again integration and coordination of measures adopted at Community, national and local level is vital if the various measures undertaken to reduce sound pressure are to be coherent and that this will also require **common methods** of noise assessment to be established and **common noise exposure indices** to be determined.

Exchange of **information** between institutions and subsequent public dissemination should be the other key elements of this common programme.

The programme also envisages greater use of **economic instruments** as part of measures to reduce noise from various sources, such as air transport, or in the use of road infrastructures as well as for reducing railway noise.

The Union must also **determine the spheres** in which the Community can help both the Member States and the regional and local authorities to implement the chosen policies.

CONCLUSION

The Green Paper endeavours to open a **great debate** on noise involving the Union, the Member States, local and regional authorities, and specialized organizations, in order to develop a noise abatement programme and thus offer a global response to this acute problem.

There is no doubt that this is a pressing need since no one should be exposed to noise levels which endanger their health and quality of life (COM(95)0624)().

Having recognized that, in more than 20 years of Community environment policy, noise pollution has not been given the attention it merits, the Green Paper should have included a clearer **commitment to legislation** and set a deadline for the submission of a legislative proposal as promised in its 1996 annual work programme. By virtue of this, the Commission should assume the following three commitments as part of its overall noise abatement measures: a communication; a framework directive on environmental noise; and a global framework directive on outdoor machinery (COM(95)0512, Annex II).

(¹) OJ C ...

By any reckoning, these commitments are essential given that more than 20% of European citizens (approximately 80 million people) live on a daily basis with noise levels in excess of 65dB(A) solely as a result of traffic, without including other noise sources which would add to these levels. A further 50% of the population, in other words some 300 million

people(), are subject to sound pressure of more than 55 dB(A) from a single noise source, namely traffic.

This means that more than 70% of Europe's population lives with environmental noise levels **much higher** than those recommended.

While the measures proposed by the Green Paper are both necessary and valuable, they are **inadequate** because, as everyone knows, **a programme has no binding force at any stage**.

Taking all the above considerations into account the resolution which is being tabled on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection urges the Commission, once the necessary discussion has taken place following the publication of the Green Paper, to honour its commitment and to submit, **within the current year, a set of laws** designed to reduce ambient noise.

In so doing it would provide a comprehensive, coordinated response to the wide variety of noise sources in accordance with the Green Paper, the Commission's own work programme, the Fifth Action Programme and the repeated calls from the general public regarding the noise issue.

(), are subject to sound pressure of more than 55 dB(A) from a single noise source, namely traffic.)

Source: OECD.

Annex I

Annex I (cont.)

Annex II

JUAN RAMÓN JIMÉNEZ (Premio Nobel)*[Carta a los Sres. de León]*

Queridos vecinos:

Desde que les regalaron a ustedes esa vil pianola, la casa ha perdido toda su dignidad. Esto es a todas horas, y por virtud de ustedes, un cine, un "cabaret". ¡Qué lata y qué niñería permanentemente de musiquillas de cuplés y de baile americano! Hablar a ustedes de derechos y deberes de vecinos que viven en una misma casa, que pagan lo mismo, etc., sería absurdo, puesto que en España esas cosas no tienen sentido y, aquí, el que trabaja en serio tiene que hacerlo ¡ay! a salto de mata, a deshora, sin ritmo, como Dios quiera. Prescindo de ello, por lo tanto.

Pero como mientras la pianola de ustedes, toca y toca durante doce horas al día, yo no puedo hacer nada, me voy a dedicar a ponerme a tono con ustedes. Y el tono será el de los platillos y el redoblante. Así es que en cuanto ustedes empiecen con su pianola, empezaré yo con tambor y metal. Se lo aviso a ustedes de antemano, no se asusten y tengan que llamar a la Casa de Socorro, o para que preparen algodones y demás, porque el ruido va a ser tempestuoso, diluviano, apocalíptico.

Su desocupado y envilecido vecino,
J.R.J. (1919)

[Carta a Narciso Clavería]

Muy Sr. mío, de mi mayor consideración:

Perdóneme si me dirijo a usted sin tener el gusto de conocerle, y, sobre todo, para un asunto que, a primera vista, puede parecer infantil.

Desde que ha comenzado el buen tiempo y, con él, a cantar un grillo que, según creo, está en uno de los balcones de la casa de usted, no es posible en la nuestra -y la suya-, pared por medio, trabajar por las tardes ni dormir por las noches, pues el pobre e incansable animalito cumple su misión primaveral tan sonoramente, que resuena en nuestro piso como si estuviera dentro.

He probado, antes de molestar a usted, una serie de remedios, y ninguno me ha dado, por desgracia, resultado.

Sería, sin duda, ridículo que yo pretendiese siquiera reducir la libertad de usted. Lo único que me atrevería a rogarle es que, si le fuese posible y no le causara la menor contrariedad, ya que su casa tiene balcones a la calle de Lagasca, más ancha, y donde tal vez no haya nadie, cerca, a quien moleste, tuviese la bondad de trasladar al animalito, con lo que proporcionaría usted un alivio considerable a mi cerebro; pues creo que, desde media tarde en adelante, me parece que me lo están agujereando.

Si usted no cree justo acceder a lo que le pido, suplico a usted que me dispense mi atrevimiento; si puede hacerlo, le doy un millón de gracias anticipadas.

De usted afmo. s. s. q. b. s. m.
J.R.J. (1919)

Poesía. Revista ilustrada de información poética.
Nº13-14, Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura,

Inverno 1981-1982, pp 83-84.

13 May 1997

OPINION
(Rule 147)

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on future noise policy - the European Commission Green Paper (COM(96)0540 final - C4-0587/96) (report by Diez De Rivera)

Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy

Draftsman: Mr Stelios Argyros

PROCEDURE

At its meeting of 23 January 1997 the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy appointed Mr Stelios Argyros draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 19 March 1997 22 April 1997.

At the latter meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: von Wogau, chairman; Katiforis, vice-chairman, Argyros, draftsman (for Christodoul), Areitio Toledo, Arroni, Balfe (for Read), Boogerd-Quaak (for Gasoliba I Böhm), Camison Asensio (for Fourcans), Carlsson, Cassidy (for Friedrich), Cox, de Brémond d'Ars, de Rose, Donnelly, Ettl (for Caudron), Fayot, García Arias, Glante, Harrison, Hautala, Hendrick, Herman, Hoppenstedt, Ilaskivi, Kestelijn-Sierens, Kuhne, Langen, Larive, Lindqvist, Lukas, Mann E. (for Imbeni), Mann T. (for García-Margallo), Menrad (for Konrad), Metten, Miller, Murphy, Peijs, Pérez Royo, Porto (for Lulling), Randzio-Plath, Rapkay, Ribeiro, Roth-Behrendt (for Billingham), Rübig, Siso Cruellas (for Secchi) Soltwedel-Schäfer, Tappin (for Paasilinna), Theonas (for Svensson), Thyssen, van Velzen (for Mather), Väyrynen (for Riis-Jorgensen), Watson and Willockx (for Kuckelkorn).

BACKGROUND

For more than 20 years Community environmental noise policy has essentially consisted of legislation fixing maximum sound levels and design standards for vehicles, machines and other products.

In its Fifth Environmental Action Programme 1993-95, combatting noise emerged for the first time as one of the basic priorities of an integrated environmental policy. The Green Paper adopted on 5 November 1996 seeks to develop a new approach to the problem of noise and constitutes a first step towards formulating an integrated programme for combatting noise.

The basic objectives of the Green Paper are to stimulate public debate, to encourage an exchange of information between the Community and the Member States with the participation of the

bodies and individuals concerned and, up to a certain point, to establish a uniform legal framework and specific measures for preventing and suppressing noise.

Problems identified by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Lack of a uniform method for measuring and assessing noise

The studies so far carried out estimate the external costs of noise to society at between 0.2 and 2% of GDP. These estimates have been made on the basis of a variety of methods and this accounts for the great divergence.

It is clear that the Community and the Member States need the most accurate and detailed information available concerning the real costs and consequences of noise, if they are to develop an integrated strategy for combatting it.

For this reason the Community should, on the one hand, develop a uniform methodology for measuring and evaluating noise which can then be uniformly implemented by the Member States and, on the other, launch general guidance and technical aid initiatives in respect of the Member States to organize research, exchanges of information and public awareness campaigns, and also to monitor the implementation of the measures.

The advisability of adopting economic measures

Only certain Member States have tried out economic measures as a means of combatting noise. Such measures take the form either of incentives/subsidies (preventive) or the form of taxation as a 'noise levy' (repressive). The OECD estimates that economic measures have proved effective, for example, in the case of subsidies to replace motor vehicles.

In countries which have used taxation as a mean of repressing noise, levies and fines have been quite low and the culprits appeared very willing to pay up in order to avoid more drastic (and costly) structural interventions. A typical example of 'noise levies' are the charges incorporated into airport charges at major European airports. In Austria 'road user' levies have also been announced as a means of tackling noise caused by motor vehicles.

It is clear that, in the absence of stable measuring methods and specific information regarding the real cost of noise, it is not possible to fix the size of the levies which must be imposed to repress noise.

Noise policy and industry

It is estimated that industry accounts for only 20% of overall noise emissions, compared to the 80% allowed for by transport, although it appears more to most people.

So far there exists no Community legislation fixing permissible noise emission levels from industrial installations, even though most Member States impose limits on noise levels in industrial regions, the strictest level today being 85 dB in the Netherlands. However, noise in industrial zones is measured accumulatively, i.e. by taking into account all the industrial plants operating in the zone and the noise emissions to the entire surrounding inhabited area. A sounder method, which is applied in only certain Member States, would be to measure the noise emission by industrial unit in conjunction with certain receiver points in the surrounding area. In this way

operating permits would be issued, the permissible levels established and the noise levy calculated on the basis of one coefficient for each separate industrial unit.

As far as Community law is concerned, the proposal for a directive on the integrated prevention and control of pollution (IPPC) on which the Council adopted a common position in 1995 provides for controls on emissions of noise and the establishment of permissible noise emission levels from industrial installations. The 'machines directive' (89/392/EEC) also lays down health and safety provisions relating to the specifications for the construction of machines and covers noise emissions, inter alia. This directive provides that machines must be examined and designed so as to reduce as far as possible the risk that they may damage health or cause industrial accidents because of noise emissions, especially at the workplace. As regards measures to improve the working environment for health and psychological reasons, mention should also be made of the proposal for a Council decision adopting the safe programme (COM(96)652).

Measures to combat noise at source mean an additional cost for industry which has to adapt to new specifications, for example the gradual replacement of technical equipment, the construction of new industrial installations with better insulation against noise, the production of low noise products, the adoption of measures to combat noise at the workplace. It is already estimated that measures to combat noise account for 1% of the total investment expenditure by industry.

On the other hand, industry should bear in mind that noise is one of the five main sources of annoyance which erode the quality of life, behind environmental pollution, which are attributed to industry and damage its image among the public and consumer. From the point of view of labour policy, an improvement in the acoustic working environment would help prevent industrial accidents - which clearly have a social and economic cost - and improve productivity. Consequently, noise abatement is in the interests of industry.

Noise policy and regional policy

In the absence of an opinion by the Committee on Regional Policy, it is incumbent upon the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs to take into account the local and regional aspects of the problem too. Since noise is a form of pollution whose effects are mainly local, it is natural that local and regional authorities should be directly involved and mobilized in combatting it. However, as the Green Paper repeatedly stresses, the division of responsibilities in addressing this problem must be determined on the basis of the subsidiarity principle.

Another question - directly economic, and relating to the Structural Funds - is the question of the specifications of projects receiving funding. While there has been an increase in environmental awareness concerning the implementation of projects - where the question of eligibility frequently arises - the same cannot be said of noise awareness.

For example, the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund provide funding for motorway construction. But to what extent do they make provision for (and consequently finance) noise reduction measures, for example, special porous road surfaces, protective lateral noise barriers etc.?

Planning and control

No-one should expect the adoption of strict measures to produce immediate results. Society and industry need at least a decade of planning and adjustment until the positive results are

measurable. The costs will also have to be shared out gradually, so as not to impose a disproportionate burden on the state, industry or citizens.

Controls on the implementation of measures are also important if these measures are to prove effective. In any case, the Community, acting on the basis of subsidiarity, charts out the general orientations while the Member States adopt specific legislation and implement and control the measures. However, this is frequently not enough. It is at the control stage that the Community should intervene, by carrying out spot checks in the Member States and - where necessary - imposing fines.

Coordination of Community policies

Finally, it is self-evident that Community policies within the framework of the various action programmes and initiatives on environmental, transport, regional, industrial and social policy must be coordinated so that the problem of noise can be addressed in a multi-faceted and, consequently, more effective manner.

Conclusions

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following in its report:

- A. Noting that existing statistics and econometric estimates concerning the real economic consequences and external costs of noise to society:
 - are inadequate and are not always available from the Member States,
 - are not based on a uniform methodological approach,
 - correspond to accumulative methods of measuring noise in industrial zones;
- B. Noting that national policies for addressing the problem vary substantially and need to be coordinated. There is also a frequent lack of coordination between the various Community policies and initiatives regarding the environment, industry, the regions, etc.;
- C. Discerning a reluctance on the part of the Commission to propose to the Member States specific measures for preventing and repressing noise or to determine the limits of Community intervention;
- D. Taking the view that any attempt to establish repressive measures of an economic nature with regard to industry must be based on a reliable assessment of the relation between the imposed cost and the anticipated benefit, so that such measures do not undermine competitiveness;

Calls on the Commission:

1. To seek, and support the development of, uniform methods for measuring and assessing the external costs of noise to society in all Member States, following the example and using the experience of the most advanced states in this sector.

2. To coordinate national policies and to provide guidance and technical assistance to the Member States so that they can organize their policies in respect of noise and control the implementation of the measures which they adopt.
3. To determine more clearly, within the framework of regulations which it shall propose in future, its methods of tackling noise and to coordinate its various policies in this connection.
4. To step up its efforts to provide better information so as to increase the awareness of the Member States and the public in respect of noise, its consequences and the methods of combatting it.
5. To refrain from adopting legislative provisions, with direct or indirect economic consequences for the state, citizens and industry, without first carrying out a cost-benefit assessment and ensuring that costs are proportionate to the benefits.
6. With a view to approving in future the funding of projects by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to control whether the proposed projects meet the required standards for noise prevention and repression together with other environmental standards.
7. Calls on the Member States to address the problem of noise, in cooperation with industry, in a planned and responsible manner, given that the cost of such an exercise is not excessive, while an improvement in working conditions and in the quality of life of citizens will lead in the long term to a reduction of costs and benefit society as a whole

13 May 1997

OPINION
(Rule 147)

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on the Commission Green Paper on future noise policy (COM(96)0540)

Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy

Draftsman: María-Teresa Estevan Bolea

PROCEDURE

At its meeting of 3 December 1996 the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy appointed Mrs Estevan Bolea draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 18 March, 14 April and 12 May 1997.

At the last meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Quisthoudt-Rowohl, first vice-chairman and acting chairman; Lange, third vice-chairman; Estevan Bolea, draftsman; Ahern, Argyros, Bloch von Blottnitz, Caudron (for Adam), Chichester, Elchlepp (for Desama, pursuant to Rule 138(2)), Graenitz (for Stockmann), Haug (for West), Heinisch (for Ferber), Izquierdo Collado, Linkohr, Malerba, Marset Campos, Matikainen-Kallström, McNally, Mohamed Ali (for Elmalan, pursuant to Rule 132(2)), Mombaur, Robles Piquer (for Rovsing), Rothe, Soulier, Tannert, W.G. van Velzen and Weber.

INTRODUCTION

Noise problems are something that the public is particularly aware of. They mainly affect town dwellers, and road traffic noise is a major culprit. In industry, noise is more part of safety and health at work, since, except in very special cases, it does not reach the world outwith the factory walls.

In order to reduce noise in the EU, the Commission is to further develop the noise abatement programme set out in the 1993 Fifth Environmental Action Programme and its 1996 review, by taking action to achieve the targets set. The first step is the Green Paper on future noise policy under consideration here.

OBSERVATIONS

The Green Paper seeks to open a debate which will allow the drawing up of a genuine noise abatement programme. This programme requires wide-ranging work in the field of research and

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technical development, and in order to give the new R&TD programmes a proper focus, we need to specify quite clearly what the fields of action are to be, and therefore have a clear grasp of the causes of noise.

CAUSES OF NOISE

The main sources of noise are: industry, housing and various activities, wheeled traffic and aviation.

Noise caused by wheeled traffic

There are five principle sources of noise in cars, which can be broken down on a percentage basis as follows: (a) engine and gears (30%), (b) admission ??? (10%), (C) exhaust (45%), (d) cooling systems (10%), (e) tyres (5%). For heavy vehicles, the percentages are different - engine noise may reach as much as 40%, and cooling systems, 20%.

The way in which people drive and the cyclic patterns characteristic of general urban traffic affect average noise levels for vehicles. Amongst the causes of noise we have: (a) use of certain cars or motorbikes, (b) slamming doors, (c) bursts of speed, (d) changes of speed, (e) 'sporty' driving, (f) starting engines, (g) braking, (h) heavy vehicles going up ramps, (i) sirens, etc.

Other circumstances or factors which make a major contribution to noise pollution in cities need to be added, such as inadequate town planning, particularly with regard to routes for wheeled transport, the closeness of residential areas to airports, inadequate soundproofing of transmitters of noise, and in housing and premises.

Noise produced by automobiles

The major source of noise in towns is due to road traffic. The noise levels depend on the speed of the vehicle, or rather, its engine's rpm. Furthermore, independent of the vehicle's engine or exhaust noise, considerable noise is caused by wind resistance when the vehicle is in motion. Nor does this list exhaust all the possible sources of noise, since the quality of the vehicle's construction and the state of the roads and road surfaces also play a role. Finally, the noise emitted by a vehicle also depends on its condition, and on what kind of vehicle it is: scooter, motorbike, private car, lorry, bus, etc.

Noise caused by industry

Industrial noise problems fall into two categories: the effects of noise on the external environment (i.e. those living around the establishment) and internal noise. The latter is monitored and regulated by measures on safety and hygiene in the workplace designed to protect workers' health. In the case of major heavy industrial plants, the problems of external noise are less evident, since such establishments are normally located on large sites where sheer distance effectively reduces noise. However, with regard to light industry and workshops located within urban centres, noise and its effects on the local population are a major environmental problem.

COMBATING NOISE

Of the various kinds of action that can be taken to combat the irritation and disturbance caused by noise, the following should be highlighted: soundproofing the source, soundproofing

whatever is transmitting the noise, and protecting potential receivers. In industry, most measures seek to soundproof the source or to minimize noise levels. This means that research and technological development programmes have to focus on these aspects, but above all, the first, i.e. the source of the noise.

RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST NOISE

Both the Fourth R&TD Framework Programme and the Fifth Framework Programme which is currently being drawn up, ought to lay greater stress on R&TD projects which seek to reduce noise from machinery and plant, transport and industrial and recreational activities. In the third and fourth R&TD programmes support was provided for projects on: (i) measurements of noise and vibration in the Standards, Measurements and Testing Programme; (ii) reduction of noise from equipment in the Industrial and Materials Technologies Programme, especially noise from motor vehicles, railways and aircraft; (iii) research in the telematics applications programme, testing the effects of advanced road traffic management strategies on noise levels, and supporting pilot projects providing environmental information on noise levels in urban areas. However, as the Commission's Green Paper itself indicates, these actions were scattered across various specific programmes and not sufficiently geared to environment policy objectives. However, under the Fourth Framework Programme efforts have been made to achieve better coordination between specific programmes. As far as industry is concerned, businesses whose premises contain sources of major noise potential (compressors, engines, furnaces, air cooling systems, pumps, ejectors, air and steam vents, fans, valves and other equipment) should ensure that their eco-management programme includes a noise-minimization plan just as it includes a waste-minimization plan.

The first step is to ascertain the noise levels of each piece of equipment and each area of the plant and the causes of those noise levels. The next step is to investigate what measures should be applied in order to prevent noise and vibration as part of the improved operation and maintenance of equipment and production lines. In the case of the building industry, which causes huge noise annoyance, the trend is to limit noise levels by specific legislation on pneumatic hammers, drills, compressors, cranes and other equipment. With regard to reducing background noise from traffic on major roads, from railways or from aircraft, noise abatement plans concentrate on soundproofing, by means of anti-noise screens and barriers where appropriate, and increasingly, by double glazing buildings. In any case, the true (and most effective) solution to noise problems lies in town planning.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection to include the following conclusions in its motion for a resolution, namely that it:

1. Supports the Commission's decision to launch a genuine noise abatement programme, taking a first step towards doing so by submitting its Green Paper;
2. Asks the Commission to ensure that the Fourth R&TD Framework Programme in the field of industrial and materials technologies and of Standards, Measurements and Testing should devote particular attention to reducing noise from equipment and tools used in the building industry;

3. Calls on the Commission to establish a series of standards applicable to road surfaces, tyres, noise level measurement, anti-noise screens, air conditioning equipment, fridges and other equipment with regard to noise abatement, and asks the European Standards Committee (ESC) to carry out the requisite work;
4. Believes that the Commission's legislative proposals on noise abatement should include an obligation on the industries concerned to draw up a plan for minimizing the noise produced by their establishments, where appropriate as part of their environmental management system;
5. Urges the Commission to include back-up measures in its legislative provisions on noise abatement, such as negotiated agreements with the rail sector or the automobile or aircraft industries, noise-level labelling of tools and equipment, reference to standards, information and awareness-raising programmes amongst the population at large, noise-minimization plans in industrial and other activity, preventive measures to reduce noise in the building of the new high speed train networks, speed limits where appropriate, soundproofing measures inside buildings, taxes and economic incentives, etc;
6. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that current noise abatement measures are complied with and monitored;
7. Calls for framework legislation for noise abatement planning. This could determine areas in which noise has now, or is expected to have, a damaging environmental impact. This assessment can then be used to develop an integrated approach to noise abatement by selecting the appropriate measures;
8. Calls on the Commission to create a suitable framework in the fifth R&TD framework programme for the development of noise prediction and assessment techniques, as a field of pre-legislative research of particular relevance to EU legislation.