

## **The preparation of the new EU Noise Policy**

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- Background information on the EU Noise Policy Working Groups
  - EU Noise Policy WG4 on Noise mapping

## **Background information on the new EU Noise policy preparation**

At Community level, action in the past has been limited to legislation pertaining to a small number of sectors, generally within the framework of broader industrial standardisation programmes. The EU Council of Ministers has adopted Directives governing noise emissions for construction products and machines, motor vehicles and aeroplanes -in the context of international agreements- as well as for exposure to noise at work.

However, the 5<sup>th</sup> EC Action Programme for the Environment and the subsequent review revealed a commitment to a more constructive and co-ordinated approach.

In November 1996, this commitment was underlined by the publication of the Commission's Green Paper on Noise (COM(96) 540) on the way forward for EU Noise Policy which offered an analysis of the noise situation in the EU and proposed ways in which Community contribution could represent an added value, related to the harmonization and improvement of measurement and calculation techniques and the availability of useful data.

The future EU strategy for noise policy was officially launched during 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 mapping, noise abatement and emission control.

The following general action plan was agreed:

- 1999 : common indices/indicators proposed by Working Groups, proposal of the Commission (DG Environment) 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

Many additional information related with the Commission's Green Paper on Noise, as well as the already existed Directives on noise, can be found in European Commission's (DG Environment) noise webpages

## **Background information on the EU Noise Policy Working Groups**

In order to develop the new EU noise policy, the European Commission (DG Environment) has created technical working groups to assist the preparation of the policy. The policy will be established in a coherent system of Directives consisting of a Framework Directive for Environmental Noise and Directives on Noise Emission (some of these already existing or being prepared).

Under an overall Steering Committee on Noise Policy, presided over by Commission, with participation by national experts, industry, NGOs and Local Authorities, 7 WG have been created for the perception, description and abatement of environmental noise :

- WG1 : indicators
- WG2 : dose/effect
- WG3 : computation and measurement
  - WG4 : mapping
  - WG5 : abatement
- WG6 : cost/benefit
- WG7 : research

The chair and co-chair persons were appointed by Commission. Member States proposed experts for membership of the WGs. The final composition of each WG has been determined by a proper balance between them. Members of the WGs participate in a personal capacity and were selected because of intrinsic knowledge in the domain.

A full work programme shall be developed by each WG to show deliverables, time schedule, interim reports and checks. The Chairperson shall seek unanimity in deliberations. The work of each WG shall be concluded with the publication of a position paper. Commission has invited NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations), Industry, Local Authorities (LA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Environmental Agency (EEA) and the Joint Research Centre in Ispra (JSR) to participate in one or more WG. The response was positive and Commission has invited a considerable number of experts from those organisations to join the WGs.