

Sound level of motor vehicles and of replacement silencing systems

2011/0409(COD) - 09/12/2011 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to ensure a high level of health and environmental protection and to safeguard the Internal Market for motor vehicles as regards their sound level.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Commission.

BACKGROUND: Council Directive 70/157/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the permissible sound level and the exhaust system of motor vehicles harmonised the different technical requirements of Member States relating to the permissible sound level of motor vehicles and of their exhaust systems for the purpose of the establishment and operation of the internal market. For the purposes of the good functioning of the internal market and in order to ensure a uniform and consistent application throughout the Union, it is appropriate to replace that Directive by a Regulation.

As more information about the health impacts of noise became available, **the need for a higher level of protection of EU citizens through further EU-wide measures became more imminent.**

The European Commission [Green Paper on Noise from 1996](#) estimated that around 20% of the then EU population suffered from noise levels that scientists and health experts consider to be unacceptable. Based on information from EU Member States, **the European Environment Agency has estimated, that half of the population in urban areas is exposed to noise levels above 55 dB(A) as a result of ambient road noise.**

Over the years, considerable research effort, including large EU-funded projects, has been dedicated to the quantitative assessment of the relationship between environmental noise and its effects. Although the approaches and the scope of the various studies differ, **common ground can be found in the terms of harmful effects and annoyance that noise generates.** These findings have been confirmed by the 2008

WHO-report.

The Communication from the [European Commission regarding a European strategy on clean and energy efficient vehicles](#) announced that the European Commission will present a proposal in 2011 to amend the respective legislation to reduce the noise emissions of vehicles.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: different options were considered for the proposal which covered environmental, social and economic aspects:

- **Option 1:** No change - the current limit values together with the allowances will remain valid, as well as the old measurement method;
- **Option 2:** New method - old limit values (the new measurement method will be combined with the current set of limit values);
- **Option 3:** New method – new limit values equivalent to old ones;
- **Option 4:** New method – new limit values with noise reduction potential;
- **Option 5:** New method – new limit values with noise reductions potential in a two step approach.

According to the most preferable option (Option 5), the limit values for light and medium size vehicles will be lowered in two steps of each 2 dB(A) and for heavy vehicles in a first step of 1 and a second step

of 2 dB(A). This will result in a reduction of the noise impact of about 3 dB(A) for free flowing traffic and up to 4 dB(A) for intermittent traffic. The reduction of the number of highly annoyed people will be 25 %. The cost-benefit ratio for this measure is estimated to be around 20 times in favour of the noise reduction compared to no action taken.

LEGAL BASIS: Article 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

CONTENT: the draft proposal will repeal Directive 70/157/EEC and its subsequent amendments. It aims to update the requirements for the type-approval system as regards the sound level of motor vehicles and of their exhaust systems. In particular, it introduces a new test method for noise emissions measurement, lowers noise limit values and introduces **additional sound emission provisions in the EU type-approval procedure**.

A more ambitious final target for noise reduction shall be pursued. This would be achieved in **two stages**:

- the first step is a reduction of 2 dB(A) for light vehicles and 1 dB(A) for heavy vehicles and can be introduced two years after the date of publication of the present proposal;
- the second step is a reduction of 2 dB(A) for light vehicles and 2 dB(A) for heavy vehicles. It will require more development effort and a more drastic set of technical measures: according to the contractor, this step could be introduced two years after the first step. The total reduction would be 4 dB(A) for light vehicles and 3 dB(A) for heavy vehicles.

The draft proposal will lay down new requirements: new test protocol, new limit values, additional sound emission provisions and **minimum noise for electric and electric-hybrid vehicles**. It is proposed to amend the noise legislation with an Annex harmonising the performance of 'Approaching Vehicle Audible Systems' if they are fitted to a vehicle. The fitting of such systems however shall be voluntary and remain an option under the discretion of the vehicle manufacturers.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: this proposal has no implication for the EU budget.

DELEGATED ACTS: the proposal contains provisions empowering the Commission to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.