Noise pollution: future policy. Green paper

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OBJECTIVE: the Commission's Green Paper is the first step in the development of a programme of action against noise and aims to stimulate public discussion on the future approach to policy on noise reduction. SUBSTANCE: one of the main aims of the Green Paper is to give noise abatement a higher place in terms of legislative priorities: it has been estimated that about 20% of the Union's population or almost 80 million people, suffer from noise levels that experts consider to be unacceptable. The document gives a general picture of the noise situation, reviews Community and national action taken to date and outlines the framework of action covering the improvement of information and its comparability and future options for the reduction of noise from different sources. The future measures envisaged by the Commission are as follows: - general noise: adoption of a directive harmonizing noise exposure assessment methods and organizing the exchange of information followed at a second stage by a document setting target values and requiring the adoption of the measures needed to achieve them; - road traffic: the programme for the reduction of road traffic noise would deal in its second phase with tyre noise. It will study the possibility of integrating noise costs into tax instruments, modifying the Community texts on technical control of vehicles and the possibilities for financial support for the use of low-noise surfaces; - railway noise: assessment of the feasibility of limiting emissions through legislation and of negotiation with the railway industry of agreements setting target values or establishing economic mechanisms such as variable track charges; - air transport: greater stringency in setting emission values, use of economic instruments to encourage the development and use of lower noise aircraft and encouragement of local measures such as land use planning; - machinery: simplification of legislation restricting emissions from outdoor machinery and preparation of a framework directive requiring all equipment to bear a label specifying its noise emission level.