

MEPs: Vote YES for a Quieter Europe

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Traffic noise is the second biggest environmental factor affecting Europe's health after air pollution. Almost half of EU citizens are regularly exposed to road traffic noise over the level that the World Health Organisation (WHO) considers to pose a serious risk to health.¹ Noise pollution has been linked to 50,000 fatal heart attacks every year in Europe.² According to a recent Eurobarometer, close to half of us believe noise affects our health "to a large extent".³

There's an easy and cost-effective solution to tackling urban noise – making vehicles quieter.⁴ Achieving the limits recommended by the Environment Committee would only cost around €500 per truck.⁵ For cars, many measures required to make cars more efficient and lower their CO2 emissions also make them quieter.⁶ Around a quarter of cars and a third of trucks tested over the past five years already meet the levels proposed by the Committee.⁷

Cutting vehicle noise levels by just 3 decibels has an equivalent noise-reduction effect to halving the level of traffic on the road; and the benefits to health and quality of life are more than 30 times their costs.⁸ Making vehicles quieter is also the most cost-effective way of reducing urban noise. Stricter vehicle noise standards will cost just €15 per person/year compared to €1,800 per person affected/year for building noise barriers.⁹

With next week's vote on the first update of EU vehicle noise standards in 20 years, Members of the European Parliament have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not only significantly improve our quality of life, but also decrease the strain on the budgets of our local authorities, who have to pay for costly noise management measures. The Environment Committee has delayed the introduction of new noise limits for vehicles and in some areas weakened the European Commission's proposal. Whilst this is unfortunate, the Committee's report does reflect a true political compromise.

We urge you to reject any further weakening amendments to Annex III, proposed by the Rapporteur (MEP Ouzky). We call on you to support a quieter, healthier Europe and vote in favour of the ENVI committee's report next Tuesday, February 5th.

¹ WHO (2011): <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-publish/abstracts/burden-of-disease-from-environmental-noise.-quantification-of-healthy-life-years-lost-in-europe>

² T&E Report (2008): <http://www.transportenvironment.org/publications/can-you-hear-us-why-it-finally-time-eu-tackle-problem-traffic-noise>

³ Eurobarometer survey (2010): http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_347_en.pdf

⁴ T&E Position paper (2012):

http://www.transportenvironment.org/sites/te/files/media/2012%2004_TE%20Position%20Paper%20New%20EU%20Vehicles%20Noise%20Limits_2pg.pdf

⁵ TNO (2012) Reduction of vehicle noise emission – Technological potential and impacts:

<http://www.transportenvironment.org/publications/reduction-vehicle-noise-emissions-technological-potential-and-impacts-0>

⁶ TNO (2012): <http://www.transportenvironment.org/publications/road-vehicle-noise-versus-fuel-consumption-and-pollutants-emissions>

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⁸ TNO (2012) Reduction of vehicle noise emission – Technological potential and impacts:

<http://www.transportenvironment.org/publications/reduction-vehicle-noise-emissions-technological-potential-and-impacts-0>

⁹ CEDR report

Signed by:

Jos Dings, Director, Transport & Environment (T&E)

Henk Wolfert, City of Rotterdam, chair of EUROCITIES Working Group Noise

Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Génon K. Jensen, Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

About the organisations:

- *The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)*, a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union;
- *The European Environmental Bureau (EEB)*, a federation of over 140 environmental citizens' organisations based in all 27 European Union's Member States;
- *Transport & Environment (T&E)*, the leading NGO voice on smarter and greener transport policies at the EU level in Brussels;
- *Eurocities*, the network of more than 140 large cities in over 30 European countries.