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Noise pollution in the EU

Noise pollution is linked to a range of **health problems**, yet the number of Europeans exposed to high levels of noise is on the rise. Noise also has **harmful impacts on wildlife**. EU Member States are required to map noise levels in large towns and cities, roads, railways and airports, and to come up with plans to tackle the problem.



Noise from traffic, industry and recreational activities is a **growing problem**. Road traffic is a leading source in towns and cities – each day nearly **70 million Europeans** in towns and cities **are exposed to noise levels in excess of 55 decibels** just from traffic. According to the World Health Organisation, long-term exposure to such levels can trigger elevated blood pressure and heart attacks.

Around **50 million people** living in urban areas **suffer from excessively high levels** of traffic **noise** at night, and for 20 million of them night-time traffic noise actually has a damaging effect on health.

The **biggest problem is loss of sleep**. The World Health Organisation recommends that for a good night's sleep, continuous background noise should stay below 30 decibels and individual noises should not exceed 45 decibels.

Other issues include hearing problems such as tinnitus, mental health problems and stress.

It can also affect performance at work and cause children problems with schoolwork.

Birds and animals also suffer. While some creatures are able to adapt to an urban existence, there is concern that noise pollution may drive some away from their usual breeding and feeding sites.

EU laws oblige authorities to inform the public about the impacts of noise pollution and **consult them on the measures** they are planning **to tackle noise pollution**. That way, citizens can see how noise management measures are bringing real improvements, and approach their elected representatives if necessary.