

Is there a necessity for noise caused by motor bikes?

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Introduction

In Germany, in the east of Belgium, northeast of the Netherlands, the Eifel is situated, a mountainous region offering large forests liked by the Germans and also the Dutch as a recreational area. A network of inviting tracking paths leads the walkers across the country. Off the beaten tracks the acoustical environment is dominated by natural sounds: birds are twittering, there is some crackling in the undergrowth, leaves are moving in the wind, in short, there is just silence which we urgently need in our world of noise and stress.

Suddenly comes up an unexpected technical noise. It may sound as a helicopter for several minutes. Or it may sound like a chain saw at full power. Both noise sources stem from motor bikes driving on roads just several kilometres away. There is no other traffic noise at all. As a matter of fact, the walker comes closer to the road he recognizes the motor bikes first. It is striking as we all know that there are also motor bikes which are not louder than passenger cars. This shows that it is possible to construct and drive such "silent" motor bikes. Therefore I cannot accept why some few motor bikes obviously cause such a noise carpet off the roads and thus disturb citizens who are looking for recreation and want to enjoy nature and silence. People who just want to relax normally enjoy nature such as gentle meadows and hills, black forests but reject any kind of noise disturbance which unwillingly attracts attention. In these moments the noise disturbance almost destroys their wish to relax. The soundscape (the acoustical environment) does not fit in the landscape (the optical environment). This leads to some irritation caused by such a disturbance.

The EC-environmental noise directive No. 2002/49/EC [1] points out in two passages that "silent areas" have to be protected. This part of the directive is not sufficiently respected in all member countries while preparing the noise action plans. It is not understandable why some few motor bikers, legally or not, annoy and hinder the recreation process of hundreds of people!

Suggestions

Many motor bikers very often drive in a reckless way; they practice high speed and cut corners. That is why the police in the Eifel region control the biker's speed regularly. In the course of these controls they also should measure the sound emission of the motor bikes and should sort out engines which exceed the legal noise limits. According to German laws a manipulated muffler for example annuls the licence. The police can forbid the continuation of the ride. I think, in all European countries it is not allowed to operate vehicles in public without a valid licence.

Police needs therefore a simple close-field measurement technique which may quickly detect machines exceeding the

noise limits. Such a method must be practicable in a field situation. It is necessary that a close field noise emission value as laid down in the EC-directive 2002/24/EC [2] as well as the ISO-pass-by noise value also must be recorded in the vehicle registration. The close-field value must be checked by the police. Exceeding the value must lead to severe consequences, for example an immediate prohibition, so that all manipulations on the motor bike which exceed the loudness become unattractive.

The necessary sound level meters with an integrated tachometer are available on the market. The police especially in the recreation areas who control the speed and the safety of the bikes should have and use such instruments. Of course, they must be instructed how to handle these instruments. The costs for both, purchase and instruction should be financed and counterbalanced by punishments, I am very sure!

Outlook

The examination of the today's high noise limits regarding to motor bikes and a prohibition of exceeding vehicles is one possibility of reducing noise in short time because the loudest motor bikes will disappear soon. As a long term measure the today's noise limits for motor bikes must be reduced in the same way as it was done in the case of passenger cars and trucks. Reducing the limits can only be regulated on a European basis because all permissions and licences are valid in all EC member states. On the other hand there is a strong lobby of bikers in all countries but why don't we also form an equal efficient lobby or pressure group working at the European parliament in order to defend the interests of the majority of the citizens?

In Germany one new section of the DEGA, called ALD (Arbeitsring Lärm in der DEGA) is just under foundation. Its aim is to concentrate all German activities in one organization to help citizens in order to minimize noise. On a European level we also need to have such a strong organization which does the necessary lobby work for the sake of a quieter Europe and the protection of the quiet areas. There also was an organization called AICB (Association Internationale contre le bruit) but that organization has not been active enough for the last 10 years. It may be possible to revitalize that organization again.

On the occasion of the next Noise Awareness Day, on April 29th 2009, in Düsseldorf, Graf-Adolf-Straße 102, the DEGA (German Acoustical Society) presents a panel discussion on motor bike noise and the political, technical and administrative possibilities to reduce that noise, particularly in silent areas. Everybody is cordially invited to join in this discussion!

You can see that the aim of my paper is to inaugurate a discussion on these topic in order to establish the necessary lobby work at national and European parliaments.

[2] Directive 2002/24/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 March 2002 relating to the type-approval of two or three-wheel motor vehicles and repealing Council Directive 92/61/EEC

References

[1] Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2002 relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise - Declaration by the Commission in the Conciliation Committee on the Directive relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise