



Doc. 11551

31 March 2008

Noise and light pollution: serious risks for the environment

Motion for a recommendation¹

tabled by Mr Jean HUSS and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

People often tend to overlook the fact that noise and light can also be major factors in pollution.

Noise pollution includes noise from various sources with consequences ranging from passing annoyance to serious repercussions on ecosystems and people's quality of life.

There are many causes of noise pollution: mobile mechanical sources (in particular, motor vehicles and aircraft); intermittent mechanical sources (machines, factories, etc.); works, building sites and other sites, whether temporary or lasting (quarries); public events and demonstrations (which may be one-off or, occasionally, ongoing); parties, fireworks, festivals, concerts and sports stadia; animal sources (dogs barking, farms, animal shelters, etc.); neighbours (poor sound insulation in buildings, lawnmowers, children, alarms going off for no reason); personal stereos and mobile telephones on public transport, and so on.

Noise pollution has a variety of consequences for ecosystems and animal species, ranging from depopulation resulting from migration to increased mortality. Noise is often an ecological barrier which, although intangible, creates areas that are unsuited to the lifestyles of numerous species or are simply not conducive to their moving about and/or reproducing. For example, studies carried out along motorways in Britain have shown that songbirds are gradually dying out over a band some two to four kilometres wide.

Noise pollution seems to be stabilising in the rich countries, but it is growing fast in developing countries. It is a factor that disturbs species and affects at least 70% of

urban green spaces and private gardens, as well as the natural areas bordering main roads.

Light pollution is the harmful impact of artificial night-time lighting on fauna, flora and ecosystems and may, in certain cases, have damaging effects on human health.

Migrating birds, for example, are disoriented by light haloes and collide with building facades as a result. It must also be borne in mind that public lighting accounts for 47% of municipalities' electricity consumption, representing an enormous waste of energy.

The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers invites the governments of Council of Europe member states to endeavour to agree on a common approach to combating the harmful effects of noise and light pollution on the environment and people's quality of life, in particular by:

- determining noise and light pollution levels by means of standard evaluation methods;
- informing the public about noise pollution and its effects on the environment;

1. Referred to the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, for report at the Standing Committee: Reference No. 3439 (18th Sitting, 18 April 2008).



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- adopting action plans to prevent and, where necessary, reduce noise pollution, particularly in cities, along main roads and near major airports;
- taking necessary steps to regulate the use of night-time lighting.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*²:

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2. EDG: European Democrat Group
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