

Occupational noise in Europe

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<http://osha.europa.eu>

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Aim of the Agency:

- **To help improve working conditions in the European Union by providing technical scientific and economic information to people involved in safety and health at work**

Achieved by:

- **Network development – building the links**
- **Information projects and services – developing and communicating knowledge**

The European Agency (2)

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- **Created in 1996, governed by a tripartite board**
- **Annual work programme linked to community strategy**
- **Jukka Takala, Director**
- **Main work areas:**
 - Identification of emerging risks (information for researchers and policy makers)
 - Provision of practical information for prevention to complement MS material
 - Awareness raising on OSH issues

Occupational noise situation in Europe

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- **30% of workers report being exposed to loud noise at least a quarter of the time**
- **Workers in “blue collar” occupations report greater exposure to noise**
- **Twice as many men report exposure to loud noise than women**

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 4th
European Working Conditions Survey, 2007

Occupations "at risk"

- **Craft workers**
- **Machine operators**
- **Agricultural workers**
- **Armed forces**
- **Elementary occupations**

Sectors of concern

- **Construction**
- **Agriculture**
- **Manufacturing**

- **In EU alone, the number of people with hearing loss is more than 55 million.**
- **7% of workers report that work affects their health in the form of hearing disorders**
- **Cost of hearing loss from noise represents about 10% of total compensation costs for occupational diseases**

European Agency *Noise in Figures 2005*

- **Estimates for cost of untreated hearing loss to Europe range from EUR 78 - 92 bn**
- **Difficult to estimate cost of noise at work, due to noise being causal factor in many issues (e.g. voice loss, accidents) and also many costs are hidden**
- **Cost of all work-related ill-health has been estimated to be from 2.6% of GNP**

N.B. Treat estimates with caution

The cost of harm from noise at work affects us all:

- **The worker can suffer loss of earnings as well as loss of health**
- **The employer can suffer losses (directly and indirectly)**
- **The state loses, through increased social security and health costs**

Non-auditory effects of noise

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- **Noise is not just about hearing loss and other hearing damage**
- **Noise can be a causal factor in:**
 - Work accidents (e.g. through failure to hear warning systems)
 - Voice loss (by interfering with spoken communication)
 - Work-related stress (directly or indirectly)

European Agency *Noise in Figures 2005*
European Agency *Reducing the risks from occupational noise 2005*

Emerging risks relating to noise

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- **Noise exposure due to new technologies and work organisation (e.g. “acoustic shock”)**
- **Exposure to noise and other hazards (e.g. ototoxic substances, vibration)**
- **Noise exposure in classrooms**
- **Noise impeding communication**
- **Noise below exposure values causing fatigue and other psychosocial effects**
- **Noise during pregnancy**

European Agency *Expert forecast on emerging physical risks related to occupational safety and health 2005*

The legislative framework

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A legislative structure exists - with directives setting minimum requirements

- **891/391/EEC framework directive**
- **2003/10/EC noise directive**
- **Other legislation exists that may be relevant (e.g. "supply" directives, PPE directives, young or pregnant workers)**

Noise should not be seen in isolation in terms of hazard and prevention

- **In, the Agency ran a “European Week” campaign entitled “Stop that Noise”**
- **Goal was to :**
 - Raise awareness of noise hazard and
 - Inform that solutions are available and a
 - New directive was coming into force
- **Campaign had:**
 - 14,000 participants at EW05 events
 - 465,000 publications distributed in 20 languages
 - 380,000 visits to campaign web site

➤ **Agency runs award scheme for innovative interventions in the EW campaign. Winners on noise included:**

- Training for musicians (UK)
- A new lower-noise concrete manufacturing process (France)
- Noise reduction in a weapons testing environment (Greece)
- Designing in noise reduction in the construction of a brewery (Finland)
- Reducing noise in education (Denmark)

- **At its web site, Agency has a range of material on noise issues, including:**
 - Fact sheets (20 languages)
 - 3 Reports (En + summary in 20 languages)
 - Other publications (e.g. magazine, e-facts)
 - Web feature linking to key information sources from around Europe in all languages

All material free to download from
<http://osha.europa.eu>

Ongoing Agency work on noise issues

- **Report on noise in the entertainment sector**
- **Identification of emerging physical and psychosocial risks, including noise**
- **Healthy Workplace initiative,**
 - Awareness raising campaign focused on NMS on risk assessment, including noise

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