

Complaints about environmental noise and analysis of the situation in 2009/2010

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Presentation.

In Estonia, noise situations are regulated by the following documents:

- first of all, acts of law (Ambient Air Protection Act and Minister of Social affairs Regulation No. 42),
- various action plans (Tallinn Strategic Noise Map 2008, City of Tallinn Ambient Air Environmental Noise Reduction Action Plan)
- European Parliament and Council Directive 2002/49/EC

Complaints should be resolved primarily pursuant to legislation. I point out the Ambient Air Protection Act and the Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 42 *”Standard levels of noise in living and recreation areas, dwellings and communal buildings and methods of noise level measurement”*; in reality, however, one needs to operate using a variety of acts of law enacted in Estonia.

Four major areas of complaints have been identified: technological equipment noise, traffic noise, noise arising from commercial and manufacturing activities, and other noise sources, which have come to mean mostly noise from entertainment establishments. In either year, the majority of the complaints submitted have been invariably about noise from technological equipment. The main issue has been heat pumps and ventilation devices facing an adjoining dwelling. The second recognisable issue regarding technological equipment noise has been central heating pumps installed in apartment buildings, which pose problems to first-floor residents in particular. Complaints about traffic noise and noise arising from commercial and manufacturing activities have come relatively close behind in the comparison of the two years while the category “Other” has seen a brisk rise. This has been due first of all to an increase in complaints submitted against entertainment establishments.

Noise Complaints	Year 2009	Year 2010
Technological equipment	21	15
Traffic	10	6
Commercial and manufacturing activities	8	12
Other	9	11

In general, the total of complaints was greater in 2009 (except for the “Other” category) than this year; however, the results should be regarded in view of the fact that the 2010 complaints statistics have been compiled up until the month of September.

There are various possibilities of noise complaints being resolved by the noisemaker or a third party in order to alleviate an existing annoying noise situation or avert a future one.

As to the prevention of the emergence of a noise situation, it must be noted that proper city planning is the most efficient means of preventing the emergence of an annoying noise situation. Local governments need to observe the existing situation in initiating various plans to exclude conflicts (for instance, not allow the construction of

residential buildings near big roads or manufacturing buildings in residential areas, etc.)

Next, I present a list of measures to be observed in alleviating an existing noise situation:

Technological equipment	Traffic	Commercial and manufacturing	Other
Barriers, regimes	City planning	City planning	Antinoise building measures
Use of accessories (noise-absorbing caps, etc.)	Noise barriers	Barriers	Proper timetables and delivery schedules
Antinoise building measures	Antinoise building measures	Antinoise building measures	City planning
		Proper timetables and delivery schedules	

The last chapter provides for active discussion, where I propose some solutions to noise complaints backed up by examples from real life.

Summary

From a comparison of the number of noise complaints in the two years, it can be concluded that the situation is relatively similar. Complaints have been submitted in similar numbers and the problematic areas have been the same for either year. Based on the possible solutions and real-life examples identified, I can say that most of the complaints will find a positive solution.