<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject: Noise limits in rail transport</th>
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<td>The Commission has forwarded to the Member States a working document on noise reduction in rail transport, under which it would be compulsory to apply TSI Noise requirements to all wagons, including freight rolling stock used in domestic traffic. The rolling stock is already being made quieter through natural replacement: since 2007, each newly purchased wagon has met the TSI Noise requirements and is fitted with composite brake blocks. In many cases, silencing existing wagons goes far beyond the standard replacement of brake blocks and significantly increases the cost of such an operation, which leads to discriminatory treatment of the rail sector in relation to other means of transport that generate even more undesirable effects.</td>
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<td>1. Has the Commission assessed the risk of rail transport losing competitiveness against road transport? 2. Does the Commission not consider the proposed changes, involving significant financial investment, which could be used to purchase new wagons, to be in contradiction with the objectives of the 2011 white paper on EU transport policy, which envisages an increase in the competitiveness of railways compared with road transport? 3. Has the Commission carried out an analysis of the impact of any EU noise regulations on rail operators in the individual Member States?</td>
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Original language of question: PL
Rail freight noise is the most sensitive environmental problem of the railway sector and a serious nuisance for citizens living close to railway lines. There is a risk that excessive levels of rail noise can lead to uncoordinated unilateral actions by Member States. These unilateral actions could take the form of speed restrictions or bans on operating at certain times, especially at night. Such measures would likely result in bottlenecks which, in turn, would have adverse effects on European economies and the railway sector. Furthermore, restrictions may lead to a reverse modal shift from rail to road. In order to preserve the interoperability and competitiveness of the rail sector coordinated action at the European level is needed.

The Commission aims at reducing the number of people exposed to excessive rail noise focusing on reduction of rolling noise emissions from freight wagons. At the same time the competitiveness of rail freight vis-à-vis other transport modes should be maintained. This should allow avoiding noise-triggered obstacles to the growth of rail transport and to the functioning of the internal market.

For the rail competitiveness the Commission would refer the Honourable Member to the Commission’s Impact Assessment that is available on the website of Directorate General Mobility and Transport at: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/rail/environment_en.htm. This document assesses possible impacts of different policy options that had been analysed by the Commission services on the competitiveness of the rail vis-à-vis the road sector. It contains also some case studies in selected Member States.
Parliamentary questions

2 May 2016

Question for written answer to the Commission
Rule 130
Tomasz Piotr Poręba (ECR)

Subject: Noise limits in rail transport

The Commission has forwarded to the Member States a working document on noise reduction in rail transport, under which it would be compulsory to apply TSI Noise requirements to all wagons, including freight rolling stock used in domestic traffic. The rolling stock is already being made quieter naturally through standard replacement. In many cases, silencing existing wagons goes far beyond the replacement of brake blocks and increases the cost of such an operation, which leads to discriminatory treatment of the rail sector in relation to other means of transport that generate even more undesirable effects.

1. The problem of noise is defined differently in the different EU countries and is not seen everywhere as a social problem owing to the differences in the length and density of railway lines. Is the Commission taking this factor into account in its work on the regulations in this area? 2. Has the Commission examined the issue of suppliers of composite blocks by the European rail industry in terms of their diversification and competitiveness and which companies are leaders? 3. Does the Commission not consider that allocating resources (with only 20% co-funding from the limited amount available under the CEF) to replace blocks will have a negative impact on manufacturers of rolling stock?
Rail freight noise is the most sensitive environmental problem of the railway sector and a serious nuisance for citizens living close to railway lines. Even if awareness of noise pollution has been increasing in the EU over recent years, it is not equally perceived in all Member States. Health of EU citizens should be protected in function of their respective situation and not only in the Member States where this matter has become a political issue.

The information provided in the Commission’s Impact Assessment on Rail Freight Noise Reduction will be updated thanks to data provided by the European Rail Agency (ERA) in order to take into consideration dynamic changes in this transport mode and to base new legislation on the latest available data. This process will include among other things, verification of the production and maintenance capacity of the sector. Furthermore, during the consultations on the new Technical specifications for interoperability (TSI), possible exceptions to the general application of the noise limit values may be considered, including derogations for technical reasons.

Finally, the analysis set out in the impact assessment, as also in other studies, suggests that the most cost effective way to mitigate rail noise is tackling noise at its source, by retrofitting the existing freight wagons with composite brake blocks. According to that analysis, this technical solution reduces rail noise by up to 10 dB which equates to a 50% reduction in audible noise for humans, and it is also many times cheaper than any other measure, such as construction of noise barriers or purchase of new rolling stock.
Parliamentary questions

2 May 2016  
E-003675-16

Question for written answer  
to the Commission  
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1. Has the Commission assessed the risk of certain operators losing market share to other operators which have received support from Member States to acoustically upgrade their existing rolling stock? 2. Have the Commission and the ERA taken into account in the impact assessment the technological differences between freight operators and the different costs of replacing brake blocks (they are considerably more expensive in the CEE countries)? 3. Safety of rolling stock equipped with composite blocks: experience in the Scandinavian countries indicates a decline in performance in winter conditions (extended braking distance) from silent rolling stock fitted with composite blocks. Is the Commission taking into account this aspect, and the fact that with current climate anomalies winter conditions (temperatures below freezing) may occur in the majority of EU countries?

Original language of question: PL

Last updated: 18 May 2016
### Parliamentary questions

#### 28 June 2016

**Answer given by Ms Bulc on behalf of the Commission**

National schemes aimed at compensating the costs of retrofitting of noisy wagons need to satisfy EU requirements in order not to be deemed to constitute state aid within the meaning of Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, unless such support has already been approved by the Commission as individual aid or has been granted on the basis of an approved scheme or is in compliance with the Commission Block Exemption Regulation (EC) N 651/2014.

The information provided in the Commission's Impact Assessment will be updated by the European Rail Agency (ERA) in order to take into consideration dynamic changes in this transport mode and to base the legislative process on the latest available data. During the works of the Task Force established by ERA possible exceptions to the general application of the noise limit values will be considered, including derogations due to climatic or technical reasons.

Last updated: 29 June 2016