

Opening speech

Julie NOUVION, President of Bruitparif

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome,

As President of Bruitparif, noise observatory for Ile-de-France, and regional councillor for Ile-de-France, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you today to Brussels for the final event of the Harmonica project.

You have come from all over Europe (11 countries are represented) for this day of presentations of the tools developed as part of the Harmonica project.

Despite the description of "final event", this is not the end of a project but rather a starting point, where we will disseminate the work and the tools prepared, in order to allow you to take ownership of them and help to reinforce information on noise at European level.

The HARMONICA project was coordinated by Bruitparif, the noise observatory for the Île-de-France region, in partnership with Acoucity, the observatory of environmental noise for the Greater Lyons urban area.

The project leaders also enjoyed support from the members of the Eurocities network's Working Group Noise, which is represented today by Mrs Emma Deneuve and Mr Henk Wolfert, who I would like to thank for their considerable help.

The HARMONICA project (Harmonized Noise Information for Citizens and Authorities) was co-funded over 3 years and 3 months (from 1 October 2011 to 31 December 2014) by the European Commission under the LIFE program. I would like to thank the representatives of the European Commission for their presence and their confidence. Harmonica also received the support of the Regional Council of Ile-de-France, the Urban Community of Greater Lyon, represented by Mrs Julie Vallet here today, and other partners of Bruitparif and Acoucity, like the city of Paris, the RFF, the SNCF, CEREMA, IFSTTAR, and representatives of associations and members of their scientific councils who are also here today.

This project aimed to help the public and authorities take ownership of the noise issue in order to increase the effectiveness of noise reduction and prevention policies. Because, as you are aware, noise is an issue that has difficulty making itself heard, despite more and more data proving its impact on the environmental and health.

The noise produced by human activities is an environmental nuisance that is prevalent in European towns and cities, which are home to over 40% of the population of member states.

According to an opinion survey on the quality of life, conducted in 75 European towns and published by the European Commission in March 2010 (Flash Eurobaromètre), over half of respondents believe that noise is a major problem in their town. The various surveys and statistics published by different pollsters in recent years show the importance of noise as major source of degradation of the quality of life.

This situation expressed by European citizens is the result of their very high exposure to noise. Around 60% of the population that live in urban areas, which represents about 120 million Europeans, are exposed to noise pollution from transport that exceeds 55 Lden dB(A), which may have an impact on their health.

Environmental noise is indeed a serious health problem and is considered by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the second highest cause of morbidity among environmental risk factors in Europe, behind atmospheric pollution. According to a report published by the WHO and the JRC (Joint Research Centre) in April 2011, transport noise could cost member states and other western European countries over a million Healthy Life Years every year. Many studies have established a link between exposure to environmental noise and health problems such as sleep disturbance, annoyance and stress, cardiovascular risks, and learning difficulties.

Noise pollution has a heavy social and territorial impact and generates a very high financial cost. The cost of noise is caused by the social costs related to the health impact of noise (medical treatment of cardiovascular disease, sick leave, insurance costs, intangible costs related to loss of well-being, loss of concentration, tiredness, and pain and suffering for the ill and their loved ones) and by the economic repercussions of noise in terms of the devaluation of property prices, loss of attractiveness of certain sectors and loss of productivity due to the effects of noise on health. The cost of damage caused by the noise generated by road and rail traffic in the European Union was recently estimated at €40 billion, which represents around 0.4 % of the European Union's total GDP.

Faced with this situation, noise can no longer be considered inevitable, an inescapable and uncontrollable nuisance or the price of modernity. This notion, which is the reason why, for many years, noise was the "poor relation" of environmental policies, is now behind us.

The publication of European directive 2002/49/CE pertaining to the evaluation and management of environmental noise and the spontaneous emergence of noise monitoring bodies in several towns are clear indications of a sustainable approach aiming to meet the public's increasingly pressing demand to be better informed on the environmental factors responsible for the quality of life and their health.

That's why Bruitparif was created exactly 10 years ago, on the initiative of the Ile-de-France Region, in order to meet the expectations of its inhabitants for more information on noise nuisances and decision-aid tools to help guide public action.

Developing a tool to objectively characterise the noise environment on the scale of a region like Ile-de-France is a big challenge.

Indeed, the Ile-de-France region is a very vast territory. It measures 12,000 square kilometres and has 12 million inhabitants. There is an extremely dense transportation infrastructure: 40,000 km of roads, 1,800 km of railways, an airport system that is unique in Europe, with two international airports (Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Paris-Orly); a commercial airport with Paris-Le Bourget; a heliport (Paris-Issy-Les-Moulineaux); and 25 smaller airfields.

In order to meet the noise characterisation needs of this territory, Bruitparif has rolled out an effective measurement network with 45 measurement devices already, as well as innovating with a mobile laboratory in a car, the creation of so-called "sonopodes" which are urban furniture with

devices specially designed for monitoring air traffic noise, and the "Rumeur" website, which publishes noise levels in real time. The association has carried out numerous noise measurement surveys and studies around roads, airports, and places of work and leisure. In partnership with research teams it contributes to work on the health and socio-economic impact of noise. As part of the European Directive of 2002, Bruitparif supports local authorities with their regulatory obligations to publish noise maps and environmental noise action plans. A regional noise map has been made in collaboration with the public authorities. The association has also carried out numerous initiatives to raise awareness of noise issues, in particular with young people, to inform them of the hearing risks related to listening to amplified music.

Bruitparif is a collegial association which brings together around 100 players involved in fighting noise pollution at regional level: representatives of state departments, the regional and local authorities, organisations managing infrastructures, transport and industrial operators, acoustics professionals, environmental and consumer defence associations, etc.

Understanding the noise issue in order to act with the necessary efficiency as well as looking beyond Île-de-France. That's why Bruitparif wanted to work at European level as part of the European Union's LIFE Programme.

Bruitparif managed and coordinated the Life Harmonica project which has developed innovative tools to better inform the public about environmental noise and to help local authorities make the right decisions in fighting noise pollution. There are three new tools:

- The HARMONICA index, a noise pollution index developed to provide information that is easier to understand and more closely reflects the reality of noise nuisances as they are perceived by the public.
- A collaborative database of noise abatement actions carried out in European cities in order to facilitate discussions between stakeholders and boost noise prevention policies.
- An on-line platform - www.noiseineu.eu - to display the results of the Harmonica index in European cities and to share best practice.

The association was particularly closely involved in the scientific testing and design of the Harmonica index, in producing information sheets promoting noise abatement initiatives, and in producing on-line information tools (the platform for the operational calculation of the Harmonica index, collaborative database on initiatives, development of calculation algorithms, and the design, development and management of www.noiseineu.eu). Bruitparif also managed all the administrative tasks and support functions necessary for the project to run smoothly, including coordination and communication. Bruitparif's 11 employees have been particularly committed to implementing this project over the last three years.

That concludes the quick presentation of Bruitparif and its involvement in the Harmonica project.

I hope you find today's presentations and discussions interesting and enlightening.

I would like to thank the contributors who have accepted to give their point of view during the round tables that have been organised for this morning and this afternoon.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Matthew Eden, who will be the Master of Ceremonies for the day, and who was involved in the Harmonica project since he translated the Noise In EU website.

I hope that at the end of the day many of you will want to use the tools developed for the Harmonica project in your region.

Now I will pass the floor to Xavier Olny, Vice-president of Acoucity, who will present the noise observatory for Greater Lyon, which was our partner in this project.