

## INVESTIGATION OF COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS IN BUDAPEST

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### INTRODUCTION

As it is known urban inhabitants are disturbed by noise in some way. The majority of people are of the opinion that this noise belongs to the urban life and therefore they tolerate it. In some cases they cannot tolerate the noise observed in the environment any more and complain about it to the authorities.

We have no statistics concerning the amount of complaints directed to the local and the common health authorities, but in the capital there are several hundreds of such notices yearly. Our Institute receives only those complaints, which needs standard measurement by calibrated instruments or are not responded by the territorial authority. During the last 7 years we have more than 650 of such complaints.

In this lecture I'd like to inform you in poster form about the results of a survey which process the complaints of the last few years. In this survey we investigated the context between the noise source and its place (which part of the city), the assessments (the complaint is real or false) and the consequences of the authority's activity.

### DISTRIBUTION OF COMPLAINT ACCORDING TO NOISE SOURCES

Because of simplifying we divided the noise sources into groups, presented in Fig 1. The main causes of the complaints are the activity of industrial plants and private enterprises (40 %) and amusement facilities (30 %).



Complains according to noise sources

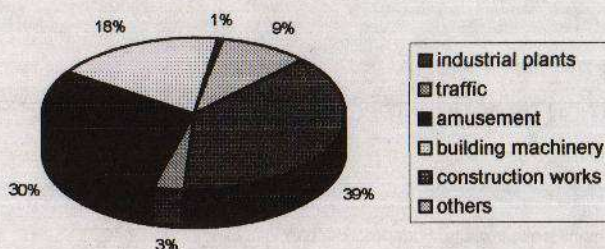


Fig. 1.

The complaint distribution according to places is characterised by the fact that the densely inhabited city areas are dominant because of private enterprises and amusement facilities located in living houses.

The main conclusion of this part of the survey are:

- only a small part of disturbed urban inhabitants make complaint to the authority
- significant part of the complaints is motivated by such noise sources which don't belong to the every-day-life of the inhabitants; or is characterised by lasting hostilities between the occupants and the noise makers
- inhabitants tolerate noises considered natural part of urban life (for example traffic and construction works) but are against such kind of new sources which they consider not convenient in living areas (e.g. night clubs in a downtown living house or car repairing plant in a suburban garage, etc).

## EVALUATION OF COMPLAINTS

The results of the evaluation of complaints are presented in Fig. 2. In 54 % of the cases which are able to determine using standard measurements and calibrated instruments (41 % of the total amount of complaint) the noise immission was higher than the permitted noise level. Concerning the noise sources of industrial plants 37 %, in the case of amusement facilities 68 % of the complaints has been real.



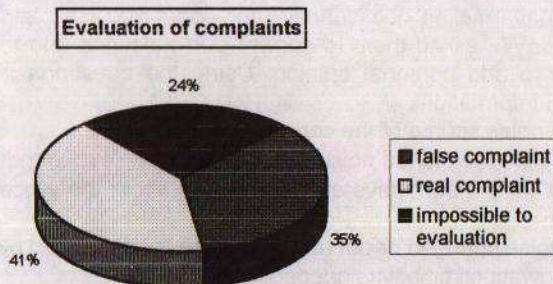


Fig. 2.

In 35 % of the total amount of complaints the noise immission was below the permitted noise level. In our opinion this percentage is too high, even knowing that in some cases the complaint is motivated by personal reasons and not by the noise. These circumstances proves the need to reconsider the requirement system of noise control. It is necessary to carry out all the needed changes and to establish much more severe noise limits (in several times we observed disturbance with characteristics below limit, first of all in the sleeping time.)

As can be seen in Fig. 2, a great part, 24 % of all complaints presents those cases when the noise is not repeatable and not measurable by instruments, consequently impossible to evaluate. To such cases belong the so-called „inconvenient human behaviour”. The number of this kind of complaints is higher in amusement facilities than in e.g. industrial plants, because in amusement places loud speech and noisy human behaviour is more natural. Actually in Hungary there is no regulation against such disturbances. The „disturbance of silence” is classified as violation of the law and falls within the competence of the police. The procedure of the police can't be considered as effective defence against this kind of noise.

### THE ACTIVITY OF THE AUTHORITY

Concerning this topic the main question has been raised: was there any improvement or not, if there were, how did it happen, if not, what is the reason.



We have mailed questionnaire for about 200 complainants of the last 3 years. We asked them to answer our questions and they had the opportunity to add personal opinion. Using the questionnaire we were trying to get informations

- does the noise source of the complaint exist or not
- how does the mentioned noise source work now (e.g. in reduced time)
- does the complainant have any information about the procedure of the authority
- did the noise changed or not (e.g. the noise is not so loud by now)
- if it did how much time was needed for that.

Analysing the answers we stated that in 62 % of these complaints still remained and only 38 % indicated closed cases or solved problems. In 61 % of cases already solved, the reason of the result is the ceasing of the source. We don't know that the cause of the noise source disappearance was the activity of the authority or the bankruptcy of noise maker. In 39 % the reducing of noise has been achieved by technical means.

Using the questionnaire we could registrate the fact of any kind of authority's activity. 68 % of the real complaints are the cases when the inhabitants had information about the activity of the authority.

Detailed answers have come mostly from those people who were unsatisfied with the authority's work (may be this can be explained so that the noise remained below the permitted level and the authority had nothing to do).

## **CONCLUSION**

Occupants are disturbed first of all by those noise sources which are not connected with their every-day-life. Complaints usually comes from the centre of the city where hostility belongs to the human relation.

Investigating the evaluation of complaints we stated that the requirements concerning the noise level inside the building is not satisfactory for the occupants' quiet life. There are cases when the complain is subjectively real, it is disturbing, but the noise level doesn't exceed the limit. These case are to be regulated. Improvement in this situation could come after the elaboration of the new requirement system.

In existing cases satisfactory results can be achieved by eliminating the noise sources, so the best way to prevent the complaints is the policy when noisy facilities are permitted to be established in the areas with no danger of disturbance.