

April 4th, 2021

Dorota Jarosińska
Programme Manager, Living and Working Environments
WHO European Centre for Environment and Health
WHO Regional Office for Europe
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
D-53113 Bonn, Germany

Dear Dorota Jarosińska,

We are teachers at Chapela Secondary School, located in a small town in the northwest of Galicia in Spain. The Atlantic Highway passes very close to our school and Audasa, concessionaire of the already said Highway, concludes in a 2012 report that the on-ramp to the AP-9 in Teis, the one which is next to our school, is “the most exposed area” of the entire Atlantic Highway to noise pollution. In the aforementioned report, the passage of 53,000 cars per day was calculated, 3,300 vehicles per hour in the morning hours. The intense noise endured by the homes near the AP-9 in Chapela and Teis, consisting of only 3,8 kilometers, is due to three key factors: the intense traffic in the area, the population density and the fact that the road passes at the same level as the urban nucleus. All of this without taking into account the atmospheric pollution produced.

In 2016, the highway was expanded. This resulted in closer proximity to the population center, a higher volume of cars and higher speeds, which of course contributed to raising the volume of noise. That same year, AUDASA committed to the installation of acoustic screens that would help reduce noise.

As a general rule, the so-called “acoustic discomfort” band is established between 55 and 65 decibels (dB). Royal Decree 1367/2007 sets maximum sound intensity at 55 dB for the health, educational and cultural sectors, 60 dB for residential use, and 65 dB as the maximum tolerance limit for ambient noise.

The Health Center and Chapela High School bear up to 65 dB and more. According to the study commissioned five years ago by the residents of Chapela, there are 145 homes that hold between 65 and 70 dB, another 93 up to 75 dB and 39 exceed that average. Around 1,100 people live in the entire nearby area, not counting the entire parish of Teis, with a much larger population volume.

Despite this situation, the fact that the report has been on the concessionaire's table since 2012, that in 2016 there was a widening of the road and a commitment to place the acoustic screens, and that the World Health Organization itself -much stricter when setting the maximums- has warned of the risk of living with more than 65 dB, Audasa has not yet installed acoustic screens to stop noise pollution in the area. Neither has the public administration just given a solution to the problem after so many years.

The AP-9 is 40 years old and it has hardly undergone improvement investments since its inauguration. This lack of investment by Audasa contrasts with the intense traffic density of the AP-9 whose highway tolls are, surprisingly, among the most expensive in Spain.

The demand for placement of these acoustic screens is already a historical claim from Chapela High School. During these 30 years we have been requesting, together with the neighbors of our parish, the installation of this means of acoustic protection through demonstrations, road closures, letters, meetings, etc. This year, the need to have the windows open while teaching due to the application of the COVID-19 protocol worsens the problem. Students and teachers endure constant noise day by day that causes stress, fatigue, irritability, hearing loss, etc.

This year we have started another mobilization to make our problem known. Neither the educational nor health administrations have contacted us in order to provide a solution to this critical issue. At this point, we humbly ask for your prompt intervention hoping that your involvement brings this crisis to an end.

Thanking you in advance and looking forward to hearing from you,



Prof. Miguel Pérez-Lorenzo
Chapela High School Principal

