

Pump down the volume, EU to tell MP3 makers

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An Apple iPod plays an iPod commercial at an Apple Store July 2009 in San Francisco, California. Tens of millions of people will be forced to listen to portable music at permanently reduced volume under European Commission proposals to be unveiled next week.

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The plans, trailed ahead of talks between Consumer Commissioner Meglena Kuneva and gadget manufacturers on Monday, are aimed at

reducing health hazards but also nuisance complaints.

Brussels says the dangers arising from high volumes or long periods spent wearing [headphones](#) or earplugs means developers of [MP3 players](#) including iPods and mobile phones will have to lower permitted noise output levels.

According to a report issued by an EU scientific committee in October 2008, as many as 10 percent of listeners risk permanent hearing loss by listening to [loud music](#) every day for five years.

Brussels wants the maximum decibel level to be reduced from 100 to 80 decibels, with all new music players built to the new standards.

A normal conversation is held at around 60 decibels, according to medical charts, with a loud rock concert measured at about 115 decibels.

Kuneva has previously expressed her fears over "irreversible degradation" in the hearing of today's youth.

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