

PRESS RELEASE

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SWOV study into the feasibility of fewer than 500 road deaths in 2020

SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research commenced a study into the question of how the annual number of road deaths can be reduced to fewer than 500 in 2020. This is sharper than the original target of 580 fatalities. This announcement was made by SWOV's Managing Director Fred Wegman at the Dutch National Road Safety Congress 2008 which was held in Rotterdam on 24th April 2008.

The announcement is in support of the Dutch Transport Minister Camiel Eurlings who in April 2006 at the start of the World Road Safety Week stated to 'find a target of a maximum of 500 quite good, really'.

In the Netherlands, the annual number of road deaths has decreased considerably during the last decades; the Netherlands is one of the safest countries in the world. However, in the last three years the number of road deaths has roughly stabilized at approximately 800.

The Dutch government is working on a strategic vision Road Safety 2008-2020, which sets the target at a maximum of 580 road deaths in 2020. According to SWOV a sharper target of 500 or less is feasible, provided adequate measures are taken. These need not be draconian measures like an investment of billions of euros or severe limitation of mobility. SWOV expects to have completed the study in the summer of 2008.

In his speech at the Road Safety Congress Wegman stressed the importance of an integral approach of road safety. He came up with two proposals, one in the field of traffic and transport and one concerning the relation between environment and road safety. The first proposal involves including road safety more explicitly and transparently in the design process of roads and streets. Wegman expects the European parliament to adopt a guideline within too long on the safety management of main roads, which describes how a safer traffic flow can be achieved for the main road network. For the Netherlands this guideline will be worked out by the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management.

Wegman urged other road authorities like provinces, municipalities, and water boards to develop instruments to this end as well, and next to make agreements about their application. SWOV has reserved space in its research programme to make a contribution to the development of these instruments. A second initiative is the agreement between SWOV and SenterNovem to cooperate on their common topics of road safety and environment. This year the two organizations will give shape to cooperation, each from its own mission and perspective. The environment and road safety can strengthen one another, according to Wegman. Subjects of cooperation are, for example, in the fields of speed management, mobility management, and urban environmental zoning.

In addition to an integral approach and cooperation, the Sustainable Safety approach is a third pillar for successful road safety policy. This approach has been developed by SWOV, and has made a strong contribution to the successful Dutch road safety policy for more than 10 years now. In this period it has been demonstrated that investing in road safety is worthwhile. In 2002, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis calculated that the Sustainable Safety investments had a high social cost-effectiveness. Sustainable Safety measures were then financed from the Dutch natural gas profits and Wegman pleaded to do this once more in 2008.

SWOV's Managing Director mentioned two subjects that will be of considerable importance for the near future: the use of modern technology in road traffic and the cooperation of all parties for the Sustainable Safety vision. For the latter social support and decision making on and financing of a sustainably safe infrastructure is crucial. Of course specific problems like drink-driving, fatigue, young drivers and ageing will continue to demand our attention, but these will be met from a joint vision, said SWOV's Fred Wegman in his speech at the Dutch National Road Safety Congress 2008.

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About SWOV:

The Institute for Road Safety Research SWOV has been conducting fundamental and anticipatory road safety research for more than 45 years, and is the main Dutch road safety knowledge and information centre. SWOV aims at improving road safety by using research results. More information about SWOV is to be found on our website

www.swov.nl.