

Press release

Leidschendam, 16 december 2008

SUNflowerNext: A proposal to develop a composite road safety index for international comparisons

The recently published study [SUNflowerNext](#) draws the framework for a composite road safety index to compare the road safety performance and progress in different countries. Aim of a composite road safety performance index is to come to a better understanding of the road safety developments so far and to identify the possibilities to speed up further progress. The main results of the study will be presented to the European Commission on the 8th of January 2009.

Benchmarking performances can be useful and motivating in the process of improving road safety. In doing so, however, it is important to compare the right indicators in the right manner. Developing a method to achieve this was one of the aims of the SUNflowerNext study.

The SUNflower project started in 2002 with a comparison of the developments in the three countries with the best road safety record in the preceding period: Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, the so-called SUN countries. In a later phase, six countries from South and Central Europe joined to form the SUNflower+6 project. The current SUNflowerNext study was a joint effort of three research institutes: SWOV from the Netherlands, the Technion University in Israel, the British TRL and the Czech institute CDV. The SUNflowerNext project was conducted with financial support of the European Commission. The study was part of the SafetyNet project.

Towards a composite index

Countries are usually compared using road traffic fatality data related to the number of inhabitants (mortality rate) and/or the number of vehicles or kilometres travelled. Sometimes relevant road traffic behaviour is compared. However, these indicators don't present a full and integrated picture of all relevant factors. The composite road safety index of the SUNflowerNext project explicitly looks at these factors in a comprehensive way. SUNflowerNext distinguishes between outcome indicators (numbers of people killed and injured, safety performance indicators and economical costs), the quality of policy strategies, and the quality of the institutional frameworks for a high-quality implementation of road safety plans and individual measures. This gives a much more complete picture of the road safety performance of different countries and gives more insight into the areas in which countries can learn from one another.

The results of a number of test analyses showed that the performance rating of a country using this composite index differs from the performance rating which is generated by a ranking based on a single indicator, such as mortality rate, as has been customary until now. It was illustrated clearly that information about policy and its implementation is essential for understanding why a country performs well or poorly and why countries make more or less progress in casualty reduction. Furthermore, it was concluded that it is better not to compare a country with all other European countries, but to attempt grouping comparable countries and compare a country with the 'best of class' in its own group.

Towards a SUNflower index

The current analyses were performed on the basis of existing data only. To make full use of the composite road safety index, reliable and comparable data from all countries are required. It is recommended to have this data collected based on agreed definitions and data collection methods.

The SUNflowerNext study recommends a set-up for benchmarking the safety performance of countries, using a composite road safety performance index (*the SUNflower index*) and publishing this index annually to create a firm basis for further road safety improvements in the EU Member States.

+++++

A note for the editor

For more information, please contact SWOV, Information and Communication Department:
Han Tonnon, Tel. + 31 70 317 3315, han.tonnon@swov.nl
Miranda Brandsen, Tel. +31 70 317 33 18, miranda.brandsen@swov.nl.

The full report entitled *SUNflowerNext: Towards a composite road safety performance index* can be downloaded (pdf) [here](#)

About SWOV

The Dutch SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research aims to make a contribution to promoting road safety by means of knowledge from scientific research. SWOV is an independent, scientific institute. SWOV's knowledge is public information and is made available to anyone who is professionally involved in traffic and road safety in the Netherlands and abroad.

