



Change in policy required to reduce serious road injuries

Worldwide, every year about 50 million people are seriously injured in traffic crashes, the majority in developing countries. Their number is expected to increase even further in years to come. Also in the Netherlands the number of seriously injured road casualties increased: from 15,400 in 2006 to 19,100 in 2010. This is remarkable, because the number of road fatalities showed a decrease during the same period. Forcing back the number of serious road injuries is therefore the new road safety challenge. With its 50th anniversary congress *Greater Emphasis on Road Traffic Injuries* held on 17 October in Amsterdam, SWOV wanted to highlight this issue.

The increasing number of serious road injuries as opposed to the declining number of road fatalities is an international problem. This transpired from the presentations of nearly all speakers from many countries at the congress. They observed this trend, not only in their own countries, but also – according to the international statistics – in many other countries. This conflicting development indicates that the policy aimed at reducing the number of road fatalities that has been used for years, does not automatically result in the prevention of serious road injuries.

Different, or supplementary policy is therefore required which focuses on a different type of road crashes. To determine how this policy

should be modelled, an important international problem should first be solved: the reliable crash data that is lacking.

Presently, information about serious road injuries is not kept up to date or is incomplete, there are no unambiguous definitions of injuries, data files of police, hospitals, and others have not been linked or cannot be linked. This is one of the reasons that we have too little insight into the long term impact of serious road injury, both in medical and in social respect, and of the social costs.

More reliable and more complete data

The improvement of crash and casualty data requires a higher priority for this subject among

politicians, policy makers, and researchers. ‘Only reliable data can help us to find out which different policy is necessary’, according to SWOV’s managing director Fred Wegman.

Not only a wide variety of content expert speakers inspired the guests, there was also a selection of speakers who are not professionally employed with road safety, but who are actively committed to road safety all the same. Actress and ambassador of the Make Roads Safe campaign Michelle Yeoh presented a short version of her documentary *Turning Points* and FIA president Jean Todt discussed which steps the car industry has made concerning road safety.



Michelle Yeoh

Dutch Paralympic athlete Ronald Hertog won a bronze medal at the javelin event at the 2012 Paralympics in London, nine years after he was seriously injured in a road crash. He shared his experiences from that day on with those present. The Dutch Minister of Infrastructure and the Environment Melanie Schultz van Haegen and member of the Dutch Royal House and professor Risk Management Pieter van Vollenhoven both contributed with a video message.

Professor Jan van Dijk's contribution showed the complexity of obtaining reliable data, using them to obtain the correct picture, and the difficulty in finding reliable alternative data sources. Van Dijk, victimologist at Tilburg University, used his expertise to indicate both the possibilities and the stumbling blocks in relation with data and discussed the alternatives that can be used to obtain data.



The video messages and the presentations are available on the SWOV website:
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