

THE NETHERLANDS GOVERNMENT STATUS REPORT

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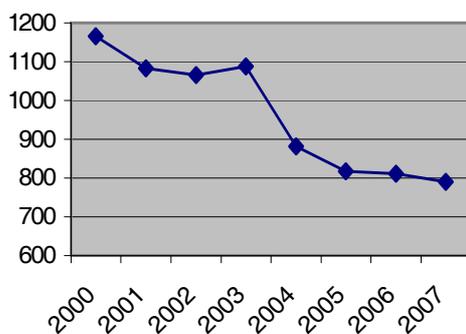
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ABSTRACT

Last year The Netherlands have adopted a new Road Safety Strategy. Where we continue the successful current policy, we add a focus on specific groups of road users that are still at risk or risky in traffic. In this way we expect to decrease the number of annual road casualties to not more than 500 in 2020.

INTRODUCTION

Never change a winning concept. That certainly holds true for road safety policy in the Netherlands. The number of road casualties is dropping steadily and the way our country is dealing with this issue is being followed all over the world. Therefore, we will be continuing to use public awareness campaigns, enforcement, infrastructure adaptations and new vehicle technology to make the ambitions for 2020 from the Mobility Policy Document a reality: no more than 500 deaths and 12,250 injuries in traffic, a drop of over 25% compared to 2007. But, however successful we may be, we will not achieve such a significant decrease without any effort.



Figuur 1. Dutch road casualties in 2000-2007

Accordingly, the Ministry worked with many partners over the last year to draw up the Road Safety Strategy 2008-2020. These partners included not only other government bodies and enforcement authorities, but also knowledge institutes and civil society organisations. Calling on all those parties is something that we view as an important task for the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. We want to organise a process and initiate measures in order to work together to continue decreasing the number of road casualties, because road safety is everyone's responsibility.

The most important question here is how far the measures should go and at what cost. In road safety strategy, we have chosen in favour of the principles of proportionality, maintaining freedom of mobility and the existing financial frameworks. Within these frameworks, more drastic measures such as raising the motor scooter age or imposing a ban on night-time driving are neither appropriate nor necessary.

TRENDS

Positive trends

Analysis of the accident figures revealed many positive facts and developments. A few of the relevant developments in the Netherlands include the following:

- The decrease in the number of accidents occurs in nearly all age groups and nearly all vehicles;
- The chance of a fatal accident per one thousand million vehicle kilometres was nearly halved between 1997 and 2006 (from 11 to 6.1);
- The risk of accidents among the elderly also dropped between 1994 and 2004;
- The number of fatalities among pedestrians dropped in the years leading up to 2004, especially among children;
- Despite an increase in traffic intensity, the number of road fatalities dropped on 50 km and 80 km roads in particular (primarily due to measures introduced in infrastructure);
- Road users are better equipped for their driving responsibilities, primarily through improved driving skills in combination with good enforcement;
- The number of motorcyclists who died in traffic accidents has dropped sharply.

Negative developments

These successes require some qualification though. In some areas, accident figures appear to be stabilising or even increasing, or the risk of accidents remains relatively high. Facts and developments giving reason for concern include the following:

- The number of fatal accidents among the vulnerable groups of cyclists and the elderly increased in 2006, particularly among older cyclists;

- Single-person accidents involving cyclists are increasing;
- Motor scooters and mopeds are seven times more likely to have an accident than bicycles; they represent a small percentage of total transport figures, but contribute to a considerable percentage of the number of fatalities and injuries requiring hospitalisation;
- Compared to experienced drivers, drivers aged 18 to 24 are nearly three times as likely to have a fatal accident;
- Motorcyclists remain a high-risk group: they are 24 times more likely to have a fatal accident than automobile drivers;
- Alcohol, drugs and medication continue to be an important factor in fatal accidents;
- Speeding and unsafe traffic situations go hand in hand;
- Roads that have a speed limit of 50 or 80 km continue to be the most important accident-prone roads;
- The number of road fatalities due to an accident with a lorry or delivery van is decreasing less quickly than the total number of road fatalities. As a result, their relative involvement is increasing.

FUTURE RESEARCH IN FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE SAFETY PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Innovative research ideas and emphasis

Road safety policy for 2008-2020 is based on the three cornerstones that made this policy successful over the past years: **cooperation, an integral approach** and **‘Sustainable Safety’**. We will be pursuing cooperation in the road safety sector and beyond. For example, we will be joining forces with the school systems for educational activities and with the police, the Ministry of Justice and the public prosecutor’s office for enforcement, including cooperation within the local ‘triangle’ of municipal, judicial and police authorities. But numerous civil society organisations and market parties also play a role in policy implementation. The integral approach emerges when road safety policy helps to realise other Cabinet targets (and vice versa) in such areas as the environment, town and country planning and neighbourhood renewal. These links to other fields of policy require that the stakeholders think outside the box more often.

Two approaches can be identified in the policies for the coming years, based on the three cornerstones.

The first approach uses **generic measures** to continue building on the success of the past years, in which good results have already been achieved.

‘Never change a winning team’, as they say in sports; similarly, we need to maintain our successful policies in road safety.

The second approach focuses on **specific areas that require targeted attention**. These focal areas were identified by analysing accident data and researching trends that may influence road safety in the coming years. The analyses clearly show a number of groups vulnerable to accidents, but also a number of groups that cause accidents. To reduce the risk of an accident for these groups, the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management will be introducing targeted measures over the coming years, to supplement the generic measures already in effect.

Policy in the coming years will be based on these three cornerstones and follow these two approaches. The ambition is for everyone, regardless of origin, age or mode of transport, to take part in traffic with the least possible risk of having an accident – so that (nearly) everyone can make it home safely.

Areas of emphasis

Analysing accident data and researching trends has yielded several specific areas of emphasis. This concerns groups of road users who deserve extra attention, both victims and perpetrators. These road users run a relatively greater risk of having an accident, or did not reflect the general decrease in accident statistics as much or at all. Some categories of roads and vehicles also need extra attention.

Some groups of road users stand out because they fall victim to accidents relatively often; this includes such vulnerable road users as cyclists, pedestrians and the elderly. Other groups catch our attention because they cause unsafe traffic situations relatively often, consciously or subconsciously. This would be the case for e.g. speed violators and people driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication. In the category of ‘deliberate and accidental causal agents’, new drivers – generally young people – continue to require our attention. In cases of deliberate repeat violations, we will be applying the ‘causer pays’ principle more frequently.

We have also designated several types of roads and vehicles as areas of emphasis. Despite every effort, the most accidents involving casualties continue to occur on roads that have 50 and 80 km speed limits. In terms of vehicles, lorries and delivery vans deserve attention, due primarily to their mass and size, which make any potential ‘collision partner’ particularly vulnerable.

We have identified the following areas of emphasis:

- Pedestrians;
- Cyclists;
- Single-person accidents;
- Children;
- The elderly;
- New drivers;
- Drivers of motor scooters, mopeds and microcars;
- Motorcyclists;
- People driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs, medication or fatigue;
- Drivers who violate the speed limit;
- 50 and 80 km roads;
- Lorries and delivery vans.

New approaches being tried

A great deal of new technology is being developed, more and more of which is hitting the market. Mobility technology is also increasingly advanced. These trends are relevant to the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management in view of the policy targets for accessibility, road safety and the environment. After all, new systems can contribute to more efficient, cleaner, safer roads.

Innovative solutions help us to realise road safety policy ambitions for the coming years. This makes innovative solutions an integral part of the range of measures. After 2010, innovative vehicle technology will play an increasingly major role, primarily because mobility is continuing to increase, while almost all the possibilities of conventional behavioural influence tactics have been exhausted.

In principle, any technology that contributes to road safety is welcome. Besides possible side effects and public support, we naturally also have to take the cost-benefit ratio into account. In context, we have to consider the fact that technical solutions sometimes have unwelcome side effects, like distracting the driver, or invite inappropriate behaviour. Some techniques also have the potential to be abused.

In our policy, we have allowed man to be the measure of all things; we primarily make room for technology that people understand, and that they are willing and able to use. And there is technology that we can use to compel 'causers' to drive appropriately.

Potential for collaborative research internationally

The international importance of road safety is apparent from the ongoing globalisation of the

topic. The Global Road Safety Week organised jointly by the UN and the WTO in April 2007 illustrated this trend. Worldwide interest arose from the concern about the costs society pays for unsafe traffic conditions and human suffering as a result of accidents. Moreover, the expectation is that the number of road casualties will continue to grow worldwide, particularly in developing countries. Road safety in developing countries is the number-one cause of death among young people aged 15 to 21.

As 'world champion of road safety', the Netherlands should act as a role model; working in concert with other countries that do well in this area, we can and should help the countries that are not doing as well.

In the Netherlands, foreign road users represent over 10% of the traffic violations. Since the opening of the inner borders in the EU and the increase in road traffic throughout Europe, the number of foreign road users in the Netherlands has been increasing.

Driving licence requirements have been equalised in the European Union by now, but not all countries train and test their drivers as thoroughly as the Netherlands. In particular, some drivers are relatively unfamiliar with the prominent role that cyclists play in Dutch traffic, which can have unfortunate consequences. We will be focusing extra attention on this aspect with public information and campaigns. Conversely, we can pay more attention to Dutch drivers abroad. By providing accurate information, we can help to prevent accidents in foreign countries.

RESEARCH ON ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

The Netherlands are currently carrying out a number of research projects on advanced technologies in vehicle safety systems:

The Field Operational Test on anti-accident systems.

The FOT will involve approximately 3,000 vehicles owned by more than 60 haulers. Five different accident prevention systems and a registration system will be tested. Vehicle movements of lorries involved in the FOT will be recorded and processed for at least four months and the Ministry of Transport expects the results in July 2009. This is the most comprehensive FOT ever conducted with accident prevention systems.

- The objectives of the FOT can be divided into three aspects:

- To reduce the number of accidents involving lorries and analyse the traffic safety effects.
- To assess the impact of large-scale implementation of accident prevention systems on traffic circulation.
- To gain insight into the effectiveness of the various systems with regards to lorry traffic safety.

The FOT will address the three most common types of accidents: rear-end collisions (ACC, HWM, FCW), side collisions (LDWA) and single-vehicle accidents (DC, ROC). A separate registration system will also be tested.

The results will be widely communicated, amongst others to the European Commission, with which contact already exists on this topic. More information can be found on the internet:

<http://www.fileproof.nl/index.php?cat=3&id=52>

Alcohol-lock demonstration trial

The Netherlands wants to reduce the number of road accidents due to alcohol use. To this end we want to build the alcohollock into cars of people sentenced for driving with more than 1.3 promille. In 2008 a trial with 80 cars was held in the Netherlands to test the alcohol-lock. It showed that the lock could be installed in all cars, was safe to use and difficult to fool. Further information can be found on the internet:

<http://www.verkeerenwaterstaat.nl/onderwerpen/rijbewijs/alcoholendrugsinhetverkeer/alcoholslot/>

Trial speed-monitoring in vans.

The last year 100 vans were equipped with a new speed-monitoring device to get practical experience, knowledge about the cost-benefits for fleet owners and the effect of these devices on road safety. The speed-monitoring device warns the driver in case of speed violation on every road type. That makes it a driving assistant for well-willing drivers. The aim was actually to prevent not-well-willing drivers from speeding. Therefore the system sends the information to the fleet owner. The conclusions are not yet available. One of the most important conclusions will be that such a system has to be 100% effort free. Drivers don't switch on such a system voluntarily. It has to be a black-box version that automatically turns on by starting the engine. Otherwise the system has to be a part of work-related processes.

Other fields of research planned for the near future.

- Research on accident causes, including single-person cycle accidents;

- Ex-post effects of measures;
- Options for supporting measures in the area of ITS for the elderly; (follow-up study)
- Analysing types of accidents on 50 and 80 km roads;
- Developing vehicle innovation monitor for Dutch vehicle fleet;
- Improving passive safety, collision compatibility and testing methods (Euro NCAP, EU legislation);
- Using trip recorder and accident data recorder;
- Drug testers;
- Measures to limit aggression in traffic (road rage);
- Limiting single-vehicle accidents;
- Better protection of bicyclists;
- Exploration of the possibilities for infrastructure-vehicle and vehicle-vehicle communication technology

PUTTING SAFETY TECHNOLOGIES TO WORK

A great deal of new technology is currently being developed, more and more of which is hitting the market. Mobility technology is also increasingly advanced. This trend is relevant to the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management in view of the policy targets for accessibility, road safety and the environment. After all, new systems can make the traffic system more efficient, cleaner and safer.

We see a clear trend towards a car filled with sensors. They make driving easier, warn the driver of risks and/or intervene on their own initiative if danger occurs. For example, Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS) and Electronic Stability Control (ESC) keep the car under control under difficult conditions, such as sudden evasive manoeuvres or braking sharply on a slick surface. By now there are also applications that help drivers control the car on an ongoing basis. This includes keeping the right distance from the vehicle ahead (ACC), stay in the same lane (LDWA) and maintain a safe speed (ACC). Technology is also taking on a more important role along the roadside, such as peak-hour lanes, ramp meters and traffic management. This development in technology will continue strongly in the coming years.

In deciding whether or not to introduce new technology, due consideration should be given to potential side effects that might distract drivers from what they are doing, such as navigation systems or on-board diagnostics. Another

development is the arrival of entertainment devices in cars, such as DVD players. If this presents a danger to road safety, it will need to receive more attention.

Public support is important. Experience shows that innovative products are generally used voluntarily at first, followed by gradually growing support. In the long term, an innovative application becomes standard usage out of habit, either on its own or in response to a statutory requirement.

CONCLUSIONS

The newly adopted Road Safety Strategy 2008-2020 will help the Netherlands to achieve its goal to further reduce road casualties. Technology plays a paramount role in making traffic safer and more reliable. Different target groups were identified which either are at high risk or demonstrate a risky behaviour. A combination of behavioural and technical measures are envisioned to reduce their accident risk.