

# Foreword

You are reading the SWOV annual report over 2010, the fourth and final year of the research programme 2007-2010. Except from a few international projects, all current projects and activities have been completed, mostly in the form of one or more publications. Consequently, a high number of publications was issued in 2010 and early 2011. In this annual report, you will find a few examples of the work carried out at SWOV in 2010; firstly, in the *Director's report*, and secondly in thirteen short articles. For a complete overview of SWOV activities in 2010 and an overview of all issued publications, I refer to SWOV report R-2011-1, electronically available (in Dutch) on the SWOV website. In addition, in this annual report you will find a brief overview of the most relevant financial and organizational aspects of SWOV in 2010.

As said above, 2010 was the last year of the four-year programme 2007-2010. Spring 2011, a special edition of SWOVschrift (in Dutch) and Research Activities (in English) was published, which reflects on the past four years focussing on the content of the programme. Looking back on the full programme period, I must conclude that much and, moreover, interesting work has been done. What stands out to me is the great diversity in type and scope of the activities: from broad and future exploring to focussing on a specific problem or question, and from quite fundamental to of immediate use on local, regional, national and even international level. Due to the scientific quality and independence of research, SWOV is seen as a leading institute nationally as well as internationally. With this, SWOV has acquired a unique position and has, based on that, made an important contribution to the promotion of road safety in the Netherlands.

In 2011, a new work programme has been started. Unlike in previous years, it has appeared impossible to come to agreements on the content of a programme for a period of more than one year with the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment – SWOV's main source of subsidies. However, SWOV keeps aiming at this, because it allows for a better scientific research programme and thus helps SWOV to contribute more to the promotion of road safety.

SWOV has received a first announcement of a coming cut in its subsidies. According to the Supervisory Board, the independence and scientific quality are the main assets and important standards for the assessment of developments at SWOV. The knowledge and skills of the institute in serving the whole area of road safety on a high-quality level has shown to be of great importance for the Netherlands. This strength of SWOV should not be lost, as there continues to be a need to strive for a decrease in the number of road casualties.

On behalf of the Supervisory Board, I would like to thank everyone inside and outside SWOV who has contributed to SWOV's work, and I would especially like to thank all SWOV employees for their efforts.



**Pieter Jan Biesheuvel**, Chairman Supervisory Board

# Director's report

## Completion of the 2007-2010 programme

The year 2010 most certainly was not the easiest year for SWOV and its employees. Firstly, we had to complete the four-year programme 2007-2010 successfully on time. Especially in the second half of the year, this led to quite a workload. Yet, with suitable pride I dare to state the result; 2010 has been a very productive year, with almost 50 SWOV reports, almost 40 articles in scientific journals, conference volumes or specialist journals, as well as almost 40 presentations at national and international meetings. Through our website, our journals SWOVschrift (in Dutch) and Research Activities (in English), and our newsletters, we have tried to keep anyone interested in road safety well-informed of our research and its findings as much as possible. Some of the studies are described further on in this annual report in the form of a brief article.

Quantity is one thing, but for a research institute such as SWOV, quality is at least as important. Although quality is a lot more difficult to measure than quantity, I conclude that we can also be satisfied on this point. Of course, some studies were more successful than others, some see more in one topic while others see more in another, and some are searching for knowledge that can be applied immediately while others mainly focus on good scientific support. It is impossible to please everyone at all times. The conclusion that we can be satisfied is therefore partly based on the 'indirect evidence' of the great number of invitations from the world of practical implementation as well as the world of science, regionally and nationally as well as internationally, for input in working parties, expert groups, think tanks, projects, congresses, reviews, et cetera.

## Preparation of the new programme

Next to finishing the current programme, in 2010 SWOV has also worked on the set-up of the next period's programme. Leading in this were the results of the formal four-yearly evaluation of SWOV, done upon instructions from the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, and the following consultations together with the ministry. In the previous programmes, SWOV was asked to focus its research especially on the somewhat further future, so-called there-and-then research. The ministry has concluded that this orientation insufficiently fits its need for concrete support of here-and-now decisions, and more specifically the further realization of the *Strategic Plan Road Safety*. In the establishment of the new programme, we identified a great number of possible topics which in our view can contribute to road safety and road safety policy. Next to the SWOV researchers, various support groups and the members of the Programme Advisory Board have played an important part. Thereupon, this survey was offered to the Directorate-General for Mobility, which made the choices for the topics to work on in 2011. We have now started to work with these topics.

## Further decrease in fatalities

Here-and-now or there-and-then, SWOV's mission was, is, and will be the improvement of road safety through knowledge derived from scientific research. SWOV's main tasks in that respect are monitoring road safety, understanding the how and why of developments up until now, and estimating future developments that can be expected. In 2010, the minister has made known that compared to the previous year, the number of fatalities had decreased once again; from 750 in 2008 to 720 in 2009. The Netherlands can be proud of this development, and it is one of the countries that stand out for road safety in the world. Yet it is true that in 2009, the number of fatalities has decreased less than in many other countries. Almost half of all fatalities are occupants of passenger cars or delivery vans, and two thirds of all fatalities occur outside of urban area. Relatively speaking – that is, relatively to the population size – many fatalities occur among young people and young adults (16-24 years)

and elderly (65+). By contrast, relatively only few fatalities occur among children (0-15 years).

### **Number of serious road injuries increases**

A point of concern is the development in the number of serious road injuries. After years of decrease, quite an increase has taken place from 2007 onwards. Unfortunately, this negative development has still been taking place over the last couple of years. Serious road injury is the term that replaced the previously used term inpatients. A person has serious road injuries if he or she was taken into hospital after a crash, and has a injury severity of at least level two on the medical injury severity scale MAIS. For various reasons, this gives a much more realistic view of the number of serious road injuries. Elsewhere in this annual report, an article that focuses on this topic is included.

### **Bicycle safety action plan**

The safety of cyclists needs some extra attention. The positive developments in many other types of transport, have not taken place for this group. For that reason, in 2010 I have appealed to those present at the National Road Safety Congress to set up an Bicycle Safety Action Plan and to work on improvement of the bicycle's situation in Dutch traffic. For SWOV this has led to a new research cluster, which as one of its first activities will work on a National Research Agenda Bicycle, together with a great number of relevant parties.

### **National Road Safety Congress 2010**

The great turnout at the abovementioned National Road Safety Congress, also known as NRSC, among other things showed that road safety can still count on much interest on all levels. This biannual congress took place in Rotterdam on 22 April 2010, having more than 450 participants. For years now, the NRSC has been organised by ANWB and SWOV and is also made possible by the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment. For the first time, the Dutch Traffic Safety Association has joined the organization. Many topics were discussed that fitted in with the theme of the day, which was: less is possible! At the congress, the minister has handed out the first national road safety award. This award will be handed out every two years with the aim to stimulate practical and inspiring initiatives on the subject of road safety. Together with the ministry, ANWB and the Dutch Traffic Safety Association, SWOV was part of a working group which prepared the award. The diversity and creativity of the submissions for the award also shows that road safety is a point of concern and therefore a point of action on all levels and in all parts of the Netherlands. The first prize went to the school cycling route project in Alblasserwaard-Vijfheerenland, part of the water authority of Rivierenland. In this project, pupils could indicate the unsafe situations on their way from school to home, after which a great number of the identified problematic locations has been adapted.

### **Advice and support groups**

In the realization of our research, once again we had great benefit from the input of many people involved outside of SWOV. We would specifically like to mention here the members of the Programme Advisory Board, chairman of which is drs. Fred Heuer, and the members of the Scientific Advisory Board, chairman of which is prof. dr. Bert van Wee. Once more, in 2010 these boards have given us advice on the research programme's focus regarding its content and its scientific focus, respectively. Next to that, the various support groups have been very actively involved in the concrete elaboration and execution of the activities. We deeply appreciate this form of cooperation and knowledge exchange and we understand this appreciation to be reciprocal. Cooperation and knowledge exchange can also be seen in the form of the exchange of researchers. The presence of Nimmi Candappa at SWOV for the largest part of 2010 is an example of this, as well as the presence of Mike Lenné for a somewhat shorter period. Both are researchers at the Australian Monash University Accident Research Center (MUARC). As another example of exchange, I myself had the honour to twice spend a few weeks in Australia within the framework of the *Thinker in Residence*

programme upon invitation of Prime Minister Mike Rann of South Australia, in order use my knowledge on the area of sustainable road safety to help realizing an innovative road safety plan for South Australia. This was an inspiring and motivating experience.

### **Looking forward to 2011**

By now we are busy working on the execution of the 2011 programme. Once again, this programme covers a great area of the broad subject of road safety: man, road, vehicle, and new technologies, where possible in combination with the environment and accessibility. Though our function as planning bureau and the research on which it is based, we keep developing our knowledge on the how and why of developments in the past and on the support for our expectations of the future. As said above, a special place is reserved for research on the safety of cyclists. Again, the research focuses not only on national policy, but also on international government bodies, and at the same time on the international market. Of course we also continue to apply ourselves to making our knowledge accessible for all those who can and wish to make use of it. Our hope is to get sufficient opportunity, financially as well as concerning the content, to continue, after 2011 as well, with our mission to contribute to the improvement of road safety by means of knowledge derived from scientific research.



**Fred Wegman, Managing Director**