



## The evaluation of traffic education programmes

**In order to optimize the quality of educational programmes, quality assurance should be a continuous area of concern. In this way, one remains alert to possible improvements that can be made. This is one of the conclusions in the recent SWOV report *The evaluation of traffic education programmes*.**

### Education programmes

A large number of traffic education programmes is available in the Netherlands. These programmes focus on a variety of subjects, like safe cycling, alcohol in traffic, moped riders, public transport, and on different target groups, like children, adolescents, novice drivers, or older road users. The Dutch Knowledge Platform Traffic and Transport has brought together all these programmes and catalogued them. This resulted in the 'Toolkit for Permanent Traffic Education: an overview of instruments that can be used for traffic education in a meaningful way. Presently the toolkit includes some eighty programmes. In principle these programmes concern all types of subjects and all target groups, but the majority of the traffic education programmes are aimed at children and adolescents. These programmes are often very much appreciated by schools, parents, and the target group itself. But what

contribution do these programmes make to road safety improvement in the Netherlands? An answer to this question requires evaluation of these programmes.

### PDCA cycle

The evaluation of traffic education programmes is part of a broader process of quality assurance: the so-called PDCA cycle (PLAN, DO, CHECK, ACT). In the development phase a programme should address road user behaviour and the target group the programme focuses on, the learning objectives and the didactic approach. The evaluation is only meaningful if this has been done well. Only then is it clear which learning objectives are to be evaluated. The evaluation itself is part of the CHECK phase.

### Research

The ultimate purpose of most traffic education

programmes is the reduction of the traffic casualties. As it is not possible to directly relate education programmes to the number of casualties, the evaluation usually considers the effects on aspects known to have a relation with road safety, such as high-risk behaviour. In order to relate a programme to, for instance, high-risk behaviour it is important to choose a suitable research design for the evaluation. Often there are alternative explanations for an effect that is found, and it is essential to exclude these. A good research design consists of a before and an after measurement in an experimental group as well as in a control group. If the evaluation has been done in the best possible way and no positive effect or only a negative effect is found, the development phase of the programme should be repeated and the programme can be adapted.

### Proposal

Because programmes are often not sufficiently evaluated, the SWOV study resulted in a proposal for an accessible method that can assist and motivate developers and executors to evaluate their programmes. The proposal is to build a database which contains clusters of questions,

composed by subject (e.g. alcohol, safe cycling) and by competence (e.g. knowledge, attitude). This can make the evaluation process easier and

can thus improve the effectiveness of an education programme.

**The following SWOV publications are available about this topic:**

Safer roads with a quality assurance system.  
Article with the SWOV Newsletter April 2011.  
SWOV, Leidschendam.

A quality assurance system for road safety in road design and road management; Materials for a manual. J. Mesken, W. Louwerson, M. van der Veen & N. Beenker (2011). R-2011-2.  
SWOV, Leidschendam. (Dutch with an English summary)

The evaluation of traffic education programmes; Recommendations for measuring the effects and a proposal for an abbreviated measuring instrument. J. Mesken. R-2011-8.  
SWOV, Leidschendam. (Dutch with an English summary)