



Road safety knowledge and policymaking

PhD research into the use of knowledge by regional and municipal authorities

To which extent is scientific knowledge about road safety used in policymaking? What are the reasons sometimes not to use this type of knowledge? How can the use of scientific knowledge by authorities be stimulated? These questions are the research questions in the PhD thesis that SWOV researcher Charlotte Bax will defend today, 14 September 2011.

Not only did Bax carry out a study of national and international literature for her PhD research, she also interviewed 12 provinces and 14 municipalities in the Netherlands about their road safety policy, about how this was developed, and to which extent scientific road safety knowledge was used.

National and regional

The research indicated that the available road safety knowledge is used on a wide scale. At the national level road safety knowledge provided by organizations like SWOV is often used in the process of drawing up policy plans. Furthermore, both at the national and the regional level the guidelines for road design, as drawn up by CROW, are used extensively.

Municipalities

As was indicated by 80% of the municipalities

that were interviewed, guidelines and manuals are also consulted by them for the implementation of road safety measures. Furthermore, they make use of knowledge about matters of interest other than road safety; often provided by neighbouring municipalities, public transport, emergency services, or citizens. Although municipalities do indeed use road safety knowledge for the design of road sections and intersections, they indicated that on 50% of the roads they allowed interests other than road safety to prevail. Examples are interests like traffic flow and accessibility, liveability and economic interests. The municipalities also remarked that they often lack knowledge about how to balance road safety and other interests in policymaking processes.

Translation

Many data, effect calculations for measures and

policy programmes are focused on national policy. However, provinces and municipalities often want to know what effect road safety measures will have in their own area or on their own roads. This translation is often missing. One of the recommendations Bax makes to bridge the gap between knowledge and policy is to develop more knowledge specifically suitable for regional and local authorities.

Charlotte Bax' thesis has been published in the SWOV dissertation series:

Processes and Patterns; The utilisation of knowledge in Dutch road safety policy. C. Bax (2011). SWOV, Leidschendam