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BRIEFING

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## De onderbouwing van DGG-beleid (The Foundation of Freight Policy)

Een procesbeschrijving voor het  
gebruik van beleidsinhoudelijke  
gegevens (A process description for  
performance measurement within  
the policy process)

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Prepared for the Adviesdienst Verkeer en Vervoer (Dutch Ministry of Transport  
and Waterworks), Directorate General Freight

The research described in this report was prepared for the Adviesdienst Verkeer en Vervoer (Dutch Ministry of Transport and Waterworks), Directorate General Freight.

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## Summary

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Reliable measurement of developments and policy effects is essential to evidence-based policy development. Since the implementation of the VBTB-system in the budget, such policy related data have become even more important. Following the implementation of the VBTB-system, the Directorate-General for Freight Transport (DGG) constructed a ‘goaltree’ of policy goals, defining major and minor performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of DGG-policy, focusing on outcomes. These require reliable measurement of performance and policy effects. It became clear that policy makers were insufficiently aware of when and how to provide the essential data.

Policy makers are confronted on a daily basis with three intertwined processes, each with its own time frame:

1. the *data collection process* which, depending on the aim and the content, is characterised by a wide range of dynamics and (often) an undefined duration,
2. the *policy development process*, in which the sequence of activities is fixed, but the duration can vary from a few months to years, and
3. the *budgetary process*, which is characterised by a fixed time frame linked to the calendar year.

It is obvious that when multiple policy development processes and the related data collection weave around the fixed budgetary process, a complex and constantly changing pattern emerges. It is not always evident how to pull the processes together at the right moment.

The Research Division of the Dutch Ministry of Transport and Waterworks (AVV) commissioned RAND Europe to perform a process analysis of the implementation of the VBTB-process in relation to policy development and the monitoring activities of the DGG. This study was performed in the third quarter of 2003. RAND Europe was supported during the study by a steering group with members from AVV and DGG. The analysis was based on two main sources of information: Firstly on a review of available documents with regard to policy processes within DGG and official guidelines with regard to the budgetary process and the implementation of the VBTB-system herein; and, secondly, on interviews with policy makers from DGG that explored their experiences and in depth knowledge of the type of information required.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Interviews were conducted with 14 members of DGG staff, and three external stakeholders – two from AVV and one from NEA - involved in providing essential performance and monitoring data. Interviewees were Ms. A. Ahlers, Mr. H. Cramer, Mr. J. Flipse, Mr. E. Huijsmans, Mr. H. Kraaij, Mr. M. Koopmans, Mr. M. van Kruijningen, Mr. R. Schenk, Ms. R. Sondervan, Mr. F. Timmermans, Mr. G. Visser, Mr. H. Wöhler, Mr. J. Zoller, Mr. A. van der Westen, Mr. C. Aangenendt en Mr. J. Francke (AVV) as well as Mr. J. Kiel (NEA)

The three main research questions were:

1. What is the role of data in the policy process?
2. When and which type of data are essential (and why)?
3. Who is responsible for what?

### **1. What is the role of data in policy?**

The role is diverse. Firstly, data can provide insight into the developments - by describing the past and present, and by enabling forecasts of future developments - which can be instrumental when formulating new policy actions. Secondly, using the implicit policy theory – exploring the implied causal structure – data can provide insight into the available policy options through ex-ante evaluations, impact assessments or prognoses of policy effects. Thirdly, performance measurement or ex-post evaluations can give insight into the appropriateness and effectiveness of policy. It is therefore essential to complement policy implementation with a sound monitoring scheme, making it possible to identify whether expected results or effects have indeed been realised.

Within the policy process this requires the use of four types of data: (1) historical data, (2) forecasts of autonomous developments, (3) prognoses of policy effects (ex-ante evaluations) and (4) ex-post evaluations and effect measurements.

Within the policy process, there are no fixed deadlines before which specific types of information must be supplied. Furthermore, the time frame for policy development is flexible. The inherent flexibility of data streams in these processes is difficult to reconcile with the rigid requirements and time frame of the budget.

### **2. When and which type of data are essential (and why)?**

The same four types of data used in the policy process are used in the budgetary process to facilitate the creation of result oriented and transparent policy that gives the public ‘value for money’. The budgetary process was analysed and described using a flowchart. In this flowchart, included as figure 2 in the Dutch language summary, the moments are indicated when – and in which type of policy product – the various types of data can be brought into the process. We have used the budgetary process as guideline because it has a fixed and recognisable time frame: the calendar year

The point of departure in the analysis was the perception of the policy maker. The flowchart is colour coded and includes major political milestones, the budgetary process (in blue) and the flow of data (in green). The analysis shows that there are between six and eight moments in any given year where policy makers can input the most recent results from the various processes and data streams. Sources here can be existing monitoring exercises, ex-ante or ex-post evaluations of separate policy measures. The latter type of data can become available at any time during the year, and so it is possible to input this type of information into the budgetary process throughout the year. The budgetary process will be extended in the future to include a comprehensive evaluation cycle, where all policy goals will be evaluated every five years.

### 3. Who is responsible for what?

The policy maker is responsible for providing the required information and can call on AVV to help in this matter. In practice AVV is not always involved in or responsible for the data collection, and so is not always capable of fulfilling its supporting role.

Policy development and the definition of output and outcome performance indicators is the responsibility of DGG. The responsibility for the operationalisation of the indicators, data collection and analysis is often delegated to external partners (e.g. AVV). The responsibilities are not always independent; there are aspects that touch on both parties and there are areas of overlapping responsibilities, in particular for DGG and AVV. AVV believes it has a certain degree of co-responsibility for the specification of relevant and effective performance indicators and formulation of policy, while DGG believes it has co-responsibility for data collection and analysis.

DGG depends on the work performed by external parties and vice versa. For evidence-based policy, it is essential that the relevant information is collected and presented to DGG in a workable fashion. Workable in the sense that the information must provide insight into the question of whether policy needs to be amended. This makes it essential that optimum performance indicators are defined. AVV can support DGG in this. AVV has included this issue in its new mission statement.<sup>4</sup>

In practice there are many creases in the process that could be ironed out to make it smoother. Activities further on in the process are not always taken into account fully during earlier stages of the process. Progress could be made by improving communication between stakeholders, which would lead to a number of concrete recommendations for DGG and AVV. At the request of the client, these recommendations are not included in this public report.

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<sup>4</sup> Verkeerspost, November 2003, p. 11