

## NOORD-BRABANT ROAD SAFETY LABEL: MAXIMUM EFFECT THROUGH SCHOOLS

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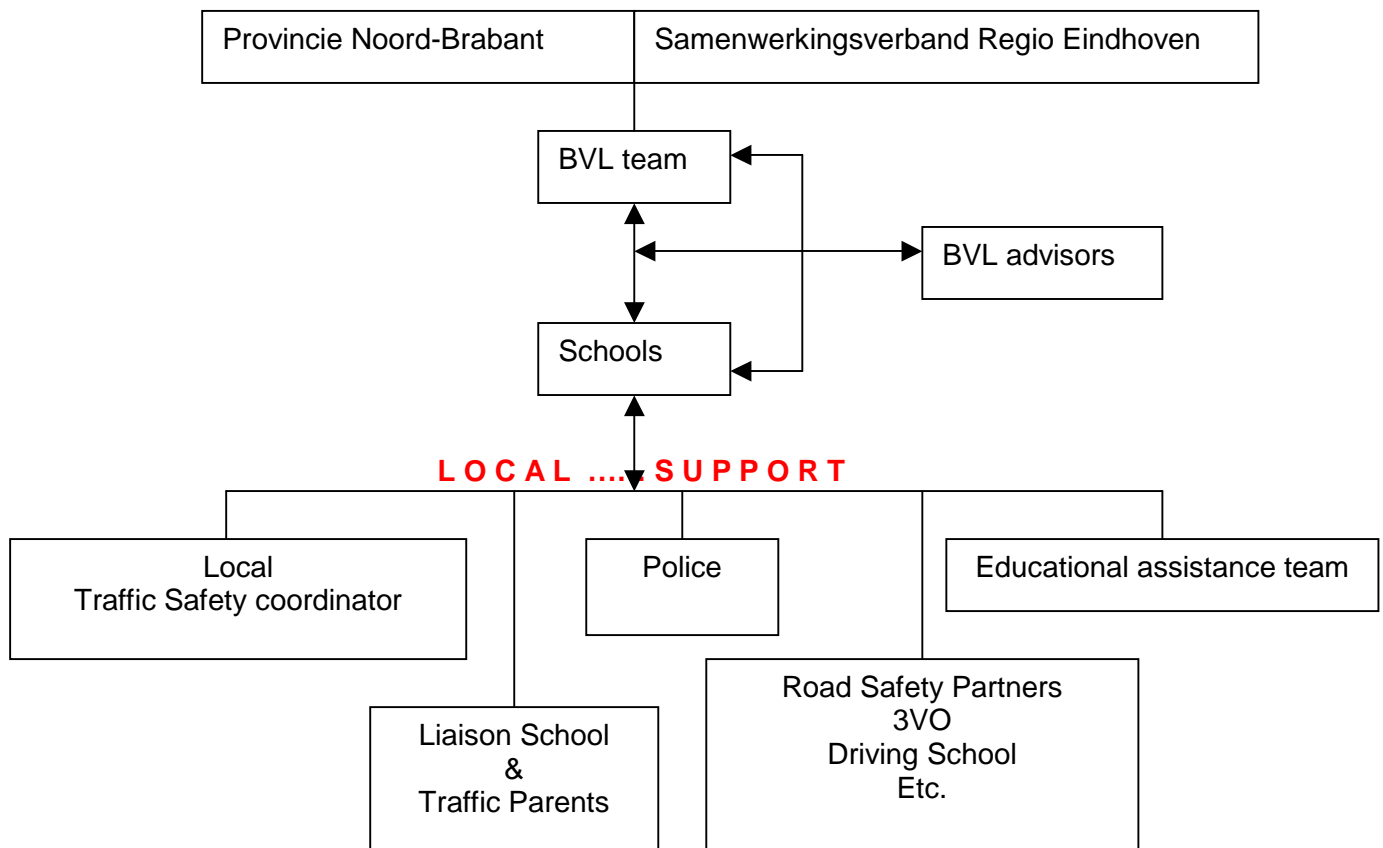
### Summary

Since 1997 the province of Noord-Brabant has implemented the project Brabant Road Safety Label (BVL)<sup>0</sup> to improve road safety among children and young adults by structural attention to traffic education in schools. For school-age children in the Netherlands the bicycle is a major means of transportation. BVL is a road safety quality mark schools can obtain by meeting a number of criteria, both educational and extracurricular (e.g. safe school environment, practice-based traffic education and sufficient parental participation). Independent experts (employed in education) visit and judge the schools. The entire BVL process is audited. In order to obtain the label a school is checked twice: at intake and at assessment. Regular checkups occur as well. Local authorities actively supporting the schools can become BVL authorities. They are assisted by the provincial BVL team with standard or made-to-measure material. At present 800 schools in Noord-Brabant participate in this project. 500 schools have so far been awarded the Label.

### Introduction

The Netherlands are divided into 12 provinces and 7 regional authorities, designed to cover the gap between national and local government. Noord-Brabant is a province, the Samenwerkingsverband Regio Eindhoven (SRE) a regional authority. In the field of road safety there is close cooperation between province and SRE. Both are active in a large number of fields: culture, economics, financial supervision, youth welfare, quality of life in the countryside, environment, nature development, accessibility of town and country, education, environmental planning, social issues, safety, water, building and care and road safety. Noord-Brabant has a strong educational emphasis, with over 1.000 elementary and secondary schools. Nationally 15% of this type of education occurs in Brabant. After secondary school students may continue in 2 universities. For children aged 4 to 12 and 12 to 16 the province introduced the traffic education project BVL in 1997. The provincial BVL team is responsible for the project's organization. Within the project a number of parties actively participate in improving road safety for children, as represented in the diagram below:





Schools, parents, local authorities and other road safety partners, e.g. police and the Dutch traffic safety organization VVN<sup>1</sup>, cooperate in providing structural and qualitatively excellent traffic education, practical training in schools and safe school environments. Following Noord-Brabant's lead, over half of all provinces in the Netherlands have introduced the Road Safety Label. In Belgium the province of Antwerp and the Vlaamse Stichting Verkeerskunde have partially adopted this project under the title '10 of 10'. This aims at improving qualitative road safety for children in a similar manner and with similar objectives. In the 10 of 10 project a school can earn a Label, demonstrating the efforts in road safety to the outside world as well.

### ***BVL and society: a higher objective***

In 8 years' time over 500 schools have joined BVL: clearly schools set great store by BVL and traffic education. Many people feel affected by antisocial behaviour in traffic due to increasingly crowded streets, individualization and fading of standards of behaviour (nationwide a hot topic). Today's children are tomorrow's adults. If these children are taught correct traffic behaviour from day one, everyone will profit in future. Good behaviour is a matter of repetition, consistent application of the regulations and practice. Thanks to the BVL approach children are taught a different way to handle do's and don'ts. This will turn them into traffic participants that differ from the majority of today's adults.

## The BVL organization

The BVL team is responsible for the project. Team members are qualified in education and communication. In addition there is an independent BVL commission, of which 6 BVL advisors visit the schools and the chairman leads the quarterly award meetings. All participants are regularly informed by means of newsletters and a web site.

## Costs

Local authorities: approx. 100 hours a year and budget for traffic education.

Schools: small number of hours, thanks to various subsidies (50% - 80%) costs of e.g. educational material are minimal.

Province: project team of 3,0 fte and accompanying budget, approx. €250.000 a year. In addition judging requests for subsidies.

## What does BVL entail?

BVL is an initiative of the province of Noord-Brabant in cooperation with SRE. It is aimed at structural improvements in road safety for young traffic participants. BVL approaches this issue on all fronts: from local policy to traffic education in the classroom. From traffic behaviour in and around school grounds to support by police and traffic safety organisations. The BVL team assists local authorities and schools in improving the quality of traffic education. BVL also awards a quality mark to schools meeting the criteria for an enduring and safe way of providing traffic education in schools. The 'Seef' is a mascot (see picture): the national safety logo for 9 Dutch provinces. The name derives from "Safe".



## Education and numbers:

Road safety is expressed in numbers of dead and wounded. Measures to improve road safety<sup>2</sup> are often judged by the amount of reduction in the numbers of dead and wounded.

For soft measures like permanent traffic education the rule of thumb in the Netherlands is that it may lead to a 20% reduction in victims. This fall a study will be conducted into actual effects of BVL. At a young age good (traffic) behaviour can be learned and in older children behavioural changes can be effected. Permanent traffic education is therefore a prerequisite for safe behaviour. The permanent nature of traffic education implies that activities for a certain age or target group will often only later bear fruit. Traffic education in the Netherlands is part of the Duurzaam Veilig covenant, designed to improve national road safety. Besides infrastructure and enforcement, education is the third pillar of traffic safety policy. Many infrastructural measures and new traffic regulations are pointless if road users don't understand or accept these. BVL targets ages 4 to 12 and 12 to 16. These are elementary and secondary school pupils. The BVL approach is successful. At the basis of this success are in particular regional and local cooperation, shared responsibility, permanent attention to education and opportunities for subsidy. Continuously and structurally.

## BVL and schools

For schools BVL is not 'a new project'. Existing projects and activities are structurally and coherently incorporated into BVL. The added value of BVL for schools is twofold:

- the structuralization enables the school to include BVL easily into the curriculum each year. Teaching staff and parents both know what they are required to do;
- a good overview of BVL activities allows a long-range budget to be made by school and local authorities.

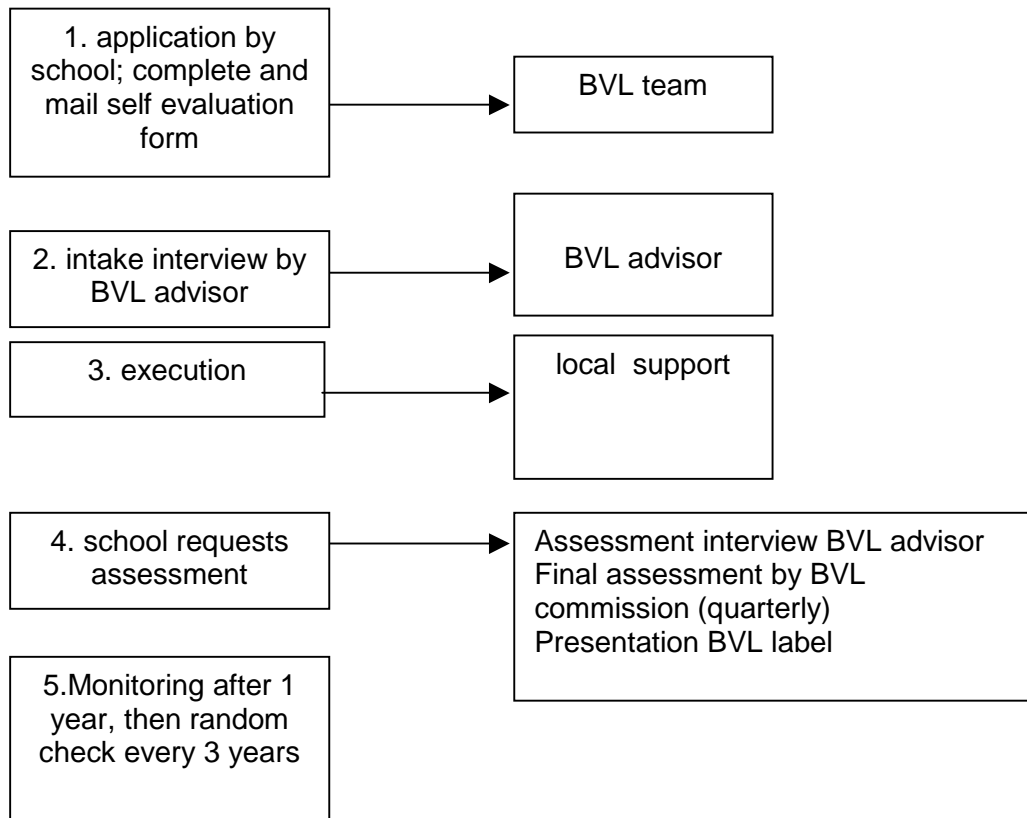
The BVL activities in schools are subsidizable by province or SRE through local authorities.

### **BVL process**

The Brabant Road Safety Label is a quality mark for schools that structurally address road safety. The criteria are divided into six main categories:

1. school organization;
2. traffic education in the classroom;
3. traffic educational projects;
4. practice in the school grounds and street;
5. school environment;
6. communication with and involvement of parents.

Schools can score points and stars in these categories. They decide for themselves the pace and emphasis within the education. BVL is aimed at more than simple traffic education. A participating school is visited by an independent BVL advisor for assessment by the BVL commission after having finished a specific process. The Label is awarded when enough criteria have been met. The school is regularly monitored afterwards. During the entire process the school is assisted by the provincial BVL team, local authorities and local partners (see diagram).



To visualize the objectives of BVL in actual traffic education, a comparison between low and high scores of BVL content is illustrative:

<b>Occasional traffic education: low BVL content</b>	<b>Permanent traffic education: high BVL content</b>
Disjointed	Everything fits into place: <i>Planned and professional</i>
Little coordination	Strong coordination: <i>Traffic coordinator</i> <i>Traffic taskforce</i>
Little goal-oriented	Highly goal-oriented
Ad hoc	Structural: <i>In each school year</i>
Irregularly	Regularly: <i>In (weekly) timetable</i>
Dated	Relevant, modern and educationally sound: <i>Modern method and materials</i>
No relation with environment	Environment-based: Neighbourhood is basis <i>School-home-route</i>
Little practice-based	Practice-based: Practice and apply <i>School grounds and neighbourhood</i>
Not effective	Highly effective
Little cooperation	Much cooperation in BVL environment  <i>In school and outside</i>
Qualitatively weak	Qualitatively strong: Check and evaluate <i>Theoretical and practical exams</i>

### ***BVL-activities***

To state some examples of actual BVL activities in schools:

- acquisition of modern educational material: each week attention is paid to traffic matters in every classroom;
- school-home projects: together with local authorities the school environment is made safe and children practice on the route from and to school, under supervision;
- the campaign 'School has started again': at the start of the school year children in traffic are emphasized by way of banners and media messages;
- 'national play in the street day': school closes the street in front once a year to allow children to play and practice safely;
- attention to parental transport behaviour: by constructing a kiss & ride area children can be safely dropped off at school;
- "blind angle project": by means of a video and lorry in the school grounds children become aware of the risks of walking/cycling beside lorries. The importance of eye contact with the driver is stressed;
- keeping parents up to date on traffic activities: particularly traffic parents play a crucial role in the school organization;
- frequent appearances by police in classrooms and support of school activities by enforcement.

Moreover, this leads to local cooperation in traffic safety platforms or taskforces. Projects and activities occur in all schools and there is a division of labour.

## **BVL and bicycles**

BVL wants to enable children and young adults to participate in traffic safely and independently. In the Netherlands this usually means by bike. At a young age children will go to school on their own, by bike. Both in traffic education and in attention to behaviour and skilfulness and a safe environment the bicycle is a major focus of attention. Many activities of BVL are aimed at cycling safety and bicycle visibility, as exemplified by:



- bike proficiency training for various ages;
- theoretical and practical traffic exams for children aged 10-11. In school they are taught the traffic regulations and they have to pass a practical test on their bikes. They are only allowed to enter this test when their bike has been technically approved. Attention is paid as well to safe clothing (reflective material and bright colours);
- 'from grade 8 to 1": the children in the highest grade of elementary school explore the route to secondary school by bike, accompanied by parents and teachers;
- alcohol and drugs are subjects that are frequently discussed in young adult classrooms;
- a lot of attention is paid to child safety in BVL schools. This means that children living close by the school can safely walk or bike this distance. Signs warn drivers of the presence of a school in the vicinity;
- in the Netherlands riding a motorbike requires a special certificate. In secondary education children will often receive theoretical instruction, but practical examinations occur as well;
- regional bicycle illumination campaigns; during nationwide enforcement campaigns local authorities and schools contribute by means of posters, lessons and press releases. When cyclists demonstrate adequate illumination when stopped by police, they are eligible to win a bike. When the lights are not used or inadequate, they are fined.

The BVL approach has an important role for parents, both through information from school about traffic and through participation in actual projects for children in and around the school. Experience has shown that once responsibility is deferred back to the parents they will re-evaluate their own attitudes in traffic. A final aspect is an emotional attachment to BVL. A BVL school tackles physical and social safety, both schools and parents opt for quality.



## **BVL and local authorities**

Local authorities play an important part in the BVL approach. Together with the major traffic safety partners they realize the objectives of BVL. In practical terms this means that the traffic safety coordinator directs the local network and is informed of all school activities. Local authorities improve road safety near schools, e.g. by means of stopping prohibitions, introducing speed reduction measures and providing sufficient parking space and bike racks.

The coordinator stimulates activities by local partners like VVN, police, educational assistance teams and active parents to support schools in obtaining (and maintaining) the BVL. The coordinator also maintains relations with the province and SRE. To support everyone involved in BVL, a provincial BVL team has been instituted to assist local authorities and schools when needed. To attune the various activities, local taskforces road safety have been established. These do not organize activities exclusively for BVL, but meet 2 to 3 times a year to stimulate and organize traffic activities. Thanks to BVL, road safety receives more attention not only in schools, but also with local authorities, police and other local partners!

The number of local authorities participating in BVL has grown spectacularly of late. As of now all local authorities have become involved and almost all non-participating local authorities are reconsidering their position.



### **Success factors BVL**

The success of BVL is easily attributable. Active and involved people take their responsibilities seriously and perform their task well. BVL is not alone in this. Not only active participation in public services and the field are crucial, but also political commitment, professional support by the BVL team and BVL advisors and opportunities for subsidies..

Continuity is essential. Withdrawal of a manager, teacher or traffic parent may cause stagnation at school level. Jobs rotate frequently within local authorities and police organizations. A strong network can deal with these events and is the best guarantee for structural continuity in the BVL process. Local traffic safety coordinators coordinate and manage this network. Educational assistance teams can play a role in tailoring projects to specific schools. Some local authorities have good experiences with this approach.

### **New objectives and challenges**

Over the past years BVL in Noord-Brabant has given rise to a successful structure to enable schools and local authorities to increase road safety among their youths. Local authorities and schools prove to have a great need for BVL. The first BVL objectives have by now been realized, new objectives and challenges loom. Considering the explosive growth in participation there is certainly public support. In 2004 the BVL strategy 2004-2009 has been formulated, answering the question: What will be the results in Noord-Brabant in 2009 and how has this been achieved? These objectives are:

- in 2009 two thirds of all elementary and secondary schools will participate in BVL. Half of these has actually obtained the Label;
- this increase is realized because the BVL approach has been incorporated in provincial, regional and local policies. These clearly define who is responsible for what;
- in all 68 local authorities taskforces are active (preferably local traffic safety platforms);
- financial consequences are clear to all participants (from province down to individual school);
- schools are professionally supported and BVL completely dovetails with educational demands, even if a need for BVL should arise from other educational quarters;
- in secondary education the BVL approach is adapted to modern requirements. Moreover, BVL fits in with the national curriculum for Permanent Traffic Education (PVE);
- there is a well-supported policy intention to include the BVL approach in national regulations, to allow the schools inspectorate to (jointly) determine BVL quality after 2009.

With a large number of traffic safety partners, and the knowledge that other provinces have adopted this approach as well, Noord-Brabant continues to play it 'Seef'. Because children's safety is worth it!

## Reference

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<sup>0</sup> See [www.bvlbrabant.nl](http://www.bvlbrabant.nl) for information on BVL: database on projects, addresses and BVL Strategy 2004-2009. For information on the province of Noord-Brabant [www.brabant.nl](http://www.brabant.nl) and on Samenwerkingsverband Regio Eindhoven: [www.sre.nl](http://www.sre.nl).

<sup>1</sup> VVN, United Dutch Traffic Safety Association. An NGO. National web site [www.3VO.nl](http://www.3VO.nl)

<sup>2</sup> Information on accident data by the web site of the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, Adviesdienst Verkeer en Vervoer [www.rws-avv.nl](http://www.rws-avv.nl). Available in English. At present a national study is being conducted on the effects of education and information, coordinated by Stichting Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Verkeersveiligheid (SWOV), Institute for Road Safety Research. Traffic education has long been one of the E's in road safety theory: Education, Enforcement, Engineering. In contrast to the other two, it has been hard so far to actually measure the effects of Education in a reduction of numbers of victims. The SWOV project *Effects of education and information* is aimed at gaining insight into specific effects of education. Costs and benefits are stated as well as the effectiveness of various types of education, in order to provide a basis for effective and efficient policies. See [www.swov.nl](http://www.swov.nl) (available in English) for information on road safety, including the fact sheet 'Road safety of children in the Netherlands'.