

C-LIEGE - Clean Last mile transport and logistics management for smart and efficient local Governments in Europe

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ROUND TABLE MANUAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within the C-Liege project, the Round Tables play an important role. Each pilot city will set up 4 round table meetings with relevant local stakeholders of the UFT sector.

The cities with already existing good practices will contribute to the pilot projects, check their progress and help with recommendations.

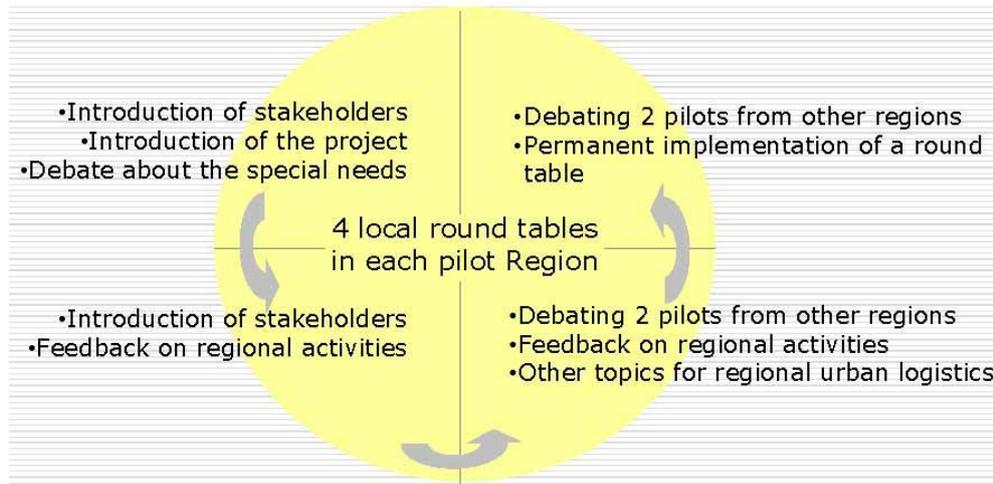
- The partners will search in all cities for good urban logistics topics and will structure them.
- The 4 round tables will have different topics. The aim is to establish the round tables in the region beyond the lifetime of the project.

Round Table 1: The participating stakeholders introduce themselves and their institutional roles. The meeting will introduce the C-LIEGE project and the intended regional pilot, and debate the needs for the pilot. It will give an overview on the six other project pilots.

Round Table 2: More regional stakeholder will be introduced; feedback (recommendations) on regional activities with special hindsight to cost/added value.

Round Table 3: Debating two pilots from other regions in more detail, feedback on regional pilot activities with special insight into organizational and implementation needs (recommendations). Other topics for regional urban logistics, which could be of interest in the pilot region, will be introduced, as a first step towards a regional strategy.

Round Table 4: Debating two more pilots from other regions in detail, reviewing the regional pilot (recommendations), organizational steps towards permanent implementation of a round table for urban freight issues in the region.



The Round Tables are organized in the responsibility of the local partner of the respective pilot project. They are supported by KLOK, LEITAT and FIT, to ensure the following tasks:

- Help to ensure that the Round Tables are set up in each region.
- Give additional input / guidance for and during the meetings, a feedback to the round table leaders, including an exchange about what is going on.
- Ensure that the result is compiled and distributed among participants and the other round tables.
- Help to ensure that the Round Tables work smoothly with people, institutions and topics, and to provide suggestions in case of arising problems.

This manual builds upon the observations made in the “Stakeholder Engagement Manual”, and deals specifically with the situation of the round tables. Of course, it gives just a general framework. Reacting to the local conditions and to the specifics of the individual Round Table may very well result in individual solutions beyond the suggestions of the manual.

The main outputs of the Round Tables will be:

- Inputs to the local pilot project
- Generating active partners for the local pilot project
- Inputs to the Urban Freight Plan
- Continuation of Round Tables beyond the end of C-Liege.

Other important results, though less easy to quantify, are:

- Improved understanding among participants about their roles and their interest

- Increased respect about each other's roles and interest
- Increased level of understanding of urban goods transport issues in general
- Increased level of understanding of urban goods transport issues in the own agglomeration and its city center.

2. HANDLING THE ROUND TABLES

2.1 Preparation

Once the partners have the draft version of the "Stakeholder Engagement Manual", they can begin with the planning of the Round Tables. In a first step, each partner should create a list of all relevant stakeholders who should be invited to the round table meetings. This list will be continued and expanded during the project.

- The list of relevant stakeholders in practice goes beyond the list of Round Table participants.
- It should include institutions found on the base of the list of groups for the Stakeholder Engagement Manual.

Each pilot region already developed a concept for the first round table and sent it to KLOK. All partners have the opportunity to point out upcoming problems and ask KLOK for help and advice.

KLOK already has experience in the organization of round tables in the Stuttgart region, so it will transfer this experience to the other partners. One instrument of transferring the knowledge is this "Round Table Manual". In addition, the partners can always contact KLOK with specific questions about the round tables.

The round tables are planned for the months 7, 12, 17 and 22 of the C-Liege project work. This does not mean that they must take place exactly in these months. The exact scheduling of them is left to the individual partners. For example: the planning of the first round table, its implementation and reporting must take place between months 7 and 12.

The language of the round tables will be the local language. The guests and the project staff, which join the meetings, need a translation into English. The summaries and reports of the round tables have to be in English.

How long should the first meeting be? The first meeting should not last longer than 4-5 hours. To the events, local stakeholders, which are usually very busy, should be invited. It will be difficult to get them for more than 4 hours.

How many participants should we seek? Since we want to achieve a dialogue among local stakeholders and want to put together a group in which there is the possibility to discuss,

approximately 20 participants represent the upper limit. But bringing together the relevant people is more important than the number of participants.

2.2 What to expect from the participants

All participants are stakeholders which are specialists in their field. It is a good idea to recognize this explicitly in the first meeting. But being both a specialist and a stakeholder will influence the view upon any topic. Specialists will look both for problems and for solutions in their own field of competence first. Stakeholders have at least the interest, often also the obligation to give preference to certain views on a topic. This is not only legitimate, but also a reason to use the instrument of a “Round Table” at all: The different views all get their role there. Just remember that each participant will likely interpret any topic more or less strictly from his or her point of view or institutional interest.

It is necessary to be prepared for this and to make sure that the other likely institutional views are at least mentioned.

2.3 What to expect from the meetings

The meetings of the Round Tables can significantly support the project work. They can

- comment on the work, adding new viewpoints or aspects,
- produce new ideas or suggest improvements,
- show the interests of individual stakeholders or groups of stakeholders,
- give the project the mandate to proceed towards a specific target,
- make weak points in the project work surface in time and help to improve them.

But there are limitations: Usually, during a single meeting, an assembly will not come up with an idea, define it in an operative way and decide about it. Thus, if a decision is needed, input must be provided to decide upon. This input may then, through debate, be improved, changed, or even discarded completely by the Round Table.

The participants can make suggestions how to proceed and with whom to proceed (addition of stakeholders and Round Table members), but they cannot make the decision to operate the local pilot project. This must be negotiated between the meetings and will with all likelihood include other people as well as other institutions.

2.4 How to proceed

At the end of a round table, the participants may get some kind of homework. Usually, participants will not do elaborate work between such meetings, despite any promise they may make in the course of an inspiring meeting. The daily practical work almost always gets into the way, and also it often appears during the work that the deliverable turns out to be quite a lot more complex than what they thought.

With this general observation in mind, and after checking it against the specific participants of the Round Table, what can be expected as a minimum is practical insight to the topic from the viewpoint of the presenting person or institution. That can be quite something as an input for the debate. On the other hand it can be difficult to find a participant who will give an overview on a certain topic in a way that is helpful for the project goals. This the organizers of the Round Tables should keep in their own hands.

2.5 Documentation

A clear documentation of the Round Table work is a must and a key responsibility. It should therefore remain in the hands of the organizers. Of course, members of the round table should have the chance to add aspects.

Keep the documentation short enough to be read by decision makers. Name the results and the key arguments (pro and con) that lead to them, so that all participants find their main viewpoints and interests reflected. Meandering debates should be brought to the point and summarized. Include a list of next steps and responsibilities.

3. TYPICAL SITUATIONS

Not all situations which may arise can be named beforehand. However, some which may be considered typical, are named and elaborated below. It is important to have an eye upon them and be prepared, but they should not frighten the moderator.

3.1 High Expectations

Expectations play a major role in the perception of a Round Table. Unrealistic expectations therefore can be a risk.

Many people, among them business managers, are used to meet, exchange their views, find a common ground and then come to binding decisions about future cooperation. If they

discover only step by step that the results of the Round Table meetings by themselves will not produce the solutions, but “only” suggestions for solutions, to be further negotiated, they may get frustrated.

A Round Table cannot make decisions which bind participants legally, and of course it cannot bind others. It is not the place to tailor the results in the exclusive interest of a specific stakeholder, and neither is it the answer to urban traffic, urban logistics and everything. It is better to be clear about this aspect right from the beginning. After all, a suggestion from a Round Table should well have more authority than a suggestion from one individual stakeholder.

Another expectation of participants may be that a Round Table will be a great opportunity to let all other stakeholder understand and agree upon one’s own view on a subject. It must be made clear that conflicting interests will result in different views and different priorities. A Round Table can work towards mutual understanding, but not eliminate different and conflicting interests. A main point therefore is to ensure that, as a minimum, all views are respected, both during the meeting and in the documentation.

Furthermore, there may be fear among some participants that their position will be that of a minority or represent a weaker interest and may therefore get lost in the formulation of the local pilot project or the local goods mobility plan. Remember that in many cases a minority view actually can be a good addition. For a concrete action, or for inclusion into an urban goods mobility plan, a measure need not always reflect the view or the interest of a majority. As long as it does not contradict other measures or a current policy, there is quite a chance it can be included.

3.2 Existing conflicts

Many of the local stakeholders have met before, at other occasions including meetings. They have institutional roles that in some cases represent conflicting interests. They therefore have a history of meeting and debating these conflicts and standpoints.

A Round Table has no problems with explicit statements about interests and institutional roles of the participants. To the contrary, it is necessary that the interests become clear and are explicitly stated. The moderator should at this point make clear that these standpoints and interests are respected.

3.3 Egos and personalities

When you go for the main stakeholders, or for renowned specialists in their field, you will work with people who have made successful career moves in their field. They know their field. If you consider them fit for the round table, they happily will be outspoken about their

point of view. Doubtlessly, these are strong personalities. They people often will not fear conflicts and sometimes will even go for them to reach their targets.

This sometimes is not easy to handle in meetings or assemblies. On the other hand, the ability to make a position heard in a complex environment is a necessary personal precondition for progress, both for the involved persons and their institutions. When they go for a conflict, this often is not meant to be obstructive. It may well mean just that they want their position to be recognized.

On the other hand, during a conflict, these strong personalities will make great efforts to ensure that, besides their own person, neither their standpoint nor their institution will leave the field as losers. You will have to predict this behaviour already when approaching and selecting the stakeholders, and you should make sure they never really lose a debate in public, but can always keep their face.

3.4 Knowledge

The more people learn about a topic they are interested in, the more it may appear to them that there still is quite a lot they do not know at all. Urban logistics is a rather complex field, with more aspects than one would expect at first. During a Round Table, it therefore may become obvious that the view of some stakeholder does not consider important aspects, simply because that person did not think about them. This can be embarrassing to that person. But it is perfectly normal.

There is a general tendency that people take their own view of a topic for the whole thing. That means, they believe to have an overview, just because they are knowledgeable about their own professional field. The risk is to completely blank out the problems that will arise, just because such problems may root in another field. The very idea of a round table is to join the professional views, and thus to enlarge the view. Therefore, there often is no need to correct such a standpoint explicitly. The sum of views and standpoints will broaden all viewpoints, of course including those of the organizers.

3.5 Active interest of the participants

The members of the Round Table will join for various reasons. While active interest is what the Round Tables need, it cannot always be taken for granted. On the contrary, a lack of active interest may not be openly stated. In practice, if a participant has no active interest for continuation, a typical action is to send a deputy to the second meeting and an excuse to the third.

The best answer is to check whether any other potential participants would be originally interested, and how to approach them. Also, it is a good idea to check the own agenda: Are there topics ahead which are more interesting? Can we sharpen the agenda in their interest?

Else, the lack of interest will usually mean that in the end there will not be a reasonably strong consortium to do anything reasonably.

Perhaps even more dangerous than the open lack of active interest is the hidden lack of interest. In this case, the attendants may all come, perhaps because they do not want to embarrass the inviting organization, or, in the worst case, just to watch each other's move, mainly to ensure that nothing will result out of it that could harm their own interests.

If their behaviour suggests such intentions, it is a good idea to talk to the stakeholders about the situation also between the meetings. They may be more outspoken about their real intentions, and there may still be common ground. And, of course, in any Round Table the level of interest varies among the participants. Up to a certain degree, that is very much okay.

In practice, another and perhaps more typical scenery would be: The project work – in our case: The Round Table – somehow seems to run empty, the debate does not produce the desired results but just repeats viewpoints and arguments. A clear structuring of the agenda often helps. Also, in order to close the debate about the ever-repeating points, summarizing and explicitly asking for solutions can also help.

3.6 Political support

During the work of the Round Tables, the political support may diminish or disappear. This may have several reasons:

There may be a change in policy. Such changes can happen: There may be a new local administration or a new basic parliament decision. New politics usually will not allow to be reversed by any round table – they will most definitely head for their new agenda instead, which is what they came into power for. In this case, it is usually best to check whether and where there still is some common ground. It may be a good idea at this point not to do that via persons who are prominently tied to the previous administration or the previous basic decision. The next step then could be to check whether the project work actually could be helpful to the new political stakeholders, and how to make them aware of it. Changes can also be chances.