

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

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INTRODUCTION

Within the project work of C-Liege, stakeholders must be selected, involved and engaged in order to

- do the work of the Round Tables,
- start the Pilot Project,
- work out the regional Goods Transport Strategy and prepare its implementation.

Furthermore, a generally positive climate regarding C-Liege should be established, in order to allow for good work.

As a result, a rather large group of people and institutions are to be identified as potential stakeholders. Therefore, the first step is to get an overview over the different types of potential stakeholders, possibly in form of a list. This should include their specifics, and why cooperation with them is necessary or desirable. With this understanding of the different types of stakeholders in mind, approaching and engaging the individual stakeholders is much easier.

This manual stresses the identification of stakeholders as a main point, for several reasons:

- There typically are many more stakeholders than those which appear at first.
- Moving ahead with the wrong stakeholders can be counterproductive.
- Understanding the scope of stakeholders can open up alternatives in case not all foreseen stakeholders can be interested.

The reactions of stakeholders depend partly on their personality and partly on their institutional role. In that institutional role, people react according to the needs of their institution. We can often judge about that beforehand and thus anticipate their reaction. This may be according to the role of a private institution on a market and among competitors, as well as the role of a public institution responding to recent or upcoming elections etc., and all institutions typically do respond to their specific budget situation. All that can change drastically during an upswing or a crisis. Therefore, if you know the institutional role, and perhaps also the fields of actions and conflicts of a stakeholder within the region, you will be able to understand and handle any personal communication much better.

Generally, the types of stakeholders in the case of the C-Liege project should include:

1. Public institutions.
2. Associations and other institutions which act as intermediaries between stakeholders.
3. Private stakeholders. Importance can be according to size, innovation potential, political exposure or specific interest.
4. Other actors.

Below, the potential stakeholders and their potential roles are described in detail.

1. RELEVANT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

There are several ways to search systematically for the relevant public institutions:

- By spatial hierarchy,
- by the scope of their responsibility, and
- by the legal or administrative influence they can have in their field.

Of course, what we are looking for are the responsibilities and the potential influence. The description in this manual nevertheless is based upon hierarchy as a first step when regarding public institutions. This is, because a spatial hierarchy exists in every country. At the very least, there is a local level of administration and a national level. Usually, there also are intermediate levels, which we may call “regional”, no matter how they designate themselves.

1.1 Local administration

Wherever we live and work, we all are aware that there is a local administration. Its tasks vary widely among the member states of the European Union. However, a local administration usually has a number of relevant responsibilities in the field of transport. In some cases, it will have an institutional role in the organization and development of passenger transport, but not in goods transport. Nevertheless, the local administration can have influence in goods transport flows, including urban distribution. It executes rules according to the decision of the municipal council, regarding access at all or certain times, parking areas, emissions etc.. Local authorities are more concerned with the transport implications of freight movements as opposed to how it is organized.

But even if there is not (yet) a very specific in-depth knowledge about the specifics of goods transport and the way it is organized, there may be a political will to deliver more sustainable and efficient outcomes. This can perhaps be done by indirect and “soft” measures, although it may not be clear from the beginning, which instruments the local administration has – and how to use them.

All in all, we will want to look for responsibilities in the fields of

- road planning and construction,
- traffic management,
- transport policies,
- environmental care and emission control.

These responsibilities may be spread across several divisions of the administration and may also be found in departments of economic development and promotion. All in all, the local administration will have an understanding about traffic levels – often separately for passenger cars and goods vehicles. This will be the result e.g. of traffic counts. The administration may also know the main origins and destinations of goods traffic. This type of analysis, however, does not tell much about the reasons behind the goods transports, or how

they are organized and managed. Such understanding need additional knowledge and interpretation.

Within the local administration, there usually is a department promoting the local economy. It is not the job of those people to know traffic figures, but their general expertise may help to interpret them:

- What kind of traffic goes where?
- What is actually transported?
- From where does the goods traffic come and where does it go?

This kind of knowledge typically is not formalized. It may require some thinking and debate, and this may not result in hard facts. Nevertheless, if the road and transport departments have traffic figures, the debate may result in some good interpretations.

Key questions to any local administration are:

- Does a mobility plan exist?
- Does it explicitly cover goods transport?
- Does it analyze goods transport flows?
- Does it suggest measures and which ones?

The department of the administration that has set up such a plan (or that is about to do it) is of course a key stakeholder.

At this point, something must be said about the organizational culture within larger administrations: Planning, road traffic and local economic affairs may be handled in different divisions of the local administration. These divisions have different tasks which must be handled in different ways. As a result, you may find quite different organizational cultures within the same organization.

Even within a single public administration, experienced observers know immediately whether they deal with a group of engineers, a group of legal experts or a group of managers. The engineers strive for facts which include computable numbers. The legal experts will go for facts which describe a desired behaviour. The managers will prefer to deal with the relation between people or institution, their interest and responsibilities. Because these approaches differ so basically, any answer from one type of person may in earnest be targeted at the question of a person from another group, but may not fit into that group's scheme of handling a topic. Therefore, it could be difficult for people from these different cultures to establish consensus and good working relationship.

In practice, in order to deal with a topic it is most helpful to understand the likely needs of all three approaches. The best way is to structure one's own question in anticipation of the type of answer you are likely to get. Engineers, legal experts and managers all appreciate if they find the question asked in a way that allows their answer really to contribute. Such adequate preparation is among the responsibilities of you as a project team member.

1.2 Neighbouring local municipalities

Transport problems do not end at city limits. Check carefully whether the problems you are going to address may involve the territory of neighbouring municipalities. If that is the case, check with the main municipality of your area about the information and engagement policy regarding its neighbours. This can be a most critical issue – usually, old conflicts exist, regarding topics as well as persons or institutions. It can easily happen that any communication as well as any non-communication may step on some neighbour municipality's toes by accident. Fortunately, on the other hand there normally also are well established practices to handle them.

Whenever you inform any neighbouring municipality about anything you do, and whenever you think that involvement of that other municipality would result in a valuable improvement, check every step with the municipality you are mainly working with, and get yourself an opinion about the implications of any suggested strategy!

1.3 Regional administrations

The town or city in question will be located within a larger entity, which may be designated as county, department, planning region, province, region, etc.. Those acquainted with the standardized spatial levels throughout the European Union will know some of these levels as “NUTS 1” to “NUTS 5”. In practice we may find even more levels in some countries. The reason for existence of each of these intermediate levels is a set of responsibilities in one field of administration or another. Each of these intermediate levels has its own field of responsibilities. It is quite likely that goods traffic questions touch the interests of one or more such regional institutions. The main point here is to check that out.

The regional level, especially if associated to administrative competences, is particularly interesting because it concerns a wider territorial scale on which logistics phenomena and operations happen, in the sense that city logistics often does not only concerns the “last miles” but business, organizational and logistics processes on a wider territorial scales.

We tend to believe that we understand the administration in our own country well. This typically is the case with hindsight to the local administration. As for the regional levels, their responsibilities may not be so clear at first, not even to the experienced project manager with a background in handling regional questions. Not all levels have parliamentary bodies, and some levels exist only for a narrow scope of responsibilities. We may therefore learn about additional administrative levels, even in our own national context, as soon as we search for them.

The best way to check out the relevance of these levels is to talk to an experienced regional administrator with technical expertise in the subject. First, try to list all existing levels. Then, the next step is to check each level for some basic responsibilities and explicitly for any responsibility in the context of transport, economy and planning. This includes a check of possible fields where interests collide or where synergies are possible.

Also, it is important to check out whether the local or regional administration has created any other body related to the subject (agency, etc.), which may be responsible for policy design or implementation in a certain field. Such agencies etc. may cover the fields of energy, innovation and development, and they may be either public bodies or private-public partnerships.

Another question is whether these intermediate levels have their own power for decision making, or whether they are just administrative bodies which carry out decisions made at national or local level. Through this you learn about the ties of that administration with other levels or institutions. Generally, it is very useful to remember for each of these intermediate levels whether they basically carry out local tasks (just for a larger area) or national tasks (just for a subdivision). In many countries, by constitution there is a strict division between national and local affairs. The intermediate levels will therefore often clearly lean to one of the two sides, depending on the context.

Most likely, from an administrative point of view, stakeholders for a certain topic will be found in some intermediate levels, but not necessarily in all. On the other hand: Except in very small countries, if no regional stakeholders are mentioned to the project team, this should raise suspicion.

1.4_National and State administration

For most countries, “nation” and “state” is the same. However, a number of EU countries (Germany, Austria) themselves are composed of “states”, which may have not only their own legislation, but even their own constitution. These states may in practice have only limited legislative power, but they may run huge administrations, carrying out decisions on behalf of the national government. Even national programs and projects may be carried out independently by the states, the level of cooperation with the national government varies. For practical work, the state administrations may therefore even be more important than the national level, which may just provide a general framework. In other nations, the national level does supervise the regional levels more closely even in operative work.

At the administration of any municipality in question, they will know their interactions with the state resp. federal level very well. It is strongly suggested that the local project team asks local and regional administrators about their professional links and dependencies with higher levels.

2. RELEVANT ASSOCIATIONS AND INTERMEDIARIES

There will be quite a number of relevant associations and intermediaries.

2.1 Chamber of Commerce

The chamber of commerce typically relates to an administrative area, e.g. a city or county. In some countries, membership is compulsory, in other countries the chamber depends on the contributions of companies which joined voluntarily. Also, the scope of activities varies. In some countries, the chamber of commerce can – and does – join economic activities, in others it keeps strict neutrality. Also, the chamber may or may not have a budget of some size for own project activities or research.

The neutrality policy of a chamber may result in a self-limitation regarding any institutional engagement. In this case it must be understood that this limitation may be a legal restriction because membership is compulsory, and even without that legal restriction a limited engagement may be a key to its success as an institution. Therefore, trying to press a chamber of commerce into undue action without checking out its status could be counterproductive. But even within such institutional limitations, if they apply, the chamber could play an important role:

The chamber in any case is a relevant stakeholder in all questions regarding transport, trade and manufacturing. The specialists for each field may have little executive power, but they typically make up for this with broad organizational knowledge. Within the regional or local chamber of commerce, you may well find the widest knowledge of the field and its actors.

The officers at the chamber of commerce also have the explicit task to promote the economy. Different from the situation of their counterparts within the public administration, the chamber staff does not have to balance its statements to reflect the society as a whole – this, in democratic theory, is done by the sum of all organizations that raise their voices. As a result, the chambers typically can be rather outspoken about the interests of their members and the regional economy. As a result, good relations with these experts usually are a big asset.

2.2 Business associations

In Europe, there usually are business associations for just about any topic. Therefore, it is worthwhile to check the local situation for the relevant associations. Just as a general guideline: The topic of urban logistics touches business associations in the field of

- retail,
- trade,
- transport,
- logistics, and perhaps
- manufacturing.

There may be competing associations trying to cover the same field. But, even more likely, the main clientele of each association or organization may be somewhat different and rather specific. One association may be the first choice of those logistics companies, which are of a

certain size, while the other association is where mainly the independent truck drivers are organized. Furthermore, a number of institutions may represent companies which engage in specific segments of logistics. Some associations or organizations may not appear to be very important at a national level, but might have a very active and highly professional regional role or a most knowledgeable regional representative.

Neither the website nor the publications of an organization may explain these issues. A good relation to the local chamber of commerce is one of the best starting points to define the right associations that need to be engaged – besides asking the organizations themselves, of course.

Besides general associations of trade and retail, there may be a local initiative in which the retailers of the city engage. Such initiatives may even exist for specific areas of the town/city. Membership is usually not mandatory. These initiatives may be purely aimed at local marketing, on a more or less professional level, but even if their core activity is limited they may have a good overview on the key players in urban retail trade.

In summary, the key advice is: When looking for relevant partners among business associations, you may find there are more than the initially obvious, once you research the whole range of organizations – an approach which is strongly recommended.

3. RELEVANT PRIVATE PLAYERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Among the private players and representatives are, primarily, the individual businesses and companies to be involved. Here it is important to think of all fields of logistics, and of all fields of receivers and senders of goods which may be involved in the pilot project.

Urban goods traffic is much more than serving downtown retail stores. It is often much more than what can ever be addressed by a single project. But since one result of the project should be a general urban or regional concept of goods logistics, the inclusion of all of them should be well considered.

In today's world, many of the retail stores belong to chains. This is the truer for the big supermarkets and department stores, but many specialized chain stores also exist. These stores in total make up a big share of urban goods traffic. For urban logistics schemes, that is not without consequences: These chain stores have their own delivery strategies, and they are centrally developed by the respective chain. Often, the individual stores of such a chain get their goods mainly via a logistics operator with whom the chain has a contract. The local store may therefore have little interest to debate any concept that deviates from the logistics policy of the chain to which it belongs. It may not even be authorized to do so. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to approach at least the really big of these chain stores. If you win one of them to think about its delivery in context with urban logistics, you have found a most relevant partner.

Urban goods traffic includes many delivery services for private households, from parcel couriers to takeaway/pizza delivery services. However, to include private households would be too onerous and difficult. The same is the case with most individual shop owners. But they should at least be represented through their organizations. Of course, if there is a competent shop owner, known to be willing to participate, that person should be considered. Such persons can be key assets not only as promoters, but also for checking the practicability of an idea.

The private actors usually are hands-on businessmen and at the same time practically minded people. Their interest is not to find out how relevant a project or a topic is to the municipality, the region, or to a certain European policy. Their main interest is to find those aspects which help to improve their own businesses, or which can endanger their profitability lines. This includes a strong preference for short and mid-term solutions. On all else they usually will soon lose interest.

Another point is that practically minded people have their minds set on what is relevant to their core business. As a result, they will often assume that their own core business is the very heart of the matter. It is therefore a big necessity for project work to talk to enough of them to get a broader view of the issue and the interests involved.

The private actors work in a competitive environment. Typically, such competition does not mean a head-on confrontation, since the market economy allows for a huge amount of separate niches. Therefore, they are generally willing to cooperate on common issues – but usually they will never accept cooperation with a competitor on a core issue. Even if such cooperation appears unavoidably reasonable to them, they may nevertheless prefer if each works separately with the same neutral institution.

Generally, the involvement of some personalities is important in this field. There may well be a number of experienced stakeholders which are well aware of the above and can debate it explicitly within the project work.

Furthermore, around a city or urban area a number of logistics operators may run facilities for cross-docking, intermodal transport etc., even if they originally are not in the focus of the project consortium. Their activities need not all be included. But the very least is to know what is going on and what, for good reasons, is left outside the scope of the project.

4. RELEVANT OTHER PLAYERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Finally, there are a number of relevant other players and representatives.

4.1 Educational institutions, research institutes and consultants

The first main group is that of educational institutions, research institutes and consultants. With logistics being a rather practical science, you may find experts in the scientific

community not only in Universities, but in many types of educational institutions. All of these institutions may have quite some experience in this and adjoining fields, both locally and with regard to general technical or organizational aspects. They will very often have a good reputation as experts.

When engaging these organizations and consultants outside the consortium, remember that they will not get paid for their advice, but they do assume that your work is paid for. Therefore, consider carefully the advice you can reasonably expect and spare any intense involvement for the moment you really need them for. Also remember that in some cases these institutions may compete for the attention of stakeholders, not only among each other but perhaps also with institutions that are formally involved in the project.

Due to the organization of scientific institutions, their members can work within a pre-defined range of topics and expertise. This may mean that they generate advice which is based upon academic interest, or that they propose a clever technical solution that does not necessarily match organizational conditions. It would then be part of the project work to define and analyse these conditions.

4.2 Local media and general public

Important “other” actors are the local media and the general public. Both should be informed about the on-going, typically the general public through the local media. Some general remarks:

The general public may have just a limited understanding about the flows of goods traffic. Experience from Germany shows a general belief that most goods flows mainly are from factories to shops. This much oversimplified view ignores the inter-industrial flows and the flows that end in other places than retail stores, although all this together is the vast majority of goods flows. Also, the general public will usually not differentiate between the different kinds of goods. As a result, expectations towards the project results may be far exaggerated.

There also is a general tendency to confuse promotion actions with the topic itself. As a result, C-Liege is in an imminent danger to be mistaken as a logistics operator. Such errors sneak in where the project members do not expect them, and are very difficult to correct – the public does not like to get corrected, and neither does the media.

The best way to avoid any such misunderstanding is to be explicit about the role of the project, to be realistic about the means of the project and the achievable results, and to explicitly address any potential misunderstanding at the side when talking to the press.

Another issue to consider locally is to consider the use of certain language and technical terms. Certain language has been used everywhere to describe desirable or undesirable actions. You should therefore check locally, in which context your technical terms have been used and which images/ideas they imply. Otherwise, you may find your project is completely misunderstood, or becomes the subject of a political argument, just because one of your technical terms has been used in different context in the past, and now you find the project erroneously linked to that context. The general public will certainly not differentiate, and you

will have great difficulty trying to convince any local stakeholder that your idea is different from the image or idea the language evokes in their mind.

At this point it is important to highlight one final and very important set of players and representative:

4.3 Political framework and parliaments

Finally, it must be clarified explicitly, that the basic decisions on policies are with political bodies (known as councils, parliaments or assemblies). During any project work with administration at various levels, with organizations and with private representatives, this basic insight must never be forgotten. Political bodies which do not feel well informed, or which fear a project may contradict their political objectives, can easily undermine the outcomes of the project effort.

Also, each such body will probably have experience of and a clear process for dealing with conflicts and with decision making. In some cases, they usually follow the suggestions of party leaders or fixed coalitions, while other political bodies take pride in personal decision making and resulting across the board decisions, which can have surprising results. The point is to have an idea about the role your contacts will play in this process, both institutionally and as an individual. It is important to ensure that projects do not promote ideas or policies which are not in line with the political views of the relevant political bodies.

You probably need not have the political bodies represented within the project work by their members. But you must know the agenda of the relevant bodies well enough to make sure you won't contradict their basic decisions within the project work, as long as that is avoidable. And the basic support of the municipal political body, expressed through the commitment of a mayor or a senior administrator, is a must for success.

HOW TO APPROACH THE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS?

Once you reflect the local situation against the above topics, it should be easy to find a sufficient number of relevant stakeholders for the project work, including the round tables, and to engage them. But how can you approach and engage them? Here are some suggestions. They are based upon practical experience with local and regional stakeholder groups. Nevertheless, always check the advice against your local conditions!

For each type of stakeholder, as described above, get yourself an overview regarding the following questions:

- Which are the members of the stakeholder group (institutions / persons)?
- Is it possible to get a list of all stakeholders of that group? Is it necessary?
- Do you already know some of the group members?
- Do you already have working relations with some members of the stakeholder group?

- Which are the prominent persons / speakers of the group? Which persons / institutions do you still have to make a first contact with?
- What is their mission and interest?
- What can they deliver to the project and its environment?

The next step is to check the level of engagement. Participation can be seen as a continuous scale, or continuum, ranging from a low level of stakeholder participation to a high level of participation. There are the four (general) levels:

- Inform: To provide the stakeholder(s) with balanced and objective information to enable people to understand the problem, alternatives and/or solution.
- Consult: To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. It involves acknowledging concerns and providing feedback on how stakeholder input has influenced the decision.
- Collaborate/Partnership: To work as a partner with the stakeholder(s) on each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- Empower/Control: A process of capacitating the stakeholder(s) through involvement and collaboration so that they are able to make informed decisions and to take responsibility for final decision-making.

Check which stakeholders you need to inform, to consult, with which you want to collaborate, and which are controlling the process. This depends not only on the group of stakeholders. Within that group, it will soon become clear that some institutions and persons will need to be engaged more than others. This may be because of their institutional role or because of their personal knowledge and availability. Therefore, in many cases the degree of engagement is not at all clear from the beginning.

Approaching the stakeholders is rather easy if a personal contact was established already before. Generally, the key persons should nevertheless be contacted individually (usually better by phone than by email, but an email may announce the phone call). C-Liege should be outlined to them, and it should be debated which role they could have in the project.

The key persons in the local administration need special consideration. This is because the project will not work without involvement of the local administration. In the private sector, if one person or business is not interested, there may be some other person or business to work with instead. In the public sector, this is different, because every function is carried out by one specific organizational unit. Key persons in the local administration should therefore be approached personally and individually. They will for sure have matters to debate regarding the project as a whole and their role in it, and they may not want to do so at a general meeting or Round Table.

But even within the public sector there often are alternatives, if approaching one specific person or department was not successful, there are second best solutions with other departments. With other words: There is hardly a single person or institution that cannot be substituted. Having this in mind reduces pressure when approaching people and institutions. This in return can improve results.

In the private sector, associations will generally have to be approached individually, one by one. Selected members of larger stakeholder groups will be invited to the Round Tables. Here it is necessary to think about alternatives, since not everybody will follow such an invitation.

The process of engaging stakeholders lasts throughout the project. There will be the need to check administrative and legal issues. Which ones, will depend on the way the pilot projects are to be organized. These questions tend to be less obvious than those influencing business models of private stakeholders. Therefore, there should be a continuous mutual consulting with stakeholders preferably from the municipal level, which can help with such questions, even if these stakeholders for whatever reasons do not continuously take part in the Round Tables.

As already said, an established working relation always is a huge advantage. But make sure you do not work with a certain person as a representative of a certain stakeholder group, just because you already have a good working relation. As an important rule, don't make yourself dependent of a single member of a stakeholder group! Any person's personal view is important, but it is his/her personal view.

The foremost way to utilize such existing contacts is to ask for the recommendations of others. You can then still decide whether to follow any such recommendation.