

Freight Quality Partnerships: An International Survey

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This research is part of on-going work to investigate the role of public-private freight partnerships in improving urban freight policies and operations. The presentation reports on a survey of 25 partnerships from Europe, Asia, North and South America (the majority are from Europe). The research aimed to identify similarities and differences between the partnerships, evaluate the main successes and achievements and note any weaknesses. The end result should be a step towards helping partnerships to be more effective.

The main method used for this stage of the research has been a qualitative structured questionnaire sent to the freight partnerships and addressed to the person responsible for the coordination of each partnership. The sample selection has been guided by existing knowledge of partnerships and then by asking informed experts to suggest additional respondents. Where possible supporting information, data and examples has been gathered about the achievements of the partnerships. The research is essentially exploratory and seeks to identify whether issues such as the extent to which partnerships are formally constituted, the size of the partnerships (in terms of number of participants) and the way the partnerships are managed (or facilitated) appears to have any influence on the success they achieve. A number of interviews have also been conducted during the research and the two researchers have also actively participated in two of the partnerships.

The results of this survey are in line with previous results from partnership studies. Many of the responding partnership focus on quite specific outcomes for example detailed problems of loading and unloading in the urban area. Often the aim of their work has been to reduce the risk of parking fines and to improve the accessibility to the shops and restaurants in the urban area that are dependent on heavy goods deliveries.

The outputs reported in the survey are more or less equally distributed between physical outputs (for example changes in design, the provision of information and so on) and what might be termed 'soft results'. Examples of the soft results include improved communication and the indirect better cooperation between stakeholders that takes place outside the partnership meetings because they have got to know each other through the partnership.

The responses illustrate that almost all the partnerships are achieving valuable results often with relatively limited budgets. The results from the partnerships highlight the importance of a much better engagement between the public and private sectors. Partnerships are not the only way to achieve this interaction but the survey from various countries does show that freight partnerships are a key approach to work together to improve urban freight practices.

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