

## Survey of Local Business Logistic Practices in Brussels Historic Centre

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 April 2018

**472 business interviews within or just outside the central pedestrian area of the City of Brussels, Belgium.**

In Spring 2017, The ULB undertook a survey for Brussels Mobility to understand how shopkeepers adapt to changes like the Brussels pedestrian area expansion; in order to shape mobility and urban freight transport policies.

Sometimes difficult face-to-face interviews highlighted objections to the pedestrian area expansion, and mistrust of local institutions. The target 400 answers (response rate of +/- 50%) was reached in 2.5 months, using a customised methodology.



Significant increase in the knowledge of shopkeepers' servicing and logistics practices



Continuous review of performance to improve survey methodology during the study period

# 472

High level of engagement 472 respondents

Efficient questionnaire and interview design: 20 minutes average questionnaire completion time

## Scope of works

The survey set out to better understand the impact of the Brussels pedestrian area expansion on businesses and deliveries; in order to plan a pilot project to better organise delivery and servicing in this area.

The survey provides a comprehensive view on the type and amount of goods (and businesses), timing of deliveries, vehicles used, waste collection and disposal and organisation of deliveries through own account transport or subcontracting.

Other questions focused on delivery behaviour since the extension of the pedestrian area, environmental perception, and satisfaction of businesses (deliveries, mobility, access for deliveries...).

Using the Regional Agency for Commerce database, a sample of businesses was selected for interview. Interviewers (students) received a detailed sheet for each business with name, address, single identifier code, a map and a paper questionnaire. If possible, interviews were conducted directly at the business address. Paper questionnaires proved easier for the interviewer.

## Outcomes

Findings included:

- Approx. 50% of all deliveries made with vans under 3.5T
- Businesses on the pedestrian area edge are less satisfied with their deliveries than those in the central area – they cite negative impacts of the new traffic plan putting more pressure on them without adding benefit
- Businesses across the whole study area complain about poor access and inefficient enforcement of rules (i.e. respect of loading bays)
- There was no reported change in reliability of deliveries since the introduction of the pedestrian area
- Some sectors, such as supermarkets and HORECA (hotels, restaurants, catering), require more heavy trucks than others, notably because of beverages
- Of the new logistics solutions presented, approx. 30% businesses were interested in e-vehicle delivery, 20% in consolidated delivery location, 18% in bicycle delivery, and 8% in night-time deliveries.

## Lessons learnt

Good response rate due to thorough survey preparation and follow-up, flexible organisation and trust in interviewers. Taking into account the cultural context of the neighbourhood or shop is important. When designing new traffic plans or a pedestrian area, focus also on neighbourhoods at the edge of the target area, which may suffer most from effects of change. Even if transporters adapt to almost all changes and difficulties, this does add to the cost and challenges facing businesses in the city centre.

## Future of the project

Survey results fed into the Brussels Mobility monitoring database, and into the ongoing policy and pilots being developed to improve urban freight transport. The survey method can be easily repeated and updated at a later stage when required.



Think through your survey from the interviewee point of view

Take the interviewee context into account (who and when?)

Focus on what you really need to know and what you can really use to inform policy and practice (to improve a situation)



Time spent on preparation is time saved on execution/analysis

Answers give nice figures to analyse, but often remain subjective and need critical evaluation

All kinds of businesses report highly variable delivery patterns, no one exactly knows when deliveries happen. This means i.e. that loading bay time windows must be as wide as possible in shopping areas



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Summary of the action plan for a goods transport serving the Stalingrad-Lemonnier neighbourhood.



<http://urbact.eu/freight-tails-partner-integrated-action-plans>