

LIVING LAB XCHANGE

DEALING WITH COVID-19 IN THE SUSTAINABLE LIVING LABS

WHY

As part of the innovation program of the Topsector Logistics, and more specific the Sustainable Living Labs program of NWO and TKI Dinalog, 8 so-called Living Labs combine fundamental and applied research into real-life logistics settings. The Sustainable Living Lab program is organized around 5 themes:

1. Emission-Free Transport Networks
2. Sustainable Urban Mobility and Transport
3. Shorter Logistic Chains and Consolidation
4. Self-Driving and Self-Cruising Transport
5. Innovative Business and Organisation Models.

Living Lab Xchange

On January 19 2021, the Living Lab community came together in a so-called Xchange; an online event to exchange approaches and experiences with and between the different Living Labs. One of the sessions was on the topic of dealing with the Covid-19 crisis.

WHAT

The Covid-19 crisis has imposed numerous restrictions and challenges for the 8 Living Labs that started in the end of 2019 and early 2020. The shift from a 'normal' setting towards a largely online digital work environment has impacted the planned workpackage activities and in the interaction and collaboration between consortium partners.

Challenges for the Living Labs due to Covid-19

The different challenges faced by the consortia are among others related to:

- Difficulties related to the planning and execution of physical experiments in the lab,
- The hiring of and working with (foreign) students (PhD) has become more difficult,
- Private partnering companies that are struggling to (continue to) participate in the project activities (surveys, internships etc.),



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HOW

The Living Labs are faced with restrictions by the measures taken to constrain the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly impeding mobility, working at business location and face-to-face contact.

Managing a Living Lab project

So far, the Living Lab projects have mainly focused on trying to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 crisis through measures of rescheduling, replanning and finding alternative methods for interacting with stakeholders and students within the project.

The Living Labs adjust for dealing with COVID-19 by:

1. Consortium: Interaction within the consortium face-to-face is not possible, and should be mainly online
2. Research: Some research methods, especially with interventions or analysis on-site or including many people, are not possible
3. Business: The priority of business partners has been on dealing with the crisis.

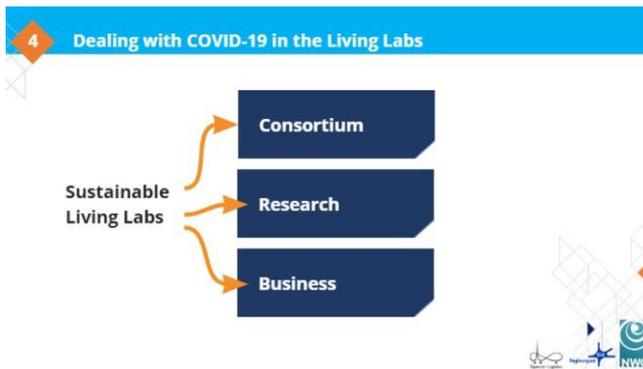
RESULT



Challenges due to the COVID-19 measures

Solutions that are being considered or (already) applied are:

- The preparation of robust back-up plans, focusing on what is still possible (instead of on what is not possible)
- To plan more structured project meetings with stakeholders and PhD students
- Alternative financial constructions with project partners; e.g. to replace and compensate part of the cash-contributions of some private consortium partners by additional in-kind contributions of other private consortium partners
- The postponement of project activities
- Increased flexibility in terms of extended deadlines for project deliverables and milestones
- More exchange of experiences and meetings with other Living Labs.
- Replacement of physical meeting hubs by business developer approach of SMEs.



Solutions approaches in dealing with the COVID-19 restrictions - Miro board breakout session Living Lab Xchange

TAKE AWAYS

- In the 'longer' term the restrictions will eventually and inevitably lead to a need to have more flexibility and options with regard to the time and finance requirements for the Living Labs.
- Increase the interaction with other Living Labs. To share solutions that work.

Conclusion

Apart from finding solutions on how to deal with the Covid-19 crisis by the Living Lab consortia themselves, it is also important to consult and discuss with NWO and TKI Dinalog on what is possible. To exchange experiences and solutions between the Living Labs and with NWO and TKI Dinalog and for example the need and possibilities to change the formal project agreements.

The research programme Sustainable Living Labs is co-financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Taskforce for Applied Research (SIA) and the Top Sector Logistics and the programme is monitored regarding progress and development by TKI Dinalog.

