

REPORT



City food recovery vs. food poverty

27/29 OCTOBER 2021 / MILAN, ITALY



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Introduction



From 27 to 29 October 2021, the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) and Food Bank representatives from Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and Slovenia gathered in Milan for a three-day skill-sharing session organised by the European Food Banks Federation in collaboration with Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus (FBAO).

Under the umbrella title “City food recovery vs. food poverty”, the focus of the meeting laid on the recovery and redistribution of fresh and cooked food from the distribution and catering sectors. One pillar of the session was the exchange of **experiences and best practices** among the participants, which allowed for the identification of common challenges and opportunities.

Based on short presentations, an overview could be gained on the state of the art in the different countries, especially in regard

to existing initiatives and arising hurdles. In order to demonstrate role model examples, the idea of **learning by watching** was the guiding principle of the whole session: visiting the food recovery and redistribution operations in Trento where the web application **BringTheFood** is applied for example by **Banco Alimentare del Trentino Alto Adige - Onlus**, witnessing **food recovery and redistribution operations** in the urban context by

Associazione Banco Alimentare della Lombardia “Danilo Fossati” Onlus, and taking a tour through the **logistics platform of Banco Alimentare** in Parma. All these activities gave the Food Banks’ representatives the opportunity to gather information and inspiration.



[Watch the movie !](#)



The aim of this report is to give a **concise overview on the activities carried out during the session and summarise the key take-aways. Thereby, the pooled knowledge gained by the participants can be made accessible for FEBA members or other stakeholders as a road map to the recovery and redistribution of fresh and prepared foodstuff.**

¹ Estimates of European food waste levels’ – FUSIONS, March 2016.

² EUROSTAT, 2018.



Context

Annually, an estimated volume of 88 million tonnes of food, equalling up to 20% of the entire production, is wasted in the European Union¹, whilst 33 million people are not able to afford meals of good quality every other day.² To solve this **abundance – scarcity paradox**, on 16 October 2017, the European Commission adopted **the EU guidelines on food donation** to lift barriers to the recovery and redistribution of safe and edible food to those in need.



When food surpluses occur, the best destination, which ensures the highest value use of edible food resources, is to redistribute these for human consumption.

Food donation must always comply with the **General Food Law** (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) and EU rules on food hygiene (Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, 853/2004, and 2017/625).

Concerning the latter, recent initiatives have been taken to amend the regulations and open up new possibilities to **donate food after the 'best before' date** (Commission Regulation (EU) 2021/382 of 3 March 2021) and **freeze meat at retail stage** to facilitate its safe redistribution to Food Banks and other charities (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1374 of 12 April 2021).

To allow for this, certain conditions must be fulfilled:

- If a 'use by' date is applied, before the expiry of that date
- without undue delay to a temperature of -18 C or lower
- ensuring that the date of freezing is documented and provided either on the label or by other means
- excluding meat that has been frozen before (defrosted meat)

- in accordance with any condition laid down by the competent authorities for freezing and further use as food.

Besides this EU-level regulation, the scale and scope of rules may differ between Member States (Fig.1).



As regards the hospitality, catering, and food service sectors as sources of origin, additional precautions must be taken to ensure food safety, for instance the cooling of meals at the end of service.

Despite the existence of EU-level and Member State specific regulatory frameworks, the recovery and redistribution of fresh and prepared food remains a challenging endeavour for many Food Banks. To overcome perceived hurdles, the topic should be addressed to a bigger extent in order to **foster the exchange of knowledge and enable the leapfrogging of complications** inherent to the handling of perishable goods.

The objective of this skill-sharing session has been to contribute to the fulfilment of that task by offering inspiration regarding the scope of possibilities and the necessary requirements to exploit them.

Fig.1 Examples of guidelines for food donation in EU Member States



- Belgian food safety agency

Circulaire relative aux dispositions applicables aux banques alimentaires et associations caritatives



MINISTÈRE DE L'AGRICULTURE ET DE L'ALIMENTATION

- French Ministry of Agriculture, Agrifood, and Forestry

Guide des bonnes pratiques d'hygiène de la distribution de produits alimentaires par les organismes caritatifs



- State Food and Veterinary Service, Lithuania

Įsakymas dėl labdarai ir paramai skirto maisto tvarkymo aprašo patvirtinimo



- German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture

Leitfaden für die Weitergabe von Lebensmitteln an soziale Einrichtungen – Rechtliche Aspekte



Foodstuffs donated to food aid

- Finnish food safety agency



Food Donation Guidance to Charities and Businesses

- The Food Safety Authority of Ireland



Recupero, raccolta e distribuzione di cibo ai fini di solidarietà sociale

- Validated by the Italian Ministry of Health

[Check the Resources library of the European Commission for more info](#)



Each city is a microcosmos of its own kind – a notion reiterated in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which challenged the smooth operating of the different system elements coming together in an urban environment. **Panic-buying, food shortages** resulting from disruptions of the supply chain, and **increasing prices** are boosting levels of **food poverty especially in the urban context**, imposing the largest burden on the most vulnerable groups of society.³

Moreover, trends such as digitalisation and remote working can stimulate urban segregation, fostering inequality and social exclusion, and potentially aggravating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, among others of SDG 2, the attainment of zero hunger.⁴

A crucial component of future-ready cities is a **resilient food infrastructure** based on local food systems and short supply chains to drive the transition from a linear to a **circular economy** and not just prevent food waste but also provide nutritious food for its inhabitants in a reliable manner. In this regard, as explained in more detail below, the **Siticibo programme of Banco Alimentare** constitutes a flagship project for the recovery and redistribution of fresh and cooked food from the catering and retail sectors in an urban context.

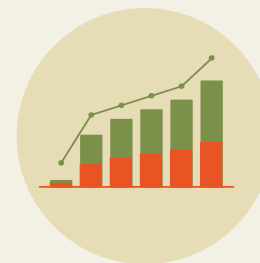


As a consequence, Food Banks are confronted with raising demands for food assistance and, given the unprecedented circumstances, must, on the one hand, respond quickly, and on the other hand, develop long-term strategies to cope with the “new normal”. Both requires the collaboration with public authorities, different food business operators as well as a wide range of stakeholders and at best, the crisis is used as an opportunity to develop more resilient and innovative approaches to fight food poverty.



Sharing Experiences / Country Presentations

After a guided tour through the warehouse of Associazione Banco Alimentare della Lombardia “Danilo Fossati” Onlus (ABAL), the objective of this session was to gain an **overview on the country-specific state of the art** regarding the recovery and redistribution of fresh and prepared food from the retail and catering sectors. With this in mind, the floor has been given to the **Food Bank representatives** who held a **short presentation** guided by the following questions



- ➔ Is your organisation already recovering and redistributing food from the distribution and catering sectors?
- ➔ If yes, can you share more details regarding processes, tools, etc.?
- ➔ What are the most important results and data obtained?
- ➔ What challenges and successes did you experience?
- ➔ What are your future goals and objectives?

³ Toffolutti et al., 'Is the COVID-19 pandemic turning into a European food crisis?', *The European Journal of Public Health*, 30(4), 2020, pp. 626f.

⁴ United Nations, 'Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World', 2020.



Case study / Česká Federace Potravinových Bank (Czech Republic)



Rostislav Ráček,
Project Manager

Key figures

+7,007

tonnes of food
recovered in 2020

Redistributed to ca.

160,000

people in need

With the help of

85 permanent
employees and

38 volunteers

In cooperation with

1,012

charitable organisations

→ Challenges

- Czech law does not specifically regulate and allow the recovery of prepared food. School canteens, for instance, do not own the food they prepare but it is still in the possession of the state. Thus, it cannot be handed over to Food Banks.

→ Experience

- Different Food Banks initiated pioneer projects to conserve perishable food and thereby extend the shelf life:

Food Bank of Prague: Zbytkoláda

- Pickle fruits and vegetables to preserve them
- Processing takes place in a charity training kitchen, which renders the food "home-made" but ensures professional supervision
- Project is supported by the retailer Tesco guaranteeing hygiene standards and food safety

Food Bank of South Bohemia: Bread beer

- Beer is brewed using bread as a main ingredient
- Project is carried out in cooperation with South Bohemia University and takes place in university laboratories
- Still in an experimental stage

Food Banks in several regions: "Food not Bombs"

- Volunteers cook meals from recovered food and provide them to homeless people
- Preparation takes place in "home kitchen"

Objectives

- Increase the volume of recovered food to reduce food waste and support more people in need

- Build a professional kitchen in the logistic centre to facilitate the accomplishment of hygiene standards
- Lobby for the legality of donating and recovering cooked food
- Educate the public (schools, companies, organisations, government) on the potential inherent in the recovery of prepared meals

Case study / Magyar Élelmiszerbank Egyesület (Hungary)



Balázs Cseh,
President

Key figures

+8,400 tonnes of food
recovered in 2020

Redistributed to ca.

250,000 people
in need

With the help of

13 permanent
employees and

30

volunteers

In cooperation with

450 charitable
organisations

→ Challenges

- Recovering and redistributing prepared food is more complex due to the hygiene and food safety standards
- It is related to higher costs, for instance for professional equipment (packaging, blast chillers, etc.)
- Complying with EU regulations can be challenging but overall is feasible
- Given its heterogeneity, different segments of the hospitality sector need different approaches



→ Experience

- As regards the restauration sector: researched and visited / analysed existing initiatives
- Started a cooperation with the Hungarian National Food Chain Safety Authority
- Initiated pilot projects to test logistic system
- Prepared guidance documents
- Evaluated the interest of both the donor and the recipient side

→ Objectives

- Built partnerships with entities of the hospitality sector
- Gain knowledge and establish / improve the processes

Case study / Banca de alimente (Moldova)



Igor Belei,
President

Key figures

+222 tonnes of food recovered in 2020

Redistributed to ca.
12,000 people in need

With the help of
3 permanent employees and **26** volunteers

In cooperation with
150 charitable organisations

→ Challenges

- Due to the absence of governmental regulation, the recovery and redistribution of food takes place in a legal "grey zone"
- Health authorities require the compliance with very strict standards

→ Objectives

- Learn from existing projects
- Foster the adoption of national legislation

Case study / SIBAHE (Slovenia)



Alen Novit,
Director

→ Challenges

- Lack of capacity in terms of money, workforce, storage space, and vehicles to recover food from the HORECA sector
- Charities do not have the equipment and experience to handle and redistribute prepared food
- Supermarkets sometimes donate unsafe food, already inedible for human consumption, which makes daily sorting indispensable

→ Objectives

- Scale up the recovered volume from the retail sector
- Realise plans to recover frozen meat and fish
- Take inspiration from existing projects

Key figures

+240
tonnes of food recovered in 2020

Redistributed to ca.
10,000 people in need

With the help of
10 permanent volunteers and **100** occasional volunteers

In cooperation with
46 charitable organisations



Case study / Federația Băncilor pentru Alimente din România (Romania)



Gabriel Sescu,
President

Key figures

+2,363

tonnes of food
recovered in 2020

Redistributed to ca.

131,300

people in need

With the help of

19 permanent
employees and

442 volunteers

In cooperation with

485

charitable organisations

→ Challenges

- The Romanian law does not allow the donation of fresh meat and fish
- No experience regarding the recovery of prepared food

→ Experience

- Restaurants are supported in their efforts to manage and reduce the amount of food waste

→ Objectives

- Increase the collaboration with the hospitality sector
- Set up a Siticibo project following the footsteps of Banco Alimentare

Banca pentru Alimente București (BpA București) is FEBA Associate Member in Romania and officially joined FEBA at the Annual Convention 2019 in Rome. Since then, the network of Food Banks in Romania has grown and today counts 9 Food Banks in Bucharest, Brașov, Cluj, Constanța, Craiova, Galați, Oradea, Roman, and Timișoara. The Federația Băncilor pentru Alimente din România - FBAR which brings together all these 9 Food Banks, was established at the beginning of 2021.



Learning by watching

The entire skill-sharing session was themed around the idea of learning by watching: giving participants the opportunity to become first-hand witnesses of the recovery and redistribution of prepared and fresh food from the catering and retail sector.

A / Learning by watching: BringTheFood / A Web application to manage food recovery

Shair.Tech S.r.l., a socially-vocated innovative startup managed by Adolfo Villafiorita, presented the web application **BringTheFood (BTF)** which is used by Banco Alimentare to **manage surplus volumes** from restaurants, the retail sector, and producer organisations.

Traditionally, this activity is coordinated based on "informal" telephone or messaging communication between the responsible volunteers of Banco Alimentare, often happening simultaneously on multiple



btf

Adolfo Villafiorita,
CEO, Shair.Tech S.r.l.



channels. As a result, the recovery of perishable fresh and prepared foods, in which speed and accuracy are key to guarantee food safety and prevent food waste, is aggravated. Moreover, recovering and allocating large quantities to several charitable organisations according to their demands can become a challenging endeavour. Hence, the introduction of an **enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution** like BringTheFood offers the opportunity to **increase the speed and effectiveness of the recovery** by improving the management capabilities.

While operations can be scaled up, data transmission and processing are facilitated, making the operations running more smoothly. Besides that, extensive levels of **high-quality information** generated through the system allows precise analyses on the origin and volume of recovered food to tackle food waste and support people in need.

BringTheFood operations

- 1 Food donors post their donation details (recovery location, recovery day, food quantity, food typology, expiry date, etc.) on BTF platform.

BringTheFood covers all the steps of the donation supply chain and all different types of products:

- Donation types: Regular/ Intermittent, Big/Small, Fresh/Prepared donations
- Recovery flows: Recover – Store – Distribute and Collect – Distribute (Siticibo operations)
- Operation Models: Direct and delegated redistribution



BringTheFood allows smart food recovery:

- Planning collection trips using the vehicle Routing Problem algorithm
- Estimating recovery and redistribution costs and the value of recovered goods
- Reporting on the environmental footprint of operations
- Selecting data monitoring (e.g., temperature at collection, trays given to donors)

BringTheFood allows smart data management:

- Importing and managing data with OCR, which automatically recognizes donation items and classifies them according to defined rules
- Exporting data to SAP and other systems

BringTheFood main features

- **Managing and monitoring** surplus food recovery and/or donations from donors to final beneficiaries
- **Collecting data** and statistics for reporting
- **Engaging** donors and partners
- **Storing fiscal documents** from donors and generating administrative declarations for authorities

DETTAGLI DELLA DONAZIONE		
DONATA	RITIRATA	RIDONATA
INFORMAZIONI	RICONSEGNA	STORICO
Piatti donati		
Piatto	Quantità	Riconsegnato
Pane		
Pane	3.0 kg	✓

- 2 A Banco Alimentare supervisor receives the information posted on BTF platform, (manually or automatically), assigns the food recovery to Banco Alimentare co-workers and monitor it.

- 3 BringTheFood provides the book-keeping, generates, and stores fiscal documents useful for both internal and partner reporting.

Amongs its users is Associazione Banco Alimentare Trentino Alto Adige ONLUS, which welcomed the FEBA staff and the representatives of Banca de Alimente from Moldova and Banca pentru Alimente from Romania, showing their daily Siticibo activities integrated with BringTheFood web application.



B / Learning by watching: following the Siticibo Van of Banco Alimentare

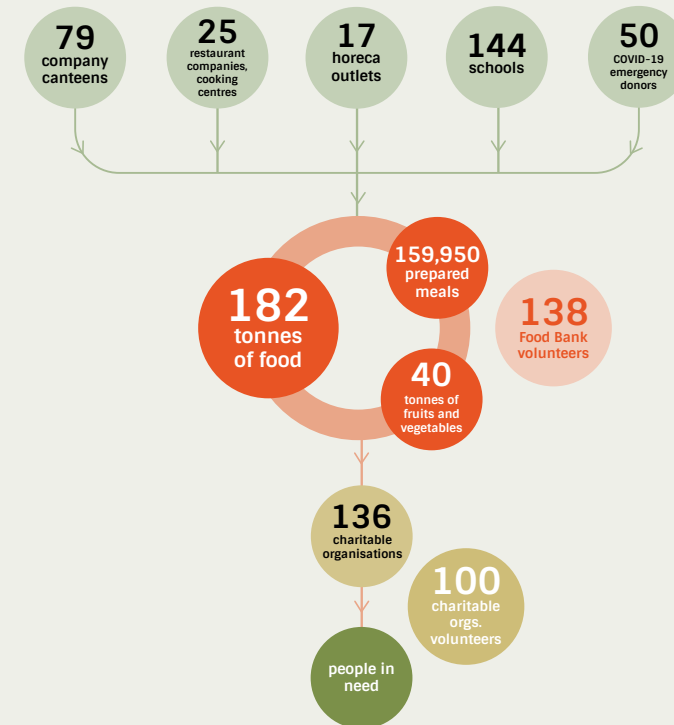
Associazione Banco Alimentare della Lombardia “Danilo Fossati” Onlus (ABAL) operates the Siticibo programme, which was set up by Banco Alimentare in 2003 to recover food surpluses from suppliers such as supermarket chains, catering and hospitality industry, and cruise ships.

Key aspects in its implementation, which was facilitated through the Italian Law No 166/2016 on the donation and redistribution of surplus food, the so-called Gadda Law, are the protection of the end beneficiary, food hygiene and safety, and the protection of the liability of all actors involved.

Law No 166/2016 on the donation and redistribution of surplus food (“Gadda Law”)

- Creates a comprehensive regulatory framework by pooling rules regarding fiscal incentives, civil liability, and hygiene and food safety procedures
- Provides definitions, e.g. for the terms “food business operator”, “surplus food”, or “food waste”
- Encourages companies to donate surplus food instead of wasting it by simplifying administrative procedures
- Establishes a hierarchy for the use of foodstuff, prioritising the recovery for human consumption over the use as animal feed or for energy generation.

Fig.2 The impact of Siticibo Ristorazione in Milan in 2020



During the **learning by watching** session on 27 October, participants had the opportunity to witness first-hand the recovery of **fresh food and cooked meals** by following the itinerary of refrigerated vans of Banco Alimentare through Milan.

The first stop was the **canteen of Zambon Company S.p.A.** operated by Gruppo Serenissima Ristorazione, where food prepared for the employees on the previous day is cooled down and maintained at constant temperature by using a blast

chiller. The kitchen staff **places the food in sealed aluminium trays** early in the morning and a team of ABAL volunteers picks it up. Following hygiene protocols, ABAL volunteers wear disposable gloves and hats when entering the kitchen. In order to guarantee hygiene and food safety, they measure the food temperature, which must be between 0 and 4°C at all times, with a sanitized thermometer.



To maintain the cold chain, the packages are **stored in an insulated thermo box and placed in the refrigerated vehicle** immediately after reception.



Given that transparency and traceability are crucial when handling food as sensitive as cooked means, the ABAL volunteers fill out detection forms indicating the number of portions, the type of food, and the temperature. Additionally, the canteen personnel attach a label to each tray, which specifies the ingredients, production data and time, as well as information regarding allergy risks. After the end of the recovery tour, the food is delivered to near-by charities, where it is heated up and consumed by people in need.

Establishing a **good relationship between Banco Alimentare and the donating companies as well as the involved charitable organisations** is crucial. While the packing and labelling of the food is concomitant to increased effort for the kitchen staff, the extra material also has its price. In case of the visited canteen, the additional costs related to the aluminium trays for instance are covered by the company in contract with the operator.



Subsequent to the canteen visit, participants could observe the **recovery of food from two supermarkets, namely Lidl and Esselunga**. Regarding the former, mainly fruits, vegetables, and bakery products that cannot be sold anymore but are still of high quality are donated to Banco Alimentare.

In addition to these food categories, the latter retail chain also donates dairy products and fresh meat, which is withdrawn from the shelves two days before the expiry date.



C / Learning by watching: visit to the Siticibo programme and the Hub of Banco Alimentare in Milan



A visit to one of the City of Milan's Food Waste Hub further gave participants the chance to learn about the process of **managing and redistributing foodstuff in an urban context**.



As a winner of the **2021 Earthshot Prize** issued by the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, the City of Milan's Food Waste Hubs were recently honoured as one of the best initiatives fostering a waste-free world. ABAL belongs to the team of stakeholders operating the hubs and thereby does not just actively contribute to the cushioning of the climate crisis but also supports large numbers of people in need.

After recovering a daily average 600-700kg of ambient and fresh food from retailers in the area, the Siticibo van delivers it to the local hub where it is documented and sorted by Siticibo volunteers. In the afternoon, four to five charitable organisations daily pick up the specific volume and type of food allocated in proportion to the number and characteristics of the people they serve.

Before handing it out, the goods are weighted and paperwork completed to ensure transparency and traceability.

In order to guarantee the maintenance of the cold chain, products that must be refrigerated are packed into thermo boxes and

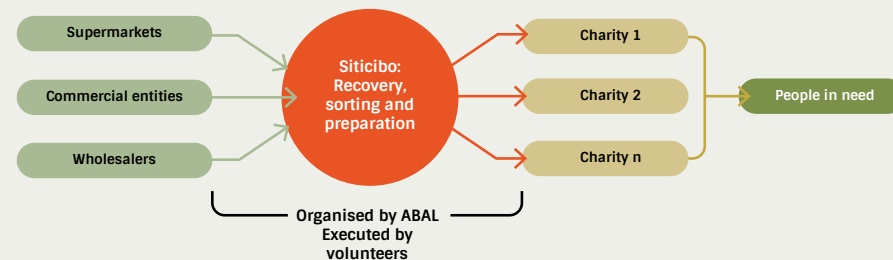


for reasons of food safety, the transportation time for frozen and fresh food shall not exceed 15 min and 60 min, respectively.

ABAL is in charge of coordinating the Siticibo operations, which represent an example of micro-logistics. Unlike a macro-logistic system, it involves no centralised warehouse.



Fig.3 The Siticibo recovery and redistribution process



Objectives of the Siticibo project

- **Reducing the distance** between Banco Alimentare and its affiliated charitable organisations
- Retrieving mainly **fresh food** from supermarkets and neighbourhood shops and redistribute it within the same day
- Guaranteeing **food safety** by maintaining the cold chain up to the delivery
- Providing charitable organisations helping people in need with a mix of products to support a **healthy and nutritious diet**
- **Raising awareness** on the issue of food poverty among citizens of the area and involve them as volunteers
- Creating and strengthening **local ties and solidarity** going beyond food and towards social inclusion

D / Learning by watching: visit to the Logistics Platform in Parma

During the skill-sharing session, participants also had the opportunity to travel to Parma and visit the large **logistics platform of Banco Alimentare**. Due to its geographically strategic position, the logistics platform serves as the ideal location for a handling terminal.

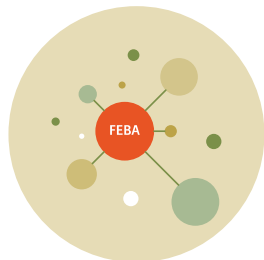
The warehouse is operated by Banco Alimentare since 2009 and comprises a total area of 5,000 m². From here, food is redistributed to the end recipients with the support of 270 charities, of which around 30 per day pick up their share. Additionally, it is transported to smaller warehouses and hubs across the country. Large amounts of the food are provided through the **Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)**. Other sources are **surplus quantities obtained through food donations, and fruits and vegetables withdrawn from the markets** as a price stabilisation mechanism.

Given the availability of large cold rooms, both positive and negative, chilled and frozen food can be stored safely.





Wrap-up Session



The last day of the three-days event began with a wrap-up session where participants shared their thoughts and impressions. During an exchange of opinions, witnessed activities and gained knowledge were discussed to reinforce new learnings.

Experiencing on the ground how activities are carried out constituted a chance for the Food Banks' representatives to interact with the people involved by engaging in question-answer dialogues. Moreover, being physically present reinforced the belief that the projects could serve as a blueprint, which, however, cannot be transferred one to one to the specific countries but must be adjusted on a case-by-case basis.

While possible next steps to foster the recovery and redistribution of prepared and fresh food from the catering and retails

sectors have been outlined during the session already, the idea is to set up **concrete action plans** for the different countries, aligned to the particular circumstances. FEBA will foster and facilitate this endeavour.

In a nutshell, the skill-sharing session not just offered the participants an environment to **discuss previous experiences and Food Bank-specific projects**, but also provided them with **ideas and concrete inputs** on what is possible and what are the necessary requirements.

Programme

27 October

→ Extra programme for participants from Moldova and Romania

5:30	Departure from the hotel and van journey to Trento
9:00 - 12:00	Learning by watching: witnessing the food recovery from the large-scale retail sector and discovering the management system BringTheFood

→ General programme

16:00 - 17:30	Guided tour through the premises of Associazione Banco Alimentare della Lombardia "Danilo Fossati" Onlus (ABAL)
17:30 - 19:30	Skill-sharing session: presentations held by participants to exchange experiences
19:30 - 21:00	Dinner at ABAL

28 October

7:00 - 9:00	Learning by watching: recovery of fresh and cooked food from the catering sector
9:30 - 12:00	Learning by watching: recovery of food from the large-scale retail sector
12:30	Lunch
14:00 - 16:00	Learning by watching: redistribution of fresh food from the large-scale retail sector to charitable organisations at the Banco Alimentare Siticibo Hub of Milan
19:00	Aperitivo in the centre of Milan

29 October

9:00 - 12:00	Wrap-up session: lessons learned and next steps at social centre meeting room
→ Extra programme for participants from Moldova and Romania	
12:30 - 14:00	Van journey to Parma
14:00 - 15:00	Lunch
15:00 - 17:00	Visit to the Banco Alimentare logistics platform for food donation in Parma
17:00 - 18:30	Return journey to Milan



Acknowledgement

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We are grateful to ALDI, Esselunga, LIDL as well as Gruppo Serenissima Ristorazione operating the canteen of Zambon Company S.p.A. for giving us the possibility of witnessing the recovery of surplus food and for providing interesting insights from the donors’ perspective.

Last but not least, thanks to all the participants for attending the session and enriching it with valuable insights.

Thank you



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