

MPA 2018 AWARDED CITY

❖ *Highest Score Award*

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| City | GHENT |
| Country | Belgium |
| Title of policy or practice | Foodsavers Ghent |
| Category | Food waste prevention, reduction and management |
| Practice description | <p>At the city level there are significant volumes of food leftovers available through classic wholesale distribution and retail systems. At the same time cities are trying to tackle food poverty and malnourishment within their urban context. In Ghent we noticed that there was a higher offer of food leftovers than what was being recovered and redistributed by social organizations. The City of Ghent and the social welfare department built scenarios with the stakeholders involved and decided to launch a logistic platform to better match offer and demand of food leftovers. This process took about 2 years of discussions and research. In March 2017 the Foodsavers platform was launched. It brings together food leftovers from the wholesale market and the local retailers and redistributes them to social organizations in Ghent. The organizations are a mix of food banks, social restaurants and social supermarkets. The goal is threefold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate target: by avoiding food to be wasted, we save on CO2 emissions. According to the FAO 100 tons of food waste in Ghent would be equivalent to avoiding 254 tons of CO2 emissions. The goal was to avoid at least 100 tons of food being wasted in 2017. - Social employment: the Foodsavers platforms is being operated by people coming from long-term unemployment. The project trains them in logistic skills and prepares them for the regular labour market. The goal was to employ 10 to 12 people coming from unemployment and with difficult access to the labour market. - Fighting poverty: the food leftovers are being distributed to people in poverty. It focuses on fresh, healthy food and should thus increase access to healthy food for those groups. Nevertheless, the project is not considered as a structural way of fighting poverty because it doesn't tackle the causes of food poverty. The whole topic of food poverty and determining causes for lack of access to healthy, sustainable food is being taken up in another project. <p>After 10 months the results are overwhelming. 300 tons of food have been recovered and have been redistributed. That equals savings of about 762 tons of CO2 emissions. The biggest part of leftovers are fruit and vegetables. A total of 172.000 portions have been redistributed to about 19.000 people. This means both food packs for families in need as well as individual meals in social restaurants. 19 people coming from unemployment have already been put to work though Foodsavers. Leftovers are being distributed through 58 social organizations. 24 retailers, 1 wholesale market, 2 distribution centers of retailers, 1 organic farm and 1 company have provided leftovers. The project has been very successful and has received a lot of study visits from other cities, locally and internationally and has already been awarded three times.</p> |

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| Date of start and state (ongoing/completed) | <p>March 2017</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |
| Institutional location(s) and actors | <p>City of Ghent: climate and environmental department</p> <p>OCMW: social welfare department (coordinates the project)</p> <p>Other partners of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offering leftovers: REO (fresh wholesale market), retailers Makro, Delhaize, Colruyt, Aldi and Lidl, one organic farm and one company - 58 food banks, social restaurants and social supermarkets <p>We look into opportunities to include new partners, such as schools.</p> |
| Approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings with social organizations and interested retailer to look for solutions with existing people and logistic capacities (2014) - Research to build new scenarios in a participatory way on how best to use the potential of food leftovers and to develop the business case and investments needed (2015) - Political agreement on approach and investments needed (2016) - Preparations needed: cooled trucks, cooled distribution cell, hiring people (2016-Q1 2017) - Launch of first operational phase (March 2017) - Further investments and scaling up (June 2017) - Annual reporting for 2017 and action plan for 2018 (Q1 2018) |
| References | <p>On 8 December 2016 the Council of the Welfare service formally approved the project and budgets needed. The formal decision can be found in the document in annex (in Dutch).</p> <p>It is also taken up as an initiative in our overview document of Ghent en Garde, with our operational goals for the future. See page 22.</p> <p>Beginning of 2018 an annual report has been edited. The summary can be found in the flyer attached.</p> |
| Innovation | <p>The methodology of picking up food and redistributing it is not innovative. Unlocking the potential which the scale of a city offers, is important though and innovative in many ways. Cities are in full exploration of their role in the food system. Lots of initiatives happen at a very local, small-scale level. The role of the city can be of importance in creating bigger volumes and bigger impact. It provides professionalization for local volunteering initiatives. This also implies that the role of a city does not remain limited to policy work and legislation but that it takes up an important operational role focused on building societal value.</p> <p>Another innovative aspect is the key role of social employment. The whole operational side is managed by people coming from long-term unemployment and being trained in labour market skills that are rare. Logistical skills are highly sought after. The working experience Foodsavers offers is thus of high added value for the people engaged. The aim is to use the working experience of</p> |

Foodsavers as a stepping stone to access the regular labour market. The number of unemployed people being employed through Foodsavers is considerable. It has employed 19 people in the first 10 months. The high interest given to Foodsavers by cities from Belgium and abroad (up to China!) proves the pioneering role of this initiative.

Impact

At the start of the project, clear targets were set forward:

1. Redistributing 100 tons of potential food waste per year and thus avoiding 254 tons of CO2 being emitted
2. Employ 10 to 12 people coming out of long-term unemployment
3. Better access to healthy, fresh food for people in poverty through a collaboration with at least 20 social organizations

After ten months of operations we have evaluated the figures that have surpassed all expectations. After ten months, the first results are the following:

- tons of food redistributed: 300,34 tons composed of 64,395 items.
- partners providing for leftovers: 24 retailers, one wholesale market, 2 distribution centers of retailers, 1 organic farm and 1 company.
- partners distributing the leftovers to people in poverty: 58 local poverty organisations and social restaurants based in Ghent
- number of unique persons in poverty having received products or food baskets: 18,971
- percentage of fresh fruit and vegetables on total amount of products redistributed: 68%
- reduction of CO2 emissions: 762 tons of CO2
- number of people put to work coming from long-term unemployment: 19

Inclusion

This project is a clear example of thematic inclusion. It is the result of a structural collaboration between different departments within the city: the climate and environmental department, the department of work and social welfare department. The project responds to the objectives of those three departments involved and is also the result of bringing together their respective budgets in order to make it possible. The project has thus also passed different approval procedures at different management teams.

Apart from the thematic inclusion, there is also clear social inclusion. The project has been developed in a participatory approach with many civil society organizations and private business (retail and wholesale market) involved. They have co-created the most relevant approach for Ghent and are also strongly engaged in the further development and scaling up of the project. There is a continuous feedback loop with the different partners and stakeholders in order to further improve the service of redistributing food surpluses. The service and added value Foodsavers delivers to social organizations, foodbanks and social restaurants is being highly appreciated by those actors. It allows them to improve their offer to the people in most in need.

From a regional perspective, collaboration with neighbouring cities are being explored to be able to further scale up and find synergies with similar initiatives.

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| <p>Adversity coefficient</p> | <p>Western European cities are not spared from poverty. Nowadays 20 percent of the children born in Ghent are born in a poor family. We see poverty as a complex problem that goes beyond the fact of lacking sufficient income. Through employment projects, such as Foodsavers we try to bring people out of poverty in a structural way. As for access to food, Foodsavers fulfills a direct and urgent need. It allows children to fill a lunchbox when they go to school, it allows workers to have lunch at noon, it allows families to prepare a healthy dinner, ... The combination of responding to these needs through a healthy offer and moreover strengthening people's access to the labour market, has been essential in freeing up the necessary budgets.</p> <p>Another important Adversity Coefficient we had to deal with was the complicated law on food and food distribution. Legislation is not always adapted to these kind of projects. In the preparation, we really negotiated with different control agencies (FAVV, Federal department of Agriculture) in order to respect all legal requirements.</p> |
| <p>Peer-to-peer technical assistance plan</p> | <p>Many cities start to tackle food waste in different ways. The advantage of the system developed in Ghent is that it responds to very different strategic objectives: reducing food waste, fighting poverty and strengthening employment capacities. According to local and higher level (e.g. European) legislation, there is more or less flexibility in redistributing food surpluses. Experiences on logistics, employment, volumes, etc. can be shared with other interested cities. Our approach and first experiences have already been shared at national and international meetings (e.g. EC, RUAF) where cities have shown interest in further exchange. Several cities, both locally and internationally (China, Sweden, the Netherlands), have sent delegations to visit the logistics center of Foodsavers and have exchanged detailed information on the process. The peer-to-peer technical assistance could thus be put at value through in-depth exchange with interested cities.</p> |