

Workshop Report

Food waste in healthcare: European policy and national initiatives



European Parliament | Tuesday 27th June 2017



OPENING WORDS

On the 27th June 2017, MEP Davor Škrlec (Greens) kindly hosted HCWH Europe's workshop Food waste in healthcare: European policy and national initiatives in the European Parliament, Brussels. The aim of the workshop was to provide an overview of the on-going policy developments at both the EU and international levels to prevent and reduce food waste, and explore how food waste prevention and reduction strategies can be successfully implemented in the European healthcare sector.

Mr. Škrlec opened the workshop by welcoming attendees from several countries and sectors. He began his welcome stating the scale of the food waste problem – [one third of food produced](#) for humans is lost or wasted, and that the issue of food waste is a multi-dimensional problem with far reaching environmental, social, and economic impacts. He closed by saying the European Parliament wants to be more ambitious, continuing the success of addressing food waste during the debate surrounding the Waste Framework Directive (WFD revision). Mr. Škrlec finally asked civil society to be part of the push for more ambitious food waste targets, as currently Member States are sceptical due to insufficient food waste data.



STATE-OF-THE-ART OF EUROPEAN FOOD WASTE POLICY

The first session - State-of-the-art European food waste policy - featured speakers from the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).



As rapporteur, MEP Biljana Borzan (S&D) spoke first about the European Parliament's own initiative report (INI) on [Resource efficiency: Reducing food waste, improving food safety](#). Ms. Borzan echoed Mr. Škrlec's comments that food waste is a complex issue and added that most Member States cannot solve it on their own – the solution requires coordination amongst stakeholders – and the INI report itself had the involvement of DG Environment and support from all political parties. She continued to illustrate the complexity of on-going food waste policy developments by expressing the need for a more comprehensive food waste definition, hierarchy, and methodologies of measuring food waste. She also emphasised that local and regional authorities (in cooperation with other stakeholders) have a responsibility to increase their competency and capacity for implementing food waste prevention and reduction programmes, including educational campaigns. These educational and awareness-raising initiatives should aim to improve

understanding of 'use by' and 'best before' dates, as well as providing best practice guidelines for the storage and use of food. Short supply chains should be promoted in an effort to reduce packaging (particularly non-recyclable packaging) and food miles. Shorter supply chains can also help increase food standards through

increased procurement of local and seasonal products with higher animal welfare, and tackle unfair trading practices.



Bartosz Zambrzycki of the European Commission DG Health and Food Safety spoke next presenting the Commission's work on food waste, including the formation of the [FLW Platform - Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste](#) (of which [HCWH Europe is a member](#)). Mr. Zambrzycki explained the FLW Platform's actions surrounding EC guidelines for food donation, which includes optimising safe use of food (including animal feed) and clarification of date marking. Other important actions of the FLW platform are the creation of a community of food waste experts (including non-members) and the development of a methodology for measuring food waste. However, until the legislative process of the WFD revision is complete, nothing will be decided in terms of a methodology - it is important to know whether a food waste definition and targets are agreed upon by the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission. The current focus of the FLW Platform is to pave the way for monitoring on food waste for Member States (MS) by detailing what should be measured, so that MS can have the freedom to decide which economic entities should start measuring.

[Click here](#) to view **Bartosz Zambrzycki's presentation**

Reinforcing earlier comments, the next speaker Ulf Björnholm-Ottosson from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) stated that the solution to food waste lies in collaboration between stakeholders at all levels, adding that EU leadership will be crucial for global progress. He continued by saying the [2030 Agenda](#), adopted in 2015, is an inspiring, positive vision for the future - the best UN plan second only to the Paris Agreement. Mr. Björnholm-Ottosson also stressed other motives to tackle food waste apart from the environment, namely the opportunity to reduce poverty and foster effective global partnership. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are made more concrete thanks to the targets, and they are already integrated in the national policies of 100 countries and in 13 EU member States. SDG 12 is about sustainable consumption and production, SDG target 12.3 is about reducing food waste. In the EU, debate on how to implement this target at the EU, national, and municipal levels has already started, acknowledging that to reduce food waste we have to start measuring



it. Taking the development of many different initiatives such as the Fusions Project and the World Resources Institute Working Paper into consideration.

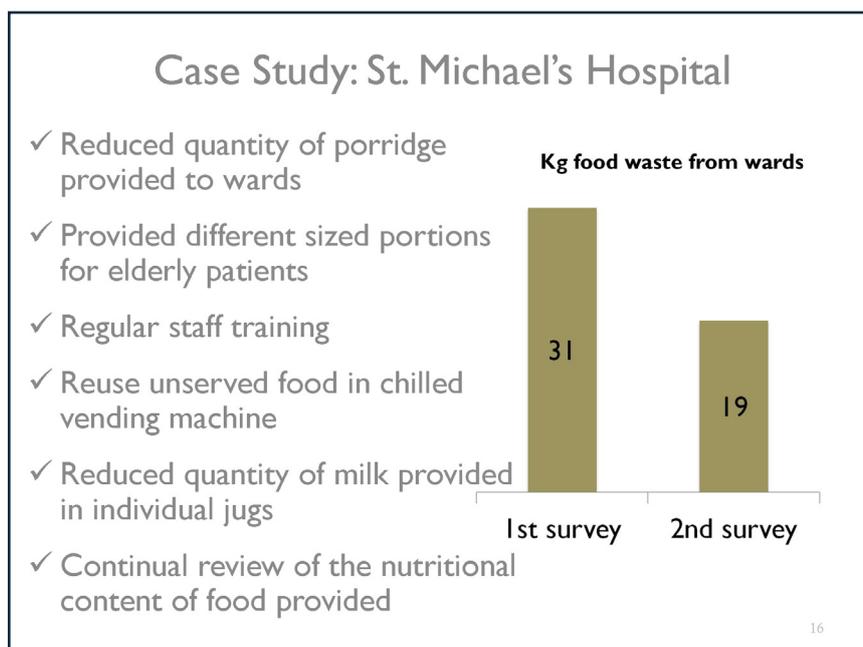
MEMBER STATES' BEST PRACTICES IN HEALTHCARE - PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARDS PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF FOOD WASTE

The second half of the workshop continued with national initiatives beginning with Ireland - presented by Eileen O'Leary of the Cork Institute of Technology. She opened by noting the difference between food waste at the production and consumer level. In Irish acute hospitals, waste contractors weigh food waste generated by the hospital – an important first step, and one highlighted by previous speakers as vital in reducing food waste. The average findings were that 51% of prepared food was eaten and, of the remainder, 27% was unserved (i.e. wasted) and 22% was plate waste (i.e. uneaten leftovers) meaning that 49%, i.e. almost half of the prepared food was wasted.



Ms. O'Leary then spoke about the financial costs of food waste – disposal charged by weight as well as other costs that are often hidden or not immediately obvious (i.e. purchase costs and fuel and staff time invested to produce food that is wasted). One example was given from a hospital in Dublin which lost approximately €97,000 in food purchase costs alone.

Closing with a selection of [general observations about food waste in Irish hospitals](#) and the specific case of St. Michael's Hospital, Ms. O'Leary presented some methods and behaviour changes that have shown to help reduce food waste.



[Click here](#) to view Eileen O'Leary's presentation

approximately 20% of food waste is composed of potatoes).

WRAP estimates that in UK hospitals, one in every six meals are wasted and that food waste costs £1,900 (approx. €2200) per tonne - equivalent to 22p (€0.25) per meal. This translates to an annual total cost of £230m GBP (approx. €260m). To put this cost into perspective, this would pay the salaries of 1,500 Band 1 nursing staff.

Following this analysis and identification of food waste causes, Hugh Jones then presented WRAP's resources for the health sector, including WRAP's [Waste Prevention Toolkit](#).

The Toolkit helps hospitals cut costs by reducing food waste, providing guidance on:

- Measuring waste and determining related costs
- Identifying root causes of wastage and opportunities to reduce food waste (including associated costs)
- Prioritising actions and improvements to food provision
- Collaboration between catering, nursing, and dietetic staff to make these improvements



Mr. Jones closed by saying that collaboration between multiple departments within hospitals is important in combatting food waste, and that communication is key to successfully engage all hospital staff.

[Click here](#) to view Hugh Jones' presentation

A short Q&A session highlighted the common themes running through all the presentations: the need for measurement as a first step. There is "no wrong way to measure food waste - just do it!" was Hugh Jones' response when asked about aligning the three methodologies mentioned in session two, referencing the lack of methodology from the European Commission whilst waiting on a food waste definition.

CLOSING REMARKS

In her closing remarks, workshop moderator, HCWH Europe Deputy Director Grazia Cioci, thanked the speakers for providing clarity on the international and European policy developments around food waste. She extended her gratitude to the speakers for providing information on the serious impact of food waste coming from healthcare facilities and showcasing important national initiatives that are advanced in measuring and reducing food waste in the healthcare sector.



To close, Ms. Cioci added that policy makers should consider the healthcare sector as an ally in the fight against food waste and that she hopes the workshop has been an inspiration for policy-makers, healthcare systems, and other sectors alike, as they are all united in the effort to tackle food waste.

HCWH Europe is committed to continue facilitating the sharing of best practices and dialogue between policy makers and the healthcare sector with workshops, webinars, and publications.



[Click here for more HCWH Europe sustainable & healthy food resources](#)