

Translating data into valuable impact

Final Plenary Session, 9 February 2021

Speech of Jacques Vandenschrik, President of European Food Banks Federation

Two years ago, on 4-5 February 2019, we met in Brussels for a session on “Impactful data for social good”. That was **the beginning of our journey on data collection and digital transformation**.

The objective is clear from the start: to share a standardized and consistent methodology for data collection across our members; to assess the impact of our members taking into consideration the economic, environmental, nutritional, and social areas; to define how to make sense of the information for impact management and measurement; and to encourage digital transformation within our membership.

Capturing the most value from data begins with **excellence in identifying, measuring and storing that data**; moves through the **technical capability and creativity to analyse and visualize that data**; and ends with **an organization which is able to complement analytics with human talent to implement and communicate relevant insights**.

This project is not an easy path because it has to respond to multiple and complex needs. It has to build upon our daily activity and meet our needs. It has to lay the foundations on an existing dataset that can tell our long-lasting story. It has to be efficient and effective, but also significant and reliable, consistent and comparable, accurate and transparent. It has to give a European overview and at the same time in-depth details. It has to minimize the effort requested to our members while offering new valuable outputs. A system that can collect, analyse and aggregate data from members of differing socio-economic and cultural contexts across the continent, sharing the same mission but implementing different models and activities. A system which aims to achieve unity while valorising diversity.

We have come across **unforeseen challenges**. Despite a global pandemic not allowing physical meetings, the quality and continuity of the activities has never been mined. We have faced the difficulty to find a common model to meet the needs of each Food Bank.

We have **studied the complexity of data collection** and the diverse dataset structures used in the different countries. We have **discussed and exchanged views**, we **have identified our**

indicators, and we have **agreed on a common terminology**. Through an in-depth analysis of the existing systems used by Food Banks to collect data, we have **developed an online platform to host an Observatory on Food Donation**. This is a first unique European Observatory on Food Donation. The platform has been developed **using a bottom-up and agile approach, building on our knowledge and needs**, and **has the potential to integrate existing systems of data collection and digital tools already used by our members**.

Our friends have been instrumental for the success. Since the beginning **we have counted on important partners**, such as DG Health and Food Safety of the European Commission and the General Mills Foundation, to support our efforts. **We have built on the experience of a Pilot Group** made of 8 Food Banks – Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain, and UK – which have dedicated their knowledge and time. **We have exchanged information and views with external partners** to enrich our discussions and bring new perspectives to our work. **We have worked with professional experts**, who have listened to our needs and used their expertise to find the best possible solutions.

This project can leverage the beneficial impact of our activity for social good. Working on this project we can drive strategies and empower us to take decisions, we can feed policies and funding, we can identify problems and find possible solutions, we can use food and fund resources more efficiently, we can maintain data comparability, we can learn from each other, we can tell our story, and we can transform vast amounts of data into value-creating insights for our organization, for our members, and for society at large.

This Observatory on Food Donation aims **to systematically record and disseminate the impact of FEBA members taking into consideration the economic, environmental, nutritional and social benefits**. It will help us **to increase the awareness of the prevention of food loss and waste and the reduction of food insecurity**, while enhancing the collaboration with public authorities, the food supply chain as well as private citizens.

Looking at the COVID-19 and the impacts of this crisis, such as disruptions of the food supply chain and an increase of food insecurity in Europe, the contribution given by **Food Banks has been outstanding and proved again the importance of collaboration amongst all the actors**. In this context **digital tools are extremely useful when they support and enhance an action in progress**. Digital tools are essential to be put at the service of Food Banks and not vice versa.

Today we mark the end of the first year of this challenging and ambitious project. The protagonists will share with us the steps of this journey. We will hear about indicators, dataset and terminology as well as technology and data visualization. We will learn from those who have been involved since the beginning sharing their knowledge with generosity. We will collect your further inputs and feedbacks. And we look forward to continuing this journey, together because “Yes, we can!”.