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# **Advancing social supermarkets across Europe**

**WP4 – Testing Social Innovation**

**Feasibility Study Final Report**

**Date: July 2015**

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**Reducing food waste through social innovation**

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# Colophon

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# 1 Summary

## Benefits of Social Supermarkets

Social supermarkets sell surplus food at a reduced price to poorer members of the community. As well as contributing to food waste prevention, social supermarkets have several social benefits. They support poorer people who have had particular challenges (e.g. long-term unemployment). Many social supermarkets have a café at the side of the main shop, which encourages social interactions, and several provide support and advice (particularly training and advice in seeking employment). The normal consumer behaviour, in that supermarket items are purchased, builds confidence and dignity of the members. Social supermarkets therefore bridge the gap between traditional food donation and retailing.

## Overview of Feasibility project

The aim of this feasibility study is to facilitate the expansion of the social supermarket concept into new areas or countries by analysing the experience in several Member States, identifying different models and good practices. The research for this feasibility study was carried out in 2014 under the EU FUSIONS programme<sup>1</sup>. It is one of seven feasibility studies to test social innovation projects.

## Main Findings

- **Evaluation indicators** – There are limited data available to evaluate the impacts of social supermarkets. Performance indicators for evaluation are recommended in this report, including the number of members, quantity of products sold, financial indicators, etc.
- **Umbrella network** – There are various types of social supermarket and there are strong benefits of an umbrella network for social supermarkets in each country. The benefits include: development of partnerships with the food industry and therefore encouragement of food donations; provision of support and training to staff; facilitation of sharing of good practices; collection of evaluation data; stronger lobbying for funds; etc.
- **Social benefits** – The research carried out in the feasibility study has confirmed the numerous potential social benefits of the social supermarkets, outlined above and detailed in this report.
- **Different funding mechanisms** – There are different funding mechanisms for the start-up costs and operational costs of social supermarkets, although there are limited data available.

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<sup>1</sup> FUSIONS is “Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising waste prevention Strategies”. The EU Fusions programme started in August 2012 and runs for 4 years.

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- **Advancing social supermarkets** – There is major scope for replication of social supermarkets across EU countries. The timescales for planning and start up are clearly longer than for some other social innovation projects.
  - **Guidelines** – In some countries guidelines have been developed to support social supermarkets, although these tend to focus on legal aspects (e.g. hygiene regulations). The development of guidelines with a wider scope, including operational practices, would bring benefits to encourage replication of social supermarkets.
  - **Local support** – Local connection and co-operation are important factors for social supermarkets, in terms of support from the local authority, local food companies, etc. In addition, some social supermarkets rely heavily on local volunteers.
  - **Link to other social innovation projects** – There is strong potential for other social innovation projects (e.g. including other feasibility studies implemented under FUSIONS) to link to social supermarkets. For example, the products from Gleaning and Disco Bôcô activities could be sold at social supermarkets, providing additional nutritional value and economic benefits.

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# 2 Introduction

## 2.1 Aims of the Feasibility Study

The aim of this feasibility study is to facilitate the expansion of the social supermarket concept into new areas or countries by analysing the experience in several Member States, identifying different models and good practices.

## 2.2 Context of the Feasibility Study

### **Summary of the Fusions Project**

The overall objective of the FUSIONS project (Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising waste prevention Strategies) is to achieve a Resource Efficient Europe by significantly reducing food waste. This will be accomplished by the harmonisation of food waste monitoring, showing the feasibility of socially innovative measures for optimised food use in the food supply chain and by giving policy recommendations for the development of a EU27 Common Food Waste Policy.

This report is a deliverable from the FUSIONS Work Package (WP) 4 which sets out to test the impact of social innovation on reducing food waste through a suite of feasibility studies (FS) conducted within the duration of FUSIONS project. The feasibility studies are a key part of FUSIONS, delivering actual reductions in food waste alongside social benefits.

This Social Supermarkets feasibility study was developed as an idea and submitted in November 2013 for consideration by a panel comprising WP4 core partners<sup>2</sup> under the EU FUSIONS project. It was one of 39 ideas for social innovation projects, obtained via a stakeholder survey, assessed by the panel against a set of agreed selection criteria. After the proposal was selected in the beginning of 2014, the research work for the feasibility study started in early 2014. The Social Supermarkets feasibility study is one of seven projects implemented in 2014-2015.

Social supermarkets are in most cases restricted to registered people (who are food and/or financially insecure) and offer food (usually surplus food that has been donated) at a reduced price. They often also offer a small coffee shop to foster social interaction. This is an ideal environment to communicate ideas on food waste prevention, while providing guidance to help people save food and money, along social and professional support. The

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<sup>2</sup> For information on the selection process please go to: <http://www.eu-fusions.org/uploads/deliverables/WP4%20report%20Jan%2014.pdf>

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feasibility study was selected based on the underlying objective of facilitating expansion of the social supermarkets concept into new areas and new countries.

## 2.3 Method

The study sets out to support the expansion of the “social supermarket” model across Europe based on development of case studies on the experiences of already established social supermarkets in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and United Kingdom. The work was structured as follows:

- **Identification of social supermarkets and types of models in the EU.**  
Based on a literature review, and the experience of authors, a review of existing models of social supermarkets in the context of national requirements and conditions has been made.
- **Selection of good practice examples for short case studies.**  
Based on the review described above, good practice examples were identified (in particular from France and Austria). The selection of the countries was based on the general availability of information on the development, character, present situation and trends of social supermarkets, the long-term experiences of the study authors and the language in which the information is available. As most social supermarkets act on a local basis, literature information can be found mainly in local language. The selected good practice countries have well-established social supermarkets where common trends can also be considered. The UK was included to also provide information related to a new establishment and approach of social supermarkets to see if there are innovations or other new aspects. The main aspects which were studied are:
  - Target group.
  - Sourcing.
  - Accessibility.
  - Restrictions of purchase amount per shopping trip.
  - Type of employees and volunteers.
  - Procurement policy (e.g. cooperation with donors, cooperation with other social organisations).
  - Price policy.

Building on the literature review on models of social supermarkets, and in order to understand actual practices, expert interviews were carried out. The interviews included a focus on relevant barriers and opportunities. The four interviews were conducted by phone (one-to-one), with experts identified by the authors through their knowledge or research (their names are identified in the colophon at the beginning of the document). The interviewed experts were from the leading social supermarket organisations in Austria, UK and France.

- **Analysis**  
An interpretation of key success factors and constraints- of the case studies and market environments from current experience was conducted. This included a SWOT analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each

case study. The experts' contribution was invaluable with respect to understanding the barriers to implementation and opportunities, since this led to recommendations on policy or financial changes that could remove those barriers.

- **Recommendations**

The analysis of best practice models focused on identifying the barriers to implementation, and the opportunities. Recommendations were therefore targeted towards specific changes required to policy or to financial mechanisms that can remove these barriers.

The feasibility study benefited from linkages to other tasks under the EU FUSIONS project. For example, FUSIONS Task T1.4.1c, led by the University of Bologna, involved an assessment of the social impact of redistribution activities on different stakeholders using a framework of social capital. Task T1.4.1c identified a list of over 380 organisations working in European food aid, which was used for identification of social supermarkets for the feasibility study. The social impacts and evaluation metrics investigated for the feasibility study and Task T1.4.1c were related to:

- Groups and Networks;
- Trust and Solidarity;
- Collective Action and Cooperation;
- Information and Communication;
- Social Cohesion and Inclusion;
- Food Security/safety.

A logic map was created collectively with the FUSIONS partners to highlight the rationale and strategic objectives of the feasibility study.





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The overall coordination of the feasibility study was handled by BOKU University, Austria, which was supported by the valuable expertise of Deloitte Sustainability, France.

## 2.4 Aims and structure of this report

The aim of this report is to provide the key points from an analysis of existing initiatives with a focus on social supermarkets located in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and United Kingdom (the main countries that already have various types of social supermarkets within the European Union) and to identify good practices that could be implemented in other European Member states. The structure of the report covers the following:

- Section 2 provides background and definitions of social supermarkets.
- Section 3 gives an overview of applicable indicators for the evaluation of the impacts of social supermarkets.
- Section 4 provides detailed case studies on social supermarkets in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and UK.
- The conclusions on the different models and factors related to social supermarkets are provided in Section 5.
- The main recommendations for advancing social supermarkets across Europe are provided in Section 6.

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# 3 Background on Social Supermarkets

This section provides some context on the development of social supermarkets, definitions, and an overview of social supermarkets in Europe.

## 3.1 Context of social supermarkets

According to the waste hierarchy published in the European Waste Framework Directive (2006/12/EC), the prevention of food waste is the most preferable option, ahead of separate collection and different treatment options. Food waste prevention should target the optimisation of processes and systems in order to avoid the generation of surplus food along the food supply chain. However, even if there are effective food waste prevention measures in place, the generation of surplus food might occur for various reasons. In most cases the perfectly edible surplus food is not marketable in a normal way. In order to use the resources in the most efficient manner, this surplus is often donated to support people experiencing food insecurity, typically on a local basis. There are different types of food aid activities in operation worldwide, such as food banks, food rescue programs, food pantries, soup kitchens, etc. This feasibility study focuses on the model of “social supermarket” which can be found in some Member States.

The implementation of a food waste prevention measure such as a social supermarket is far from straight-forward with respect to legal requirements, logistics and societal acceptance. However, the experience of the authors indicates that the model of the social supermarket has strong potential to complement the portfolio of existing food aid programmes and provides another mechanism to prevent food surplus becoming waste.

The model closes the gap between soup kitchens and traditional retail outlets and meets the needs of the increasing number of poor people, some of which have an income but who are not able to cover all their household expenses fully. A social supermarket gives people the choice between different products, and helps them preserve their dignity (by requiring them to pay for the items, although at a reduced price, just like any customer of a regular store). The social supermarkets prevent the dependence on charity in the traditional sense, and relieve beneficiaries from the feeling of being indebted. During financial hardship, it is the food bill that is easily squeezed as it is an area that offers flexibility (Goode, 2012: 16). By significantly reducing the food budget, social supermarkets provide an important opportunity for low-income households to meet other expenses, such as utility bills, or to save, which will increase their financial capacity for unexpected expenses. As such, social supermarkets may be seen as an intermediate step towards inclusion into mainstream consumption behaviour.

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Alongside these benefits, however, there are some risks which relate to the legal situation of voluntary food aid (including the right for support on a long-term basis). Also, the fight against food waste might go against the idea of increasing donated surplus food: if donor companies reduce food waste, less surplus would be available for social supermarkets. The implementation of a social supermarket has to be adapted to the local context and legal framework, but there are some basic considerations that apply generally, and these are described in this report.

## 3.2 Definitions

There are several types of food aid in Europe. They all aim to support people who, for many different reasons, are not able to satisfy all of their nutritional needs from their own budget.

As a first step in separating the activities of social supermarkets from other food aid activities, the term "food aid" is defined. A UK report of Lambie-Mumford et al. (2014) defines "food aid" as "an umbrella term used to describe any type of aid giving activity which aims to provide relief from the symptoms of food insecurity and poverty. It includes a broad spectrum of activities, from small to large scale, local to national, emergency one-off operations or well established food banks".

There is no harmonized definition for the term "social supermarket" and therefore, some definitions from literature are summarized below:

- According to Bono (2002) seven different models of food aid including a shop or food depot, have been defined by McKinsey as: "The collected goods are handed over directly to people in need within a shop which includes storage and cooling area".
- Schnedlitz et al. (2011) defined a social supermarket as "a small, non-profit oriented retailing operation offering a limited assortment of products at symbolic prices primarily in self-service manner. Authorised for shopping are needy people only. The products are donated by food production and retail companies free of charge as they are edible but not marketable due to small blemishes. Achieved profit is reinvested into social projects".
- Sellmeister (2010) states that "social markets (Sozialmärkte) are organisations which provide food that is no longer useful for the common trade cheaply to people who are in situations of poverty".

In an attempt to summarise these definitions, three differences can be identified between food aid in general and social supermarkets in particular. The first one is that within a social supermarket food is directly transferred to food-insecure people in return for a monetary contribution. The second difference is that it is mainly surplus food that is redistributed within a social supermarket. The third difference is that in several cases a social supermarket provides a setting which supports social inclusion and relationship-building between customers.

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In relation to the FUSIONS criteria that define social innovation the present feasibility study contributes to the following key characteristics:

- Socially recognised goals: social supermarkets target food waste prevention by supporting people in need with edible surplus food.
- Deep reflection on the problem and direct action from those involved: most people involved in the funding and operation of social supermarkets have business relationships with wholesale, retail or social welfare organisations.
- People-focused: some of the models work with former long-term unemployed people as staff members and all models target directly food and financially insecure people, without an intermediate step.
- Multi-stakeholder approach and process of social interactions: social supermarkets receive surplus food from different stakeholders within the food supply chain. The cooperation is based on trust between the actors and reliability of partners, and increases awareness towards food waste prevention as well as awareness on food insecurity, throughout the food supply chain. In the case of social enterprises there is a new relationship of donors and social supermarkets as the latter train some potential future staff for the donors. In coffee shops associated with social supermarkets new social interactions are enabled and there is also a new interaction between volunteers and clients during activities. The environment of a social supermarket therefore enables contact between different stakeholders and this leads to benefits such as increased awareness of volunteers about the fact that anyone can easily experience a situation of food insecurity.
- New combination of activities, delivered into a new setting: food donation and redistribution is now a common part of the food system across the world. Social supermarkets build on this concept by bridging the gap between traditional food donation and retailing. Furthermore, although social supermarkets are already established in some countries, the model can be further enhanced through best practice, by incorporating new social developments and growing awareness of food waste.

For the present study and in line with FUSIONS' mandate which focuses on food waste prevention, the term "social supermarket" is defined as "an organisation which sells food - at least a part of which is sourced from surplus food - to poorer people at a reduced price".

### 3.3 Overview of social supermarkets in Europe

A brief introduction on the historical evolution of social supermarkets, including a general overview of the present situation in Europe, is presented in this sub-section as the basis for the selection of social supermarkets for the case studies (in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and UK) in subsequent sections.

The basic concept for most of the modern food aid activities offered by non-profit and municipal institutions around the world was developed in the late 1960s in the USA. John Von Hengel worked as a volunteer at a local soup kitchen in Phoenix, Arizona and recognised that while he struggled to have enough food to supply the people who needed it, surrounding restaurants and supermarkets were throwing away edible food due to small blemishes. He started to cooperate with local companies and soon founded the first "food

bank” as the collected food amounts exceeded the needs of his soup kitchen (Schneider, 2013). While typically food banks solicit food and grocery products from a variety of sources, receive and store the products in a warehouse and distribute it to needy families and individuals through charitable human service agencies, the given concept was implemented in Europe in manifold ways (Schneider, 2013; Leitsberger, 2011).

The European Federation of Food Banks started with the first food bank in Paris in 1984 and the Federation was established in 1986. Thirty years later there are 256 food banks operating in 21 European countries (FEBA, s.a.). In parallel to the food banks, which support social organisations with food, there was also a development of social institutions which directly supported food-insecure people with non-marketable food. In contrast to the already established soup kitchens, they did not hand out free food to their clients but introduced a monetary contribution system. In France the concept of social supermarkets was developed in the late 1980s (Holweg & Lienbacher, 2014), in Switzerland the first Carisatt market was established in 1992 (Bono, 2002), in Germany Carisatt markets were also opened in 1996 (Bono, 2002), and in Austria the first SOMA was founded in 1999 (Schneider, 2013). The first social supermarket in UK was established in December 2013 (Cocozza, 2013).

**Table 1: Approximate number of social supermarkets in selected European countries**

Country	Approximate number of social supermarkets
Austria	80
Germany	640
Switzerland	134
France	700
United Kingdom	2

It is estimated that in 2013 more than 1,000 social supermarket stores were operating in various countries across Europe including France , Austria),Germany, Belgium, the UK , Switzerland, Spain, Luxembourg and Romania (Cocozza, 2013). Also in Turkey several social supermarkets have been established since 2004 but do not fulfil the definition used in this report and were therefore excluded from the survey. Most of Turkey’s social supermarkets distribute mainly bought food or food donated for humanitarian reasons (not surplus food) and offer it free of charge to people in need (Cakirli, 2014).

There is a wide variation in social supermarket provision: there is approximately one social supermarket for every 83,000 people in France, one for every 105,000 people in Austria, one for every 60,000 people in Switzerland, and only two in the UK (population 64 million). This can be explained by each national context, and mostly by the presence of one strong player that acts as a network developer. In France, the A.N.D.E.S network provides solid support to social supermarkets; potentially the concept will grow in the UK under the management of Company Shop which established the first Community Shop. Other factors for a strong development of social supermarkets in France might be related to the historical precedence of food donation movements (food banks were funded in France as early as the 1980s), and the strong public support – the “social stores” are mostly run directly under the supervision of local authorities.

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At a social supermarket, people in need do not receive a ready-to-go food package, as they would with most food banks. These packages may not meet the user's expectations and preferences. A social supermarket on the other hand allows for users to choose which products they buy. Furthermore, the setting is supportive (with specific activities and support sessions organised), it is much easier to find someone sharing knowledge on how to handle and cook unknown fruits and vegetables. The social supermarkets therefore have much wider positive social benefits. The variety of food products offered by a social supermarket is not as broad as in a common supermarket as it is mostly restricted to those products which were surplus. Nonetheless, social supermarkets provide essential items such as bread, conserves, soft drinks, sweets and in recent years also fruit and vegetables. As most clients have constraints which result in them having little capacity to spend time shopping around for discounts, they may not be able to benefit from the wide range of promotions and offers at conventional supermarkets. This makes the low cost of products sold very attractive. Whilst the social supermarket may not supply an extensive variety of foodstuff, it provides the users with the essentials at a reduced cost; if something is missing the users can shop elsewhere using the money that they have saved through shopping at the social supermarket. Due to the social inclusion facilities of a social supermarket, such as a coffee shop, the clients are provided with a setting where they can have lunch with friends and receive specific support (e.g. advice about job search, budgeting, health, food waste, etc.). Some of the social supermarkets also offer cooking lessons, which aim to improve food preparation skills and decrease food waste at home. Holweg and Lienbacher (2011) summarise the findings of literature research, claiming that social supermarkets contribute to the new creation of social value due to implementing new activities, meeting "unfulfilled social needs... within or across government, business, or non-profit sectors". Their concept belongs to social marketing within the area of social entrepreneurship.

In the course of FUSIONS work package 1, Task T1.4, a survey of existing social organisations dealing with redistribution of food to people in need was conducted in summer 2013. The aim was to get an overview of the established organisations as a basis for further collection of information. The FUSIONS partners of T1.4 were asked to contribute to the survey according to their language coverage. In addition, other FUSIONS partners were contacted to cover countries such as Turkey, Denmark, Greece and Hungary. In total, over 380 entries have been listed although some of them cover multiple outlets of the same organisation (e.g. one entry of Sozialmarkt Wien represents 3 outlets) while other entries represent all social welfare services within an area (e.g. one entry represented all over 150 London homeless services partly providing free food). Each entry was classified by the contributors according to the following categories. The definition for classes A to D was taken from the annual report of Feeding America (2010):

- A (food bank): a food bank is a charitable organisation that solicits, receives, inventories and distributes donated food and grocery products pursuant to appropriate industry and regulatory standards. The products are distributed to charitable human service agencies (e.g. food pantries), which provide the products directly to clients through various programs.
- B (food pantry): a food pantry is a charitable distribution agency that provides clients with food and grocery products for home preparation and consumption.
- C (soup kitchen): a soup kitchen is a charitable program whose primary purpose is to provide prepared meals, served in the kitchen, to clients in need.

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- D (shelter): A shelter is a charitable program with a primary purpose to provide shelter or housing on a short-term or temporary basis to clients and typically serves one or more meals a day.
  - E: mixed form.
  - F: no information available.

For the further work in the present feasibility study within WP4, only the classes B, E and F as well as the entries with missing classification were further processed. During this approach 194 entries have been excluded and 189 remained on the list. Where possible, the information in English was checked to see if the organisation fulfils the “social supermarket” definition used in the present report. Most of the organisations run a website in their native language only, thus it was not possible to get further information from there.

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# 4 Evaluation of the operations and impacts of social supermarkets

The challenge in using effective evaluation indicators to determine the impact of social supermarkets is problematic due to relatively weak / incomplete data. Most of the existing social supermarkets do not communicate performance data on a regular basis. There are no common umbrella organisations that cover all the social supermarkets in a country. Where such organisations exist in countries, they do not collect and summarise the available data from their members. Furthermore, data on performance indicators from social supermarkets could be mis-interpreted: for example, a higher volume of redistributed food does not necessarily indicate an increased support for the beneficiaries (it rather highlights that there is a higher need or awareness of social supermarkets by customers). As the interaction of performance indicators of social supermarkets has not been researched in detail so far, it is currently difficult to confirm the most applicable and effective indicators for evaluation purposes. A practical constraint for wider evaluation cutting across several countries can be the language barrier, as most of the social supermarkets target a local market and local people (donors, authorities, volunteers, beneficiaries) and therefore communicate only in their local language.

It is also important to evaluate, aside the impacts of a supermarket, the operational variables of a social supermarket, especially when considering replication: knowing the costs, the time needed to set up the project, the investment and operational cost, etc. are essential. However, such data is currently not communicated or aggregated by social supermarkets or umbrella organisations.

The following list provides examples of indicators that could be useful when considering the set up, operation and evaluation of a social supermarkets.

- Number of other social supermarkets in the area;
- Set up costs (and how these were covered);
- Time needed to plan and set up the social supermarket;
- Operational costs per month (and how these are covered);
- Revenues per month (including from the shop, cafe, etc);
- Average discount (%) on price of items (compared to regular supermarket price);
- Floor area and floor breakdown;
- Number of customers / day;
- Number of members / month;
- Number of coupons used ;
- Number of paid staff (employees) and staff time (e.g. average number of employee hours / week);



- Number of management staff and time;
- Number of volunteers (and particularly number of volunteer hours per week, because many work part-time);
- Number of supplying organisations (and where they are in food chain (e.g. farms, manufacturers, retailers, restaurants, households));
- Quantity of food waste diverted/sold;
- Value of food waste diverted;
- Number of training sessions per year;
- Number of training participants per year;
- Qualitative analysis: feedback from customers/employees/volunteers.

The following list mentions more detail on some potential indicators and describes the pros and cons of using them in an evaluation process:

- **The number of social supermarkets:** It can give a good idea of a national or local coverage by social supermarkets. However, the data are unreliable even in the reference countries as not all social supermarkets are covered by national umbrella organisations, the update of the collated data is not done on a regular basis and there is no common definition of social supermarkets. Therefore, in order to identify social supermarkets in a country, one has to search for different names and initiatives fitting to the definition used in this report. Furthermore, under the perspective of a long-term sustainable model one should mention the market saturation effect. The challenge is to set up the most suitable type of offer in relation to the specific local context and of the people who might benefit from a social supermarket in the area. A "mobile" version could cover rural areas more efficiently than a stationary one, but would lead to difficulties in monitoring the number/reach.
- **The floor area :** It can provide a comparable data to evaluate the size/volume of social supermarkets. The floor area of social supermarkets can also be compared to regular supermarkets area to highlight the difference between the two models. However, this indicator is quite rarely used: the literature review found only one study from Austria where the floor area was considered. Furthermore, using the floor area as an indicator may be less relevant in examples that provide a temporary social supermarket (e.g. if sharing space with another organisation, products are removed outside opening times). There was no information about the former usage of the adapted social supermarkets. These elements make this floor area indicator rather difficult to use. However, finding information on how the size of areas used for storing, selling and social spaces could be interesting.
- **The number of members:** The indicator gives a great idea of the impact of a social supermarket on a given area. This information is available on a mostly individual basis, meaning that it has to be collected from each social supermarket. Similar to other indicators, the challenge is to find suitable indicators which can be measured accurately over time and show trends. Sometimes relative indicators may provide more useful data e.g. actual number of customers vs. potential number of customers. From a food waste prevention point of view, increasing numbers of customers would represent increased volumes of redistributed surplus

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food (would have otherwise been waste) and hence avoided waste. However, it could also represent increased levels of deprivation in the locality.

- **Feedback from customers:** Qualitative information on how customers feel about the support provided by the social supermarket is a good indicator of its effectiveness, since customer support is its main goal. However, only a few studies were found contributing to feedback information from the users, which means this indicator is not very easily used. Moreover, these may not have been representative of the full customer base, making the indicator only partially valid. Therefore, the available information is not usable for evaluation purposes at the moment. It would be useful if future surveys use a harmonised methodology and a broader target group to collect corresponding data.
- Measuring the **quantity of product sold** (differentiated by surplus food and food that was donated for humanitarian reasons): this indicator targets directly the aim of food waste prevention. In line with the definition used in this report, social supermarkets sell at least partly surplus food. For some of the models the additional purchase of products is banned, others use purchases to complement their assortment to meet the requirements of their clients. The latter is often only mentioned qualitatively, thus no figures are provided. In practice, only a few social supermarkets publish the amount of redistributed food on a regular basis. The reason for that is unclear; there may be some concern about the impact of being evaluated against other Social Supermarkets or against other types of food aid. Another challenge is that those which do report some data on quantities do so with a variety of metrics. For example, some social supermarkets communicate their quantity of products in kilogrammes, others in truck loads, cubic metres, and number of pallets or portion sizes. Therefore this makes accurate comparison difficult.

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# 5 Case studies

The present chapter covers case studies on social supermarkets in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and UK. It summarises the findings from the literature and internet review, as well as aspects from the interviews with experts and other relevant stakeholders. The selection of case studies was driven by available published information as well as existing personal contacts to the organisations by the authors.

## 5.1 Social Supermarkets in Austria

### **Austria – Key Points for Replication**

- Austrian social supermarkets offer food at reduced prices to registered people in need. For example, many social supermarkets offer food at about one third of normal price. There are approximately 80 social supermarkets in Austria. In general, the Austrian social supermarkets consist of a large number of small outlets and few large stores (a few with sales of more than 100,000 Euro/year).
- The umbrella organisation “SOMA Österreich und Partner” includes over 30 social supermarkets in Austria. The umbrella organisation facilitates closer cooperation between different social supermarkets on coordination of acquisition of products, exchange of products, joint logistic infrastructure (e.g. warehouse), and exchange of knowledge and experiences.
- The registration process for the clients is handled in different ways, with some social supermarkets having their own registration process, and some cooperate with local social welfare office on registration. All the social supermarkets interviewed in 2010 use a member card, and most monitor the needs of members on an annual basis. Most of the organisations use more or less the official Austrian level of poverty as the limit for the membership.
- The two main operating expenses are staff costs and occupancy costs. Most of the social supermarkets are primarily co-financed by public institutions such as federal states or municipalities. The third important funding sources are contributions from charitable organisations such as registered associations or parishes as well as the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). While the funding from the federal state and AMS are mostly related to personnel costs, municipalities tend to target the provision of premises or the financial support for rent.
- Support from companies or individuals include provision of vehicles and/or petrol vouchers, use of cooling/freezing storage area, website support, training courses for staff etc.
- Only 50% of social supermarkets surveyed in 2010 have their own storage for cooling and freezing.
- Many social supermarkets tend to have shorter opening times than normal supermarkets.
- The ability to collect and transport products by themselves is an important feature of a social supermarket, but not all of them have an available vehicle. In order to transport cooled and frozen products, the availability of a suitably equipped vehicle is needed.
- There is a major reliance on volunteers in social supermarkets, with the 2010 survey indicating that about 60% of staff are volunteers, 21% of staff are in part-time employment, 18% in the course of reintegration programmes or alternative service (instead of military service) and only 2% in full-time employment.
- Some social supermarkets have shopping rules to restrict the maximum amount spent per week or maximum number of the same items purchased, for example to manage the risk of

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re-sale. At some social supermarkets, specific products are offered free of charge (for example at times of surplus).

- Most of the food products sold by social supermarkets is surplus food that would have been wasted. Most social supermarkets also sell some non-food products. Nearly all of them do not offer alcohol or cigarettes. Products that have passed their "best before" date are sold, but no products are sold that have passed their "use by" date.
- Many social supermarkets also include a small café. This facilitates social interaction of the customers. Some offer a dish of the day in order to use up products that are approaching expiry.
- The activities focus on wider social benefits. Some social supermarkets operate as social enterprises reintegrating long-term unemployed people, ex-convicts or disabled people into the labour market. Some staff are trained for future work in the retail sector.
- There is also a growing interest among companies to send paid staff members on a daily or weekly basis to work at social organisations as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility activities.
- In Austria there is no specific law with respect to the liability of social organisations redistributing food. Social organisations offering food have to take over the same responsibility as any other food company. However, nearly half of the surveyed social supermarkets were required to sign special contracts with the donors that they take on the full liability after transfer of the products. Some social supermarkets inform their customers about the fact that some of the offered products could already have passed their best before dates, that the cooling chain may have been interrupted, and require the clients to sign that they are responsible for checking the products and consuming within a short timescale.
- A guideline on legal aspects of food donation was published by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Health in 2011.
- There is minimal data in Austria on the tonnes of food waste prevented by social supermarkets.

### 5.1.1 Organisational and structural characteristics

At present, there are approximately 80 social supermarkets in Austria. In general, the Austrian social supermarkets consist of a large number of small outlets, but there are a few large stores.

Social supermarkets in Austria started in 1999 in the capital city of Upper Austria with the establishment of SOMA Linz. The name "SOMA" is a shortcut for the German term "Sozialmarkt" which means "social supermarket". The next initiative was implemented in 2001 in Styria, named Caritas&Markt (Bono, 2002). In 2004, within a scientific study a model was developed aiming to achieve maximum social, environmental and economic benefit from the social supermarket concept. The model suggested to combine the supermarket with a coffee shop and to include job options for socially deprived people in a structured way (Schneider et al., 2004). The model was used as a basis for additional social supermarkets starting their operation in late 2004 in Lower Austria. The first social supermarket in Capital City of Vienna was launched in 2008, followed by others in the same year. In the meantime, the SOMA concept was expanded to over 30 outlets all over Austria in a franchise-kind manner and the name is a registered trademark. The outlets using the name SOMA may be managed and operated by different responsible organisations but each has to fulfil the given SOMA basic bylaws. However, some operation characteristics of the outlets may differ in detail. Beside the SOMA markets there are also other types of social supermarkets established in Austria using names such as Der Korb, Vinzmarkt, Sozialmarkt, Laubemarkt, CarLa Sozialmarkt, SOMI Sozialmarkt Imst,

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Paulusladen, Solidarmarkt, LEBI Laden, Kraut und Rüben and many others. In 2007 the umbrella organisation "SOMA Österreich und Partner" was launched (SAM, 2014a) which at present includes over 30 social supermarkets in Austria (SOMA Österreich und Partner, 2014). The umbrella organisation ensures a closer cooperation between different types of social supermarkets with respect to coordination of acquisition of products, exchange of products, joint logistic infrastructure (e.g. warehouse), exchange of knowledge and experiences. The organisation runs as a non-profit association and is supported by partner organisation such as Austrian Red Cross.

In general, Austrian social supermarkets target deprived people who mostly live in their own housing and receive some kind of income (e.g. unemployment benefit, single parent subsidy, income from work, pension etc.). However, their low income level is not sufficient to meet the requirements with respect to nutrition, heating, clothing, education, social contacts etc. on a constant basis. In most cases the beneficiaries have to decide which expenses are most important and need to be covered, and which cannot be met. In order to keep important structural things such as housing, mobility or electrical power supply, often the expenses for nutrition are restricted. Typical target groups include retirees, single parents, multi-child families (often of migrant background), students and long-term unemployed people. At the SOMA operated by Wr. Hilfswerk single retirees, single parents and families with three or more children account for approximately 50 % of the clients (Wiener Hilfswerk, 2012). Only one organisation is operating in Austria with redistribution of surplus food which does not have any restriction with respect to the beneficiaries of the donated food - VIEW (Verein Initiative Ethisch Wirtschaften, Association Initiative for ethical economy). This organisation directly supports social customers as well as non-profit organisations such as retirement homes, schools, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Association etc. but do not operate a social supermarket. The main aim is to save the food from being wasted (View, s.a.; Stoiber, 2013).

The registration process for the clients is handled in different ways. Some social supermarkets have their own registration process on-site where all the documents are checked (e.g. income statement, confirmation of household size etc.) and the member card is issued according to the number of people in the family (e.g. Der Korb, 2013; Wiener Hilfswerk, 2012). Others cooperate with local social welfare office and accept member cards issued there (e.g. TDD, s.a.; CarLa, 2009; SOMA Walkersdorf, 2010). Others only use an affirmation of the client to fulfil the requirements of neediness (Novotny, 2011). A survey indicated that 100 % of the interviewed Austrian social supermarkets in 2010 use a member card and 84 % monitor the level of neediness again each year (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). Most of the organisations use more or less the official Austrian level of poverty as limit for the access but there are differences in the consideration of the number of household members. Only one Austrian social supermarket, the LEBI Laden in Styria, focuses on financially and food insecure people but do not have a registration process at all (LEBI, s.a.). Another one which also did not monitor the level of neediness of the clients was the Caritas&Markt social supermarket founded in 2001 but closed after a short time (Bono, 2002).

A survey conducted in 2010 showed that the volume of sales differs a lot between the social supermarkets. Only 14% stated a volume of sales above 100,000 Euro per year while 29% have a maximum of 10,000 Euro (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). The two main expenses are staff costs and occupancy costs. Most of the social supermarkets are primarily co-financed by public institutions such as federal states or municipalities. The

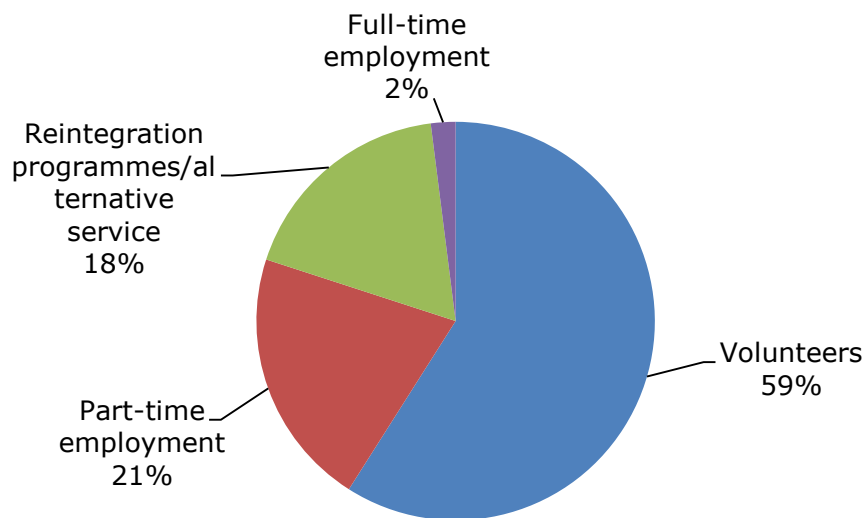
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third important funding sources are contributions from charitable organisations such as registered associations or parishes as well as the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). While the funding from the federal state and AMS are mostly related to personnel costs, municipalities target the provision of premises, the financial support for premises rent or financial support in general. The contribution of charitable organisations covers mostly financial bottlenecks in general (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). The Sozialmarkt Wien announces that they receive no public funding at all (SMW, s.a.), they rely on donations from companies, private persons, promotion activities from celebrities and the revenue from the food sales. Support from companies or private persons cover beside general financial bottlenecks also provision of vehicles and/or petrol vouchers, use of cooling/freezing storage area, website support, training courses for staff etc. (e.g. View, 2010; TDD, 2013). Start-up costs are mainly covered by unique investments by participating communities or other donations. In the umbrella network "SOMA" start-up costs are furthermore covered by revenues of other markets within SOMA (Pöll, 2015). The introduction of mobile social supermarkets was driven by the demands of rural areas with lower population density and restricted mobility of financially insecure people and also the need to decrease occupancy costs of social supermarkets. There are currently six mobile social supermarkets operating in rural areas in Lower Austria under the umbrella network. The interest of the communities is very high, yet the lack of public financial support hinders the opening of further mobile markets (Pöll, 2015). Beyond the umbrella network there are two other mobile markets (Tischlein Deck Dich in Vorarlberg, Laube-Markt Mobil in Pinzgau/Salzburg).

The average sales area of an Austrian social supermarket was calculated as 90 m<sup>2</sup> based on the survey from Schnedlitz et al. (2011). The smallest 15% cover 20 to 40 m<sup>2</sup>, the largest 4% include 200 and more square metres. One of the largest Austrian social supermarkets is the SOMA operated by Wiener Hilfswerk with about 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> sales, storage and office area (Wiener Hilfswerk, 2012). 94% of the social supermarkets answering the survey of Schnedlitz et al. (2011) have storage for dry foods available while only 50% have their own storage for cooling and freezing respectively.

There is also a significant difference between a social supermarket and a normal retail outlet with respect to the opening hours. Schnedlitz et al. (2011) identified in their study in 2010 that approximately 48% of the interviewed social supermarkets offered their products from 11 to 20 hours a week, predominantly on weekdays.

The ability to collect and transport products by themselves is an important feature which should be covered by a social supermarket. The survey of Schnedlitz et al. (2011) indicated that 75% of the covered social supermarkets had one transportation vehicle available. About 13% did not have their own vehicle (Schnedlitz et al., 2011) and therefore depended on delivery from the donors, cooperation with other social organisations with transportation capacity and volunteers who provide private vehicles for transportation activities. In order to also cover cooled and frozen products within the assortment, the availability of a suitably equipped vehicle is a prerequisite.



**Error! Reference source not found.** shows the status of employment in Austrian social supermarkets in 2010. There are some social supermarkets in Austria operating as social enterprises employing former long-time unemployed people (e.g. SOMA St. Pölten, SOMA Wiener Hilfswerk, Solidarmärkte), disabled people (e.g. Laube markets, Der Korb, Sozialmarkt "Kraut und Rüben") or ex-convicts (e.g. Pannonische Tafel, Tischlein Deck Dich). More detailed information is given in chapter 5.1.2. On average there are 11 volunteers per social supermarket, 4 part-time and reintegration each and 0.4 full-time staff members working (Schnedlitz et al., 2011).

About 65% of the Austrian social supermarkets have the legal status of a registered association, 33% operate as private limited company and only 2% represent a public body (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). An example for a private limited company is the social supermarket tiso Tiroler Sozialmarkt which was funded by the Chamber of Labour Tyrol, the City of Innsbruck and the Caritas of diocese Innsbruck (tiso, s.a.). According to Schnedlitz et al. (2011) 98% of the Austrian social supermarkets are non-profit organisations, which means that they support the general public. In practice, most of the revenues are reinvested for the social supermarket purposes. This fact meets previous definitions of "non-profit" which state that non-profit organisations may gain money from commercial activities as long as they retain or reinvest those potential profits (Hansmann, 1980 cited in Holweg & Lienbacher, 2011). In most cases the establishment of a social supermarket is driven by enthusiastic private people fighting against food waste and/or hunger or already established social organisations when extending their support portfolio to the needy in society.

### 5.1.2 Services for clients and society

Austrian social supermarkets offer food at reduced prices to registered people in need. A survey among the existing Austrian social supermarkets in 2010 found out that 54% of the social supermarkets offer their food products at 1/3 of the normal price (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). The Team Österreich Tafel offers their products free of charge except the Viennese outlet where 1 Euro per shopping trip has to be paid (Novotny, 2011). Sometimes specific products are offered free of charge on a daily basis, e.g. bread (e.g. Vinzmarkt,

SOMA Wr. Hilfswerk), or in times of surplus and short time to expiration (Schneider, 2013; Schnedlitz et al., 2011). About 71% of interviewed social supermarkets offer products free of charge due to imminent expiration, lack of space or because they constitute basic needs (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). The social supermarket SOLEart offers the products received from VIEW which works similarly to a food bank free of charge as the rules of VIEW ban a purchase of the products even at low prices (VIEW, 2012).

A survey showed that 93% of the interviewed Austrian social supermarkets restrict the maximum expenses per member card and week, and 63% restrict (in addition) the maximum expenses per member card and purchase. About 60% of the respective social supermarkets introduced a weekly limit of 26 to 30 Euros, while 90% of the respective social supermarkets have a limit of 5 to 15 Euros per purchase (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). Some social supermarkets introduced higher limits for those clients living in remote area or suffering from restricted mobility (CarLa Wörgl, 2009; tiso, s.a.). The restriction was introduced due to real occurrences in order to avoid re-sale of products by the clients. Regardless of the monetary limit, some products are restricted with respect to the maximum number of items per person in order to ensure that more people may benefit from the product (e.g. Der Korb, 2013).



Social supermarkets in Austria (© Schneider, 2011)

The assortment of the Austrian social supermarkets includes food and non-food products such as personal hygiene products, pet food or cleaning detergents. Most of the offered products cannot be marketed at conventional supermarkets due to small blemishes (e.g. packaging failure, under or overweight, near/after best before date, relaunch of packaging design etc.). 98% of the social supermarkets interviewed do not offer alcohol or cigarettes (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). In most cases (e.g. SOMA outlets), the assortment of the social supermarket is restricted to donated products which are given free of charge to the social supermarket by the donors (e.g. Meissner & Schneider, 2011; Der Korb, 2013). In contrast, the Sozialmarkt Wien (SMW) and Kraut und Rüben for example, widen their assortment by buying additional products (SMW, 2012; Kraut und Rüben, s.a.). A survey indicated that 90% of the interviewed social supermarkets only distribute free donations, 4% buy up to 5% of their assortment, 2% buy up to 10% and 4% buy up to 75% (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). The price level for the bought food products is in most cases a special offer such as a kind of donation from the producer, wholesaler or retailer. Most social supermarkets aim to support people in need with foodstuffs; however they also provide donated food that is not necessarily surplus. This means that a (small) part of the



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redistributed foodstuff was not intended to be wasted by the companies or the private households who donate it. Unfortunately, the exact share of those products is not communicated by the organisations. Given that a maximum of 6% of the Austrian supermarkets buy additional food to a maximum of 10% and only 4% purchase up to 75%, the share of non-surplus food is marginal.

In most social supermarkets the assortment also includes food products which have passed their best before date, after checking for appearance and food hygiene (e.g. Der Korb, 2013; SOMI, s.a.). The checks depend on the type of product - however, in most cases, the selected products are checked for appearance, smell, damages and taste. Products with a use by date are never sold after the expiry date. Most authorities which are responsible for the hygienic approaches in food companies (a social supermarket is a food company in Austria), offer trainings also for volunteers working at social supermarkets in order to share knowledge and experiences in on-site checks. In contrast, the Sozialmarkt Wien (SMW) only offers products which still meet the best before date (SMW, 2012).

There are also differences in the way that clients may choose from the offered assortment. On the one hand, there are real retail outlets with several opening hours and a typical retail outlet infrastructure (e.g. shelf for vegetables, cooling/freezer equipment for dairy/frozen products, cashier station). The clients enter the store, take a trolley, personally select products, and show their member card to pay. On the other hand, there are also two other types of social supermarkets with less retail characteristics. There are several mobile social supermarkets operating in rural areas (e.g. Tischlein Deck Dich in Vorarlberg, Laube-Markt Mobil in Pinzgau/Salzburg, SOMAmobil in Lower Austria) providing a service with fixed stops and a registered time schedule (TDD, s.a.; Laube Markt, 2013; SAM, 2014b). The assortment is smaller than in an outlet and the shopping character more like at a market stall than a supermarket. While some provide their offer directly from the bus (SAM, 2014b), others use small in-house locations (e.g. TDD, 2013) for the redistribution activities. Another option is offered e.g. by the Team Österreich Tafel or Le+O where once a week surplus food is arranged on tables and given to registered clients. Each client is accompanied by a volunteer who supervises the choice of the client in order help with questions and to limit the number of chosen products per person (Le+O, 2014).

In Austria several social supermarkets (e.g. Pannonische Tafel, Sozialmarkt Wien, Barbara Laden Schwaz, SOMA Linz, Paulusladen, SOMA Wolkersdorf) also include a small coffee shop and/or a cheap lunch offer to foster social interaction and self-help as well as low-threshold help from the social workers present. Some of the institutions also offer free coffee (e.g. Paulusladen, 2010; SOMA Wolkersdorf, 2010). Interviews with established facilities show that direct contact fosters self-confidence and interaction between clients. They start to help each other with smaller problems or discuss their situation with likeminded people and find new solutions. Opening the coffee shop to the general public, (those who are not in need of food assistance) would provide a range of benefits: not only a cheap meal and drink but also a place to develop new friendships and social networks. Therefore, if the coffee shop was open to the general public, social networks and friendships may occur or be cultivated between those in need and those who are not. These friendships and networks can lead to the widening of individual's awareness of each other, the minimisation of the stigma attached to receiving food aid as it is perceived to be accepted by all not just the 'needy', the feeling of being part of society as well as practical help in the form of assistance with job connections, for example. In practice (from

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the authors' experience as well as from some shops direct feedback), wealthy people eating and drinking there, will often pay more than the displayed price as an additional donation, which could also generate a new revenue stream. Besides the social benefit, the kitchen used for making the lunch can also help to reduce food waste in the social supermarket and take over products in large amounts which otherwise would have to be rejected. The option to offer a dish of the day in order to use up overripe products and/or to preserve the products, enables large amounts of fruits or vegetables to be accepted without the risk of dumping them afterwards. The jam, jelly, dried fruit or frozen food produced could be used in the coffee shop or be sold in the supermarket (Schneider, 2013). The only social supermarket which is open to all people (no registration process or monitoring of income level) is LEBI-Markt in Styria which aims to foster social inclusion of financially insecure people in society and raise awareness of social problems (LEBI, s.a.).

As already mentioned above, some social supermarkets operate as social businesses reintegrating long-term unemployed people, ex-convicts or disabled people into the labour market. The model used in Austria which is supported by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) has an obligation to reintegrate a minimum specific quota of people employed to the normal labour market. For example, SOMA operated by Wiener Hilfswerk fulfilled the set quota in 2010 by obtaining an outplacement quota of 25% which is equal to 11 out of 44 employees per year. In this case the model is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) (Wiener Hilfswerk, 2012). From the employee's point of view the benefit is the possibility to work and feel useful, the option to speak about one's own life and its challenges, to have an income for concrete work instead of passive subsidies, receiving commendations and recognition as well as having the self-confidence to cope with future challenges. For a restricted timespan (up to 11 months) the employees are trained for future work in retail. For example, this is done by working with the collection, sorting, displaying, selling and disposing of the food products. In addition to the practical work experience, the employees are also trained with regard to job interviews, behaviour in the workplace, occupational orientation, language courses etc. (Wiener Hilfswerk, 2012). The social supermarket CarLa Sozialmarkt Wörgl offers one workplace with 19 hours per week which is financed to 66.7 % by AMS and 13.3% by the federal state of Tyrol and limited for one year (CarLa, 2009). At the social supermarket Kraut und Rüben people with disabilities find a meaningful workplace during weekdays. On Saturday volunteers run the shop (Kraut und Rüben, s.a.). The social supermarket WBI Leoben also runs a cooperation with the local Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) as the participants of the regular AMS course "sales training at retail" pass their practical units within the social supermarket (WBI Leoben, s.a.).

Other social markets are supported by people fulfilling their alternative service (instead of military service) such as Tischlein Deck Dich (TDD, 2013). There is also a growing interest among companies to send paid staff members on a daily or weekly basis to work at social organisations as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility activities (so-called Corporate Social Volunteers) (TDD, 2013; Wiener Tafel, s.a.). The role of Corporate Social Responsibility in social innovation towards food waste reduction is also explored in the "Stimulating social innovation through policy measures" position paper drafted within the FUSIONS project (2014)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Available here: <http://www.eu-fusions.org/publications>

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Most of the social supermarkets also offer products other than food, such as personal hygiene products, housewares, clothing or electrical and electronic equipment. The SOMA operated by Wiener Hilfswerk for example runs a partnership with a social enterprise refurbishing electrical and electronic equipment which is offered in tested condition at the social supermarket (Wiener Hilfswerk, 2012). The social supermarket CarLa St. Johann in Tyrol offers in addition to the social supermarket a second hand shop enclosed. There everyone may try to resell second hand products while 30% of the sales profit is kept by CarLa to cover expenses (CarLa, s.a.).

Some of the social supermarkets also offer vouchers which can be bought and distributed instead of monetary gratuity (e.g. tiso, s.a.; SOMA NÖ, s.a.).

### 5.1.3 Legal aspects, waste management structures and policy conditions

In Austria, unlike other countries such as Italy with its La Legge del Buon Samaritano act passed in 2003, there is no specific law with respect to the liability of social organisations redistributing food. The Austrian authorities do not see any reason for a specific regulation with respect to redistribution as social organisations offering food act as a food company and have to take over the same responsibility as any other food company (Schneider, 2013). Although the legal situation should be clear, 47% of the surveyed social supermarkets signed special contracts with the donors that they overtake the full liability after transfer of the products. In addition, 30% of the interviewed social supermarkets introduced rules with respect to liability and food safety with the clients (Schnedlitz et al., 2011). The Team Österreich Tafel for example informs their clients about the fact that some of the offered products could already have passed their best before dates (but does not sell products after their use by date), that the cooling chain may be interrupted due to display and therefore the clients are responsible to carefully handle the food products by eating up within a short time and checking them before consumption by visual appearance, smell and taste. The information sheet has to be signed by each client (Novotny, 2011). Since 2011 the Austrian Federal Waste Management Plan includes a food waste prevention programme including the claim to release a guideline on legal aspects of food donation (BAWP, 2011). This publication was launched by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Health in October 2011 (Schneider, 2011). This guideline was also the basis for a similar document launched in Germany in 2012 (see chapter 0). Another guideline was published as a result of the "Efficient Consumer Response (ECR) working group on social sustainability" which discusses aspects of day-to-day cooperation between donors and social organisations (Meissner & Schneider, 2011).

As social supermarkets deal with foodstuff, which include a high percentage of over-ripe products, products which have already gone beyond their best before dates or have to separate products which have already been spoiled from edible stuff, a significant bio waste generation may occur. One key factor to avoid the spoilage of large amounts of products is to be prepared and keep several options for utilisation, such as sharing with other organisations, processing the products immediately in the coffee shop, preserving for later use and so on. There is one small scale study available in Austria, where the efficiency of the SOMA operated by Wiener Hilfswerk was assessed with reference to the share of food waste. Due to a lack of data, several assumptions and calculations have to be made. All the donated products were registered at the point of consignment on a regular basis. The

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amount of products sold was estimated by subtracting the assumed waste proportion (based on number of waste bins, interval of collection and measuring the % filling) from the input amount. The overall results indicate that in 2009, 92% by mass of the input of 571 t of food products were distributed to the clients of the SOMA. This means that 525 t of food could be recovered within 1 year (Meissner et al. cited in Wiener Hilfswerk, 2012).

Bono (2002) identified some factors influencing the development of social supermarkets in Austria. From the beginning in 1999 it could be seen that in Upper Austria, Salzburg, Carinthia and Styria most interest existed to establish a social supermarket. In Carinthia for example, a member of the liberal party responsible of social affairs initiated the support from Carinthia for the establishment of social supermarkets in March 2001 by decision of the Carinthia state parliament (Bono, 2002). In other Austrian Federal states there was discussion on the topic and a lot of concerns mostly from established social welfare organisations due to stigmatism, quality of products, support from companies, potential competition with already established food aid institutions and acceptance of a social supermarket within the surrounding neighbourhood (Schneider et al., 2004).

Most of the food redistributed by social supermarkets in Austria is surplus which means that the products are designated to be disposed if a redistribution were not to take place. Since 2004, the landfilling of untreated organic waste was banned according to Austrian Landfill ordinance (Deponieverordnung, 1996). The ban is implemented by a limiting maximum value for total organic content (TOC) of 5 % dry matter. This means that all waste has to be pre-treated by mechanical-biological pre-treatment (MBT) or thermal treatment before landfilling. As the compulsory TOC value often cannot be fulfilled by MBT processes e.g. due to fixation of carbon in humic matter, an alternative parameter (calorific value) was introduced for those treatment options within a revised version of the ordinance (Deponieverordnung, 1996). On the level of hospitality sector such as hotels, restaurants, catering, canteens, hospitals, schools etc. as well as for the food processing industry a separate collection of food waste is established (BAWP, 2011). The collected amounts are used for composting, biogas or biofuel production depending on the characteristics such as water content, presence of animal products etc. A separate collection is established for specific food waste streams such as surplus bread from bakeries and supermarkets which are processed towards animal feed (Scherhauser & Schneider, 2011). Surplus food products from retail are either collected separately as bio waste (mainly fruit and vegetables), and treated at a biogas plant, or composting plant or disposed of as residual waste and processed at a MBT or thermal treatment plant. Comparing the donation to social organisations with the aforementioned alternatives show the clear benefit of the redistribution activity against recycling as all the inherent nutrients, energy etc. is used for human consumption. Also, there is a potential for donating companies to become more aware of the amount of surplus food they generate, thus enticing them to take further action towards food waste prevention.

According to the guideline related to legal aspects of redistribution of food, in Austria the monetary value of the redistributed food is assumed to be zero. This means that companies donating food surplus which otherwise would be designated to be wasted, do not have to pay tax (Schneider, 2011). So far, there was no intention of Austrian authorities to levy taxes on donated surplus food products (Kiefel, 2014).

#### **Example social supermarkets – Austria**

All shops operated by SOMA: <http://www.somaundpartner.at/standorte>

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Examples of individual social supermarkets beyond the umbrella organisation:

<http://www.tiso.at/>

<http://www.sozialmarkt.com/>

<http://tupalo.com/de/rd/1eou7e>

<http://www.sozialmarkt-freistadt.at/>

<http://sozialzentrum.org/sozialmarkt-der-korb/>

<http://www.laube.at>

<http://www.st-barbara.at/Barbaraladen/Laden.htm>

<http://www.somi.at/>

<http://www.paulusladen.at/cms/>

<http://www.solali.at/>

<http://www.martinladen.at/>

<http://www.chanceb.at/index.php?seitenId=14&einrichtungenId=54>

<http://www.wbi-leoben.at/de/sozialmarkt/>

<http://www.tischlein-deckdich.at/>

Social market run by other charities (red cross, caritas, ...):

<http://www.rotekreuz.at/ooe/dienststellen/steyr-land/die-bezirksstelle/was-wir-tun/soziale-dienste/rotekreuz-sozialmarkt/>

<http://www.rotekreuz.at/nocache/bgl/pflege-betreuung/sozialmarkt-oberwart/>

<http://www.volkshilfe-ooe.at/spende-soma/>

<http://www.caritas-leo.at/>

<https://www.caritas-salzburg.at/hilfe-angebote/re-integration-und-nachhaltigkeit/carla/carla-st-johann-in-tirol/>

#### **Umbrella network Austria**

SOMA Österreich und Partner, <http://www.somaundpartner.at>

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## 5.2 Social Supermarkets in Germany

### Germany – Key Points for Replication

- The umbrella organisation “Bundesverband Deutsche Tafel” covers social supermarkets and food banks. The aim of this Federal Association is to organise nationwide funding, negotiate specific tariffs, lobbying, coordinate large donations, ensure knowledge exchange between members, offer training and provide PR material. At least 640 shops are operating within this organisation. Additionally there are some social supermarkets operating outside the umbrella organisation.
- The price of food products sold in social supermarkets is typically 10 to 30% of the normal price. An alternative model is to sell a whole shopping basket for a symbolic amount of 1 to 1.50 Euro.
- The financing sources of the social supermarkets are similar to Austria. Most of the expenses are covered by private donation and sponsorship.
- There are three main types of social supermarket in Germany:
  - The Tafel social supermarkets operate with a procedure similar to normal supermarkets.
  - Some social supermarkets are serving counters, at which the customers take a basket and move along the different product groups where the volunteers offer products with a restricted number of items.
  - There are also few mobile serving counters where a room can only be used for a limited time (typically a few hours).
- The serving counter generally takes place once a week while the Tafel shop opens on several days.
- A pilot delivery service was implemented in 2013, to serve non-mobile and handicapped persons.
- The activities at Tafeln social supermarkets have recently widened to include cooking lessons, special courses, supervised leisure time for school children, etc. Often the special services are offered in cooperation with other organisations such as special schools, municipal social services, etc.
- In 2013 approximately 60,000 volunteers worked for the different types of social supermarkets, and a smaller number (e.g. 1200) of people volunteer (e.g. after military service) and receive a small allowance under a national volunteering scheme.
- There is no specific law with respect to the liability of social organisations redistributing food in Germany. Social organisations offering food have the same responsibility as any other food company.
- A guideline on legal aspects of food donation was published by the German Ministry for Nutrition, Agriculture and Consumer Protection in 2012.
- Organisations used to have to pay a purchase tax for donated surplus food, but a policy measure has been introduced to scrap this tax for surplus food.

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### 5.2.1 Organisational and structural characteristics

Germany is dominated by the "Bundesverband Deutsche Tafel" in the sector of social supermarkets. At least 640 shops are operated by this organisation. Additionally there are some individual social supermarkets running (e.g. Josefslädchen, Caritas market).

In Germany some CariSatt shops were established in 1996, similar to the model implemented in Switzerland (see section 0), also. In contrast to the Swiss sister organisation the aim of social inclusion was not highlighted in Germany. Due to financial problems the German CariSatt shops were operated mainly by volunteers (Bono, 2002).

The first German food bank was established in 1993 in Berlin according to the City harvest initiative from New York and called "Berliner Tafel". In total, 916 organisations were united within the umbrella organisation of "Bundesverband Deutsche Tafel" in 2013 (Deutsche Tafel, 2014). Therefore, most of the existing food redistribution organisations targeted with the present study are covered by the umbrella organisation. However, it should be noted that not all Tafeln include social supermarkets (some are food banks only). Aim of the Federal Association is to organise nationwide funding, negotiate specific tariffs, lobbying towards society, politics and economy, coordinate large donations, ensure knowledge exchange between members, offer trainings and provide PR material. According to Selke (2009) about 70% of Deutsche Tafeln also run a Tafelladen (Tafel shop) where the food products are sold for 10 to 30% of the normal price. Applied to the given number of 916 organisations, it would mean that at least 640 shops are operating in Germany. The alternative model which is called "Ausgabestelle" (serving counter) is to give a whole basket for a symbolic amount of 1 to 1.50 Euro (Selke, 2009). Besides the German Tafeln there are also other organisations which offer food to food insecure people in shops.

One example is the Josefslädchen (Joseph's shop) located in Bamberg. Since 1999 about 1,000 clients are served via a sales area of 45 m<sup>2</sup>. The Caritas operates the shop and cooperates also with local authorities where the member card is issued in addition to on-site issue. Also in this shop, three workplaces were initiated for long-time unemployed people. There is also a small coffee shop enclosed in order to relax, meet friends and get support by social workers (Weiss, 2002).

The financing sources of the German Tafeln are similar to Austria. Most of the expenses are covered by private donation of food and other goods (Deutsche Tafel, 2014). (Deutsche Tafel, 2014).

### 5.2.2 Services for clients and society

The approach of how the clients receive their food is different depending on whether there is a Tafel shop or a serving counter. At the Tafel shop the procedure is equal to the Austrian social supermarkets. At the serving counter of a German Tafel it is similar to the Team Österreich Tafel or Le+O (see chapter 5.1.2). The clients take a box and move along the different product groups where the volunteers offer products with restricted item number and the clients may take the offer or not (Selke, 2009). The serving counter offer takes place once a week while the Tafel shop opens on several days. In addition, there are also few mobile serving counters which means that the room can only be used for a limited

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time (typically a few hours) in order to redistribute the products to the people. There is no option to store products in advance or the use fixed furniture (Selke, 2009).

According to the demand for help, the offer of Tafeln was widened within recent years. In addition to food redistribution, several Tafeln also offer cooking lessons, special courses, supervised leisure time for school children etc. A pilot delivery service was implemented in 2013, for example, at a small city as only a low percentage of the potential users were registered at the local Tafel. It was identified that non-mobile and handicapped persons were not able to benefit from the Tafel offer due to lack of mobility and/or shyness (Deutsche Tafel, 2014). Often the special services are offered in cooperation with other organisations such as special schools, municipal social services, etc. (Deutsche Tafel, 2014).

In 2013 approximately 60,000 volunteers worked for the different types of German Tafeln (Deutsche Tafel, 2014). Besides volunteers and employees paid from own revenues, there is also another option in Germany to get additional manpower. The Bundesfreiwilligendienst (BFD, Federal volunteer service) was established following the military service and alternative service after 01.07.2011 in order to ensure the capacities of several social, ecological and cultural organisations after that date. The aim is *"to create a new culture of voluntary involvement in Germany and to enable as many people as possible to commit themselves to the common good"* (BFD, 2014). The volunteers work full-time and receive an allowance at a maximum of 250 Euro (Deutsche Tafel, 2014) and are registered for social insurance. That type of work is open to all people independent of age, nationality, gender etc and restricted to a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 18 months. The participation at trainings covering 25 days per year as well as educational support by experts is obligatory.

The volunteers can choose from a broad assortment of organisations which were approved by authorities (BMFSFJ, 2014). According to the yearbook of the Bundesverband Deutsche Tafel, a total of 1,249 people from the federal volunteer service worked for 200 Tafeln all over Germany in 2013. The share is only 2% of all volunteers working in the Tafeln, but it is a convenient source of manpower and it involves people who are willing to help, but can't afford to do it unpaid (Deutsche Tafel, 2014).

Another option which is used by German social supermarkets is to employ so-called "1 Euro jobber". This type of job offer was introduced to foster integration of unemployed people and is supported by public financing. The average duration is six to nine months with a working time between 15 and 30 hours a week. As the title of the job suggests, the average income is between 1 to 2 Euro per working hour and the person receives unemployment benefits in addition (from a legal point of view the income is not seen as income but as compensation for expenditure (HartzIV, s.a.). Selke (2009) states that approximately 3,200 "one Euro jobbers" support the German Tafeln but there is no information on the types of Tafeln that they relate to.

### 5.2.3 Legal aspects, waste management structures and policy conditions

Similarly to Austria, there is no special law with respect to food redistribution in Germany, as the existing food regulations have to be fulfilled by all organisations dealing with food.



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Based on the Austrian guideline which deals with legal aspects of food redistribution, the German Ministry for Nutrition, Agriculture and Consumer Protection published a similar guideline in 2012 (BMELV, 2012). The guideline also provides information related to the important aspect of purchase tax release for donors. Until 2012 companies would have to pay purchase tax for donated surplus food and other donations in kind to social organisations. In contrast, there was no obligation to pay the purchase tax if the products were disposed of. Although this legal requirement was not executed commonly in practice, it represented a barrier for donation. In November 2012 the German Federal Ministry of Finance released a statement that there is no obligation to pay purchase tax for donated products as long as no donation receipt is issued by the receiving social organisation (BMELV, 2012; Deutsche Tafel, 2013).

The waste management system in Germany is also very similar to Austria. Since 2009 the direct disposal of wastes without pre-treatment is banned and a maximum level of TOC and heating value respectively is in force (Abfallablagungsverordnung, 2001).

#### **Example social supermarkets – Germany**

German food banks:

<http://www.tafel.de/de/die-tafeln/tafel-suche/adressenliste.html>

Other examples:

<http://www.caritas-landkreis-bamberg.de/einrichtungen/josefslaedchen.html>

[http://lebensmittelbank.de/index.php?cat=00\\_Home](http://lebensmittelbank.de/index.php?cat=00_Home)

#### **Umbrella network Germany**

Bundesverband Deutsche Tafel, <http://www.tafel.de/nc/startseite.html>

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## 5.3 Social Supermarkets in Switzerland

### Switzerland – Key Points for Replication

- There are about 23 social supermarkets and additional 110 locations where food is distributed in Switzerland
- A centralised coordination centre was established for social supermarkets in Switzerland.
- The types of customers are mostly single parents, families with multiple children, people employed in uncertain contracts and long-time unemployed people.
- In order to facilitate the number of social contacts for their clients, small coffee shops have been included in the social supermarkets for customers to meet and talk.
- The details of the models for social supermarkets do vary, for example at Tischlein Deck Dich the clients are supported by volunteers who give them the food products according to the total available food amount of the day. At some establishments members are only allowed to shop once a week. The model at some social supermarkets also aims to decrease social exclusion of people in need by supporting their contribution to sport and cultural activities. For example, the CariSatt shops provide tickets for cinema or theatre, special holiday offers and subscription for newspaper and magazines at reduced prices.
- Operating costs tend to be covered by the income from sales and external funding from companies, charities and individuals. There is minimal direct support from public authorities.
- The opening hours of social supermarkets are variable. Caritas Markt runs several shops which are open several days a week, but other social organisations, companies and churches offer free locations to Tischlein Deck Dich where the food redistribution takes place once a week.
- The member cards are issued at Caritas bureaus, social authorities, clerical organisations or other social welfare organisations depending on the Swiss Canton. The cards are generally reissued yearly. The number of cards per issuing office is restricted.
- Surplus products are offered at the social supermarkets (food and personal hygiene products). These are donated free of charge or offered at very low prices by the companies. There is also the option to have sponsorship for specific product categories. In this case a company (e.g. not from food sector) finances the support with staple foods or other products which are not offered as surplus products by food companies.
- The majority of staff at social supermarkets are volunteers. The Caritas markets employ former unemployed people who are part of employment schemes in order to train them for future work in food retail.
- In terms of liability, Switzerland is similar to Austria and Germany in that there is no special law with respect to food redistribution, as the already existing food regulations have to be fulfilled by all organisations dealing with food.
- A policy measure has been introduced so that products donated for free for redistribution are not subject to VAT so long as the amounts and products are documented.

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### 5.3.1 Organisational and structural characteristics

In Switzerland there are two main organisations in the field of social supermarkets. The organisation of "Caritas Markt" runs 24 shops and "Tischlein Deck Dich" offers food at up to 110 locations.

According to Bono (2002) the first social supermarket was established in 1992 in Switzerland, named CariSatt-Laden. Beside the prevention of food waste, the model also aims to decrease social exclusion of people in need by supporting their contribution to sport and cultural activities. To do so, the CariSatt shops provided tickets for cinema or theatre, special holiday offers and subscription for newspaper and magazines at reduced prices. Some of the shops bought food products in order to balance their assortment. The price level was approximately half or one third lower than the wholesale price (Bono, 2002). For better coordination of the shops a centralised coordination centre was established. In order to facilitate the number of social contacts for their clients, small coffee shops have been established in the social supermarkets for customers to relax and talk (Bono, 2002). In the meantime, the CariSatt-Laden were renamed "Caritas Markt". The 24 shops offer surplus food at low prices to people in need (Caritas Markt, s.a.). In parallel to the CariSatt shops, another organisation was funded in 1999, called Tischlein Deck Dich (TDD ch, 2013a). In 2014 they offer food for needy people at 102 locations throughout Switzerland. If we consider the cooperation partner Tables du Rhône, there are 110 locations in total for Tischlein Deck Dich (TDD ch, s.a.a).

The financial expenses of Caritas Markt are covered by the income from sales and private or company-driven funding. There is no direct support from public authorities (Caritas Markt, s.a.). In 2012, the 23 Caritas markets achieved a volume of sales of 8.3 million Euro (10 million Swiss francs) (Caritas Markt, s.a.). In 2013 the budget of Tischlein Deck Dich was 2.6 million Swiss Francs (= 2.1 million Euro) of which 53% came from charitable foundations, 25% from companies, 9% from the symbolic Franc from clients, 7% additional sponsoring and 6% private funding (TDD ch, 2013b).

While Caritas Markt runs several shops which are open several days a week (Caritas Markt, s.a.), other social organisations, companies and churches offer free locations to Tischlein Deck Dich where the food redistribution take place once a week (TDD ch, 2013a).

The offer of Caritas Markt is restricted to people who are financially insecure. The member card is issued at Caritas bureaus, social authorities, clerical organisations or other social welfare organisations depending on the Swiss Canton; it is reissued yearly (Caritas Markt, 2014). The member card is necessary to profit from the offer of Tischlein Deck Dich. The number of cards per issuing office is restricted (TDD ch, 2013a). There is a cooperation between Tischlein Deck Dich and Caritas Markt, therefore the member cards are valid in both shops. Tischlein Deck Dich also exchanges food products with Schweizer Tafel which delivers food to social organisations (TDD ch, s.a.a).

According to the brochure of Caritas Markt the offered products are surplus products (food and personal hygiene products) which are donated free of charge or offered at very low prices by the companies. There is also the option to have a sponsorship for specific product categories. In this case a company (e.g. not from food sector) finances the support with staple foods or other products which are not offered as surplus products by food companies

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(Caritas Markt, 2014). Tischlein Deck Dich only offers surplus food products mainly from producers and wholesale (TDD ch, 2013b).

Caritas Markt has the legal status of a collective (Caritas Markt, s.a.) while Tischlein Deck Dich represents a registered association (TDD ch, 2013b).

Using their database, Caritas Markt found that their clients are mostly single parents, families with multiple children, people employed in uncertain employment contracts and long-time unemployed people (Caritas Markt, 2014).

### 5.3.2 Services for clients and society

While Caritas markets offer their products at very low prices (Caritas Markt, 2014), the clients of Tischlein Deck Dich pay only a symbolic price of 1 Swiss Franc (= 0.82 Euro) per purchase (TDD ch, s.a.a).

The Caritas markets are organised like a normal supermarket (Caritas Markt, 2014). At Tischlein Deck Dich the clients are supported by volunteers who give them the food products according to the total available food amount of the day. With their member card the clients are only allowed to come once a week (TDD ch, s.a.a; TDD ch, s.a.b).

In addition to the support with cheap food, the Caritas Markt is also seen as a place to meet others in similar situation. Caritas Markt try to offer a suitable environment to foster meetings between clients in order to achieve a bilateral communication and exchange of experiences and help (Caritas Markt, s.a.).

The Caritas markets employ former unemployed people who are part of employment schemes in order to train them for future work in food retail. Most of those employees work directly in the market. In addition, there are full-time employed people or volunteers (Caritas Markt, 2014). In 2013 Tischlein Deck Dich was supported by 1,830 volunteers, 17 full-time employed staff, 50 long-time unemployed people working in employment schemes and 7 people working in alternative service (TDD ch, 2013b).

### 5.3.3 Legal aspects, waste management structures and policy conditions

Switzerland is similar to Austria and Germany in that there is no special law with respect to food redistribution, as the already existing food regulations have to be fulfilled by all organisations dealing with food.

The waste management system in Switzerland is also very similar to Austria and Germany despite the fact that Switzerland is not a member state of the European Union. According to Beretta (2012) most of the wasted food is used for animal feed, treated by a composting or anaerobic digestion plant or incinerated at the thermal waste treatment plant. There is no landfilling of untreated food waste in Switzerland.

A stakeholder dialog group with respect to Food Waste was implemented in Switzerland in order to facilitate the cooperation towards redistribution. In the course of the meetings the topic of taxes was also discussed with the tax authority. Two different issues have to

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be considered: the value added tax and the tax on earnings of the social supermarket. It was proposed that products donated for free for redistribution should be handled in the same way as products which are designated for disposal. This means that for the donated products a deduction of input tax is possible for the donating company as long as the amounts and products are documented. Unfortunately this proposal was neglected by the tax authority (Hirt, 2015). With respect to the tax on earnings the correct approach is to adjust the donated products from the accounting (Schneider, 2014; Hirt, 2014). The clear arrangement is helpful in order to reduce misunderstanding and excuses for non-donation of surplus food.

#### **Example social supermarkets – Switzerland**

Addresses of all Caritas markets in Switzerland: <http://www.caritas-markt.ch/de/p103001486.html>

Addresses of all markets of “Tischlein deck dich”:  
<http://www.tischlein.ch/index.php?id=68&L=0>

Other examples:

<http://www.partage.ch/>

#### **Umbrella network Switzerland**

Central coordination centre for Caritas markets:

<http://www.caritas-markt.ch/de/p103001118.html>

Central coordination for Tischlein Deck Dich:

<http://www.tischlein.ch/>

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## 5.4 Social Supermarkets in France

### France – Key Points for Replication

- There are about 700 social supermarkets in France. Their purpose is to provide a form of food aid respectful of the dignity and freedom of members, and help the people who benefit from it to reintegrate the working society.
- The key actors of the French food redistribution system are 5 associative networks which are accredited by the French Government to redistribute the produce. One of these, A.N.D.E.S, for example, provides workshops on team management and training for volunteers.
- French social supermarkets are referred to as “social and solidarity stores,” and are local convenience stores where people with low income can purchase everyday goods for a price of about 10 or 20% of their normal retail price.
- Generally, the income of users of these stores is close to the poverty line, but each structure defines its own criteria depending on the local social context. The social stores work closely with local social services with which they review applications and decide on a period during which the beneficiaries can have access to the stores. On average, people go to these stores regularly (e.g. every week) for a period of 2 or 3 months, but that can be extended to up to 6 months or even a year, on a case-by-case basis.
- Most existing stores include opportunities for members to participate in activities such as cooking lessons, cosmetic workshops, parents-children activities, etc, which contribute to recreating a social link and break a pattern of isolation.
- One existing model is that of a partnership that some stores set up with local social services, allowing for social workers to be physically available at the store once or twice a week. Their role is to provide beneficiaries with guidance and administrative support, either to find a job, build their own professional project, get access to adequate medical care, manage a household budget, etc.
- The workshops of A.N.D.E.S include preparation of jams, juices and soups to be sold in the main retail outlets. In addition, A.N.D.E.S includes food waste prevention in the topics of its workshops.
- The main challenges for the social and solidarity stores at the local level are diverse and include: establishing partnerships with local supermarkets to access surplus food, whereas these local supermarkets are also in competition with social supermarkets; identifying supply opportunities for fresh products (fruit, vegetables, dairy); and management and training of volunteers.
- As a complement to the European laws related to food, France has one of Europe’s most attractive fiscal incentives for food donation in place. Companies benefit from a tax break of 60% of the donation, with a cap of 0.5% of the company turnover.
- Best practice guidelines have been published in France to facilitate food surplus redistribution. These guides aim to clarify legislative and logistical aspects related to food donation for all food chain actors (producers, retailers, catering services).

### 5.4.1 Organisational and structural characteristics

There are about 700 social supermarkets in France, which is the highest number in Europe.

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The key actors of the French food redistribution system are 5 associative networks which are accredited by the French Government to redistribute the produce provided by the PNAA and the former PEAD. These networks are the French Red Cross, the French Federation of Food Banks, Secours Populaire, Restos du Coeur and more recently since 2010, the A.N.D.E.S network.

French social and solidarity stores are local convenience stores where people with low income can purchase everyday goods for about 10 or 20% of their "regular retailing price". They were reportedly created in France in the 1980s, as an addition to the system of free distribution essentially meant for homeless or financially insecure people.

Solidarity stores are meant for people with low income (working poor, unemployed, retirees with a low pension etc.) who can't afford buying food in "normal" supermarkets but who are, on the other hand, reluctant to benefit from charity. There are more than 700 social and solidarity stores in France, serving between 120 000 and 170 000 "clients" per year.

Apart from the products provided by the A.N.D.E.S network, each store can have its specific additional supply lines (from private donations, corporate philanthropy programmes, etc.).

The access to social stores is usually dependent upon socioeconomic and family criteria (number of children, etc.). Generally, people's income is close to the poverty line, but each structure defines its own criteria depending on the local social context.

#### Difference between social and solidarity stores

In France, social stores are usually run by associations, under the responsibility of one or several local authorities and are public-funded.

- These stores are supported by local authorities, by organisations such as the Food Bank and the Red Cross, by foundations and by private companies, through local or national partnerships.
- These stores work in close relations with local social services with which they review applications and decide of a period during which the beneficiaries can have access to the stores. On average, people go to these stores regularly (every week or so) for a period of 2 or 3 months, but that can be extended to up to 6 months or even a year, on a case-by-case basis.

The difference with solidarity stores is that the latter are formed by a group of individuals or associations and are not exclusively public-funded.

Beyond redistribution, A.N.D.E.S has a mission to:

- Help create social and solidarity stores wherever there is a need for it and ensure their long-lasting activity.
- Lead the solidarity stores network in order to extend its practices, run national estimates and promote these structures to public and private partners, as well as media.
- Develop services for the solidarity stores, especially by proposing workshops on nutrition or team management, and training for volunteers.

- Supply these stores with quality products by developing national and local partnerships with food industries, hypermarket chains and local producers.
- Develop professional integration workshops that will help to process the excesses of the fruits & vegetables sector for solidarity stores and other food aid organisations.

A.N.D.E.S is funded by public support and through the earnings of some of their programmes.

#### 5.4.2 Services for clients and society

The purpose of social and solidarity stores is to provide a form of food aid respectful of people's dignity and freedom, and help the people who benefit from it to reintegrate the working society.

Often their retailing activity is a vector for larger solidarity actions : most existing stores allow for people to be listened to and exchange, or participate in activities such as cooking lessons, cosmetic workshops, parents-children activities, etc. which contribute to recreating a social link and break a pattern of isolation.

One existing model is that of a partnership that some stores set up with local social services, allowing for social workers to be physically available at the store once or twice a week. Their role is to provide beneficiaries with guidance and administrative support, either to find a job, build their own professional project, get access to adequate medical care, manage a household budget, etc.

Another model, focused on food waste prevention, has been developed by the A.N.D.E.S network to promote access to fresh fruits and vegetables in social and solidarity stores, and to develop its mission to help professional integration. Since 2008, A.N.D.E.S. has opened professional integration workshops in different wholesale markets across France, meant for processing fruits and vegetables that otherwise would have been destroyed as they are not considered saleable in supermarkets. The approach and aim of A.N.D.E.S is to work on a variety of topics and raise awareness through food access: social integration, nutrition and health issues, fight against food waste.





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## Social supermarkets in France (© ANDES)

There are four professional integration workshops developed by the A.N.D.E.S network in France (Le Potager de Marianne in Rungis, La Cistella de Marianne in Perpignan, la Banaste de Marianne in Marseille and le Gardin de Mariane in Lomme). They collect, sort and repack unsold fruits and vegetables to distribute them to local food distribution associations. Some of them also process jams, juices and soups, to be sold in the mainstream retail sector (since the cost price of these products is too high to be sold in a solidarity store at a low price).

Future projects for A.N.D.E.S. include a closer cooperation with farmers, so that they can produce for A.N.D.E.S (who would buy their products at the market price and then distribute to the solidarity stores) while gaining help from local actors. Gleaning unsold products directly from their fields could also be organised as a professional integration activity for some of the beneficiaries of the shops, while constituting a new source of products for the stores. For more information on gleaning activities, see the Gleaning Network website <http://feedbackglobal.org/campaigns/gleaning-network/> and the FUSIONS Feasibility study on the development of gleaning networks.

The main difficulties for the social and solidarity stores at the local level are diverse:

- Establish strong partnerships with local supermarkets to make them aware of the store and be able to supply food. There exists a form of competition with other food distribution charities (Les Restaus du Coeur for instance), who are long and well-established.
- Develop well-integrated projects within local territories: the economic development policy, the openness and knowledge of the topic by the local councillors (and therefore the subsidies) are strong drivers for the success of a local store.
- Find a supply for good quality products, mostly fruit and vegetables and dairy products. It is easier to find staple products.
- Manage the volunteers to make the shop work: despite their willingness to help, some wrongly judge clients and the reintegration workers. There are examples where some volunteers tend to think that the shops would “give alms” and that consequently the beneficiaries would not be entitled to receive high quality products or to have any kind of demands. There have been incidents where some racist or despising comments have been made by some volunteers towards people who are being reintegrated to the working society<sup>4</sup>. The A.N.D.E.S network provides training and support to volunteers to such reintegration to help them respond to comments and preconceived ideas.
- Make sure that all the people working in the shops (professionals and volunteers) have a good management of food security and hygiene rules. A.N.D.E.S. developed a dedicated software to manage the traceability of the products. Providing them with an efficient training is essential.

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<sup>4</sup> In France, the “Insertion through economic activity” programme is a public plan that provides financial support to companies that hire people who have been jobless for a long time or going through socio-economic difficulties. The employing company has a specific legal status and the workers benefit from specific support (training, help to find a long-lasting job, social support, etc.) so that they can be “reintegrated” into a regular company and social life afterwards.

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### 5.4.3 Legal aspects, waste management structures and policy conditions

France does not have specific legislation dedicated to food redistribution in place. The legislative framework is mainly composed of laws transposing the European legislation laying down:

- the general principles and requirements of food law (Regulation EC/178/2002),
- the rules on hygiene (the Food Hygiene Package),
- the food durability and date marking provisions (Regulation EC 1169/2011)
- the VAT regime on food donation (Council Directive 2006/112/EC)
- the waste management hierarchy (Waste Framework Directive) etc.

As a complement to the European laws related to food, France has one of Europe's most attractive fiscal incentives for food donation in place. According to Article 238 bis of the General Tax Code, companies benefit from a tax break of 60% of the donation, with a cap of 0.5% of the company turnover. If the tax break was not fully used during its first year because of the cap, it may continue over the next five years. The tax break also applies when the company provides delivery and storage of foods for donation, in the sense that it treats the service delivery or storage as a gift. This is a very important aspect considering that cost transportation is a big hurdle in food redistribution.

According to three pilot studies undertaken at the beginning of 2012 by Leclerc in the North of France, tax credits appear to be one of the most effective incentives for food redistribution in France. The three supermarkets compared the costs which the food donor would bear in two case scenarios: food donation and anaerobic digestion (AD) treatment. The conclusion was that thanks to fiscal incentives for food donation, and to the high costs of bio-waste treatment in France, it is more attractive for a large retailer to donate food surplus than to send it to anaerobic digestion.

Guidelines to facilitate food surplus redistribution, and in particular food surplus donation to charities were drafted in September 2013 by the Region Rhône-Alpes. These three guides (DRAAF Rhône-Alpes, 2013) aim to clarify legislative and logistical aspects related to food donation for all food chain actors (producers, retailers, catering services). The French Federation of Food Banks also drafted a best practice guide (Banques alimentaires, 2011) in order to assist food donors and food charities to comply with the Hygiene Regulations.

In the framework of the National Pact against Food Waste (Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Forêt, 2013) adopted in 2013 with the aim of reducing food waste by half by 2025, the French Ministry of Agriculture experimented the digital platform EQO Sphere for a year. Pilot projects of food redistributions were run in several supermarkets in France.

Regarding the legislation applicable directly to Social and solidarity stores in France: The European Commission approved on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014, the French Operational Programme to use the new Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

France, the first Member State to have adopted its Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) programme, will receive 499 million euros in current prices over the 2014-2020 period to support the provision of food aid to those most in need in the country (complemented with €88 million from national resources).

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The Regulation for the new Fund for European Aid for the most Deprived requires that the food and goods it finances be distributed free of charge to the most deprived. However, this does not mean that social groceries distributing food against a small fee cannot participate in the Fund. They can participate as long as the products co-financed by the Fund are distributed free of charge.

This situation triggered a lobbying action from the French network of social and solidarity stores A.N.D.E.S and other partners of the national Food Aid system. They opposed this disposition, perceived as counter productive for the socially-added value and purpose of the stores' mission since symbolic monetary participation can be identified as a fundamental factor of dignity and autonomy for recipients. The food banks do use products of the FEAD.

The French Government responded to this important mobilization movement by voting a specific budget in Parliament: the Crédit National des Epiceries Solidaires (National Credit for solidarity stores), allocating an amount of 80 Euros per recipient (to a maximum of 210 recipients), to a selection of solidarity stores. 20% of the disbursed funds will have to be allocated to fruit and vegetable supply. The A.N.D.E.S network now does not use FEAD products and works with this national credit and buys products.

#### **Example social supermarkets – France**

Map of some of the social supermarkets in France: <http://reseau-andes.viabloga.com/texts/geolocalisation>**Umbrella network France**

A.N.D.E.S network : <http://www.epiceries-solidaires.org/>

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## 5.5 Social Supermarkets in United Kingdom

### UK – Key Points for Replication

- Although there is much food redistribution activity in the UK, there are just two operational social supermarkets. The social supermarkets (Community Shops) have been set up as an offshoot of the much more widespread Company Shop model, which sells surplus food at a reduced cost to employees or retirees of Company Shop's partners, or those that work in the emergency services.
- The business model of the Community Shop is that the surplus food is purchased from the suppliers (except if they want to make a donation) at a price that is higher than the return they would get from producers of animal feed.
- There is a large amount of effort needed to plan and set up a community shop.
- The set-up costs of the community shops have been covered by Company Shop. Community Shop are aiming for the operational costs to be commercially sustainable, similar to Company Shop. The difference is that profit is invested back into supporting the members.
- The community shop model relies on local organisations, such as the local authority and social services. In setting up the shop, it takes time to develop relationships with these local organisations and to get them engaged in the set up and operations of community shop.
- Each Community Shop includes a café where members can interact. The café offers subsidised fresh meals everyday and provides cooking classes.
- One of the most important benefits of Community Shop is that members engage in a personal development plan, with support from mentors from the shop. In particular, this focuses on confidence building, training and advice on job applications and interview skills. About 1 in 5 members who have completed the training have moved into employment.

### 5.5.1 Organisational and structural characteristics

About 6,000 tonnes of food is redistributed for human consumption in the UK<sup>5</sup> by various charities (e.g. FareShare, FoodCycle, foodbanks), but the redistribution of surplus food through social supermarkets has only recently started.

There are two social supermarkets ("Community Shops") in the UK, set up by Company Shop, which already worked in a similar fashion to a social supermarket.

Company Shop, founded in 1985, operates staff shops at three food manufacturing locations across the country. These allow workers from Company Shop's partners to receive discounts of up to 70% on grocery, toiletries, household goods, perfume and drinks. The food products are surplus (e.g. broken biscuits, short dated food). Company Shop developed a network of these traditional factory shops and standalone stores on industrial sites by sharing the products between the various factories, and reportedly being able to provide 80% of the workers' weekly requirements for groceries. This is, in itself, a circular approach to the economy: the food produced in the factories that would be potentially wasted is supplied back to the workers themselves. The management of these shops benefits from existing logistical / transport operations, and the system operates on a membership basis.

The management team at Company Shop realised their model was similar to the model of some social supermarkets in other countries; except on the demographic they served.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/foodredistribution>

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Whilst members of Company Shop are typically low income workers, the model was not set up to proactively address specific social issues and/or food insecurity in the UK. Therefore in December 2013, Company Shop launched a pilot social supermarket, and the name of Community Shop; aiming to ensure that people in disadvantaged communities could benefit from their model. The first pilot in Goldthorpe, Yorkshire, is now a full-scale social supermarket, and Community Shop opened another full-scale social supermarket in London in December 2014. To date the two Community Shops are the only social supermarkets in the UK. They are registered as community interest companies. Company Shop's future strategy is for 18 more Social Supermarkets to be established in communities which need Social Supermarkets and where strong local authority support is available to "contribute" to start-up costs (for example through provision of a building, for a time period or for low rent).

Similar to the business model of Company Shop, within Community Shop only surplus food is provided. This is purchased from the suppliers (except if they want to make a donation); at a price that is higher than the return they would get from producers of animal feed. This price, and the avoidance of landfill costs, provides incentives to the suppliers. The price for the surplus food ensures that the suppliers consider these products as food and not as waste.

One of the differences between Company Shop and Community Shop is that the members that buy food items at Company Shops are workers within the sector and understand the concept of surplus food and avoiding food waste. However, some members of Community Shops might be less aware of food waste issues and more reluctant to purchase surplus food.

An objective of the Community Shops is to be commercially sustainable in terms of operating costs, similar to Company Shop. The difference is that any profit is invested back into supporting the recipients. Each Community Shop employs a combination of skilled positions; two mentors; a chef; and a retail manager. Additionally some members of Community Shop can undergo training that enables them to be peer mentors. These individuals offer guidance and support to other members of Community Shop and are supported by the two paid mentor employees.

The objective of being commercially sustainable relates to operational costs only, because start-up costs were covered by Company Shop and in the future plan to be supplemented through "contributions" from local authorities. At present (as of 2015), Community Shop is finding it a challenge to cover operational costs on a month-by-month basis, but this has been achieved at the Goldthorpe shop.

### 5.5.2 Services for clients and society

The key point about the two social supermarkets in the UK is that the objectives are different to Company Shop in that they are not just to provide discounted food and reduce food waste, but include training and building confidence of local people (members) that have had particular life challenges (e.g. long-term unemployment). Community Shop's mission statement is: "we believe in building stronger individuals and stronger communities with the will and the skills to succeed". The identification of people in need (and therefore potential members) is complicated, and carried out in collaboration with

the local authority, using their statistics and also a more central government database / map of deprived areas.



Social supermarkets in the UK © Community Shop

About two-thirds of the surface area of the stores is dedicated to retail; the last third is a café. This allows a chef to cook cheap fresh meals everyday (subsidised) and to provide cooking classes (in particular for products that are available on the shelves that members may not be familiar with, therefore aiming to provide some nutritional benefits). The café also encourages social interactions between members.

The most important feature of Community Shop is that members engage in a personal development plan ("The Success Plan"), supported by mentors from the shops. There are 750 members at any one time in each shop. The 'Success Plan' takes into account the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals, and their confidence. Community Shop provides tailored support (e.g. courses, training, and support from partners such as local health trainers or social services). The social services/trainers visit the café so that members can meet with them in a familiar and secure environment. Topics of help can range from confidence building and loan management to CV writing. Within the first six months of operating the first Community Shop, 423 people benefited from a personalised "success plan"; 120 people had access to CV and job search training; 38 people received debt help (for a total amount of £360,000); 112 people completed individual health training; and about 1 in 5 members who have completed the training have moved into employment. An independent research company has surveyed members (November 2014) on behalf of Community Shop and found the following results:

- Shoppers reported that they saved £53/month on average.
- 73% of those surveyed said they felt better off financially since starting the Success Plan.
- 85% of those surveyed said they had made positive healthy changes.
- 92% of those surveyed reported that they felt more confident as a result of the Success Plan.

Conditions to become a member include receiving one of the Government's income-related benefits, and importantly showing the will and commitment to enrol in the scheme. Membership is for 6 months, and can be renewed in a few cases (although this is not encouraged because the aim is to reduce any dependency on the shop). Products are usually sold at around 30% of the regular retail price.

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Job creation is not the main driver of the Community Shop, and it is not an objective for job creation to become the main driver because this might influence the selected locations for the establishment of future shops (i.e. locations with a strong job creation potential do not often align with socially deprived areas, which are the main targets). Most important to the Community Shops is the confidence that they help to instil in members and the potential ripple effect on their families, as they start to make positive changes in their lives, while pressures on family budgets are reduced. Through removing the immediate stress of being food insecure Community Shop identify that the members can then develop other aspects of their lives. Additionally, through partnerships with local services and charities, there is potential for wider communities to gain.

### 5.5.3 Legal aspects, waste management structures and policy conditions

As in Austria, Germany and France, the UK does not have legislation with a focus on food redistribution, but different pieces of legislation transpose the EU ones such as the General Food Regulations. However, there are governmental action plans and programmes that encourage the diversion of food waste from landfill to anaerobic digestion (The UK Government, 2009 and 2010).

The UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the UK Treasury do not have plans to consider the use of fiscal instruments in encouraging the redistribution of food surplus. Defra's focus is on ensuring the retail and charity sectors can better work together to overcome barriers to redistribution, including promotion of best practice (House of Lords, 2014a)

In April 2014, the House of Lords published a report (House of Lords, 2014b) on food prevention suggesting a range of practical options, hoping to move forward the food waste debate to more actions. In terms of food surplus redistribution, the House of Lords recommends a food use hierarchy (House of Lords, 2014b), which would place greater emphasis on the redistribution of surplus food, through food banks and charities (FareShare, 2014).

In 2012, WRAP set up a Food Redistribution Industry Working Group in UK (WRAP, 2014), bringing together retailers, manufacturers and wholesalers, charities and other food industry actors to develop a set of guiding principles to help organisations redistribute food surplus. A series of good practice food surplus redistribution case studies are illustrated in the report. The research found that whilst tonnages of surplus food available at store level are small in comparison to the whole supply chain, the volumes are sufficient and the process is straightforward enough to make this a strategic target area for expansion.

According to Community Shop, the incentive for suppliers to provide food is mainly consumer-driven. Food insecurity is very topical in the UK at the moment, thus making the fight against food waste almost a competitive advantage for the supermarkets and food makers. Also, the fact that Community Shop provides a 365 day solution for surplus food is an incentive for the suppliers to use this solution rather than waste disposal.

<b>Example social supermarkets – UK</b>
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Community Shop: <http://community-shop.co.uk/>



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# 6 Conclusions

This section includes the main conclusions from the analysis of the case studies. In particular, it highlights various features of typical social supermarket models, and can therefore be seen as key factors to address in any social supermarket or similar project. The features are summarised in the table below. At the end of this section, a SWOT analysis provides an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the social supermarket models.

## **Benefits of social supermarkets**

Social benefits are understood, for instance, to result in an improvement of the quality of life of the beneficiaries through a reduction of food insecurity, and better social inclusion through a renewed feeling of belonging and more self-confidence to communicate with others. Social supermarkets give the opportunity to their beneficiaries to be treated as clients (and not as charity beneficiaries), which strengthens a feeling of dignity.

Environmental benefits are related to the distribution of food surplus, therefore avoiding the surplus to go to waste (and avoiding the associated environmental impacts).

Economic benefits are related to the budget of the customers: they benefit from cheap, good quality food, therefore allowing them to get to a more balanced budget and to direct their finances to other essentials (health, heating, education).

## **Different models of social supermarkets**

The table below provides an overview of the different models of social supermarkets in the selected countries of this study.

There is no clear definition of social supermarkets. If there was a clearer common definition, then this might help to mobilise more funding and support. In this case, the common definition should be broad enough to integrate all the variations in the social supermarket model.

	Main organisation	Main aim	Funding	Dependency to local context	Type of structure that manages the store	Price	Other activities available	Standard of living criteria to access the shop	Delivery/collection	Workforce	Products available	Source	Style/layout	Legal context	Options to reduce food waste
ANDES (FR)	National network that helps develop local projects	Social inclusion and access to food for low income population	Subsidies + support from network	Strong (local subsidies and local authorities support needed + partnerships with local supermarkets needed)	Association (NGO) or local authority	1/3 price	Informal social connections, coffee area, cooking classes, and so on	Yes, decided at the local level	Undiscl.	1-2 employees but mostly volunteers	Food	Donated products and products bought by the network	Grocery store	No specific law on redistribution but strong tax incentive (+biowaste treatment is expensive) + guidelines	Skills workshops that produce soup, juice and jam
SOMA (AT)	National network that helps develop local projects	Social, environmental and economic benefit for deprived people	Yield from shop + local institutions (municipalities) + contributions from charities and private companies, in-kind contribution	Strong (cooperation with donors and authorities essential – e.g. hygiene, subsidies for long-term unemployed)	Mostly associations (and 33% private companies)	1/3 price + free for specific products	Coffee shop + cheap lunch + help from social workers + informal social interactions + mobile supermarket	Most yes	Mostly done by the social supermarket	Mostly volunteers and reinsertion employees	Food and non food ; no alcohol or cigarettes	Donated products only, sharing with other social supermarkets and organisations	Supermarket or market (mobile version)	No specific law on redistribution + guidelines + waste has to be treated before being disposed of	On-site use (cheap lunch offer and coffee shop)
Variations in Austria						free of charge or 1 euro per purchase (TAFEL)		LEBI-Markt open to everyone			Some workers fulfilling their alternative service (Tischlein Deck Dich)	Donated products and small amount of products bought (SMW)	Distribution once a week in a specific location (Tafel, Le+O)		

	Main organisation	Main aim	Funding	Dependency to local context	Type of structure that manages the store	Price	Other activities available	Standard of living criteria to access the shop	Delivery/collection	Workforce	Products available	Source	Style/layout	Legal context	Options to reduce food waste
<b>Tafel (DE)</b>	National network that helps develop local projects	Food redistribution	Yield from shop + local institutions (municipalities) + contributions from charities and private companies, , in-kind contribution	Strong (cooperation with donors, authorities essential – e.g. hygiene, subsidies for long-term unemployed, one euro jobbers)	Association	10 to 30 %	Cooking lessons, special courses, supervised leisure time for school children + delivery service	Yes	Undiscl.	Mostly volunteers and employees + federal volunteer service + one-euro jobber (low paid work in complement to the unemployment benefit)	Food	Donated products mostly, sharing with other social supermarkets and organisations	Supermarket or serving counter	No specific law on food redistribution + guidelines + tax release + biowaste has to be treated before being disposed of	Undiscl.
<b>Caritas Markt (CH)</b>	National network that helps develop local projects	Food waste prevention + Decrease social exclusion by contributing to cultural activities	Private only + yields from shop	Lower (no direct support from public authorities)	Collective	50 to 75 % price	Cinema tickets, holiday offers, magazine subscription + cheap lunch	Yes	Undiscl.	Reinsertion employees + regular employees + volunteers	Food and non food	Donated products and products bought at a low price or sponsorship on one type of products	Supermarket	No specific law on food redistribution + guidelines + tax release + biowaste has to be treated before being disposed of	on-site use
<b>Variations in Switzerland</b>			Mostly from charitable foundations (53%) and private companies (25%) - Tischlein Deck Dich		Registered association (TDD)	Symbolic price of 1 Franc per purchase ; allowed once a week only (TDD)							Distribution once a week in a specific location (TDD)		
<b>Community Shop (UK)</b>	Community Interest Company that will develop as a national network	Fight against food poverty, social insertion, food waste prevention	Yield from shop – commercially sustainable	Strong (locations are chosen according to local appetite for the project and local capital grants provided)	Community interest company	30 % price	"Success Plan" for all members that included tailored mentoring + cheap lunch and cooking classes + social services support + café	Yes (means tested benefits or local authorities referral)	Undiscl.	Full time employees only	Food and non food (household, toiletries)	Surplus food bought from the industry	Supermarket	No specific law on food redistribution and no fiscal incentive	On-site use and cooking lessons

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The main differences between the various aspects of the models of social supermarkets are:

- The organisation of the workforce (split between paid employees, volunteers and reintegration workers). This depends mainly on the resources of the shop or network and of the local or national organisation of the workforce (reintegration and volunteering programmes available).
- The variations in the layout of the shops (see pictures in the case studies for examples): most of them try to appear as similar as possible to a regular supermarkets; but two variations have been identified (a layout close to a market stall, with SOMA's mobile supermarket; and a serving counter in some of the Tafel shops).
- The type of products sold: most shops focus on food but some also have other basic products (hygiene products, pet food or cleaning detergents).
- The sourcing of products: most of the products are donated, whereas in the UK surplus products are bought from the suppliers (to maintain the value they have as products and not waste).
- The possibility to have various options for the discarded food, in order to avoid waste as much as possible: beyond the redistribution, some of the social supermarkets have complementary activities that provide alternative ways of using fruits and vegetables quickly (skills workshops in France; lunch offer made within the coffee area of the supermarket in Austria, preservation of overripe food in kitchen of coffee shops, sharing large amounts with other social supermarkets or other redistribution activities).
- The source of funding: most shops rely on public subsidies or support from other charities; whereas the Swiss model only resorts to private funding and the British model aims to be commercially sustainable on its own.
- There are some mobile social supermarkets, which provide the service to communities in rural areas that have difficulties with mobility.

### **Local integration**

A strong common feature of all the models is the integration into the local community; this seems to be a key success factor (and the existence of a café seems a common way of embodying this integration).

Social supermarkets might rely on the local government for financial help, or to find suitable/cheap premises. But even when the local authorities are not directly involved in the project, local cooperation with suppliers, social services, and connection with the specific demand of the local area are vital.

### **Funding**

There are various funding sources for the social supermarkets, for example from the local municipality, from local businesses, local charities, government grants, revenues from sales, etc. Different social supermarkets have different funding models, and these tend to be a mix of the above. There are very limited available data on financial aspects.

### **Performance measurement**

Overall there are limited data available on social supermarkets. More reliable data would be useful to identify the aspects of the organisations that work best. Indicators should

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cover operational, financial and social performance. Umbrella organisations could be tasked with collecting and aggregating data to protect confidentiality, where needed.

### **Umbrella organisation**

There are particular benefits in countries where umbrella organisations exist, as their roles include organisation of funding, negotiating with suppliers, collection of data on performance indicators, facilitating knowledge exchange, offering training, lobbying and providing PR material. It is not always clear how these networks are funded and more research is needed on this aspect.

### **Guidance document**

There are guidelines available (e.g. Germany, Austria) but these mainly focus on legal aspects. A more general guidance document covering all aspects of setting up and operating a social supermarket would be useful.

### **Variation in number of social supermarkets in different countries**

There is a large difference between countries in the number of social supermarkets (about 700 in France, only two in UK). This is due to each national context and history of food redistribution.

### **Replication**

The FUSIONS programme includes tasks on encouraging replication of feasibility studies. There is unlikely to be sufficient time to encourage replication in terms of setting up social supermarkets within FUSIONS timescales, but there is potential to spread good practices and encourage initial planning.

### **SWOT Analysis**

An overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the social supermarket models is provided below.

The SWOT model gives an overview of all the elements that need to be analysed when considering the development and replication of social supermarkets.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p><b>ORGANISATIONAL:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant historical experience throughout various Member States: successful models exist from which lessons can be learned (could inspire new social supermarkets to be set up); guidelines are available and umbrella organisations exist.</li> <li>• Most of the products redistributed were to be discarded otherwise: social supermarkets are an effective tool to help fight food waste.</li> <li>• There are various social benefits. These also help to give the fight against food waste good visibility and help it to be more widespread.</li> <li>• Some have a coffee shop / cafe: enhancing social interactions and an extra way of not wasting food by cooking it in store.</li> <li>• Social supermarkets work with nearly expired products: fosters creativity on how to avoid food waste.</li> <li>• Using the umbrella networks for sharing and exchange of products – benefits the assortment of each supermarket, reduces on-site waste, provides convenience to donor as also large amounts can be accepted.</li> </ul> <p><b>LEGAL:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing guidelines on food donation, including on legal aspects (for France, Austria, Germany), are available.</li> <li>• Some economic incentives exist in national policy. For example, food donors exempted from tax (in France, Switzerland) on the donated amounts: strong fiscal incentive to donate in these countries. In Austria, the value of redistributed food is assumed to be zero, which involves no tax issues to be paid on the products.</li> </ul> <p><b>HUMAN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social supermarkets can benefit from structured volunteer services, which involve full-time people and some training; this provides skilled and reliable manpower.</li> <li>• System of buying food (instead of, or to add to, food received for free) provides a wider variety, allows dignity to be preserved and increases purchasing power of clients.</li> <li>• Social supermarkets allow self-determined product selection (more choice and less risk of products being thrown away by the clients), the value perception of products is higher.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ORGANISATIONAL:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some food is purchased (in 3 countries): in these cases this is not a direct diversion of food waste and it might divert financial resources of the social supermarkets from other forms of support that they could give to members.</li> <li>• Sometimes no harmonisation on where to set the “poverty line” or the right to access social supermarkets.</li> <li>• Some offer their products only once a week.</li> <li>• Umbrella organisations do not have a total coverage of the existing social supermarkets, which is less efficient (no evidence of joint training of the volunteers for instance).</li> <li>• Different forms, names, services provided, no unique definition of a social supermarket. This makes their identification and understanding complicated and does not allow easy recognition of what the social supermarket does.</li> <li>• Service counter model not as efficient (in terms of dignity, consumer consideration), whereas strong support is given during “shopping activities”.</li> </ul> <p><b>LEGAL:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No clear law on liability for social supermarkets in most countries.</li> <li>• No legal right for the food-insecure people to be supported by a social supermarket as it is a non-governmental institution.</li> <li>• In several countries there are no clear or uniform rules on how to handle products after best before date in order to be “safe” (see also liability) between the regional authorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>HUMAN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The beneficiaries are not always receptive to environmental messages (not their priority).</li> <li>• Reintegration programmes means that the some employees/ volunteers only stay for a limited timespan: high turnover and loss of skills.</li> <li>• Risk of creating a two-tiered food system, where the perception is that food waste (surplus products) is passed on to (food-insecure) individuals who are not fully integrated into society; compared to those who can afford conventional supermarket food.</li> </ul> <p><b>FINANCIAL:</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking among clients, creation of social connections: feeling of being more included into society, actual contacts for job support or other kind of support / training, feeling of belonging to a group (social inclusion).</li> <li>• Clients of social supermarkets might be more receptive to awareness-raising messages on food waste.</li> <li>• Cooking classes provided also help reduce food waste at home and improve nutritional eating habits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to obtain economic balance (generally public funding or donations are needed).</li> <li>• Re-sale of products by clients might happen (a limit to the amount of goods purchased can be a solution).</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>ORGANISATIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing umbrella organisations can help the development of new projects.</li> <li>• Mobile social supermarket: good way of supporting more rural populations, including on the fight against food waste.</li> <li>• Food beyond best before date is distributed: good opportunity to communicate on expiry dates and their use.</li> <li>• Some have a coffee shop / cafe: opportunity to raise awareness on food waste, increase on-site social inclusion , offer of professional help by social workers.</li> <li>• New way to create connections and esteem between staff at the donor companies and social supermarket staff/volunteers; these contacts build up respect.</li> <li>• Reduce food waste at donor companies due to awareness building .</li> <li>• Cooperation with authorities (e.g. related to hygiene) – trainings, regular tests of products after best before can show that perfectly edible (not applicable to products with a use-by date).</li> <li>• The UK model, building on an existing regular company and network (The Company Shop) might provide a model in other countries.</li> </ul> <p>LEGAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various legal forms possible for social supermarkets.</li> </ul> <p>HUMAN :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The beneficiaries are low income target groups who can really benefit from improvement in food waste prevention (potential savings).</li> <li>• Opportunity to use reintegration programmes / socially-oriented employment: new added-value to the local area.</li> <li>• In some cases part-time, skilled employees are provided by companies to social supermarkets as volunteers as part of CSR activities: skill transfer opportunity.</li> </ul>	<p>ORGANISATIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal registration needed for clients with member card: potential barrier for some beneficiaries and the setting of a poverty line might generate some stigma.</li> <li>• Transportation (incl.refrigerating) vehicles needed; if social supermarket does not have this transport, then strong dependency on donors or other organisations.</li> <li>• Edibility/hygiene check needed in order to be able to distribute food after their best before date: specific resources and skills needed.</li> <li>• Competition with other local charities on supplies ; difficulty to find fruit, vegetables, dairy products.</li> <li>• In many cases there is a strong dependency for local political support: there can be a risk when the local context changes.</li> <li>• Some inconsistency of objectives: risk of reduction in the supply to social supermarkets if food waste prevention is well implemented within donating companies.</li> <li>• Risk of a negative incentive at donor companies – they might not work as efficiently on preventing food waste since they know surplus food is donated anyway (and therefore not wasted).</li> </ul> <p>HUMAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The supermarkets are volunteer intensive. The volunteers might not have the same approach and might lack some important skills (food safety for instance).</li> <li>• The employees and volunteers are not always skilled to build partnerships with supermarkets for long-lasting donations.</li> <li>• Volunteer-client relationships can be difficult: volunteers are sometimes “contemptuous” towards the beneficiaries; volunteers sometimes feel that the clients are not thankful enough, especially at serving counters (they may also reject an overripe fruit).</li> </ul>

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# 7 Recommendations

The analysis resulted in six main recommendations regarding the development of social supermarkets in Europe, which are listed below and then each covered in more detail in this section:

1. Develop one national-level umbrella network for each country.
2. Strengthen local connections and cooperations.
3. Provide a social environment for the beneficiaries, not only a supermarket.
4. Work closely with volunteers and workers to adapt.
5. Measure the impacts in a transparent way.
6. Lobby towards better social support.

These will be shared with FUSIONS Partners working on developing policy to reduce food waste (WP3; led by the University of Bologna) as well as through the FUSIONS Platform activities (WP2). Over time, we expect more social supermarkets to be implemented across Europe through the coordination of existing networks and actors, engagement with businesses, charities and local government, and a clear policy framework.

## **Develop one national-level umbrella network for each country**

In some countries there are national umbrella organisations for social supermarkets, although these do not necessarily cover all existing social supermarkets. A national network can help give social supermarkets strong support and visibility, particularly on the following aspects:

- Build capacity for the set up of social supermarkets;
- Workshops on specific topics such as "Creating a local redistribution network", "How to manage volunteer employees", "Identifying local surplus food supplies";
- Model tools and processes to manage basic business activities (logistics of local surplus food supply, etc.);
- Support in developing national and local partnerships with food industries, retail chains and local producers;
- Training resources to empower employees to deliver awareness raising to recipients on food waste prevention at household level, but also on nutrition and balanced diets, budget management;
- Collect data at the national level and promote these structures to public and private partners, as well as the medias;
- Identifying, compiling and sharing best practices and return on experience for member stores;
- Act as an advocate for social supermarkets at the national (public authorities and potential sponsors) and European levels;
- Act as a reliable partner for cooperating companies to fulfill legal requirements, limit misuse of surplus products, provide useful support to people who need it. A national network is able to have enough resources to accept the whole of the offered amounts etc.;



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- Facilitate the sharing of infrastructure, such as trucks and storage facilities, between member social supermarkets, and provide these facilities if the network has the funds available.

These umbrella organisations need to be funded, for example by a combination of public support and contributions from the social supermarkets that are members of the organisation, or a share of the sales of the social supermarkets, or private sponsorship.

Potentially, social media could be used to establish a virtual community of social supermarket clients and owners at national and EU levels, to continue to share best practice and knowledge and build relationships. Anonymous ways of communication can be used (using aliases), to avoid shyness related to admitting using a social supermarket.

### **Strengthen local connections and cooperations**

The connection between successful social supermarkets and their local environment is essential, with regards to the support from the local authorities (financial support, facilitation on the premises, etc.) or to strong relationships with social services to help their beneficiaries. Creating a good relationship with local supermarkets or producers is also essential to carry out a regular flow of supplies: the social supermarket has to be reliable when picking up supplies, to use the products in a regular and legal manner, etc.

Cooperation with other associations or companies can also be fostered to broaden the services offered to the beneficiaries of the social supermarkets (training, cultural products or services, debt support, school programmes, etc.). Products, skills, volunteers or tools might also be shared with other organisations (food banks, gleaning network) to improve product collection or product use. Taking social innovation further, links between different FSs could further increase positive impacts. For example, combining the activities of gleaning, social supermarkets and Disco Bôcô, we could use the strengths of each activity in order to overcome difficulties with restricted assortments of products, limited volunteers etc. This could also be an option to connect different types of target groups with additional valuable issues – young people could help to glean a field, delivering the products to a social supermarket where they meet food insecure people and have a joint Disco Bôcô.

### **Provide a social environment for the beneficiaries, not only a supermarket**

The beneficiaries are a specific target group, mostly fragile, sometimes withdrawn from any form of social life and receiving little support. Social supermarkets can therefore become a familiar, welcoming place to help them start over and rebuild themselves if other services are provided (apart from cheap food products): a coffee shop, a meeting point for formal and informal support, social services access, etc. These wider activities, that are more common in some countries (UK, France) seem to have major benefits.

Social supermarkets might increase the economic capabilities of users (through providing them essentials at a low cost), which can allow for them to engage in consumer behaviour similar to that of those in higher social classes, and therefore increase their confidence.

A key aspect could be to combine social supermarket socialising activities with food waste prevention awareness and training activities. For example, in the UK a suite of simple

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activities<sup>6</sup> have been created to provide people with the tips they need to change their food behaviours. The customers are likely to be particularly receptive to money saving messages that help them get more out of the food that they buy and waste less.

### **Work closely with volunteers and workers to adapt**

The state of mind of the volunteers is essential to ensure the spirit of help and dignity, and as such, the credibility of the social supermarket, is maintained and enhanced. Therefore, it is important to make sure the volunteers receive ongoing training on:

- The pedagogical approach towards employees, other volunteers or beneficiaries (respect their dignity, choices and demands, not to be in an “alm-giving” state of mind, ban any discriminatory or inappropriate language and comments, discuss and challenge any such comments, etc.)
- The quality management of their practices within the social supermarkets : food safety principles and checks, process management, knowledge on nutrition, reliability of the organisation.

The share of volunteers among the staff is variable across the countries. Significant management time is necessary to work for volunteers; this should be taken into account when planning to include volunteers in the staff.

### **Measure the impacts in a transparent way**

Measuring the impacts of the social supermarkets’ activity (both at local and national levels) is a good way of highlighting the work they do and the support they provide, and helps to encourage expansion and replication of these activities. Impacts could be measured in terms of the number of people helped, tonnes of food distributed (and percentage of food waste avoided), number of jobs created through social supermarket activity, and number of jobs found by the members thanks to job support provided within the supermarket, number of volunteers involved, number of volunteer hours, and number of training events given, number of participants, etc.), and more specific indicators related to each organisation, discussed in Section 0. Also, the social benefits of social supermarkets could be measured.

Both quantitative and qualitative approach can be used to evaluate the impacts of social supermarkets; they may well complement each other. For instance, a quantitative approach can be effective to identify the specific indicators and impacts (see indicators above).

A qualitative approach, through interviews, can explore the types of relationships that are built, how they have impacted the lives of the beneficiaries outside of helping them economically, but also how it impacts the volunteers, the type of relationships they have built with the users, the sense of community they feel is created, etc. Observation sessions within social supermarkets could also contribute to the qualitative approach, by giving insight on the existing interactions and behaviours at work. Surveys could also be used to gather qualitative data but might prove more difficult to exploit.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.wrap.org.uk/savemore](http://www.wrap.org.uk/savemore)

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Transparency is essential for the reputation and reliability of social supermarkets; therefore communicating on the results and impacts will help towards recognition of the utility of social supermarkets by society.

Aside the measurement of impacts, it is essential to be able to measure start-up and operational costs, and to plan the business model carefully (share of costs covered by revenue / by public support / by sponsorship ; volunteer hours and paid hours ; etc.). Financial data is essential when preparing a social supermarket project and when assessing its impacts.

### **Lobby towards better social support**

Social supermarkets can act as a key player in supporting policy development and implementation aimed at continuing to improve facilities and support for people in need. Social supermarkets could both bring their own insights and experiences to policy makers, as well as offer a place for inclusive policy discussion.

While it has not been possible to obtain reliable data on the current size of the social supermarket activities across Europe or on the quantity of food waste prevented by social supermarkets, this study has shown that they have enormous potential in all these areas. They complement existing retail and food bank activities, and meet the criteria of social innovation.

Over the next year, there will be opportunities for the FUSIONS network to bring together businesses, charities, local government and policy makers to effect change in how food is used across Europe, including through social supermarkets. Umbrella organisations also seem to have a role to play in this support to the development of social supermarkets.

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## Feasibility study – Advancing social supermarkets across Europe

Through this feasibility study, we aim to facilitate the expansion of the social supermarket concept into new markets by analysing the experience in several Member States (MSs).

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