Connecting Food Systems in Southern Europe-
"Food Connect"

Project Number: 101148772

LIFE23-TAR-CY-Food Connect

D2.2 Replication Methodological Guide

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Contents

1. Introduction

The present document constitutes the Deliverable D2.2: Replication Methodological Guide, in the framework of the Project titled "Connecting Food Systems in Southern Europe - "Food Connect" (Project Acronym: Food Connect; Project number: 101148772).

This guide covers methodological aspects, technical aspects, best practices, cultural adaptation strategies, to ensure a functionable replication of a food donation platform. It also serves as a valuable resource for other stakeholders involved in replication efforts and safeguards the transferability and sustainability potential of the platform and app.

This guide includes a summary of the methodology used for the needs assessment (WP2) as a preparatory step to map the needs of target groups and lay the groundwork for a tailored platform which can be launched as a pilot. Format: Electronic (PDF), Language: EN

2. The LIFE Food Connect Project

In the Southern EU region, the food waste crisis from food production to food consumption and distribution, poses a significant challenge, affecting communities, ecology, and economies. Current food waste management practices often lack coordination, efficiency, and uniformity. There is a need for holistic strategies that encompass the entire food system to effectively address this issue, since food waste has additional socio-economic repercussions, as it contradicts efforts to address hunger and food insecurity.

LIFE Food Connect is our response to this critical challenge, with three primary objectives:
- upscaling a previous LIFE-funded result the "Collaboration Network platform",
- replicating it in several southern EU countries,
- raising awareness on food waste and food donation.

Upscaling this innovative result includes making it more user-friendly, accessible, and intelligent while developing a comprehensive methodology to replicate and pilot it in 3 southern EU Countries including Portugal, Malta and Cyprus. The project acts as a unifying force, bridging the gap between food waste, the food and hospitality sector, and scientific communities. It aims to create a holistic and adaptable food donation platform where diverse participants, including food donors, beneficiaries, policymakers, and society as a whole, can come together and create a network of collaboration. Within this environment, the project facilitates engagement, discussions between stakeholders, and effective food distribution that is custom-made for each pilot case.

2.1 Objectives of Life Food-Connect Project

The focus of LIFE Food-Connect project will be the continuity, replication and upscaling of promoting food waste management and resource efficiency by building up on the experiences and technical capacities from the recently completed LIFE project titled "LIFE FoodPrint - Awareness raising campaign to prevent and manage food waste among consumers, the food and hospitality industries" (LIFE19 GIE/CY/001166).

Regarding its general objectives, Food Connect will:

1. Contribute to the upscaling of the existing platform developed by LIFE FoodPrint project, by enhancing the Technical Infrastructure of the existing one and integrating additional features and tools to enhance user experience and engagement, through developing strategies and campaigns to attract and onboard new users, including businesses, social operators, and other relevant stakeholders.
2. Facilitate and establish replication through pilots of the FoodConnect online platform (prototype) in partner countries which enables members to record and share their activities related to food waste management and mitigation while serving as a collaborative and communicative hub.
3. Catalyze raising awareness among consumers, the food and hospitality sector, and other relevant stakeholders, as well as the general public, regarding zero food waste management, with a particular emphasis on its societal implications to show the interconnection between the two.

Specific Objectives:

O1: Upscaling and Enhancement of the Platform, in order to include various technical advancements to result in the engagement of more users. Upscaling the platform in order to ensure the inclusion of more social groups, anonymity and enhancing the platform into the languages that vulnerable groups use, will introduce the social aspect into the prototype platform. This will result in a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) in order to attract users to validate the product and receive user feedback (WP2, WP3).

O2: Empower stakeholders in countries to connect and work in synergies regarding food waste and waste management, to build their knowledge, capacity and skills. This will result in at least 500 local and regional stakeholders including local authorities gaining increased skills and knowledge in food waste and food donation actions. (WP2).

O3: Catalyse new prototypes in three countries (pilots) online and mobile version, where a local and national food connect platform will be established, through matchmaking activities in the southern Europe regions, a methodological framework and toolkit and technical support. This will entail the

creation of two national and functional new online and mobile platforms in southern Europe with at least 500 citizens, businesses and social organizations being involved (WP2, WP3).

O4: Involve and reach more than 350 000 citizens through a public awareness campaign that will be focused on southern Europe users in terms of food waste prevention and food donation (WP4).

O5: 10% of reduction of food waste through the implementation of platform pilots resulting in reducing food waste in the areas by 0.48t/year (WP2, WP3).

O6: Developing a replicable methodology and tool guide for pilots that will be translated in other languages in order to be replicated beyond the scope and partners of the project, beyond Europe (WP5).

O7: Develop a business plan that will be standardized that will also be replicated and transferred to partners and stakeholders beyond Europe (WP5).

2.2 Participating Organizations

No	Name	Short Name	Country
1	DIAS Publishing House Ltd	DIAS	CY
2	FILOI TIS GIS	FoE Cyprus	CY
3	FRIENDS OF THE EARTH MALTA	FoE Malta	MT
4	INOVA+, Innovation services, SA	INOVA+	PT
5	B.E. Base Element Ltd	Base Element	CY
6	ZERO - ASSOCIACAO SISTEMA TERRESTRE SUSTENTÁVEL	ZERO	PT

2.3 Overview of Working Packages

Food Connect is divided into 5 interlinked Work Packages (WPs), as follows:

WP No	WP Title	Objectives
1	Project Management and Quality Assurance	To coordinate and manage the smooth development of the project in accordance with the proposal and ensure that all project activities are carried out in accordance with the work plan and timeframe specified as well as monitor and report the progress of the project to the

		European Commission. It will also ensure appropriate control of the project budget to achieve the timely completion of the activities. Furthermore, through this WP, the implementation of the quality assurance and impact assessment will be maintained to ensure the monitoring of the quality and impactful fulfillment of the project's objectives as regards both internally for the collaboration and communication of partners and with the project's target groups. Technical and innovation management is also performed in this WP to assess and mitigate any risks that will arise during the implementation of the project. As such WP1 is transversal for all activities of the project and relates to all objectives of the project.
2	Upscale and replication of collaboration network platform	This work package aims to conduct a comprehensive assessment to gain an in-depth understanding of the current state of food waste management. The assessment will encompass various aspects, including existing best practices, barriers and opportunities, legal frameworks, and stakeholder engagement levels. FoE Cyprus will create in collaboration with the consortium initially the methodology for this assessment and then coordinate its implementation. Key tasks within this work package involve mapping and identifying best practices, as well as key stakeholders. Meetings with stakeholders will be conducted to assess the baseline situation and gather valuable input. Within this work package, the focus is on replicating and upscaling the "Collaboration network" online platform. It entails several activities to ensure the successful implementation and enhancement of the platform. Technical development, customization, and translation of the platform will be carried out to cater to partner languages and specific requirements. Additionally, the platform will be transformed into a mobile application for iOS and Android, thereby improving its usability and accessibility. Upscaling efforts will involve automating functionalities to streamline processes, incorporating additional elements that link food waste with social issues, and facilitating the certification and recognition of stakeholders' contributions towards achieving zero food waste goals.
3	Pilot Implementation	As part of the upscaling efforts, the project will apply the MVP created through the upscaling and replication of the collaboration platform to a pilot case following the creation of the pilot implementation methodology and toolkit, expedited to remove local, regional and

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		national legislative barriers to ensure the sustainability and replication of the platform. This pilot case will serve as a practical demonstration of the platform's effectiveness and its adaptability to different contexts. Based on the feedback and recommendations collected by stakeholders during the piloting cycles, the consortium will technically improve the platform and launch the Food-Connect Platform final version.
4	Dissemination & Awareness Raising Campaign	WP4 is a multifaceted work package designed to propel the project's visibility, impact, and reach. It has a twofold aim: **A)** Development of Project Branding and Communication and Dissemination Strategies and Channels. This includes re-branding the visual identity of the Collaboration Network Platform, development of comprehensive communication and dissemination strategies (D4.1) and channels that the project will use to convey its aims, results, progress and actions to its target groups and stakeholders across partner countries and within Europe. It will also craft and maintain the project website (integrated into the existing platform) and create and manage all social media accounts (including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube), fostering a dynamic online presence to engage with diverse audiences. **B)** Raise awareness about waste management and its profound societal implications through targeted social media and media campaigns to address waste management topics from various angles, aiming to inform, educate, and inspire action among different audience segments. The project employs a multifaceted campaign strategy, encompassing various approaches to effectively communicate its message that are strategically designed to engage diverse stakeholders and maximize the impact of the project. This twofold aim will be implemented having in mind the results obtained from the needs assessment conducted in WP2 & the baseline of each country concerning food waste to obtain key messages and input from the stakeholders on how we can create targeted messages relevant to the target groups of the project and maximize the outreach of this WP.
5	Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results	WP5 is primarily dedicated to the comprehensive development of a sustainability and business plan for both the project and the food waste platform. Its central focus is on formulating strategies that ensure the prolonged viability of the replicated platform, extending

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stakeholder engagement well beyond the project's timeframe, and facilitating the seamless integration of project achievements into pertinent policies and operational norms. Additionally, exploitation activities will be defined and focused on further research- analysis, product or process development, marketing and branding, expansion of services and activities of standardization. WP5 places a strong emphasis on establishing collaborative ties with policymakers, governmental entities, and pertinent institutions to secure their unwavering commitment and backing for the ongoing execution of food waste mitigation initiatives. Meetings with stakeholders will include other existing EU food waste platforms, but also include HoReCa sector organizations, Start-Ups, NGOs/CSOs and Entrepreneurs from the South-EU region. Moreover, WP5 is inherently driven by the overarching objective of sustaining, replicating, and disseminating the project's outcomes far beyond the consortium's boundaries and the project's duration. Essentially, it acts as the project's strategic pillar, charting a course for the enduring and far-reaching positive impact in the realms of food waste reduction and the adoption of circular economy principles.

2.4 Stakeholders, Target Groups and Dissemination activities

2.4.1 Key Target Groups and Stakeholders

2.4.1.1. Target Groups

Primary (Direct):
   a. General public, specifically marginalized groups of society (consumers)
   b. Hospitality and food industries (restaurants, hotels, supermarkets, etc.)
   c. Civil Society Organisations (NGOs, Social Enterprises) and community (informal) groups
   d. Agricultural sector

Secondary (Indirect):
   a. Public bodies/institutions (Ministry of Health/Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment)
   b. Local authorities (Municipalities)

2.4.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement Processes and timeline in the Life Food Connect Project:

The project's stakeholder engagement methodology is designed to facilitate effective collaboration, communication, and active participation of key stakeholders outside the consortium. It aims to create a collaborative ecosystem, rooted in principles of inclusivity, responsiveness, and sustainability, aiming to maximize the collective impact of the project's activities.

	WP	M	Description
Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis	WP2	**M4-M18**	Identifying key external stakeholders who play critical roles in addressing food waste and promoting food donation initiatives, understanding their interests, and tailoring engagement strategies. Over 600 stakeholders will be reached during the project. Key stakeholder mapping will include hospitality and food industries, civil society organisations and initiatives that deal with food donations, food banks, public bodies and municipalities. An analysis will be conducted following the stakeholder matrix methodology to understand their interests, motivations and potential and future contributions to the project.
Engagement Objectives and Alignment	WP2	**M4-M25**	Definition of clear objectives for engaging each stakeholder group, considering their roles, interests and activities. Development of strategies (D2.3) to align project results with stakeholder objectives, ensuring mutual benefits and commitment. Each stakeholder group may have distinct motivations and objectives for engaging with the project. The replicability methodology and business plan which will be developed in the project will emphasize aligning the project's goals with the interests and objectives of these stakeholders. This will result in creating a sense of purpose to explore the replicability potential of the platform and commitment among stakeholders to use the platform.
Stakeholder & Networking meetings	WP2	**M12-M18**	Partners will organize national and European meetings to facilitate discussions, explore synergies, and generate interest in the exploitation of our project results. (T2.3, MS6, MS7, MS8, and D2.3) Utilise online platforms for virtual meetings to ensure accessibility and inclusivity when requested and necessary.

Pilot Initiatives and Demonstrations	WP2	**M12-M18**	Pilot implementations will be designed to engage stakeholders in utilizing the upscaled and replicated platform so that they witness the project's impact firsthand. T.2.5 MS9, MS10, MS11, MS12, MS13, D2.4, T3.2, D3.2). Collaborate with hospitality businesses, community groups, and agricultural stakeholders to pilot food waste reduction strategies and sustainable practices.
Personalized Outreach		**M1-M30**	We will employ tailored communication channels and messages to address specific stakeholder needs. Tailored communication channels such as emails, newsletters, and social media to reach stakeholders with specific messages addressing their needs and interests will be used. Training sessions or workshops tailored to each stakeholder group to enhance understanding and participation in the platform
Regular Communication		**M1-M30**	We will provide transparent updates and progress reports about the project's development to maintain stakeholder engagement, through newsletters, project websites, and social media platforms. Scheduling of monthly progress meetings with stakeholders to discuss achievements, challenges, and upcoming activities
Feedback and Adaptation		**M1-M30**	The engagement methodology is not static; it involves an iterative feedback loop. Stakeholders' feedback and suggestions will be actively sought and incorporated into project activities for ongoing relevance. The project leaders will establish feedback mechanisms such as feedback forms, to gather input from stakeholders on project activities. Incorporating stakeholder feedback into project planning and decision-making, such as feedback forms, to gather input from stakeholders and relevance.
Measuring Engagement Impact		**M7, M10, M13, M16, M19, M21, M24, M27**	Define metrics such as participation rates, satisfaction surveys, and qualitative feedback to measure the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement (Quality and evaluation plan D1.2). Conduct quarterly reviews to analyze engagement impact and adjust strategies as needed to optimize stakeholder involvement.

2.5 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment, including critical risks and their management strategies, is addressed comprehensively in the Project Plan D.1.1, which is the appropriate document for managing project-wide risks. The Replication Guide focused only on the needs analysis and the step by step process of replicating a food donation platform.

3. Replication Methodological Guide

3.1 Introduction

This Guide provides research-based guidance to map the needs of target groups in food donation in partner countries and also the implementation steps needed for successful and impactful interventions.

This guide covers methodological aspects, technical aspects, best practices, cultural adaptation strategies, to ensure a functionable replication of a food donation platform. It also serves as a valuable resource for other stakeholders involved in replication efforts and safeguards the transferability and sustainability potential of the platform and app.

The Replication Methodological Guide provides detailed instructions for effectively replicating the Food Connect platform across consortium countries. It addresses technical aspects, best practices, cultural adaptation strategies, and project management considerations, ensuring the platform's transferability and sustainability. Additionally, it includes a summary of the needs assessment methodology from WP2, laying the groundwork for a tailored platform launch. By leveraging this guide, stakeholders will have the resources and structured processes required to replicate and adapt the platform in diverse regional contexts.

3.1.1 Overview of WP2

This work package aims to conduct a comprehensive assessment to gain an in-depth understanding of the current state of food waste management. The assessment will encompass various aspects, including existing best practices, barriers and opportunities, legal frameworks, and stakeholder engagement levels. FoE Cyprus will create in collaboration with the consortium initially the methodology for this assessment and then coordinate its implementation. Key tasks within this work package involve mapping and identifying best practices, as well as key stakeholders. Meetings with stakeholders will be conducted to

assess the baseline situation and gather valuable input. Within this work package, the focus is on replicating and upscaling the "Collaboration network" online platform. It entails several activities to ensure the successful implementation and enhancement of the platform. Technical development, customization, and translation of the platform will be carried out to cater to partner languages and specific requirements. Additionally, the platform will be transformed into a mobile application for iOS and Android, thereby improving its usability and accessibility. Upscaling efforts will involve automating functionalities to streamline processes, incorporating additional elements that link food waste with social issues, and facilitating the certification and recognition of stakeholders' contributions towards achieving zero food waste goals.

3.1.2 WP, Deliverables and other tasks associated with D2.2

	Partner	Deadline
T2.4 Replication of the platform to other locations	ZERO	M28
D2.3 Stakeholder Mapping	ZERO	M10
D2.4 Stakeholder Surveys	FoE Cyprus	M8
WP3 Pilot Implementation	FoE Cyprus	M29
D5.1 Market Analysis	INOVA	M12

3.1.3 Objectives of the Replication Methodological Guide

The primary objectives of this deliverable are:

The guide aims to:

1. **Standardize Replication Methodology:** Offer a clear framework and detailed roadmap for replicating the Food Connect platform.
2. **Ensure smooth Replication of the platform in the selected pilot regions**
3. **Facilitate Cultural Adaptation:** Provide strategies to adapt the platform to diverse cultural contexts.
4. **Support Stakeholders:** Serve as a resource for stakeholders involved in replication efforts. To identify key stakeholders and develop engagement strategies to maximize participation
5. **Summarize Needs Assessment Methodology:** Detail the approach used to assess target group needs in WP2.
6. **Document Best Practices:** Share lessons learned and effective strategies from previous implementations.

3.3 Methodological Guidelines

Step by Step Implementation and instructions

The Replication Guide provides 3 important stages in designing and implementing replication in the consortium countries and beyond the consortium level.

STAGE 1: Planning and Preparation Phase
STAGE 2: Implementation Phase
STAGE 3: Deployment/Pilot Phase

3.3.1 Stage One: Planning and Preparation Phase

The planning and preparation phase should be initiated by a brief needs assessment that serves as a foundational step to ensure the Food Connect platform effectively meets the requirements of target groups in different regions. This process begins with data collection, where partners should identify key stakeholders, including food donors, food recipients, beneficiaries, policymakers, and local organizations, implement a thorough stakeholder analysis mapping and a desk based research on food donation and food waste in their respective countries.

The next step includes stakeholder engagement, involving collaborative workshops and discussions to incorporate diverse perspectives and ensure community buy-in. Once data is collected, analysis is performed to identify common needs, regional challenges, and opportunities for customization. Online surveys, interviews and focus groups can be conducted with a wide range of stakeholders, including food donors, beneficiaries, and policymakers, to gather quantitative and qualitative insights on the existing state of the Food Connect platform (upscaling in Cyprus) and also a needs assessment to cover how the existing platform can be incorporated and implemented in the partner countries (Portugal and Malta).

Finally, a comprehensive report is produced, outlining key findings and recommendations for tailoring the platform. To implement these steps effectively, teams should establish a structured timeline with clear milestones, allocate dedicated personnel for data gathering and analysis, use standardized tools and templates for consistency, and maintain open communication channels with stakeholders throughout the process.

How to find stakeholders:

A crucial step is to identify key external stakeholders who play critical roles in addressing food waste and promoting food donation initiatives, understanding their interests, and tailoring engagement strategies.

Key categories of stakeholders include:

- Hospitality and Food Industries: Restaurants, hotels, caterers, food producers, and distributors.
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): NGOs, community groups, social enterprises, and volunteer networks focused on food redistribution and sustainability.
- Food Banks and Donation Initiatives: Organizations directly involved in collecting, storing, and distributing surplus food.
- Public Bodies and Municipalities: Local government agencies, regulatory bodies, and public health departments responsible for food safety and waste management.

Table with the different steps, processes explained and the methodological tools. In the following table all methodological tools are explained and described further.

Stage One		
Step	Process	Methodological tools/Resources
Stakeholder Mapping and Data Collection	Identify key stakeholders, including food donors, beneficiaries, policymakers, and local organizations. Build a preliminary list of stakeholders, following the Stakeholder Analysis Mapping Stakeholder_Analysis_FoodConnect (encrypted_version_24012025).xlsx A desk based research should be conducted in order to be prepared for the issues that may arise. *Steps and methodology are explained below and a structure is provided in Annex 3*	Desk Based Research listed in Annex 3 Stakeholder mapping Deliverable D.3
Stakeholder Engagement	Involve key stakeholders to gain insights and foster collaboration. Organizing workshops and meetings with key stakeholders, including policymakers, local organizations, and end-users. Workshops and focus groups to gather local requirements for customising and using the platform. Gather quantitative and qualitative data on target groups' needs. Conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews to gather quantitative and qualitative data on target groups' needs and expectations	Field based research Semi structured focus groups with open ended sections Stakeholder Surveys (Annex 5) Stakeholder Surveys Deliverable D2.4

Stage One		
	Common needs, regional and sectoral challenges, and opportunities to customise and optimise the current platform	
Evaluation and Feedback	*An indicative evaluation form for the meetings is provided in Annex 1*	Evaluation forms from the meetings Annex 1
Reporting on Findings	Results from the focus groups and collection, document findings, produce a need assessment report to inform platform adaptation strategies.	Needs analysis Report

Methodological Tools	
Desk Based Research	A Desk based research is performed to identify potential stakeholders that work directly or influence the issue of food waste management. Listing and identifying organisations or individuals, who can then be invited to the roundtable discussions and contribute to the upscaling and development of the platform. Prepare a document with any available data and resources applicable at the national level on food donation (literature, reports, policy documents, previous surveys, research studies, etc.) in relation to the regulatory context (e.g. laws,policies, and practices). Structured guidelines and suggestions are listed in Annex 3
Field Based Research Recoding the needs of target groups/Stakeholders	The field-based research includes two phases: (i) a semi structured focus group with open sessions with representatives from relevant stakeholders in the form of a focus group; and (ii) online questionnaires to be delivered to representatives of the stakeholders and target groups. The aims and underlying rationale of the field-based research follow that of the desk-based research outlined above. It should be noted that the desk-based and the field-based research are not entirely separate stages. Rather, they are understood to be **mutually reinforcing** processes. For instance, the desk-based research could provide important leads for finding organisations or individuals, who can then be invited to the roundtable/focus group or be asked to complete the questionnaires. Likewise, the field-based research can be crucial in providing insights in existing best practices, which might not be visible from a desk-based research perspective. Researchers are advised to be mindful of these links between the two methodological processes. **Semi structured focus group with open ended sections**

Methodological Tools

	A focus group shall be carried out in all partner countries and should include representatives of target groups and stakeholders mentioned in Section 2. The number of participants on the roundtable should be at least 2 representatives per each sector (Policymakers, Businesses, NGOs, Food & Hospitality). It is recommended that 2 or more focus groups are organized with a maximum of 10 people each (either physically or online). One roundtable of more than 10 participants might not give the ground and opportunity for all participants to express their opinions openly and in more detail. Each participant should sign a *Consent form (Annex 2)* in order to participate in the discussion. *A semi-structured guide for the focus group is provided in the (Annex 4).* The evidence to be collected includes the signed consent forms and photos or screenshots from the roundtable sessions. **Surveys depending on the nature of the stakeholders** The number of answers for the surveys should be at least 20 per country with a minimum of 10 from hospitality & food sector, 5 from CSOs/NGOs and 5 from public bodies/policymakers. A template is provided in Annex 5.
Evaluation and Upscaling	Monitor the existing platform usage and gather feedback. Collect and analyze feedback to identify areas for improvement.
Report	Upscaling and implementing the platform Semi structure report for each partner in ANNEX 6 Needs analysis Report

3.3.2 Stage Two: Technical Development Phase

The implementation phase includes customizing the platform based on the needs assessment findings from each location, and ensuring alignment with regional needs, requirements and other obligations. Additionally, the implementation phase includes the development and the delivery of comprehensive training programs for end users and other platform administrators in order to ensure the effectiveness of replicating the platform.

Following steps for the implementation phase:
- Platform adaptation and customization: Customize the Food Connect platform to meet local needs and opportunities. Adapt the platform based on needs assessment findings that came up from the evaluation process.
- Integration Testing: Test platform components within the team

- National trainings for end users: Trainings and workshops for end users and platform administrators.

Steps	Process/Methodology	Tools
Platform adaptation and customization	National reports are collected and provided to the respective app developer	National reports following the consultations from stakeholders
Integration testing	The project managers or people responsible from each partner organisation (2-3) testing the platform and ensuring needs from stakeholders are met. In this step, technical support is provided if needed and common technical issues are being addressed.	Internal Document with comments and reviews of the platform
National trainings	User and administration trainings Two trainings should be implemented in each partner country. The trainings include and focus on the people who will be providing the pilots in their respective areas. A detailed explanation of the platform's technical structure, including back-end and front-end components A detailed list of hardware and software prerequisites for platform deployment.	instructional sessions for platform users, covering navigation, content management, and reporting features Presentation template User Manual D2.5

Technical Guidance on the Implementation of the Platform	
User Manual (Deliverable 2.5)	A well-structured user manual is essential for ensuring that both donors and recipients can navigate the platform with ease. Comprehensive guides should provide step-by-step instructions on how to register, list food donations, claim available items, and manage transactions. Additionally, troubleshooting sections should address common technical issues users may encounter, such as login difficulties, incorrect donation listings, or mismatched recipient pairings. To accommodate diverse users, manuals should be available in multiple languages and include visual aids, such as screenshots and tutorial videos, to enhance accessibility. A well-designed user manual not only improves user experience but also reduces the burden on customer support by proactively addressing common concerns.

Technical Guidance on the Implementation of the Platform

Integration Process on websites and other forms	Seamless integration with existing food redistribution systems is crucial for expanding the platform's reach and efficiency. Additionally, smooth data migration processes should be in place to allow organizations transitioning from other donation tracking systems to transfer their records without data loss or corruption.
Maintenance Protocols (Deliverable 5.3 Maintenance Plan of the platform and mobile app)	To ensure long-term usability and security, a robust maintenance protocol must be established. Regular software updates should address bug fixes, introduce new features, and enhance platform performance. A dedicated team should monitor system health, proactively identifying and resolving technical issues before they impact users. Cybersecurity measures, such as data encryption, secure login authentication, and regular vulnerability assessments, must be incorporated to protect sensitive donor and recipient information. Establishing a structured maintenance plan will help prevent service disruptions and ensure the platform remains reliable over time.
Support Channels	Providing clear and accessible support channels is essential for resolving user issues promptly. A multi-tiered support system should be implemented, including an FAQ section for self-service troubleshooting, a chatbot for instant assistance with common queries, and a helpdesk staffed with customer service representatives for complex problems. Additionally, users should have the option to report issues via multiple channels, such as email, phone, and live chat, ensuring that support is accessible regardless of technological proficiency. Implementing a ticketing system to track and prioritize user concerns will further improve response efficiency and maintain user satisfaction.

Upgraded Features of the Food Connect App in Cyprus

To enhance the functionality and efficiency of the **Food Connect** platform in Cyprus, several key features have been introduced to streamline the donation and collection process, improve user experience, and ensure a more effective food redistribution system.

- **Claim Code Verification** To enhance the security and transparency of food claims, a **unique claim code** will be generated for each product a Receiver claims. At the time of pickup, the Receiver must provide this **claim code** to the Donor, allowing for a **verification process** that ensures the right recipient collects the donation. This feature minimizes fraudulent claims and enhances trust between donors and receivers.

- **Quantity Specification for Donations** To standardize the way donated items are listed, Donors will be required to specify the **quantity** of the products they add. Instead of exact weight or volume measurements, simple size categories will be used e.g. portion size.
- **Donor Location Mapping** Donors will now be required to **enter their exact location** using **latitude and longitude coordinates** when listing a donation. This information will be stored in the **CMS** and displayed on an interactive **map**, allowing Receivers to easily locate available food donations near them. Additionally, a functionality will be integrated into the **mobile app**, prompting Receivers to grant **location permissions**. This will enable the app to display available donations based on **proximity**, improving accessibility and reducing logistical challenges.
- **Receiver Location Registration** Upon signing up, **Receivers** will be required to **enter their country of residence**. This data will allow the system to **assign them to the correct regional version** of the platform, ensuring that they access only relevant food donation opportunities based on their location.
- **Integrated Navigation System** To facilitate the food collection process, the mobile app will include an **integrated navigation feature** that provides directions to the **donor's location**. This feature will allow Receivers to navigate directly to pick-up points using built-in GPS functionality, reducing confusion and making collections more efficient.
- **Claim Cancellation by Donors** Donors will have the ability to **cancel a claim** if necessary. To ensure clarity, they will be required to **provide a reason for the cancellation**, which will be **instantly communicated** to the Receiver. This feature prevents miscommunication and helps both parties manage expectations regarding availability.
- **Notification System for Users** A **notification system** will be implemented to keep users updated in real time. Donors will receive **web notifications**, while Receivers will receive both **web and push notifications** on their mobile devices. This ensures that users remain informed about new donations, claim updates, cancellations, and any relevant platform activity.
- **Scheduled Pick-Up Times** To improve coordination between Donors and Receivers, a **scheduled pick-up system** will be introduced. This feature allows Donors to **set specific pick-up time slots**, ensuring that Receivers collect their items within a predefined timeframe, reducing delays and improving efficiency.

3.3.3 Stage 3: Deployment/Pilot Phase

The discussion of the deployment phase falls within WP3 of the LIFE FoodConnect Project and will focus on the implementation and analysis of pilot projects. This will involve rigorous data collection throughout the pilot phases, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of platform performance and user experiences. This data will then be used to iteratively improve the platform based on the feedback received from pilot participants. Finally, a thorough evaluation of the pilot projects will be conducted to assess their effectiveness and inform the development of a robust scaling strategy for the platform. This iterative approach ensures that the platform is continuously refined and optimized to maximize its impact and achieve long-term sustainability.

The tasks and the Deliverables of WP3 Pilot Implementation are listed in the table below:

WP3 - Pilot Implementation	
Task 3.1	Development of Pilot Implementation Methodology and Toolkit
D3.1	Pilot Implementation Toolkit
Task 3.2	Delivery and Implementation of the piloting
Task 3.3	Monitoring and Evaluation of the piloting
D3.2	Pilot Replication Impact Report

4. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

To successfully deploy and expand a food donation platform across diverse cultural contexts, it is essential to analyze past implementations, extract key lessons, and design sustainable scalability strategies. This section delves into case studies, lessons learned from the LIFE LOOP project and approaches for ensuring long-term success.

Case Studies/Best Practices of food donation platforms

Platform/Country	Description
FoodCloud Ireland	Connects food businesses with charities to redistribute surplus food. Utilizes a digital platform for efficient matching and logistics. Challenges: Initial resistance from some businesses. Ensuring food safety and quality across the supply chain. Building trust and transparency among stakeholders. Solutions: Extensive outreach and education campaigns. Strong emphasis on food safety training and audits. Transparent data sharing and impact reporting. Website: https://food.cloud/ Impact report: https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/65a64f36fd143e0af8505228/66a38ad9e3d3712c1c6b8173_FoodCloud%202023%20Annual%20Report.pdf
Olio / Multiple European Countries	A free food sharing app that allows users to give away or request surplus food from neighbors and local businesses. **Challenges:** Maintaining food safety and quality standards within a peer-to-peer

Case Studies/Best Practices of food donation platforms

	sharing model. Ensuring the platform is used responsibly and ethically. Scaling operations to reach a wider audience. Solutions: Providing clear guidelines and resources on food safety and hygiene. Implementing robust moderation and reporting mechanisms. Actively promoting the app through community outreach and partnerships. Olio Website https://olioex.com/
Robin Food /Germany	Connects businesses with social institutions to redistribute surplus food. **Challenges:** Reaching a wider network of businesses and social institutions. Ensuring efficient and timely logistics for food distribution. Raising awareness about the platform among potential users. **Solutions:** Expanding outreach efforts to target specific industries and geographic areas. Partnering with logistics providers to optimize delivery routes and reduce costs. Conducting public awareness campaigns and educational programs to promote the platform's benefits. Website: https://www.eitfood.eu/projects/robin-food
Neighbourly / UK	Connects businesses with local communities through a variety of initiatives, including food redistribution. **Challenges:** Scaling operations to manage a large network of donors and recipients. Ensuring food safety and quality across the supply chain. Securing sustainable funding for operations. **Solutions:** Developed a robust technology platform to manage donations, logistics, and communication. Implemented rigorous food safety protocols and training programs for volunteers and recipients. Diversified funding sources through corporate partnerships, grants, and social investment. Website: https://www.neighbourly.com/aboutus

Other valuable food waste prevention initiatives

Pilot projects provide invaluable insights for successful replication. User feedback is paramount, revealing usability issues, unmet needs, and unexpected user behaviors. For instance, **Too Good To Go:** initially focused on bakeries, but user feedback quickly revealed a strong demand for inclusion of supermarkets and restaurants. Agile development allowed them to rapidly adapt their platform and expand their network of partner businesses, significantly increasing the availability of surplus food. Note: Too Good To Go is not a food donation platform, but provides surplus food from businesses at a lower price.

By closely monitoring user interactions and incorporating their suggestions, platforms can be refined to better serve their intended purpose and increase user satisfaction. In Finland, ResQ Club initially faced challenges with user onboarding and platform navigation. User feedback led to the development of more intuitive interface designs, improved onboarding tutorials, and personalized recommendations, enhancing user experience and increasing platform adoption.

Scalability strategies are crucial for expanding platform reach and monetization. This can involve strategic partnerships with local governments, businesses, and community organizations to increase awareness and user base. In Ireland, FoodCloud partnered with local authorities and government agencies to expand its reach and integrate with existing food waste reduction initiatives. They also explored innovative funding models, such as impact investing and corporate social responsibility programs, to secure sustainable funding for their operations. Exploring innovative funding models, such as impact investing or corporate social responsibility initiatives, can provide sustainable revenue streams. Leveraging technology, such as cloud computing and artificial intelligence, can enhance efficiency and scale operations. Additionally, developing a tiered membership model with premium features for businesses or organizations can generate revenue while providing additional value to users. This was the case for Neighbourly in the UK that leveraged its existing network of local community groups to expand its food redistribution programme through a tiered membership model for businesses, offering premium features such as priority listing and customized reporting in exchange for increased financial support.

4.1 What We Learned from the LIFE FOODPRINT Project

One of the key lessons learned from previous implementations, including the LIFE FOODPRINT project, is the importance of **user-centered design and continuous feedback integration**. Platforms that fail to adapt to user needs often struggle with engagement, particularly in communities with varying levels of digital literacy. In Tunisia, for example, an early version of a food donation platform encountered low participation from rural users, with the issue being traced back to complex navigation and unclear instructions. By redesigning the interface with simplified icons, intuitive workflows, and step-by-step tutorials, adoption rates increased significantly. These findings highlight that ongoing feedback loops—through surveys, user interviews, and usability testing—are essential for improving functionality and accessibility.

Another critical challenge is the **back-office workload and the lack of automation**, which can place a significant burden on administrators. The LIFE FOODPRINT platform, for example, required manual data entry and coordination between donors and recipients, creating inefficiencies and delays. Unlike fully automated platforms, which integrate real-time tracking and auto-matching algorithms, LIFE FOODPRINT relied on a team to process donation offers, verify requests, and coordinate logistics. This manual approach led to bottlenecks during high-demand periods, emphasizing the need for automated backend solutions such as AI-driven matchmaking, automated notifications, and digital verification systems to streamline operations.

Real-time agility in problem-solving was also a major takeaway. Many platforms face unexpected logistical and operational challenges, such as fluctuating food supply levels, inconsistent donor participation, or transportation hurdles. A major challenge encountered during the LIFE FOODPRINT project was the unpredictability of food donations, both in terms of type and quantity. Donors often provided items that were not listed or expected, making it difficult to match donations with recipients quickly. In many cases, donations included perishable food items that required immediate distribution, yet finding recipients within a short time frame proved challenging. Unlike platforms with pre-set categories and automated matching, LIFE FOODPRINT relied heavily on manual coordination, which sometimes resulted in delays. This experience underscores the need for a more flexible, real-time inventory management system that can dynamically update available donations and notify recipients instantly.

Another significant issue was the **limited capacity of recipient organizations**, particularly volunteer-run groups, to handle large-scale food donations. Many of these organizations lacked the infrastructure, storage space, or logistical support to accept and redistribute large quantities of food efficiently. In some cases, even when food was available, redistribution was hindered by a shortage of volunteers or transportation options. This bottleneck highlighted the necessity of **pre-assessment mechanisms** to evaluate recipient capacity before food is allocated, ensuring that donations are appropriately distributed based on storage capabilities and redistribution reach.

To address these issues, future food donation platforms should integrate **smarter inventory tracking and automated recipient matching**, ensuring that donations are assigned based on recipient needs and capacity. Additionally, establishing **regional redistribution hubs** or forming partnerships with third-party logistics providers could help bridge the gap between large-scale donations and smaller recipient organizations. The ability to anticipate mismatches and adapt quickly is critical for ensuring that donated food reaches those in need efficiently and sustainably.

Moreover, **strong user support mechanisms** are indispensable for maintaining participation and trust. Many donors and recipients using the LIFE FOODPRINT platform faced technical issues or had questions regarding eligibility, yet the support infrastructure was limited. Platforms must provide multiple support channels, including hotlines, chatbots, and dedicated customer service teams, to resolve issues promptly. Case studies from Morocco highlight the effectiveness of hybrid support systems, where automated chat services handle common inquiries while a human support team assists with complex cases.

Another key challenge faced during the LIFE FOODPRINT project was the **manual coordination of food donations based on locality**. The platform did not have an automated system to match donors and recipients based on geographic proximity, meaning that every donation had to be assessed and manually assigned to a recipient within a feasible distance. In several instances, food was donated in areas where no registered recipients were available, creating logistical difficulties in ensuring that the food did not go

to waste. Unlike larger-scale food bank systems that operate with centralized collection points, LIFE FOODPRINT required direct donor-to-recipient exchanges, making local availability a critical factor.

This experience highlighted the necessity of ensuring a **balanced distribution of both donors and recipients across different regions, and making sure that a region had a sufficient number of both donors and recipients that could cover different levels and sizes of food donation**. Encouraging a more geographically diverse network of recipients would help prevent food surpluses in some areas while shortages persist in others. A crucial point was the clear communication with recipients about the **need to collect donations directly from the donor's location**. Many volunteer organizations were unfamiliar with this requirement, leading to delays in pick-ups and, in some cases, food spoilage. Future platform improvements should integrate an automated **geo-matching feature**, allowing donors and recipients to be paired based on proximity while also sending real-time notifications to recipients when a donation is available nearby. This would reduce the need for manual intervention, speed up the redistribution process, and ensure that donations remain practical and sustainable within local communities.

Finally, **sustainability remains a core focus in platform design**. Many food donation initiatives start strong but struggle with long-term viability due to financial constraints or reliance on external funding. The LIFE FOODPRINT project emphasized the need for economic and environmental sustainability by integrating partnerships with local food producers and promoting waste reduction strategies. By embedding circular economy principles—such as repurposing surplus food for secondary markets or animal feed—platforms can extend their impact beyond immediate food redistribution.

These lessons underscore the importance of automation, adaptive problem-solving, robust user support, and sustainability in building scalable and effective food donation platforms. Future implementations should prioritize these aspects to ensure efficiency and long-term success.

5. Cultural Adaptation Strategies

Adapting a food donation platform to diverse cultural contexts while maintaining its core functionality is essential for ensuring relevance and acceptance across various communities. To achieve this, several strategies can be implemented:

Cultural Assessment Tools: Utilizing frameworks to evaluate cultural factors—such as values, norms, and digital literacy—is crucial for understanding how different communities might interact with the platform. For instance, the Mediterranean diet, recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage, varies across the region due to diverse religious and cultural practices. Recognizing these differences is vital for tailoring the platform appropriately.[1]

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[1]

https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ea291e6e-deb4-4402-8f1a-138c32d23dbb/content

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Localization Techniques: Tailoring platform content through translations, culturally relevant visuals, and region-specific examples enhances user engagement. In Spain, food banks have adapted to local contexts by aligning their operations with regional food cultures and languages, ensuring better acceptance and participation from local communities.

Community Engagement Plans: Building trust and encouraging participation among local communities can be achieved through collaborative workshops and ambassador programs. In the Mediterranean region, initiatives like ecomuseums have promoted sustainable food systems by involving local communities in preserving and showcasing their food heritage, fostering a sense of ownership and active participation.[2]

Local Partnerships: Collaborating with local organizations enhances cultural relevance and fosters trust. For example, in the Mediterranean, partnerships between food systems and landscape sustainability initiatives have been established to promote local products and practices, ensuring that interventions are culturally appropriate and supported by the community.

Customized Content: Developing materials that reflect local customs, languages, and user preferences is essential. Adapting the Mediterranean diet to different cultural contexts has been shown to promote more sustainable dietary changes, indicating the importance of culturally tailored content in dietary interventions.

Inclusive Engagement: Inclusive engagement ensures that a food donation platform is accessible and beneficial to all community members, including those from marginalized or underrepresented groups. This approach focuses on addressing the unique needs, challenges, and barriers that diverse community segments face, creating a platform that truly serves everyone.

Key Elements of Inclusive Engagement	
Accessibility for Marginalized Groups	To ensure marginalized communities can participate in food donation initiatives, platforms must address barriers such as language, digital literacy, and socioeconomic challenges. In Malta, local food banks have integrated multilingual support into their online platforms, providing resources in Maltese, English, and Arabic to cater to migrant and refugee populations. Similarly, simplified user interfaces ensure that individuals with limited digital skills can navigate the platform with ease.

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[2] Ecomuseums in the Mediterranean Area and the Promotion of Sustainable Food Systems
https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/18/7891

Empowerment Through Participation	Including representatives from diverse groups in the planning and implementation phases fosters a sense of ownership and ensures the platform addresses their specific needs. In Greece, the "Boroume" initiative works closely with community leaders from various backgrounds to design food donation systems that respect local traditions and dietary requirements. This collaboration has been particularly impactful for engaging low-income and immigrant communities.
Special Provisions for Vulnerable Populations	Platforms should include features that cater to the specific needs of vulnerable populations, such as single parents, elderly individuals, and those with disabilities. In Cyprus, the "Hope for Children" organization incorporates food distribution networks that specifically support families with young children by ensuring donations include child-friendly, nutritious options. This model could be integrated into digital platforms by allowing users to specify dietary needs or preferences.
Partnerships with Grassroots Organizations	Collaborating with organizations that already have strong ties to marginalized groups enhances trust and participation. In Portugal, the ReFood movement works closely with local NGOs to connect surplus food with underprivileged neighborhoods, using their insights to refine the platform's functionality and ensure cultural appropriateness.
Digital Inclusivity	Bridging the digital divide is essential for reaching all community members. This involves providing offline or low-tech solutions for areas with limited internet access or for individuals without smartphones. In Italy, some food donation platforms have established hybrid systems where users can register online or in person through kiosks in community centers, ensuring no one is excluded due to technology constraints.

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Social Stigma Reduction & Community Participation	Some marginalized groups may feel ashamed to seek food donations due to social stigma. In these cases Community-based and focused solutions may include: **Anonymous or Discreet Pickup Points**: In Cyprus, some food donation programs allow beneficiaries to pick up food from neutral locations such as community centers rather than food banks, reducing stigma. **Peer Ambassadors & Local Champion**s: Engaging respected community members to advocate for the platform. In Italy, food donation projects partnered with local faith leaders and NGOs to encourage participation among migrant communities
Feedback Mechanisms	Ongoing engagement with users through feedback surveys and focus groups ensures the platform evolves to meet changing community needs. Including diverse voices in this process strengthens inclusivity and fosters continuous improvement. Spain's food redistribution platforms often organize community meetings to gather input from participants and refine their services.

Case Study: "El Banco de Alimentos" in Spain

Spain's food bank network has integrated inclusive engagement strategies to ensure no one is left behind. They've developed partnerships with organizations serving minority populations, offered materials in multiple languages, and created mobile apps with audio guides for visually impaired users. Their feedback loops involve regular consultations with user groups, ensuring the platform remains responsive to evolving needs. By implementing these strategies, a food donation platform can effectively adapt to various cultural contexts, ensuring its relevance, acceptance, and success across diverse communities. This approach ensures that the benefits of food donation initiatives reach everyone, contributing to a more just and sustainable food system.

Conclusion

The **D2.2 Replication Methodology Guidelines** serve as a critical resource for successfully scaling the **Food Connect** platform across Southern Europe. By outlining a structured, three-phase

approach—**Planning and Preparation, Technical Implementation, and Deployment/Pilot**—this guide ensures that the platform is effectively adapted to diverse regional and cultural contexts.

The methodologies presented address key challenges in food waste management, providing best practices, stakeholder engagement strategies, and technical guidance to facilitate seamless replication of the food donation app. Lessons learned from previous initiatives, including LIFE FOODPRINT, emphasize the importance of automation, stakeholder collaboration, and tailored user support systems to enhance efficiency and impact.

As the **LIFE Food Connect** project moves forward, the replication methodology will be instrumental in bridging gaps between food waste, redistribution efforts, and community engagement. By leveraging technology, fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, and integrating feedback loops, this guide lays the foundation for a sustainable, scalable, and impactful food donation platform that will contribute to reducing food waste and improving food security across the region.

ANNEXES:

Annex 1

1. Event/Activity Evaluation Questionnaire

The following questions are the basis for evaluating our events. According to each event partners should include other questions that have relevance and importance in the evaluation process.

1. Email

2, Country

3, Which stakeholder do you represent?

4, The event was planned and organized

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree(2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)

The event and contents addressed were interesting and relevant					
The event content had high quality					
The presentations were easy to understand.					
Participants had the opportunity to discuss, perform activities and/or exchange perspectives/experiences relevant to the project					
The presentations, discussions, activities and/ or exchange of perspectives/ experiences made/ promoted during the event were adequate to the acquisition of knowledge and development/ consolidation of skills and competences					
Presentations stayed within the time frame					
The materials presented were clear and appropriate					
The duration of the event was according to its objectives, contents and activities/assignments					

The event corresponded to my initial expectations.				
All necessary information were provided prior to the event				
The event was organised and delivered				
The organizer managed the workshop properly and positively				

5, What was the most useful or interesting thing you learned in this event?

6. Areas of improvement?

7, Further comments/Anything else you wish to share?

Annex 2 – Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Semi Structured Focus Group

By signing this form, I _____, agree to participate in a focus group/roundtable discussion in the concept of the project "Connecting Food Systems in Southern Europe - "Food Connect" (Project Acronym: Food Connect; Project number: 101148772), which is implemented by DIAS Publishing House Ltd, FILOI TIS GIS, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH MALTA, INOVA+, B.E Base Element Ltd, and ZERO.

The LIFE Food-Connect project aims to build upon the achievements and technical capacities of the recently completed LIFE FoodPrint project to enhance food waste management and resource efficiency. Its primary objectives include upscaling the existing LIFE FoodPrint platform by improving its technical infrastructure, integrating new features, and developing strategies to attract and engage a broader range of users, including businesses and social operators. The project will also facilitate replication by piloting the FoodConnect platform in partner countries, enabling stakeholders to record and share food waste management activities. Additionally, it seeks to raise awareness among consumers, the food and hospitality sector, and the general public about zero food waste management, emphasizing its broader societal impact.

The main objective of the semi structured focus group is to gather insights, feedback, and suggestions from stakeholders regarding the upscaling and replication of the **Food Connect** platform in their respective regions.

	Signature
I understand that information provided by myself during the interview (except for personal information that can identify me) could be used in writing research reports, scientific articles, and for other scientific/research purposes	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason	
I understand that I can ask for all necessary information at anytime and contact the responsible organisation	
I understand that the interview will be audio or video recorded and the recording will be used only by the researchers for data analysis	

If you have any further questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact us:

Name and surname:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail

I understand the purpose of the focus group/roundtable/interview and agree to participate:

Full Name:

Signature:

Date:

Annex 3 - Desk Based Research Guidelines

The desk-based research shall underpin the compilation of the literature review and, by extension, the review of existing practices and conditions at the national level in the partners' countries regarding food donation.

Go through the following sites and have a comprehensive idea of the current state of food donation in each country. The desk-based research involves analyzing recent and relevant data, including literature, reports, policy documents, and previous studies. Since the context varies across partner countries, this guideline does not prescribe specific research materials; instead, each partner organization should explore resources relevant to its national situation.

Additionally, in line with the objectives of **Life Food Connect**, the research should focus on obstacles and barriers that hinder food donation efforts, particularly the gap between public knowledge and perceptions. Special attention should be given to the lack of access to relevant spaces and information. Researchers should also examine existing best practices, as well as national laws and regulations on food donation. When assessing best practices, it is important to evaluate both their effectiveness and any shortcomings to identify areas for future improvement.

Subject-matter and content to be included in the desk-based research:

1. **Statistics:** Statistical data pertaining to food donation and online food donation platforms in each partner country.
1. **History:** An overview of the historic background around food donation if applicable.
2. **Legislation:** Short overview of laws and regulations (at the broader level, as well as when it comes to food donation).
3. **Policy and Practice:** Review of existing policies and current practices of food donation/initiatives and programs.
4. **Identifying issues:** These could be general issues which concern the Target Groups as a whole, but, in addition, certain specific issues such as the particular needs.
5. **Searching for stakeholders:** Desk-based research can be helpful in identifying and, thus, meeting and involving relevant stakeholders in roundtable discussions/focus groups.

Resources to look at:

The Global Food Donation Atlas: https://atlas.foodbanking.org/

Regulatory Compliance Checklist from EU here:
https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/food-waste/eu-actions-against-food-waste/food-donation_en

Annex 4 - Semi Structured Guide for Semi Structured Focus Groups

Objective of the Focus Group
To gather insights, feedback, and suggestions from stakeholders regarding the replication and adaptation of the Food Connect platform in their respective regions.

Indicative flow – questions to be answered

1. **Welcome and Introduction** (5-10 minutes)
   ○ Welcome
   ○ Brief introduction of the Food Connect project, its goals, and the purpose of the focus group.
   ○ Describe the agenda and set ground rules (for respectful participation)
   ○ Ice-breaker - Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves (name, organization, role)
2. **Discussion Topics and Questions**
   A. Current Challenges in Food Waste and Donation

   ○ What are the biggest challenges your organization faces in managing donating/receiving food donations?
   ○ Have you or your organization been involved in food donation initiatives before? If yes, what has worked well, and what hasn't?

   B. Feedback on the Food Connect Platform Concept

   ○ Present the platform
   ○ Based on your understanding of the Food Connect platform, what features do you think would be most helpful for you to utilize the platform during your operations (business or NGOs) ?
   ○ Are there any functionalities you feel are missing or could be improved?
   ○ How can the platform be made more user-friendly for businesses/organisations like yours?

   C. Cultural and Regional Adaptation

   ○ What cultural or regional factors should we consider to ensure the platform works effectively in your area? [Ensure input is provided by NGOs that work with vulnerable communities and communities with different cultural backgrounds]

   D. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

- ○ What incentives or motivations would encourage your business/organization to actively use the platform?
  E. Recommendations for Pilot Implementation

  - ○ Do you foresee any barriers to adoption, and how do you suggest overcoming them?
3. **Closing and Next Steps** (5 minutes)
   - ○ Summarize key points discussed
   - ○ Inform participants of the next steps, including how their feedback will be used.
   - ○ Provide contact information for follow-up questions or additional suggestions.

Additional Notes for Moderators

- Ensure all participants have an opportunity to speak.
- Record responses (with participants' consent) and assign to a member of your team to take notes for later analysis.
- Depending on the number of people, decide whether the questions will be asked to everyone or answered in a pop-corn style.
- The suggested duration is 1-1.5 so participants will not lose interest

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Evidence Collection / After the focus group

- Collect signed consent forms (Annex I).
- Take photos or screenshots during the focus group session (with participants' permission).
- Summarize the discussion outcomes and send them to participants in a visually simple way
- Results from the Semi structured focus group added to Annex 6 Needs Analysis Report

Annex 5 - Food Connect Stakeholder Survey

Food Connect Stakeholder Survey
Collecting Practices, Barriers, and Opportunities for Food Donation and Waste Reduction

Thank you for participating in this survey as part of the LIFE Food Connect project. Your input will help us identify existing practices, barriers, opportunities, and legal limitations related to food waste and donation in your sector.

The survey will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete. Your responses are confidential and will be used only for the purposes of the LIFE Food Connect project
For questions or more information, please contact us at **(contact email from your organisation)**.

Section 1: General Information

1. **What is your full name?*** *(Short Answer)*
2. **What is the name of your organisation?** *(Short Answer)*
3. **What is your role/position in the organization?** *(Short Answer)*
4. **Which sector do you represent?** *(Multiple Choice)*
   - Hospitality & Food Sector
   - CSO/NGO
   - Public Body/Policymaker
   - Other (please specify) *(Short Answer)*

Section 2: Existing Practices

5. **Does your organisation/business currently engage in food donation or food waste reduction practices?** *(Multiple Choice)*
   - Yes
   - No
   - We are planning to start
6. **If yes, please briefly describe your food donation or food waste reduction practices.** *(open end)*
7. **What resources or tools do you currently use to support food donation or waste reduction efforts?***(open end)*

Section 3: Barriers

8. **What are the key barriers your organization faces in implementing food donation or waste reduction practices?** *(Checkboxes – can choose more than 1)*
   - Lack of awareness
   - Legal limitations or unclear regulations
   - High operational costs
   - Limited infrastructure (e.g., storage, transportation)
   - Lack of coordination with potential food recipients
   - Other (please specify) *(Short Answer)*
9. **Please elaborate on any legal or regulatory challenges your organization faces regarding food donation or waste reduction.** *(Open end)*

Section 4: Opportunities

10. **What opportunities do you see for improving food donation and waste reduction in your sector?** *(Open end)*

11. **What additional support or resources would help your organization engage more effectively in food donation?** *(Checkboxes)*
    - ○ Training for staff
    - ○ Financial incentives
    - ○ Policy changes
    - ○ Improved technology/tools
    - ○ Networking with other organizations
    - ○ Other (please specify) *(Short Answer)*

Section 5: Feedback on Platform Development

12. **Would your organization consider using a digital platform for food donation?** *(Multiple Choice)*
    - ○ Yes, definitely
    - ○ Maybe, if it meets our needs
    - ○ No, not interested

13. **What features would you like to see in a food donation platform?** *(Checkboxes)*
    - ○ Easy food listing
    - ○ Legal compliance tools
    - ○ Reporting and analytics
    - ○ Communication between donors and recipients
    - ○ Multi-language support
    - ○ Recognition
    - ● Geo- locator [Location specific]
    - ○ Other (please specify) *(Short Answer)*

Section 6: Additional Comments

14. **Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding food waste reduction or the development of the Food Connect platform?** *(Paragraph Answer)*

Additional Notes for Partners (not included in the survey):
- ○ The surveys can be executed in the form that is most appropriate for each country (e.g., printed, Google Form, email communication, or interview format).

- o Ensure all answers are recorded and reported accurately in the data log
- o Always include a Consent and Disclaimer section about the project, ensuring participants are aware of how their data will be used.
- o Where necessary, adapt the questions to match the specific audience (Hospitality and food Sector, CSOs/NGOs, and Public Bodies/Policymakers).
- ● Results from the surveys should be collected and added to to Annex 6 Needs Analysis Report

Annex 6 - Needs analysis Report

Partners, following the data analysis of the desk-based and field-based research shall develop a needs analysis report.

- ● Style Guide Guidelines for the Needs Analysis Report
    - ○ Number of pages for each National Report: 7-10 pages.
    - ○ Font style: Arial
    - ○ Font size: 12
    - ○ Line spacing: 1.5
    - ○ Alignment: Justify

- ● Semi Structured Template Content for the Needs Analysis Report

1. Partner Name and Country
2. Key findings from Desk Review
    a. Brief explanation of the national context
    b. issues/problems
    c. Case studies/best practices (1-2 case studies)
3. Results from Semi Structured focus groups with open discussion
4. Results from Questionnaires
5. Conclusions
    a. what target groups needs to be included in the platform
    b. Technical and Logistical conclusions

- ● Referencing Guidelines
    - ○ For referencing and other editorial-related aspects of the research, please apply only the APA Citation Style Guide. This is both to safeguard the scientific quality of the overall research of the project, as well as to ensure that there is a stylistic uniformity amongst the reports submitted by the partners.