

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001747/25
to the Commission
Dan-Ștefan Motreanu (PPE)
(30 April 2025)

Subject: Towards a comprehensive European policy on food donations to reduce food waste and support vulnerable communities

The Commission has made considerable efforts to reduce food waste, notably by promoting food donations. Food donations are an important means of redistributing wealth and supporting the most vulnerable people across Europe. A recent report, supported by funding from the ESF+ project Food4Inclusion, analyses the implementation of European food waste reduction and food donation policies across all 27 Member States up to 2024.

A number of important findings have emerged from interviews with both governmental authorities and local food donation organisations.

While mandatory food donation schemes appear to be among the most effective approach, significant challenges remain. These include the lack of harmonisation of national measures, major disparities between countries focusing solely on food waste reduction versus those promoting food donations, inadequate logistics for food recovery and distribution, limited support for local charitable organisations, the absence of an EU-wide VAT exemption for donated products, unclear responsibilities within the food supply chain, high distribution costs and a lack of financial incentives.

In light of these challenges, does the Commission intend to propose a comprehensive EU-level policy and legislation to support food donations and ensure a more coherent and effective approach across Member States?

Submitted: 30.4.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(1 July 2025)

On 18 February 2025, the European Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement ⁽¹⁾ on the Commission's legislative proposal for a targeted revision of the Waste Framework Directive ⁽²⁾ in order to set legally binding food waste reduction targets to be achieved by Member States by 2030.

In that agreement, the co-legislators introduced a strengthened approach on food donation. Upon formal adoption of the amended Directive, which is expected by the end of 2025, Member States will be required to take measures ensuring that economic operators with a significant role in the prevention and generation of food waste (as identified by each Member State) facilitate the donation of unsold food that is safe for human consumption in the context of donation agreements.

Furthermore, in order to facilitate the recovery and redistribution of safe, edible food to those in need, a Commission Notice setting out EU guidelines on food donation ⁽³⁾ supports compliance of providers and recipients of surplus food with relevant requirements laid down in the EU regulatory framework (e.g. food safety, food hygiene, traceability, liability, Value-Added Tax, etc.) and promotes common interpretation by regulatory authorities in the Member States of EU rules applying to the redistribution of surplus food.

Finally, the Food donation sub-group of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste ⁽⁴⁾ is currently identifying and assessing barriers to food donation and opportunities to facilitate this practice across the EU, as well as developing recommendations for actions at EU and national level.

⁽¹⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety-news-0/provisional-agreement-reached-eu-food-waste-reduction-targets-2025-02-20_en.

⁽²⁾ Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives, OJ L 312, 22.11.2008, p. 3-30, as amended by Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May, OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109-140.

⁽³⁾ Commission Notice — EU guidelines on food donation (2017/C 361/01).

⁽⁴⁾ EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste: https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/food-waste/eu-actions-against-food-waste/eu-platform-food-losses-and-food-waste_en.