Milan Pact Awards 2025	**VANTAA**						
Country	Finland						
Population	251,269						
Title of practice	Vantaa Shared Table – Food Waste Ecosystems						
Subtitle	Serving waste donation to food aid - piloting surplus food donations from serving lines to social food aid in Vantaa						
MUFPP Recommended Action	37. Save food by facilitating recovery and redistribution for human consumption of safe and nutritious foods, if applicable, that are at risk of being lost, discarded or wasted from production, manufacturing, retail, catering, wholesale and hospitality. – FOOD WASTE						
Starting year	2023	**Ending year (if any)**			2026	☐already submitted in the past	
Actors and stakeholders' involvement	**Municipal departments**	**Other public institutions**	**NGOs CSOs**	**Research centres**	**Private sectors**	**International organizations**	**Other**
	2	5	3	1	4		2
Budget	Budget for the practices: less than € 2,000. Total budget for the coordinating project is € 1,187,471 in over 3 years. Funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), co-financed by the City of Vantaa and partners through the Food Waste Ecosystem project (City of Helsinki, Laurea and LUKE).						
Brief description	Vantaa Shared Table delivers surplus food from food factories, wholesalers and retailers to a large network of food aid distributors. This network gives away the food aid and organizes community lunches and free and open community activities. The Shared Table network of stakeholders who contribute to the common goal has grown to over 80 NGOs and there are about 50 surplus food doners. Distribution of about 10-20,000 kg of surplus food per week (0,5 million kg annually) benefits about 10k inhabitants with low income in Vantaa weekly. As part of the Food Waste Ecosystem initiative (2023-26), we piloted an innovative model to recover and redistribute "serving waste" - edible food left on serving lines - from school and institutional kitchens and private restaurants to social food aid operators. Partnering with public and private food service providers and NGOs, we coordinated over 10 pilots, ensuring legal, hygienic and logistical feasibility. Key objectives included reducing food waste, improving food security and promoting circular economy practices. During the pilots thousands of kilograms of food were recovered, contributing to both environmental and social sustainability. In the next phases three models of distributing food are scaled to cover more of Finnish metropolitan area. Our role was to facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration, align processes with updated national guidelines and demonstrate scalable impact.						
Innovation	This practice marks one of the first municipal-level models in Finland to enable systematic recovery of cooked surplus food from serving lines for food aid, aligning with new national food safety regulations. It combines public kitchens, private food providers, social food aid actors and food safety authorities into a functioning ecosystem. The use of cold chains, allergen documentation and real-time coordination between kitchens and aid distributors is highly innovative. The model shifts the paradigm from ad-hoc food rescue to a systemic, scalable and safe mechanism for everyday operations in cities. Vantaa's role as an initiator and ecosystem orchestrator is key to the model's replicability across municipalities. Latest ongoing pilot: When food waste meets new technology, the result is electricity, heat, soil improver and climate benefits! Benerg Oy is developing smart biogas systems that convert organic waste into biogas - and then into energy. Just 10 kilos of biowaste a day is enough to power up more than 10 households for an entire year! One of these systems is now being tested at the Yhteinen Pöytä food surplus terminal in Vantaa, where donated food is collected from across the city. The system not only reduces waste management costs but also helps to balance energy demand peaks						

	and reduce the need for fossil fuels. This pilot combines climate action, circular economy and local energy self-sufficiency. The goal here is to exploit all waste, including inedible waste.
Impact	During its existence, Shared Table has grown into a permanent fixture in Vantaa. It all started in 2015 and thus we are celebrating 10 years of anniversary this year. After its implementation in Vantaa, the Shared Table idea and/or model of co-working has spread to other cities in Finland. The practice has yielded significant social, environmental and economic results. Socially, it supports vulnerable groups such as low-income families and migrants with regular access to nutritious cooked meals. A meal enjoyed together brings people from different backgrounds closer, prevents loneliness and enhances well-being. In a survey made for people participating: 82% reported having felt a sense of belonging at the Shared Table meal gathering, 71% reported making friends by participating and more than half (56%) also felt that the meal gatherings have brought a sense of continuity and security to their lives. Nearly one third of diners (32%) estimated that participating in the Shared Table meals had reduced their personal need for other forms of assistance. Environmentally, each kilogram of food rescued avoids emissions from production and waste. Across pilots, thousands of kilograms of food have been redistributed and bio-waste reduced by up to 50% in some kitchens. Economically, kitchens reduce bio-waste fees and enhance their societal value. The pilots also inform procurement and waste policy and contribute to SDG 12.3 on food waste reduction.
Inclusion	The model is all about co-operation and would not work without a highly involved network. It brings together the city, the parish union, food factories, wholesalers and retailers and food aid operators such as congregations, NGOs and citizen centres. The surplus food hub has sought to work closely with other experienced professionals within the city and the church, to learn for instance from the city unit that takes care of food safety. The network of local organizations, which range from drug clinics and service housing units to youth clubs, churches and citizen centres, receive coaching from the core team of Shared Table. This is to ensure that the food distribution is carried out in as human and food safe way as possible. The initiative integrates multiple MUFPP action fields: food waste, food aid, governance and sustainable diets. It involves actors from municipal departments, schools, companies, NGOs and food aid organizations. Territorial reach includes Vantaa and Helsinki, with potential for replication in Espoo. Multilevel collaboration was achieved through joint planning with food safety authorities, kitchen providers and aid actors. Local food councils and EU-funded innovation teams facilitated the learning. The initiative promotes social equity, circular economy and interdepartmental cooperation within and between cities.