



CASE HISTORY

**RECONSTRUCTION PATH OF THE SCHOOL CANTEEN IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

*A summary of “It’s On Our Plate and We Care” Case Study*



For over 20 years, Slow Food has emphasized the key role that school canteens can play, indirectly influencing multiple aspects of food systems: the environmental impact of supply chains, food education, the right remuneration for small local producers. Over 400 million meals served in the Czech Republic every year are a strategic point for simultaneously addressing the multiple critical issues of the Czech food system, which consequently have an impact on the international one. “It’s on Our Plate and We Care” is an ongoing project that addresses urgent needs today, promoting sustainable nutrition for children and young people, to ensure a better future tomorrow, for them and for everyone. This Case Study tells us that a systemic transformation needs time and the active participation of the various parties involved to achieve shared and long-term goals, but that it is possible.

**BACKGROUND**

School meal service in the Czech Republic has been guaranteed by the government since the mid-1960s, and provides five meals a week to about 1.8 million students. However, there are issues with the meal service that this study aims to address. First, there are no nutritional requirements for the school meals, which has led to using unhealthy, industrially-produced, pre-prepared food items that satisfy the meal budget, as well as the students’ appetites but directly lead to poor diets and health, and contributes to non-sustainable food production practices. Second, school kitchens are under resourced (lack of equipment, tools, and staff competence), which has led to limitations regarding the quality of food that the canteen offers to students.



“ We want to create an environment in canteens where all children have access to food they like and that is good for them, for producers and for the planet. ”

▶ Renata Lukášová, Slow Food Prague

**It’s On Our Plate and We Care project timeline**





## FROM ANALYSIS TO CRITICAL ISSUES

The project It's On Our Plate and We Care kicked off in 2020, using eighteen school meal services as pilots.

To prepare for the project, a team of experts analyzed studies and research concerning the issues this project would address.

### The project defined six critical issues:

- 1 • Regulatory Framework, to establish legislation for school meal service consistency;
- 2 • Personnel, to attract better qualified workers by increasing remuneration;
- 3 • Control Tools and Nutritional Health of the Diet, to be able to measure and monitor the nutritional content of school meals by using dedicated software;
- 4 • Organization and Equipment, to enhance the efficacy in school kitchens by investing in better quality tools;
- 5 • Consumption, Waste, and Surplus, to use tools to prevent and/or handle food waste in appropriate, sustainable ways;
- 6 • Food Education, to spread knowledge about healthy diets and lifestyles not only to students, but to school staff as well.



## THE RECONSTRUCTION PATH: THE 4 PHASES OF THE PROJECT

The project is divided into four phases.

**Phase 1** concerns the quality of the food, by establishing a list of allowable foods, comprising a nutritional recipe database, creating a national software for recording and planning meals, and devising portion sizes respective of the ages of students.

**Phase 2** concerns personnel and organization, by investing in staff competency and remuneration as well as establishing organizational standards such as plate types and eating times.

**Phase 3** concerns ongoing educational opportunities through the school canteen, by incorporating food education lessons in the classroom and making the canteen a local community center.

**Phase 4** concerns ongoing assessment of the project implementations in order to assess progress and make alterations when necessary.



## KEY OBJECTIVES AND PILLARS

The high-level objective of It's On Our Plate and We Care is to develop a high-quality school meal service system, by improving the quality and reputation of school meal services and strengthen the skills of all relevant stakeholders.

The project has this immediate goal, but also several long-term goals, such as to improve community health by increasing gastronomic and nutritional knowledge, as well as implement sustainable food production practices.

### The project identified six pillars to which certain objectives were correlated, including

- 1 • personnel
- 2 • facilities and premises
- 3 • operational processes
- 4 • food and gastronomy
- 5 • care and education
- 6 • supplies



## THE PROJECT'S MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

The key players involved in this project are the national Ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, Environment, and Labor and Social Affairs.

Outside government bodies, the project involves organizations such as the Czech Gastronomic Institute, the National Institute of Public Health, the Culinary Arts education program, as well as a roundtable of experts with focuses on different relevant facets of this project.

Slow Food Prague also has a direct connection to this project, with its experience in school canteen projects all over the world. The four-member initiation team represent these organizations and worked together to strategize a new national food canteen system.

*Find the full Case Study on "It's On Our Plate and We Care" here in [english](#) and [italian](#)*



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