RETASTE Conference Abstracts
RETASTE-PLW-1366-In-person Oral
Rethymno, September 16-18, 2026
© Author(s) 2026 CC BY 4.0 License
DOI:10.5281/zenodo.23678354

Impact of an Exhibition on Food Waste Prevention in Schools

Gudrun Obersteiner and Sandra Luck

BOKU University, Austria

ACCEPTED

Abstract

In 2023, BOKU University in collaboration with the Austrian foodbank and the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, developed the exhibition "GewissensBISS – harvested.bought.thrown away" to address food waste prevention. The content was focused on middle school students and the exhibition was designed in a way that it can be shipped from one school to the next without additional supervision and can be set up and taken down independently by the local staff. To date, more than 20,000 visitors from schools in all federal states, representing approximately 80 locations have visited the exhibition. As part of the exhibition's presentation in 21 schools, surveys were used to analyse the extent to which the exhibition triggers actual learning and behavioural processes among students and their social circles, and to what degree visiting the exhibition results in a measurable increase in knowledge and/or a greater willingness to act in an environmentally conscious manner among the students. Another focus of the analyses was to determine whether it is possible, in the sense of "reverse socialization," to reach students' families through the students themselves and, ideally, to educate them as well, and whether providing parents with targeted additional information about the exhibition can enhance the reach and effectiveness of knowledge transfer. The exhibition GewissensBISS was received very positively by teachers, students, and parents alike. Of the 469 participating students, 68% rated the exhibition as very good or good. The comparison clearly shows: after visiting the exhibition, students know noticeably more in several areas. The greatest improvement was in knowledge regarding the proper storage of food—here, the percentage of correct answers rose by 29%. The project clearly demonstrated that a multiplier effect occurs and that students also influence their parents' behaviour - measures were implemented in 20% of the households surveyed following the discussion with the students. It was also clearly established that parents who had been informed in advance were more likely to discuss the exhibition with their children. Thus, in 78% of households, there were conversations between children and parents in which the parents had been informed beforehand, whereas this was the case in only 35% of households that had not been informed in advance. 40% of respondents stated that these conversations led them to engage more deeply with the topic and that they have already implemented concrete measures to prevent food waste. An interesting aspect here: detailed conversations led to the implementation of measures significantly more often than brief ones. For instance, 64% of parents who had a detailed conversation with their children reported that they implemented measures in the household.

Keywords: food waste prevention, testing intervention, reverse socialization, students, parents