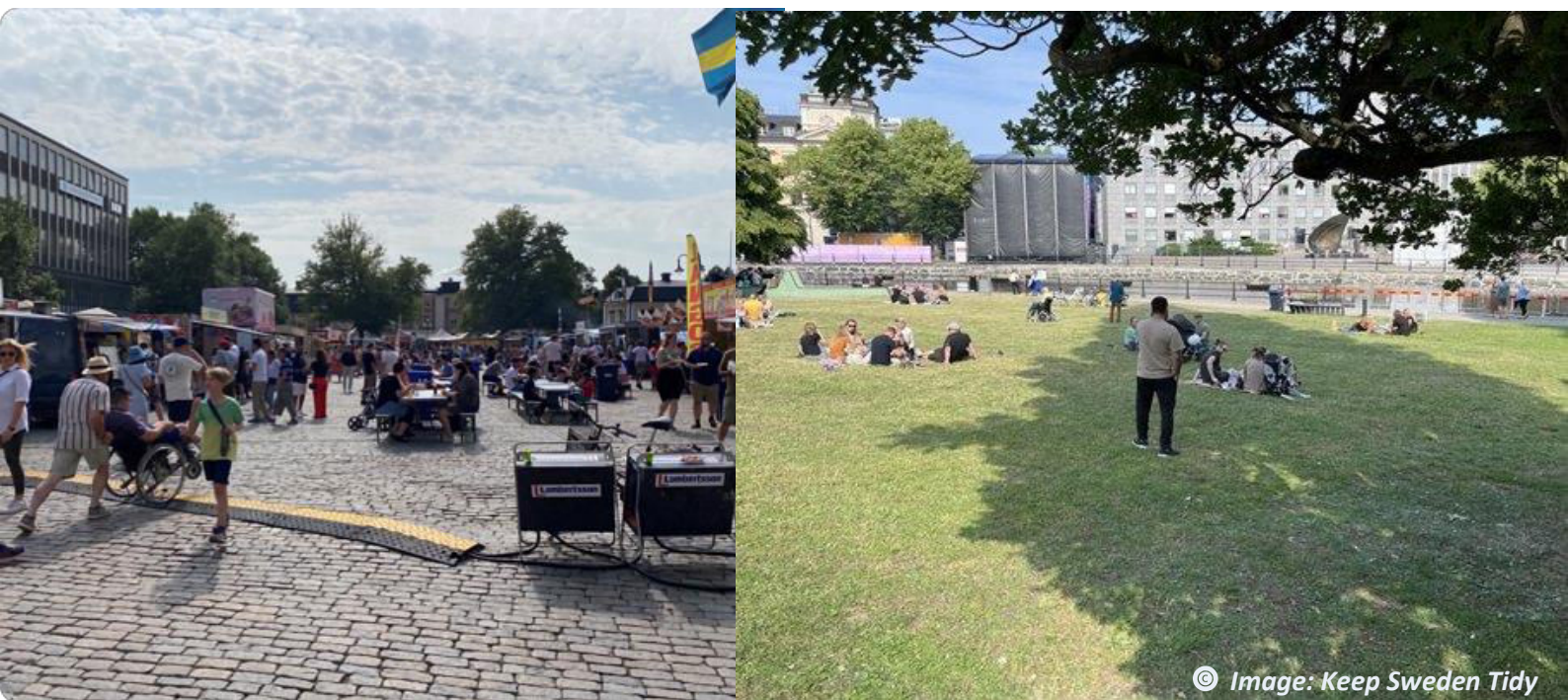


BALTIPLAST “Baltic Approaches to Handling Plastic Pollution under a Circular Economy Context”

Reducing single-use plastic littering at Västerås City Festival 2023 in Sweden



© Image: Keep Sweden Tidy



The project BALTIPLAST co-financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region helps driving the transition to a green and resilient Baltic Sea region.

CityFestival in Västerås

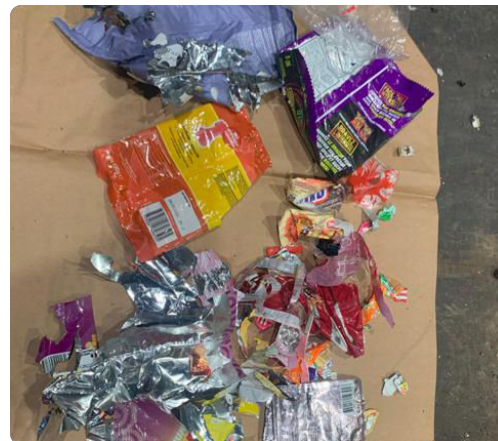
The City of Västerås and Keep Sweden Tidy are working closely together to reduce the use and subsequent littering of plastic during the annual City Festival in Västerås 2023-2025. Organised since 1992, the City Festival in Västerås has a strong tradition of bringing people together with music, food, and other social activities in late June every year.

The project kicked off in 2023 with a field study to gain a baseline of plastic consumption as well as to conduct a litter analysis during the three-day festival event. The City Festival takes place in the heart of Västerås with focal points such as a large green area (City Park), a plaza where food is sold and consumed (Food Area), and a designated concert area. In 2023, the City Festival attracted approximately 350,000 visitors.

Our field study comprised of activities such as photographing, enquiring with vendors, conducting litter measurements and meeting with local festival organisers. Measuring litter during the festival turned out to be a challenging task and unfortunately meant that we collected low quality data. This was due to a small quantity of litter being collected (approximately only 10 large bin bags were collected) by event staff, a limited collection window between 12am – 10pm during the three-day festival, and an inadequate primary analysis of the litter collected.

Despite these challenges, we were able to combine a litter analysis and qualitative observations to draw some conclusions on the distribution of larger littered (plastic) items.

In the City Park, the most common littered material was plastic (62%), followed by paper and cardboard and metal items at 13% each, glass items at 3%, and other items at 8%. Plastic items were further divided into sub-categories and the top-3 items were: cups (22%); lids and caps (22%) and candy wrappers (17%).



Images from the City Park (Image by Keep Sweden Tidy)

In the Food Area, the most common littered material was paper and cardboard (59%), followed by plastic (30%), metal (3%) and other items at 9%. Plastic items were further divided into sub-categories and the top-3 items were: cutlery (23%); lids and caps (23%) and candy wrappers (23%).

We found that the litter analysis was strengthened by a qualitative analysis. A key observation was that there was a strong presence of litter throughout the festival grounds. Another key observation was that plastic items were the most represented form of litter such as candy wrappers (for example given out by political party representatives), balloons, condoms and their packaging, flags, and earplugs. To our surprise, we also found that in the Food Area, there was a considerably high level of distribution of banned single-use plastic (SUP) products such as food containers, cups, and straws despite festival requirements and regulations. Finally, the queuing section of the concert area was largely littered.



Images from the Food Area (Image by Keep Sweden Tidy)

Since last year, we have been working closely with the City of Västerås to reduce plastic consumption and minimise littering for the upcoming festival in 2024. Our aim is to improve the situation from last year and set the conditions for a SUP-free and litter-free festival in 2025.

These are the six measures we are prioritising during this year's festival:

1. Increased control of banned SUP products
2. Improved communication with vendors, restaurants, and festivalgoers
3. Updated festival requirements for vendors and restaurants (for example banning plastic give-aways)
4. A small-scale pilot study with 5 restaurants at the Food Area that will only offer multi-use cutlery and containers in a closed-loop system
5. Upgraded recycling stations throughout the festival grounds
6. Reduced consumption of single-use plastics among festival staff with of the BALTIPLAST inventory tool.

The 2024 city festival is set to take place between 27-29 June.