



**REDUCTION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS &
PLASTIC PACKAGING IN MUNICIPALITIES
AND BUSINESSES –**

NO BIG DEAL.

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



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CIRCULAR ECONOMY
BALTIPLAST



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FROM SMALL STEPS TO BIG CHANGE

Tackling Single-Use Plastics with BALTIPLAST

IN A WORLD WHERE PLASTIC POLLUTION IS EVER-PRESENT, THE BALTIPLAST PROJECT IS DRIVEN BY A CLEAR MISSION: TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS (SUP) AND PLASTIC PACKAGING THROUGH REAL, MEASURABLE ACTION. OUR AIM ISN'T JUST TO STUDY THE PROBLEM – IT'S TO SOLVE IT.

That means supporting municipalities with strategic and legal tools, and just as importantly, testing hands-on solutions that organisations can start using today.

We believed the first step would be easy: “soft measures” like small changes in day-to-day operations across municipalities, schools, and businesses. After all, these low-hanging fruits – improving Good Housekeeping practices – are within reach of every organisation. Or so we thought.

Surprisingly, our pilots revealed the opposite. Strategic actions like developing Action Plans, Strategies or amending legal acts were easier to implement than small behavioural changes at organisations. Assigning responsibility for SUP reduction or adjusting catering contracts required more than policy – it required real engagement.

Schools leaned more towards educational activities than operational changes, constrained by tight schedules. Businesses, meanwhile, faced a different hurdle: many didn't even realize how much SUP they used. But once we helped them conduct a simple plastic inventory, the results spoke for themselves – and awareness quickly followed.

While engaging our target groups wasn't as easy as expected, the progress we've made

proves one thing: small steps matter. Our plastic inventory tool has already helped several municipalities, schools and businesses visualize their SUP use and take action – and it can do the same for yours.

Reducing single-use plastics is a journey, not a one-time fix. But every journey starts with a single, doable step. We invite you to take that step with us. Try out the inventory, reflect on your daily practices, and join the growing movement toward a cleaner, smarter future. Follow BALTIPLAST — and follow through. Together, we can make less plastic the new normal.



This report is written by

Heidrun Fammler, Baltic Environmental Forum, Germany
Eva Kruse, City of Västerås, Sweden
Johanna Gäbken, Plastikfreie Stadt (KuBuS e.V.), Germany

The following person have contributed to the texts

Cases from businesses

Denisa Martinkutė, Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology (ECAT), Kaunas, Lithuania

Irina Paegle, Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF-LV), Latvia

Cases from municipal entities (including green events) and schools

Līga Biezina, Valmiera Municipality Government, Latvia

Karolina Senkiene, Kaunas City Municipality, Lithuania

Jolanta Reca-Laze, Daugavpils City Municipality, Latvia

Helen Barda, Keep Sweden Tidy, Sweden

Liina Kanarbik, City of Tallinn, Estonia

Loreta Wuestenberg, Baltic Environmental Forum, Germany

Jelena Barbir, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Andrea Dobri, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Eva Kruse, Heidrun Fammler & Johanna Gäbken (from left to right) Leaders of the BALTIPLAST soft-solution case study



INTRODUCTION

The challenge and our solution

IN 2022, GLOBAL PLASTIC PRODUCTION EXCEEDED 400 MILLION TONNES, WITH ABOUT HALF DESIGNED FOR SINGLE-USE. ONLY ONE-THIRD OF PLASTICS ARE RECYCLED, WHILE THE REST END UP IN LANDFILLS OR ARE INCINERATED FOR ENERGY.

The Baltic Sea, being a closed and brackish sea, is particularly vulnerable to plastic pollution. Annually, 12 million tonnes of plastic enter waterways, with 70 % of marine litter consisting of single-use plastics and abandoned fishing gear. Plastic pollution affects both land and water, posing threats to biodiversity and costing society large sums for cleanup. Littering is also a social problem, often perceived as unsafe. It's crucial for everyone, private households, public, municipalities and businesses to reduce single-use plastics and improve waste management locally.

One solution, amongst other, is to implement soft measures as it has been done in the BALTIPLAST pilots in municipal entities, schools, at green events and in businesses. By soft measures we mean actions that can be taken at low efforts and low investments. Our solution is to carry out an inventory of plastic material at a facility to reduce the use of single-use plastics and plastic packaging. The inventory process is basically simple: find out what plastic is used in the operations and which plastic becomes waste, set goals for what should be reduced and how it should be done, and make a new inventory after a certain time and see if the reduction has been successful.

In the BALTIPLAST pilots the inventory process has been carried out in slightly different ways and adopted to the piloting municipalities, target group and operation in question. Pilots have been accomplished by different supporting measures. This provides us with a wide range of experiences that helps us understand what works well and what challenges there may be.



THE INVENTORY PROCESS AND THE PLASTIC INVENTORY TOOL

The Plastic Inventory and Plastic Inventory Tool

TO TACKLE THE WIDESPREAD ISSUE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS, BALTIPLAST HAS DEVELOPED A PLASTIC INVENTORY TOOL, A PRACTICAL AND LOW-INVESTMENT SOLUTION DESIGNED FOR BUSINESSES, MUNICIPALITIES, AND SCHOOLS.



OUR GOAL

THE PLASTIC INVENTORY SUPPORTS ORGANISATIONS TO MEASURABLY REDUCE THEIR PLASTIC CONSUMPTION.

The tool provides a structured approach to identifying plastic consumption, analyzing waste patterns, and implementing targeted reduction measures.

It has already been piloted in over 50 organisations across the Baltic Sea region, offering a tested and adaptable framework for minimizing plastic waste.

How Does the Plastic Inventory Work?

The plastic inventory is a step-by-step process that enables organisations to gain clear insights into their plastic footprint and uncover opportunities for reduction. It involves:

Kick-off & Preparation –

Organisations receive an introduction to the tool, including training or workshops to guide them through the inventory process.

Waste Auditing & Data Collection –

Over a set period, businesses systematically track and record their single-use plastic consumption. This includes examining waste bins, documenting packaging waste, and identifying key areas of plastic use.

Data Analysis &

Identifying Reduction Measures –

The collected data is analysed to determine the main sources of plastic waste, highlight existing good practices, and suggest potential alternatives, such as reusable packaging or supplier engagement strategies.

Implementation of Reduction Strategies –

Based on the findings, organisations take action by eliminating unnecessary plastics, switching to sustainable alternatives, or working with suppliers to reduce packaging waste.

Evaluation & Follow-up –

To measure the effectiveness of the changes, a second round of waste monitoring can be conducted. The tool quantifies plastic savings and presents them in a visualized progress report, helping organisations track and communicate their improvements.

The project partners and their pilots

Municipality	Businesses	Municipal entities	Green event	Schools
Tallinn (EE)	5 offices (Põhjala Factory – creative hub, Swedbank – bank, Elron – public transport, Tallinn Music Week – event, Alexela – energy provider)	n/a	Sporting event – LHV Women’s Run	3 schools (Rocca al Mare School, Laagna Gymnasium, Ääsmäe Primary School)
Kaunas (LT)	7 offices (Kaunas regional development agency – regional development, Kaunas regional waste management centre – waste management, Nivela – catering, Kauno Švara – waste management, Vilterus – decoration shop, Baltijos Vertimai – translation, KTU aplinkos inžinerijos institutas – education)	3 divisions (Investment and Project Division, Environment Protection Division, Transport and Traffic Management division)	n/a	2 schools (Kaunas St. Casimir Progymnasium, Kaunas Martynas Mazvydas Progymnasium)
Västerås (SE)	n/a	Unit of research and school development	Västerås City Festival	3 schools (Apalby elementary school, Hamre elementary school, Mälarpark elementary school)
Valmiera (LV)	Sports Hotel (hotel) DARE (co-creating space)	Administration Building	Valmiera City Festival	1 school (Valmiera Design and Arts Secondary School)
Daugavpils (LV)	4 offices (Ddzksu – housing, Satiksme – public transport, Siltumtikli – heat management, Udens – water management)	3 departments (Development Department, Educational Department, Urban Planning Department)	n/a	2 schools (Daugavpils Zinatnu Secondary School, Daugavpils Vienibas Elementary School)
Hamburg – Bergedorf (DE)	n/a	n/a	n/a	3 schools (GS Leuschnerstrasse, STS Bergedorf, STS Lohbrügge)
Utena (LT)	2 companies (Utenos komunalininkas – utilities, Utenos vandenys – water management)	n/a	Biliakiemis Herbal Festival	n/a

INFOGRAPHICS – RESULTS FROM THE PILOTS

The BALTIPLAST pilots

THROUGHOUT THE PILOTING PHASE, THE PLASTIC INVENTORY HAS BEEN APPLIED BY SEVERAL TARGET GROUPS, RANGING FROM MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION TO SCHOOLS AND DIVERSE BUSINESS SECTORS (SEE FIG. 1).

Given that Plastic Inventory Tool proves to be highly adaptable, a plethora of different organisational types have been able to employ it and gain valuable insights from the tool.

This holds true also for the size of the organisation and their number of employees (see fig. 2), demonstrating that the Plastic Inventory can be tailored to different organisations and their unique needs and contexts.



Fig 1: Overview of pilot organisations and their sectors
The Plastic Inventory connects and is applicable to organisations of all kinds and branches.

THE PLASTIC INVENTORY

A VISUAL OVERVIEW OF MOST IMPORTANT FACTS AND FIGURES FROM THE PILOTS SPEARHEADING THE PLASTIC INVENTORY AS PART OF THE BALTIPLAST PROJECT ACROSS THE BALTIC SEA REGION.

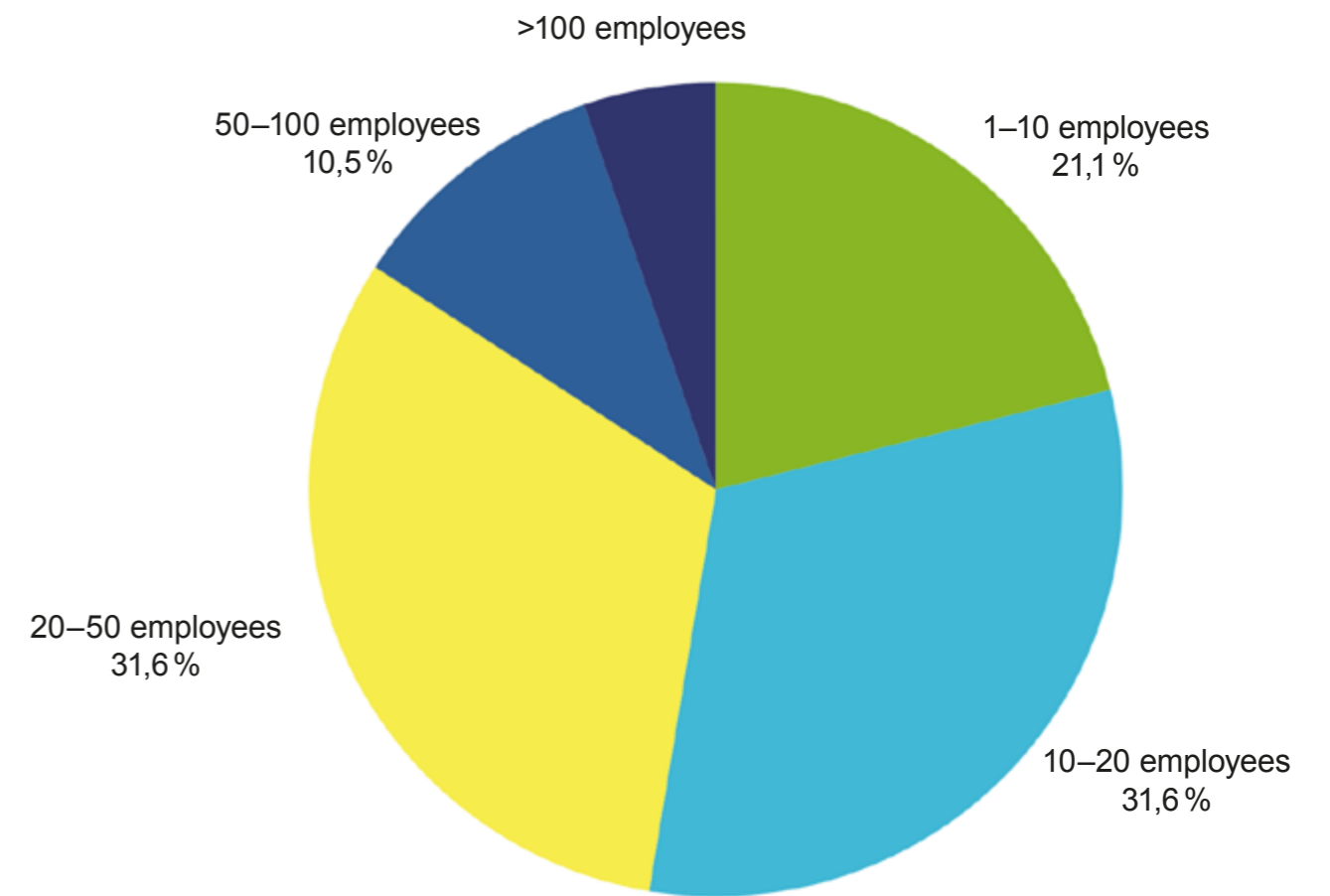


Fig 2: Overview of pilot organisations' size by numbers of employees
The Plastic Inventory can be implemented at all sizes of organisations.

THE FINDINGS OF THE PLASTIC INVENTORY:

Categories of consumption

DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PILOTING ORGANISATIONS REGARDING THEIR TYPE, SIZE AND ACTIVITIES, A NUMBER OF COMMON PATTERNS OF PLASTIC CONSUMPTION COULD BE IDENTIFIED DURING THE PILOTING PHASE (SEE FIG. 3).

Notably, the categories of Food & Drinks widely represented the most substantial category in terms of single-use plastic and plastic packaging by weight. In most piloting organisations, takeaway packaging represented the main leverage point, followed by Snack packaging and drinking bottles or cartons.

The second most relevant category in terms of plastic consumption by weight proved to be products used for cleaning and hygiene. For instance, an often-overlooked product which has been identified thanks to the Plastic Inventory are waste bags. Furthermore, cleaning products often represent a significant contribution to an organisation's footprint. A smaller contribution are also made by hygiene products such as soap or disinfectant.

A third substantial category of plastic consumption lies within office supplies. Especially folders and binders proved to be substantial in this context, followed by transparent sheet protectors. Lastly, stationery and printer cartridges often represent potential for reduction.

Please note that these tendencies might shift significantly in organisations whose core activities are not office-based, such as companies within production, and in schools depending on how the pupils lunches are organised.

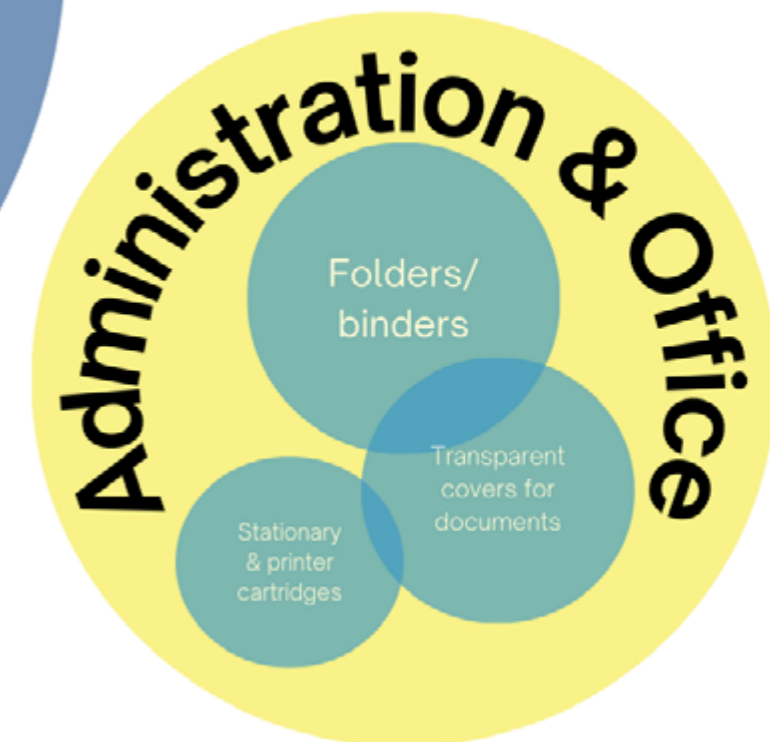
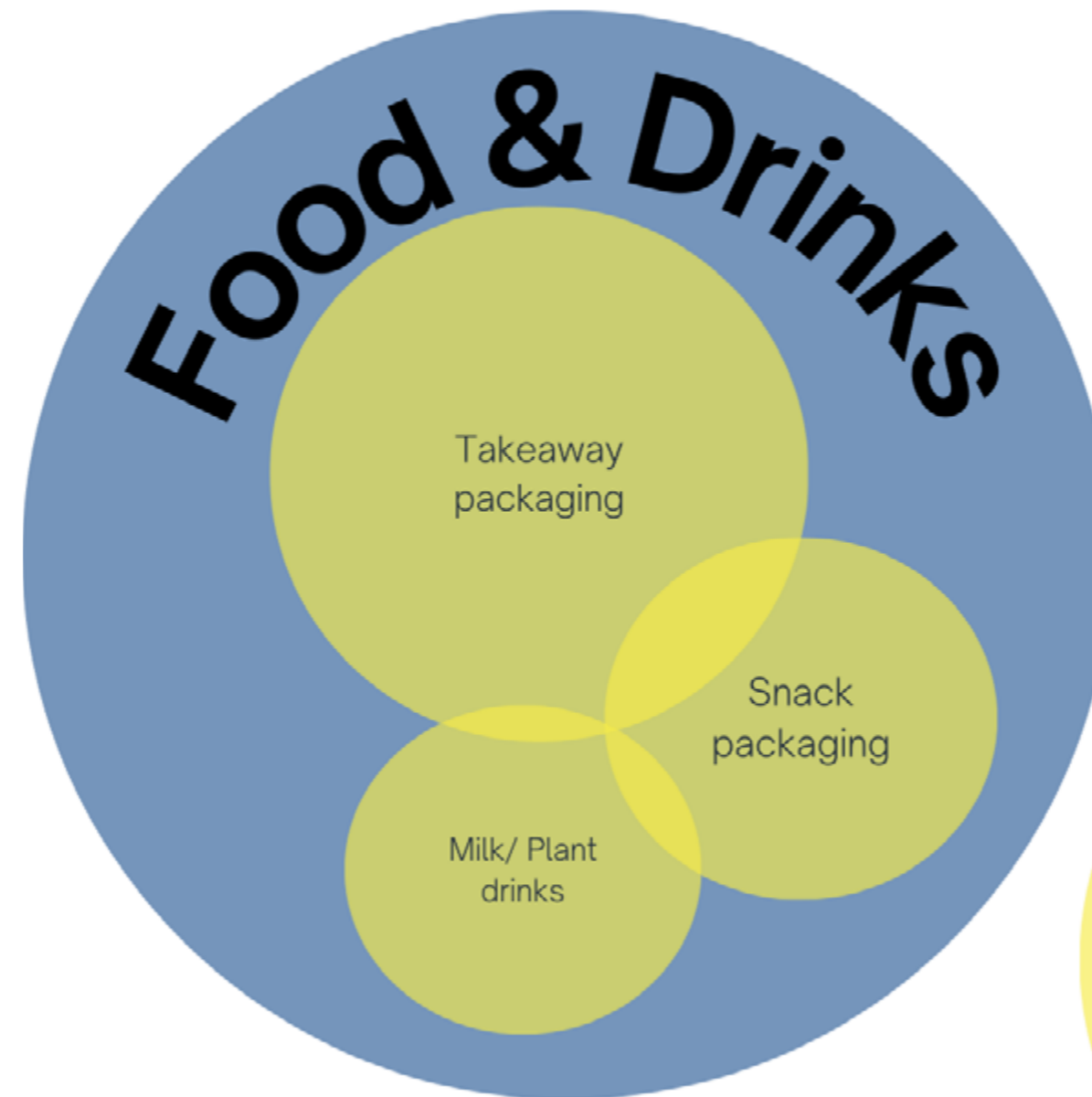


Fig 3: Most common sources of single-use plastics in offices (size of the circles represent their average weight)

ADOPTING MEASURES:

How to address single-use plastics as an organisation

AFTER THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOST SUBSTANTIAL SOURCES OF PLASTIC CONSUMPTION, THE SECOND STEP OF THE PLASTIC INVENTORY PROCESS ADDRESSES INDIVIDUAL REDUCTION POTENTIALS. WHEN IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES TO LOWER AN ORGANISATION'S PLASTIC FOOTPRINT IT IS CRUCIAL TO BEAR THE ZERO-WASTE HIERARCHY IN MIND (SEE FIG. 4).

This is a framework guiding the European Union's approach to waste and resource use and prioritises certain strategies over others. In the case of plastic reduction, this means, measures should preferably be within the first tier of the hierarchy.

Such steps can often imply introducing reuse systems which can be designed in cooperation with suppliers. Recycling and other types of waste management are not considered as a measure.

Namely, refusing, rethinking or redesigning processes is usually most beneficial since it does not require additional material inputs.

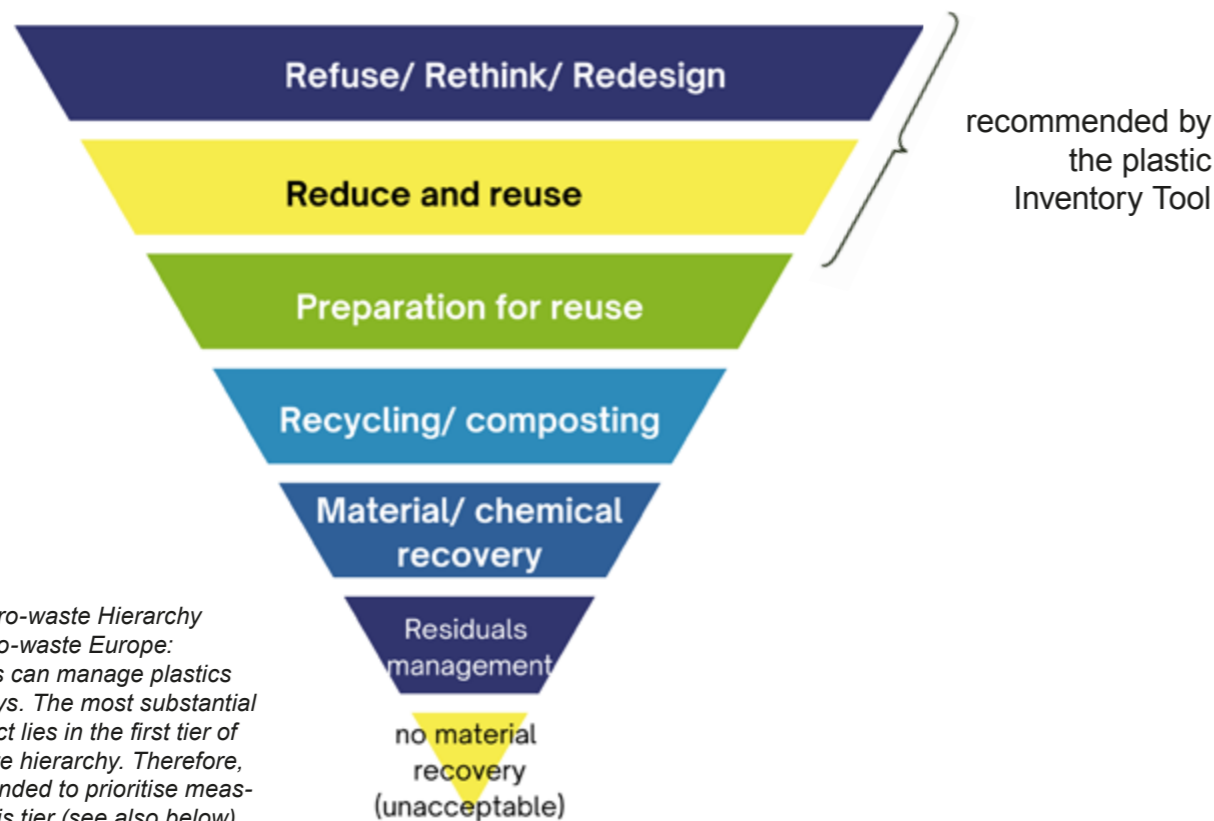


Fig 4: The Zero-waste Hierarchy based on Zero-waste Europe: Organisations can manage plastics in diverse ways. The most substantial positive impact lies in the first tier of the zero-waste hierarchy. Therefore, it is recommended to prioritise measures within this tier (see also below).

REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Beneficial in three ways

AS A GENERAL LEARNING FROM THE REDUCTION STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE PILOTING ORGANISATIONS, IT CAN BE NOTED THAT SOLUTIONS ADDRESSING THE FIRST TIER OF THE WASTE HIERARCHY ARE MOST BENEFICIAL IN THREE WAYS (SEE FIG.5).

Economically, it does not require additional products or purchases to rethink, redesign or reduce consumption which leads of less financial input required. For the same reason, such measures are generally the most environmentally sustainable options, too.

As a consequence, stakeholders generally view them in a positive light. In many cases, such measures are therefore low-hanging fruits with a high effectiveness.



Fig 5: Most low-hanging fruit measures to reduce single-use plastics at any organisation Measures to reduce single-use plastics which fall under the upper tier of the Zero-waste Hierarchy (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Rethink, Redesign) are often the most economic ones, while also being best for the environment and consequently most approved by stakeholders.

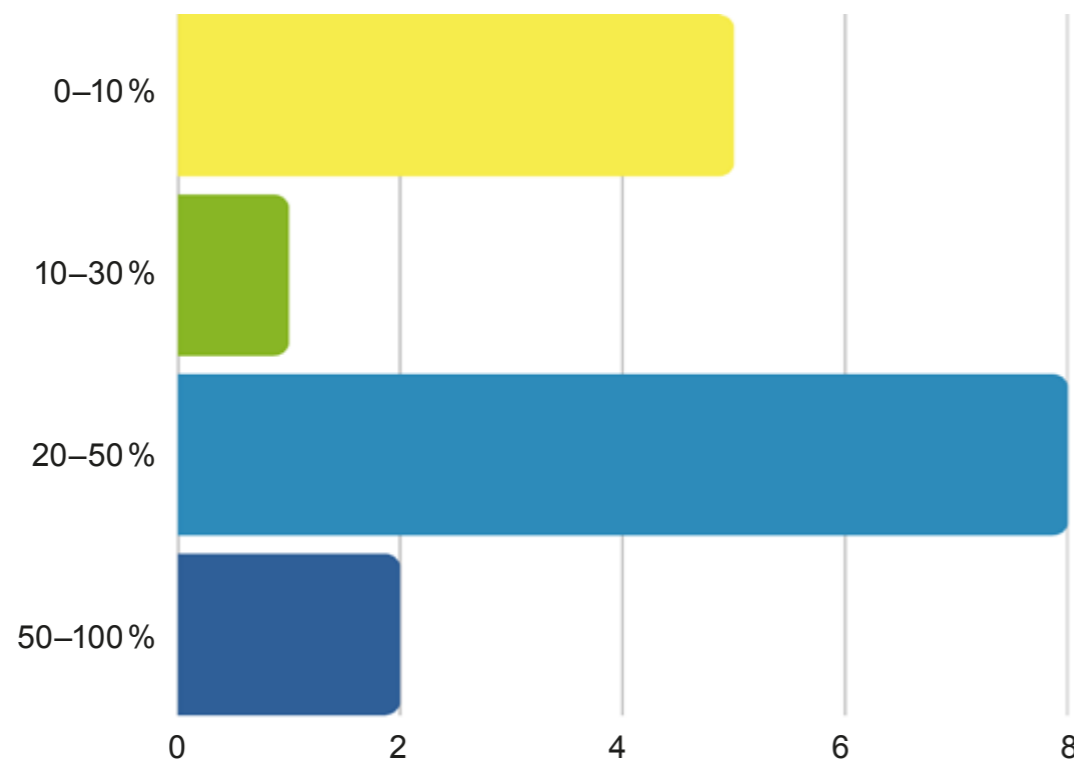
PLASTIC REDUCTION

At the pilot organisations

MOST PILOTING ORGANISATIONS MANAGED TO REDUCE THEIR RECORDED PLASTIC CONSUMPTION SIGNIFICANTLY.

The majority achieved a reduction between 20–50% compared to their originally indicated plastic use over an average time period of three months (see fig. 6). These results demonstrate the achievability of plastic reduction with the support of the Plastic Inventory Tool.

The piloting organisations implemented a diverse range of reduction measures. Despite very diverse activities, several patterns could be observed: Almost all participating organisations achieved substantial reduction through several most common measures (see fig. 7). Firstly, avoiding single-use plastic bottles was implemented most often. Instead, reusable options were introduced.



*Fig 6: Overview of relative reductions
Percentage of single-use plastics which has been reduced by the piloting organisations through the Plastic Inventory (compared with registered consumption at the beginning of the Inventory process).*



Fig 7: Most implemented measures (low-hanging fruits)

Plastic-free snack packaging

Reusable bottles instead of single-use

Plastic-free cleaning and hygiene products (e.g. concentrates)

This also applied to food and especially snack packaging. In this case, bulk or reusable options were chosen, but also alternative packaging materials such as paper. Within sanitary and hygiene, several organisations have switched from single-use cleaning packaging to lower waste options, such as concentrates or refillable containers. Apart from these Top 3 measures, five additional common and/or effective reduction strategies observed during the piloting phase include:

1. Cooperation with suppliers to redesign, reduce or refill their packaging.
2. Reusing and refilling stationery (e.g. folders and binders, transparent protection sheets, pens).
3. Encouraging employees and pupils to bring their own reusable food containers.
4. A larger process to reformulate procurement guidelines for plastic packaging and single-use plastic products.
5. Reducing the frequency of replacing waste bags by rethinking processes and questioning necessities.

KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

Businesses Take Charge: a Journey to Plastic Reduction

IN KAUNAS, LITHUANIA, A GROUP OF BUSINESSES DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION. THEY KNEW PLASTIC WASTE WAS A GROWING PROBLEM, BUT HOW MUCH DID THEIR OWN COMPANIES CONTRIBUTE? AND MORE IMPORTANTLY – WHAT COULD THEY DO ABOUT IT? THE BALTIPLAST PLASTIC INVENTORY PILOT GAVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO FIND OUT AND TAKE REAL STEPS TOWARD CHANGE.

The businesses, ranging from waste management and catering services to business consulting and retail, approached the challenge differently. Some collected and weighed all plastic waste over a month, while others analysed procurement records to track how much plastic entered their supply chains. One company even turned the inventory into a team effort, having employees track their own plastic use to get a full picture of everyday habits.

When the results came in, the reality was clear – plastic was everywhere, much of it unnecessary. But rather than feeling overwhelmed, the businesses saw opportunities. They got to work designing custom reduction plans, aiming not just to recycle better but to eliminate plastic use wherever possible.

At the Kaunas Regional Development Agency, they discovered that simple changes – like switching to reusable materials and eliminating redundant plastic items – led to an impressive 53% reduction in plastic waste. Meanwhile, at the Kaunas Regional Waste Management Centre, they tackled a common office issue: plastic packaging from takeout meals and coffee cups. By encouraging employees to bring their own reusable containers and ditching disposable cups, they cut their plastic waste by 40%.

Now, these businesses aren't just reducing their own waste—they're leading the way for others. Their experience shows that with simple tools, collaboration, and a commitment to sustainability, plastic waste can be significantly reduced. And this is just the beginning – many of them plan to continue their efforts beyond 2024, setting a new standard for business sustainability in Lithuania and beyond.



Kaunas Business Employee weighs plastic item for inventory



Employee weighing items and recording data in the inventory tool

KAUNAS

6 PILOT BUSINESSES
SECTORS:
WASTE MANAGEMENT,
CATERING SERVICE,
CONSULTING,
RETAIL,
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
EDUCATION



Employees assisting with the weighing process

UTENA, LITHUANIA

Taking Action on Plastic: Businesses in Utena Lead the Way

IN UTENA, LITHUANIA, TWO KEY BUSINESSES—UTENOS KOMUNALININKAS (UTILITIES) AND UTENOS VANDENYS (WATER MANAGEMENT) — SET OUT TO TAKE CONCRETE ACTION ON PLASTIC WASTE REDUCTION. RECOGNIZING THE GROWING IMPACT OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS, THEY JOINED THE BALTIPLAST PLASTIC INVENTORY PILOT TO MEASURE THEIR PLASTIC FOOTPRINT, RETHINK THEIR CONSUMPTION HABITS, AND IMPLEMENT MEANINGFUL REDUCTIONS.

The journey started with an informative event on March 15, where the companies learned about the plastic inventory tool and its benefits. Seeing an opportunity to become more sustainable, they decided to participate. The inventory process itself took two approaches: Utenos vandenys focused on both waste collection and procurement analysis, while Utenos komunalininkas tracked plastic waste through monthly purchase records. These different methods allowed the businesses to gain a detailed picture of where single-use plastics were being used most.

With the first round of data collected, the companies worked closely with the project team to develop targeted reduction plans. The focus was on eliminating unnecessary plastics rather than replacing them with other single-use alternatives. Simple yet effective measures were put in place:

- ✓ Utenos Vandenys reduced plastic waste by 22%, largely by promoting the reuse of office supplies. The company has implemented the ISO 14.001 environmental standard and encourages employees through its policy to avoid excessive plastic use. For example, kitchen areas are provided where employees can heat food brought from home in reusable containers instead of ordering takeout in single-use plastic packaging.
- ✓ Utenos komunalininkas reduced overall plastic use by 15%, with an 11.1% drop in plastic waste from food and beverages, thanks to better purchasing habits and employee awareness campaigns.

One of the biggest successes of the pilot was the inclusion of requirements in contracts for the return of plastic packaging so it can be reused,

demonstrating that businesses can extend their impact beyond their own operations. However, recruiting participants for the pilot was a challenge – there were few existing communication channels with businesses in Utena, and while several companies showed initial interest, only two followed through.

Despite these hurdles, the results proved that even small actions lead to measurable change. Continuous communication, clear guidance, and practical tools like a filled-in example inventory helped companies navigate the process and take ownership of their reduction plans.

With their first reductions achieved, these businesses are now setting an example for others in the region. The Utena pilot has shown that structured, data-driven approaches to plastic reduction work – and with the right support, more companies can take the next step toward sustainability.

Plastic products being weighed at Utenos Vandenys.



The Plastic Inventory also reveals previously „invisible“ use of plastics which sums up over the year, such as takeaway containers.



UTENA
2 PILOT BUSINESSES
SECTOR:
MUNICIPAL COMPANIES

VALMIERA, LATVIA

Acting on Plastic Reduction

IN VALMIERA, A DYNAMIC MIX OF LOCAL BUSINESSES IS STEPPING UP TO TACKLE THE GROWING PROBLEM OF PLASTIC WASTE THROUGH THE BALTIPLAST PLASTIC INVENTORY PILOT. THESE FORWARD-THINKING ORGANISATIONS – RANGING FROM A LOCAL HOTEL AND AN EVENT ORGANIZER TO A CO-CREATION STUDIO AND UNIVERSITY – ARE DISCOVERING FIRSTHAND THE EXTENT OF THEIR PLASTIC FOOTPRINT AND UNCOVERING PRACTICAL WAYS TO REDUCE IT.

The hotel has already completed its inventory, revealing significant usage of items such as latex gloves and plastic bags. This eye-opening data has inspired them to explore alternative products and smarter procurement practices. For example, larger plastic bags from deliveries are now being used as waste bags and in collaboration with the cleaning staff they are now reducing the number of gloves and single-use liquid soap in plastic packaging will be replaced with refillable ones. Meanwhile, the event organizer is preparing to launch their own inventory process, setting the stage for transformative changes in their operations.

Each business is approaching the challenge in its own unique way – some meticulously collecting and weighing plastic waste over a month, others analyzing purchasing records to track plastic inputs into their supply chains, and

some even engaging their staff to monitor everyday plastic use. The results consistently point to a clear opportunity: a substantial amount of the plastic consumed is unnecessary and can be eliminated with targeted actions.

Rather than being overwhelmed, these Valmiera businesses view the findings as a catalyst for change. They are developing customized reduction plans that not only enhance recycling efforts but also aim to phase out plastic use altogether.

With the support of the BALTIPLAST pilot, these organisations are setting a new standard for sustainability in the region, proving that with commitment, collaboration, and simple yet effective measures, significant plastic reductions are well within reach – paving the way for a cleaner, greener future beyond 2024.



The company Dare3D from Valmiera shows their offices to BALTIPLAST representatives during the Inventory.



The event organiser Ezi in Valmiera together with the project partner BEF Latvia after the Plastic Inventory.

VALMIERA, LATVIA

Reduces Plastic Waste and Promotes Sustainability

THE VALMIERA MUNICIPALITY CHOSE ITS MAIN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING FOR THE BALTIPLAST PILOT PROJECT TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT. THE GOAL WAS TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND REDUCE PLASTIC WASTE.

The inventory process was thorough and engaging. Interviews with key staff and audits of waste bins over three months provided valuable insights. The BALTIPLAST team then discussed potential solutions with employees and tested them over the next three months.

The results were commendable! Measures like replacing single-use coffee cups with reusable mugs and reusable lunch boxes and switching to package-free tea significantly reduced plastic waste. The municipality also considered long-term solutions like rechargeable batteries and document digitization. Success depended on employee interest and the effectiveness of internal communication.

During the implementation of the BALTIPLAST pilot project, the Valmiera Municipality faced a few challenges. One of the main challenges was changing the habits of employees. Raising environmental awareness and encouraging employees to adopt more sustainable practices requires continuous effort and communication.

Additionally, the municipality had to balance the need for practical solutions with the constraints of existing procurement policies. For example, replacing certain office supplies with more sustainable alternatives is difficult due to centralized purchasing procedures. Despite these challenges, the project was successful in reducing plastic waste and raising awareness about environmental sustainability among employees.

The lessons learned and the positive outcomes have set a strong foundation for future initiatives. Educational initiatives and workshops further supported the project, highlighting the importance of waste management and proper sorting. The municipality is committed to continuing these efforts, making a positive environmental impact and setting an example for others.



KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

BALTIPLAST Project: A Success Story in Plastic Reduction

THE BALTIPLAST PROJECT IN KAUNAS BROUGHT TOGETHER ENTHUSIASTIC DIVISIONS TO TACKLE PLASTIC WASTE. THE TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT DIVISION, INTRIGUED BY THE CHALLENGE, JOINED THE PROJECT TO SEE HOW THEY COULD REDUCE POLLUTION.

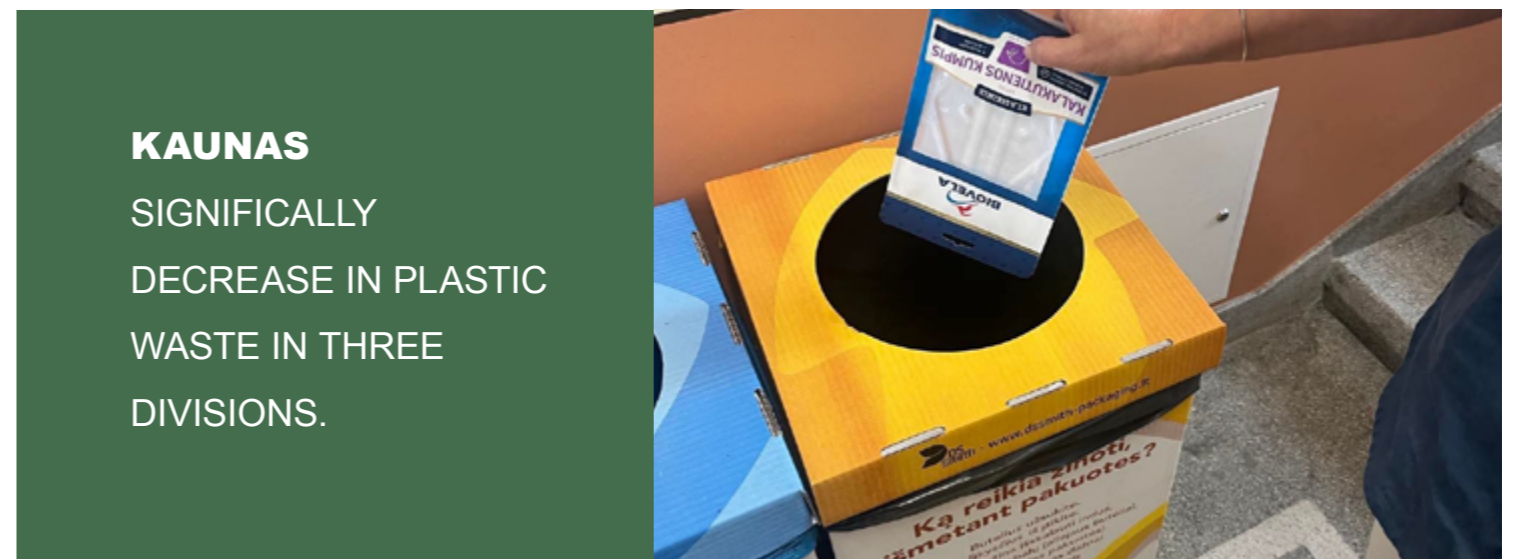
The inventory process was engaging and thorough. Employees collected and sorted plastic waste for two months, divided into two periods. They received training on the harms of plastic and brainstormed ways to reduce its use. The waste was categorized into administration, food and drinks, and sanitary items. Results were meticulously recorded and shared internally.

Plastic waste significantly decreased between the two inventory periods. Food and drink waste was the most common, while sanitary waste was minimal due to a cleaning contract. The Transport division excelled by using fewer office supplies and decided to work mostly by computers. The Environment Protection division rejected single-use food packaging, and the Transport division switched to reusable coffee cups.

Successes included strong employee interest and collaboration between divisions. Challenges were minimal, with some difficulty in identifying plastic types. The pilot proved feasible and replicable, with low financial resource constraints. Employees supported the pilot and provided valuable feedback.

The project demonstrated the power of teamwork and dedication in reducing plastic waste. The guidelines for sustainable plastic use in Kaunas City were a significant outcome, showcasing the potential for expansion to other municipalities. The divisions are committed to continuing their efforts beyond 2024, making a positive environmental impact.

Sorting plastic waste at office.



DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA

How Three Municipality Departments Reduce Plastic Waste

THE BALTIPLAST PROJECT IN DAUGAVPILS WAS AN EXCITING JOURNEY FOR THREE ENTHUSIASTIC MUNICIPALITY DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING THE URBAN PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT. THEY SAW THIS AS A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE IN WASTE MANAGEMENT AND INSPIRE THEIR COLLEAGUES.

DAUGAVPILS

URBAN PLANNING DEPARTMENT REDUCES PLASTIC BY 57 %



Daugavpils municipal Sorting of single-use plastic take-away packaging

The inventory process was straightforward and engaging. Employees collected plastics for three weeks, then sorted, weighed, and recorded the data with help from project expert.

During the summer, they developed a reduction plan and attended a seminar on plastic waste. The inventory was repeated in September, and the results were verified by BEF Latvia.

The results were impressive! Initially, they collected almost 2 kg of plastics, but after implementing reduction measures, this dropped to just 864 g. The largest type of waste was food packaging. The department became more conscious of their plastic use and made significant efforts to reduce it.

Successes included the enthusiasm of key team members who drove the project forward and effective communication through reminder emails. Challenges were minimal, with no major issues reported.

The pilot proved to be a fantastic success, demonstrating feasibility and replicability. Financial resources were only needed for the reduction plan, and human resources were involved in data collection and analysis. The pilot can be expanded within Latvia and other BSR countries, with potential replicators including other municipalities and government institutions. The Urban Planning and Construction department is committed to continuing their efforts to reduce plastic waste and prioritize proper waste management beyond 2024. This project truly showcases the power of teamwork and dedication in making a positive environmental impact!

VALMIERA, LATVIA

Sustainability Initiatives in Focus: Successful Deposit System

IN VALMIERA, LATVIA, THE ANNUAL CITY FESTIVAL IS A MAJOR EVENT ATTRACTING AROUND 50.000 VISITORS OVER FOUR DAYS. THIS YEAR, THE FESTIVAL ORGANIZERS AIMED TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC WASTE BY INTRODUCING A DEPOSIT SYSTEM FOR CUPS. THE GOAL WAS TO CREATE AN EXPERIENCE THAT COULD BE REPLICATED AT OTHER EVENTS IN THE MUNICIPALITY.

The festival, celebrating Valmiera's "birthday," features numerous activities, concerts, and street food vendors, resulting in substantial waste, particularly single-use plastics. To address this, the Valmiera Municipality Government Culture Department implemented a deposit system for cups during the 2024 festival.

Preparation was crucial. The organizers launched a campaign to explain the deposit system, including a TV story, press releases, social media posts, and a short video shown during the event. They also held early discussions with caterers to ensure understanding and support. Massive direct educational communication to the visitors of the festival and the catering service providers was performed by the outsourced company that offered the service of centralized deposit system for cups. During the festival, a live statistics activity engaged visitors with a questionnaire about the environment and the municipality's sustainability efforts. An outdoor exhibition provided information about plastics and the BALTIPLAST project.

The results were impressive, with a 29% reduction in waste compared to the previous year. The event premises were much cleaner, with hardly any plastic cups littering the ground. Discussions with caterers led to excellent cooperation and successful implementation of the deposit system.



Information about plastics at Valmiera Cityfestival

Key lessons learned included the importance of preparation, communication, and collaboration. Despite challenges, such as a few caterers circumventing the system, the overall experience was positive. The festival organizers demonstrated that it is possible to significantly reduce plastic waste and create a cleaner, more sustainable event, inspiring other municipalities to follow suit.

VÄSTERÅS, SWEDEN

A Successful Pilot for Reducing Single-Use Plastics

VÄSTERÅS CITY FESTIVAL WAS CHOSEN AS A PILOT PROJECT BECAUSE IT IS ORGANIZED BY THE CITY, ALLOWING THEM TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND PLASTIC PACKAGING. THE FESTIVAL'S ORGANIZERS WERE MOTIVATED BY THE CITY'S STRATEGIC GOAL TO REDUCE PLASTIC USE AND COMPLY WITH NEW LEGISLATION ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT.

The pilot was conducted over three years, starting with a feasibility study in 2023, followed by the implementation of measures in 2024, and further actions implemented in 2025. During the festival, litter was categorized to understand the types of single-use plastics present.

The actions were developed in collaboration between Keep Sweden Tidy, Visit Västerås and other municipal authorities such as the local waste company. One of the major actions was the implementation of a reusable plates system for food vendors, providing a measure of how much single-use material was avoided in this context. Public relations activities included information on the festival's

website, notifications to food and other vendors, communication with visitors on social media and posters informing visitors about reusable plates for food.

A workshop called "idea lab – plastic reduction at events" was held in two stages, gathering ideas and experiences from Swedish authorities, scientists, organisations, companies, and municipalities. This helped in planning the pilot.

The results were promising, with 2.800 portions of food served on reusable plates and a noticeable decrease in plastic waste on the ground. The system for delivering and collecting reusable plates worked well and was appreciated by the vendors and visitors.

However, there were also different challenges in the pilot, such as difficulties in measuring litter in crowded places and difficulties in getting the festival vendors to comply with restrictions on single-use plastic products. Despite these challenges, the pilot provided valuable insights and positive lessons for future efforts in reducing single-use plastics and plastic packaging at events. Lessons and recommendations for cities organizing bigger events, are summarized in the Keep Sweden Tidy Guide to litter and plastic-free public festivals.

VÄSTERÅS

2800 PORTIONS
SERVED AT
REUSABLE PLATES

Picture left: Customers buy food in reusable
Picture right: Reusable bowl sorted into special bin after use



Meal served in a reusable bowl



Food vendors with reusable bowls provided under the pilot project

TALLINN, ESTONIA

How Estonia's Largest Women's Run Reduces Plastic Waste

THE LHV WOMEN'S RUN, ESTONIA'S LARGEST WOMEN'S MOVEMENT EVENT, TOOK A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY BY IMPLEMENTING MEASURES TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND PROMOTE WASTE MANAGEMENT.

Held on May 18, 2024, in Tallinn, the event gathered approximately 12,000 women and 2,000 children on site, with thousands of spectators and 6,370 women attended the virtual run. The organizers, in collaboration with the City of Tallinn, implemented various environmental strategies as part of the BALTIPLAST project.

The event has been organized since 1988 and has grown into the largest women's movement event in Estonia. Due to its long-standing cooperation with the City of Tallinn, sustainability has become an integral part of its organisation in recent years. The event provided a great opportunity to explore and implement innovative measures for reducing plastic waste, making it an ideal pilot for the BALTIPLAST project.

The organizers aimed to improve waste management and reduce plastic waste. Challenges included the widespread use of single-use plastics, the need for improved waste sorting among participants, and sponsors distributing single-use plastic bottled sports drinks. A comprehensive inventory was carried out, mapping single-use plastic materials used during the event. Based on the findings, a targeted action plan was developed and implemented. Bib sizes for the children's race were reduced by half, and the women's race bibs were downsized to minimize single-use plastic. Safety pins used for bibs were collected for reuse in future races.

Four additional drinking water taps were installed to encourage the use of reusable bottles. Participants were informed about this initiative through event communication channels. One refreshment point provided water and sports drinks in reusable cups, significantly reducing waste.

All food and drinks at the event venue were served in reusable tableware, with collection points placed around the site. Clearly labelled waste sorting bins for biowaste, plastic packaging, paper, and mixed waste were placed throughout the event. Vendors were prohibited from distributing plastic souvenirs such as balloons and leaflets. All event signage was designed without dates to allow reuse in future years. Public transport was free for all race participants, encouraging the use of sustainable transportation options such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

The event's sustainability initiatives were widely communicated through press releases, social media posts, and the event website. Participants were informed about the sustainable initiatives via email and on-site announcements by event hosts. Achievements included the use of around 24,000 reusable cups, preventing the same amount of single-use plastic waste, and the downsizing of approximately 14,000 bibs, contributing to material savings. Increased awareness about sustainability among participants and vendors was also noted. Success factors included long-term cooperation between the City of Tallinn and event organizers, and a positive attitude and commitment from the organizing team. Challenges included waste sorting, as participants needed guidance on proper disposal, and no volunteers were assigned to help visitors sort waste, leading to misclassified waste. The distribution of bottled sports drinks by sponsors could not be eliminated due to contractual obligations.

Despite financial and human resource constraints, the event successfully implemented low-cost sustainability measures. The pilot demonstrated that sustainability initiatives can be integrated into major sporting events without significantly increasing costs. The model is replicable in other large-scale public events, particularly sports events, and serves as an inspiration for future green events in Estonia and beyond.

Drinking tank and public water tap at LHV Womens run



TALLINN

24,000 REUSABLE CUPS
LOWERS THE USE OF
SINGLE USE PLASTICS.

VALMIERA, LATVIA

Design and Arts Secondary School

THE PILOT STUDY ON REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN SCHOOLS BEGAN WITH THE RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOLS ALREADY INVOLVED IN THE ECO-SCHOOLS PROGRAM, WHICH FOCUSES ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION. INVITATIONS WERE SENT TO TEN ECO-SCHOOLS, BUT ONLY VALMIERA SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND ART RESPONDED POSITIVELY.

Their motivation stemmed from their focus on waste management for the academic year and the desire to introduce sustainable waste management practices at the first-year level. However, the school's eco-coordinator faced challenges due to limited authority over the school's overall environmental management.

The inventory process started with a training session on plastic and its environmental impact,

led by experts from the Baltic Environmental Forum. Students learned about the types of plastic, their production, and the negative effects on the environment and health. This training aimed to motivate students to reflect on their plastic consumption and think about reducing or eliminating its use. The training concluded with a practical task where students identified different types of plastic in various items.



Hier fehlt eine Bildbeschreibung

Valmiera school
Common plastic waste
in schools



For the next two weeks, students sorted the plastic waste they generated in their daily lives. The collected waste was analysed using a special tool, and students set goals to reduce the amount of waste generated. They implemented new habits and measured the plastic waste again to compare the results. The process was adapted to the school's schedule, with sessions held during a designated class hour.

The students' efforts led to significant reductions in various types of plastic waste: candy wrapper waste by 67%, chocolate bar wrapper waste by 100%, tissue packaging waste by 100%, PET water bottle waste by 100%, and plastic bag waste by 50%. The educational seminar and hands-on activities increased students' awareness of plastic's impact and motivated them to adopt more sustainable habits. The students appreciated receiving reusable metal water bottles as a surprise gift at the end of the challenge.

The pilot also faced challenges, such as differences in local waste management communication and the lack of centralized environmental management within the school. Despite these challenges, the pilot demonstrated that with proper education and motivation, students could significantly reduce plastic waste and contribute to a more sustainable school environment.

The school received the Latvian Eco-Schools Recognition Award for their participation in the international Eco-Schools educational program for the 2024/2025 academic year. This recognition highlighted the success of the school's first-year students' involvement in the plastic waste reduction challenge

VALMIERA
REDUCED USE OF
DIFFERENT TYPES
OF SUP BY 50–100%

DAUGAVPILS, LATVIA

Students take steps towards a plastic-free future

IN AN EXCITING PILOT PROJECT, DAUGAVPILS MUNICIPALITY REACHED OUT TO LOCAL SCHOOLS, INVITING THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN TESTING AN INNOVATIVE INVENTORY TOOL. BEF EXPERTS PREPARED DETAILED MATERIALS TO EXPLAIN THE PROCESS AND BENEFITS, WHICH SPARKED INTEREST AMONG THE SCHOOLS.

Teachers were eager to tackle topics like plastic pollution and polymers, aligning perfectly with their curriculum. The pilot offered a hands-on approach to these important issues.

The process began with two visits to each school, starting with engaging presentations on plastic pollution, educational videos, and interactive workshops on sorting single-use plastics. Students were introduced to the inventory tool and given a chance to practice using it.

Teaching about plastics



After the initial inventory phase, students presented their findings and reduction plans via Zoom, showing great enthusiasm for implementing these plans in the next phase.

The pilot was promoted on social media and the municipality's website, and workshops on waste sorting were conducted. BEF LV provided plastic waste samples and taught students how to identify different types of plastic.

Students sort different types of plastic



The results were impressive: Daugavpils Zinatnu Secondary School reduced their plastic waste by 78%, and Daugavpils Vieni-bas Elementary School achieved a 68% reduction. The well-planned timeline, excellent cooperation with the municipality and teachers, and the reliability of the inventory tool were key enablers of success. The main challenge was the long travel distance to Daugavpils.

Teachers played a crucial role in the success of the project. Their active involvement and motivation were key factors in getting the schools to participate. They encouraged students to collect, count, and fill in the inventory tool, present results, and implement reduction measures. At Daugavpils Zinatnu Secondary School, the chemistry teacher even evaluated the children's involvement with a grade for their participation in the piloting activity.

Overall, this pilot project not only significantly reduced plastic waste but also educated and empowered students to make a positive environmental impact.

Students try to understand the differences between different types of plastic

DAUGAVPILS

TWO SCHOOLS

ACHIEVED 68%

AND 78% REDUCTIONS

IN PLASTIC,

RESPECTIVELY



KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

St. Casimir Progymnasium and Martynas Mazvydas Progymnasium

THE SCHOOLS IN KAUNAS CITY WERE SELECTED BY THE EDUCATION DIVISION OF THE MUNICIPALITY ADMINISTRATION, INVOLVING 1.123 PUPILS FROM TWO SIMILAR PROGYMNASIUMS FROM 5 TILL 8 CLASSES.

The schools were eager to participate in the project to assess and reduce their plastic waste. They discovered that their strategy of avoiding single-use plastic was effective, with more students using reusable water bottles and food containers.

The inventory process was carried out by a selected NGO in collaboration with the school communities over eight weeks. They evaluated the existing waste sorting bins and deter-

mined that new bins were needed to meet the specific requirements for single-use plastic. Special 240-liter bins were provided, and cardboard boxes were reinforced to withstand the necessary loads. The bins were labelled with colourful posters to encourage students to sort plastic waste, and each bin was lined with a 240-liter bag. From September 27, 2024, all bins were used for sorting plastic in the schools, and teachers informed students about the proper use of the bins.

The initial plastic waste collection took place on October 3, 2024. Plastic waste was collected from all bins and brought to a classroom for sorting and counting. The waste was sorted into different categories, and each item was counted and weighed. Workshops were held to familiarize students with single-use plastic items and the inventory process. An informational event was organized to present the project and its goals, and the target was set to reduce single-use plastic consumption by at least 10%.

The inventory continued weekly, with plastic generation being measured every Thursday. The data showed that during the second week, plastic quantities increased significantly, indicating active participation from the school community. By the third and fourth weeks, plastic quantities decreased, reflecting the community's commitment to reducing single-use plastic waste. A reduction of 36% in plastic use was recorded by the end of the project, demonstrating the effectiveness of the initiative.

The project results were presented to the school community during a final informational event, highlighting the importance of reducing single-use plastic and the positive impact of the project. The community responded positively, understanding the significance of sustainable habits. The project recommended continuing waste sorting and expanding recyclable materials to include paper, plastic, and glass. Schools were provided with specialized bins to support ongoing environmental protection efforts.



Food packaging as plastic waste



Plastic waste and sorting bins at school



Lesson on Plastic and Plastic Waste

KAUNAS

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE
RESULTED IN A 36%
REDUCTION IN PLASTIC
WASTE.

HAMBURG-BERGEDORF, GERMANY

Primary school Leuschnerstraße

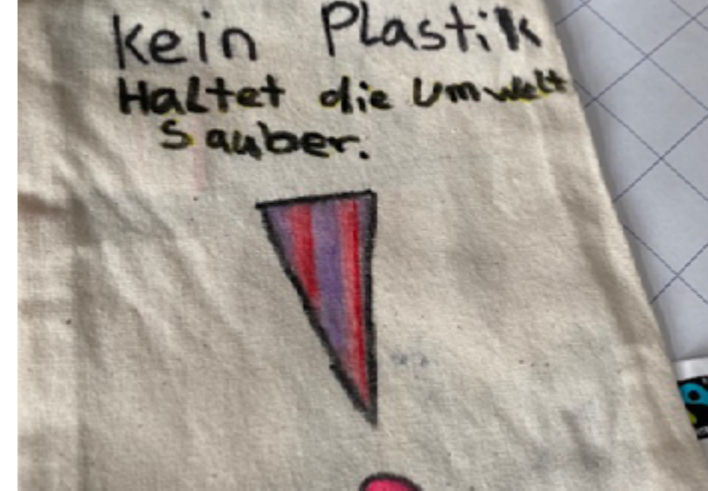
BEST PRACTICE FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL LEUSCHNERSTRASSE IN GERMANY: CAN COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES AND NGOS HELP TEACHERS AND PUPILS TO BECOME MORE AWARE OF PLASTIC CONTAMINATION AND STOP IT?

The key to a good awareness raising concept with even better impact are intrinsically motivated persons like director and teachers at the primary school Leuschnerstraße, Bergedorf, Germany. Since the very beginning of

our collaboration, which started in May 2023, the school got interested to explore further the concept the project was offering – to reduce plastic usage through awareness rising. Very soon, we started working together and organized



Hamburg-Bergedorf, Sustainable Christmas at school



HAMBURG-BERGEDORF

RAISING AWARENESS
AMONG PUPILS AND
THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH
COLLABORATION WITH
UNIVERSITIES AND NGOS

several joint activities. Firstly, in April 2024, a climate week was organized by BEF Germany, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, the municipality of Bergedorf and the company Plastikfreie Stadt e.V in cooperation with the local school and the Library of Altona. There, 35 pupils from two preschool classes came to watch a theatre about “Flupsi, the fish” and his friends which highlighted the problems of plastic waste in the sea and how it harms animals and the environment.

Later, in June 2024 the BALTIPLAST project team organized a “Sustainability Week” which included series of workshops with over 350 pupils under the name “Plastic in your daily life and how to avoid it”, and as a closure a visit to the Bergedorf recycling centre was organized with the school pupils. After the opening week, the pupils (together with their teachers) conducted their own plastic inventory at the school and classrooms, using the “collecting sheets” produced by the BALTIPLAST project experts.

This “hands on” inventory, was not done only within the school walls, but was passed via school children to their households where they continued to use slightly more complex plastic inventory tool to track and reduce the

plastic waste in collaboration with their parents. In May 2024, the tool was presented to teachers, and it was shared with 240 households via official school letter. In November and December 2024, two workshops with 70 pupils from 4th grade were conducted to explain the household tool and gave them the task to explore the tool at home. The data collected from the tool in school and households was properly collected and processed by experts from TalTech University (Estonia) who assessed environmental impact that was achieved with this joint action.

And not just that. The pupils of the Leuschnerstraße school in Bergedorf also participated in Sustainable Xmas week action in 2024 and Easter Egg hunt week in 2025 organised by the BALTIPLAST project coordinator the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. In those two weeks over 500 children were introduced to sustainable activities, learned about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and finally had fun by creating their own sustainable and plastic free Xmas and Easter decorations.

This simple but effective example of close collaboration between the project and the school is offering us hope that our future could be one day plastic free!

EVALUATION RESULTS

The Plastic Inventory

By understanding these common and unique factors, stakeholders in each sector can better navigate the path towards significant plastic reduction. Enthusiastic engagement, strategic planning, and innovative solutions are key to overcoming the challenges and achieving success.

REDUCING PLASTIC USE IS A CRITICAL GOAL ACROSS VARIOUS SECTORS, INCLUDING OUR TARGET GROUPS : MUNICIPALITIES, GREEN EVENTS, SCHOOLS, AND BUSINESSES. EACH SECTOR FACES UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND HAS ITS OWN SET OF SUCCESS FACTORS, YET THERE ARE COMMON THEMES THAT CAN GUIDE EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES.

Municipalities and Green Event:

Success Factors:

- **Strategic Integration:** The effort to reduce the use of single-use plastics and plastic packaging is greatly facilitated if there are strategic plans or existing sustainability measures that say the work needs to be done. Strong strategic documents are one important solution to several of the challenges listed below.
- **Leadership Support:** Strong backing from managers and department heads is essential for the work to be carried out and, in addition to strategic documents, the most important success factor.
- **Engaged Individuals:** There are always individuals who are passionate about the issue. To find and empower those enthusiasts can be the key for success since they can engage the others in the workplace.
- **Effective Communication:** Clear and consistent messaging is always important to create an understanding of what needs to be done and what goals are to be achieved and why.
- **Legislation:** National laws and international sustainability goals provide a supportive framework supporting the actions.

Challenges:

- **Resource Constraints:** Limited time and human resources are always a challenge.
- **Organisational Complexity:** Municipal administration is often large organisations where it can be difficult to communicate and coordinate the work, especially if the unit that runs the work to reduce plastic use has no formal influence over other units. Here, strategic documents and support from managers are important.
- **Compliance Issues:** It is not easy to change ingrained behaviours and establish new routines. Therefore, good communication with all employees is required to ensure adherence to rules and guidelines.
- **Legislative Gaps:** In the absence of national legislation, it may be difficult to motivate some people to act beyond what is necessary.
- **Procurement Processes:** Centralized procurement can slow down the adoption of sustainable alternatives. Many agreements extend over several years. It is therefore important that all new agreements contain strong environmental requirements.
- **Financial Barriers:** Strong environmental requirements and investments such as reusable items for events can be associated with high costs.

Schools:

Success Factors:

- **Local Commitment and Eco-School Programs:** Engagement at the school level, including proactive principals and motivated teachers and participation in environmental education initiatives or Eco-School programs are the strongest success factor.
- **Collaboration:** Strong cooperation among teachers and with external partners as support for workshops makes the work easier. The students, and the teachers, often appreciate that an expert from outside the school's organisation comes and conducts events and workshops.
- **Supportive Infrastructure:** Adequate sorting bins and clear signage, have proven to be important prerequisites for successful work to reduce plastic waste and improve the sorting of the waste that arises.

Challenges:

- **Resource Constraints:** Like municipalities, schools face time and human resource limitations. Teachers already have a high workload and may find it difficult to find time for anything out of the ordinary.
- **Management Support:** Lack of support from school management and unclear responsibilities can prevent teachers from making extra efforts.
- **Behavioural Changes:** Changing students' habits and food packaging practices takes time and requires behavioural changes that can be challenging to implement. Nor is it always the students who decide for themselves what to eat.
- **Procurement Issues:** Centralized procurement of plastic consumables makes it hard for teachers to do changes. They are often bound to use the goods procured.
- **Inventory Process Issues:** Using the inventory tool was sometimes a challenge because of low knowledge of proper waste sorting and difficulty recognising different types of plastic. Expert help from BALTIPLAST partners was needed. Special events, like school clean-updays, can skew results.

EVALUATION RESULTS

The Plastic Inventory

OVERALL, THE PLASTIC INVENTORY REPRESENTED A MEANINGFUL PROJECT FOR ALL PILOTING ORGANISATIONS. DESPITE MINOR CHALLENGES COMMON TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS, IT CONTRIBUTED WITH INDIVIDUAL INSIGHTS AND LEVERAGE POINTS TO DAILY OPERATIONS, SHOWCASING WHERE AND HOW TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND PLASTIC PACKAGING.

Businesses:

Success Factors:

- Support from “above” is essential: Plastic Inventories (as well as other measures for sustainability) tend to be more successful when the Chief level not only endorse the project but actively support it.
- Personal convictions and personal contacts are decisive for winning over an organisation to participate in the Plastic Inventory: Many of the businesses in our BALTIPLAST network have joined both thanks to high environmental values within the team and/ or leaders, but personal contacts with members of the project partners’ team were equally important.
- Clear responsibilities and good communication within the business and with external stakeholders make the process easier: Collecting the data and implementing reduction measures often requires cross-department collaboration. It also proves beneficial if good relationships with suppliers exist.
- Creativity to rethink processes: Plastic reduction often means getting off the beaten path and rethinking processes to be smarter and more resource-efficient.
- Integration in core business: Ideally, a certain weekly time budget can be attributed to the project instead of adding it “on top” of other projects.
- Thinking broader in terms of sustainability: Often, plastic reduction measures also open up other sustainability measures or efficiency improvements within the business, e.g. less biowaste and paper waste and better waste sorting.
- Financial benefits: Focusing on the monetary benefit of reducing single-use plastics proves to be helpful to gain support from the management level.
- External support for the Plastic Inventory: Additional support for conducting the Plastic Inventory by e.g. collaboration with students or organising workshops to train employees proves to be helpful.

Challenges:

- Challenges in making plastic reduction a business priority:
 - Economic vs. environmental concerns: In several locations it proved to be challenging to find businesses open to piloting the Plastic Inventory. This could possibly be due to conflicts of interest (the dichotomy of economic vs. environmental concerns in crisis-laden times). On a more systemic level, the externalisation of environmental costs currently still leads to many businesses deprioritising environmental sustainability measures.
 - Lack of network and personal contacts: Many piloting project partners did not dispose of an established network of businesses nor personal contacts with business owners. This was even more relevant if the piloting project partner was not based in the respective piloting municipality.
- Lack of capacities: Time and human resource constraints are often a challenge for businesses to address plastic waste reduction.
- Lack of data: As this first year represented the piloting phase, several data points were not yet easily accessible. For instance, in some cases the weight of products was not yet present in the Plastic Inventory tool which rendered the inventory more time-consuming.
- Identification of reduction measures: Despite overall high reduction (see chapter 3: Results) in some cases, identifying reduction measures proved difficult. Especially in the area of Food & Drinks which mostly includes items which are brought by employees, an organisation’s leverage to reduce such products is limited.
- Guidance: Support from the piloting project partners was often needed to conduct the Plastic Inventory efficiently and effectively.

THE FINDINGS OF THE PLASTIC INVENTORY:

Quotes from project partners on their experience with implementing the BALTIPLAST “soft solutions”

**LIGA BIEZIŅA,
VALMIERA**

“THE BALTIPLAST
PROJECT SPARKED
NEW BEGINNINGS.”

THE BALTIPLAST “SOFT SOLUTIONS” – NAVIGATING THE PATH TO CHANGE IN HELSINKI.

Introducing “soft solutions” at BALTIPLAST in Helsinki proved more challenging than expected. These solutions rely heavily on personal motivation – something harder to harness in a large, bureaucratic municipality where most employees wait for top-down instructions.

Many staff were genuinely interested in environmental issues, but without a clear directive, action stalled. That’s why reducing single-use plastic (SUP) at events was an easier win – it aligned with procurement policies and will become a strategic, rule-based activity. Once included in the Helsinki Litter Control Action Plan 2.0, it gained traction. Working groups formed, and employees were eager to implement the change, especially since it came with a budget and official backing.

But a deeper cultural challenge remained. In Finnish public institutions, individual activism is rare; the culture favours collective action and modesty. While the public showed growing curiosity about the health impacts of plastics, changing personal habits was a different story. By embedding change into official strategies and fostering collective ownership in large organizations, even the most subtle shifts in behavior can take root.

Kati Kauppi, Helsinki



KATI KAUPPI, HELSINKI

“THESE SOLUTIONS RELY
HEAVILY ON PERSONAL
MOTIVATION.”

PLANTING SEEDS OF CHANGE: HOW THE BALTIPLAST PROJECT SPARKED ENVIRONMENTAL THINKING IN VALMIERA, LATVIA

Just before our project began, Valmiera municipality went through a major reform – eight municipalities were merged, creating an uncertain and transformative time. Before this, I worked as an environmental communication specialist and studied governance, including public participation, but we hadn’t had many initiatives aiming to improve the overall governance of environmental sustainability.

The BALTIPLAST project sparked new beginnings. It came at the right time, as we were forming new practices.

It pushed us to confront our use of plastics and think seriously about environmental management. The administration became more interested in certified systems, and EU courses pointed us toward future sustainability measures. We realized that while volunteer efforts are often ineffective, mandatory measures – though administratively heavy – actually drive action.

The project opened our eyes. Inventories revealed how deeply single-use plastics were embedded in our everyday practices – even branded water bottles in our administration. We started discussing tap water use and greening events, though even small changes sparked big debates.

In 2025, we plan to expand our efforts through education and partnerships, helping people see the problem – and act.

Liga Bieziņa, Valmiera



**FROM STRATEGY TO SYSTEM:
A JOURNEY TO REDUCE PLASTICS
IN THE CITY OF VÄSTERÅS, SWEDEN**

Our Plastic Reduction Strategy delivered what we hoped for and our experience with its implementation during the last two years are positive. With good political backing from the start and growing awareness, we tackled not just single-use plastics (SUPs) but a wider range of plastic use.

Strategic changes came first: banning SUPs at events, removing shoe covers, and initiating plastic-free catering at meetings. These top-level actions were straightforward. The real challenge lay deeper – legacy contracts, healthcare needs, and entrenched habits. Some changes will take 2-5 years. In healthcare, for example, convenience and hygiene make SUP use harder to replace. In contrast, educational sectors were quicker to adapt.

While political will was strong in the beginning, maintaining momentum is harder now that the spotlight has moved on. Still, we've seen significant reduction in both SUPs and complex plastics. Sustainability is now part of procurement. Yet new challenges arise – like food packaging from 12.000 employees. Long-term change needs persistence, daily dialogue, and commitment. If we stop talking about it, progress stalls – so we keep going.

Olof Bergold, Västerås



**OLOF BERGOLD,
VÄSTERÅS**

“SUSTAINABILITY IS NOW PART OF PROCUREMENT. IF WE STOP TALKING ABOUT IT, PROGRESS STALLS – SO WE KEEP GOING.”

**JELENA BARBIR,
HAMBURG**

“FOR ME, THE KEY LESSON WAS VISUALIZING THE ISSUE – SEEING OUR PLASTIC PILE GROW MADE THE IMPACT REAL.”

**FROM WRAPPERS TO REALIZATIONS:
HOW OUR OFFICE TOOK ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS**

At Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, our department (30 staff and student assistants, however only part-time present at the office) took on the challenge of tracking single-use plastics. As part of the BALTIPLAST project, we set up plastic collection points in every office and weighed the waste weekly for a month. The process was smooth, thanks to coordination with cleaning staff and the facility manager. In total, we collected 3.78 kg of plastic during this month – mostly from chocolate wrappers, chips, and sweets, not office supplies. That was the big surprise: our eating habits, not our work materials, were the main issue.

This led to great team reflection. We celebrated avoiding single-use cups, bottles, and lunch containers – a big win! Then we brainstormed how to reduce further: swapping packaged snacks for fruit or homemade veggie sticks or choosing paper-wrapped treats.

For me, the key lesson was visualizing the issue – seeing our plastic pile grow made the impact real. For the team? Let's just say many are rethinking their sweet tooth. Phase 2 starts in May, and we're ready to do even better.

Jelena Barbir, BALTIPLAST project manager at Hamburg University of Applied Sciences



CONCLUSION

The results of the BALTIPLAST inventory pilots are clear:

MEANINGFUL PLASTIC REDUCTION IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE – IT'S ALREADY HAPPENING. ACROSS SECTORS AND COUNTRIES, ORGANISATIONS HAVE TAKEN THE FIRST STEP BY SHINING A LIGHT ON THEIR OWN PLASTIC USAGE.

While many businesses and institutions use similar products – office supplies, packaging, catering materials – the inventory process revealed that each organisation has its own unique “plastic hotspots.” These often-unseen leverage points hold far more potential than generic one-size-fits-all solutions.

This is where the real power of the Plastic Inventory Tool lies. It moves beyond assumptions and uncovers the patterns and practices that truly drive plastic consumption. Armed with this data, organisations can take targeted, informed actions – some as simple as switching materials, others as bold as rethinking workflows or questioning long-standing habits.

This process is not just about cutting plastic for the sake of it. Plastic, as a material, has value and utility in our modern lives. But it's

too often used in ways that are unsustainable, excessive, or simply impractical. The inventory pilots demonstrated that real progress begins when we shift from asking what can we replace to what can we redesign or eliminate altogether?

By mapping out their plastic use, engaging their teams, and embracing soft, low-cost changes, the pilot participants are now leading the way – not only in reducing plastic waste but also in building smarter, more sustainable systems. Their experiences show that with curiosity, commitment, and a willingness to question the status quo, any organisation can take part in creating a cleaner, more circular future.

