

BEST PRACTISES IN PLASTIC-FREE SOLUTIONS

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

Guidelines for plastic waste prevention and reduction in municipality's offices

VALMIERA, LATVIA

Photo: Matīss Toms Brūvers



VALMIERA is a state city and administrative centre of Valmiera Municipality with 24 220 inhabitants. It is a growing, development-oriented city that is constantly developing and ensuring support to entrepreneurship and creating a dynamic business environment.

Valmiera is not only an active city with great sports infrastructure and culture activities, but also a green one, with half of its territory covered by green spaces.

Valmiera Municipality Government aims to improve its environmental management and reduce its impact on the environment as a whole. To do that, guidelines for plastic waste prevention and reduction in municipality's office buildings were developed, mainly for employees to use. A plastic inventory tool was used to assess the situation and set targets for plastic reduction. Employees from different departments were involved in the process of developing the guidelines to boost their motivation and willingness to apply these guidelines in the future.

Challenges and actions

Valmiera Municipality Government aims to improve its environmental management and reduce its impact on the environment as a whole. By starting to implement activities in the main municipal administration building, the greatest potential impact is anticipated. Additionally, carrying out inventory and reduction measures is a significant step towards enhancing environmental management.

Activity steps

- Interviews with employees to study the use of plastics
- Doing a plastic inventory twice
- Meetings with employees from different departments to draft the guidelines

Target groups

Employees of the municipality, working in administration buildings across the region.

Timeline

The time it took to implement the guidelines, including conducting an inventory for plastic waste, was about **1 year**.

1. Conducted interviews with housekeeping manager, responsible specialists for purchasing stationary, IT specialist about purchasing IT goods.
2. Over a period of three months, audited the building's kitchen waste and employee office bins.
3. Conducted interviews with previously mentioned specialists, discussed potential solutions for reducing plastic waste.
4. Put solutions into place.
5. Conducted a repeated inventory for 3 months for plastic waste.
6. Organised "work group" to develop guidelines.

Results

By implementing plastic waste reduction measures, the municipality managed to achieve a **total reduction of 47 kg/year**, which corresponds to a **6%** decrease in plastic waste.

Although the internal set goal was higher, the result achieved is still good and it means that by implementing the guidelines long term, we could reduce the use of plastics more.

Piloting the solution

To set targets that we would like to achieve with the guidelines' implementation, an **inventory tool** was used to determine the use of plastics in the municipality's main administration building. We looked at plastic usage in **different sectors, such as cleaning, kitchen, meetings** etc. Afterwards colleagues from different departments came together, assessed the current situation and decided on the recommendations to be included in the guidelines.

Enablers



- + **No need for high financial resources** to develop and implement the guidelines.
- + Using the inventory tool shows that **by introducing small actions into everyday work day, we can manage to reduce the use of plastics**. The inventory tool shows it visually, which motivates to do more.
- + **Developing the guidelines together with other colleagues** – makes them more motivated to follow the guidelines.

Barriers



- **High demand for human resources** to manage the development process.
- **Hard to break habits** in workplace.
- **Weak waste sorting infrastructure in the building**. No sorting bins in the offices, only in the hallways.
- **Hard to implement the guidelines into everyday life for all municipality employees** as we have many buildings across the region. Each building should have one flag-bearer that would repeatedly communicate and encourage the use of guidelines to the colleagues.

Key takeaways

For the guidelines on sustainable plastic use to become an effective tool for improving plastic management within the municipality, **communication is crucial**. **Education and discussions with stakeholders** during the development process of the guidelines promote their acceptance and integration into daily practices.