

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.

Reduction of single-use plastic in the municipal administration building VALMIERA, LATVIA



Photo: Uģis Bralens

VALMIERA is a state city and administrative centre of Valmiera Municipality with 22 376 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.

7,8 %
CO2 reduction

Valmiera Municipality is seeking long-term solutions to improve its environmental management and reduce the environmental impact of its operational practices. Plastic is a material largely produced from unsustainable, fossil-based resources, and its use for ensuring daily convenience is embedded in almost all everyday activities. In order to reduce the environmental impact of its administration's activities, Valmiera Municipality was interested in assessing where and to what extent plastic-containing products are being discarded within the municipality.

Challenges and actions

Given the municipality's role model status in every area of its governance, the challenge for the municipality lies in improving its daily administrative practices to reduce environmental impact. The **plastic circulation audit** conducted within the BALTIPLAST project served as a means to provide an overview of the potential reduction in plastic waste achievable through the implemented measures, thus offering information on potential savings. It was intended to serve as the foundation for the future development of the municipality's environmental management system, where setting measurable targets will play a crucial role.

Brief description of activities

- Evaluating the use of single use plastics in the building by doing an audit with a tool developed within the project.
- Organising a meeting with different department employees (working in the building) to assess the situation and to set targets to reduce the use of single use plastics.
- Developing action plan (concrete steps) on how to reduce the use of single use plastics.
- Implementing the new actions.
- Doing another audit with the developed tool. The tool shows the reduction in % immediately.

Target groups

Valmiera Municipality Government employees working administration building.

Timeline

1 March 2024 – 1 October 2024.

Pilot implementation

To assess whether the established targets for single use plastic reduction were met, a tool was used to input baseline data and data after the implementation of various green measures.

Enablers



- + **Specific responsible persons were appointed for conducting, overseeing, and supervising the plastic circulation audit.** These were the implementers of the BALTIPLAST project within the Valmiera Municipality Government – the key to success was ensuring that a responsible person was designated for the entire process.

Barriers



- **It is challenging to break established habits in the implementation of daily practices.** Individual agreements with colleagues involved in the audit were necessary to ensure the separate sorting of plastic waste, which required a significant investment of human resources and working time from the responsible person.
- **In the municipality, offices are equipped with bins for unsorted household waste, while bins for separate collection are placed in the corridors.** Therefore, in order to separately collect plastic waste, additional actions were necessary for the auditing process – the plastic waste had to be separated from the total amount of waste generated in the offices.

Key takeaways

In order to improve the municipality's environmental management practices and reduce the environmental impact of its activities, it is necessary to **appoint a person responsible** for achieving measurable results.

Communication and parallel educational activities highlighting the importance of the implemented actions are crucial to draw attention to the significance of responsible behavior.