

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.

Stakeholder collaboration to organise Västerås Cityfestival VÄSTERÅS, SWEDEN



VÄSTERÅS in Sweden is a growing city with ca. 158 000 inhabitants.

The city is actively working on the sustainability issues. Since 2023 there has been an *Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Plastics*, which states that the city must reduce its use of unnecessary plastic and plastic with harmful substances. This Action Plan is part of the city's ecological sustainability program.

325 kg
CO2 reduction

Västerås Municipality piloted reducing plastic in city events to develop the concept of litter-free public events. Västerås collaborated with Keep Sweden Tidy, which played a key role in identifying and testing measures to reduce littering (especially single-use plastics) at the Västerås Cityfestival.

Challenges and actions

Västerås Municipality piloted reducing plastic in city events to develop the concept of litter-free public events. During this pilot, several challenges were encountered, including the need to balance municipal resource allocation with broader priorities, ongoing sales of previously banned plastic items (e.g., plastic straws and cups), and a high volume of plastic giveaways during the festival.

To address the challenges, a range of initiatives was implemented, including **monitoring of plastic use**, improving **waste sorting and recycling**, running a **communication campaign**, and introducing **reusable solutions** like Panter. Additional efforts included **informing vendors** and **promoting sustainability** through a crafts and upcycling street.

The pilot highlighted the importance of collaboration between stakeholders, such as the municipality, waste management companies, and small business owners, to effectively address littering challenges.

Early and clear communication with vendors and the public was essential for ensuring compliance with regulations and encouraging sustainable practices. Additionally, using data from previous city events enabled more targeted measures, maximizing the impact of waste reduction efforts.

Brief description of activities

- Investigated plastic use at the Food Court.
- Conducted litter measurements to monitor and evaluate progress.
- Informed food vendors and exhibitors while encouraging them to reduce plastic use.
- Introduced a new crafts and upcycling street to promote sustainability.
- Improved waste sorting and recycling systems.
- Tested reusable plates for food through the Panter initiative.
- Ran a communication campaign to engage and inform festival visitors.
- Inventoried and reduced plastic within the festival organization itself.

Target groups

City departments

Waste management companies

Vendors

Exhibitors

Timeline

The pilot spanned from 2023 to 2025 and focused on reducing plastic usage and minimizing litter at the annual **Västerås Cityfestival, a three-day event held every June.**

In 2023, the pilot began with a comprehensive field study to establish a baseline for plastic consumption and to conduct a litter analysis across the festival grounds. Building on these insights, 2024 saw the introduction of targeted measures (detailed above) aimed at reducing plastic use and curbing littering during the festival. The festival hosted 374,000 visitors in 2024.

As we entered the final year of the project in 2025, our goal was to build upon the progress made last year, striving to further reduce SUP plastics (Single-Use Plastic) and litter at the Festival. Additionally, we develop a *Litter-Free Festival* guide to help other municipalities organize plastic- and litter-free events, ensuring the project's impact extends beyond Västerås.

Results

Our qualitative assessment indicates a reduction in single-use plastic (SUP) products at the festival, including giveaways and banned SUP items. To further promote sustainability, we introduced a reusable system for food vendors. In 2024, **six vendors** participated in a pilot program, offering reusable plates to customers. A total of 2,800 meals were served on reusable plates, preventing an estimated **325 kg of CO₂** equivalent emissions compared to single-use alternatives.

Litter collection data highlights the **most common plastic-containing waste** found on festival grounds, including **candy and ice cream wrappers, bottle caps, straws, and other food packaging.**

Ahead of City Festival 2024, Keep Sweden Tidy launched a targeted social media campaign to engage festivalgoers. The campaign leveraged Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok, achieving:

- **Cost:** 28,000 SEK
- **Exposure:** 1,021,796 impressions
- **Reach:** 162,455 users
- **Frequency:** 6 (7 for older audiences, 6 for younger)
- **CPM:** 27 SEK
- **Link clicks:** 324
- **Poll responses:** 923



This combination of on-site initiatives and digital engagement reflects our ongoing commitment to reducing plastic waste and fostering a more sustainable festival experience.

Enablers



- + **Strong communication channels**
- + **Strong support from the stakeholders** and interest of target groups

Barriers



- **High demand for human resources** to manage the development process (e.g. establishing a re-use system for food and drink)
- **Municipal resource constraints** (e.g financial)
- **Ongoing sales** of previously banned plastic items (e.g. plastic straws and cups)
- A high volume of **plastic giveaways** during the festival

Key takeaways

The pilot highlighted the **importance of collaboration between stakeholders**, such as the municipality, waste management companies, and small business owners, to effectively address littering and plastic-use challenges.

Early and clear communication with vendors and the public was essential for ensuring compliance with regulations and encouraging sustainable practices. Additionally, using data from previous events enabled more **targeted measures**, maximizing the impact of waste reduction efforts.