

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 plastics at municipal unit *Research and School Development* 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.

89 %

CO2 reduction

The city operations can use unnecessary plastic. To learn how to reduce this, the City of Västerås conducted a plastic inventory at one of the municipal units. The key to plastic reduction is to leverage staff's interest in sustainability issues to drive action.

Challenges and actions

Plastic materials simplify our everyday lives in many ways, but also have negative effects on climate, environment and human health. The Västerås' *Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Plastics* sets out objectives and activities that show how the City of Västerås should work long-term to achieve a sustainable use of plastics.

The overall aim is to create a clear governance and common priorities for sustainable use of plastics in the Västerås Municipality.

By being part of the BALTIPLAST project, we gain experience that can be used in the implementation of the action plan's activities and transnational contacts that facilitate the understanding of possible solutions to the challenge of plastics.

Brief description of activities

The municipal unit *Research and School Development* was selected to make an inventory of which plastic packaging was collected separately and which plastic from the operations of the unit was disposed of as residual waste. The inventory serves as a pilot to see if the way of working can be spread to other units in the city.

The inventory process included several steps:

- Kick off meeting with staff at the three departments of the unit.
- Collection of waste in staff kitchens and plastics as residual waste.
- Analysis and weighing of the waste and entering the data in the Plastic Inventory Tool.
- Compiling and compering results of the three departments.
- Send survey on plastic issues to staff and asking for their ideas for plastic reduction.
- Meeting with all staff and discussion about reduction measures.
- New collection of plastics in kitchen.

Target groups and timeline

The target group of this action are **municipal units and departments**. The pilot activities in Västerås spanned **over a year**.

Results

Total amount of plastic waste calculated in the tool was nearly **112 kg/year**. **52 kg** came from staff kitchens and **60 kg** from operations at the departments. Big differences were found between the three departments of the unit when it came to food packaging waste in kitchens.

Plastic waste from operations at the unit almost entirely consists of **food packaging** brought to one of the departments by visitors, 52 kg/year.

In the second inventory we focused on **staff kitchens and plastic food packaging from visitors**. The results showed **46% reduction of plastics packaging**.

Enablers



- + The **head of the unit** was actively supporting the process
- + **Enthusiastic staff** at the unit

Barriers



- **High demand for human resources** to manage the development process

Key takeaways

Plastics are discussed in the public debate. There are **news about microplastics**, **new legislation** on the use of single-use-plastics and **new ways to sort and collect waste**, plastic waste being one category, and an ongoing questioning of the way we consume items, climate change etc. This creates an interest for the topic, and opinions pro or against the measures. **The key takeaway here is to use this interest to create actions.**

A lesson learned is that it takes time. Especially when it comes to change the use of plastics that are used in the daily work in the office. The use of these items is already low, and most staff are aware of the necessity to reuse plastic folders, and being digital instead of using paper and pens etc. **Now we need to change what we buy and what products are purchased.**