

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.

Reducing single-use plastics and plastic consumables in primary schools 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.

18 %

CO2 reduction

Schools in Västerås can use unnecessary plastic in their operations. To address this, three schools in the city conducted inventories focusing on plastic consumables.

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

School activities constitute a significant portion of the municipality's overall operations. Therefore, it is crucial for them to actively engage in sustainability initiatives.

Three primary schools volunteered as pilot institutions to inventory plastic usage, focusing on single-use plastics and plastic consumables. This inventory serves as a pilot project to determine if the approach can be implemented in other schools within the municipality.

The process began with an **informational session** and a **kick-off meeting** with the involved staff at each school. This was followed by a **tour of the school** to identify the types of plastics used in daily activities and those separately collected in the schools' waste rooms.

Subsequently, we conducted an inventory by **examining the municipal purchasing system** to identify annual plastic purchases. The purchasing data was entered into the Plastic Inventory Tool, and the results from the three schools were compiled and compared.

No goals for reduction have been set: for this pilot, it was more relevant to discuss the **differences in the use of materials**, such as lamination pouches, between the schools rather than setting specific reduction goals. This discussion is expected to lead to changes in behavior and, consequently, a reduction in usage.

New inventories were carried out after a year to see changes in which goods are purchased for the schools.

Target groups and timeline

This pilot targeted **municipal primary schools**. Pilot activities in Västerås spanned **over a year**.

Results

The results show that most common plastic items are **garbage bags, laminating pouches, plastic file folders** and **felt tip pens**.

It turned out that there were differences between the three schools. For example, in 2024, the purchase of plastic folders was four times as high at the school with the highest purchases compared to the one with the lowest purchases.



Piloting the solution

The soft measure solution is rather 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.

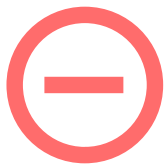
This process has been applied in the pilots focusing on the purchasing system and the use of plastic consumables.

Enablers



- + The connection between the inventory process with results and **Västerås' Action plan for Sustainable use of Plastics**
- + **Interested staff** at the schools
- + The **ongoing discussion in society** about the plastics issue
- + Most of the work was done by the BALTIPLAST partner **within the project**

Barriers



- It takes a **long time to show results**
- The inventory methodology by **examining the municipal purchasing system was time consuming.**
- Teachers have a **strained work situation**, and they could not find time to work on the plastic issue with the pupils

Key takeaways

There is an interest in the plastic issue and other sustainability questions in society and amongst staff at schools. **Most people want to do the right thing and lower the environmental impact. Their interest is a good starting point.**

It is harder to find time to work with pupils and to do the reductions. **The process takes time**, and there must be good alternatives to plastic items in the purchasing system.

The differences between schools' purchases of plastic consumables show that that **habits and routines regarding what material is used in daily activities are important and can be changed.** What one school thinks are necessary products, another school can do almost without.