

23-04-2026

Circular take-away in Copenhagen



Sarosh Qureshi
Special Konsulent- Circular Copenhagen

Since 2019, the City of Copenhagen has required that for events where the Climate, Environmental and Technical Administration grants the event permit and is a co-organizer, and where the serving of beverages is part of the event, single-use plastic cups may not be used for drinks.

Informal networks emerge as a result of the work of Green Business.

The opportunity to work towards greater recycling/reuse of take-away packaging in Copenhagen is mentioned at the outset of the resource and waste management plan.

Roundtable meeting with the Mayor

First meeting in the network for increased reuse of take-away packaging

Second meeting in the network for increased reuse of take-away packaging

Budget negotiation 2022-23

Budgetnotat 2023 + EU ansøgning

Next??



Change (k)now!

- EU Interreg Baltic Sea Region project with 8 partner countries
- From primo 2024 to ultimo 2026



The Change(K)now! project helps municipalities reduce single-use food packaging in food delivery and catering systems, and build social acceptance among companies and people for circular reuse of food packaging.

Change(K)now! is concerned with promoting a mind-set change in food delivery systems from single-use to multiple-use crockery and packaging at different use types. [...]

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region  Co-funded by
the European Union

 CIRCULAR ECONOMY
Change(K)now!

3 Core tasks

eat

skolemad

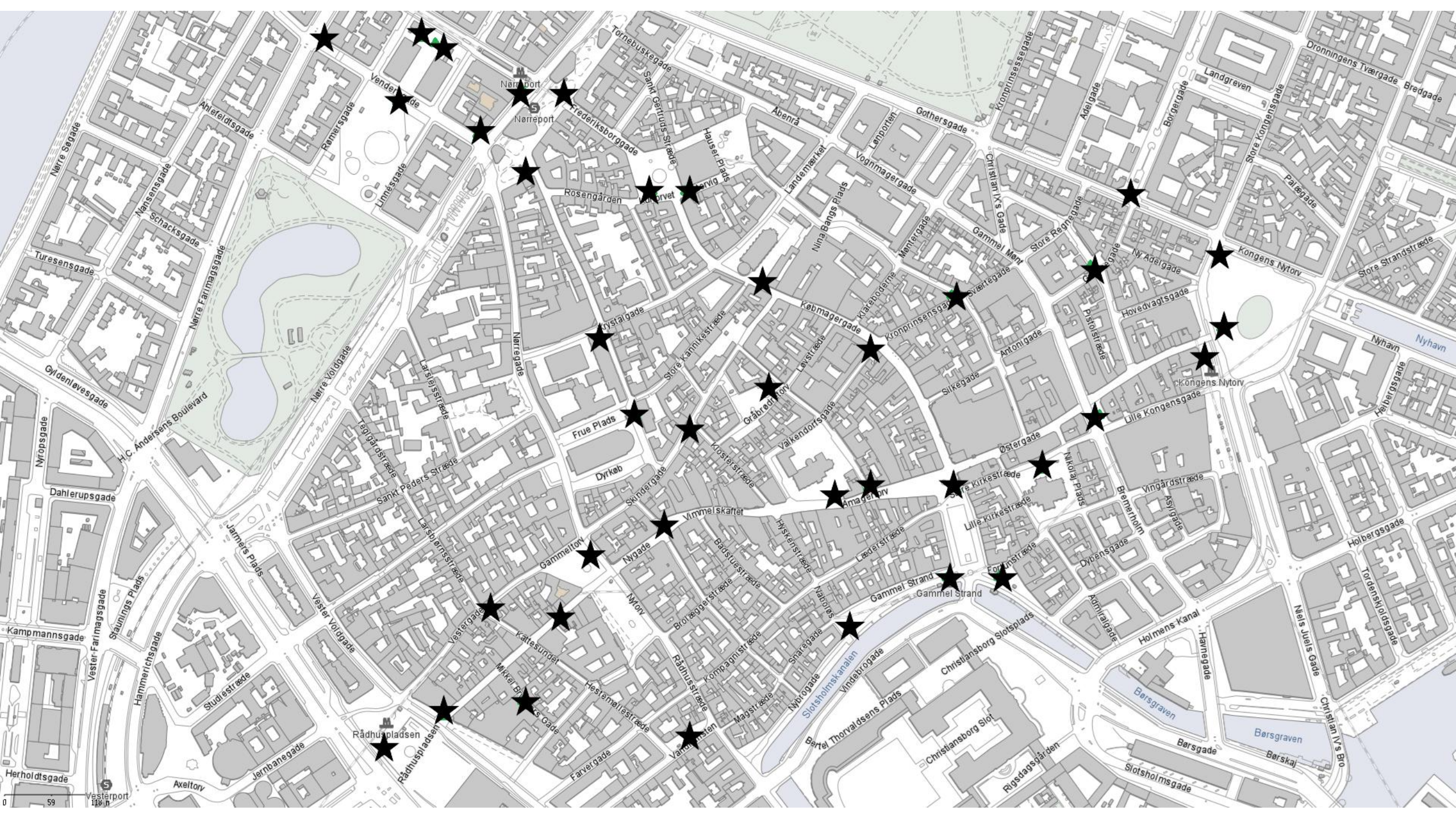
MEGAEVENT



Take-away In the city

- Rollout of infrastructure
- Tendering for reuse operator in Copenhagen.
 - 38 return points in the Inner City
 - Donation possibilities
 - How can a digital packaging crate value for companies.
 - Packaging material
 - Cost and sustainability





Nørrebro

Nørrebro

Rosengården

Kongens Nytorv

Kongens Nytorv

Kongens Nytorv

Frue Plads

Amager Plads

Gammel Strand

Rådhuspladsen

Christiansborg Slot

Minimum Criteria

RVM must be sized to accept both drink and food packaging (though not packaging covered by the deposit scheme), be set to register RFID and/or QR, and be able to pay out funds to a payment card

The packaging must have an RFID tag and/or QR code

The packaging must be returnable by anyone

The packaging must have an embedded return incentive with an attached value or a fee for non-return

Collection and delivery of packaging should be done with electric vehicles, preferably electric bikes and the like

The washing facility must be at a close proximity of Copenhagen

Logos and other marketing materials can be added to the packaging.

The supplier must document quarterly

- o Number of used reusable packaging.
- o Operating costs of the reuse system.
- o Communication or recruitment campaigns initiated.
- o Number of discarded packaging.
- o Number of packaging that has disappeared from the system.

The system must not be app- or cash-based

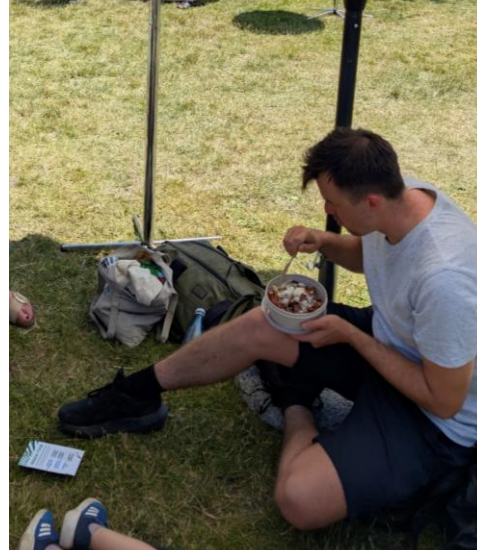
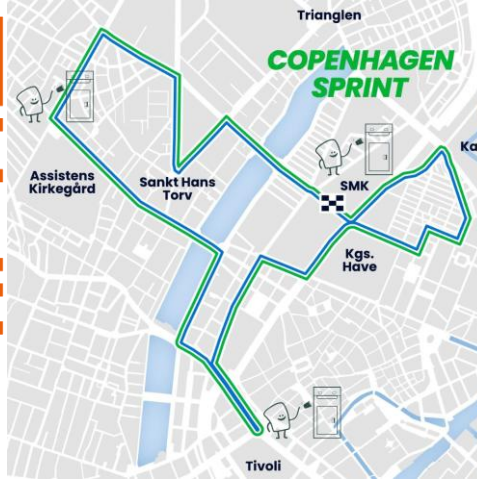
RVM must be solar and/or battery-powered and easily attachable to the surface, so they can be quickly moved if necessary. It is the supplier's responsibility to restore the surface if it is altered

The return machines must be able to accept and register packaging from other reuse operators (in the Danish market)

Innovation pool

- Funding for businesses
 - Businesses must commit to reuse.
 - System must be compatible with returnpoints
 - Businesses can receive between DKK 100,000 and DKK 300,000.
 - The purpose is to generate new knowledge about the behavior of businesses and citizens in relation to reuse.
 - Reusable packaging can be returned:
 - Directly in shops.
 - Via designated return points in public spaces.





Events

Copenhagen Sprint: 21–22 June 2025

“Copenhagen Street Days” and the European Championship in 3x3 basketball: 5–7 September 2025

- Three types of return points
- Exclusive use of reusable packaging for food and beverages
- The same system across the city and across different use scenarios

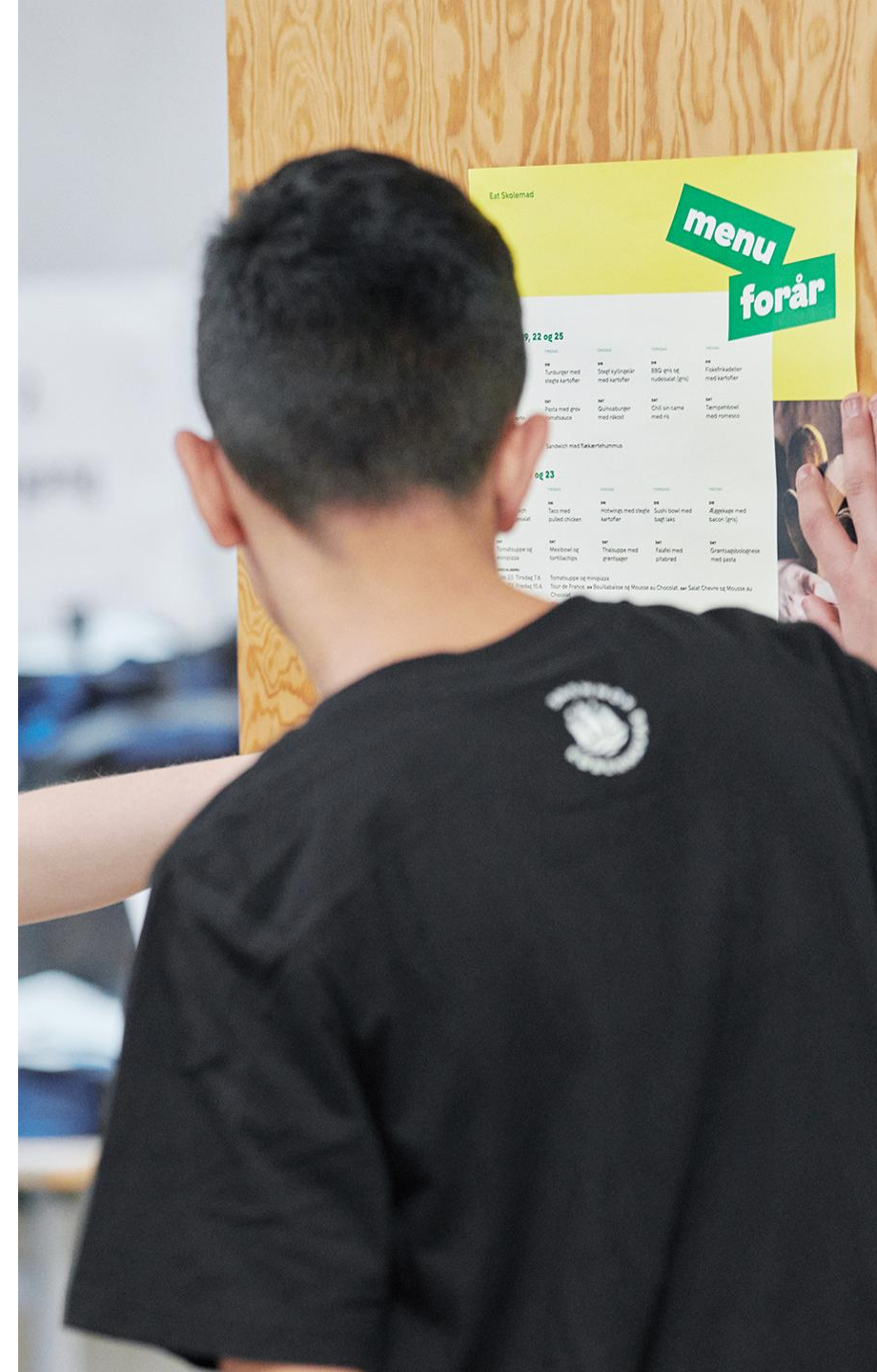
Reuse system for EAT School meal program

- Background

- 56 schools in the City of Copenhagen participate in the EAT school meal program.
- Approximately 6,000 meals are served daily (in bowls or divided containers).

- Key Elements

- 15,000 reusable containers in three different sizes
- Containers equipped with RFID chips
- RFID scanner installed on the washing line at the central kitchen in Valby
- Automated tracking of container circulation
- Automatic calculation of reduced CO₂ emissions compared to single-use packaging



Key Learnings – Reuse Projects

1. What made reuse possible in our context?

- **Strong institutional support**
- **Clear sustainability goals** aligned with Copenhagen's circular economy vision
- **Piloting and testing approach** → allowed us to experiment, adjust, and improve quickly
- **Engagement from national and international actors, staff and students**
- **Existing infrastructure with modifications** (kitchens, distribution systems, washing) enabled integration

2. What was the biggest challenge or surprise?

- Need for scale for the system to be feasible and environmentally sustainable
- Economy shifts from buying packaging to hiring workers
- Students like reuse, and have a better eating experience
- Reusable packaging does not significantly change the workload for staff
- Need for regulations to scale



What changes to we wish to see from you

- More businesses in Copenhagen offering reuse solutions to citizens
- Collaboration to develop an efficient and flexible system
- Less packaging waste
- Contribute to a national reuse system for take-away packaging
- Working with you to scale internationally



[Circular.kk.dk](https://circular.kk.dk)

Circular Copenhagen

Engage in innovative partnerships with the City of Copenhagen developing tomorrow's circular economy solutions for today's challenges.