



Single-use waste prevention plan

Playbook for local authorities

Guide

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Document purpose

What if your city could lead Europe's shift away from single-use materials - one event, one building, one public space at a time?

This *single-use waste prevention plan* is a practical playbook designed to help municipalities move from intention to action.

It works more like a structured guide: a fixed skeleton of sections - Introductory statement → Legislation → Baseline → Objectives → Measures → Annexes - that a municipality can reproduce in its own plan, with most sections opening with prompts like "What to include?" or "Describe..." to help local teams think through and write their own content, rather than blanks to complete.

To make that process concrete, the playbook pairs each section with real examples pulled directly from municipal plans already in force in the Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project and other exemplary cities: E.g.: Viladecans' introductory statement or Lyon's seven objectives - that cities can adapt or lift almost as-is.

At its core sits a "menu" of 8 zero single-use policies and measures, each detailed with its content, scope, objectives and implementation pathway, ready to be picked, adapted and inserted into a local plan.

The goal is not to be exhaustive, but to be useful: giving any municipality ready to advance single-use waste reduction policies a solid, actionable starting point to draw inspiration from.

Background and context

The [Elevating Reuse in Cities](#) (ERIC) project, funded by the Plastics Solutions Fund (PSF) and coordinated by [Zero Waste Europe](#) (ZWE), brings together ambitious European municipalities ready to turn single-use waste prevention from policy commitment into the everyday reality of their citizens.

The project is implemented with a network of ZWE member organisations across 5 European countries: Ekologi brez meja (Slovenia), Rezero (Spain - Catalonia), Zero Waste Belgium, Zero Waste France, and ZERO Portugal.

- In its first phase (2023-2025), 10 Zero Waste Europe member organisations implemented the project locally, supporting 30 EU municipalities in developing their own single-use prevention plans - concrete roadmaps targeting single-use items across four areas: events, public buildings, streets & parks, and procurement.
- In the second phase (2025-2028) - currently underway - ambition meets action. We now work with a tighter cohort of 10 municipalities, selected for their drive and determination, together reaching nearly

4 million EU citizens across Slovenia, Spain, Belgium, France and Portugal: Ljubljana; Cornellà de Llobregat, Viladecans and Torrelles de Llobregat; Brussels; the Nantes and Lyon metropolitan areas; Bordeaux; and Funchal and São João da Madeira. The focus? Two areas where real, measurable change is already happening: reuse systems at public events and single-use-free public procurement.

I. Introductory statement

What to include?

1. Open the prevention plan with a summary of the problem your municipality is facing (with concrete baseline local data, if possible): the scale of single-use consumption locally, its environmental and social costs, and why action is needed now. Introduce the single-use waste prevention plan as your municipality's response: a structured, policy-driven commitment to reducing single-use waste across the areas where local government has direct influence.
2. Describe what the plan contains: the measures it sets out, the sectors and spaces it targets, and the level of ambition it reflects. If the prevention plan sits within a broader municipal strategy – such as a zero waste plan, waste prevention plan or waste management framework – make that connection explicit here, showing how this plan contributes to a larger vision.
3. Close by stating what success looks like: the concrete outcomes, behavioural shifts and environmental benefits your municipality expects to achieve through implementation. This section should be tailored to your municipality's specific context, priorities and commitments – it is your city's voice, not a generic statement.



Example from Viladecans' Plastic Prevention Plan¹ (Catalonia)

The problem

Global plastic production has grown exponentially since the mid-20th century, with more than half of all plastics ever produced generated since the year 2000. Less than 10% of this plastic has ever been recycled, and nearly 80% has accumulated in landfills or natural environments. The negative impacts are well-documented: depletion of fossil resources, ecosystem contamination, microplastic dispersal into food chains, emissions from production and waste management, toxic health impacts, and growing costs to public finances – particularly at the municipal level. These impacts are most acute in the case of single-use plastics, which still account for 40% of all plastic produced globally – the vast majority of it packaging that becomes waste within a month of use.

Why our municipality must act

Waste prevention – including product reuse – sits at the top of the waste hierarchy, yet most public policy effort has so far focused on recycling and end-of-pipe solutions, or on false material substitutions such as paper, cardboard or compostable plastics. These approaches shift the material but not the behaviour, and carry their own environmental costs.

Local governments have a key role to play: not only through their regulatory powers, but as enablers and role models for the businesses and citizens in their territory.

The solution: a Plastic Prevention Plan (PPP)

[The adoption of a municipal Plastic Prevention Plan \(PPP\)](#) is a significant step in the fight against plastic pollution. It serves as a strategic roadmap, identifying key measures to effectively reduce plastic waste generation across priority sectors within the municipality's direct sphere of influence, while reducing dependence on single-use plastics at the local level. [Watch the video](#)

Note: This programme consolidates, structures and builds on actions already included in [the municipality's Local Waste Prevention Plan](#) and its Municipal Plastics Reduction Project, while introducing additional measures identified as strategic priorities on the path to a single-use-plastic-free municipality.

¹ Sample text translated from Catalan

Expected benefits

Implementing this plan is expected to deliver four key categories of benefit for Viladecans:

- **Environmental & health protection:** significant reduction in locally generated plastic waste, less ecosystem and waterway contamination, lower climate emissions, and reduced citizen exposure to hazardous substances.
- **Economic savings:** lower municipal waste management and street cleaning costs, particularly for litter collection on public roads and beaches.
- **Economic opportunity:** new business models centred on reuse, repair and shared packaging; growth of a local circular economy; job creation.
- **Community empowerment:** greater civic participation in sustainable practices, engaging residents, schools and local organisations.



II. Existing legislation and obligations

This section sets out the regulatory context within which the single-use waste prevention plan operates – demonstrating that the measures it contains are not only voluntary good practice, but are increasingly backed by binding legal obligations at European, national and regional level.

What to include?

1. European legislation: The EU has been progressively tightening its regulatory framework on single-use plastics and packaging waste. Key instruments to reference include:
 - a. [The Single-Use Plastics Directive \(EU\) 2019/904](#) – which bans certain single-use plastic products, introduces extended producer responsibility, and sets consumption reduction targets.
 - b. [The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation \(PPWR\)](#) – the incoming regulation that sets reuse and refill targets for packaging placed on the EU market.
 - c. [The Waste Framework Directive](#) – which enshrines the waste hierarchy and sets the legal basis for prevention as the priority.
 - d. Any relevant Green Public Procurement frameworks or targets at EU level.
2. National legislation: Describe the national laws that transpose EU directives into domestic law, as well as any additional national measures that go beyond EU requirements.
3. Regional/metropolitan legislation: Where applicable, include regional regulations that affect the municipality – for example, regional waste prevention plans, targets set by metropolitan authorities, or regional procurement rules.
4. Municipal obligations and commitments: Describe what the municipality is already legally required to do, as well as any voluntary commitments it has made – such as signing a zero waste declaration, joining a network, or adopting a climate action plan that includes waste reduction targets.
5. How the single-use waste prevention plan responds to and goes beyond compliance.

Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) – Directive (EU) 2019/904

The SUPD is the EU's primary legal instrument for reducing the environmental impact of the most problematic plastic products. It operates on two levels directly relevant to municipalities:

- First, it bans the placing on the market of a range of single-use plastic products for which alternatives exist, including cutlery, plates, straws, beverage stirrers, and food containers made of expanded polystyrene.
- Second, and of particular relevance to public events and spaces, Article 4 of the Directive requires Member States to take measures to reduce the consumption of single-use plastic cups and food containers, with those expected to achieve a measurable quantitative reduction by 2026 compared to 2022 levels. These measures may include national consumption reduction targets, the promotion of reusable alternatives, or marketing restrictions. European-bioplastics This municipal single-use waste prevention plan directly contributes to the national and municipal compliance with this obligation.

Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) – Regulation (EU) 2025/40 (Articles 26 & 38)

Adopted in December 2024 and formally entered into force on 11 February 2025, the PPWR establishes a directly applicable, harmonised legal framework for all packaging placed on the EU market. Most of its provisions will take effect from 12 August 2026. For municipalities, two sets of obligations are particularly significant:

- First, Member States are required to progressively reduce per capita packaging waste production – by 5% by 2030, 10% by 2035 and 15% by 2040, compared to 2018 levels
- Second, the Regulation introduces binding reuse targets for specific packaging formats as well as obligations for the HoReCa sectors:
 - By 2030, beverage distributors must ensure 10% of products are offered in reusable packaging, rising to 40% by 2040;
 - By 2027, restaurants and cafes providing takeaway food or beverages must allow consumers to bring their own containers;

- By 2028, restaurants and cafes providing takeaway food or beverages must offer reusable packaging options at no extra cost.

Example text from Viladecans' municipal regulatory framework²

The main regulatory tool available to local councils to define or set certain requirements for economic, administrative, or civil activities are municipal bylaws. However, there are also binding instruments (such as the granting of licences) and other internal regulatory instruments (bans, motions, mayoral decrees, institutional declarations, government measures, etc.). Regarding municipal bylaws, councils can establish a general prevention bylaw, incorporate plastic prevention and reuse promotion measures into the existing environmental or waste bylaw, or create bylaws on specific topics (regulating public and festive events, beaches, etc.). In addition, fiscal bylaws can include taxes or rebates that contribute to reducing plastic waste generated.

Local authorities can also incorporate specific requirements into the licence-granting process for businesses, ensuring a reduction in their waste and the products they offer customers. For example, councils could require shops to provide the necessary space for returnable containers to be stored. (...) Presenting municipal motions committing to reducing waste and incorporating this criterion into procurement and operations is another avenue. Finally, it is worth noting that councils have another tool to introduce prevention measures in public facilities – such as municipal markets or public daycares – through their internal regulations. Specifically, binding measures can be introduced around reducing packaging and outer wrapping, regulating single-use plastic bags, or promoting the use of reusable nappies.

Regarding the municipal regulatory framework, the following instruments are specific to Viladecans:

- **Municipal Waste Bylaw:** Viladecans has a Regulatory Bylaw on Public Cleanliness and Waste Management, dating from 2005, which governs all aspects and activities related to waste management in the municipality, covering both household waste and that from shops, offices, and other services. On waste prevention, the bylaw includes the following article:
 - Article 26. Prevention of Waste Generation (...)
 - The prevention and reduction of waste generation in activities carried out by the municipal administration itself, as well as in those in which it participates

² Sample text translated from Catalan

with its resources, and more broadly in all economic and social activities taking place within the municipality.

- The Council may establish a special scheme of tax benefits and financial support aimed at encouraging waste reduction and selective collection.
- **Commercial Waste Fiscal Bylaw:** Viladecans regulates commercial waste management and treatment fees through its Fiscal Bylaw on the Fee for Commercial Waste Management Services (2024), which governs the collection, transport, and treatment of commercial waste in the municipality. (...) The bylaw includes a 95% discount on the applicable fee for food retail and catering establishments that channel food waste for reuse in collaboration with non-profit social economy organisations. However, the municipality currently has no rebates specifically linked to the prevention of commercial plastic waste, although in previous years shops affiliated with the Green Shops Network could apply for a 5% reduction on their commercial waste management fee.
- **Other regulations:** Beyond the regulatory and fiscal bylaws on waste prevention and management, the municipality includes some references to waste prevention in specific regulations – such as the Regulations of the Viladecans Municipal Market and the Regulations of the Municipal Market of Plaça de la Constitució, in force since 2012 and 2014 respectively. Both regulations include, in Chapter XI, the development of waste prevention measures through a specific waste plan for the markets (...)
- **Plans and Programmes:** The municipality has several plans addressing the issue of waste generation – particularly plastic waste – and sets out measures to tackle it:
 - **Single-Use Plastic Reduction Action Plan** (2019) presents 15 detailed actions across 5 areas of intervention for eliminating single-use plastics in Viladecans:
 - *Elimination of single-use plastics in public spaces;*
 - *Elimination of plastics in shops;*
 - *Elimination of plastics in municipal premises;*
 - *Elimination of plastics and sustainable criteria in procurement and subsidy frameworks;*
 - *Public awareness-raising.*
 - **The Municipal Greening Project to Reduce Single-Use Plastics in Viladecans** was developed in 2021 and remains in force. It brings together 10 actions – some carried over from the previous plan, some new – with the same goal of reducing single-use plastics across various areas.

- **Local Municipal Waste Prevention Plan 2021–2025** is currently in force, incorporating 3 actions aimed at preventing various types of plastic waste, primarily single-use:
 - *Promotion of reusable wrapping and lunchboxes for schoolchildren;*
 - *Creation of a reusable tableware service for parties and events;*
 - *Reduction of single-use plastics (promotion of bulk purchasing).*

III. Baseline situation / Municipal diagnosis

This section serves as the factual foundation of the entire single-use waste prevention plan: **without a clear baseline, it is impossible to set realistic objectives, prioritise measures, or demonstrate progress over time.**

We strongly recommend that municipalities invest time in compiling the most complete and up-to-date local data available before drafting the rest of this plan. This baseline will become the reference point against which all future impact – reductions in waste generation, cost savings, behaviour change – will be measured and reported.

The baseline should capture both quantitative data (figures, statistics, costs) and qualitative context (local infrastructure gaps, stakeholder landscape, political or operational constraints).

Where official local data is unavailable, municipalities may draw on regional or national averages, estimates from waste management operators, or proxy indicators – while clearly flagging these as approximations to be refined over time.

What indicators can be included?

- **Waste generation & composition**
 - Total municipal solid waste generated annually (in tonnes), and per inhabitant;
 - Mixed waste generated annually (in tonnes), and per inhabitant;
 - Annual costs for disposal of mixed waste (or the fee per ton);
 - Results of any waste composition audits or characterisation studies, particularly those identifying the quantity and type of single-use packaging items in mixed-waste;
 - Estimated quantities of single-use packaging consumed locally per year (e.g. cups, bottles, bags, food containers), drawing on retailer data, event records, or national consumption statistics;

- Annual costs for street cleaning of litter (if available).
- **Event and public space footprint**
 - Number and size of public events organised or permitted by the municipality annually;
 - Average waste generation at the main public events, with a breakdown by material type where available;
 - Current practices around single-use items at events;
 - Number and type of public buildings, facilities, and outdoor spaces managed by the municipality;
 - Current procurement practices related to single-use items within key procurement categories (e.g. what is being purchased, in which quantities).
- **Social and behavioural context**
 - Available data on citizen awareness of or attitudes toward plastic waste and single-use reduction (e.g. from surveys, public consultations, or participation in previous campaigns);
 - Existing local initiatives, associations, or businesses (e.g. solution providers) already active in the reuse or zero waste space.

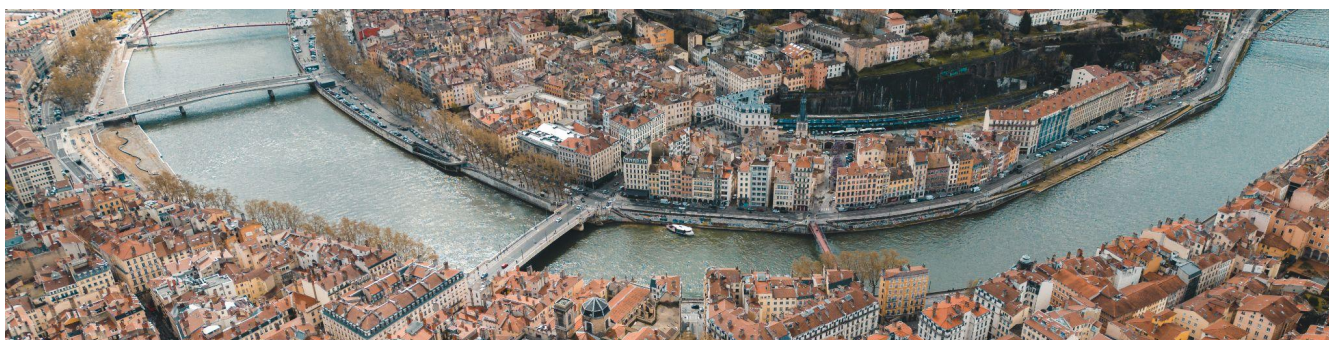
Information about the municipal context can also be added – e.g. : population, density, economy, as well as more data on main packaging waste main generators, e.g. numbers of HoReCA businesses and type, number of municipal facilities and type.

IV. Objectives of the single-use waste prevention plan

In this section, the short (1-2 years), medium (3-4 years) and long-term (5-10) objectives/targets to be achieved by the measures adopted under the plan must be clearly defined. Ideally, those should be ambitious, yet realistic and achievable – and determined in relation to the baseline assessment.

Moreover, those objectives should be correlated to existing EU, national, regional and/or municipal targets.

Finally, they should be clearly correlated to the level of ambition and implementation timeline of the policies and measures described in the plan.



Example from [Lyon Zero Waste Plan](#)

Main objective of the plan: Accelerate the phase-out of single-use plastics, notably by promoting reuse systems and alternatives such as deposit-return schemes

The 7 objectives of the plan:

1. **Limit single-use plastic in public procurement:** Reduce the use of single-use plastics through public purchasing policies and contracts.
2. **Promote tap water consumption:** Encourage drinking tap water to reduce the use of plastic bottles.
3. **Make reusable tableware standard in public events:** Require the use of reusable (often deposit-based) tableware in events held in public spaces.
4. **Generalise reusable tableware in public facilities:** Extend the use of reusable dishes and containers across all metropolitan facilities (offices, schools, services, etc.).

5. **Prevent plastic pollution in water and natural environments:** Reduce the leakage of plastics into sewage systems and natural ecosystems.
6. **Raise awareness and support citizens:** Inform and guide residents and stakeholders toward “zero plastic” practices.
7. **Support municipalities and stakeholders:** Assist municipalities, businesses, and organizations in reducing single-use plastics and adopting reusable solutions.

V. Single-use waste prevention measures

This section presents a toolbox of priority measures and policies for municipalities committed to reducing single-use waste. These measures were identified based on municipal competences and key levers of influence, as well as the main hotspots for single-use consumption and generation: procurement, events, public buildings, and public spaces.

Each measure is described succinctly here, but should be developed in full within the municipality's single-use waste prevention plan – covering its content, scope, objectives, implementation approach, budget estimate, and timeline.

Note that this list is not exhaustive. Each municipality should select the measures that make the most sense for its specific context.

Adopting and implementing the plan is expected to take several years – timing that can ideally be aligned with the electoral cycle, so results are visible and mobilisable before the next election. Annual audits should track progress along the way, flagging what's working, what isn't, and where the next round of measures should focus,



1 Ban or restrictions on single-use plastic (SUP) items in key hotspots

Content

Establish criteria in public procurement and local regulations to limit or prohibit single-use items in key consumption hotspots within your jurisdiction mandating reusable alternatives. As a municipality, your direct authority covers:

- Public and municipal events
- Municipal buildings and offices
- Public schools and kindergartens

✗ Avoid false alternatives

Substituting single-use plastic with single-use paper, or single-use biodegradable and compostable packaging, does not solve the underlying problem. The goals should be single-use waste prevention and packaging reuse, not material substitution.

Legal grounding

Municipal authority to act does not come from EU law directly – it derives from local procurement rules, permitting conditions, and regulations over events, public buildings and spaces. However, the **EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD, Directive EU 2019/904)** and the **Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)** provide useful definitional and political reference points that should be used consistently.

Local restrictions can therefore be based on the SUPD's definition of a single-use plastic product (Article 3): *any product made wholly or partly of plastic, designed or intended to be used once or for a short period before being discarded, and that is rarely recycled and prone to becoming litter.*

Two key levers

- Public procurement: Embed "zero single-use" requirements directly in tender specifications and contract clauses, either as binding conditions for contract award or as scoring criteria. This can create consistent demand for refillable/reusable alternatives across everything the municipality purchases.
- Regulatory and permitting powers: Attach conditions to event permits, concession agreements, market licences, and authorisations for the use of public spaces, requiring organisers and operators to restrict or prohibit single-use items and mandate reusable packaging for food, drinks, and cutlery.

Desired objectives

- Reduce single-use waste generation and related pollution;
- Lower cleaning and waste management costs associated with mixed-waste generation and littering;
- Increase the uptake and availability of refillable and reusable alternatives;
- Stimulate new business models and drive innovation in the refill and reuse sector;
- Lead by exemplarity.

Conditions of implementation

- Clear regulatory framework: define precisely which items are prohibited or restricted, which alternatives are permitted, and in which contexts. Unambiguous rules are essential for consistent compliance and enforcement.
- Circular procurement criteria: Embed restrictions and reuse obligations directly into tender specifications, evaluation criteria, and contract clauses – prioritising procurement categories with the highest single-use consumption, such as catering. Criteria should ideally reflect the full environmental profile of products reusability, durability, and end-of-life recyclability – so that contracts systematically favour sustainable over single-use options.
- Stakeholder engagement and capacity building: Consult and engage affected parties early and consistently: event organisers, catering operators, public staff, suppliers, and contractors. Explain new requirements clearly, train key stakeholders, provide practical guidance on transitioning to reusable and refillable alternatives, and resolve operational concerns before rules enter into force.
- Monitoring and enforcement: Track compliance and measure impact through regular inspections, mandatory operator reporting, and dissuasive penalties for non-compliance. Findings should feed into periodic reviews, allowing the measure to be adjusted where needed.

Budget

Budget requirements will vary depending on the municipality's size, the scope of measures adopted, and the level of enforcement ambition. Costs to consider include permit administration, staff training, public awareness campaigns, incentives to support the transition to reusable alternatives, monitoring and enforcement capacity.

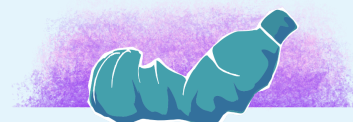
2 Packaging reuse system for take-away food and beverages

Content: Introduce a city-wide reuse system for take-away food and beverages, covering food service establishments, public buildings, and events. Such a system operates across three interconnected levels:

- **Municipal leadership:**
 - The municipality leads by example internally by making reusable tableware – trays, dishes, cutlery, cups, and containers – standard practice across public canteens, internal catering, and municipal events. It can also support private event organisers, particularly smaller ones, by providing access to reusable items and logistical assistance, and makes reuse a condition of event permit authorisation with clear and transparent criteria.
 - At city level, the municipality can go further by launching a public tender for a city-wide reuse system for take-away food and beverages – as piloted in Aarhus and Copenhagen – and supports local HoReCa businesses in transitioning to reuse through targeted communication, financial incentives, and subsidies.
- **Local business integration:** Retail and HoReCa (hotel, restaurant, and catering) businesses are connected with locally active reuse solution providers, enabling them to adopt standardised reusable packaging systems. Upfront city-level coordination and communication support helps achieve the critical volume needed for schemes to become economically viable.
- **Return and washing infrastructure:** The system must be underpinned by reliable return and cleaning infrastructure: strategically located deposit-refund points and drop-off locations where customers can return used packaging for washing and reuse. A feasibility assessment for centralised washing infrastructure should be conducted early in the planning process, as this is often the key bottleneck for scaling reuse systems effectively.

Desired objectives

- Reduce single-use waste generation and related pollution;
- Lower cleaning and waste management costs associated with mixed-waste generation and littering;
- Increase the uptake and availability of packaging reuse alternatives;
- Create new business models and opportunities for innovation.



Conditions of implementation

- Public procurement as the foundation: Launch a public tender setting out clear and binding requirements for the system providers, covering: interoperability, user-friendliness and inclusivity, packaging formats, return infrastructure, washing capacity, deposit mechanism, and geographic coverage. Procurement is the primary instrument through which the municipality defines the system it wants to see, and should be initiated early – ahead of wider rollout to businesses and the public.
- Legal and permitting framework: Embed reuse requirements in event permits, concession agreements, market licences, and authorisations for the use of public spaces. This gives the system regulatory teeth beyond voluntary participation and ensures consistent application across operators.
- Collaboration with local businesses and reuse solution providers: Establish partnerships between local businesses and reuse solution providers through networking opportunities, workshops, and platforms connecting businesses with suppliers. Engage businesses early – before rules enter into force – to surface operational concerns and build capacity for the transition.
- Incentives and communication: Support business uptake through financial incentives such as subsidies or reduced fees for early adopters. Run parallel public communication campaigns to drive user behaviour – explaining how the return system works, where drop-off points are located, and what the deposit covers. These are distinct audiences requiring distinct approaches.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Track return rates, participation levels, and waste reduction outcomes through regular reporting by operators and periodic municipal reviews. Data collected should feed directly into adjustments to the scheme – including deposit levels, infrastructure coverage, and enforcement where compliance is low.

Budget

Budget requirements vary significantly depending on the municipality's size, the scope of measures adopted, the enforcement approach, and the degree to which the city directly operates, subsidises, or supports the reuse system – as opposed to delegating it entirely to a private operator through procurement.

3

Promote, support and expand zero-packaging consumption solutions

Content: Municipalities can actively steer citizens and businesses toward zero-packaging consumption habits - including Bring Your Own (BYO), bulk shopping, and in-store refill solutions.

Three key levers

- **Regulations and procurements:**

- Where national legislation already requires businesses to accept consumer-owned containers or retailers to offer refill options, municipalities should ensure good enforcement and visibility of these obligations.
- Where no such obligation exists, municipalities can use their own tools to drive change, by embedding BYO and refill requirements in public procurement specifications for municipal facilities, and incorporating refill-friendly conditions in event permits and concession agreements. For example, cities require food and beverage vendors operating on public land to accept consumer-owned containers. This municipal ambition is now reinforced by the PPWR. As of February 2027, all takeaway businesses will be legally obliged to offer customers the option of bringing their own food and beverage containers to be filled at no extra charge. Municipalities can anticipate and reinforce these obligations in their own permitting conditions ahead of those deadlines.

- **Business support and partnerships:** Partnerships and incentive programmes with local businesses – cafés, restaurants, small retailers – can help expand the refill and bulk offer across the city. Support can include

- Practical guidance on setting up refill stations or bulk sections, including addressing the most common misconceptions around hygiene, liability, and operational complexity.
- Financial support covering capital investment (CAPEX) for individuals/businesses opening a bulk store, zero waste retail outlet or installing refill infrastructure.

- **Incentives and behaviour change**

- Offer discounts or vouchers to customers who bring their own containers, cups, cutlery, or bags – in municipal facilities and at permitted events.
- Run public communication campaigns promoting BYO culture, using behavioural nudges to normalise zero-packaging habits among citizens.



Desired objectives

- Reduce single-use waste generation and related pollution;
- Lower cleaning and waste management costs associated with mixed-waste generation and littering;
- Increase the uptake and availability of packaging reuse alternatives;
- Create new business models and opportunities for innovation.

Conditions of implementation

- Legal and regulatory basis: Embed BYO and refill requirements in event permits, concession agreements, and market licences. Where national law allows, use these instruments to anticipate the PPWR's February 2027 obligation for all takeaway businesses to accept consumer-owned containers at no extra charge. Requirements should specify which products and contexts are covered and what alternatives must be available.
- Stakeholder engagement and capacity building: Engage event organisers, retailers, and HoReCa operators before requirements enter into force. Workshops and direct municipal support help smaller businesses navigate the transition and address common concerns around hygiene, liability, and logistics.
- Financial mechanisms: Define which incentives and subsidies are available, who is eligible, and through what process.
- Communication: Offer discounts or vouchers to customers who bring their own containers, cups, cutlery, or bags – in municipal facilities and at permitted events. Run public communication campaigns promoting BYO culture, using behavioural nudges to normalise zero-packaging habits. Publicly recognise businesses and events that lead on adoption through certificates, awards, or municipal communications.
- Partnerships with local organisations: Establish relationships with environmental groups, zero waste networks, and local nonprofits early in the process. These organisations provide outreach capacity and community trust that municipalities typically cannot replicate alone.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Track uptake of BYO and refill options, participation by businesses, and waste reduction outcomes. Findings should feed into periodic reviews of permit conditions, incentive levels, and communication approaches.

Budget

Budget requirements vary significantly, primarily depending on whether the municipality limits itself to regulatory measures or extends into active business support through subsidies, grants, citizen incentive schemes and comms support – which can represent a substantial investment depending on ambition and scale.

Install and expand the network of public water refill stations

Content: Water refill stations are installed in key public hotspots. These stations are visible, recognisable and inclusive by design. They provide access to clean drinking public water, encouraging citizens to use reusable water bottles instead of single-use plastic bottles.

Desired objectives

- Reduce single-use waste generation and related pollution;
- Lower cleaning and waste management costs associated with mixed-waste generation and littering;
- Improved public access to free drinking water;
- Increased normalisation of reusable bottle use among citizens.

Conditions of implementation

- Strategic placement: Map high-traffic, accessible locations where single-use bottle consumption is highest: busy pedestrian zones, parks, playgrounds, transport hubs, schools, and recurring event sites. Placement should prioritise visibility and proximity to where people actually need water.
- Inclusive and recognisable design: Stations should be easy to use for all groups, including children, elderly users, and people with disabilities. A consistent visual identity across the network helps citizens recognise and trust the infrastructure.
- Awareness and signage: Launch a public communication campaign informing citizens of station locations and the environmental case for switching to reusable bottles. On-site signage should be clear, multilingual where relevant, and positioned to prompt use at the moment it matters.
- Maintenance and hygiene: Establish a regular maintenance and cleaning schedule to keep stations operational and hygienic. Monitor usage patterns to anticipate failures, prioritise servicing of high-use locations, and address issues promptly.



5

Implement a local tax on single-use packaging

Content: In some EU member states, municipalities have the competence to introduce a tax on single-use packaging items used for immediate consumption: such as food containers and cutlery. The measure serves three simultaneous goals: discouraging single-use consumption, incentivising reusable alternatives, and generating public revenue that can be reinvested in reuse infrastructure and broader environmental policies.

Before proceeding, municipalities must verify that this competence exists under national law, as it varies significantly across Member States.

Desired objectives

- Reduce single-use waste generation and related pollution;
- Lower cleaning and waste management costs associated with mixed-waste generation and littering;
- Increase the uptake and availability of packaging reuse alternatives;
- Create new business models and opportunities for innovation.

Conditions of implementation

- Legal feasibility: Verify that the municipality holds the legal competence to introduce such a tax under national law. Identify any constraints on taxable items, rate-setting, or revenue use. Where this competence does not exist, consider advocating for it at national level or pursuing alternative levers such as voluntary agreements with businesses or stricter permit conditions.
- Tax design: Define the scope precisely: which items are taxable, at what rate, and with what exemptions. The tax rate should be set at a level sufficient to meaningfully shift behaviour – too low and it has no effect; too high without reusable alternatives available and it becomes regressive. Consider phased introduction to allow businesses to adapt.
- Revenue allocation: While earmarking the generated revenue towards specific policies might not always be possible, the city should guarantee transparent, public reporting on how much funds are being generated thanks to the tax and what outcomes they produce, which is essential for maintaining public and business trust.
- Business and consumer engagement: Consult affected businesses early and meaningfully, before the tax is designed – not just before it enters into force. Their operational concerns around reporting, compliance costs, and the availability of reusable alternatives should shape the design of the measure, not be addressed after the fact. Reporting requirements should be simple and proportionate; administrative burden is one of the primary sources of business opposition and can undermine compliance. Where possible, complement the tax with subsidies or transition support to help businesses invest in reusable alternatives. On the consumer side, communication should focus on the logic and fairness of the tax: what it funds, what alternatives exist, and how

it benefits the local environment. Acceptance is significantly higher when citizens understand where the money goes.

- Monitoring and evaluation: Track changes in single-use item consumption, litter and single-use waste volume decrease in public bins, revenue generated, and reuse uptake over time.

Budget

Implementation costs are low relative to revenue generated. Tübingen's experience is illustrative: the city collected over €1 million in packaging tax revenue in 2022, against administrative costs of approximately €100,000.



6

Embed zero single-use criteria in public procurement across key procurement categories

Content: Public procurement is one of the most powerful levers available to municipalities for reducing single-use materials. By embedding zero single use binding requirements and reuse obligations directly into tender specifications, evaluation criteria, and contract clauses, municipalities can drive structural change across their supply chains – sending a clear market sign and setting an example for other organisations.

Procurement criteria should target categories where single-use consumption is highest, prioritised by volume of waste generated, supplier maturity, and ease of monitoring. Priority categories include:

- Catering (schools, canteens, childcare centres): Require reusable containers, cutlery, and trays; prohibit single-use plastic packaging for meals, desserts, and water; implement reuse system and refillable options, washing and return logistics.
- Beverages and water dispensing: End the procurement of single-use plastic water bottles across municipal facilities; replace with water dispensers, reusable bottles, and returnable containers.
- Office supplies and stationery: Give preference to plastic-free or reduced-plastic options; encourage the procurement of second-hand, refurbished, or bulk alternatives for pens, folders, IT equipment, and furniture.
- Cleaning products: Specify eco-friendly, plastic-free cleaning products in municipal cleaning contracts; require suppliers to offer refillable or bulk options to reduce packaging waste.
- Supplies and logistics: Restrict plastic overwrap films and disposable bags in deliveries; require reusable pallets, textile straps, and multi-unit or bulk packaging wherever possible.
- Particular attention should be paid to avoiding false alternatives: substituting single-use plastic with single-use paper, bio-based, or compostable packaging does not address the underlying problem. Prevention at source and reuse is the priority; recycling is a last resort.

Desired objectives

- Reduced single-use plastic waste and related pollution across municipal operations;
- Increased uptake of reusable and bulk alternatives;
- Lower waste management and cleaning costs;
- Development of second-hand markets and circular business models;
- Behavioural change among municipal staff toward sustainable procurement practices;
- Leadership and example-setting for other organisations and suppliers.

Conditions of implementation

- Internal governance: Appoint an internal “single-use reduction” lead responsible for coordinating across departments, maintaining a shared set of standard contractual clauses, training procurement officers and specifiers, and centralising field feedback. Success depends on clear, structured, and shared internal governance

- this cannot be left to individual procurement officers acting in isolation.

- Preliminary sourcing and feasibility: Before drafting contractual clauses, conduct upstream sourcing to identify available solutions and assess supplier maturity, logistics constraints, and cost implications. Clauses that cannot be implemented or monitored are ineffective – requirements must be proportionate to what the market can deliver.
- Standard contractual clauses: Develop a shared set of standard contractual clauses covering: binding prohibitions on single-use items for priority categories; reuse obligations and performance targets (e.g. minimum 95% container reuse rate); annual quantitative reporting by suppliers on packaging used, % of reusable alternatives, graduated penalties for non-compliance, up to and including contract termination.
- Training of procurement officers and specifiers: Train staff on applicable regulations (SUPD, PPWR, and relevant national law), available alternatives, how to draft zero single-use clauses in technical specifications, and how to monitor compliance in the field. Tailored sessions for procurement officers and specifiers respectively are recommended.
- Procurement information system: Most municipalities currently lack the tools to track which contracts contain zero single-use clauses. In the short term, a shared spreadsheet with a mandatory "single-use reduction clause: yes/no" field is a practical starting point. Medium-term, this should be integrated into the procurement information system to enable automatic reporting.
- Targeted monitoring: If the full monitoring of all contracts is often not realistic, then focus on two to four contracts per year, selected by plastic volume, supplier risk profile, and visibility. Use a simple monitoring grid with on-site inspections of 10 to 20 minutes, and document discrepancies with photos and assessment forms.
- Phased rollout: Start with pilot procurement contracts in mature categories (e.g. school catering), measure initial KPIs, and expand progressively:
 - Year 1: pilot contracts and simple activity KPIs;
 - Year 2: expansion to additional categories;
 - Year 3: consolidation and impact KPIs (number of single-use items avoided, CO₂ avoided through reuse).

Budget

Primary costs cover staff time for training and coordination, development of the standard contractual clauses library, and communication to suppliers. Monitoring costs are low if targeted as described above.

7 Establish smoke-free areas and cigarette butt collection infrastructure in public spaces

Content: Cigarette butts are the most littered item in public spaces worldwide and contain plastic filters – making them a significant source of microplastic pollution in urban environments, waterways, and soil. This measure combines two complementary approaches: designating smoke-free areas in key public hotspots – especially in environments particularly vulnerable to littering – such as beaches and parks, and installing dedicated cigarette butt collection bins at high-traffic points to ensure proper disposal where smoking continues to take place.

Desired objectives

- Reduced plastic pollution from cigarette butt litter in public spaces and waterways;
- Lower cleaning and waste management costs;
- Cleaner and healthier public environments, with reduced secondhand smoke exposure;
- Increased public awareness of cigarette butts as a plastic pollution problem.

Conditions of implementation

- Designation of smoke-free areas: Identify and designate smoke-free zones in high-footfall public spaces and vulnerable environments: beaches, parks, playgrounds, outdoor markets, transport stops, and entrances to public buildings. Install clear, standardised signage at all entry points. Smoke-free designation should be grounded in existing local regulatory powers or national legislation where applicable, and enforced consistently.
- Strategic placement of collection bins: Install dedicated, clearly identifiable cigarette butt collection bins at the boundaries of smoke-free zones and at other high-traffic smoking points. Placement should be data-informed – prioritising locations where butt litter is highest – and bins should be weather-resistant, easy to use, and regularly serviced.
- Public awareness: Run targeted communication campaigns explaining why cigarette butts are a plastic pollution problem as this is not widely understood by the public. Promote the use of collection infrastructure. Campaigns should be coordinated with the rollout of new bins and smoke-free signage to reinforce the message at the right moment.

Budget

Primary costs cover bin procurement and installation, signage, and ongoing maintenance and servicing. However, the initial investment and operating costs should be offset by the benefits resulting from reduced costs associated with littering, particularly cigarette butts.

8

Promote reusable nappies in public crèches and kindergartens as well as menstrual items

Content: Disposable nappies and single-use menstrual products are two of the most significant (and least visible) sources of plastic waste generated through municipal facilities. A baby uses approximately 4,000 nappies before potty training; a person menstruating uses an estimated 11,000 single-use menstrual products in their lifetime. Both product categories are dominated by single-use plastic items, generate significant residual waste, and have well-established reusable alternatives that are operationally viable and financially competitive over time.



Municipalities can act on both fronts through their direct authority over public crèches, kindergartens, schools, and other public facilities – using public procurement and targeted incentive programmes to shift consumption at scale.

Desired objectives

- Reduced plastic waste and residual waste generation from disposable nappies and single-use menstrual products;
- Lower waste collection and management costs in municipal facilities such as daycare centers;
- Health co-benefits: reduced skin irritation for babies, reduced chemical exposure for menstruating people;
- Normalisation of reuse practices among families and young people from an early age.

Conditions of implementation

- Public procurement as the foundation: Commission a public service contract for the hire, collection, cleaning, and redistribution of washable nappies to crèches.
- Phased rollout starting with a pilot: Begin with one or two volunteer crèches with motivated management and staff. Early success builds the evidence base and internal confidence needed to expand.
- Staff training and engagement: Staff motivation is a decisive factor in the speed of transition. Training should cover washable nappy use and care, ideally embedded in a broader ecological approach to the facility – including natural cleaning products, reusable alternatives for food containers, and zero single-use objectives. This holistic framing increases staff buy-in and public credibility.
- Incentives and subsidies: Introduce financial incentives to support the transition to reusable menstrual product and/or reusable nappies: subsidies or vouchers for menstrual cups, reusable pads, or period underwear, available through municipal health services, schools, or community centres.

Budget

The budget required would depend on the scale of implementation, the number of kindergartens involved, and the level of incentives and subsidies provided. It would also include costs for educational materials, workshops or training sessions, promotional campaigns, subsidies or discounts for reusable nappies, and ongoing support and monitoring.

VI. Supporting annexes

The annexes bring this to life with real-world examples: policies already implemented by municipalities in the Elevating Reuse in Cities and Reuse Vanguard projects (RSVP) and beyond, alongside supporting reference documents.

1. Examples from frontrunner municipalities

Reuse obligation at events

Associated measure: n°1 – Ban or restrictions on SUP items in key hotspots

Location: Brussels (ERIC project partner-city)

Objective: Reduce single-use waste and litter associated with beverages sold in disposable cups at events

More info: [Règlement Communal](#)

Beginning in 2026, the City of Brussels has adopted a regulation mandating the use of reusable cups at events. From 1 September 2026, the City of Brussels the use of disposable cups – regardless of material – will be banned from all events held in public spaces. Reusable cups will therefore become mandatory, and organisers will be legally required to set up a full reuse system: providing reusable cups, collecting and returning them after use, cleaning them, and putting them back into circulation for the next cycle. More importantly, the regulation is expressively mandating results – as such, simply supplying reusable packaging won't be enough – and organisers will have to guarantee a minimum 90% return rate as well as report the data proving it. Food packaging reuse isn't mandatory yet, but the city is already encouraging organisers to test solutions, with a possible extension of the obligations by 2028.

City-wide reuse system pilot for cups

Associated measure: n°2 – Packaging reuse system for take-away food and beverages

Location: Aarhus (RSVP project partner-city), Denmark

Project: [REUSEABLE](#)

Objective: Reduce single-use waste and litter associated with beverages sold in disposable cups

More info: [“Denmark is making reuse the norm: learnings from the study visit to Copenhagen and Aarhus”](#)

In Aarhus, roughly half of the waste collected from street cleaning and public bins comes from takeaway food packaging – with to-go cups among the top offenders. To tackle this, the city launched the REUSEABLE project on 17 January 2024: a three-year trial run in partnership between TOMRA Reuse, a division of the Norwegian company TOMRA, and the Municipality of Aarhus.

Today, over 50 businesses participate in the system, and Reverse Vending Machines – placed at key hotspots across the city-center – make returning cups quick and convenient for users. The results speak for themselves: less than 1% of reusable cups end up in city waste bins, and the system has achieved an 88% return rate. In total, 1.8 million cups have been reused, avoiding more than 20 tonnes of waste – equivalent to the volume of nearly 20,000 filled public bins.

“Bring Your Own” city-wide campaign

Associated measure: n°3 – Promote, support and expand zero-packaging consumption solutions

Location: Viladecans (ERIC project partner-city and MiZA Zero Waste Candidate City), Catalonia

Campaign: “*Fes un pas, porta l'envàs*”

Objective: Promote zero packaging consumption practices among citizens

More info: [“Tackling plastic waste locally: A Catalan success story”](#)

In Viladecans, the “[Fes un pas, porta l'envàs](#)” (“Take a step, bring your container”) campaign encouraged citizens to shop at local retailers using their own reusable containers, run by the Town Council's Environment and Sustainability Department. In only three months, 82 shops signed up and 115 families took part, generating 3,807 purchases made with at least one reusable item and avoiding 8,504 disposable items – including 2,856 plastic containers, 5,510 bags and 138 egg cups. Given the high satisfaction reported by both businesses and citizens, the Town Council is considering repeating similar campaigns in the future.

Zero plastic waste water

Associated measure: n°4 – Install and expand the network of public water refill stations

Location: Paris, France

Objective: Promote the consumption of tap water among citizens

More info: Eau de Paris [website](#)

Paris operates an extensive network of over 1,200 public drinking fountains across the city, run by the public water utility Eau de Paris. A [map](#) on Eau de Paris website is also available to facilitate the location of the nearest fountain. A street poster campaign promoting the consumption of Paris tap water is also being run throughout the city, aimed at strengthening public trust in the quality of the water and of the public service.

Since 2010, the utility has also rolled out sparkling water fountains (“fontaines pétillantes”) at several high-visibility public sites, aiming to make tap water more appealing and further discourage bottled water consumption. The network is actively promoted through the “Paris de l'eau” campaign, developed with Surfrider Foundation Europe, encouraging citizens to refill rather than buy single-use bottles.

A city wide tax on single-use packaging take-away items

Associated measure: n°5 – Implement a local tax on single use packaging

Location: Tübingen, Germany

Objectives: Reduce street littering and promote reuse systems

More info: [The Story of Tübingen](#)

Like many tourist and university cities, Tübingen faced mounting problems from single-use “to-go” packaging: overflowing public bins, littered streets, and rising municipal cleanup costs, with waste disposal in public spaces draining resources needed elsewhere. The idea for the tax came from Tübingen's city council, which wanted to tackle the city's

ongoing litter and waste problem. The city calculated that it spent an average of €700,000 a year cleaning up and disposing of waste in public spaces, 90% of which covered personnel costs. City officials estimated that 70% of the waste collected in public bins was single-use packaging, highlighting the need to prevent this waste at the source. To counter this, Tübingen introduced a city-wide tax on single-use packaging (50 cents) and cutlery (20 cents) in 2022 to cut litter and waste. Paired for a time with subsidies for reusables and dishwashers, the measure made Tübingen home to Germany's highest per-capita number of restaurants offering reusable alternatives.

Zero single-use in catering services

Associated measure: n°6 – Embed zero single-use criteria in public procurement across key procurement categories

Location: Lyon, France

Objectives: Phase out single-use materials from public procurement

More info: [Reducing single-use plastic packaging in public procurement](#)

The Métropole de Lyon, covering 58 municipalities and 1.4 million inhabitants, embedded single-use plastic elimination directly into its catering framework contract (2023–2026), covering everything from protocol receptions to packed lunches. The approach is straightforward: all disposable plastic tableware, containers, and decorative items are forbidden, hard reusable tableware is mandatory, and individual packaging must be avoided. The only exception is packed/picnic meals, where recyclable or biodegradable cardboard is permitted.

Rather than writing abstract commitments, the Métropole built the requirement into binding technical specifications and weighted environmental performance at 10% of the award criteria, making zero single-use plastic a condition of winning the contract, not a nice-to-have.

Four years in, the results speak for themselves: zero waste practices are now embedded in supplier operations, the contract has helped consolidate local eco-responsible catering businesses, and the model is being extended across the authority's entire procurement framework. A new, more demanding contract is already planned for 2026.

City-wide smoke-free beach policy

Associated measure: n°7 – Establish smoke-free areas and cigarette butt collection infrastructure in public spaces

Location: Barcelona, Catalonia

Objectives: Reduce litter and the resulting pollution caused by cigarette butts

More info: [Barcelona City council portal](#)

Barcelona expanded its smoke-free policy to all municipal beaches in 2022, following a 2021 pilot on four beaches, including Bogatell and Sant Sebastià. The ban does not apply to beach bars or promenades. Smoking is prohibited on the sand and in the bathing area, with signage marking the smoke-free beaches and municipal authorities authorised to issue fines for repeated violations. Although the ordinance included penalties from the outset, the city initially emphasised public education and voluntary compliance over enforcement. The policy was introduced as both a public health and environmental measure aimed at reducing secondhand smoke exposure and cigarette-butt litter. Early evaluations found significantly fewer people smoking on the affected beaches, reduced cigarette litter, and high levels of public support, encouraging other Spanish coastal municipalities to adopt similar smoke-free beach policies.

Reusable nappies pilot programme

Associated measure: n°8 – Promote reusable nappies in public crèches and kindergartens as well as menstrual items

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Objectives: Reduce the amount of waste represented by disposable nappies

More info: [Washable nappies in the City of Brussels' 40 communal crèches by the end of 2026](#)

Every year, the City of Brussels' municipal crèches care for up to 1,700 children and use nearly 1.5 million disposable nappies. On average, each crèche generates around six and a half bin bags of used nappies per day – equivalent to approximately 51,480 bin bags, or 242 tonnes of waste sent to incineration each year. To reduce this waste across its 40 municipal crèches, the city launched a pilot programme in 2020, awarding an initial 12-month contract to introduce washable, reusable nappies in two eco-crèches in Laeken. Following the pilot's success, the city awarded a new 12-month contract in 2023 to continue the programme in the original two crèches while gradually expanding it to seven additional facilities. In 2024, the rollout extended to 20 crèches, with plans to continue expanding the programme incrementally thereafter.

2. Resources

[RSVP – Blueprint for harmonising the implementation of takeaway food and drinks packaging systems for reuse in Europe](#)

This Blueprint provides public authorities, Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs), and other stakeholders with a strategic, practical guide for designing and scaling reuse systems. It draws on hands-on learnings from seven leading European cities under the ReuSe Vanguard Project. The five essential system criteria outlined – effectiveness, recognition, interoperability, inclusiveness, and guaranteed safety – provide a structured approach to building systems that are legally compliant, user-friendly, high-performing, and future-proof.

[ERIC – Guidelines: Reducing Single Use Plastic Packaging in Public Procurement](#)

This document is a practical guide from Zero Waste France, produced as part of the Elevating Reuse in Cities project. It focuses specifically on how local authorities can reduce single-use plastic packaging through public procurement. Three local authorities (Lyon, Nantes, Bordeaux) are cited as the pilot participants shaping this methodology.



Zero Waste Europe (ZWE) is the European network of communities, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards a better use of resources and the elimination of waste in our society. We advocate for sustainable systems; for the redesign of our relationship with resources; and for a global shift towards environmental justice, accelerating a just transition towards zero waste for the benefit of people and the planet.

www.zerowasteurope.eu



The Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project supports 10 municipalities, selected for their drive and determination, reaching nearly 4 million EU citizens together across Slovenia, Spain, Belgium, France, and Portugal. The focus is on reuse systems at public events and single-use-free public procurement, two areas where real, measurable change is already happening.



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Authors: Manon Jourdan (Zero Waste Europe)
Editors: Jack McQuibban, Giulia Lodi (Zero Waste Europe)
Date: August 2026

General information: hello@zerowasteeurope.eu
Media: news@zerowasteeurope.eu
Cities-related topics: cities@zerowasteeurope.eu

www.zerowasteeurope.eu
www.zerowastecities.eu
www.missionzeroacademy.eu

