

Change(K)now!



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Solutions for circular food delivery systems

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

Interreg
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CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Change(K)now!

Solutions for circular food delivery systems

Strategic management and communication framework

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Strategic Framework for Circular Food Delivery Systems	4
2.1	Purpose of the strategic framework solution	4
2.2	The elements of the strategic framework	5
2.3	Three levels of strategic documents	6
2.4	Public procurement as a strategic instrument.....	10
2.5	Communication and collaboration	11
3	Step-by-Step Guidance for Developing the Strategic Framework	14
	STEP 1. Get organised	14
	STEP 2. Assess the current situation	17
	STEP 3. Formulate the strategic framework.....	19
	STEP 4. Endorse, implement and monitor	22

1 Introduction

Food delivery systems, including institutional catering, catering at public events, and takeaway and home delivery services, are a major and growing source of single-use packaging and food-related plastic waste in municipalities around the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). While technical solutions for reusable containers and packaging exist, their uptake remains limited due to fragmented governance, insufficient regulatory support, weak market signals, and low awareness among both providers and consumers.

Experience from BSR municipalities shows that **isolated measures** (e.g. pilot reuse schemes or voluntary guidelines) are not sufficient to achieve a systemic shift from single-use to circular food delivery systems. What is needed instead is a **strategic framework** at the municipal level: a structured, planned, and communicated approach that aligns long-term goals, regulatory instruments, operational guidance, procurement practices, and stakeholder engagement.

This guidance provides municipalities with a **step-by-step approach to developing such a strategic framework**, adapted to local circumstances, capacities, and legal contexts. The framework supports municipalities in:

- setting objectives and targets for circular food delivery,
- creating enabling regulatory and procurement conditions,
- communication and providing guidance for implementation,
- monitoring progress towards agreed goals and targets.

The guidance is intended for municipalities of different sizes and administrative cultures – from those with well-established circular economy strategies to those relying primarily on political commitment and voluntary measures.

2 Strategic Framework for Circular Food Delivery Systems

2.1 Purpose of the strategic framework solution

The strategic framework for circular food delivery systems provides **coherence and continuity** from political ambition and regulatory action to everyday operational practices and stakeholder communication. Its purpose is to ensure that solutions and measures to reduce single-use food packaging are not implemented as isolated or short-term actions but are embedded within a long-term strategic management, governance, and communication approach at the local authority level.

The framework supports municipalities and public institutions in creating the enabling conditions necessary for the transition toward more circular food systems. This includes setting strategic goals, establishing clear responsibilities, integrating circularity into

procurement and operational practices, supporting stakeholder cooperation, and ensuring continuity between policy objectives and practical implementation measures.

Such a strategic framework is essential for the successful implementation, replication and scaling-up of circular food delivery system solutions and measures, including the cluster-based approaches developed within the Change(K)now! project. These include solutions related to institutional catering, green events, takeaway food systems, and home delivery services.

See also the cluster guidelines:

- [Institutional catering](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Take-away and home delivery](#)

Because packaging use and waste generation occur across different food service contexts and organisational levels, a coordinated strategic approach is needed to ensure consistency, effectiveness, and long-term impact.

The strategic framework is built around three strategic management levels, supported by overarching instruments that enable implementation, stakeholder engagement, and broader behavioural and mindset change.

2.2 The elements of the strategic framework

The strategic framework for circular food delivery systems at the local level comprises a coherent set of strategic documents and instruments that, together, enable municipalities to move from isolated actions towards a systemic, long-term transition away from single-use food packaging.

At its core, the solution is built around **three interconnected levels of strategic documents** that municipalities develop and apply according to their legal context, administrative capacity and ambition:

1. **Strategies and action plans** – Strategic-level documents that define the municipality’s long-term vision, objectives, targets and priority measures for circular food delivery systems.
2. **Local rules and regulations** – Local legal acts that translate strategic objectives into binding requirements, setting conditions for preventing and reducing single-use food delivery systems.
3. **Guidance documents** – Operational instructions, minimum requirements and recommendations that support practical implementation by internal and external stakeholders.

These three levels form a structured strategic framework that links political ambition, legal obligations, and everyday practices.

In addition to the set of strategic documents, the solution highlights three cross-cutting instruments and elements that strengthen implementation and impact:

- **Public procurement**, as a key strategic instrument for implementing circular food delivery solutions in practice, particularly in institutional catering, public events and municipally supported food services.
- **Communication**, as a tool for awareness-raising, behaviour change and continuous engagement of stakeholders.
- **Cooperation and collaboration**, to co-create solutions with stakeholders and ensure feasibility, acceptance and long-term sustainability.



While public procurement is embedded throughout all three levels of strategic documents, it is highlighted as a stand-alone instrument due to its decisive role in shaping markets, creating demand for circular solutions and translating policy objectives into contractual obligations. Similarly, communication and cooperation operate at all levels, supporting both the development and implementation of the strategic framework.

Together, these three elements form a comprehensive strategic framework solution that municipalities can adapt and apply to support circular food delivery systems in different local contexts.

2.3 Three levels of strategic documents

The strategic framework can be envisaged as a three-level pyramid of documents to move towards the sustainable use of plastics in local government.

Level 1: Strategies and action plans

At the top level are municipal strategies and action plans that provide overall direction and political commitment for developing circular food delivery systems. These documents define:

- a long-term vision and strategic objectives for circular food delivery,
- measurable targets (e.g. reduction of single-use food packaging, increased uptake of reusable systems),
- priority measures and implementation timelines,
- roles, responsibilities and allocation of resources.

Depending on the local context, legal framework and administrative culture, these strategic objectives may be set out in:

- a dedicated strategy or action plan addressing circular food delivery systems, or
- integrated elements within existing strategic documents, such as circular economy development plans, waste management plans, procurement strategies, or climate and sustainability action plans.

In practice, the latter approach, integrating objectives and measures related to circular food delivery into existing strategies, is more common. This reflects the fact that circular food delivery is usually part of broader municipal priorities, such as circular economy development, waste prevention, climate action or sustainable procurement, rather than a stand-alone policy field.

Regardless of the chosen approach, it is essential that the municipality defines clear, explicit strategic objectives and directions for circular food delivery. These objectives provide the foundation for aligning lower-level regulations, public procurement practices and guidance materials, and for ensuring consistency and coordination between municipal departments, services and activities.

Anchoring circular food delivery objectives within the Resource and Waste Strategy 2030 of the City of Copenhagen

Reusable packaging is an initiative under the City of Copenhagen's Resource and Waste Strategy 2030. Three focus areas are highlighted in the strategy:

- The Municipality of Copenhagen's own consumption of reusable packaging (schools and canteens)
- Promoting more recycling at events held in public areas
- A city-wide recycling system for takeaway packaging

From the outset, it was decided to anchor reuse packaging objectives and measures within existing municipal strategies rather than developing a separate dedicated document. Circular economy and waste reduction are already established priorities in Copenhagen, and the development of circular food delivery and reuse systems aligned well with the Resource and Waste Strategy 2030, Copenhagen's mandatory, six-year waste management plan, which was being updated at that time. This integrated approach supported consistent messaging and smoother implementation.

The reusable packaging initiative was aligned with municipal, national, and EU policy objectives, including the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation requirements, and by using examples from other municipalities and Interreg partners. In addition, an external legal note was commissioned to clarify the municipality's legal role and opportunities, as well as the division of responsibilities between the municipality and market actors, providing a solid basis for decision-making and strengthening confidence at both the political and senior management levels.



Level 2: Rules and regulations

At the second level are local legal acts, rules and regulations that translate strategic objectives into binding requirements. These typically:

- set obligations for preventing and reducing single-use food delivery systems,
- regulate the use of public space (e.g. requirements for public events),
- define conditions for municipal services, permits, funding and support schemes.

The scope and form of local regulations depend on national legal frameworks, but commonly include:

- conditions for organising public events and using municipal spaces,
- requirements for municipally funded, supported or permitted catering activities,
- obligations linked to municipal procurement, concessions and service contracts.

Well-designed regulations provide legal certainty, create a level playing field for businesses, and accelerate the uptake of circular food delivery solutions, while remaining proportionate and feasible for different actors.

The legal framework for circular food delivery in Tallinn

In 2019, the Tallinn City Government banned single-use plastic cups and cutlery at public events, allowing only reusable or compostable (EN 13432) dishware for serving food and drinks.

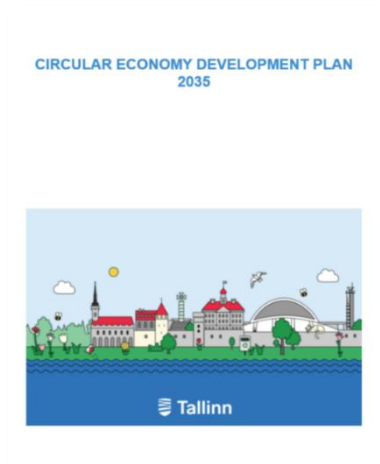
However, this ban did not significantly reduce the use of single-use, fossil-based plastic dishes. Therefore, Tallinn amended this regulation (rules for organising and holding public events in Tallinn) by banning all single-use tableware made of any material and allowing only reusable ones. Since June 2023, all public events in Tallinn accommodating up to 30,000 visitors per day have been required to exclusively serve food and drinks in reusable containers (cups, plates, bowls) and use reusable cutlery. Starting from January 2024, all public events, irrespective of visitor numbers, are **mandated to exclusively serve food and drinks in reusable containers (cups, plates, bowls) and use reusable cutlery**. Disposable straws and cocktail garnishes not made of plastic (including bio-based plastic), oxidatively degradable plastic, or biodegradable plastic are permissible.

Tallinn implemented the mandatory reuse of food packaging earlier than the state – all over Estonia, only reusable containers and cutlery for serving food and drinks at public events have been allowed since January 2024, according to the Packaging Act.

The rules for organising sustainable public events, adopted in 2023, encompass minimum requirements for event planners across various categories, including waste management, materials and purchases, catering and water use, transport, energy and resource efficiency, communication and impact on the community and environment. The overall aim is to reduce the environmental footprint of public events.

The rules are mandatory for all city authorities and their partners when organising conferences, seminars, receptions, charity or entertainment events, competitions, performances, trade events, or any similar gatherings of people hosted by city institutions.

To strengthen the transition toward circular products and services, the City of Tallinn adopted the **Circular Economy Development Plan 2035**, which sets long-term goals for reusable packaging and tableware in Tallinn.



Level 3: Guidance documents

At the operational level, guidance documents convert strategies and regulations into everyday practice. These include:

- instructions, minimum requirements and practical recommendations,
- guidance for specific target groups, such as:
 - municipal employees,
 - public institutions (e.g. schools, kindergartens, hospitals),
 - event organisers,
 - caterers and food service providers.

Guidance documents help harmonise implementation in the municipality, support capacity building, and lower practical barriers for actors expected to comply with new requirements or adopt circular solutions. They are also a means of raising awareness and supporting voluntary action beyond minimum legal obligations.

Creating a voluntary reusable take-away packaging system in Anykščiai Municipality

Since national legislation does not ban single-use containers for take-away (unlike at events), the Anykščiai municipality worked around the lack of regulatory authority over the private sector by building a fully voluntary system based on bilateral agreements with participating cafes and restaurants. This allowed the municipality to operate on a legally sound basis while avoiding mandatory requirements.

First, a project implementation working group was established by the Municipality Administration Director's Order, which provided the initiative with a formal legal foundation. The working group brought together relevant departments and stakeholders and developed a dedicated strategic document, "Regulation on the Use of Reusable Containers in Public and Private Sector Catering Establishments", approved by the Council Decision on November 28, 2024.

The regulation covers general provisions and legal basis, principles for the use of reusable containers, deposit system regulations, a cooperation framework among stakeholders, hygiene and

quality standards, distribution procedures for containers to establishments, and final provisions for information dissemination.

Prior to launching the pilot project, the municipality organised multi-stakeholder creative workshops and invested in intensive, individual, direct communication with each restaurant and with municipal units, such as procurement and communication units. Ultimately, this proved effective – 16 out of 34 city restaurants joined the system.

The municipality procured reusable containers (i.e. lunch boxes and soup bowls) and helped set up a deposit-return system for them. The municipality's support for the reusable takeaway packaging initiative also included publicity campaigns, offering consultations for cafés and restaurants.



2.4 Public procurement as a strategic instrument

In addition to the three hierarchical strategic document levels, public procurement is a key strategic instrument for enabling circular food delivery systems. In many municipalities, plastic reduction and reuse measures in food delivery are implemented primarily through procurement processes.

Public procurement is of central importance because:

- food services in public institutions are largely procured,
- requirements for events and catering are often implemented via contracts and service agreements,
- procurement can create stable and predictable demand for circular food delivery solutions, supporting market development.

To be effective, procurement related to circular food delivery systems must be:

- anchored in municipal objectives and targets,
- used systematically,
- consistent with regulations and guidance, so that political goals, legal requirements, and contractual obligations are clearly connected.

When applied in a coordinated way, procurement becomes a powerful driver for scaling up circular solutions and reducing reliance on single-use food packaging.

Please see the more detailed guidance for circular public procurement in “[Solutions for circular food delivery systems. Cluster I: Institutional catering](#)”.

Linking recommendations on the sustainability of food packaging to the Lahti Circular Economy Roadmap, the environmental goals of Päijät-Hämeen Ateriapalvelut, and procurement criteria

Since circular food packaging is not addressed in the strategies that guide institutional catering and public procurement at the national, regional, or local level, cooperation and discussion between catering (procurement) and suppliers would be useful. A working group was formed to develop a

framework to enhance the sustainability of food packaging in the City of Lahti and Päijät-Hämeen Ateriapalvelut (catering services).

The working group included city departments, Päijät-Hämeen Ateriapalvelut, and Change(K)now! partners (Regional Council of Päijät-Häme, Smart & Lean Hub Ltd.), with wider stakeholders engaged through workshops. The developed framework is a strategic work plan and a proposal for integrating sustainability perspectives into food packaging procurement.

The City of Lahti and Päijät-Hämeen Ateriapalvelut decided to embed the objectives to reduce single-use packaging and make packaging more environmentally sustainable at the operational level, rather than elevating them to a city-wide strategy. Three alternative directions were identified: a contractual level between the City of Lahti and Päijät-Hämeen Ateriapalvelut; guidance through city-level environmental and circular economy objectives; and operational-level development through procurement criteria and pilots.

Operational-level development and procurement proved to be more effective entry points when strategic change is difficult, and municipalities cannot mandate solutions beyond the scope of procurement.



2.5 Communication and collaboration

At all three strategic levels, communication and collaboration function as overarching elements that support implementation, learning and acceptance.

Communication is essential throughout the strategic framework process:

- before adoption, to raise awareness, build understanding and gather stakeholder input,
- during implementation, to support behavioural change and practical uptake of circular solutions,
- during monitoring and review, to share results, lessons learned and progress towards targets.

Strategic communication supports a shift in mindsets, from single-use convenience to circular and multiple-use systems, among decision-makers, municipal staff, service providers, event organisers and residents. Clear, timely and targeted communication helps reduce resistance to change and strengthens ownership of the transition.

Collaboration with internal and external stakeholders is equally critical. Municipalities rarely control food delivery systems alone; therefore, cooperation with caterers, service providers, event organisers, reusable system operators, residents and other actors is necessary to design feasible measures and ensure successful implementation.

Collaboration enables:

- co-creation of realistic and locally adapted solutions,
- identification of barriers and opportunities at an early stage,

- shared responsibility for achieving circular food delivery objectives.

Together, communication and collaboration reinforce the strategic framework by connecting policy, practice, and people and supporting continuous improvement towards circular food delivery systems.

Collaboration with Lithuanian municipalities for developing Green Events Guidelines

To support the implementation of green events, including the use of reusable cups, ECAT from Lithuania developed Green Events Guidelines in collaboration with four municipalities – Alytus, Anykščiai, Kaišiadorys, and Utena.

This collaboration, primarily with the environmental protection departments, ensured that the guidelines were effectively tailored to local needs, administrative structures, and specific contextual challenges. Transnational cooperation with Change(K)now! project partners allowed the development of the guidelines to build on existing examples and best practices.

The guidelines are available on municipal websites, reflecting each municipality's individual priorities and capacities. Event organisers can use them as practical guidance when planning and implementing more sustainable events.

These guidelines now serve as a foundation for other Lithuanian municipalities to adapt and apply, supporting wider adoption of environmentally responsible event management.



Supporting green public events and circular practices in Mirosławiec and Szczecin

The Municipality of Mirosławiec and Żegluga Szczecińska Turystyka Wydarzenia (a municipal company of the City of Szczecin, responsible for organising a wide range of public events, managing key waterfront areas, and supporting tourism activities) have been actively developing practices in reusable tableware, circular solutions, and environmental education.

To support their move from individual initiatives to a more systemic model and based on the experiences of EU cities that have introduced strategic approaches to circular food delivery systems and green public events, the Association of Polish Municipalities of the Pomerania Euroregion (APMEP) developed a comprehensive guidance document “Guidelines for the Association of Polish Municipalities of the Pomerania Euroregion on organising green public events and applying reusable circular economy solutions in everyday office practices.” Rather than creating separate local documents in each municipality, APMEP chose to develop a shared guidance framework to ensure consistency, facilitate knowledge transfer, and support coordinated implementation across its member municipalities.

The guidance provides a structured set of recommendations and minimum requirements, including:

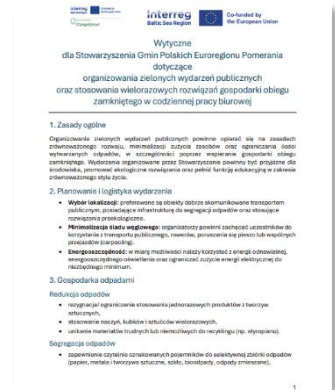
- principles for planning and organising environmentally friendly public events,
- recommendations for catering, promotional materials, transport, and logistics,
- good practices for sustainable office operations,
- educational and communication tools for staff, participants, and partners,

- approaches to monitoring and evaluation.

The guidance aligns with European circular-economy objectives and supports municipalities in responding to evolving EU policy frameworks on packaging, waste reduction, and sustainable resource management.

APMEP organised a training session during the General Assembly of Delegates, attended by representatives of 86 municipalities and counties. The training provided practical guidance on applying circular solutions in event organisation and daily operations, demonstrating the potential of inter-municipal cooperation to accelerate the transition towards more sustainable practices.

Mirosławiec and Żegluga Szczecińska are now reviewing their existing documents and practices in light of the APMEP guidance, identifying opportunities to further strengthen circular economy principles, enhance communication, and deepen collaboration with stakeholders.



3 Step-by-Step Guidance for Developing the Strategic Framework

This chapter guides municipalities in developing a strategic framework for circular food delivery systems. The development process lays the foundation for successfully implementing the strategic documents and the effectiveness of prevention and reduction measures. Thus, the process of developing the framework is as important as the outcome – the strategic framework.

In this guideline, the development process is divided into four key steps:

1. Get organised
2. Assess the current situation
3. Formulate the strategic document
4. Endorse and implement the strategic document

Each step includes a series of activities necessary for its completion.

In addition, the guidance includes a systematic basis for public procurement and communication as strategic instruments.

Each step also includes main considerations and recommendations collected during the piloting phase of the strategic solution, carried out by the municipality partners who developed their strategic framework to enhance circular food delivery systems.

STEP 1. Get organised

The aim is to establish a clear mandate, organisational structure and scope for developing the strategic framework for circular food delivery systems. Thorough preparation at this stage helps build political legitimacy, internal ownership, and a smoother implementation later on. The way the process is organised influences both the quality of the strategic framework and the municipality's ability to translate it into concrete action.

Key actions

The main activities in this step include:

Securing political commitment and leadership support

Obtain a clear political or senior management mandate to initiate the development of the strategic framework. This mandate should confirm the importance of circular food delivery systems as a municipal priority and authorise the use of relevant instruments, including regulation, procurement and communication.

Appointing a coordinator and forming a cross-departmental working group

Designate a coordinator to lead the process and serve as the main point of contact. Establish a working group comprising relevant municipal units, such as environmental or circular-economy departments, waste management, procurement, education, public events, property management, and communication.

Deciding on the type and legal status of strategic documents

Determine whether the objectives and measures related to circular food delivery will be addressed through a dedicated document or integrated into existing strategies, action plans, regulations and guidance materials.

Preparing a work plan and internal rules for cooperation

Develop a work plan that defines tasks, timelines, responsibilities and resources. Agree on internal rules for cooperation, decision-making and information sharing between departments and with external stakeholders.

At this early stage, municipalities should also reflect on two strategic questions:

- Top-down or bottom-up approach
- Decide whether the planned measures will rely primarily on regulatory and mandatory instruments (top-down), voluntary agreements and incentives (bottom-up), or a combination of both.

Early integration of procurement and communication

Consider from the outset how public procurement and communication will be embedded in the strategic framework, rather than treating them as add-on activities at a later stage.

Main challenges and recommendations in Step 1

The table below summarises common challenges encountered when launching the strategic framework development process for circular food delivery systems, together with recommendations based on lessons learned from the Change(K)now! project.

Challenges	Recommendations
Securing political or senior management support – Developing a strategic framework often requires political backing and high-level commitment, which may be difficult if circular food delivery is perceived as a niche or purely environmental issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Link the strategic framework to municipal priorities beyond environmental and climate objectives, such as public health, economic development and cost efficiency. These areas are often political priorities and help show that circular food delivery systems are relevant beyond environmental considerations.• Emphasise the role of circular food delivery systems in achieving circular economy goals and reducing long-term waste management costs.• Highlight potential funding opportunities, pilot projects and external co-financing linked to the circular economy and innovation.• Present concrete case studies and best practices from other municipalities that have successfully implemented similar approaches.• Encourage participation in international or national initiatives and networks (e.g. Zero Waste Europe or comparable platforms) to increase legitimacy and visibility.

<p>Identifying the right strategic document or entry point – Responsibilities related to circular food delivery systems are often spread between several municipal units (e.g., circular economy, waste management, procurement, public events), making it unclear where to anchor objectives and measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a structured review of existing strategic and legal documents to identify where circular food delivery objectives can be most effectively integrated. Assess which documents already address related themes, such as circular-economy development plans, waste-management plans, procurement strategies, green office rules, or sustainable event guidelines. • Integrate planned actions and regulatory directions into existing documents where possible, rather than creating new stand-alone strategies. • The integrated objectives must be clearly visible and operational, rather than diluted within broader policy texts. • Use integration to promote coherence and alignment across departments and avoid duplication of efforts.
<p>Ensuring efficient coordination across departments and stakeholders – Circular food delivery systems cut across administrative boundaries and involve multiple internal and external actors, making coordination complex.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a cross-departmental working group with clearly defined roles and responsibilities from the beginning. • Involve procurement and communication units early in the process, as they play a critical role in implementation. • Clarify ownership of the strategic framework and future responsibilities for updating and monitoring it. • Use regular coordination meetings and shared work plans to maintain momentum and accountability. • Gradually involve key external stakeholders (e.g. caterers, event organisers, service providers) to build understanding and trust without overloading the process at an early stage.

Deciding on the type and legal status of the provision on reusable cups in Liepāja

With restrictions on the use of disposable cups, the city aimed to reduce waste generation, including on Liepāja's Blue Flag beach. Initially, it was planned to update the beach regulations to require that beach cafes may not use disposable cups.

Several meetings were held with caterers of beach and park cafés to identify obstacles and assess their readiness to switch to reusable tableware. The discussions focused mainly on practical implementation, uncertainties regarding costs and additional workload, the roles and responsibilities, including whether and how the city should strategically support the introduction of the system.

Following communication with ministries regarding the legality of the regulation, the provision on reusable cups was reclassified as a recommendation: on beaches and at swimming areas, it is recommended to sell beverages in reusable cups (by introducing a deposit system for reusable plastic cups).

The reason is that local governments do not have the right to determine the manner and procedure by which a merchant offers its goods or services at its permanent place of business, given that regulatory acts in this area of law with higher legal force do not provide for such restrictions or prohibitions.

To support the introduction of reusable cups at public events and beach catering, the city of Liepāja also developed guidelines for event organisers and caterers.



STEP 2. Assess the current situation

The aim is to understand the baseline, constraints and opportunities related to circular food delivery systems at the municipal level. The situation analysis identifies the current state of food-related plastic packaging use and plastic waste management, as well as the key stakeholders involved in food delivery systems and their concerns, expectations and capacities. In parallel, a review of the strategic and legal context assesses whether the planned strategic framework aligns with higher-level goals, relevant legislation, and best practices.

Assessing the current situation provides the evidence base for developing the strategic framework and helps municipalities design realistic, effective, and context-specific actions that respond to local challenges and opportunities while supporting broader sustainability and circular-economy objectives.

Key actions

The main activities in this step include:

Reviewing the strategic, legal and policy context

Analyse existing municipal strategies, action plans, regulations and guidance documents to identify how food delivery systems, plastic packaging, waste prevention and reuse are currently addressed. This review should also cover procurement strategies and standard tendering practices for food services, events, and catering.

Reviewing procurement practices related to food delivery systems

Assess how public procurement is currently used in institutional catering, public events and other food-related services. Identify existing requirements, criteria and contractual practices that may support or hinder the uptake of circular food delivery solutions.

Mapping stakeholders in the food delivery system

Identify and map internal and external stakeholders involved in or affected by food delivery systems. These typically include municipal departments, public institutions, caterers, event organisers, food service providers, reusable packaging system operators, waste management companies, residents and visitors.

Collecting data on food packaging use and waste generation

Gather available quantitative and qualitative data on the use of food-related packaging (including the reusable packaging and cutlery use) and the generation of packaging waste.

This may include data from waste composition studies, procurement records, event permits, institutional catering contracts, surveys or audits.

Identifying legal, organisational and market barriers

Analyse barriers that may limit the transition to circular food delivery systems, such as legal constraints, fragmented responsibilities, limited market availability of reusable solutions, cost structures or behavioural factors.

This step provides the foundation for setting priorities, defining realistic targets and selecting appropriate strategic documents and measures in the strategic framework.

Main challenges and recommendations in Step 2

The following table summarises common challenges related to the situation analysis and recommendations based on experiences from municipalities participating in the Change(K)now! project.

Challenges	Recommendations
<p>Identifying and engaging a diverse range of stakeholders – Food delivery systems involve multiple actors with different roles, interests and levels of influence, making stakeholder identification and engagement complex.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a structured stakeholder mapping exercise covering the full food delivery system. Categorise stakeholders according to their level of influence and interest (e.g. high-impact/high-interest groups). • Prioritise engagement with stakeholders who play a key role in implementation, such as caterers, event organisers and procurement units. • Use targeted engagement methods (workshops, interviews, surveys) rather than one-size-fits-all consultations.
<p>Difficulty in establishing cooperation with businesses and service providers – Municipalities may face challenges in engaging caterers, food service providers and reusable packaging operators, and in obtaining feedback on their needs, constraints and capacities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach businesses early and frame the dialogue around mutual benefits, such as cost savings, operational efficiency, regulatory clarity and market opportunities. • Use existing cooperation platforms, networks or procurement-related interactions as entry points for engagement. • Start with informal discussions or pilot-related consultations before formalising requirements. • Clearly communicate the purpose of engagement and how stakeholder input will influence the strategic framework.
<p>Identifying legal and organisational constraints – National legislation, unclear responsibilities or overlapping mandates may limit what municipalities can regulate or influence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identify which aspects can be regulated at the municipal level and which require voluntary or incentive-based approaches. • Map internal responsibilities to understand decision-making authority and avoid gaps or overlaps.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the situation analysis to distinguish between short-term feasible measures and longer-term structural changes.
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Assessing the current situation with reusable cups at public events in Riga

Riga City Council adopted a regulation prohibiting the use of disposable cups during street sales at public events, effective 1 January 2025.

To effectively enforce this requirement, practical guidelines were needed to support street vendors and event organisers throughout the process: step-by-step instructions, system models, and contact information for partners and deposit system operators, enabling smoother and more consistent implementation of reusable cup systems.

The working group formed within the Department of Housing and Environment mapped the full system required for deposit-cup schemes at events, including stakeholders, governance, and measures, and identified gaps in the implementation of reusable cup solutions at public events.

It also proved necessary to test the deposit cup system in real settings and then return to the strategic level, as the testing results informed the strategic action, helping identify key areas where guidelines are needed.

Pilot testing the deposit-cup model at the Riga City Festival 2025 and the City’s 824th birthday celebrations provided evidence about user preferences, return behaviour, and challenges like queue management and refund processes. Surveys conducted with visitors, vendors, event organisers, and deposit system operators offered valuable insights into system shortcomings and communication challenges.

Based on these findings, the working group defined key needs, including templates, convenient refund processes, and procurement-ready specifications. These elements shaped the guidelines' content to ensure they are usable in permits and tenders.



STEP 3. Formulate the strategic framework

The aim of this step is to define goals, instruments and responsibilities that guide the transition towards circular food delivery systems and turn the findings of the situation analysis into coherent, implementable strategic documents.

This step is the core of the strategic framework development process. It brings together political ambition, evidence from the situation analysis, and stakeholder input to establish realistic, legally sound, and locally aligned objectives, targets, and measures. The quality of this step largely determines the effectiveness of implementation in practice.

Key actions

The main activities in this step include:

Formulating objectives, targets and indicators

Define strategic objectives for circular food delivery systems, supported by measurable targets and indicators. Objectives should reflect local priorities and clearly address the prevention and reduction of single-use food packaging. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART), enabling progress to be monitored over time.

Defining measures across the three levels of the strategic framework

Identify and structure measures according to the three levels of the strategic framework:

- strategic measures in strategies and action plans (e.g. policy commitments, long-term targets),
- regulatory measures in rules and regulations (e.g. requirements for public events or municipal services),
- operational measures in guidance documents (e.g. instructions for caterers, institutions or event organisers).

Embedding public procurement requirements that support circular solutions

Translate strategic objectives into procurement-related requirements and criteria. This includes defining how circular food delivery solutions (e.g., packaging prevention and reduction, reusable systems) are promoted through tenders, contracts, and concessions in institutional catering, public events, and other food-related services.

Defining a communication approach for key target groups

Develop a communication approach that supports implementation by clearly defining:

- what is communicated,
- to whom,
- through which channels,
- and at which stage of implementation.

Communication should address both awareness-raising and behavioural change and be tailored to different target groups, including municipal staff, service providers, event organisers, and end users.

Engaging stakeholders through consultations and dialogue

Involve relevant stakeholders in the formulation of the strategic framework through consultations, workshops or targeted discussions. Stakeholder input increases the likelihood that proposed measures are feasible, well-understood, and supported by those responsible for implementation.

All measures defined in this step should follow circular economy principles, with a clear priority on prevention and reuse, followed by recycling only where prevention and reuse are not feasible.

Main challenges and recommendations in Step 3

The following challenges are commonly encountered when formulating the strategic framework, together with recommendations based on Change(K)now! municipal experiences.

Challenges	Recommendations
<p>Defining objectives and targets that are both ambitious and realistic – Municipalities may struggle to balance political ambition with legal, financial and organisational constraints.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base objectives and targets as well as requirements and measures on the findings of the situation analysis and available data. • Start with a limited number of clear, high-impact objectives rather than an extensive list of actions. • Use phased targets that allow gradual implementation and learning.
<p>Fragmentation between strategic, regulatory and operational measures – Municipalities may, for various reasons, develop strategic documents, regulations or guidance materials in isolation. This can lead to gaps or inconsistencies between strategies, rules and operational guidance. In particular, if guidance documents or voluntary measures lack clear objectives and commitments at the strategy or action-plan level, their implementation and impact may remain weak or uneven.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the three-level strategic framework as a structuring tool when deciding, designing and drafting strategic documents. • Explicitly link each regulation and guidance measure to a defined strategic objective and target. • Ensure that rules and regulations are clearly derived from, and supported by, strategic commitments. • Avoid introducing regulatory requirements without corresponding guidance, capacity-building measures and communication support.
<p>Insufficient integration of public procurement – Procurement is often treated as a technical issue rather than a strategic instrument.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve procurement specialists directly in drafting objectives and measures. • Define procurement-related actions explicitly in strategies and action plans. • Ensure that procurement requirements are legally sound, market-ready and aligned with regulations and guidance. • Where necessary, plan for the gradual introduction of procurement requirements, tested by pilot projects.
<p>Resistance or uncertainty among stakeholders – Stakeholders may express concerns about costs, operational complexity or the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage stakeholders early and transparently in the formulation process. • Use consultations to identify concerns and adapt measures accordingly. • Clearly communicate the rationale, benefits and expected impacts of proposed measures.

feasibility of circular food delivery solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider combining mandatory requirements with supportive measures, such as guidance, training or incentives.
<p>Limited capacity for communication and implementation – Municipalities may lack resources or experience to effectively communicate new measures and support behavioural change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate communication planning into the strategic framework rather than treating it as a separate activity. • Prioritise key messages and target groups. • Use existing municipal communication channels and partnerships. • Align communication activities with implementation milestones.

The strategic framework for the procurement of catering services in Västerås

The City of Västerås has a strategic document, "**Guideline for purchasing and procurement**", which states that relevant sustainability requirements must be set in all procurements. In addition, the requirements that promote circularity, extend product lifespans, and increase the likelihood of reuse and recycling must be met. In procuring catering agreements, this means that disposable single-use plastic packaging should be avoided.



Sustainability requirements in purchasing and procurement are based on the city's adopted goals and governing documents in the areas of social, environmental, and economic sustainability. In catering, the guidance on reusable packaging is listed in the "**Action plan for sustainable use of plastics in Västerås**", and the general sustainability principles are based on the city's "**Sustainable development programme 2026–2040**".

STEP 4. Endorse, implement and monitor

The aim of this step is to turn the strategic framework into concrete action and drive continuous improvement towards circular food delivery systems.

This step focuses on formal endorsement, effective implementation, and systematic monitoring of the established strategic framework. A strategic or legal document only has an impact if it is properly approved, communicated, applied in daily practice, and regularly reviewed. Clear responsibilities, consistent use of instruments and feedback mechanisms are therefore essential at this stage.

Key actions

The main activities in this step include:

Formal approval and endorsement of strategic and legal documents

Submit the drafted strategies, action plans, regulations, and guidance documents for formal approval in accordance with the municipal decision-making procedures. Clarify which bodies are responsible for endorsement and for providing the authority to implement (e.g. city council, executive board, mayor, municipal departments).

Implementation through procurement, regulations and guidance

Put the strategic framework into practice by:

- integrating circular food delivery requirements into procurement processes, tenders, contracts and concessions,
- using guidance documents to support consistent implementation by municipal staff, institutions, event organisers and service providers.

Implementation should be coordinated between departments to avoid fragmentation and achieve a uniform approach.

Targeted communication and capacity building

Actively communicate approved measures to all relevant target groups. Communication should explain not only what is required, but also why changes are being introduced and how actors can comply. Capacity-building activities, such as training sessions, workshops or practical toolkits, can significantly increase acceptance and effectiveness.

Monitoring progress against targets and indicators

Establish a monitoring system to track implementation progress and outcomes. Monitoring should be based on the indicators defined in the strategic framework and carried out at regular intervals. Responsibilities for data collection, reporting and analysis should be assigned.

Reviewing and updating documents based on results and feedback

Use monitoring results and stakeholder feedback to review the effectiveness of measures and adjust objectives, targets, regulations or guidance where necessary. Periodic updates keep the strategic framework relevant and feasible as legal, market, and technological conditions evolve.

Monitoring should capture both quantitative outcomes, such as reductions in single-use food packaging or increased use of reusable systems, and qualitative changes, such as improved acceptance of circular solutions, behavioural change among users and increased cooperation with service providers.

Main challenges and recommendations in Step 4

The following challenges are commonly encountered during endorsement, implementation and monitoring, together with recommendations based on Change(K)now! municipal experiences.

Challenges	Recommendations
Delays or dilution during the approval process – Strategic or regulatory documents may be delayed, weakened or contested during formal approval.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage decision-makers early and keep them informed throughout the development process.• Clearly communicate the rationale, expected impacts and legal basis of proposed measures.• Use evidence from pilots, best practices and stakeholder consultations to support approval.

<p>Weak or uneven implementation – Approved measures may be applied inconsistently if responsibilities are unclear or coordination is lacking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly assign responsibilities for implementation to specific departments or units. Integrate requirements into existing procedures, procurement processes and workflows. Use internal guidance and training to support consistent application.
<p>Limited awareness or resistance among stakeholders – Stakeholders may lack awareness, understanding or motivation to comply with new requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement targeted communication strategies tailored to different stakeholder groups. Combine mandatory measures with supportive guidance, training and incentives. Highlight practical benefits, such as cost savings, operational clarity and improved public image.
<p>Insufficient monitoring and feedback mechanisms – Without systematic monitoring, it is difficult to assess progress or improve measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define a limited set of clear and relevant indicators. Use existing data sources where possible to reduce administrative burden. Establish regular reporting cycles and feedback channels with stakeholders. Treat monitoring as a learning tool, not only as a compliance exercise.
<p>Difficulty updating documents and adapting to change – Rigid approval procedures may slow down necessary updates to guidance or measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build flexibility into the strategic framework by distinguishing between documents that require formal re-approval and those that can be updated administratively. Plan periodic reviews of the strategic framework. Use pilot results and stakeholder feedback to justify adjustments.

Implementing circular food delivery measures with the management and communication tool Green Events Seal

This practical sustainability standard for events helps organisers understand, communicate, and manage their events' impact transparently. It offers guidance, structure, and concrete tools for teams who want to work more sustainably together. The seal was developed by Netzwerk Green Events, a non-profit, independent network promoting a more sustainable event industry.



How is it designed?

The Green Events Seal is a three-stage sustainability standard based on a comprehensive catalogue of measures. The measures have been developed since 2019 in collaboration with over 100 experts from science, administration, politics, and the event industry and can be flexibly adapted to events ranging from conferences to festivals. The seal is characterised by its practical relevance. The use of

reusable containers for food and beverages is one of the most popular yet challenging measures. It is embedded in the context of an overall sustainable gastronomical supply, which makes it one of nine fields of action within the catalogue.

How is it applied?

Event organisers who wish to apply the Green Events Seal receive comprehensive support from Netzwerk Green Events and can make use of a wide range of support materials, including deep dives, case studies, a service portal, working templates, as well as exchange and information events. The individually fitting measures will be identified and planned in a structured process.

For more information, visit www.greeneventssiegel.de

Change(K)now! – 2026

Website: <https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/change-know/>

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Change(K)now!

The Change(K)now! project is co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

The project's main objective is a mindset change from single-use to circular or multiple-use of food delivery systems in cities and among residents of the Baltic Sea Region.