

## Rigid plastic collection and recycling in Tampere Region

Plastic is widely used around the world due to its versatility, durability and relatively low price, but its recycling rate is still low. Plastics are used from food packaging to healthcare, construction materials, furniture and textiles. Currently, only plastic packaging is covered by producer responsibility, and it has its own national collection and recycling system in Finland. In addition to plastic packaging, a significant amount of rigid (hard) plastic waste is generated in Finland every year. Rigid plastics cover a wide range of objects and materials, including construction plastics, industrial by-products and consumables.

In 2023, the company Hyötykeräys Oy and the regional municipal waste management company Pirkanmaan Jätehuolto organised a pilot for separate collection of rigid plastics and processing them into recycled raw materials. The campaign offered households the opportunity to bring rigid plastic items, such as garden furniture, toys and kitchen utensils, free of charge to Pirkanmaa jätehuolto's waste centres. This collaboration is partly a response to the recent publication by the Ministry of the Environment, i.e. the report *Towards Ending Plastic Pollution by 2040*, which shows that coordinated global policy measures could reduce the amount of plastic waste ending up in the environment by 90 percent, and the production of virgin plastic by 30 percent by 2040 compared to 2019. Hyötykeräys also implemented its own pilot at the same time, which was aimed at rigid plastics accumulated from businesses.

Recovery of plastic waste is an important part of circular economy and sustainable future. The goal of the campaign was to raise awareness of the importance of rigid plastic recycling, and collect valuable information about the rigid plastic collection and recycling process. In the first phase, the focus was to study the composition of the collected plastic. This was done in cooperation with Tampere University of Applied Sciences and VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd. The results can be utilised quickly, as the goal is to continue the piloting this year. The collected rigid plastic was delivered for sorting and further processing to the reception terminal of Hyötykeräys.

Experiences gained from the pilot:

- Sorting and identifying plastic types is crucial
- PP and HDPE are the easiest to identify
- New technologies are needed to identify plastics

Read more at [www.hyotykerays.fi](http://www.hyotykerays.fi)