



Reuse in action: a Catalan pilot to rethink events

April 2026





Table of content

Event overview	3
Content & rationale	4
Implementation	5
Installation of water fountains	5
Reusable cup return system	6
Prevention of single-use items in catering	7
What 3 days of reuse achieved?	8
Installation of water fountain	8
Reusable cup return system	8
Prevention of single-use items in catering	10
Aggregated environmental impact	11
Results and reflections	11
Recommendations and plans for future pilots	11
Contact	13

Event overview

- **Location & date:**
 - Viladecans (Spain). Event: Conama Local 2025. 2–4 December 2025 (3 days)
 - Three separate buildings, each hosting different venues and activities
- **Scale / size:**
 - 645 attendees
 - 600 meals served during the event
- **Type of pilot: Prevention of single-use items at a public event**
 - Reuse systems for food and beverages
 - Water fountains
- **Main objectives:**
 - Pilot reuse systems and refill infrastructure at events as a core initiative of the Viladecans Municipal Plastic Prevention Programme (PPP)
 - Measurably reduce single-use plastic consumption
 - Generate monitoring data to evaluate impact and inform the design of future reuse-systems at events



Figure 1: Speakers at Conama 2025 - @credits: Conoma 2025

Content & rationale

Located in Catalonia, Spain, Viladecans is one of the pioneering municipalities in the region to take a comprehensive approach to plastic prevention. In 2024, the [Viladecans City Council adopted its Municipal Plastic Prevention Programme \(PPP\)](#), a strategic roadmap to cut plastic waste and phase out single-use plastics at local level.

In 2025, the Viladecans Town Council's Environment and Sustainability Department promoted the ['Fes un pas, porta l'envàs' \('Take a step, bring your container'\)](#) campaign, an initiative that encouraged citizens to shop at local retailers using their own reusable containers, helping to reduce dependence on disposable plastics. Over its three months, the campaign delivered notable results: 82 shops signed up, 115 families took part, 3,807 purchases were made with at least one reusable item, and 8,504 disposable items were avoided, including over 2,800 plastic containers and more than 5,500 disposable bags.

Developed by the Catalan organisation [Rezero](#) as part of the [European project Elevating Reuse in Cities \(ERIC\)](#) led by Zero Waste Europe, the programme placed Viladecans among around thirty European municipalities committed to embedding reuse systems and plastic prevention policies into city life. In ERIC's second phase, which started in 2025, a selected group of the most ambitious cities – such as Viladecans – moved from planning to action with the launch of concrete pilots to test in the real world the reuse and prevention measures proposed in their plans.

Viladecans chose [CONAMA Local 2025](#) (National Environmental Congress) as its testing ground: replacing single-use food and beverage items with reusable alternatives. Held every two years in a different Spanish city, CONAMA brings together key sustainability stakeholders to act with urgency and determination in response to the climate emergency. In 2025, Viladecans was the host city, fresh off receiving the European Green Leaf 2025 award, which recognises the medium-sized cities for outstanding commitment to sustainability and climate action.

The pilot also sits within the broader Viladecans Climate Pact, a local framework uniting stakeholders around urgent climate action. Organised by the CONAMA Foundation in collaboration with Viladecans City Council and Barcelona Provincial Council, the congress ran from 2 to 4 December 2025.



Figure 2: Main venue at Conama Local 2025 in Viladecans

Implementation

Three measures were implemented during the congress to support the implementation of reuse systems and the broader reduction of single-use items: the installation of water fountains, the implementation of a reuse cup return system, and the prevention of single-use plastic in catering. Additionally, during the sessions, all speakers were provided with reusable water bottles but the impact of these measures has not been assessed

Installation of water fountains

Six filtered water fountains were installed across the three buildings hosting the congress to ensure easy access to drinking water to all participants.

The fountains were provided, installed and managed by Aigües de Barcelona, the public-private partnership responsible for the entire water cycle in the Barcelona metropolitan area, which also monitored water consumption at each location.

This measure aimed to reduce the consumption of bottled water by encouraging participants to refill reusable cups or use their own bottle.

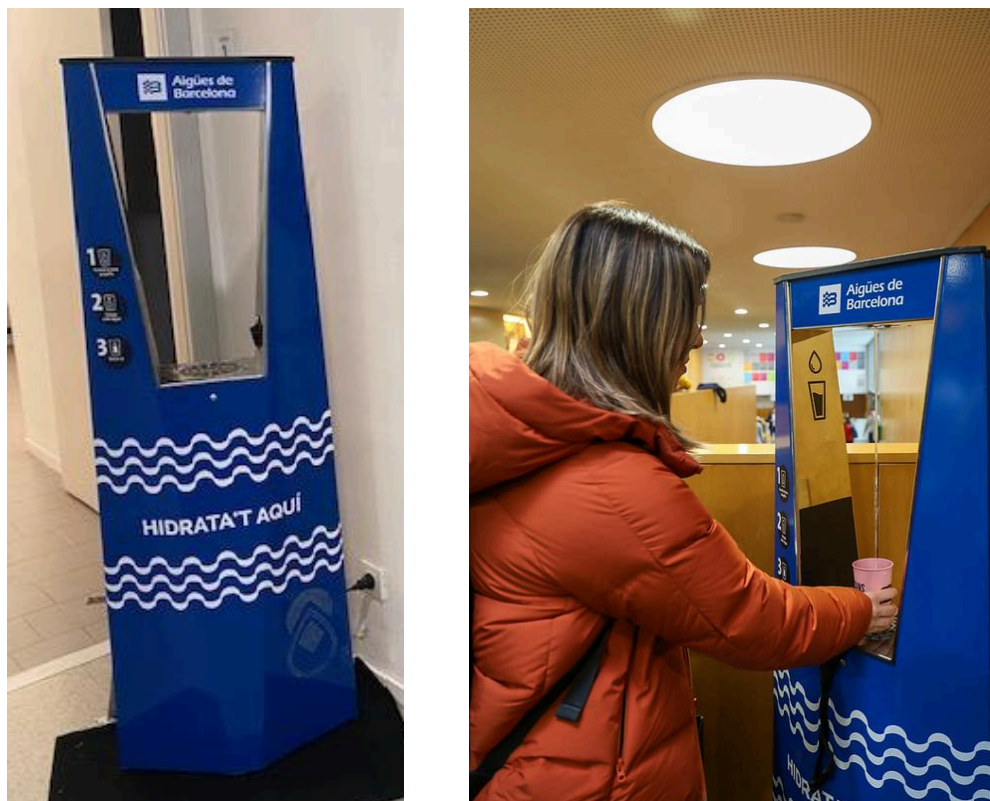


Figure 3-4: Installed water fountain model - @credits: Conoma 2025

Reusable cup return system

A reusable cup system was implemented for all attendees. Reusable cups were placed on tables with free access at six different points next to the water fountains.

System characteristics:

- **Reusable item:**
 - Cups made from polypropylene and rice husk.
 - Property of Viladecans City Council.
 - Generic design, with no year or event specified to encourage returns and discourage cups from being taken home as souvenirs.
- **Deposit system**
 - No deposit implemented due to the controlled indoor environment - as the type of venue allowed for easier monitoring and retrieval of cups.
- **Return logistics:**
 - Used cups placed in dedicated reusable return boxes located next to water and cup stations.
- **Logistics**
 - Clean cups were delivered to the different venues by the City Council before the event.
 - Used cups were collected daily by team members from Rezero and the City Council during the event and stored in a warehouse at the venues.
 - After the event, cups were transported by the company Encore for washing (including hot water, and drying) and then returned to municipal storage for future reuse.
- **Communication**
 - Communication materials (posters at each supply point) explained instructions to use and return the cups, environmental benefits of the system and a QR code linking to a user survey.

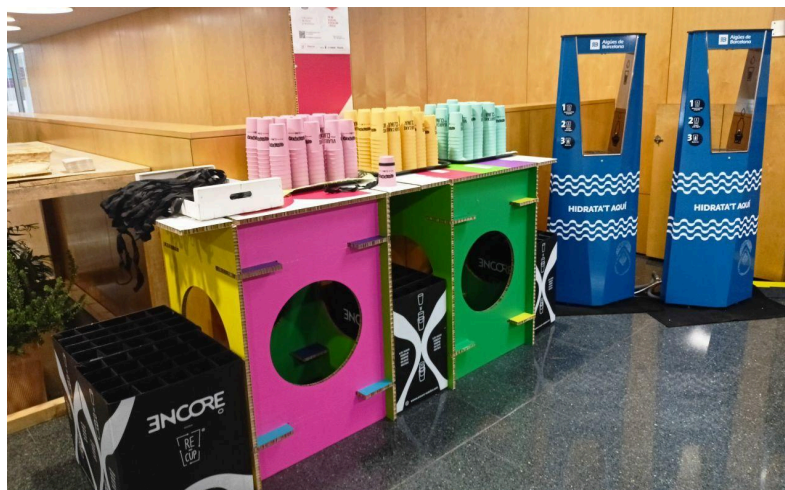


Figure 5: Water supply point at CONAMA, with fountains and reusable cups

Prevention of single-use items in catering

Catering services were provided by Dulces Inma for approximately 200 people per day, for a total of 600 meals.

- **Several single-use items were replaced:**
 - Cold drink cups → replaced with glass cups
 - Disposable plates → replaced with reusable palm-leaf plates

However, single-use coffee cups could not be replaced because the catering contract had been finalised before the reuse measures were planned. No local catering service offered such an option in advance, and the rental option could not be implemented as it was decided too late.



Figure 6-7: Catering service | Photo 8: Reusable cup - @credits: Conoma 2025



What 3 days of reuse achieved?

Installation of water fountain

Indicators	Total	Per attendee
Water consumption	775 L	1.2 L
Number of 0.5 L bottles avoided	1,550 units	2.4 units
Carbon footprint avoided	295.91 kg CO ₂ -eq ¹	0.46 kg CO ₂ -eq
Amount of plastic waste avoided	28.68 kg	44.5 g
Volume of plastic waste avoided	0.775 m ³	1.2 L

Reusable cup return system

Data collected	
Number of cups used	1,142
Number of cups sent for washing	800
Number of cups washed	754
Number of cups discarded before washing	46
Number of incidents recorded	0

¹ 295 kg CO₂ avoided is equal to powering an average European household for about 4 weeks.

Indicators	Total	Per attendee
Cup return rate (%)	70.1%	
Percentage of returned cups damaged (put of total returned)	5.8%	
Number of 0.24 L single-use cups avoided	1,142 units ²	1,8 units
Amount of waste from 0.24 L single-use cups avoided (kg)	9.8 kg of paper ³	15.2 g of paper
Volume of waste from 0.24 L single-use cups avoided (m ³)	0.27 m ³	1,2 L
Carbon footprint avoided	21.7 kg CO ₂ -eq	33.6 g CO ₂ -eq

² A minimum of 1,142 single-use plastic cups were avoided at this event. The 70% return rate (800 cups) ensures these cups will be reused at future events. The remaining 30% will have an uncertain fate; however, cups taken home for continued personal use represent an additional, unquantified avoided impact.

³ It was assumed that the single-use cups replaced were paper cups with an inner plastic lining, as this was the format originally planned and the one used in previous editions of CONAMA.

Prevention of single-use items in catering

Data collected	
Number of meals served	600
Number of reusable cups used	600
Number of reusable plates used	600
Indicators	
Number of single-use plates and cups avoided (per type)	600 single-use cups and 600 single-use plates
Amount of waste from 0.24 L single-use cups avoided	5.2 kg
Volume of waste from 0.24 L single-use cups avoided	144.0 L
Amount of waste from single-use plates avoided	14.1 kg
Volume of waste from single-use plates avoided	62.0 L
Carbon footprint avoided through the use of reusable cups	4.2 kg CO ₂ -eq
Carbon footprint avoided through the use of reusable plates	4.9 kg CO ₂ -eq

Aggregated environmental impact

The following presents the total environmental impact savings (sum of the results from all implemented actions) at the CONAMA Local 2025 event.

Indicators	Total	Per attendee
Total single-use items avoided (cold drink cups, plates, and water bottles)	3,892	6
Total waste avoided	57.7 kg	89.5 g
Total waste volume avoided	1.3 m ³	1.9 L
Total emissions avoided	326.7 kg CO ₂ -eq	0.5 kg CO ₂ -eq

Results and reflections

The pilot was a success overall. Waste prevention measures were smoothly deployed, well received, and closely aligned with the environmental values of the congress. Water refill stations and reusable cups were widely used, and integrating local strategies added credibility and visibility to the initiative.

The 70% cup return rate is a positive result - though given the environmental profile of attendees and the controlled indoor setting, organisers had anticipated even higher returns. Room for improvement in future editions.

Above all, the pilot proved that reuse systems can work at professional events - even across multiple buildings and venues - and deliver measurable environmental impact.

These results make the case for going further. Reuse systems should be consolidated and progressively rolled out across other municipal indoor events, moving from pilot to standard practice. With adaptations, the same approach can work for a wider range of public events.

CONAMA Local, held every two years in a different Spanish city, is a natural vehicle to scale these solutions and spread learnings nationally.

Recommendations and plans for future pilots

Early planning

- Waste prevention measures should be integrated into event planning from the outset - early enough to influence procurement processes through clear criterias, logistics, and communication strategies. Early planning increases the likelihood of completely eliminating single-use items, by giving event organisers and external suppliers sufficient time to identify and source the right alternatives. This includes:
 - Identifying existing local solutions and providers to design ambitious yet realistic tender requirements.
 - Defining the data requirements for monitoring purposes to be included in the tender specifications.
- Facilitate coordination early by identifying key stakeholders and establishing clear communication flows for decision-making. In this case, there were many stakeholders involved, such as environmental technicians, public relations from the city council, organisers, suppliers, and washing facilities, which made coordination crucial and had to be done well in advance.

Procurement processes

- Service contracts should prioritise suppliers capable of providing reusable or zero waste solutions for the majority of items, including both cold drinks and coffee.
- Local solutions should be favored to ensure environmental consistency
- Organisers should hold coordination meetings with suppliers to:
 - Clearly communicate environmental objectives
 - Define responsibilities for waste prevention and data reporting.
 - Agree on operational protocols.
 - Confirm the data to be collected
 - Identify logistical constraints in advance

Consider implementing a Deposit system for reusable cups even in closed and controlled environments, to:

- Increase return rates
- Reduce losses
- Improve cleanliness of event spaces
- Lower overall system costs
- Set up an easy monitoring systems

Implement a shared digital monitoring system to track:

- Cups distributed per day
- Cups returned per day
- Stock replenishment at stations

Communication strategies should include:

- Information on the event website about the plastic prevention solutions
- Instructions in registration emails, specifically about the reusable cup system
- Visible signage at refill and return points
- Reminder messages to return the cups during the event
- Highlighting previous return rates can help motivate participants
- Include follow-up survey questions regarding the measures implemented, as QR surveys during networking or catering areas often receive limited engagement



Figure 9: Participants at Conoma 2025 - @credits: Conoma 2025

Contact



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



Rezero - Waste Prevention and Responsible Consumption Foundation is a Catalan non-profit and independent organisation. Working to change the current production and consumption model towards a Zero Waste Strategy, by networking with social, political and economic agents. They promote responsible consumption and waste prevention actions through the development of transformative strategic campaigns, plans and policies and research studies. www.rezero.cat



The Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project aims to support 18 to 30 EU municipalities in embedding waste prevention at the local level through the creation of Plastic Prevention Plans (PPPs). These plans focus on implementing reuse actions within the municipalities' direct sphere of public control, including public events, buildings, and procurement tenders. www.ericproject.eu



Zero Waste Europe gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from the European Union. The sole responsibility for the content of this material lies with Zero Waste Europe. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the funder mentioned above. The funder cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

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