

UIC Barcelona

3Rs
Reduce, Recycle,
Reuse or Refuse

Strategic Plan 2023-2026	Waste prevention	Circular economy	Campus awareness
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4 Programme pillars	2 Campuses involved
1,392 Campaign views	168 Survey responses

Programme purpose To embed a practical culture of sustainability in campus life by reducing waste at source, facilitating correct segregation, fostering reuse, and progressively refusing unnecessary single-use products and materials.	4 priority lines Reduce: Prevent waste before it is generated. Recycle: Separate valuable fractions correctly. Reuse: Extend product life and value. Refuse: Avoid unnecessary disposable items.
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Strategic foundation and scope

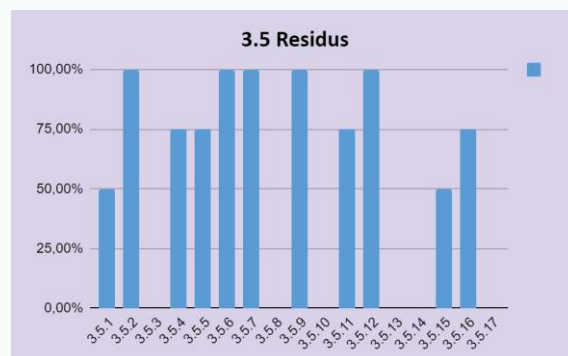
Why this programme matters

UIC Barcelona integrates waste prevention and responsible consumption into its institutional sustainability strategy. Within the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan for Sustainability and Social Commitment, the university commits to preventing waste, reducing food waste and single-use plastics, and promoting the reuse and recycling of materials that cannot be avoided at source.

The 3Rs programme translates this commitment into concrete day-to-day actions across procurement, printing, food services, campus operations, education, and awareness campaigns.

Main implementation lines

- Policy and planning: waste prevention is embedded in institutional strategy.
- Operational measures: printing, purchasing, food service and internal processes reduce waste generation.
- Infrastructure: clearly identified containers and collection points support segregation.
- Awareness: campaigns and communication materials reinforce good habits.



Waste-related indicators included in the university sustainability planning framework.

- Measures to reduce paper, plastics and food waste.
- Systems to recycle paper, packaging, organics and special fractions.
- Campus practices that reuse materials and extend product life.
- Institutional choices that refuse unnecessary single-use items.
- Awareness evidence from the European Week for Waste Reduction 2025.

Reduce

Reducing waste at source

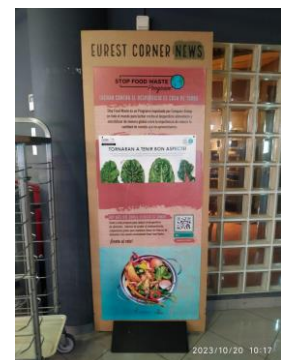
- Environmental guidelines encourage the university community to print only when necessary, reuse paper, and print double-sided and in black and white.
- Sustainability criteria were incorporated into the Xerox printing service so that more responsible printing settings are applied by default.
- Digital tools and online resources reduce dependence on printed documents, leaflets and posters.
- Actions to reduce plastic bottles include water fountains, the use of water jugs, and awareness campaigns promoting reusable alternatives.
- The Barcelona campus canteen implements the Stop Food Waste initiative to minimise food waste and improve responsible consumption.



Guidelines supporting responsible paper use and recycling.



Awareness material encouraging a reduction in single-use plastic.



Stop Food Waste campaign displayed in the campus canteen.

Paper

Printing guidelines, digitalisation and default printer settings reduce unnecessary consumption.

Plastic

Reusable alternatives, water jugs and awareness campaigns help curb single-use bottle waste.

Recycle

UIC Barcelona supports recycling through visible infrastructure and clearly identified collection points that help students and staff separate the main waste fractions correctly. The programme includes ordinary recyclables as well as dedicated collection points for specific waste streams such as batteries and cardboard.



Multi-fraction segregation station installed on campus.



Paper and cardboard collection point.



Organic waste bins.



Dedicated container for used batteries.



Specific storage area for cardboard and bulky recyclable material.



Reusable service items that help reduce plastic waste.

Examples of recycling support

- Segregation points for paper, packaging and organic waste at campus level.
- Special collection points for batteries and other specific fractions.
- Recycled and FSC-certified materials used in institutional products.
- Recycling also becomes a teaching resource in learning activities and practical projects.

Reuse and Refuse in practice

Reuse

- Reusable fabric bags replace disposable bags in communication and daily operations.
- Operational materials are reused between buildings and campuses where possible.
- Plant residues and other discarded materials are repurposed creatively in campus and educational activities.
- Durable objects such as bottles, lunch boxes and bags reinforce longer product life cycles.



Reusable fabric bag used as an alternative to disposable bags.



Plant residues reused for decorative and educational purposes.

Refuse

- The programme promotes refusing products that are unnecessary or excessively disposable before they become waste.
- Campus food-service materials are being replaced with more sustainable alternatives such as cardboard cups and recycled-paper napkins.
- The use of refillable water service solutions helps avoid disposable plastic bottles in meetings and shared spaces.
- Internal processes increasingly favour digital communication over paper-based routines.



Cardboard cup replacing plastic cups in food-service areas.



Reusable water jug supporting lower plastic consumption.

European Week for Waste Reduction 2025



European Week for Waste Reduction 2025 (22-30 November 2025).

Instagram awareness campaign

During the European Week for Waste Reduction 2025, the Office for Cooperation and Sustainable Development launched an Instagram campaign focused on everyday waste-prevention habits and responsible consumption.

- The campaign remained available for 24 hours and reached 1,392 views.
- A total of 168 responses were recorded across five awareness questions.
- The stories addressed packaging choices, waste planning, food waste prevention and the use of reusable objects.

This initiative strengthened the educational dimension of the 3Rs programme by turning waste prevention into an accessible and participatory conversation with the university community.



Selection of campaign stories published on Instagram.

Results of the waste awareness survey

Question	Yes	No	Total	% Yes
Before making a purchase, do you consider the amount and type of waste the product can generate?	17	22	39	43.6%
Do you choose products with less packaging or recyclable packaging to reduce waste?	16	16	32	50.0%
When planning meals or food purchases, do you consider how to avoid food waste or unnecessary packaging?	22	11	33	66.7%
Do you usually carry reusable items to reduce waste generation (bottle, lunch box, bag, etc.)?	27	5	32	84.4%
Do you think in advance about how you will manage the waste you generate?	21	11	32	65.6%

Total responses across the five questions: 168.

Main insights

- The most consolidated behaviour is the regular use of reusable objects, with 84.4% positive responses.
- Awareness related to food planning and food waste prevention is also strong, reaching 66.7%.
- 65.6% of responses indicate that participants think in advance about how they will manage the waste they generate.
- The area with the greatest room for improvement is the routine selection of products with less packaging, which reached 50.0% positive responses.

Value for continuous improvement

The survey provides practical evidence that the awareness campaign is reaching the university community. At the same time, it identifies behavioural areas where communication and prevention measures can continue to improve everyday practice.

From strategy to campus culture

Reducing, recycling, reusing and refusing unnecessary materials are not isolated actions. Together, they create a practical culture of sustainability that can be lived every day on campus.

Reduce

Prevent waste through responsible purchasing, digitalisation, and lower consumption of paper, plastic and food resources.

Recycle

Make correct segregation easy through infrastructure, labelled collection points and recovery systems for different fractions.

Reuse

Extend the useful life of materials by choosing durable objects and repurposing resources whenever possible.

Refuse

Avoid unnecessary disposable items and replace them with more sustainable alternatives before waste is generated.

Overall conclusion

UIC Barcelona's 3Rs programme demonstrates a broad and operational approach to waste prevention. It combines preventive actions, reuse practices, segregation systems, and awareness initiatives with documented examples from both campuses. This integrated approach helps justify a strong performance level because the programme is implemented across everyday operations, infrastructure and community education rather than remaining at the planning stage.