



Game changer: how a handball tournament cut waste in half?

72% less waste and 52% decrease in single-use items
at Andebolmania - São João da Madeira, Portugal



São João da Madeira, Portugal



1-4 April 2026



Type of pilot

Prevent waste generation via the implementation of zero waste strategies.

KEY NUMBERS

160 teams and
2,500 athletes

38,980
litres of waste

55,076
disposable items used

72% less waste &
52% decrease in
single-use items

IN A NUTSHELL

Andebolmania is a long-running youth handball tournament held every Easter in São João da Madeira, Portugal - bringing together grassroots and international teams alike. Organised by Associação Andebolmania in partnership with the handball section of Associação Desportiva Sanjoanense and supported by the municipality, the event unites athletes, families, volunteers and the local community around sport and social interaction. **In 2026, around 160 teams and 2,500 athletes from Portugal, Spain and Brazil took part.**

Meals are provided to athletes, trainers and staff throughout the event, which last edition took place over four days. While Andebolmania is not yet a fully zero waste event, the 2026 edition marked a turning point: **targeted measures cut overall waste production by 72% and reduced single-use item consumption by 52% compared to 2025.**

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

The Municipality of São João da Madeira is a [Zero Waste Cities candidate](#) and recently joined the [Elevating Reuse in Cities project](#) in order to implement single-use reduction measures. Events organised in the municipality with their official support were identified as critical areas for action.

Challenge: Andebolmania 2025 edition generated a considerable amount of waste with very little separation - notably due to meals served in individual packaging, whether athletes wanted them or not, which led to massive food waste and single-use item overload:

- 140,160 litres of waste generated
- Including a total of 114,750 disposable items (cutlery, cups, bowls, leads)

This was a wake-up call. For the 2026 edition, both the municipality and the organisers committed to putting waste prevention at the heart of the event from day one.

APPROACH / IMPLEMENTATION

- Monitoring of previous events to register waste production as a baseline;
- The municipality and organisers jointly redesigned the approach to meal service at the event;
- Following advice from the municipality and the organisation [ZERO](#), organisers sourced a catering provider able to serve food from large trays directly onto plates and bowls, with water served in reusable jugs at the tables - instead of single-use ones;
- The municipality provided waste bins for separate collection, while volunteer teams managed jug refills and supported sorting on the ground.
- The municipality monitored the waste production (in accordance with the ERSUC - Multimunicipal Waste Management System in the central coast of Portugal) and requested the data from the organisers on disposable items used, in order to be able to compare with last year's edition of Andebolmania.



Separate collection by volunteers



RESULTS

		2025			2026		
		Plastic	Metal	Paper	Plastic	Metal	Paper
Canteen	Disposable packaging	50,850	0	0	5,360	0	16,000
	Beverage bottles 33 cl	20,000	0	0	264	0	0
	Cutlery	16,950	0	16,950	15,800	0	15,800
Bar	Metal cans 33cl	0	10,000	0	0	1,832	31,800
	Beverage bottles 33cl	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		87,800	10,000	16,950	21,444	1,832	31,800
Final total number		114,750			55,076		

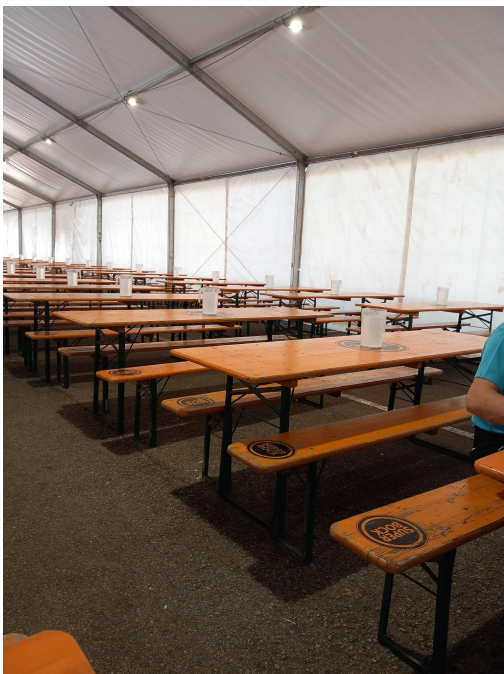
Number of litres	2025	2026
Plastic / Metal	57,600	9,160
Paper / Cardboard	19,200	8,000
Bio-waste	17,280	2,840
Waste	46,080	19,000
Total	140,160	39,000

While the event didn't transition fully to zero waste, its first single-use waste prevention and minimisation measures cut overall waste by 72% and single-use consumption by 52% versus 2025. The potential for a full reusables-only transition is clear.

FIRST LEARNINGS & INSIGHTS

- **Introducing reusable water jugs at the tables was a simple but powerful first step** which significantly reduced disposable bottle consumption. That said, moving further towards reuse for all served meals came with real logistical challenges. Finding providers able to supply and manage a full reuse system logistics on-site - covering cups, plates and cutlery - throughout the 4 days, has proved to be a challenge, given the high number of users, tight meal service windows and the absence of washing facilities on location.
- While not optimal, **serving meals in bulk instead of pre-made individual portions** - letting athletes choose what they truly wanted and in which quantity - **dramatically cut both food waste and packaging**, as a single plate and bowl replaced the two separate disposable containers used in 2025.
- On the separate collection side, the setup revealed some practical lessons: a wider collection area is needed to prevent reusable trays from piling up - creating two problems: lighter items can be blown away (the area was open to the wind), and stacked trays risk falling onto the floor where people are walking as they leave the restaurant area.
- The 2026 edition was a first step. The goal is now to go further - incrementally, but decisively. **For 2027, the priority is to move to fully reusable meal containers, and contacts are already being made to identify solution providers able to deliver this on-site.**
- Better separate collection will also be needed, with a wider collection area and more volunteers to keep up with the pace of the event or event involving athletes in the separate selection

Andebolmania is on its way to becoming a fully reusable event - one edition at a time.





Zero Waste Europe Factsheet



[Zero Waste Europe](#) is the European network of communities, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards the prevention and 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.

zero.

[ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável](#) is a Portuguese environmental NGO working across climate, energy, mobility, biodiversity, water and waste. Through advocacy, education, research and public campaigns, ZERO pushes for systemic change towards a more sustainable society - holding institutions accountable and empowering citizens to act for a healthier planet.



[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.



São João da Madeira (PT) is a Zero Waste Candidate City participating in the [Mission Zero Academy](#) programme. The city has committed to developing and presenting its own certification roadmap in line with the programme's requirements.



Zero Waste Europe gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from the European Union. The sole responsibility for the content of this materials 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.

Zero Waste Europe, May 2026

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