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**SUCCESS
STORY**

The museum of rural life:
bringing debate, knowledge and
environmental education to
citizens through culture

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Environment



FUNDACIÓ////CARULLA

The **Museu de la Vida Rural** (Museum of Rural Life) is a 5,500 m² cultural center dedicated to the preservation of the memory of the rural world, is located in l'Espluga de Francolí (Conca de Barberà, Catalonia) and was created in 1988 on the initiative of Lluís Carulla i Canals. It currently has an extensive permanent collection that allows you to travel through time, across the history and knowledge of the Catalan and Mediterranean rural world.

The museum of the **Carulla Foundation** was inaugurated in 1988 and today it is a cultural centre that preserves, generates and shares knowledge while promoting debate and reflection on sustainable social transformation from the rural world.

It acts as a cultural and educational center, with a wide program of proposals that combine analysis, debate, enjoyment, experimentation and reflection, such as temporary exhibitions, activity programs and museum services. It has an orchard and garden that occupy a central space of the facility, connecting past, present and future through ecology and ethnobotany.

It is one of the ethnological museums of reference in Catalonia and its strategic objective is to educate culturally for sustainability through the transforming effect of culture and education, from the point of view of rural life and with an eye on the past.



Why did your company join EMAS?

In 2018, the Museum of Rural Life approved its new Strategic Plan and in 2019 declared a climate and ecological emergency and made a commitment to address it. EMAS was the tool that at that time gave the museum the opportunity to carry out concrete actions in response to the commitments made and, at the same time, monitor their impact.

Given the link with the territory and the museum's own vocation in terms of sustainability, it had been carrying out various environmental actions but not in a systematic way and did not really measure their impact; implementing EMAS has been the way to know the real state of management of all the areas of the museum, to know its strong points and those that needed to be improved.

During the EMAS implementation process, the museum had the opportunity to also implement the regional ecolabel for cultural sites, obtaining a double benefit: on the one hand, all the actions and improvements carried out in EMAS were useful for the ecolabel and, on the other hand, it obtained a bonus on the fees paid in Catalonia to obtain the ecolabel, as one of the incentives currently in force in Catalonia for EMAS-registered organisations.

Initially, it took the museum some time to get up to speed with all that was involved in implementing EMAS, not least because it is a small organisation with a team of 9 people, none of whom had any specific environmental skills. But little by little it has managed to train the staff and, those registers in which all the key information on environmental management is collected and which initially required time and effort, are now integrated into the day-to-day work and allow control of all the activities and a good starting point for reporting to the Board of Trustees on the environmental results of the museum and on the investments made.





Main results so far?

The museum is a newcomer to EMAS; it started the process in 2020 after approving its environmental policy and obtained EMAS registration in 2021. Unfortunately, the EMAS implementation process coincided with the pandemic and this has had a major impact on the available environmental data and the ability to compare indicators, but even so, in this short time it has already obtained various interesting results.

As a cultural institution, environmental education and its impact on society is clearly a key issue. In this regard, the museum has an extensive program of activities for a wide range of audiences and continues to innovate and create synergies with other organizations in the region to join forces in the face of current environmental and social challenges. One example is the co-production on the theme of forest fires, carried out with the Pau Costa Foundation.

If we look at the data that is coming out over the course of 2022 in relation to the previous period, an increase can be detected, since this year the museum has resumed its usual activity by being open to the public again. But if we look further, we can see that the museum has installed a first set of photovoltaic solar in 2021 which, together with the geothermal installation (45,76 kW peak power), allowed it to cover approximately 29% of its energy demand in 2021. The museum is currently further increasing the installation of photovoltaic solar panels by 50% (an extra 22,82 kW peak power), which, together with the existing panels and geothermal installation, is expected to cover a relevant part of its demand under normal operating conditions. Given the current energy context, thanks to the investments made in renewable energies, the museum has been able to limit the impact of the increase in energy costs.

Another aspect of notable relevance for the museum is that it has begun to assess how exhibitions are designed and developed and has begun to include environmental criteria that allow it to reuse materials, use less polluting products, and partner with suppliers that offer more environmentally friendly materials and solutions. This allows it to influence many parties involved in the process of creating an exhibition, such as suppliers and curators or artists, and to transmit a new approach in the processes of generating cultural content. This is also a way of transforming a sector that puts creativity before any other need and that must now also do its bit to ensure the sustainability of the final product.

The maintenance department now has greater control of the facilities, of the interventions to be carried out by maintenance providers and of the corresponding legal requirements, a key aspect for the management and for

the board of trustees as it reduces the risk of sanctions and damage to the organization's reputation.

In order to respond to the needs of the clientele, the museum has recently incorporated a bar service, this has been conceived with environmental and circularity criteria from the beginning, therefore, the products are organic or fair trade, no single-use plastic objects are offered, an organic coffee supplier is used who removes the coffee remains that are then used to prepare substrate for mushroom cultivation and whenever possible, the museum works with local suppliers to promote the local economy.

Some chemical products for the maintenance or restoration of the works are not easy to substitute because there are not yet many options, but the Conservation department studies and applies alternative treatments as they become available. On the other hand, in cleaning activities, it has been much easier to substitute products and, at this moment, the use of only 5 products has been reduced, 4 of which have the EU Ecolabel, as well as toilet paper.

As can be seen, green purchasing is a key work axis in the environmental management of this organization, which wants to position itself in the territory as an agent of change through these operational practices, as well as through the use of culture as a vehicle for debate, knowledge and environmental education.



What do you have in mind for the future?

The museum has launched some original initiatives, such as programs for the integration of unaccompanied immigrant minors, through which this group can, on the one hand, have access to culture, but also learn trades related to environmental management, among others. This type of educational initiatives will continue to be a commitment to the future of the museum, as they are the ones that allow it to develop its vision as a transforming element in society. Likewise, work will continue to reduce GHG emissions associated with energy consumption and water consumption, which is a significant environmental aspect due to the increasingly frequent episodes of drought in the area.

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