

## SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL | Version 1.0 (September 2019)

**1. The problem.** Cigarettes are the objects most frequently disposed of in the environment. Every day, millions of cigarette butts are deposited in our green spaces, waters and on our streets. Furthermore, huge numbers of cigarette packages, also counted in the millions, are likewise discarded carelessly and wantonly. Scientific studies indicate that cigarette litter is a severe ecological hazard. The filters, made of cellulose acetate, decompose into microplastic and the poisonous substances leached from them contaminate soils and water. Cigarette butts thus harm and kill a vast number of organisms. In addition, their removal (by municipal cleaning departments, etc.) can only be accomplished to a mostly unsatisfactory extent while nevertheless incurring significant costs to be borne by the general public. The “butt problem” can be solved by levying a deposit on cigarettes at the point of sale, which is refunded when the butts are returned.

**2. Our suggestion:** A deposit of 20 cents per cigarette, or 4 Euros per pack. A pocket ashtray is issued with every pack of cigarettes. Customers who return the full pocket ashtray along with the empty pack get their money back. Thus, smokers who comply are not financially burdened, but those who continue to litter will find it expensive. Butts and packaging are both to be recycled. To this end, we demand legislative measures to implement a deposit system covering both cigarettes and – often overlooked as a problem – their packaging. This deposit system is to be

- a) established and administered by the tobacco industry;
- b) funded by the tobacco industry - where appropriate, with state support; and
- c) audited by the state.

**3 (No) alternatives:** Politicians and industry representatives periodically suggest the same four measures to address the problem: more bins with ashtrays in public spaces, tougher sanctions against littering, public awareness campaigns, and the introduction of biodegradable filters. All of these are desirable *auxiliaries* of a deposit system but are in and of themselves incapable of solving the problem. Even in the (extremely unlikely) case that the success rates for these already existing measures were to double, millions of butts would still enter the ecosystem every day. Rejecting a deposit system therefore means – for the time being – to risk the consequences of the current continuous and incremental damage to the environment (and ultimately to ourselves).

**4. Our mission** is the promotion of the deposit system to the general public as well as to political and corporate decision makers. An important instrument in this task is our petition to the German Minister of the Environment Svenja Schulze ([www.change.org/zigarettenpfand](http://www.change.org/zigarettenpfand)). We are fully aware that the design of the process - from the collection of the butts and their packaging to the recycling of all components involved - constitutes a challenge. We are confident that the industry is fully capable of developing such a system if it is asked to do so. However, we ourselves are also working hard on the practical implications of our demands. A growing number of contacts with engineers, designers, economists and specialists from other related fields is already coming to fruition: constructive answers are being hammered out to the question of how we can accomplish a deposit system for filter cigarettes and their packaging.

*Die Aufheber* (literally the *up-pickers*) is a citizens’ initiative originating in Berlin and constitutes an integral part of the growing, worldwide, *cleanup* movement. It was founded in 2017 by Stephan von Orlow.

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