

GIS VERSUS SDDR, ANOTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONFRONTATION

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The great environmental challenges present us with complex and difficult problems solution. There is usually not a single answer that resolves the issue, rather it is necessary to implement a whole series of actions that make up a mix of solutions to try to tackle the problem. This basic slogan is often repeated, for example, [when talking about climate change and the future of energy](#): replacing fossil fuels needs action of different renewable technologies; not only mitigation must be addressed, but also adaptation; we must manage the demand and the consumption model and not stay only in the energy supply; etc

Something similar could be said about the challenge of waste management. **A complex problem that needs different and varied solutions to be addressed.** And yet the [bitter controversy](#), at least the one that has transcended in some media [in which they have been reached to cross serious accusations](#), which in recent weeks has been generating the new [Law on waste and contaminated soils](#), imminent approval in Congress.

Once again, as with many other environmental issues, two opposing camps have been created, [in the purest "nuclear yes-nuclear no" style](#). On the one hand, there are traditional waste managers who operate with the system called **GIS** (comprehensive waste management system), such as [Ecoembes](#) (light packaging, that is, the yellow container) or [Ecovidrio](#) (glass containers, the green container); and on the other hand, there are those who promote a **complementary management system**, the so-called **SDDR** (deposit, refund and return system), supported and promoted by the association [Retorna](#).

What is striking is the starting point, [strong opposition from GIS environment organizations](#) against the proposal of the Retorna association. As can be read in **article 21**, the only thing the bill does is open up the possibility of establishing in the future a complementary system to the GIS, the SDDR, **as long as it is economical , environmentally and socially viable**. The SDDR recovers the concept of returnable packaging, in which the consumer returns the packaging to the trade to be reused. In addition, **it broadens this concept, since the container can not only be returnable, but also recyclable**; that is to say, the consumer, once he has drunk his soda, returns the can to the store and recovers the money that the bottler has charged when buying that product.

Article 21. Collection, preparation for reuse, recycling and recovery of waste.

1. The environmental authorities in their respective area of competence and in accordance with the principles of prevention and promotion of reuse and high-quality recycling, will adopt the necessary measures to establish priority systems to promote the reuse of products and preparation activities. for reuse. They will promote, among other measures, the establishment of storage places for waste that can be reused and support for the establishment of networks and reuse centers. Likewise, promotional measures will be promoted for products prepared for reuse through public procurement and quantitative objectives in management plans.

2. To encourage prevention and promote reuse and high-quality recycling, measures may be adopted to facilitate the establishment of deposit, refund and return systems under the terms provided in article 30.3 for:

- a) industrial packaging,*
- b) collective and transport containers,*
- c) glass, plastic and metal packaging and packaging waste,*
- d) other reusable products.*

In this case, the technical and economic viability of these systems, the set of environmental, social and human health impacts will be taken into account, and respecting the need to guarantee the proper functioning of the internal market. The Government will send to the Cortes Generales the mandatory technical, environmental and economic feasibility reports that are carried out prior to the implementation of a return deposit and return system.

In the **SIG** the packer must pay the SIG based on the containers it puts on the market; in the **SDDR** the packer "momentarily" charges the consumer who, if he returns the container to the store, recovers that amount. It is in this aspect where the outbreak of the controversy lies, because in concept it represents a substantial change in the waste management model.

According to the defenders of [GIS](#), Spain enjoys some recycling rates at the level of the most developed countries in Europe, and the alternative system of [SDDR](#) would hardly improve the numbers. In addition, they argue that the SDDR charges directly on the consumer and seriously jeopardizes the future of small businesses, who will not be able to offer the container return service.

According to the defenders of the SDDR, with this system the recycling rate of containers would increase (decreasing the deposit in landfills), the quality of the material to be recycled would be increased ([upcycling instead of recycling](#)), and would be directly involved to citizens in waste management who obtain a direct benefit for participating in the system.

Without discussing the [recycling rate figures](#) nor the questions that are made about them or about the benefits and evils of one system or another (it is clear that rigorous studies are lacking on the viability of establishing the SDDR in a complementary way), it is necessary to join efforts to continue improving waste management in Spain. Instead of the existing confrontation, it would be interesting to see how both parties work together to launch pilot projects such as the initiative promoted in Pamplona that exchanges waste for cinema tickets.

[As stated by Ramón Folch](#) recently in an article (although we remember that the SDDR also contemplates recycling): "recycling is a lesser evil that there is no reason to accept resignedly if the greater evil can be abolished. Collect bottles and melt them down to re-manufacture bottles it's less absurd than throwing them away after a single use, but worse than continuing to use them for as long as they're good". Now, the best way to avoid the generation of packaging waste is, [do not use them!](#)

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