

Austria's Deposit Return Scheme Enters Its Next Phase as EWP and Sensoneo Drive System Innovation

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Austria's Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) is finishing its first year with a strong performance and widespread public support, surpassing 1.2 billion returned PET bottles and aluminium cans by the end of November. EWP Recycling Pfand Österreich, the national DRS operator, and Sensoneo, the scheme's core technology partner, are now preparing the next stage of system enhancements targeting convenience, accessibility, and environmental impact.

A Rapid National Rollout with Strong Public Backing

Austria introduced its nationwide DRS on 1 January 2025, applying a €0.25 deposit to single-use beverage containers from 0.1 to 3 litres, one of Europe's highest deposit values. Despite the ambitious timeline, the system was rolled out swiftly and comprehensively. EWP was established end of 2022 and started 2023, with formal regulations issued in September 2023, setting in motion an accelerated implementation phase.

Early market data confirms broad acceptance: 75% of consumers support the system, citing reduced littering and improved recycling as key motivations, while the improvements in cleanliness and recycling consistency have already been recorded across the country.

Collection Results Exceed Expectations

During the initial months of operation, weekly returns increased steadily. The system has now stabilised at 7–9 million units collected per week, reflecting high consumer engagement and smooth nationwide operations.

By late October, EWP reported one billion returned containers; by the end of November, the total had climbed to 1.2 billion. EWP expects to meet the country's 80% return-rate target by the end of the year, with the final yearly performance figure to be released in January.

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Next Steps: Convenience, Expansion and further Education

Looking ahead, EWP plans to further optimize the system through enhanced convenience and clearer consumer guidance. One of the communication priorities is clarifying and educating the public on the difference between the previous approach to recycling versus the current one that already leverages the DRS benefits and makes the recycling outcomes fully verifiable.

Among upcoming initiatives:

- More manual collection points, especially to support smaller retailers and broaden system accessibility.
- Exploration of public return points to increase convenience
- Introduction of designated drop-off containers enabling citizens to leave bottles and cans to donate them for social purposes, helping both convenience-oriented users and charitable organisations.

Fraud prevention remains robust. EWP's dedicated team, working closely with retailers, has already detected and prosecuted fraudulent attempts, underlining that the risks of deposit fraud far outweigh the potential gains.

Technology Partnership as a Cornerstone of Success

A significant portion of the system's efficiency is attributed to the close cooperation between EWP and Sensoneo. Sensoneo provides a nationwide SaaS platform that supports all stakeholders and DRS processes. High automation levels were achieved from day one and continue to grow through ongoing development.

EWP highlights Sensoneo as a reliable and strategically important partner: *"Sensoneo's expertise in other countries that started implementation of a DRS before Austria was not only valuable during the setup phase of the scheme in 2024, but Sensoneo is still acting as a kind of sparring partner to reflect ideas and solution approaches by Austrian colleagues. In combination with software delivered on time and quality, EWP is looking forward to implementing the next needed functionalities with Sensoneo's professional and motivated team,"* says Valentin Hamm, Head of IT, EWP Österreich.

Peter Knaz, Deputy CEO at Sensoneo, emphasises the strong professional alignment from the outset:

"EWP came exceptionally well prepared, with clear processes and a strong security focus. Thanks to the close cooperation between both IT teams, Austria's scheme launched smoothly and with several unique tools to address cross-border fraud. We are proud to contribute to Austria's successful DRS operation and look forward to further improvements that will support high collection rates and consumer convenience."

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About Sensoneo

Sensoneo is a global provider of innovative technology solutions that support the digital transformation of waste management to achieve efficiency, transparency, and sustainability and facilitate the transition to the circular economy. With its team of 150+ professionals and active presence in Europe, the USA, the MENA region, and South-East Asia, Sensoneo helps waste professionals, Deposit Return Scheme operators, and PRO organisations to manage waste smarter.

Over the years, Sensoneo has been expanding and perfecting its portfolio, which now ranges from waste monitoring and logistics optimisation to end-to-end take-back systems, IT solutions for PRO and EPR, and comprehensive IT systems running nationwide deposit return schemes.

Sensoneo has successfully implemented and operated IT systems for Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) in 9 countries, achieving recycling performance exceeding 90%. Sensoneo's deployment of smart sensors contributes to the largest smart waste installation worldwide, encompassing an impressive 11,100 sensors in Madrid. Sensoneo solutions help the largest factories and logistics centres to automate industrial waste collection, enabling full transparency over the waste streams managed and accurate data reporting necessary for ESG.

About EWP Recycling Pfand Österreich gGmbH

EWP Recycling Pfand Österreich gGmbH is a central body that takes care of all organisational and structural agendas of the single-use deposit system in Austria. The owner of the central body is Trägerverein Einwegpfand, whose members include leading beverage producers, retail partners and related associations.