

‘POINTLESS PAPERWORK’ OR NECESSARY? MIXED VIEWS OVER GERMANY’S NEW ‘RECEIPT OBLIGATION’

The “Law on the Protection against Manipulation of Digital Records” (Kassengesetz) is intended to make tax evasion more difficult – but as it means more bureaucracy and paper waste, there’s a lot of grumbling over it.

“I think it’s nonsense,” says a young woman from Dresden in the queue at the bakery, questioning why anyone would need a receipt for a snack “I’m not going to complain about my roll anyway,” she says.

‘Typical Germany’

The new law means extra waste is inevitably being produced. At the checkout, several debates over the new law are sparked when Barche asks his customers if they want to take their receipts with them. Two construction workers, who get soup for lunch, shake their heads. “Typical Germany” is their comment.

The owner of Schawarma City, a kebab snack bar in downtown Düsseldorf, agrees.

Because of the new law, the snack bar owner had to buy a new electronic cash register. Neighbouring kiosks are also not making positive noises about the obligation to provide a receipt: “Rubbish” and a “waste of paper” – they all agree on that.

But the regulation should actually please the taxpayer: the so-called “Bonpflicht” is one of several measures passed in 2016.

The receipt obligation for all traders with electronic cash register systems is intended to help in the fight against tax fraud – because the till and number of receipts printed can be easily compared against each other by auditors.

Fraud with manipulated cash registers leads to tax losses in the double-digit billions every year, emphasizes Social Democrats’ finance politician Lothar Binding. For retailers who do not yet have a suitable cash register, there is a transition phase until September.

And it’s not all moans and groans.

Claudia Reichenbächer of the Dresden butcher of the same name, cannot understand why it’s a big deal.

“We have an electronic cash register and always print out the receipt anyway,” says Reichenbächer.