

WO KANN MAN ESSEN UND TRINKEN? (Where can you eat and drink?)

essen / speisen / trinken

vending machines: der Automat, die Automaten
self-service stores: Selbstbedienung, Selbstbedienungsladen, SB-Laden
customer service: der Kundendienst

End of the line for cigarette vending machines in Austria?



6,500 cigarette machines may have to be removed from Austrian streets because they don't comply with EU regulations, as they don't carry warning messages or graphic images concerning the health effects of tobacco.

EU law stipulates that cigarette and tobacco packaging must carry clear health warnings, including in some cases graphic images of lung cancer patients, to make people think twice before purchasing tobacco. However, this is currently not the case for cigarette vending machines.

In Germany, a judge recently ruled that the lack of warning on the machines is unlawful. The authorities in the individual federal states will now have to decide what will happen to the machines.

In Austria, the Ministry of Health is now consulting with the Ministry of Finance. Franz Pietsch, who works for the Ministry of Health and is responsible for the protection of non-smokers, told the ORF that the machines could be removed. It's not clear if pasting warnings and graphic images onto the machines would be enough to satisfy EU law.

Josef Prirschl, who represents the interests of tobacconists, warned that they could face serious economic consequences. "For some tobacconists, sales from vending machines account for up to 30 percent of their sales, depending on their location," he told Ö1 radio.

Cigarette vending machines are banned on the streets in Hungary, Great Britain, France and Ireland. The World Health Organization (WHO) has long been calling for a global ban on the machines, as they make it easier for minors to buy cigarettes.

Austrians can legally smoke from the age of 16, and cigarette machines must attempt to verify a customer's age by requiring the insertion of a debit card or mobile phone verification.

Austria is also one of the countries in western Europe where cigarettes are cheapest. The country has a deeply entrenched smoking culture, and a general ban on smoking in cafes and restaurants doesn't come into force until May 2018.