

Cost assessment for littering in Switzerland

Increasing amounts of litter are being left lying in public spaces. This not only leads to a poor image of the local authorities in question, but also means more cleaning expenditure and higher costs. EBP determined the actual litter-related cleaning costs in the local authority areas and on public transport for Switzerland.

Litter-dropping, the thoughtless or deliberate dropping or ignoring of waste in public areas, upsets and impairs the quality of life as well as the feeling of security in the public domain, creating additional costs for the local authorities. For the first time in Switzerland the cost of clearing up litter dropped in the public domain and on public transport will be systematically surveyed. The calculations are based on a representative survey of 40 communes in the period from June to September 2010 and on information from nine public transport authorities.

As far as the public domain is concerned, the cleaning costs for 3 different categories of commune and within these categories for three areas with differing degrees of litter will be surveyed and the results extrapolated to all the communal categories. Within this process the type of ground surface on which the litter was collected or had to be swept up has to be taken into account. As far as the transport authorities are concerned, the total costs were projected on the basis of expert interviews by 9 transport authorities operating three different types of transport.

The Switzerland-wide cleaning costs caused by litter-dropping in the public domain lie at around 200 million CHF in total. For the communes, the share runs to around 150 million CHF per year and for public transport around 50 million CHF per year.

These values are of the same order of magnitude as earlier estimates which were considered more uncertain. The chief components consisting of take-away food packaging, beverage containers, newspapers and flyers as well as cigarettes make up the greatest share of the costs. These proportions however vary from situation to situation. Average litter costs can be allocated for the individual categories of commune and the types of litter-covered surfaces.

Client

Swiss Federal Office for the Environment
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Facts

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