

“Plastic is not fantastic.” It’s a fact and we all know about it. Especially, the problematics of marine pollution are no news to us. But what actions are being taken?

The aim of the European Union is that each of the member states is going to recycle 50 %<sup>1</sup> of their municipal waste by 2020. Although Catalonia scores with a municipal recycling rate of 41 %<sup>2</sup>, in average Spain only recycles 29 %<sup>3</sup> of its municipal waste. Therefore, the EU listed Spain as a country at risk of failure<sup>4</sup>. Despite legislative steps towards an improvement are being in progress, motivation within population is a crucial factor to achieve a recycling routine. So, what can we do about it?

Implementing a one-way plastic deposit refund scheme (DRS) is a big part of recycling successfully. Especially the coastal regions in Spain such as Valencia and Catalonia<sup>5</sup> are committed to the improvement of the recycling rate and therefore are supporting the idea of DRS. However, to successfully introduce a refund system **awareness** and **acceptance** within population must be increased.

And THIS is what we want to do. We want to establish: **awaRE**.

**awaRE** is an initiative of the UPC with the aim to spread the understanding of the need for DRS. Our main objective is to make recycling a daily chore.

As a first action we like to introduce a refund system for all UPC cafeterias using ceramic cups and packaging. All students and employees are going to be able to download our App, become members and pick up and drop off their cups and packaging at any cafeteria at the campuses.

Our motto is: From Campus to City. We use the UPC system as a pilot project to make it practical for private businesses. The long-term goal is to build a dense refund network in Barcelona and then in other cities in Spain. The promised results are one the one hand the reduction of plastic waste and on the other hand an increased acceptance for DRS and recycling in general. Be **awaRE** and **REcycle**.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/airs/2017/resource-efficiency-and-low-carbon-economy/recycling-of-municipal-waste>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.catalannews.com/society-science/item/catalonia-recycled-78-of-plastic-and-cardboard-in-2011>

<sup>3</sup> [https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/02/28/inenglish/1519836799\\_117305.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/02/28/inenglish/1519836799_117305.html)

<sup>4</sup> [https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/02/28/inenglish/1519836799\\_117305.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/02/28/inenglish/1519836799_117305.html)

<sup>5</sup> <https://seas-at-risk.org/publications-and-videos-2/members-news/720-deposit-return-scheme-the-way-forward-to-fight-marine-litter.html>