

Bathing water results 2007 – Spain

1. Introduction

People throughout Europe show a great interest in the water quality of seas, coasts, rivers and lakes. Good bathing water quality may be an important factor in their choice of a holiday or weekend destination. Also for the tourist industry, clean and safe water is an important argument to attract visitors to an area. The Bathing Water Directive sets binding standards for bathing water in the European Union.

This report gives a general overview of the bathing water quality in Spain during the 2007 bathing season. The parameters to be checked are microbiological (total coliforms and faecal coli forms) and physico-chemical (mineral oils, surface-active substances and phenols). The bathing waters are classified in the following categories:

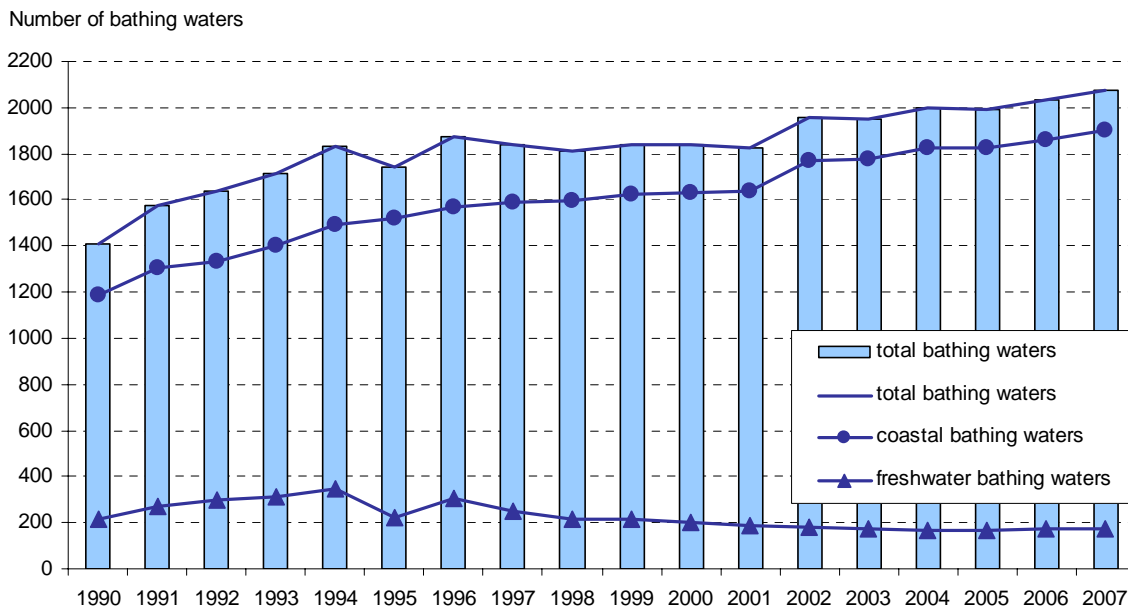
- Compliant with mandatory values of the Directive for the 5 parameters
- Compliant with more stringent guide values of the Directive for the 5 parameters
- Not compliant with mandatory values of the Directive for the 5 parameters
- Prohibited throughout the bathing season

2. Length of bathing season and number of bathing waters

The bathing season is variable in Spain, depending on the location of the bathing water. In the Canarias, it starts at 1 March and closes at 31 October. In mainland Spain it starts from end of May and ends late September.

A total of 2,075 bathing waters was monitored in Spain during the 2007 bathing season, of which 1,901 were coastal bathing waters and 174 freshwater bathing waters. With 2,075 bathing waters Spain accounts for about 9.7% of the reported bathing waters of the European Union.

Graph 1: Total number of bathing waters reported by the Spanish authorities since 1990



Remarkably is the increase in number of coastal bathing waters since the start of the reporting from 1,189 coastal bathing waters in 1990 to 1,901 in 2007. The number of freshwater bathing waters, however, decreased from 217 in 1990 to 174 in 2007.

3. Results of bathing water quality

The results of the bathing water quality in Spain during the bathing season of 2007 are presented in graph 2.

The graphs show, for coastal and freshwater bathing waters separately:

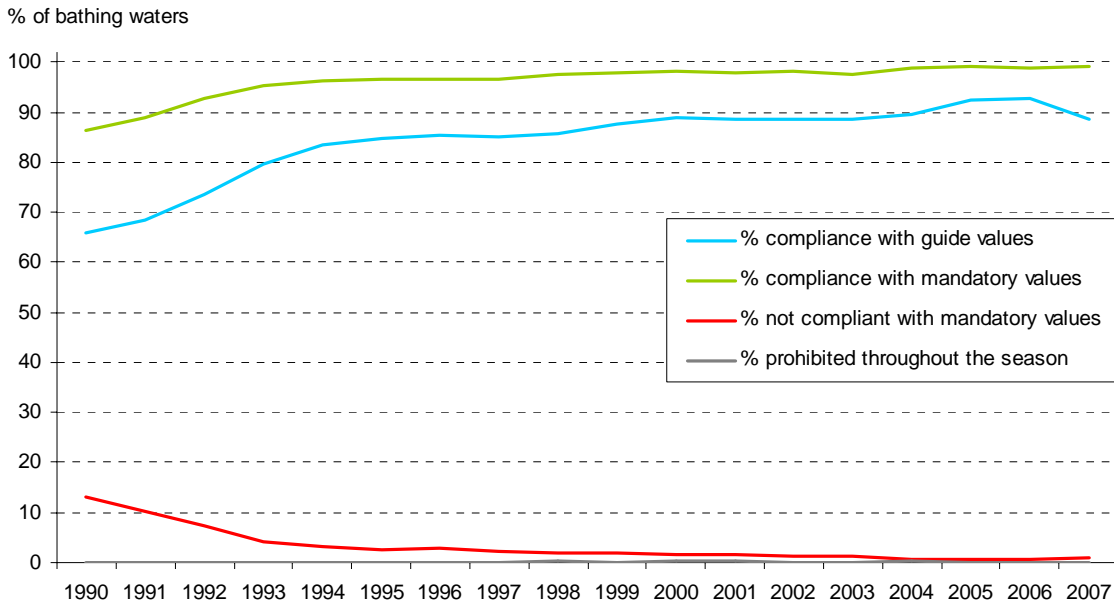
- The percentage of bathing waters that comply with the guide values of the Directive (blue line),
- The percentage of bathing waters that comply with the mandatory values of the Directive (green line)
- The percentage of bathing waters that do not comply with the mandatory values of the Directive (red line)
- The percentage of bathing waters that are prohibited throughout the bathing season (grey line)

The table in Annex 1 shows the same information in absolute numbers and in percentages, again separately for coastal and freshwater bathing waters.

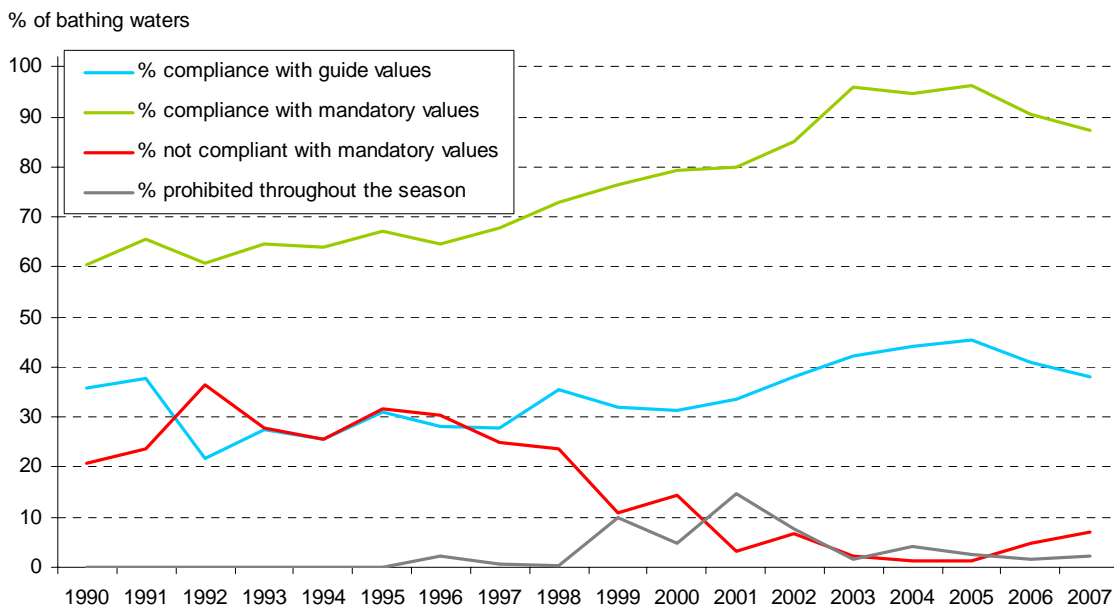
The map shows the location of the reported bathing waters in Spain. The location of the bathing waters is based on the geographic coordinates reported by the Spanish authorities.

Graph 2: Results of bathing water quality in Spain from 1990 to 2007

Coastal bathing waters



Freshwater bathing waters



4. Development of bathing water quality

Coastal bathing waters

99.1% of the coastal bathing waters met the mandatory values of the Directive in 2007. This is a slight improvement compared to the previous year. The compliance with the guide values, however, decreased from 92.7% in 2006 to 88.7%. 0.9% of the coastal bathing waters did not comply with the mandatory values. Only one coastal bathing water had to be closed during the season.

Since 1990, bathing water quality improved in the Spanish coastal bathing waters. During the last four years 99% of the bathing waters met the mandatory water quality, which is a very good result.

Freshwater bathing waters

87.4% of the freshwater bathing waters met the mandatory values in 2007. This is a slight decrease compared to the previous year. The compliance with the guide values also decreased (37.9%). The number of non-compliant bathing waters (6.9%) increased compared to the previous year. Also the number of prohibited bathing waters increased to 2.3%.

From 1990 onward there is an overall increase in the bathing water quality, although the water quality decreased during the last three years. This last evolution can be explained by the increasing number of freshwater bathing waters that did not comply with mandatory values. The percentage of bathing waters compliant with the more stringent guide values is fluctuating around 40% since 2002.

5. General information as provided by the Spanish authorities

A brief description of the measures being taken by the Spanish Environment Ministry to improve the quality of continental bathing water that do not comply with the mandatory values laid down in Directive 76/160/EEC on the quality of bathing waters is given below.

Development of the basic and complementary legislation on water

The legislative action taken to reduce emissions of contaminants to the aquatic environment and thereby to help to improve the quality of bathing water has involved major amendments to the Water Act and the Regulation on Public Water Resources, which constitute the basic legislation on water, and the drafting of complementary legislation on the control and management of waste water discharges to the aquatic environment.

“Crash plan” for zero tolerance on waste water discharges

In April 2005 the Environment Ministry launched a “crash plan” for waste water discharges. This consists of providing the Water Boards with the appropriate human, material and technical resources and setting priorities according to the volume of discharges and the danger they pose so that the action to be taken is as effective as possible and quickly benefits the receiving environment. These measures also make it possible to review discharge permits more quickly with a view to bringing them into line with the current legislation.

Initially, a budget of €2,752,704.89 was set aside for the “crash plan”, and the work was planned to be carried out over a period of 12 months. Subsequently, this period was extended to 24 months and the budget was increased to €3,327,806.97

In addition, a scheme has been launched for the inspection of all urban waste water discharges in every catchment area, with a budget of approximately €1.5 million per annum.

National water quality plan: Waste-water disposal and treatment 2007-2015

In cooperation with the Autonomous Communities, the Environment Ministry has drawn up the National water quality plan: waste-water disposal and treatment 2007-2015.

With this plan it will be possible to achieve a good ecological status, in compliance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the Environment Ministry’s Programme for the management and use of water (Programa A.G.U.A.).

The National water quality plan forms part of a series of measures aimed at full compliance with Directive 91/271/EEC and is intended to contribute to achieving the objective of good ecological status by 2015 as provided for in the Water Framework Directive.

On current estimates the total budget for the National water quality plan 2007-2015 is €19 007 million.

6. Infringement procedures

From the annual bathing water reports submitted by the Spanish authorities under the EU's Bathing Water Directive the Commission has observed that between 1991 and 2006 many previously recognised bathing waters dropped out of the official list of monitored bathing waters. The Directive requires Member States to monitor bathing water quality and keep bathing waters free of pollution. The European Court of Justice has established in the judgement C-307/98 (Commission versus Belgium) of 25 May 2000 that de-recognition or de-listing of bathing waters must be properly explained and justified and should not be a response to water pollution.

For this reason the Commission has sent a first warning letter to 11 Member States including Spain requesting that in the absence of a satisfactory explanation for their removal from the list of monitored bathing sites, the bathing waters in question be reinstated.

The Spanish authorities have responded with explanations for the de-listings. These are currently being examined by the Commission.

7. More information on bathing water quality in the European Union

More information on bathing water quality in the European Member States, including the reports for 27 Member States and the EU summary report, can be found on the bathing water quality website (http://ec.europa.eu/water/water-bathing/index_en.html).

By 2015, Member States will have to comply with the stricter and more ambitious requirements laid out in the new Bathing Water Directive¹. This new Directive requires more effective monitoring and management of bathing waters, greater public participation and improved information. More information on the new Directive can be found on the bathing water quality website and on <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:064:0037:0051:EN:PDF>. Luxembourg already started since 2007 reporting according to these more stringent new requirements.

A newly established Water Information System for Europe (www.water.europa.eu) is a gateway to all water-related information. Among other water-related data, information on individual bathing water quality can be found in the WISE viewer (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/wise-viewer>) through interactive maps.

¹ Directive 2006/7/EC

Annex 1

Map 1: Bathing waters reported during the 2007 bathing season in Spain

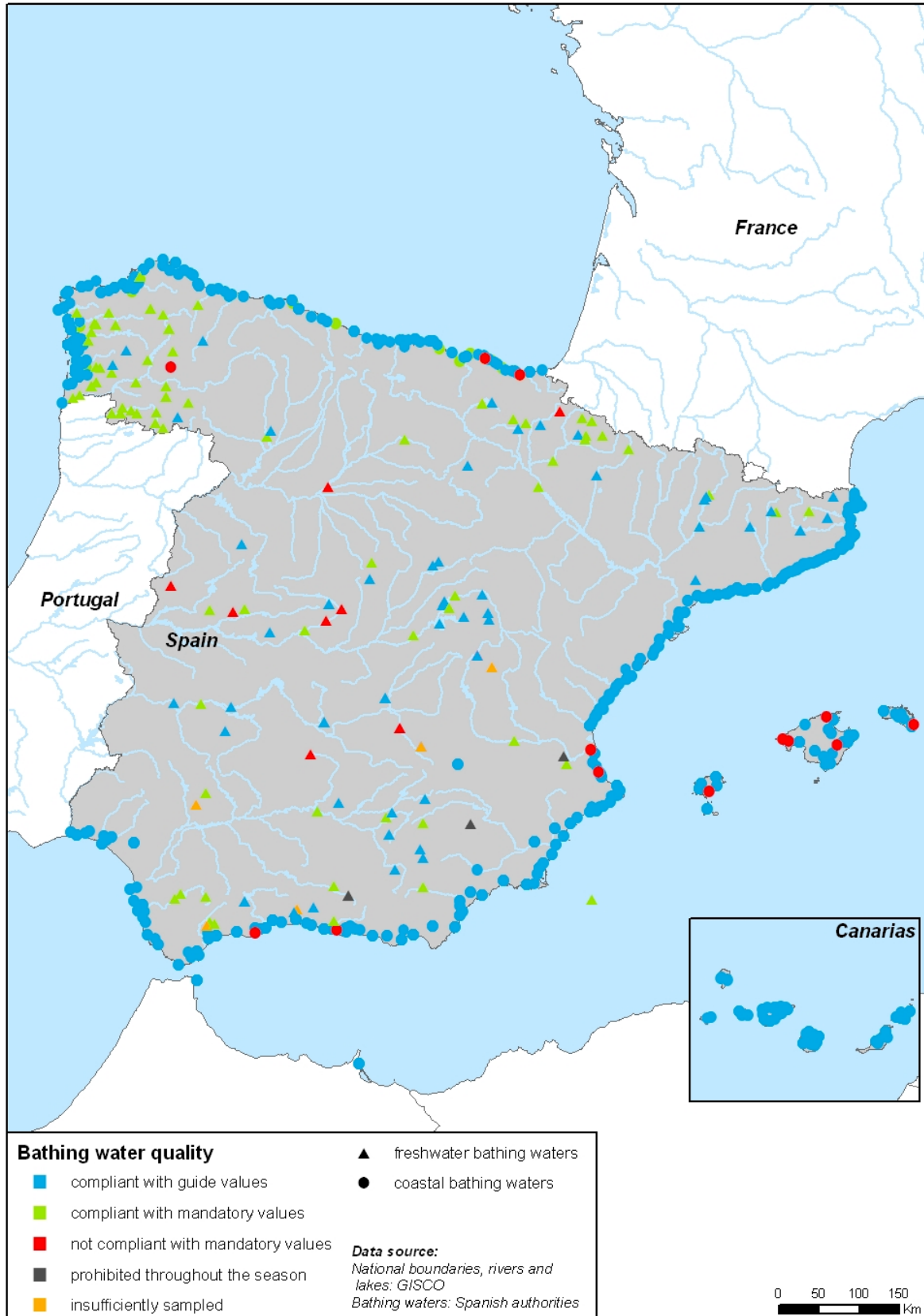


Table 1: Results of bathing water quality in Spain from 1990 to 2007

	Total number of bathing waters	Compliance with guide values		Compliance with mandatory values		Not compliant		Prohibited throughout the season		
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	
Coastal bathing waters	1990	1,189	782	65.8	1,028	86.5	155	13.0	0	0.0
	1991	1,302	889	68.3	1,157	88.9	132	10.1	0	0.0
	1992	1,334	979	73.4	1,238	92.8	96	7.2	0	0.0
	1993	1,404	1,120	79.8	1,340	95.4	58	4.1	0	0.0
	1994	1,489	1,242	83.4	1,431	96.1	47	3.2	0	0.0
	1995	1,517	1,284	84.6	1,465	96.6	41	2.7	0	0.0
	1996	1,571	1,340	85.3	1,516	96.5	46	2.9	0	0.0
	1997	1,587	1,349	85.0	1,531	96.5	33	2.1	0	0.0
	1998	1,596	1,366	85.6	1,558	97.6	30	1.9	4	0.3
	1999	1,623	1,424	87.7	1,587	97.8	31	1.9	2	0.1
	2000	1,634	1,451	88.8	1,603	98.1	24	1.5	3	0.2
	2001	1,638	1,453	88.7	1,605	98.0	26	1.6	4	0.2
	2002	1,773	1,571	88.6	1,743	98.3	20	1.1	1	0.1
	2003	1,779	1,576	88.6	1,737	97.6	21	1.2	1	0.1
	2004	1,826	1,634	89.5	1,806	98.9	14	0.8	4	0.2
	2005	1,824	1,685	92.4	1,808	99.1	14	0.8	1	0.1
	2006	1,863	1,727	92.7	1,843	98.9	13	0.7	0	0.0
	2007	1,901	1,686	88.7	1,883	99.1	17	0.9	1	0.1
Freshwater bathing waters	1990	217	78	35.9	131	60.4	45	20.7	0	0.0
	1991	271	102	37.6	178	65.7	64	23.6	0	0.0
	1992	301	65	21.6	183	60.8	110	36.5	0	0.0
	1993	312	86	27.6	202	64.7	87	27.9	0	0.0
	1994	346	89	25.7	221	63.9	89	25.7	0	0.0
	1995	222	69	31.1	149	67.1	70	31.5	0	0.0
	1996	302	85	28.1	195	64.6	92	30.5	7	2.3
	1997	251	70	27.9	170	67.7	63	25.1	2	0.8
	1998	215	76	35.3	157	73.0	51	23.7	1	0.5
	1999	213	68	31.9	163	76.5	23	10.8	21	9.9
	2000	202	63	31.2	160	79.2	29	14.4	10	5.0
	2001	185	62	33.5	148	80.0	6	3.2	27	14.6
	2002	181	69	38.1	154	85.1	12	6.6	14	7.7
	2003	171	72	42.1	164	95.9	4	2.3	3	1.8
	2004	170	75	44.1	161	94.7	2	1.2	7	4.1
	2005	165	75	45.5	159	96.4	2	1.2	4	2.4
	2006	171	70	40.9	155	90.6	8	4.7	3	1.8
	2007	174	66	37.9	152	87.4	12	6.9	4	2.3

Note: Bathing waters which were insufficiently sampled or not sampled according to the Bathing Water Directive were not included in this table. Therefore, in some cases, the sum of the different categories will not be equal to the total number of bathing waters.