

**National report on  
Monitoring progress and promotion of water demand management policies**

**SPAIN**

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**Overview and conclusion**

There is an imperative need for change and awareness of society and its classes, in all aspects, of another approach to all issues related to water, due to a main fact: water demand is higher than water availability. This fact, together with the need to maintain our life standards and face a not so optimistic future in terms of climate change, implies a change in our global vision about society, politics, technology and environment.

A greater demand exists and a greater use of resources in the coastal zones for two main reasons, these areas are very attractive for tourists, which implies the mobilisation of great amounts of the resource for other tourist uses (thematic parks, golf courses, etc.), and, in addition, in the Mediterranean areas, climate is much more favorable for the agricultural practices. In spite of these data, the average Spanish consumption of water resources stays stable in the temporary evolution because of the compensation of other regions of the country and because of technical and political advances in water resources management. Even so, the environmental deterioration has been inevitable driving us to a situation of saturation of the hidrogeologic system capacity and decreasing the quality of life of biota associated to aquatic ecosystems. Another problem associated to these demographic concentrations in coastal areas is the great number of population located in inundables zones, but the question that we must ask ourselves is to what extent economic benefits generated by employment, tourism, etc compensate if we compare them to the damage and the risk derivated from an abusive water use.

As far as the use of the water is concerned, the agricultural sector presents the highest demand and its tendency is to increase this demand of the resource, followed by the industrial sector, that contrarily to agriculture tends to diminish in the water use demand. At the moment, the domestic sector is the one with the lowest water resources requirements, but its tendency is to increase due to the raise of the use in urban areas (since in the rural ones it has practically stayed stable).

The improvements for water uses in agriculture are centered in the social management in coordination with other programmes of action, like AGENDA 21 for the improvement in the effectiveness of irrigation systems.

The improvements for water use in the industrial sector are based on the improvement of the quality of the spills through techniques of improvement in the parameters of the water quality in a high percentage leaving it suitable for reuse.

The improvements for water use in the domestic sector fundamentally appeal for the awareness of the rational use of the resource, using campaigns that, in many cases, are disseminated in the media. In last instance, the imposition of aggravating canons in the tariffs of water consumption is the chosen option, when these surpass the rational average consumption. Other undertaken action lines promote aquatic ecosystems sustainability, through a careful management and a sustainable tourist exploitation.

The environmental objectives in water policy are destined fundamentally "to palliate" inflicted effects on the environment or to develop the necessary infrastructure for the demand, so that the impact on the environment is minimum, leaving the concept of river basin as functional unit and without recognising the total complexity of relations and functions that entail fluvial hydrosystems, as it can result in serious ecological risks to treat the parts of the hydrosystem separately. The planning in water policy should follow a model of interactive planning, whose objective consists in the construction a more desirable future, instead of predicting what it will be like. This planning should be coordinated with land management policies that take into consideration soil and water, instead of focusing only on the soil.

The increase of the female population and its positioning in jobs related to water demand and management play a very important role towards the turn of the Spanish economic development; that together with the subventions coming from structural funds and Mediterranean Cooperation

Agreements, have obtained remarkable changes in the matter of the water for the reduction of regional inequalities and social groups.

As final conclusion, the object of the action lines should be based on the maintenance of the sectors' water resources demand compatible with the development and growth of society in a sustainable way.