

Bathing water results 2008 – Malta

1. Introduction

This report gives a general overview of bathing water quality in Malta during the 2008 bathing season.

Malta reported 6 parameters under the Directive 76/160/EEC (1 Total coliforms, 2 Faecal coliforms, 3 Faecal streptococci, 8 Mineral oils, 9 Surface-active substances reacting with methylene blue, 10 Phenols (phenol indices)).

The parameters to be taken into account for assessment according to the assessment rules of the Directive 76/160/EEC are microbiological (1 Total coliforms, 2 Faecal coliforms) and physico-chemical (8 Mineral oils, 9 Surface-active substances reacting with methylene blue, 10 Phenols (phenol indices)).

The bathing waters are classified in the following categories:

- Compliant with mandatory values of the Directive for the 5 parameters (class CI)
- Compliant with mandatory and more stringent guide values of the Directive for the 5 parameters (class CG)
- Not compliant with mandatory values of the Directive for the 5 parameters (class NC)
- Banned (temporarily closed) or closed throughout the season (class B)

2. Length of bathing season and number of bathing waters

For all bathing waters the bathing season lasted about 5 months, from 19 May to 26 October 2008. One bathing water was closed on 16 October 2008.

Since the start of reporting in 2005, a total of 87 bathing waters were monitored by the Maltese authorities. All were coastal bathing waters.

With 87 bathing waters Malta accounts for about 0.4% of the reported bathing waters of the European Union.

3. Results of bathing water quality

The results of the bathing water quality in Malta for the period 2005-2007 as reported in 2008 report and for the bathing season of 2008 are presented in Figure 1.

The graph shows, for coastal bathing waters:

- The percentage of bathing waters that comply with the guide values (class CG, blue line)
- The percentage of bathing waters that comply with the mandatory values (class CI, green line)
- The percentage of bathing waters that do not comply with the mandatory values (class NC, red line)
- The percentage of bathing waters that are banned (temporarily closed) or closed throughout the season (class B, grey line)

Table 1 and Table 2 show the same information in absolute numbers and in percentages for coastal bathing waters.

Map 1 shows the locations of the reported bathing waters in Malta. The location of the bathing waters is based on the geographic coordinates reported by the Maltese authorities.

Figure 1: Results of bathing water quality in Malta from 2005 to 2008

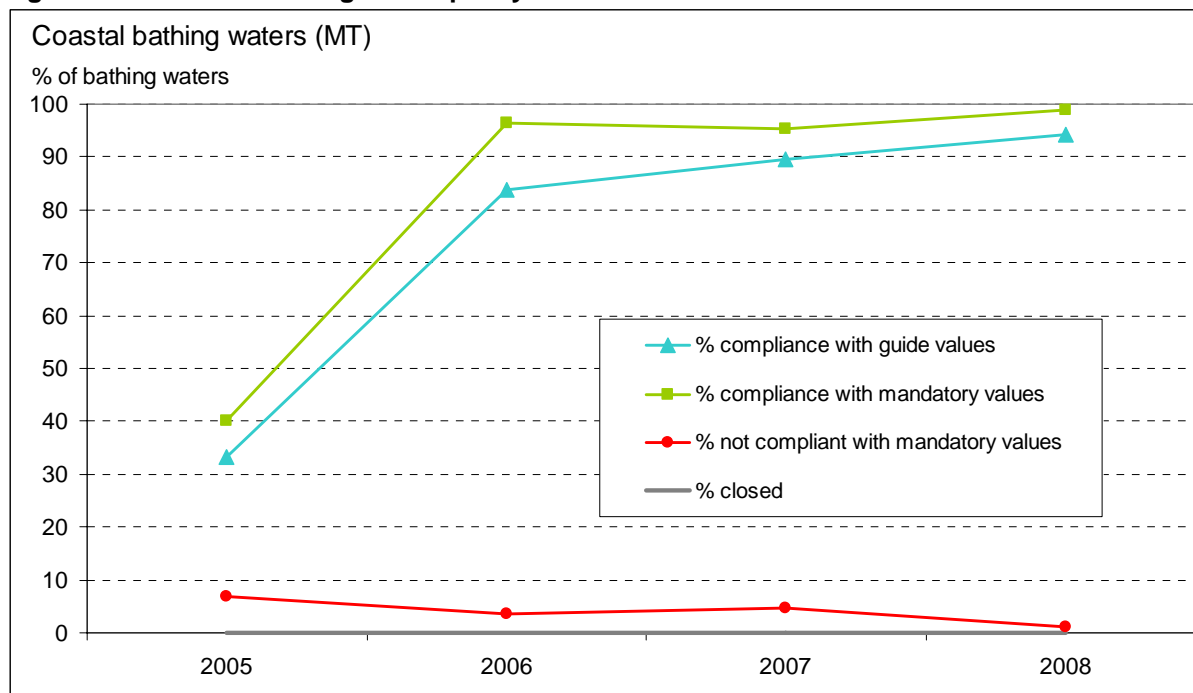


Table 1: Results of bathing water quality in Malta from 2005 to 2008 as absolute numbers

		MT				
		Total number of bathing waters	Compliance with guide values	Compliance with mandatory values	Not compliant	Banned/closed throughout the season
Coastal bathing waters	2005	87	29	35	6	0
	2006	87	73	84	3	0
	2007	87	78	83	4	0
	2008	87	82	86	1	0

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.

Table 2: Results of bathing water quality in Malta from 2005 to 2008 as percentages

		MT				
		Total number of bathing waters	% compliance with guide values	% compliance with mandatory values	% not compliant	% banned/closed throughout the season
Coastal bathing waters	2005	87	33.3	40.2	6.9	0.0
	2006	87	83.9	96.6	3.4	0.0
	2007	87	89.7	95.4	4.6	0.0
	2008	87	94.3	98.9	1.1	0.0

Note: Bathing waters which were insufficiently sampled or not sampled according to the Bathing Water Directive are not included in this table. Therefore, in some cases, the sum of the percentages is not equal to 100%.

4. Development of bathing water quality

Coastal bathing waters

In Malta, 98.9 % of the coastal bathing waters (86) met the mandatory values in 2008. This is an increase compared to the previous year (+ 3.4%). 94.3% of the bathing waters (82) met the more stringent guide values, which is an increase of 4.6%. The rate of compliance with the guide values approached the rate of compliance with the mandatory values. In 2008, the difference was only 4.6%. Only one bathing water (1.1%) was non-compliant with the mandatory values due to the parameter Surface-active substances. This is a decrease compared to the previous year, when four bathing waters were non-compliant (4.6%). No coastal bathing water had to be closed for entire season.

At the beginning of the monitoring in 2005 the number of coastal bathing waters that complied with the mandatory and guide values was rather low. This was due to the high number of insufficiently sampled bathing waters. This problem was solved from 2006 onwards.

5. General information as provided by the Maltese authorities

Only one site was classified as non – compliant due to presence of surface active substances. The Department for Environmental Health issued health warnings for five bathing waters. They were closed for few days due to localised sewage overflows. During closure sampling was carried out on a daily basis (including weekends and public holidays) and the health warnings were only lifted after 3 consecutive microbiological results confirming that the areas were once again safe for bathing. The general public was informed by a press release issued by the Department of Information to all media. Copies of press releases were sent to all local councils by e-mail and placed on the Environmental Health Unit webpage (www.sahha.gov.mt/entities/EHU.html). Information signs were placed at these areas informing the public that the area was temporarily closed and bathing was not recommended.

A detailed report is published by the Environmental Health Unit within the Department for Environmental Health in collaboration with the Environment Protection Directorate within the Malta Environment and Planning Authority. This report can also be accessed through the Environmental Health Unit webpage.

During the bathing season the Environmental Health Unit issues a weekly report with the classification for each bathing area based on the faecal coliform counts (this microbiological parameter is monitored for every week during the 23 week long bathing season at all bathing areas). A smiley weekly report has also been issued on a regular basis. As from this year the raw data for the three microbiological parameters have also been posted on a weekly basis on the unit webpage. Copies of these reports are sent by e-mail to all those who requested to be placed on our mailing list and to all local councils. All bathing areas monitored as part of the bathing water monitoring programme are clearly identified by fixed information signs indicating the site code and stating that the area is monitored by the Department for Environmental Health on a regular basis. These information signs are in five languages. If there will be the need to temporarily close any of these areas, a temporarily closure sign is attached at the same site and again the information is in five languages.

Further improvements

To further improve the bathing water quality Malta is has commissioned 2 new sewage treatment plants, one in the North of Malta and the other in Gozo. Another facility is to be constructed in the South of Malta and should be in operation by end 2009. The total cost of these three plants, to comply with the Urban Waste Water Directive, is estimated to be €73 million.

A National Plan is also in place by the relevant Competent Authority to relocate all fish farms to a site where they should not pose any possible impacts on the bathing areas.

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

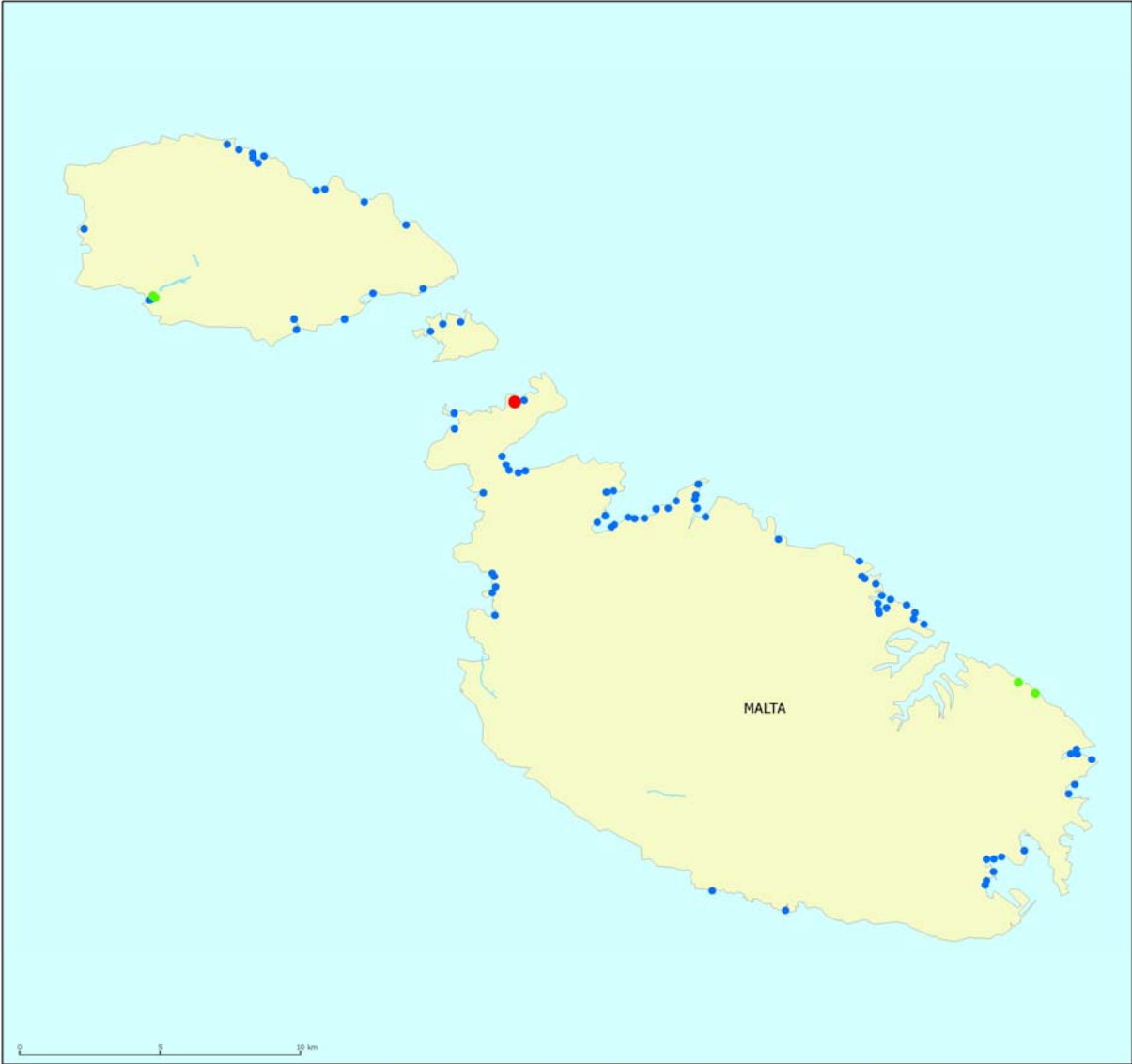
More information on bathing water quality in the European Member States, including the reports for 27 Member States and the EU summary report, can be found on the bathing water quality website (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-bathing/index_en.html).

By 2015, Member States will have to comply with the stricter and more ambitious requirements laid out in the new Bathing Water Directive (Directive 2006/7/EC). This 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://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:064:0037:0051:EN:PDF>.

Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden started to report according to more stringent new requirements in 2008 bathing season, while Luxembourg already started in 2007 bathing season.

WISE - 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 Map viewer and WISE Data viewer through interactive maps and graphs (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/status-and-monitoring/state-of-bathing-water>).

Map 1: Bathing waters reported during the 2008 bathing season in Malta



Bathing water quality

Coastal/transitional bathing waters	□ No data
● Compliant with guide values	■ Outside data coverage (data available, not presented on the map)
● Compliant with mandatory values	
● Closed*	
● Insufficiently sampled or not sampled	
● Not compliant with mandatory values	

Note: * banned (temporarily closed) or closed throughout the season
 More data on bathing water quality on: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/mapviewers/bathing>
Source: National boundaries: GISCO
 Large rivers and lakes: ESA, WFD Article 3
 Bathing waters data and coordinates: Maltese authorities