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Rethinking outdoor advertising in Spain: research summary

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The central finding

Spain regulates the advertiser, not the street. In the strictest Spanish cities, whether a vehicle may carry an advert depends on who paid for it, not on what the vehicle does. Our position: Spain should regulate how advertising uses public space, not prohibit the medium itself.

Key findings

- **Of the 21 places we rated, 5 treat mobile advertising proportionately**; 11 are restrictive and 5 ban commercial advertising on vehicles outright. A further 4 are provisional and 5 not yet readable.
- **Madrid** bans advertising on "any type of vehicle or trailer, moving or parked", except under a council contract (ordinance art. 2.2). Madrid's high court annulled the ban in 2010, saying the public-transport reservation's "only purpose" was to eliminate competition; the Supreme Court overturned that in 2012.
- **Bilbao** bans commercial advertising in public space as a general rule; exceptions depend on what the advertiser offers the council, while public bodies advertise free (Ordenanza del Espacio Público 2010, arts. 104 and 106).
- **No ordinance we read names the advertising bicycle.** Valencia's licence requires roadworthiness (ITV) papers that a bicycle cannot have.
- **Spanish models already exist.** Torremolinos lets any vehicle carry advertising but bans parking one only to advertise (ordinance nº 82, arts. 94–95); Alicante treats promotion that occupies nothing as ordinary use of the street (2026, art. 79.2); Sevilla and Málaga leave moving advertising vehicles outside their rules.
- **Every verified enforcement action against an advertising vehicle we found involved a political message.** Commercial street promoters and leaflet teams are fined in resort areas.
- **Concentration:** in 2022, JCDecaux and Clear Channel together accounted for 86% of Spain's street-furniture advertising, according to figures examined by the CNMC (case C/1426/23).
- **Market:** outdoor advertising spend in Spain reached €460.5m in 2025, up 6.7% (InfoAdex).
- **Tourism:** nationally, foreign tourists add only about 3–5% to the people in Spain on an average day (estimate), but the Balearics hold about 1.6 times their residents at the August peak (Ibestat).

Our proposal

A model ordinance any council can adapt: bikes, vans and people move freely after a simple notice; parked billboard-vehicles are treated as billboards; screens, loudspeakers, blocked pavements and litter are restricted; councils publish what they enforce and review the rules after two years. outdooradvertising.es/model-ordinance/

Method and limits

Findings come from primary texts: municipal ordinances, official bulletins, court judgments and regulators' reports. The municipal research covers 30 places chosen for relevance (the largest cities and main tourist municipalities), not a random sample. "Not mentioned" never means permitted. Full sources: outdooradvertising.es/methodology/

Using this research

Our original findings, figures and model ordinance are free to reuse with credit (CC BY 4.0). Third-party figures (InfoAdex, CNMC, INE, Ibestat) remain those organisations' work and should be credited to them. Contact: editor@outdooradvertising.es