



Quality of Europe's bathing waters remains high

Brussels, 9 June 2023

The **majority of bathing water sites in Europe** met the European Union's most stringent '**excellent**' water quality standards in 2022, according to the latest annual Bathing Water report published today. The assessment, put together by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in cooperation with the Commission, highlights where swimmers can find the cleanest bathing sites in Europe this summer.

The quality of water at **coastal sites**, which makes up two-thirds of total bathing spots, is generally **better than that of inland river and lake sites**. In 2022, **88.9%** of the EU's coastal bathing sites were classified as being of **excellent quality** as compared to **79.3% of inland sites**.

In 2022, 95% of bathing waters in Cyprus, Austria, Greece, and Croatia met the 'excellent' quality standard. Moreover, in Malta, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, and Luxembourg, all assessed bathing water waters met at least the minimum standard of sufficient quality in 2022.

Since the adoption of the [Bathing Water Directive](#) in 2006, **the share of 'excellent' sites has grown**, and has stabilised in recent years, between 85–89% for coastal and 77–81% for inland bathing waters. In 2022, it represented 85.7% of all bathing waters in the EU. The minimum water quality standards were met at 95.9% of all bathing waters in the EU.

The share of **bathing waters with poor water quality has dropped** in the past decade and has been stable since 2015. In 2022, bathing waters with poor water quality constituted only 1.5% of all bathing waters in the EU. This shows that the health risk of swimming in bathing waters is slowly decreasing in Europe.

Bathing water **quality at coastal waters is generally better compared to inland waters**, due to the more frequent renewal and higher self-purification capacity of open coastal waters. Moreover, many inland bathing waters of central Europe are located at relatively small lakes and ponds, as well as at rivers with a low flow. Compared to coastal areas, these inland waters are more susceptible to short-term pollution caused by heavy summer rains or droughts, especially in the summer.

More than 1,800 European bathing waters, or 8%, are located in cities over 100,000 inhabitants, mostly in Greece, France, Italy and Spain. They play an important role in quality of life in cities as well as having ecosystemic benefits.

Background

The assessment for today's report is based on the monitoring of 21,973 bathing sites across Europe that were reported to the EEA for the 2022 season. This includes sites in all EU Member States, Albania and Switzerland. These have to be monitored for four consecutive bathing seasons before they can be considered as of either 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient', or 'poor' quality.

Alongside this year's Bathing Water Report, the EEA has also released an updated interactive map showing the performance of each bathing site. Updated country reports are also available, as well as more information on the implementation of the directive in countries.

In the context of the European Green Deal and the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Commission is currently assessing whether the Bathing Water Directive is still fit for purpose in order to protect public health and improve water quality, or if there is a need to improve the existing rules and propose relevant updates, including new parameters.

The Bathing Water Directive is one of several pieces of EU law that protect water. It is complemented by the Water Framework Directive, the Environmental Quality Standards Directive, the Groundwater Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive.

For More Information

[2022 Assessment on Bathing Water Quality](#)

[Country reports](#)

[Interactive map](#)

[EU rules on Bathing Water Quality](#)

[Review of the Bathing Water Directive](#)

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Quotes:

Swimmers heading for lakes, rivers and beaches to cool off this summer can be sure of the highest quality standards in bathing sites across Europe. Maintaining high standards for the quality of bathing water, including in urban areas, is beneficial for citizens' health and well-being. The EU is championing in different water solutions such as water efficiency and reuse, actions to reduce pesticides, nutrients and plastic litter in oceans and rivers. We must continue with a comprehensive approach to preserving our most precious resource, especially facing increasingly more droughts.
Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries - 09/06/2023

This is great news for all Europeans who demand that the environment we all share and enjoy, including our cherished bathing sites, are as clean as possible. This shows that over 40 years of hard work in monitoring and improving our coastal waters, rivers, lakes and ponds is paying off, but it also shows that regular monitoring is vital to positive progress.
Leena Ylä-Mononen, Executive Director of the European Environment Agency - 09/06/2023

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