



## Zero Pollution: Large number of Europe's bathing waters meet highest quality standards

Brussels, 3 June 2022

The annual [Bathing Water report](#) published today shows that in 2021 almost 85% of Europe's bathing water sites met the European Union's most stringent 'excellent' water quality standards. The assessment gives a good indication of where swimmers can find the best quality bathing sites across Europe this summer. The assessment, put together by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in cooperation with the European Commission, is based on the monitoring of 21 859 bathing sites across Europe. These cover the EU Member States, Albania and Switzerland throughout 2021.

Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries said: *"This report comes as welcome news for those of us booking well-deserved summer holidays at Europe's beautiful bathing sites. Whether our destination is a Greek beach, a Hungarian Lake or a French river, we can be sure that the vast majority of bathing waters are of excellent quality. This is good for the environment, for our health, and for Europe's tourist industry as it recovers from the pandemic. We are committed to maintaining these standards and improve further on the way to our zero pollution objective."*

Hans Bruyninckx, EEA Executive Director, said: *"This year's results is proof that over 40 years of EU action to improve the bathing water quality across Europe has benefited our health as well as the environment. The EU's Zero Pollution Action Plan and revision of the EU's Bathing Water Directive will further solidify our commitment to prevent and reduce pollution for decades to come."*

### Main findings of the report

The report shows that the quality of coastal sites, which makes up two thirds of total bathing sites, is generally better than that of inland sites. In 2021, 88%, of the EU coastal bathing sites were classified as being of excellent quality compared to 78.2% of inland sites. Since the adoption of the Bathing Water Directive in 2006, the share of 'excellent' sites has grown, and has stabilised in recent years at around 88% for coastal and 78% for inland sites.

The report finds that, in 2021, the minimum water quality standards were met at 95.2% of sites. In Austria, Malta, Croatia, Greece, Cyprus, Denmark and Germany, 90% or more of bathing waters meet the 'excellent' quality standard.

The share of poor quality sites has dropped since 2013. In 2021, poor bathing waters constituted 1.5% of all sites in the EU, compared to 2% in 2013. Poor quality is often the result of short-term pollution. The report stresses that better assessments of the sources of pollution and implementing integrated water management measures can help improve water 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.

### Background

The quality of Europe's bathing water has greatly improved over past decades due to systematic monitoring and management introduced under the EU's [Bathing Water Directive](#) and other EU environmental laws including the [Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive](#).

EU bathing water legislation specifies if bathing water quality can be classified as 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient' or 'poor', depending on the levels of faecal bacteria detected. Where water is classified as 'poor', EU Member States should take certain measures, such as banning bathing or advising against it, providing information to the public, and taking suitable corrective actions.

These rules have led to a drastic reduction of untreated or partially treated municipal and industrial waste water ending up in bathing water. As a result, swimming is possible in many city-located surface water areas as well which were previously heavily polluted.

The European Commission is currently [reviewing the Bathing Water Directive](#). The objective is to assess whether the current rules are still fit for purpose to protect public health and improve water quality or if there is a need to improve the existing framework, notably by addressing new parameters.

All EU Member States, plus Albania and Switzerland, monitor their bathing sites according to the provisions of the EU's Bathing Water Directive.

The implementation of the Bathing Water Directive is supported by a broad EU framework of water legislation, including 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**

[2021 Assessment on Bathing Water Quality, including country fact sheets and interactive map](#)

[EU rules on Bathing Water Quality](#)

[Review of the Bathing Water Directive](#)

### **European Environment Agency (EEA) press office:**

Constant Brand, [constant.brand@eea.europa.eu](mailto:constant.brand@eea.europa.eu)

Phone: +45 2174 1872

Antti Kaartinen, [antti.kaartinen@eea.europa.eu](mailto:antti.kaartinen@eea.europa.eu)

Phone: +45 2336 1381

IP/22/3434

Press contacts:

[Adalbert JAHNZ](#) (+ 32 2 295 31 56)

[Daniela STOYCHEVA](#) (+32 2 295 36 64)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)