

More European sites meet excellent bathing water quality standards than ever before

Over 96% of bathing water sites met minimum quality requirements set out under European Union rules.

The [report](#) from the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA) confirms a positive 40-year trend of increasingly cleaner water at beaches and swimming spots across Europe. The assessment compiled analyses of water sampled at more than 21 000 coastal and inland bathing sites and gives a good indication where the best sites with the highest water quality are likely to be found this summer. Bathing water is sampled and monitored for contamination by faecal pollution from sewage or livestock.

As in recent years, the vast majority of Europe's swimming spots can boast good quality water. In 2016, 96.3% of sites met the minimum 'sufficient' quality requirements set out in the EU's Bathing Water Directive. This is up slightly from 96.1% in 2015. More than 85% (85.5) of bathing water sites met the directive's most stringent 'excellent' water quality standards, up from 84.4% in 2015.

Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *'The excellent quality of European Bathing Water sites is not by chance. It is the result of hard work by dedicated professionals. It shows the importance of nurturing EU policy that promotes green jobs. This year our European Green Week, 29 May – 2 June, will celebrate this investment. Water technicians, flood protectors, environmental chemists, waste water managers – all play an essential role in keeping bathing water quality high.'*

Hans Bruyninckx, EEA Executive Director, said: *'It is encouraging to see that more and more bathing water sites across Europe are meeting the highest quality standards. This helps Europeans make better informed choices about the bathing sites they plan to visit this summer. It also shows the effectiveness of our environmental policies and the practical benefits to human health protection and our daily lives when excellent data collection and analysis are conducted.'*

The report covers bathing water locations across the EU, Albania and Switzerland. European bathing waters are much cleaner than forty years ago when large quantities of untreated or partially treated municipal and industrial waste water were discharged into water.

Key findings

- All reported bathing water sites in Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Romania, and Slovenia

achieved at least 'sufficient' quality in 2016.

- In five countries, 95% or more bathing waters were assessed as being of 'excellent' quality: Luxembourg (all 11 reported bathing sites), Cyprus (99% of all sites), Malta (99% of all sites), Greece (97% of all sites), and Austria (95% of all sites).
- In 2016, 1.5% (1.4% for EU countries) of bathing water sites were rated as having 'poor' water quality. Between the 2015 and 2016 bathing seasons, the absolute number of bathing waters classified as 'poor' dropped from 383 to 318 (from 349 to 302 for EU countries).
- The highest number of bathing sites with 'poor' water quality were found in Italy (100 bathing water sites or 1.8%), France (82 sites or 2.4%) and Spain (39 sites or 1.8%)

Background

The major sources of pollution are sewage and water draining from farms and farmland. Such pollution increases during heavy rains and floods due to sewage overflow and polluted drainage water being washed into rivers and seas. Faecal contamination of water continues to pose a risk to human health, especially if it is found at bathing water sites. Swimming at contaminated beaches or lakes can result in illness. All EU Member States, plus Albania and Switzerland, monitor their bathing sites according to the provisions of the EU's revised Bathing Water Directive. The legislation specifies if the bathing water quality can be classified as 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient' or 'poor', depending on the levels faecal bacteria detected. Where water is classified as 'poor', Member States should take certain measures, like banning bathing or posting a notice advising against it, providing information to the public, and suitable corrective measures.

More information:

[Country reports](#)

[Interactive map on performance of each bathing site](#)

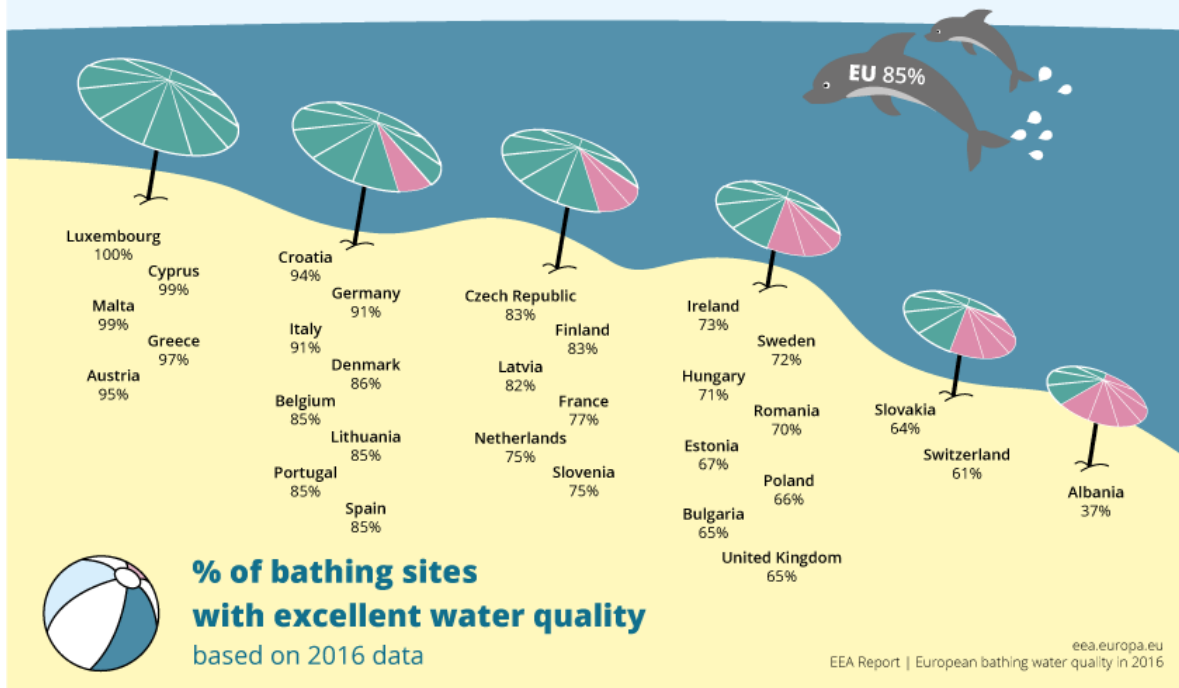
[Bathing Water Directive](#)

[EEA State of Bathing Water](#)

[EU Green Week 2017](#)

Bathing water quality in Europe

Bathing water quality in Europe continues to improve. In 2016, more than 85% of Europe's coastal and inland bathing water sites met the most stringent 'excellent' water quality standards, while more than 96% of the sites met the minimum requirements set out under the EU rules.



European Dialogue on Skills and Migration: Employers and Commission together for the integration of migrants

Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen are hosting the second meeting of the **European Dialogue on Skills and Migration**, at the [European Business Summit](#).

The Commissioners officially launched the “[Employers together for integration](#)” initiative, in the presence of CEOs and other high-level representatives of several companies committed to fostering migrant integration such as IKEA, Deutsche Telekom, NCC, Accenture, B-post, Scandic hotels, ADECCO and Microsoft as well as representatives of social and economic partners. The initiative aims to promote employers' efforts across the EU to support the integration of refugees and other migrants in the labour market and beyond.

Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, said: “*Making integration work is not just a social but an*

economic imperative. Only a successful integration of all migrants in the EU will allow turning migration into an opportunity, both for them and for our European society and economy. The role and engagement of employers is essential for this. I welcome the many existing efforts across Europe and invite more employers to set an example and join the “Employers together for integration” initiative launched today.”

Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *“Today’s forum is a sign of commitment that we unite forces with employers. Our primary task now is to tackle the challenges and to seize the opportunities of integrating refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market. It can and should be a win-win for all.”*

Peter **Wågström**, CEO NCC, said: *“Today NCC runs a number of promising projects that promote integration and diversity. We do this first and foremost because we need more people with the right skills and we believe that diversity can create better business results. At the same time, we want to play a part in building a more inclusive society.”*

Koen **Van Gerven**, CEO Bpost, said: *“Bpost is a sizeable employer in Belgium who wants to give everyone the opportunity to work for us including refugees, long term unemployed and low skilled people. Therefore we have developed a pragmatic and socially responsible employment policy, together with several partners, to achieve this ambition of social integration.”*

Jo **Deblaere**, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Executive-Europe Accenture, said: *“Employment is absolutely critical to empower refugees, yet even those with professional work experience and advanced education often struggle to achieve self-reliance. At Accenture, we aim to help refugees re-enter the workforce in jobs that match their skills, and we are proud to support the Commission’s initiative to help them re-claim their livelihood and independence.”*

Birgit **Klesper**, Senior Vice President Group Corporate Responsibility Deutsche Telekom AG, said: *“The foremost requirement for successful integration into a society is integration into the labour market. A multi-stakeholder approach is a key element to fulfilling this European-wide need. If we all act in concert – politics, policy-makers, civil society and business – a great challenge becomes a great opportunity.”*

Background

The [European Dialogue on Skills and Migration](#) was launched in 2016 to foster exchanges between the Commission and economic and social partners, in particular employers, on labour migration related issues. For its second edition on 23 May 2017, the Dialogue focuses on the labour market integration of refugees and other legally residing migrants.

Research suggests that third-country nationals continue to face barriers to access the labour market. In 2016, third country nationals’ employment rate was 15.2 percentage points lower than that of EU nationals, with women having particularly low employment rates. Third country migrants are often under-

employed, even when holding a university diploma^[1].

Failure to release the potential of third-country nationals in the EU would represent a massive waste of resources, both for the individuals concerned and more generally for our economy and society. Migrants – if well integrated – can help improve the overall performance of the labour market, as well as fiscal sustainability in the long run.^[2]

That is why the Commission adopted on 7 June 2016 an [Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals](#) to support the integration efforts of Member States. Integration can only be effective if all relevant actors play their role: EU Institutions, national and local authorities, civil society organizations. Regarding the integration on the labour market, the role of economic and social partners, and in particular employers, is crucial. Many initiatives have been taken at national level by employers, trade unions and Chambers of Commerce. The Commission, through the second edition of the European Dialogue on Skills and Migration wants to allow individual employers and other economic and social partners to share their existing and future initiatives in this area.

Through the initiative “[Employers together for integration](#)“, the Commission wants to give visibility to the engagement of individual employers to support integration and encourage more to join. As from today, interested employers can join the initiative on the website of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission.

In addition, following up on the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), the Commission is also working towards greater transparency of third-country nationals’ qualifications, upskilling of low-qualified people in Europe and easier recognition of qualifications. A tool to support recognition of skills of third-country migrants will be launched soon.

The [European Social Fund](#) (ESF) is the main funding instrument supporting labour market inclusion, including of migrants. The [Asylum Migration and Integration Fund](#) (AMIF) can also provide funding for preparatory measures to access the labour market. A call for proposal under AMIF will be launched in the second part of 2017 to support initiatives by employers and social partners to promote the labour market integration of refugees and other migrants.

For More Information

[Website](#) on the European Dialogue for Skills and Migration

[Sign up](#) for “Employers together for Integration” Initiative

[Commission Action Plan](#) on the integration of third country nationals

[European Website](#) on Integration

[Repository](#) of promising practices of labour market integration and social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees across EU Member States

[1]Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey

[2] An Economic Take on the Refugee Crisis, DG ECFIN institutional paper, July 2016
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/ip033_en_2.pdf

Discours d'ouverture du Commissaire Moscovici lors de la conférence de presse de l'Eurogroupe

Cette journée a été longue. Nous n'avons pas conclu mais le travail qui a été fait est utile et a marqué d'excellents progrès.

Faisons un état des lieux. Sur la mise en œuvre des réformes : nous parlons d'un ensemble d'engagements considérables composé de mesures législatives et d'autres engagements.

Ce paquet d'"actions prioritaires" représente 140 mesures qui sont des réformes amples et profondes. Elles touchent tout le spectre: fiscal, social, administrations publiques, administrations fiscale, stabilité financière, marché de produits, industrie de réseaux et privatisations.

Aussi les mesures budgétaires additionnelles qui entreront en vigueur dès 2019 et qui représentent 4 points de PIB y compris des mesures difficiles comme sur les retraites.

Où en sommes-nous: le parlement grec a voté la semaine dernière un projet de loi "omnibus" sur 45 de ses actions.

D'autres ont été complétées en parallèle. Certaines sont en train d'être finalisées. Au total: 104 des 140 mesures sont déjà complétées. Leur nombre a encore augmenté, des progrès ont été faits: environ 110 actions sont maintenant complétées. Les autorités grecques ont pris leurs responsabilités. La Grèce a fait d'importants progrès. Je suis confiant que nous serons vite à même de conclure que la Grèce a respecté la totalité de ses engagements, ce qui doit mener à la conclusion de la revue. C'est le résultat souhaité du prochain Eurogroup.

Nous sommes dans la finalisation de ce travail et nous avons toute confiance. Cela sera fait.

Sur la dette: de longues discussions aujourd'hui dans plusieurs formats avec Jeroen, menées avec beaucoup de détermination et de minutie. Nous n'avons jamais eu une discussion sur la dette aussi détaillée et profonde. Nous n'avons pas conclu mais nous avons avancé.

Nous allons maintenant travailler pour conclure un bon accord le 15 juin. Je suis convaincu que les avancées faites ne doivent pas être perdues. C'est une très bonne base de départ pour la prochaine rencontre. La Commission reste disponible pour contribuer à ce travail et reste confiante dans les avancées qui ont été réalisées et que nous allons encore réaliser pour aboutir à l'accord que chacun attend.

[Statement by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker following the attack in Manchester](#)

"It was with great sadness and profound shock that I learnt of the brutal attack that struck Manchester.

It breaks my heart to think that, once again, terrorism has sought to instil fear where there should be joy, to sow division where young people and families should be coming together in celebration.

I would like to convey my deepest sympathies to Prime Minister May and to the British people.

Today we mourn with you. Tomorrow we will work side by side with you to fight back against those who seek to destroy our way of life. They underestimate ours and your resilience – these cowardly attacks will only strengthen our commitment to work together to defeat the perpetrators of such vile acts."

[EU-Cuba High-level discussion on human rights in Brussels](#)

On 22 May, the EU and Cuba held their third high-level discussion on human rights in Brussels.

The EU delegation was headed by EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis and included the Managing Director for the Americas of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Edita Hrdá, as well as other representatives of the EEAS, the European Commission and the EU Delegation to Cuba. Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez, Director General for Multilateral Issues and International Law of the Cuban Ministry for Foreign Affairs led the Cuban side, and was accompanied by Cuban Ambassador / Head of the Mission to the EU

Norma Goicochea Estenoz, as well as other officials of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Both sides had an extensive discussion on constitutional, legal and administrative aspects of citizens' participation in public affairs, notably with regard to the recent and forthcoming elections in the EU and in Cuba, where municipal elections will take place in 2017 and a new President will be elected in 2018. The EU underlined the importance of complying with international human rights electoral standards, including free access to media and to information, freedoms of expression, association and assembly so that voices from different parts of the political spectrum can be heard and participate.

In the area of economic and social rights, the EU and Cuba addressed the coverage of social protection systems and the promotion of social dialogue. The respect for core labour standards, the fight against discrimination and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups were also raised.

The two sides moreover discussed the protection of human rights of migrants and refugees in the context of migration flows implicating Cuba and the EU, and the promotion and protection of the right to health, in particular for persons in vulnerable situations. Both sides agreed to explore the possibility of setting up a sectoral dialogue on social issues, as well as trilateral cooperation on global health in line with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. In follow-up to the last high-level discussion on human rights, they also addressed the situation of freedom of association and expression, including ways of engagement with peaceful civil society activists in Cuba and the EU, as well as on possibilities of all civil society to freely participate in public life. Finally, the two sides explored opportunities for closer EU-Cuba cooperation in multilateral human rights fora.

The talks reconfirmed the wish of both sides to deepen their dialogue and understanding in the area of human rights, with a view to developing cooperation to attain the objectives of the EU-Cuba partnership. The EU and Cuba affirmed their commitment for even closer engagement under the EU-Cuba Agreement on Political Dialogue and Cooperation.

Background

High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini and the Foreign Minister of Cuba Bruno Rodriguez agreed in April 2015 to start EU-Cuba human rights consultations, anticipating on the negotiations of a bilateral Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. The Agreement, which was signed in December 2016, will open a new chapter in EU-Cuban relations and contains detailed provisions on the promotion of human rights, an essential element of the bilateral partnership. It notably foresees the establishment of a structured Human Rights Dialogue that will allow both sides to share experiences and best practices, build capacities, and provide training or technical cooperation to address specific issues. The application of the PDCA should thus provide significantly enhanced opportunities for further discussions and dialogue in this and all other areas covered by the

Agreement.

The Agreement is currently being reviewed by the European Parliament and should soon be applied provisionally, pending its ratification by Cuba and the EU and its Member States.