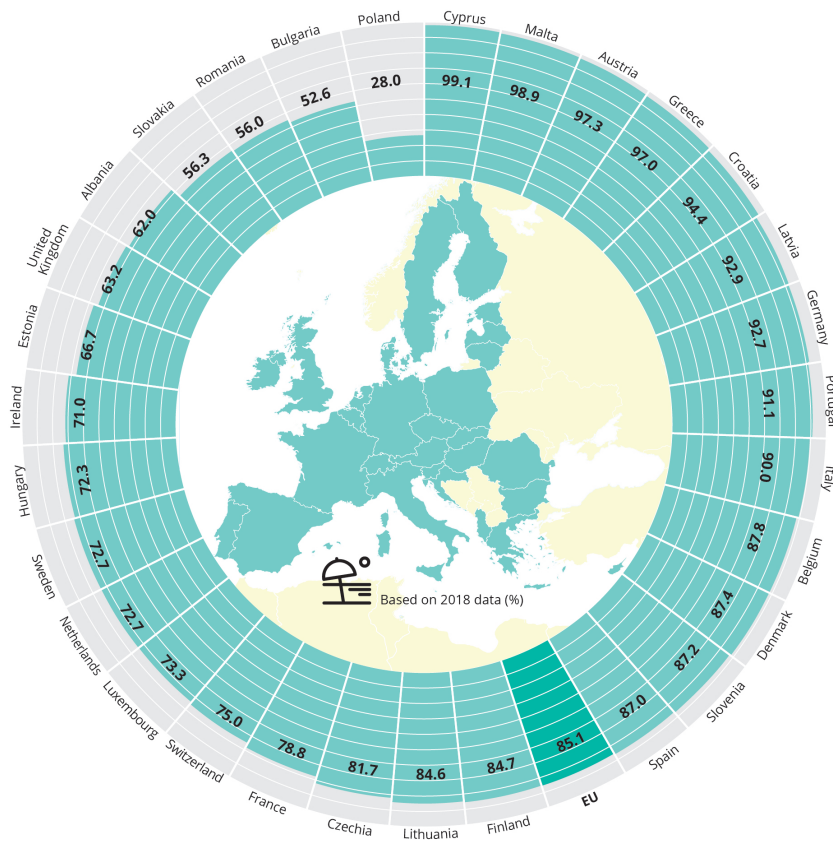


Over 85% of European bathing sites rated as excellent for water quality

Just over 85% of bathing water sites across Europe monitored last year met the European Union's highest 'excellent' and most stringent quality standards for water cleanliness, according to the latest annual European bathing water quality report. The results published today give a good indication of where the best quality bathing waters are likely to be found this summer.



An overwhelming number – 95.4% – of the 21 831 bathing water sites monitored in the 28 EU Member States met the minimum quality requirements under EU rules, according to this year's [report](#) by the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA). In addition, 300 bathing sites monitored in Albania and Switzerland were also included in the report.

The level of bathing sites meeting the most stringent 'excellent' quality standards rose slightly from 85.0% in 2017 to 85.1% last year. The number of those meeting the minimum 'sufficient' standing fell from 96% to 95.4% from 2017 to 2018. This minor drop is mostly due to the opening of new bathing water sites for which the dataset of four bathing seasons required for the classification by the Directive is not yet available. In 2018, 301 (or 1.3%) of all bathing water sites in the EU, Albania and Switzerland were rated as having 'poor' water quality. This is slightly lower than the 1.4 % in 2017.

Karmenu **Vella**, European Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs

and Fisheries said: “As yesterday’s World Environment Day showed, we face many challenges. But it is also good to celebrate the green success stories of the European Union. The quality of European Bathing Water sites is one such story to which everyone can relate. Through good testing, reporting, monitoring and sharing of expertise, we are sure to continue improving the quality of our favourite swimming spots. Our new Environmental Implementation Review will help Member States learn from each other how best to attain and keep the excellent standards we have achieved during the course of my mandate. I congratulated the EEA for helping to improve standards and also for providing this information in a regular and reliable way. That reliability allows you to make clear choices wherever you take the plunge this summer.”

Hans Bruyninckx, EEA Executive Director, said: “Our report confirms that Member States’ efforts over the last 40 years, mainly in wastewater treatment, have paid off. Today, most Europeans enjoy excellent bathing water quality. However, this is only one of the many components, ranging from tackling plastic pollution to protecting marine life, we need to work on in order to achieve healthier seas, lakes and rivers.”

Bathing water requirements are set out in the [EU’s Bathing Water Directive](#). Implementation of its rules has helped to vastly improve the quality of Europe’s bathing water over the last 40 years. Effective monitoring and management introduced under the directive combined with the investments in the urban waste water treatment have led to a drastic reduction in untreated or partially treated municipal and industrial waste ending up in the water. Under the rules, local authorities collect water samples at officially identified bathing sites throughout the swimming season. Samples are analysed for two types of bacteria that indicate pollution from sewage or livestock.

Other Key Findings

- In four countries, 95% or more of bathing sites were found to have excellent water quality: Cyprus (99.1% of all sites), Malta (98.9% of all sites), Austria (97.3% of all sites), and Greece (97% of all sites).
- All reported bathing water sites in Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania and Slovenia were of at least sufficient quality in 2018.
- The three countries with the highest numbers of poor quality bathing water sites are Italy (89 bathing water sites or 1.6%), France (54 sites or 1.6%) and Spain (50 sites or 2.2%). In comparison with 2017, the number of poor quality bathing water sites in France decreased (from 80 in 2017 to 54 in 2018), while there was an increase in poor quality bathing waters in Italy (from 79 to 89) and in Spain (from 38 to 50).

Background

The contamination of water by faecal bacteria 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. 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.

All EU Member States, plus Albania and Switzerland, monitor their bathing sites according to the provisions of the EU's Bathing Water Directive. The assessment of the bathing water quality under the Bathing Water Directive makes use of the values of two microbiological parameters: Intestinal enterococci and Escherichia coli. Bathing water quality is classified, depending on the levels of faecal bacteria detected, as 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient' or 'poor', Where water is classified as 'poor', Member States should take measures such as banning bathing or advising against it, providing information to the public, and taking suitable corrective actions.

More information

[Country reports](#)

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

[Bathing Water Directive](#)

[EEA State of Bathing Water](#)

[Bathing water quality](#)

[New city study results published on drugs in syringes](#)

A new EMCDDA Rapid Communication, published on 29 May, presents [the results of an innovative project to gather information on the substances used by people who inject drugs](#), by chemically analysing the residual content of used syringes. The pilot study of the ESCAPE project (European Syringe Collection and Analysis Project Enterprise) collected syringes in 2017 from the bins of street automatic injection kit dispensers and at harm-reduction services in a network of six sentinel European cities: Amsterdam, Budapest, Glasgow, Helsinki, Lausanne and Paris.

The contents of 1 521 used syringes were analysed in five laboratories using chromatographic and spectroscopic methods. Among the findings were that traces of stimulants (cocaine, amphetamines and synthetic cathinones) were found in a high proportion of the syringes tested in each of the cities, which may indicate a high prevalence of stimulant use among people who inject drugs.

The project seeks to complement existing data on substances injected by users, by providing local and timely information that can be used for city-level monitoring and interventions. It complements existing monitoring tools (such as surveillance data from drug treatment centres) but does not replace them.

Well-designed observational studies, collecting behavioural data and qualitative information from interviews with drug users in low-threshold services or using respondent driven sampling, are still the best tools to obtain information on many aspects of injecting, including reuse and sharing. Nevertheless, the timely, laboratory-confirmed local data on injected substances and patterns of injection provided by the ESCAPE approach can help to guide local responses. By collecting injecting material from street bins, it potentially provides information on groups of people who inject drugs that are not reached by health services.

Future collection campaigns will further harmonise the sampling strategy, the type of syringes collected and the list of substances tested across cities. Future campaigns should also aim at collecting syringes from other settings and including more cities in order to provide a more representative picture of the European situation and to advance knowledge on local injecting practices. By analysing trends over time, the network will aim to detect changing patterns of injecting.

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures against Myanmar/Burma

Your request will be handled by the Press Office of the General Secretariat of the Council in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

Your data will be stored in the database until you unsubscribe from the service.

Certain data (name, e-mail address, preferred language, media name, media type) may be disclosed to the press offices of the European institutions, the Permanent Representations of the Member States and to European Union agencies, under the conditions laid down in Articles 7 and 8 of Regulation 45/2001.

If there is data which you would not like to be stored, please let us know at: [\[email protected\]](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Libya](#)

Your request will be handled by the Press Office of the General Secretariat of the Council in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

Your data will be stored in the database until you unsubscribe from the service.

Certain data (name, e-mail address, preferred language, media name, media type) may be disclosed to the press offices of the European institutions, the Permanent Representations of the Member States and to European Union agencies, under the conditions laid down in Articles 7 and 8 of Regulation 45/2001.

If there is data which you would not like to be stored, please let us know at: [\[email protected\]](#)

[Speaking points by Commissioner Thyssen on the 2019 European Semester Spring Package](#)

Ladies and gentlemen,

The real novelty of this year's European Semester exercise is that we deepen our focus on investment.

By identifying investment priorities for each Member State, we operationalise how we want to streamline the use of EU funds.

Many of these investment priorities can and will be supported by the Cohesion

Funds for 2021 to 2027.

It is clear that this support cannot cover everything, but we are forcefully moving towards a stronger link between the European Semester and EU funding.

So that a part of the EU budget is used to support the reforms we have agreed with the Member States.

Today's country specific recommendations allow us to focus on the main issues that need further attention.

Almost half of them address labour market and social affairs – a further sign of how social the Semester has become.

I would like to focus on five key issues we have identified.

(1) Employment, including quality of employment. Even though employment is at a record level, we see large differences between countries, regions and population groups. Some regions are left behind. Temporary and atypical work is disturbingly frequent in some countries. In-work poverty is increasing.

(2) Social protection. The rise of non-standard work and self-employment forces us to rethink how we make sure all people in work are adequately covered. An erosion of social protection leaves workers insufficiently protected and our social security poorer.

(3) The rapidly changing world of work demands from us to adapt and to innovate. Investing in people is key for sustainable and inclusive growth. But we also need to address inequalities in education and training. Everybody must have equal access to quality education. This includes life-long learning. Otherwise we endanger the long-term prosperity of our societies.

(4) And then we have another challenge: With our ageing societies, sustainability of pensions, healthcare and long-term care require a hard think. We must ensure positive reforms are not retracted, costs don't balloon and intergenerational fairness is maintained.

(5) Equality between men and women keeps improving but with a persisting gender pay gap and employment gap, it is clear that we are not there yet. The new rules on work-life balance are a milestone that can help improve the situation. But Member States will need to implement this on the ground. And complement it with affordable and quality childcare and long-term care facilities.

While there is work to do, we have built a stable ground on which the next Commission can continue this effort.

The employment and social outlook in Europe is developing in the right direction:

We are still at record levels of employment with now 241 million people in jobs in Europe. Unemployment, at 6.4% in April, is now below the lowest point attained before the crisis. The improvement is even more remarkable for young people, whose unemployment rate went from a peak of almost 24% in spring 2013 to 14.2% today. And poverty and social exclusion are going down.

This shows that our policies are bearing fruit. The European Pillar of Social Rights is crucial to continue delivering. It is the basis for all future policies and investment priorities for improving working and living conditions across the EU.

Our recommendations adopted today are essential to build a more equal and prosperous future. They will guide the Member States in using EU cohesion money wisely in the period 2021-2027.

I call on Member States to translate these recommendations into action.

Thank you.