

Europe's beaches clean, but France lagging: study

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Scouts take part in a clean-up event on the Omaha beach on Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, northwest France, in April 2008. Europe's beaches are generally clean but France is lagging behind other tourist destinations in the south of the continent, a report from European Environment Agency (EEA) showed on Wednesday.

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"Good news if you're planning a beach holiday in Europe this summer -- 92.1 percent of bathing waters in the European Union now meet the minimum water quality standards set by the Bathing Water Directive," the EEA said in a statement accompanying its annual report.

The report compiled water analyses carried out in 2011 at more than 22,000 bathing sites at beaches, rivers and lakes.

Among the sites meeting the minimum water quality standards were the Serpentine Lake in London, which will host several Olympics events, including the [Open Water](#) Marathon Swim and the swimming section of the triathlon.

Meanwhile, "Cyprus, Croatia, Malta and Greece had excellent reports on their bathing water sites, all with more than 90 percent of bathing water sites meeting the most stringent guide values (excellent quality)," the EEA said.

At the opposite end of the scale, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Latvia, Luxembourg and Belgium had "relatively low proportions of sites meeting the strict guide values, especially as regards inland waters."

Spain, Italy and Portugal had more than 80 percent of sites with excellent water quality, it added.

The report noted that in France, home to 16 percent of bathing sites in the EU, only two-thirds were of excellent quality while 88 percent met the minimum mandatory water quality requirements.

"In several countries there is still a problem with pollution from agriculture and [sewage](#), so we need to see more efforts to ensure safe and [clean water](#) for the public," EEA executive director Jacqueline McGlade said.

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