

Europe's bathing waters cleaner, says Brussels

May 20 2015



Tourists enjoy the sunshine and the sea at a beach on Zakynthos island, Greece, on June 23, 2014

European beach and river bathing sites have cleaned up their acts, with 95 percent now meeting water quality standards in time for the summer holiday season, the EU said Wednesday.

The most crystalline waters are in Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece,

Luxembourg, and Malta, all of which had at least nine out of ten [bathing](#) sites rated excellent.

But Italy, France and Spain, meanwhile, had the highest number of sites with poor water quality, the European Environment Agency's study for 2014 found.

The annual survey looked at 21,538 bathing sites across the EU's 28 member states and also in non-EU Switzerland and Albania.

"Next time you take a dip, remember that the EU played a part in keeping your bathing water safe and clean," EU Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella said.

EEA director Hans Bruyninckx said hard work by European nations was paying off.

"I am glad to see that the quality of Europe's bathing waters is consistently very high and continues to improve. It shows that policies work and contribute to our quality of life when they are ambitious, well-defined and well-implemented," he said.

The survey found 95.1 percent of coastal and inland bathing waters met minimum [quality standards](#) in 2014, an increase of 0.5 percent over 2013, the EU said.

A total of 83.3 percent were classified as "excellent" last year, up 0.6 percent from 2013, it said.

The survey will be good news for Greece and Cyprus in particular, whose eurozone economies rely heavily on tourism as they struggle to overcome debt crises.



People collect waste on a beach in Biarritz, France during the launch of a weekend of voluntary cleanup, called Initiatives Océanes (Ocean Initiatives) on March 20, 2015

In Europe 409 bathing waters were ranked poor—107 (1.9 percent of sites) in Italy, 105 (3.1 percent) in France and 67 (3.1 percent) in Spain, it said.

Estonia (5.6 percent), Ireland (5.1 percent), the Netherlands (4.9 percent) and Sweden (3.6 percent) had the highest percentage rates of poor quality, although they all have relatively few bathing sites.

The report said that the findings were good news for tourism in Europe, which it said was the world's number one tourist destination when taken as a whole, with beaches and rivers attracting many visitors.

In the early 1990s, about 60 percent of EU beaches got the top rating, but there has been steady improvement since then in both awareness and remedial measures, especially in terms of sewage treatment.

The full report can be found at: [water-quality-in-2014](https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/water-quality-in-2014)"
target="_blank">www.eea.europa.eu/publications ... 5793b100992c-
in-2014.

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from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-europe-cleaner-brussels.html>

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