

Report: European bathing water quality remains high

June 8 2020, by Samuel Petrequin



In this Thursday, July 25, 2019 file photo, a boat sails by sunbathers at the beach in De Haan, Belgium. The quality of bathing waters in Europe remains high according to a study released by the EU environment agency on Monday, June 8, 2020, concluding that minimum water quality standards were met at 95 percent of the sites monitored across the continent last year. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco, File)

The quality of bathing waters in Europe remains high according to a study by the EU environment agency that found that minimum water quality standards were met at 95 percent of the sites monitored across the continent last year.

The European Environment Agency, or EEA, said on Monday that on the 22,295 sites that were scrutinized, 84.6 percent had excellent water quality. The study covered the 27-nation bloc, the U.K., Albania and Switzerland.

After nearly three months of coronavirus lockdowns, European citizens will be hoping to make the most of their beaches, lakes and rivers as the EU prepares to lift [border controls](#) inside its territory by the end of June.

"Clean bathing water is usually taken as something that is gifted, but it's actually one of the European collective achievements," said Virginijus Sinkevičius, the EU commissioner in charge of the environment.

"It's the result of hard work by many people over many years. This year's report once again confirms that European citizens can continue to enjoy very high quality standards when bathing in European waters and all measures must be taken to continue along this path."

A country-by-country breakdown showed that in five nations—Cyprus, Austria, Malta, Greece, and Croatia—at least 95 percent of bathing waters were of excellent quality. Of all the countries monitored, Poland was the only one with less than 50 percent of its bathing waters rated as excellent.



Swimmers enjoy the sea and the sun at Alimos beach, near Athens, on Saturday, May 16, 2020. The quality of bathing waters in Europe remains high according to a study released by the EU environment agency on Monday, June 8, 2020, concluding that minimum water quality standards were met at 95 percent of the sites monitored across the continent last year. (AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalis, File)

The EEA said the quality of bathing waters is generally better at coastal locations than at inland sites, with 87.4% of coastal bathing sites classified as excellent, compared with 79.1% of inland sites in the EU.

"Many central European inland bathing water sites are situated on relatively [small lakes](#) and ponds as well as low-flow rivers, which, especially in the summer, are more susceptible than [coastal areas](#) to short-term pollution caused by heavy summer rains," the EEA said.

The agency also noticed a drop in the total of locations where bad water quality can result in illness. Just 1.3 percent of all sites in the EU got a poor rating last year, compared with 2 percent in 2013. In six European countries—Albania, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands and Slovakia—3% or more of bathing waters were of poor quality.



In this May 13, 2020 file photo, two beachgoers work out at the water's edge on a nearly empty stretch of Makrinissos beach in Cyprus' seaside resort of Ayia Napa. The quality of bathing waters in Europe remains high according to a study released by the EU environment agency on Monday, June 8, 2020, concluding that minimum water quality standards were met at 95 percent of the sites monitored across the continent last year. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias, File)



In this Saturday, May 16, 2020 file photo, swimmers enjoy the sea and the sun at Alimos beach, near Athens. The quality of bathing waters in Europe remains high according to a study released by the EU environment agency on Monday, June 8, 2020, concluding that minimum water quality standards were met at 95 percent of the sites monitored across the continent last year. (AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalis, File)



In this Thursday, May 21, 2020 file photo, people visit the beach during a partial lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus, COVID-19, in Oostende, northern Belgium. The quality of bathing waters in Europe remains high according to a study released by the EU environment agency on Monday, June 8, 2020, concluding that minimum water quality standards were met at 95 percent of the sites monitored across the continent last year. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco, File)

Under the the European bathing [water](#) directive, bathing must be permanently prohibited or explicitly advised against at locations rated as poor for at least five straight years.

"In 2019, this was the case for 55 bathing waters: 36 in Italy, eight in Spain, four in the United Kingdom, two in France, and one in Czechia,

Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden respectively," the EEA said.

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Citation: Report: European bathing water quality remains high (2020, June 8) retrieved 13 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-european-quality-high.html>

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