



## THE NEW ANNUAL REPORT ON BATHING WATER QUALITY MAINTAINS AMBIGUITY REGARDING THE REVISION OF THE DIRECTIVE

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The 2025 report on the quality of bathing waters in Europe in 2024 has just been published on the European Environment Agency (EEA) website. Over 85% of bathing waters in Europe were classified as excellent last year. While the NGO Surfrider Foundation Europe recognizes the work of the European Commission and the EEA, as well as the ongoing efforts of Member States, these results still raise significant disappointment regarding the limited ambitions reflected in the current management of our recreational waters.

**Bacteriological quality remains satisfactory, but it provides an incomplete picture of the reality**

The European Environment Agency (EEA) published its annual report on the quality of bathing waters in Europe today. According to the report, nearly **22,000 bathing sites across the 27 Member States, as well as in Albania and Switzerland, were assessed**. Among them, **85% of bathing waters were classified as excellent**, meaning they met the highest bathing water quality standards. Additionally, **96% met the minimum required quality standards**.

The report once again confirms that the vast majority of European bathing sites comply with the bacteriological thresholds set by the European Directive (2006/7/EC). Surfrider Foundation Europe welcomes these results. The published figures show overall positive trends, reflecting a genuine effort to monitor water quality.

The figures have remained generally stable for several years. However, Surfrider wishes to nuance this perception. The situation of bathing waters has significantly improved since the adoption of the Directive in 2006, thanks to the concerted efforts of European institutions and the competent authorities in the Member States. Nonetheless, it is clear that **the quality of bathing waters in Europe has now stagnated for many years**.

## **A report presenting contradictory information about the state of our recreational waters.**

“This report provides a very factual overview of the bacteriological status of bathing areas in Europe. The report’s title is therefore quite telling: European bathing waters are safe for summer swimming,” notes Lucille Labayle, Water Quality and Health Advocacy Officer at Surfrider Foundation Europe. In reality, only two bacteria (*Escherichia coli* and intestinal enterococci) are taken into account in the classification of sites, and only during the summer season and in areas designated for “bathers.”

This is only a **partial picture of the quality of our waters being published today**. **Recreational uses and water sports**, which often take place well beyond the summer season, are not taken into account in the designation of monitoring areas. Furthermore, a number of **pollutants** (cyanobacteria, algal blooms, chemical pollutants...) escape monitoring and site classification, and are therefore not reflected in the figures presented today. While the report states that over 85% of bathing waters in Europe are of excellent quality, other sources, such as the [“Europe’s State of Water”](#) report cited by the Commission and the EEA, indicate that **only 29% of European surface waters achieve good chemical status**.

In the context of climate change and increasing pollution (contaminated stormwater, sewage overflows, presence of persistent chemical substances such as PFAS...), a broader assessment is essential to ensure the **real safety** of users and the **resilience of aquatic ecosystems**. In light of this, Surfrider advocates for a

thorough revision of the Directive, through seven key demands outlined in its [European Manifesto for Healthy Waters](#), submitted to the European Commission in 2021. This document particularly recommends:

- To expand the monitored areas,
- To ensure annual monitoring, not only during the summer season,
- To include new pollution parameters (chemical pollutants, microplastics, cyanobacteria, algal blooms, waste, etc.).

## Many pitfalls identified but no strong measures taken to address them

Earlier this year, the European Commission published the results of its evaluation of the Directive. [Its conclusions are unequivocal](#) and clearly echo our analysis of today's report: the Directive's level of ambition is not aligned with the European Green Deal and its Zero Pollution Action Plan, nor with the current state of science. The coordination between the various legislations affecting water quality is also profoundly lacking in coherence. Yet, nothing in today's announcements suggests that we are moving towards a revision of the Directive.

“While the concept of water resilience and the restoration of the water cycle are at the heart of concerns for our continent, the Bathing Water Directive could become a **key EU instrument to protect our aquatic environments and citizens' health**. It is high time that our recreational waters are governed by a more ambitious Directive, better adapted to today's environmental and societal challenges,” concludes Lucille Labayle.

Surfrider calls on the European Commission to urgently clarify the current status of the Directive's revision process, which began in 2021, and to **quickly implement concrete measures to continue ensuring safe recreational waters for everyone**.

We remain at the disposal of journalists for any request for information or interviews.

### Context and Resources :

[https://www.surfrider.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/WATER\\_RESILIENCE\\_STRATEGY\\_JUNE.pdf](https://www.surfrider.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/WATER_RESILIENCE_STRATEGY_JUNE.pdf)

[https://www.surfrider.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/EVALUTION\\_BWD\\_EN.pdf](https://www.surfrider.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/EVALUTION_BWD_EN.pdf)

**About Surfrider Foundation Europe**

*The NGO Surfrider Foundation is a collective of positive activists who take concrete action on the ground on a daily basis to pass on a preserved ocean to future generations. Our mission: To carry the voice of the Ocean loud and clear! Our weapons? Raising awareness and mobilising citizens, children and adults alike (in particular through 48 volunteer branches throughout Europe), using our scientific expertise to carry out lobbying actions and transform companies. Discover the association on <https://surfrider.eu/> or via [this video](#)*

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