

Bathing Water: Overview of the situation in Member States

The EU Bathing Water Directive¹ lays down two sets of bathing water quality standards: minimum **imperative values**, with which compliance is mandatory, and stricter **guide values**, with which compliance is desirable but not obligatory. Member States are required to monitor the water quality in their designated bathing areas through regular sampling during the season and to report the results to the European Commission.

In the 2004 bathing season the average compliance rate with the mandatory values was 96.7% at coastal bathing areas (96.8% in 2003) and 89.4% at inland (freshwater) sites (92.3% in 2003).

Compliance with the guide values averaged 88.5% at coastal sites (89.3% in 2003) and 66.4% at inland areas (67.9% in 2003).

Average compliance with mandatory values in the 'old' EU-15 is 96.8% for coastal areas (13.765 sites) and 91.9% for freshwater areas (5.730 sites). For the 'new' EU-10 those rates are 83% for coastal areas (141 sites) and 46.2% for freshwater areas (329 sites).

The following summary provides an overview of the situation in individual Member States during the 2004 season.

Austria

Bathing water quality is good and stable. The 2004 bathing season brought an improvement in average quality, confirming the trend seen the previous year. The improvement applies to compliance with both the mandatory values (98.9%) and the guide values (83.1%). (Compliance rates in 2003 were 97.4% and 79.7% respectively).

All bathing areas were sufficiently sampled during the 2004 bathing season. Bathing was not prohibited in any area, nor was any site de-listed. Austria had 267 freshwater sites.

Belgium

In coastal areas compliance with the mandatory values slipped from 100% in 2003 to 97.4%. The rate of compliance with the guide values remains low (25.6 %) compared with the European average.

In freshwater areas the compliance rate with mandatory values fell by (6.8% points to 73.6%), the second consecutive decrease. For guide values compliance was 40.3% (47.1% in 2003).

¹ Directive 76/160/EEC

n general terms all sites were sufficiently sampled, but bathing was prohibited at 8.3% of freshwater sites, up from none in 2003. Belgium had 39 coastal sites in 2004 and deleted one freshwater site, leaving 72.

Denmark

The excellent results recorded in 2003 were repeated in 2004. Compliance at coastal sites was 96.8% (96.4% in 2003) and at inland areas 96.4% (96.5% in 2003). For the guide values average compliance was 93% in coastal areas and 89.2% at freshwater sites (91.6% and 87.6% in 2003, respectively).

The percentage of sites where bathing was prohibited was very low: 0.5 % for coastal areas and 1.8 % for inland areas. Only one coastal bathing area was insufficiently sampled. Denmark deleted seven coastal sites and four freshwater sites during the season, leaving 1138 and 111 respectively.

Finland

Compliance with mandatory values was very high for both coastal and freshwater zones (98.1 and 98.6%), and showed a further improvement from the previous year (93.2% and 97.6% respectively).

The tendency for guide values was mixed, however. For coastal zones compliance was 61.2%, a decrease of 2% points, while in freshwater areas compliance improved by 5% points to 75.4%.

All bathing sites were sufficiently sampled. Bathing was not banned at any sites. Finland deleted two coastal and seven freshwater bathing sites during the season, leaving 103 and 285.

France

Overall compliance with mandatory values remained generally very high for both coastal and freshwater (95.7 and 94.9%) and stable compared to 2003. Compliance with the guide values was low, at 73.9% in coastal areas (77.6% in 2003) and 58.7% at inland sites (59.1% in 2003).

All bathing areas were sufficiently sampled, and bathing was not banned at any sites. France deleted 21 coastal and 41 freshwater bathing sites, leaving 1872 and 1406.

Germany

Overall bathing water quality remained very high. Compliance with mandatory values was 98.7% at coastal sites and 95.1% in inland areas (97.5% and 95.4% in 2003, respectively). Compliance with the guide values rose to 91.3% in coastal areas from 82.7%, and at inland sites to 83% from 80.4%.

The percentage of areas where bathing was prohibited was very low (0.3%). 1.5 % of inland bathing areas were not sufficiently sampled. Germany deleted eight coastal and 26 inland bathing sites during the season, leaving a total of 390 and 1561.

Greece

Overall bathing water quality remained excellent. Greece has designated only four freshwater bathing areas but, as in 2003, all of them complied with both the mandatory and the guide values.

All the listed bathing areas were open for bathing and properly monitored. Greece did not delete any bathing sites during the season. It had 1965 coastal sites.

Ireland

The results reported are very good both for coastal areas and for freshwater areas.

Among coastal bathing sites, 97.5% complied with the mandatory values and 87.7% with the guide values (95.1% and 82.8% in 2003, respectively) Compliance rate in freshwater areas is excellent (100% as in 2003). However, Ireland reports on only nine listed freshwater sites which seem low. The rate of guide values decreased to 88.9% (100% in 2003).

Ireland did not delete any bathing site from the official lists. It had 122 coastal sites.

Italy

The situation in Italy differs considerably between freshwater and coastal areas.

The results for coastal areas were high, with 94.7% compliance for the mandatory values (95.4% in 2003). However, the percentage of prohibited bathing areas rose to 4 % from 3.6%. Compliance with the guide values at coastal sites was equally high 92.3% (93.3% in 2003).

In freshwater bathing areas the percentage of sites complying with the mandatory values fell to 67.9% from 70.6%, while the compliance rate with guide values was 58.3% (58.3% in 2003). The percentage of inland sites where bathing has been banned has reached 31.5% (27.7% in 2003). The Commission will seek clarifications on this point. Six freshwater sites were de-listed during the 2004 season, leaving 779. Italy had 4884 coastal sites.

Luxembourg

The compliance rate of Luxembourg's 20 freshwater sites with the mandatory values fell sharply in 2004 to 65% from an already low 80% the previous year. Compliance with the guide values was 50% (40% in 2003).

Average bathing water quality has shown no sign of improvement for many years, raising questions about the effectiveness of the clean-up measures taken. Bathing was prohibited at 15% of freshwater sites, similar to the previous season. No sites were deleted. Luxembourg has no coastal waters.

The Netherlands

A marked improvement was observed in coastal areas, where the rate of compliance with the guide values climbed to 93.9 % from 86.4% the previous year Compliance with the mandatory values was very high at 97.6% (98.9% in 2003).

In the freshwater areas, the percentage complying with the mandatory values remained excellent (98.2%, after 98.6% in 2003), but compliance with the guide values remained rather low at 62.9% (63.4% in 2003).

No bathing areas were insufficiently sampled and all were open for bathing. The Netherlands did not delete any coastal bathing site but de-listed 21 freshwater sites during the season. It had 82 coastal bathing areas and 550 inland sites.

Portugal

Rates of compliance with the mandatory values were very high at 97.5% for coastal and 97.3% for freshwater areas (98.4% and 96.4% in 2003, respectively). Compliance with the guide values in coastal areas was also good at 86.5% (90.1% in 2003) but very low at 21.9% for freshwater sites, although this represented a modest recovery from just 10.9 % in 2003.

No areas were insufficiently sampled or closed for bathing. Portugal deleted six coastal and three freshwater sites during the season, leaving 400 and 73 respectively.

Spain

Bathing water quality in coastal areas was very high, both with the mandatory values (98.9 %) and the guide values (89.5 %). This represented a slight improvement on 2003 (97.6% and 88.6%, respectively).

The percentage of freshwater bathing areas complying with the mandatory values remained high at 94.7% (95.9% in 2003). Compliance with guide values was still low but rose to 44.1% from 42.1%. The proportion of inland sites where bathing was prohibited rose to 4.1% from 1.8% in 2003.

Few bathing sites were insufficiently sampled. Spain deleted 10 coastal and 4 freshwater bathing sites during 2004, leaving 1826 and 170. However, the percentage of freshwater bathing sites de-listed since 1996 has reached 40%. The Commission will seek clarifications on this point.

Sweden

Compliance with the mandatory values was particularly high at both freshwater and coastal bathing sites, at around 98.2% and 98.3% respectively), and remained stable compared to the previous year (96.3% and 98.5% respectively). However, compliance with the guide values is much lower, at 76.2% for coastal zones (85.9% in 2003) and 76.9% for inland areas (83.2 in 2003).

The percentage of bathing areas insufficiently sampled showed a slight increase. Bathing was not prohibited at any site and no sites were deleted during the season. Sweden has 382 coastal areas and 412 freshwater sites.

United Kingdom

Compliance with mandatory values remains very high in both coastal and inland areas, at 97.7% and 100% respectively (98.4% and 100% in 2003). However, compliance with the guide values was 79.4% in coastal zones (82.9% in 2003) and only 36.4 % in inland areas, down nine percentage points from the previous year.

The UK lists only 11 freshwater bathing sites, which seems rather low. All sites were sufficiently sampled and open for bathing. The UK deleted one coastal bathing site during the season, leaving 562.

New Member States

The six new Member States listed below reported full data on bathing water quality for the first time. In several cases the results show considerable room for improvement. In a number of new Member States water quality sampling was insufficient in a high percentage of areas. Another problem was that bathing was prohibited at a significant proportion of sites. Inspections and clean-up measures need to be implemented so that these bans can be lifted.

Four of the new Member States are not listed below due to lack of data. Poland and Malta submitted only partial information outside the format required for reporting, while Hungary and Latvia did not submit any data.

Cyprus

Cyprus has 100 sites, all coastal. Compliance with both mandatory and guide values was relatively good at 86% and 81% respectively.

Bathing was not prohibited at any sites but the percentage of areas insufficiently sampled was high at 9 %.

Czech Republic

In The Czech Republic, which has only freshwater zones (a total of 176), the percentage of compliance with the mandatory and guide values was relatively low, at 49.4% and 38.6% respectively.

A high percentage of sites were insufficiently sampled (31.3%). Also, bathing was prohibited at a large proportion of sites (7.4%).

Estonia

Overall bathing water quality is relatively low. Compliance with the mandatory and guide values was 75% and 37.5 % respectively in coastal zones, and 60% and 53.3% respectively in freshwater areas.

Twelve percent of coastal sites and one-third of freshwater areas were insufficiently sampled. Bathing was not banned at any sites, however. Estonia had 8 coastal bathing sites and 15 inland sites.

Lithuania

Average bathing water quality was rather low in both coastal and freshwater areas, with 57.1% compliance rate for coastal sites and 58.5% for inland sites.

A high percentage of sites were insufficiently sampled – 42.9% in coastal areas and 26.4% in freshwater zones). At 11.3 % of freshwater sites bathing was prohibited. Lithuania had 14 coastal sites and 53 freshwater areas.

Slovakia

Slovakia has only freshwater sites, with a total of 67. The results reported show low compliance rates at 22.4 % with mandatory values and 14.9% with guide values.

There was also a high proportion of sites at which sampling was insufficient (16.4%) and where bathing was prohibited (17.9%).

Slovenia

Compliance in coastal areas was relatively good, both with mandatory values (89.5%) and guide values (78.9 %). However, in freshwater zones compliance is low, with 55.6% of sites meeting the mandatory values and only about 27.8% complying with the guide values.

All freshwater sites were well monitored but sampling was inadequate at 5.6% of coastal zones. Bathing was not banned at any sites. Slovenia had 19 coastal bathing zones and 18 inland sites.

Further information

See press release [IP/05/614](#)

The Bathing Water Report 2004 is available on the Commission's Bathing Water Quality site: <http://www.europa.eu.int/water/water-bathing/report.html>

NBA	number of bathing sites/areas
C(I) %	% of bathing sites conform to imperative values
C(G) %	% of bathing sites conform to guide values
banned %	% of bathing sites where bathing is banned
delisted %	% of bathing sites de-listed compared to previous year

COASTAL										
Member State	2004					2003				
	NBA	C(I) %	C(G) %	banned %	delisted %	NBA	C(I) %	C(G) %	banned %	delisted %
Austria	0	-	-	-		0	-	-	-	
Belgium	39	97,4	25,6	0	0	39	100	15,4	0	0
Denmark	1138	96,8	93	0,5	0,6	1143	96,4	91,6	1,2	2,2
Finland	103	98,1	61,2	0	1,9	103	93,2	63,1	1	12,7
France	1872	95,7	73,9	0	1,1	1873	96,2	77,6	0	0,6
Germany	390	98,7	91,3	0,3	2,0	394	97,5	82,7	0,5	3,9
Greece	1965	99,9	97,6	0	0	1933	99,9	97,1	0	0
Ireland	122	97,5	87,7	0	0	122	95,1	82,8	0	0
Italy	4884	94,7	92,3	4	0,1	4853	95,4	93,3	3,6	0,3
Luxembourg	0	-	-	-		0	-	-	-	
Netherlands	82	97,6	93,9	0	0	81	98,8	86,4	0	1,2
Portugal	400	97,5	86,5	0	1,5	384	98,4	90,1	0	2,0
Spain	1826	98,9	89,5	0,2	0,5	1779	97,6	88,6	0,1	1,5
Sweden	382	98,2	76,2	0	0	382	96,3	85,9	0	0,3
United Kingdom	562	97,7	79,4	0	0,2	560	98,4	82,9	0	0,2
Cyprus	100	86,0	81	0						
Czech Republic	0	-	-	-						
Estonia	8	75,0	37,5	0						
Lithuania	14	57,1	21,4	0						
Slovakia	0	-	-	-						
Slovenia	19	89,5	78,9	0						

NBA	number of bathing sites/areas
C(I) %	% of bathing sites conform to imperative values
C(G) %	% of bathing sites conform to guide values
banned %	% of bathing sites where bathing is banned
delisted %	% of bathing sites de-listed compared to previous year

FRESHWATER

Member State	2004					2003				
	NBA	C(I) %	C(G) %	banned %	delisted%	NBA	C(I) %	C(G) %	banned %	delisted %
Austria	267	98,9	83,1	0	0	266	97,4	79,7	0	0,4
Belgium	72	73,6	40,3	8,3	1,4	70	84,3	47,1	0	0
Denmark	111	96,4	89,2	1,8	3,5	113	96,5	87,6	1,8	1,7
Finland	285	98,9	75,4	0	2,4	292	97,6	70,2	0	4,6
France	1406	94,9	58,7	0	2,8	1405	94,2	59,1	0	4,9
Germany	1561	95,1	83	1,5	1,6	1572	95,4	80,4	2,4	2,3
Greece	4	100	100	0	0	4	100	75	0	0
Ireland	9	100	88,9	0	0	9	100	100	0	0
Italy	779	67,9	58,3	31,5	0,1	775	70,6	58,3	27,7	0,5
Luxembourg	20	65	50	15	0	20	80	40	15	0
Netherlands	550	98,2	62,9	0,5	3,7	558	98,6	63,4	0,5	2,4
Portugal	73	97,3	21,9	0	3,9	55	96,4	10,9	0	3,5
Spain	170	94,7	44,1	4,1	2,3	171	95,9	42,1	1,8	6,6
Sweden	412	98,3	76,9	0	0	404	98,5	83,2	0	1,0
United Kingdom	11	100	36,4	0	0	11	100	45,5	0	0
Cyprus	0	-	-	-						
Czech Republic	176	49,4	38,6	7,4						
Estonia	15	60	53,3	0						
Lithuania	53	58,5	26,4	11,3						
Slovakia	67	22,4	14,9	17,9						
Slovenia	18	55,6	27,8	0						