

## **Evaluation report of the Bathing Water Directive: a hopeful message that remains to be translated into concrete actions**

---

Press Release 3.6.2025 | For immediate release

**As part of the second edition of the Ocean Days, the European Commission published its [evaluation report of the Bathing Water Directive](#) today. Surfrider Foundation welcomes with enthusiasm this long-awaited publication and sees efforts to move forward for the review process in a very positive light.**

**In the context of ongoing discussions regarding the Water Resilience Strategy and Oceans Pact, the NGO recalls the important delay in updating the Directive to face current water quality challenges and underlines the need to act swiftly to make sure the EU's bathing water success story lives on.**

### **Some key findings largely echoing Surfrider's claims**

The Bathing Water Directive ([EU Directive 2006/7/EC](#)) aims to protect human health and improve environmental quality by monitoring, classifying, and managing bathing water across the EU. Since 2006, it has required Member States to assess water quality for designated bathing sites located across Europe's rivers, lakes and coasts, based on faecal bacteria levels and inform the public through bathing water profiles.

Surfrider Foundation has been campaigning for safe and healthy waters for all for over 20 years in Europe, building a robust expertise, which ultimately resulted in the publication of its [Manifesto for Healthy Waters](#), supported and signed by over 50 stakeholders, in 2021. The NGO called on the EU to strengthen the Directive and reconsider the monitoring and classification of bathing water quality based on 7 key recommendations promoting especially the consideration of recreational activities in the designation of sites, the establishment of year-round monitoring, and the introduction of additional parameters to assess the quality of bathing sites.

[Today's conclusions](#) seem to indicate that several of Surfrider's claims are also on the decision-makers' mind. *"The lessons drawn by the Commission clearly align with what we have been advocating for years. We are grateful to have been heard and look forward to further supporting EU institutions in their work"*

towards safer and healthy waters in Europe”, argues Lucille Labayle, Surfrider’s Water Quality and Health Policy Officer.

The Commission especially highlights the fact that despite the Directive’s overall success, there is a mismatch between its scope and the EU’s 2050 zero-pollution ambition. Information to the public could be improved and harmonised, while monitoring should better reflect bathing habits both geographically and seasonally. Coherence with the larger policy framework should be enhanced and parameters should better align with the latest sciences, considering cyanobacteria and harmful algal blooms, as well as key contaminants affecting the bathing sites. It is however regretful to see the term bathing is still largely overshadowing other aquatic recreational activities.

## **O legislative proposal, where art thou?**

The Bathing Water Directive played an indisputable role in improving the state of bathing areas across Europe since its initial adoption in the 1976. Though the evaluation reiterates its clear added value as an EU piece of legislation and demonstrates how its direct benefits largely outweigh its costs, it also identifies room for improvement to better protect the health of citizen and our aquatic environment.

In 2021, the European Commission announced, as part of its Zero Pollution Action Plan, that the Directive was set to be assessed and possibly revised by 2023. After several rounds of stakeholder consultations, to which Surfrider Foundation took part, [it was eventually announced at the end of 2022](#) that the process was halted until the next EU mandate. It is unclear from today’s announcement whether a proposal for revision could be expected and if so, when. This is a major cause for concern frustration for representatives of the civil society. *“European waters are a public common good cherished by the millions of citizens who engage not only in bathing but in all sorts of aquatic sports or activities. The evaluation report rightfully points towards several gaps of the existing Directive. We call on decision-makers take urgent action and address these shortcomings forthwith to ensure healthy waters for all, everywhere.”*

*Our water quality experts are available to journalists for further interviews.*

### **About Surfrider Foundation Europe**

*Surfrider Foundation Europe, an NGO created in 1990, works to protect the oceans, the coastline, the waves and their users. For 30 years, with a team of experts and 50 volunteer branches in 12 European countries, the association has been working with stakeholders (citizens, private and public sectors) on several major issues: aquatic waste, coastal development, climate change, water quality and user health. Find out more about the association at <https://surfrider.eu/> or via [this vidéo](#)*

### **CONTACT :**

Lionel Cheylus | Medias Relations Manager | + 33 6 08 10 58 02 | [lcheylyus@surfrider.eu](mailto:lcheylyus@surfrider.eu)



Surfrider Foundation Europe's "Healthy Water" campaign is supported by the LIFE programme created by the European Commission. The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the content, which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.