

Newsletter Issue 2/2025

Evaluation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and The Bathing Water Directive.¹

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive stems from 2008. Its objective was to achieve good environmental status for European seas by 2020, meaning that they are clean, healthy, and productive. It does so across eleven descriptors (such as biodiversity, contaminants, and litter).

The Bathing Water Directive, adopted in 2006, regulates the management of bathing water quality at around 22,000 bathing sites across the EU. It monitors the quality of bathing water for two microbiological parameters and requires that management measures are taken when needed and that the relevant information is made available to the public.

On March 6, the Commission published evaluations of two directives on the protection of EU seas and oceans and on the quality of bathing waters on land.

The evaluation has found that the Marine Strategy Framework Directive has put in place an ambitious framework to better monitor the state of our seas and protect marine life from pollution and unsustainable practices. It has, however, not fully achieved its good environmental status objectives, which were originally due in 2020, and there is clear scope for the reduction of administrative burden through regulatory simplification and enhanced data management.

The Bathing Water Directive has been effective in protecting bathers in the EU. Based on the latest available data, in 2023, no less than 85% of bathing water sites at sea and on land were rated 'excellent' in the EU and minimum water quality standards were met at 96% of sites. The evaluation concludes, however, that there is scope for enhancing the actual level of both health and environmental protection in better alignment with the EU's One Health and Clean Competitiveness ambitions while reducing administrative burdens by enhancing coherence with the Water Framework Directive.

¹ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-evaluates-sea-protection-and-bathing-water-quality-laws-2025-03-06_en#:~:text=The%20Bathing%20Water%20Directive%20has,met%20at%2096%25%20of%20sites.