

Maltese bathing water quality in 2018



Malta 

June 2019

Photo: © Peter Kristensen/EEA

Bathing Water Quality in the Season 2018

Malta

Under the provisions of the [Bathing Water Directive](#), more than 21 000 bathing waters are monitored in Europe each season. The monitoring data and other information regarding bathing water management are reported to the European Environment Agency by 30 reporting countries in Europe, to be assessed for the annual European report and more detailed national reports.

1. BWD reporting in the season 2018

In the season 2018, Malta identified and reported **87 bathing waters**, which is 0.4% of all bathing waters in Europe. No bathing waters in Malta have been newly identified for the season 2018.

Bathing waters of Malta in the season 2018		Bathing water quality in the season 2018	
Total reported	87	Excellent	86 (98.9%)
Coastal	87	Good	1 (1.1%)
Inland	0	Sufficient	0 (0%)
Total reported samples	2071	Poor	0 (0%)
		Not classified	0 (0%)

The bathing waters are quality classified according to the two microbiological parameters (*Escherichia coli* and *Intestinal enterococci*) defined in the Bathing Water Directive. 100% of reported bathing waters are in line with the minimum quality standards of the Directive, thus classified “sufficient” or better.

More detailed information on bathing waters of Malta is available at the national bathing water portal

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/environmental/Health-Inspectorate/EHRM/Pages/Bathing-Water-Profiles.aspx>.

2. BWD monitoring

Each bathing water that is identified by the reporting country needs to have a monitoring calendar established before the bathing season. The monitoring calendar requirements can be summarised as follows: (1) a pre-season sample is to be taken shortly before the start of each bathing season; (2) no fewer than four (alternatively, three for specific cases) samples are to be taken and analysed per bathing season; and (3) an interval between sampling dates never exceeds one month.

From the reported data, the assessment also designates effective implementation of the monitoring calendar. In Malta, monitoring calendar for 2018 was implemented at all bathing waters.

Table 1: Bathing waters in 2018 according to implementation of the monitoring calendar

	Count	Share of total [%]
Monitoring calendar implemented A bathing water satisfies monitoring calendar conditions listed above.	87	100%
Monitoring calendar not implemented A bathing water does not satisfy monitoring calendar conditions listed above. They may be quality-classified if enough samples are available in the last assessment period.	0	0%

In addition to the monitoring calendar, management specifics of the last assessment period of four years are also assessed. The status primarily indicates whether the complete dataset of four seasons is available, but also points out the reasons as to why the bathing waters do not have the complete last assessment period dataset. The latter may indicate developing conditions at the site – most importantly, whether the bathing water has been newly identified within the period, or any changes have occurred that are likely to affect the classification of the bathing water.

Table 2: Management specifics in the last assessment period of 2015–2018

	Count	Share of total [%]
Continuously monitored A bathing water has been monitored in each bathing season in the last assessment period.	87	100%
Newly identified A bathing water was identified for the first time within the last assessment period. Such status is assigned until the complete four-year dataset is available, i.e. for three years after the first reporting.	0	0%
Quality changes A bathing water was subject to changes described in BWD Art. 4.4 within the last assessment period. Such status is assigned until the complete four-year dataset of samples taken after changes took effect is available.	0	0%
Monitoring gap A bathing water was not monitored for at least one season in the last assessment period. No quality	0	0%



classification is made if no samples are reported for the most recent season.

3. Bathing water quality

3.1 Coastal bathing waters

Coastal bathing waters are situated on the sea or transitional water coastline, with respective parameter thresholds defined in Annex I of the Directive. They are subject to more strict thresholds than the inland bathing waters. Quality trend in Malta for the period 1990–2018 if historical data are available is shown in Figure 1. Count of bathing waters by quality class for the last assessment period 2015–2018 is given in Annex I.

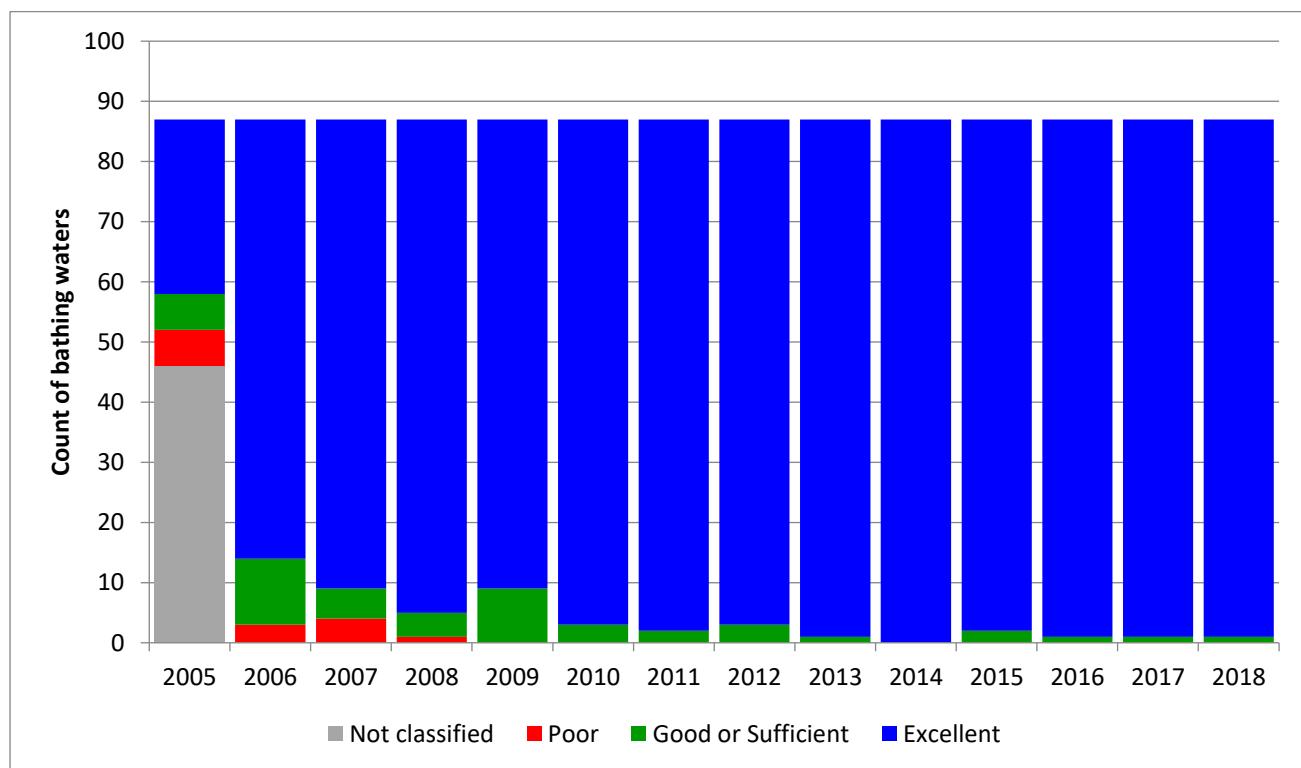


Figure 1: Trend of coastal bathing water quality in Malta. Notes: Each column represents an absolute count of bathing waters in the season. Quality classes “good” and “sufficient” are merged for comparability with classification of the preceding Bathing Water Directive 76/160/EEC.



4. Bathing water management in Malta

In addition to monitoring data, reporting countries also provide information on bathing water management in the country. The information is used to exchange good practices, discuss issues on the European level, and understand the specifics of implementation of the Directive.

All bathing waters monitored as part of the bathing water monitoring programme are clearly identified by fixed information signs indicating the site code and stating that the area is monitored by the Environmental Health Directorate on a regular basis. These information signs are in five languages (Maltese, English, French, German and Italian). If there is the need to temporary close any of these areas, a temporary closure sign is attached at the same site and the information is provided (again in five language). These information signs will be replaced with new information board so as to include further information on the classification of sites and beach profiles.

The Environmental Health Directorate has completed the compilation of 29 beach profiles covering all 87 bathing sites monitored as part of the annual bathing water monitoring programme in 2013. Following the publication of the official classification of bathing sites the Environmental Health Directorate published an up-date of all 29 beach profiles with data for 2018 season¹. Officials from the Environmental Health Directorate participated on television and radio programmes discussing and giving information to the general public on bathing water quality.

As part of the management programme, environmental health officers carry out routine site inspections so as to check for any possible sources of pollution. These officers also investigate any complaints made by the public and in case of doubt extra samples are collected and sent for analysis at the public health laboratory. In the case that visual evidence of pollution is noted, the effected site will be temporary closed for bathing. During the 2018 bathing season, the Environmental Health Directorate issued three temporary closures – health warnings at six bathing waters. These bathing waters were temporary closed due to localised sewage overflows.

- The cause of this temporary closure of bathing are at Xlendi Bay, Gozo was due to the heavy downpour. On Thursday 23rd August a complaint was received at the Environmental Health Directorate (EHD) Gozo Region, stating that the sea at Xlendi Bay was filthy and of greenish colour. A Senior Environmental Health Officer (SEHO) from the Gozo Region was instructed to take samples of bathing water from the four bathing sites of Xlendi Bay the following morning, namely from D 04 (Kantra), D 05 (Promenade) D 06 (Churchill) and D 07 (Jetty). The samples that were elevated were submitted to the Public Health Laboratory on the same day. The site was temporarily closed for 5 days between the 25th and 30th August 2018.
- The cause of the temporary closure of bathing area St. Paul's Bay was due to a stoppage in the main sewerage system in the area, which found its way into the sea through the main storm water culvert. Works to remove the stoppage were carried out by the WWU Emergency Team and kept on going throughout the night. The site was eventually temporary kept closed for 5 days between the 7th and 12th August 2018.

¹ <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/environmental/Health-Inspectorate/EHRM/Pages/Bathing-Water-Profiles.aspx>

- The cause of this temporary closure of bathing area with Site Code B 14 at Qui-Si-Sana, Sliema was due to a stoppage in the main sewerage system in the area. Works to remove the stoppage were carried out by the WWU and kept on going throughout the night. Following completion of the necessary remedial actions, the rocky beach was washed off any contaminated water. The site was temporary closed for 7 days between 19th July and 26th July 2018.

Environmental Health Officers fixed information signs on-sites indicating that these sites were temporary closed for bathing until the health warning was lifted; all of the bathing site were officially opened again once laboratory analysis confirmed that seawater was again safe for bathing. In the case of short-term pollution, besides information signs being fixed at the affected sites, also a press release is issued through the Department of Information and posted on the EHD website for the general public information (<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/environmental/Health-Inspectorate/EHRM/Pages/Bathing-Water-Programme.aspx>). From this bathing season on, detailed reports on these short-term pollutions are being published and can be found at <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/environmental/Health-Inspectorate/EHRM/Pages/Short-Term-Pollution-Reports.aspx>.

During the bathing season, the Environmental Health Directorate issues a weekly report with the classification for each bathing water based on the Escherichia coli and Intestinal enterococci counts (<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/environmental/Health-Inspectorate/EHRM/Pages/Bathing-Water-Programme.aspx>).

Sampling results are also posted at some of the sites. A weekly report with the new logos as per Commission Implementation Decision 2011/321/EU published on 27 May 2011 for the classification of sites is also issued. There is also participation on television and radio programmes discussing and giving information to the general public on bathing water quality. The Environmental Health Directorate also posted on its webpage the raw data on a weekly basis. Copies of these reports are sent by e-mail to all those who requested to be placed on the Directorate mailing list and to all local councils.

The microbiological methods employed for the monitoring of bathing water during this season are as follows:

- Intestinal Enterococci - Microplate MPN technique (ISO 7899 -1:2000) and Escherichia coli - Microplate MPN technique (ISO 9308 - 3:2000).
- Analysis is performed at the Public Health Laboratory by suitably qualified personnel with years of experience in water analysis. The laboratory is accredited for Intestinal Enterococci and Escherichia coli parameters.

Annex I Bathing water quality in Malta in 2015–2018

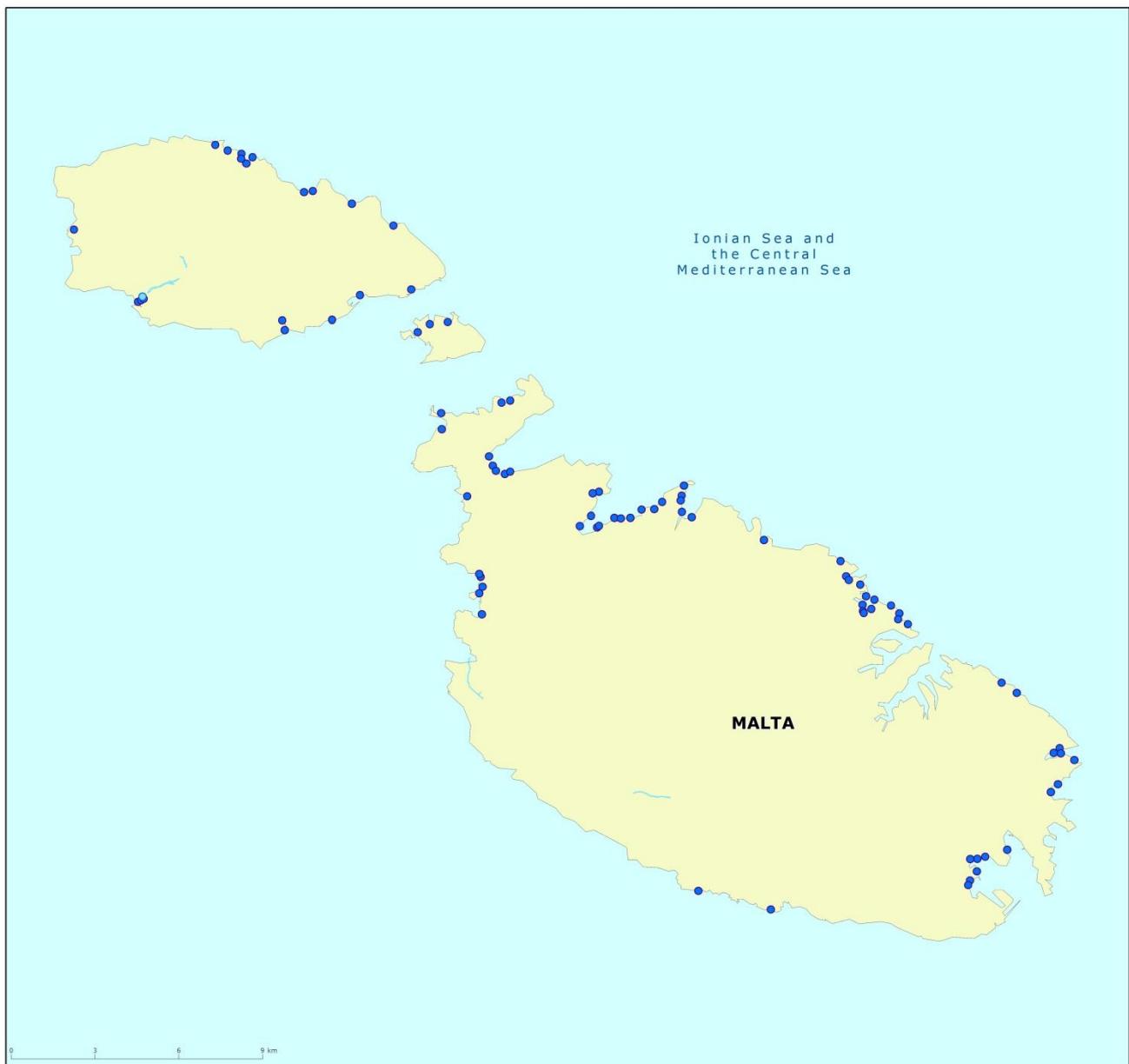
Table 3: Bathing water quality by water category and season

		Total count of bathing waters	Excellent		Good		Sufficient		Poor		Not classified	
			Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Total	2015	87	85	97.7	2	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	2016	87	86	98.9	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	2017	87	86	98.9	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	2018	87	86	98.9	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0



Annex II Bathing water quality map

Map 1: Bathing waters reported during the 2018 bathing season in Malta



Bathing water quality

- Excellent water quality
 - Good water quality
 - Sufficient water quality
 - Poor water quality
 - Quality classification not possible
- No data
 - Outside data coverage (data available, not presented on the map)

Source: National boundaries: EEA; Large rivers and lakes: EEA, WFD Article 3; Bathing waters data and coordinates: Maltese authorities; Digital Elevation Model over Europe (EU-DEM): EEA.