

QUALITY OF BATHING WATER

The microbiological quality of bathing water, which is monitored during the bathing season to protect the health of bathers, provides an indirect indicator of the overall quality of the water upstream of bathing areas. It is also a factor in the development of tourism, as bathing sites and their surroundings depend on authorisation for bathing there.

Directive 2006/7/EC concerning the management of bathing water quality has been in force in Wallonia since 2010. This directive requires that all bathing waters must be at least of sufficient quality by the end of the 2015 bathing season at the latest, and that a bathing water profile, which is a veritable identity card for bathing areas and their zones of influence, must be drawn up. The evaluation of their quality is carried out at the end of each bathing season using data on indicators of faecal contamination (intestinal enterococci and *Escherichia coli*) collected over the previous four seasons. Cyanobacteria (or blue-green algae) have been monitored on lakes and ponds since the 2011 bathing season.

Improving compliance by 2016

In 2016, Wallonia had 33 official bathing areas¹: 18 in a closed environment (on a lake) and 15 in an open environment (on a river)². These areas and their upstream zones enjoy special protection status and are designated as "protected areas"³. Between 2010 and 2016, the number of bathing areas with at least sufficient water quality increased from 56% to 76%; the number of bathing areas with excellent water quality increased from 28% to 52%. In 2016, bathing was permanently banned in 8 areas due to poor water quality for at least 5 years. In addition, 4 bathing areas were permanently removed from the official list of bathing areas due to a lack of use⁴.

Origin of the contamination sources

When the bathing water profiles were drawn up, a precise inventory

of potential sources of contamination was also made. In this context, the studies revealed that heavy rains generally increase concentrations of faecal microorganisms (agricultural runoff, stormwater overflows and waste water collection systems). Other factors are also relevant: the access of livestock to water courses⁵ and direct discharges of untreated waste water.

Efforts still ongoing

The budget committed by the Public Water Management Company (*Société publique de gestion de l'eau - SPGE*) since 2000 to protect bathing areas amounts to more than €70 million. The 2010-2016 investment programme included treatment and collection works for a total budget of €12.2 million, exclusively earmarked for improving the quality of non-compliant bathing areas. In addition, the second River Basin Management Plans⁶ include various measures aimed specifically at improving bathing water quality, including monitoring the ban on livestock access to water courses. Moreover, the implementation of a specific action programme for "bathing water" (250 multisectoral actions) is also envisaged.

[1] See <http://aquabact.environment.wallonie.be> | [2] → Map 32 |

[3] Including protection and catchment zones, and Natura 2000 zones |

[4] Nonceveux, Belvaux, Ouren and Royompré | [5] Walloon Government Decree of 17/10/2013 banning livestock access to water courses by requiring fencing in specific zones | [6] RBMPs 2016 - 2021; → WATER 21

Tab. WATER 10-1 Classes of official bathing water quality in Wallonia

Code	Name of the station	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
B04	The Beach of Renipont							
E01	The Lake of Féronval							
E02	The Lake of Claire Fontaine							
E03	The Grand Large at Nimy							
E04	The Grand Large at Péronnes							
E05	The Marlette water body							
F01	The Lake of Robertville							
F02	The Lake of Bütgenbach*							
F03	The Ponds of Recht							
F05	The Hoëgne at Royompré							
F06	The Our at Ouren							
F10	The Amblève at Nonceveux							
F18	The Amblève at Coe							
F26	The Worriken* Centre							
H01	The Pond of Rabais							
H02	The Saint-Léger Sports Centre							
H03	The Lake of Neufchâteau							
H05	The Libramont Sports Centre							
H06	The Lake of Chérapont							
H07	The Semois at Chiny							
H10	The Semois at Lacuisine							
H16	The Semois at Herbeumont							
H19	The Semois at Bouillon (Poutlé)							
H23	The Ourthe at Maboge							
H34	The Semois at Bouillon (France)							
H35	The Ourthe at Hotton							
I01	The Lake of Falemprie							
I02	The Lake of Ry Jaune							
I03	The Lake of Plate Taille							
I04	The Lake of Bambois							
I09	The Semois at Membre-sur-Semois							
I11	The Semois at Alle-sur-Semois							
I12	The Semois at Vresse-sur-Semois							
I13	The Ourthe at Noiseux							
I14	The Lesse at Pont-à-Lesse							
I15	The Lesse at Hulsonniaux							
I16	The Lesse at Houyet							
I20	The Lesse at Belvaux							

Quality classes (according to Directive 2006/7/EC)

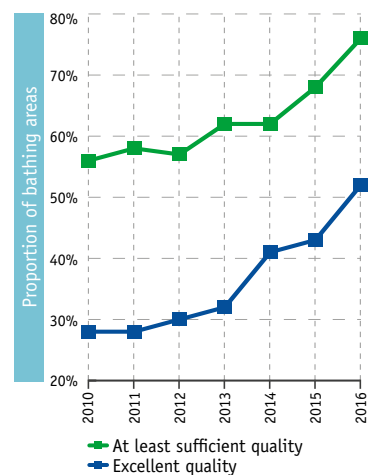
■ Excellent ■ Sufficient
■ Good ■ Insufficient

* The Bütgenbach area has been replaced by the Worriken Centre (located a few tens of meter away) since 13/03/2014.

■ Abandoned Areas
(Walloon Government
Decree of 02/06/2016)

SOERW 2017 – Source: SPW - DG03 - DEE

Fig. WATER 10-1 Classes of official bathing water quality in Wallonia



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