

Europe's State of Water

The need for improved water resilience

Milan Chrenko / 4 November 2025

[EEA, 2024](#)

Europe's State of Water 2024

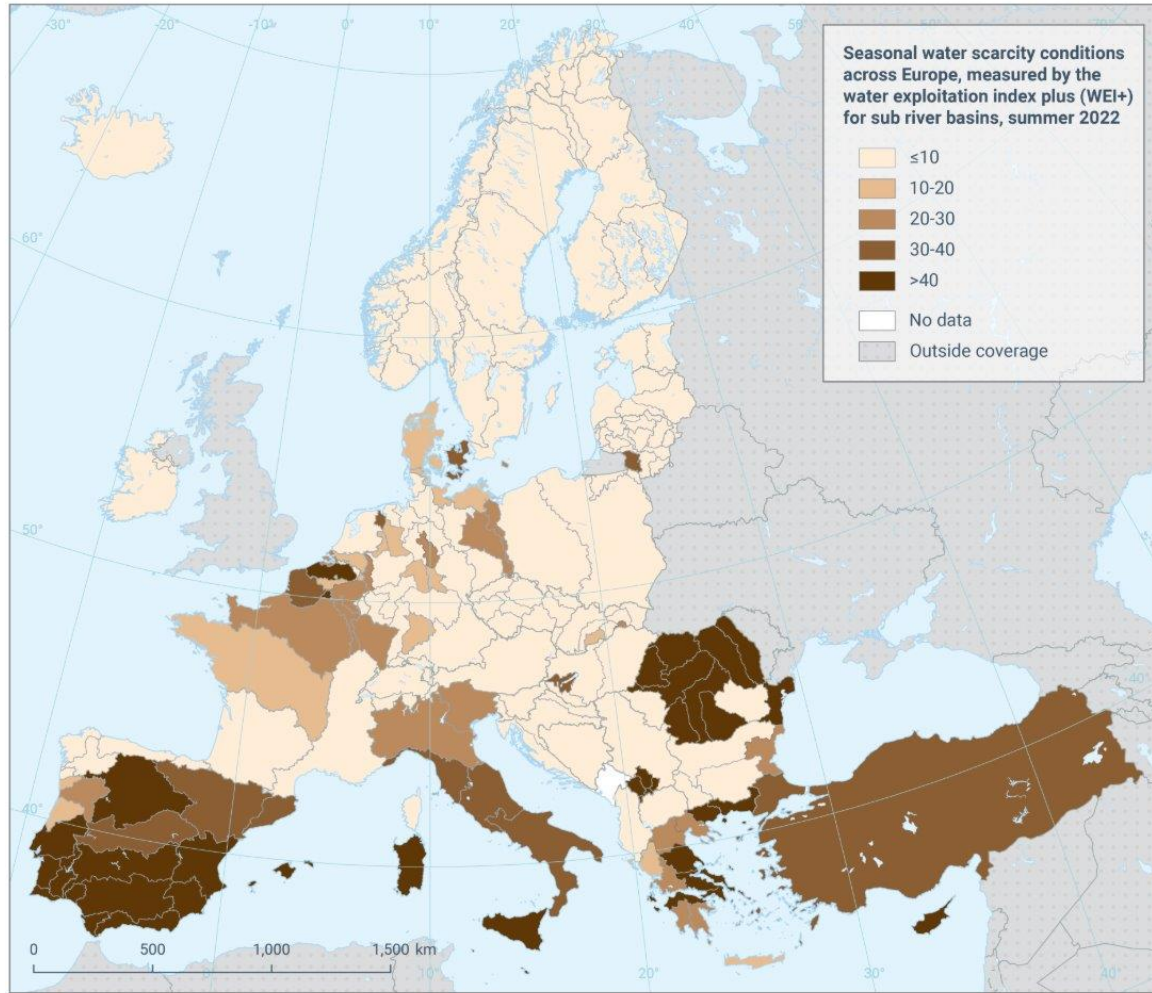


Europe's State of Water 2024: The need for improved water resilience

- › Largest assessment on the health of Europe's waters
- › **Europe's water is under significant pressure**, presenting serious challenges to water security, now and in the future
- › Europe **urgently** needs to improve its resilience and **ensure sustainable freshwater supplies for people and the environment**



Water stress



Reference data: © EuroGeographics, © FAO (UN), © TurkStat Source: European Commission – Eurostat/GISCO

Every year, water stress affects:

30%

of Europe's territory



34%

of Europe's population



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European Environment Agency



Status of Europe's water: Not meeting EU targets



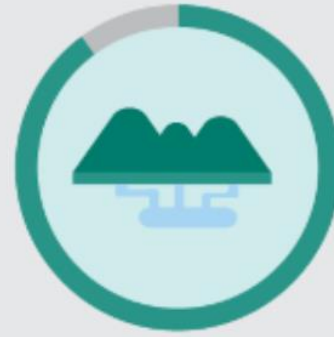
38%

of **surface waters**
are in **good** or **better**
ecological status



30%

of **surface waters**
are in **good**
chemical status



91%

of **groundwater area**
is in **good**
quantitative status

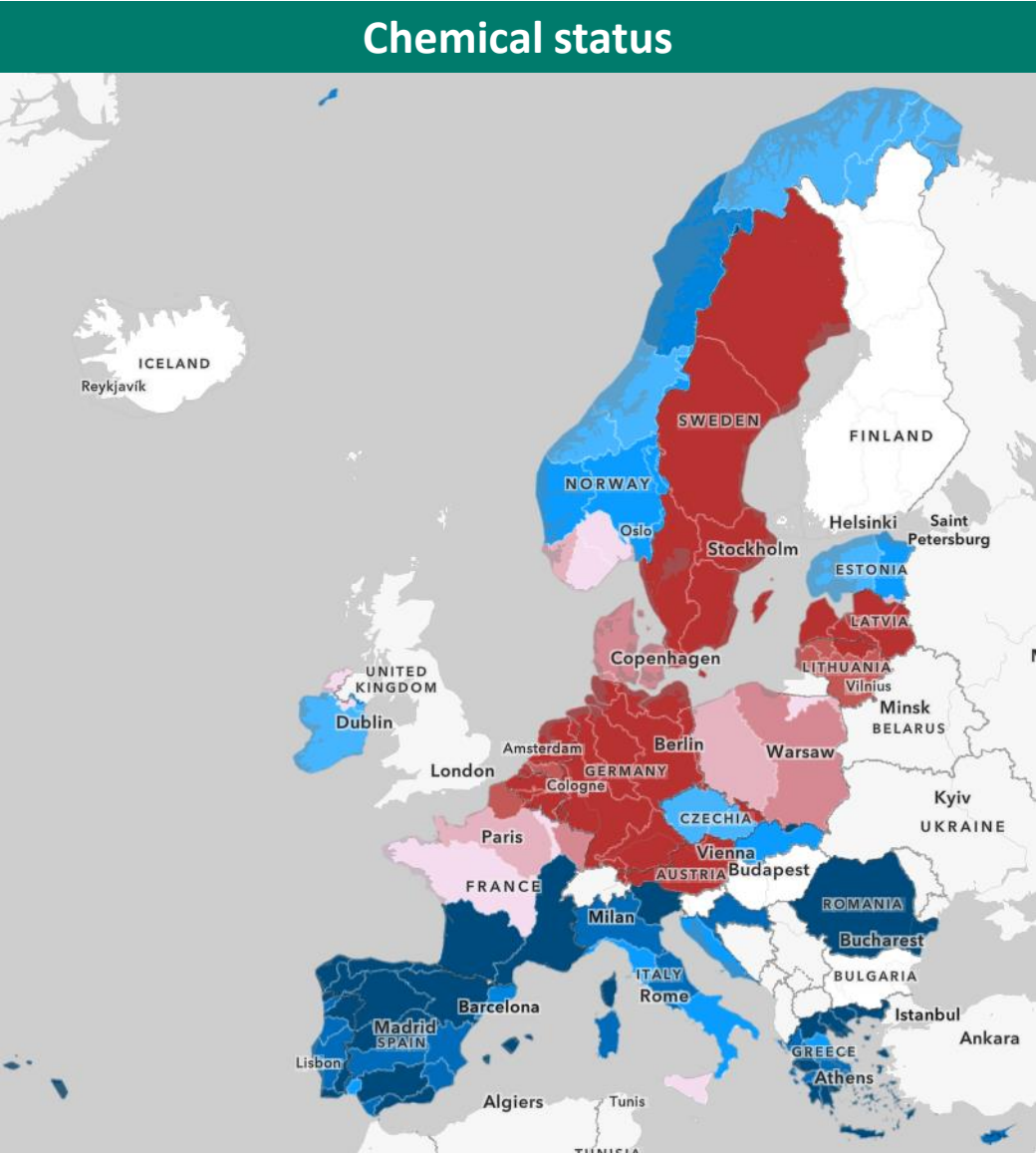
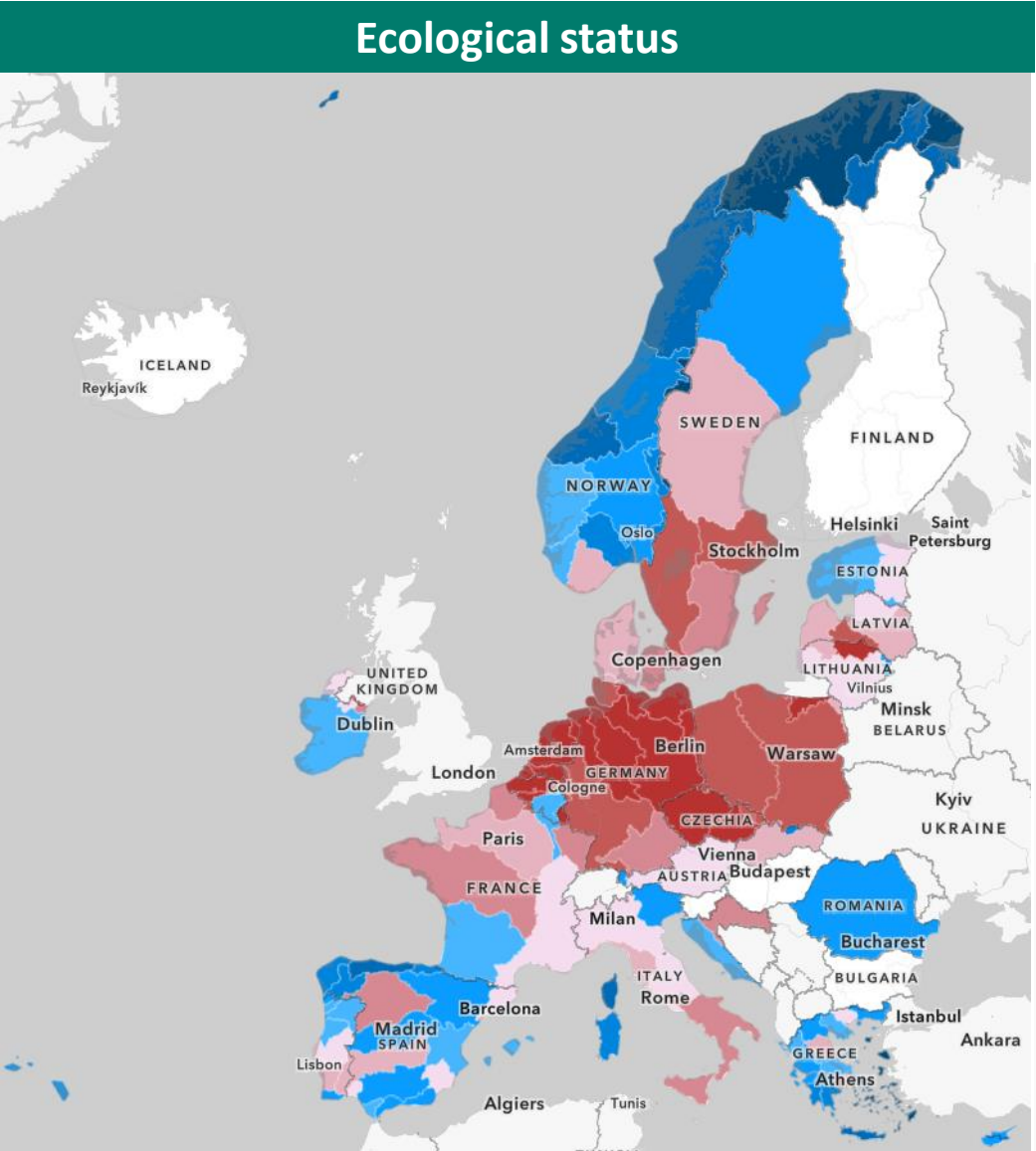


78%

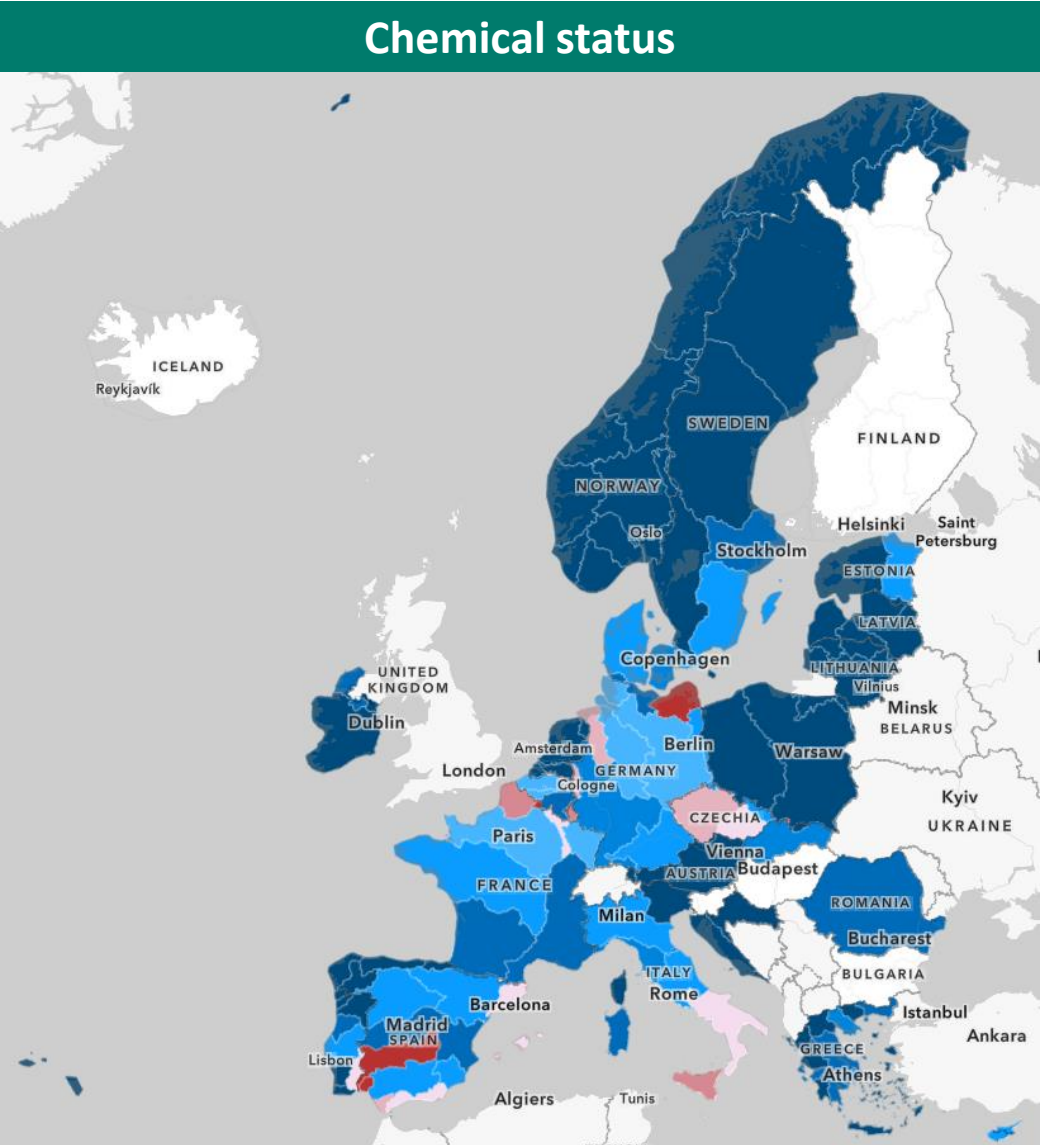
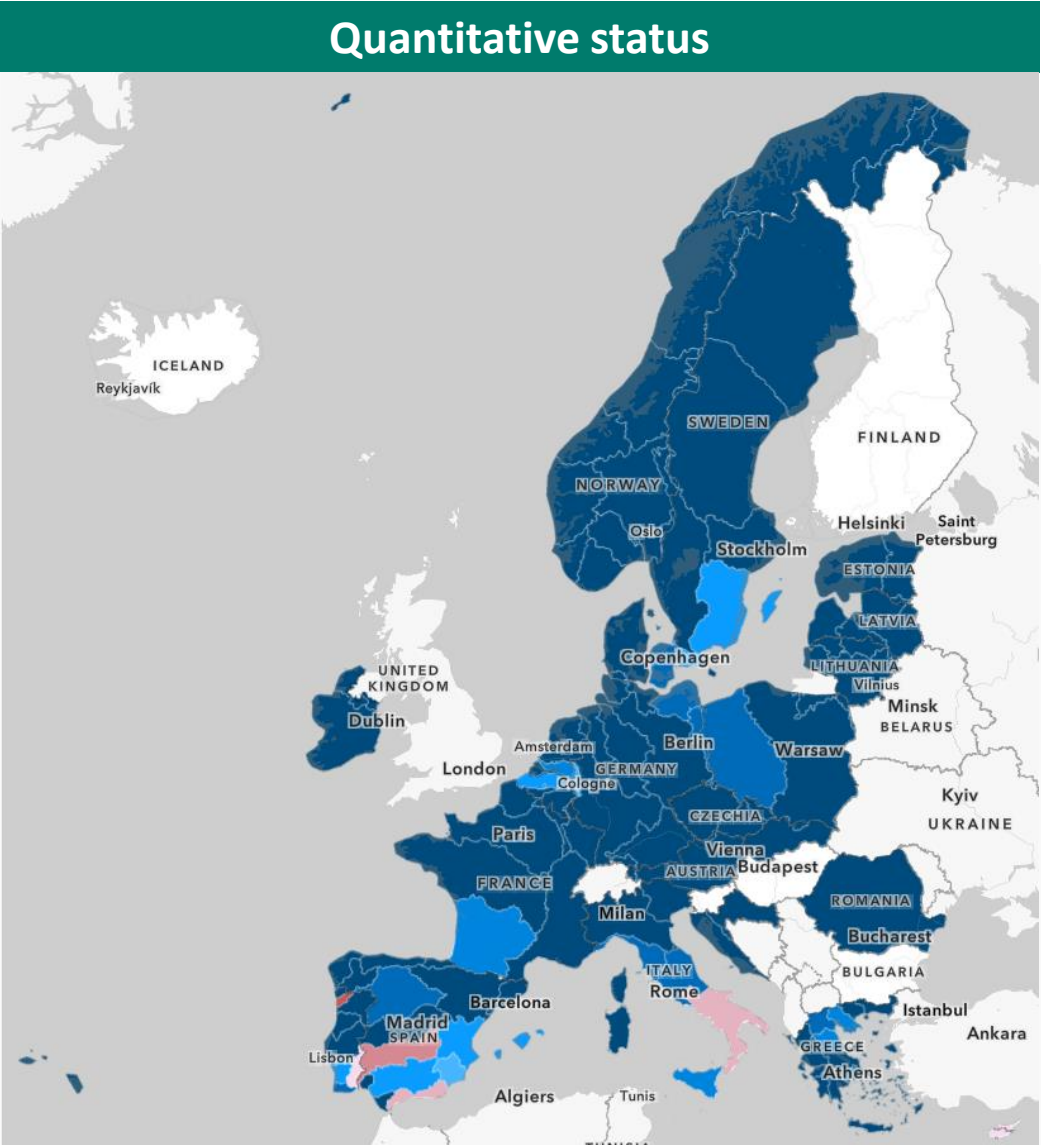
of **groundwater area**
is in **good**
chemical status



Status of Europe's surface waters

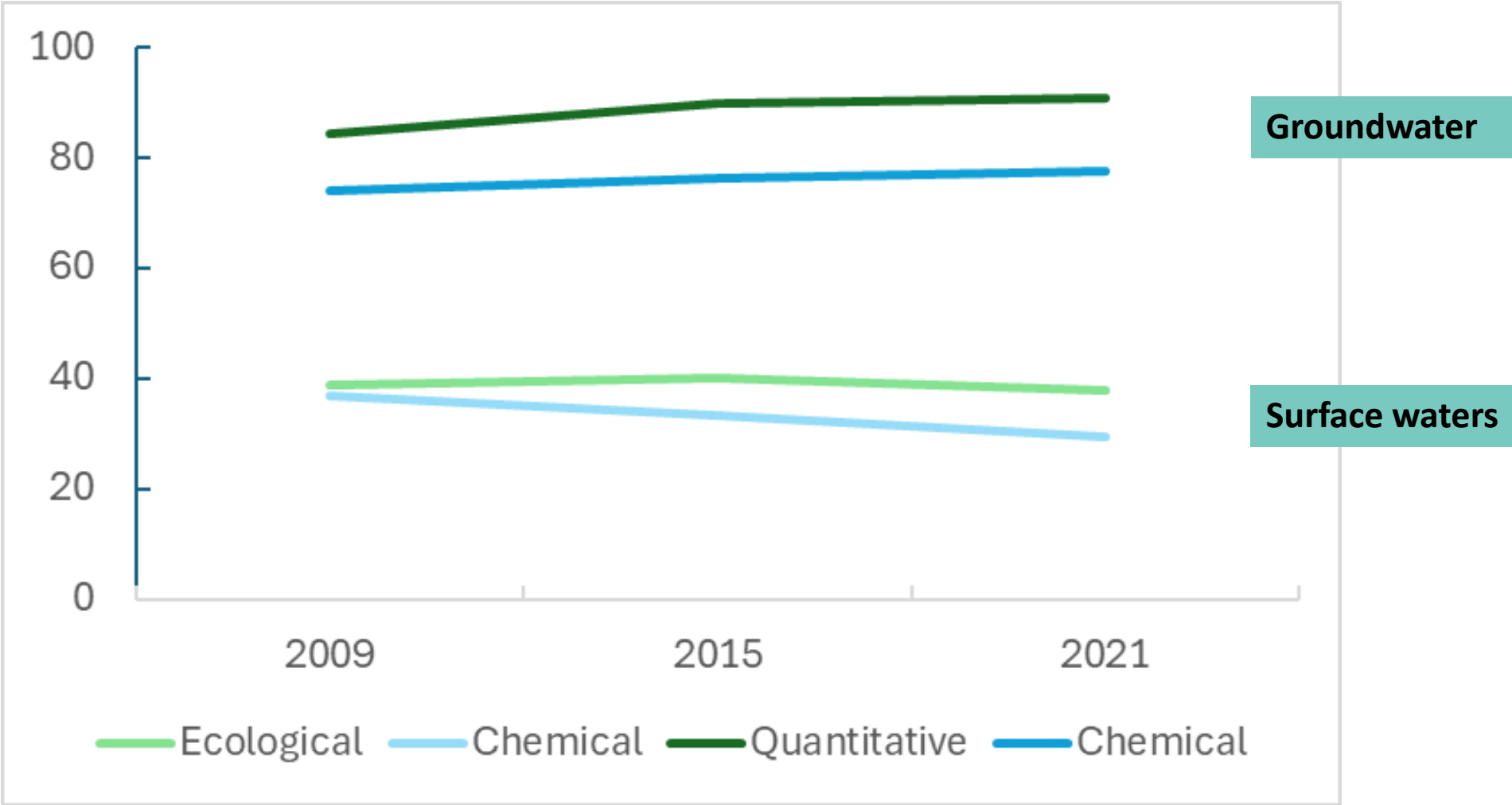


Status of Europe's groundwater



Little change in status since 2009

% waterbodies in good status



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*2021 data include 22 MS

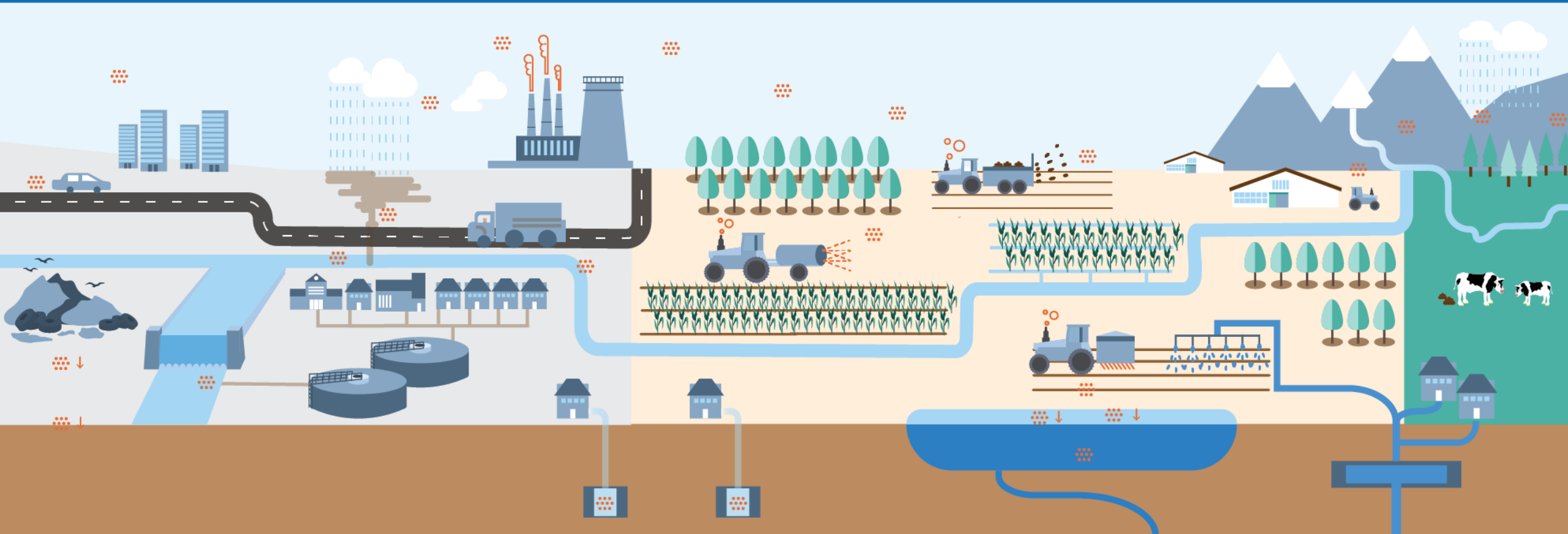
Pressures on water reported under the Water Framework Directive

Natural flow and physical features:
dams, flood protection, drainage

Point source pollution:
waste water treatment plants,
industry, storm overflows

Diffuse pollution:
agriculture, septic tanks,
runoff

Diffuse atmospheric pollution:
coal burning, vehicle emissions



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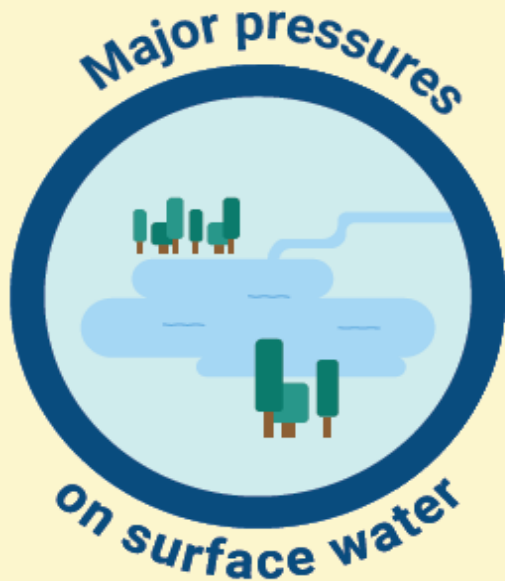
PRESSURES TO GROUNDWATER

Point source pollution:
contaminated land,
waste disposal sites

Diffuse pollution:
agriculture, urban runoff,
septic tanks

Abstraction:
public water supply,
agriculture, industry

Main pressures impacting Europe's water



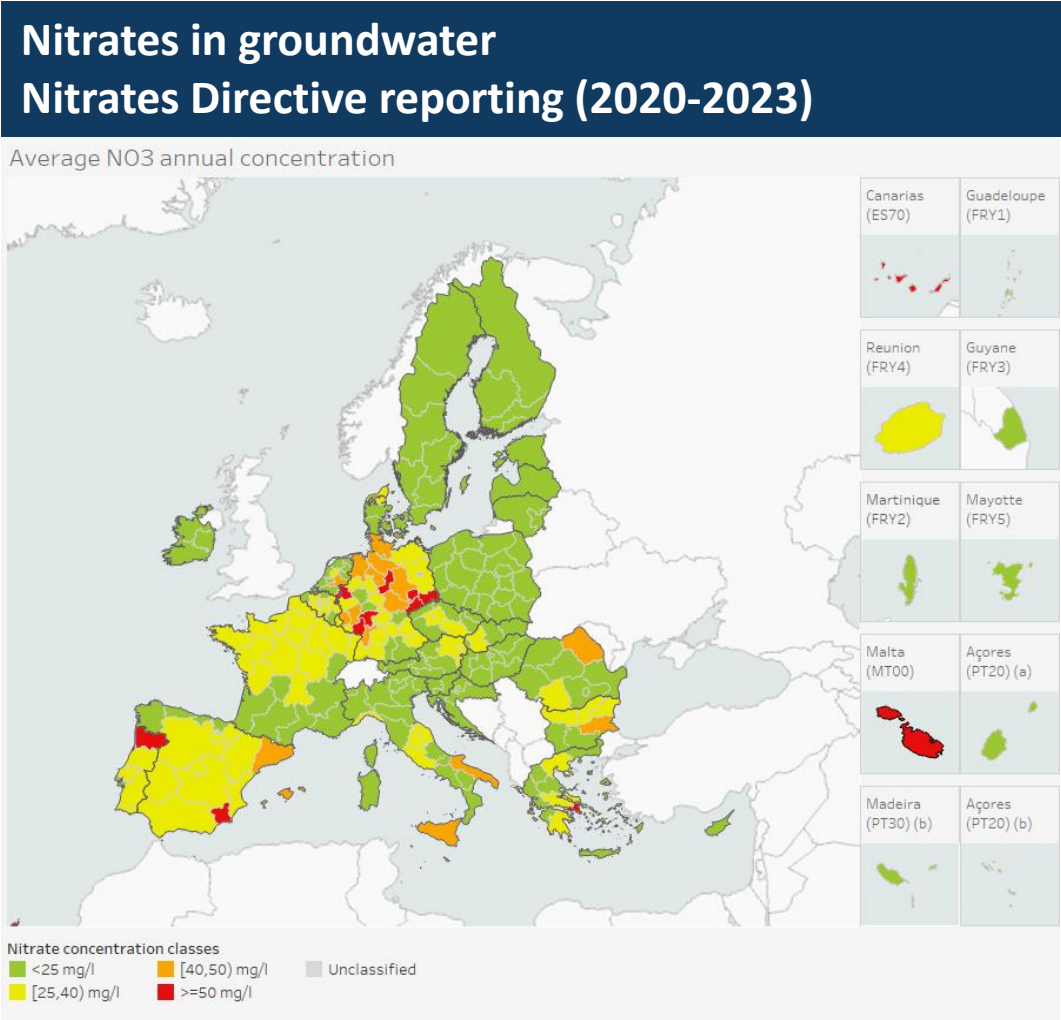
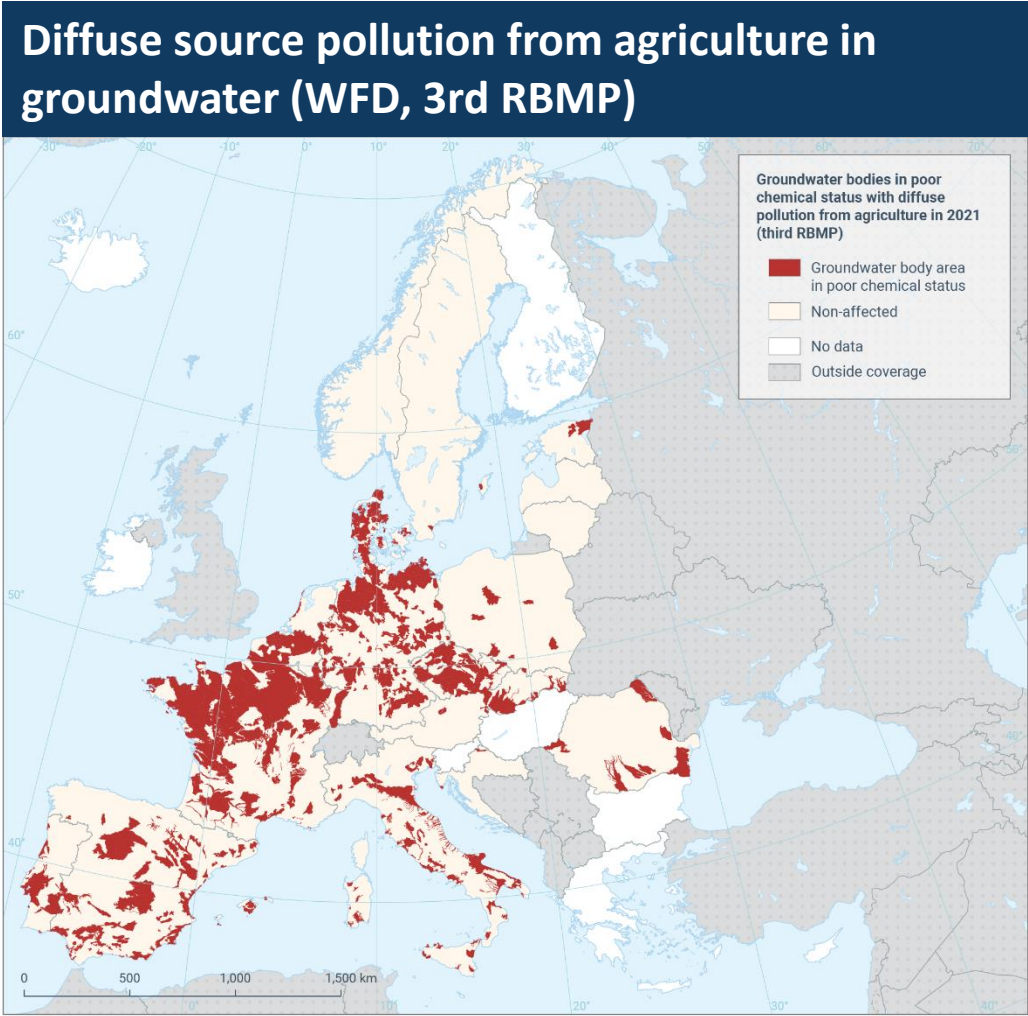
48 % diffuse air pollution
49 % natural flow and function
29 % diffuse agricultural pollution
19 % point source pollution



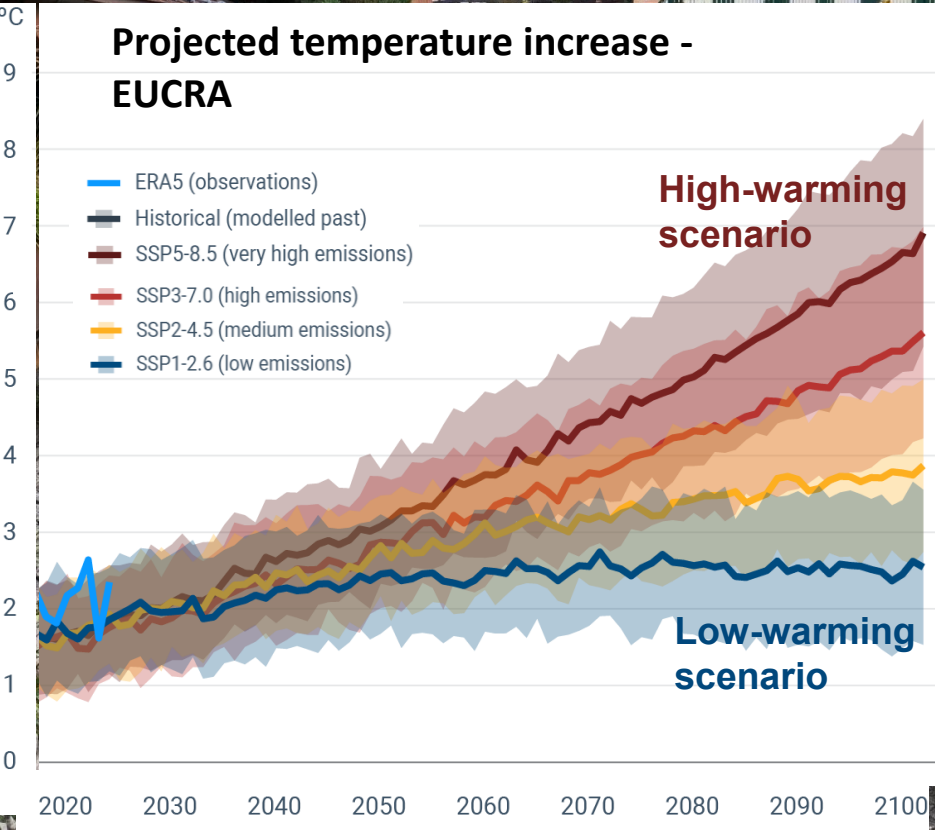
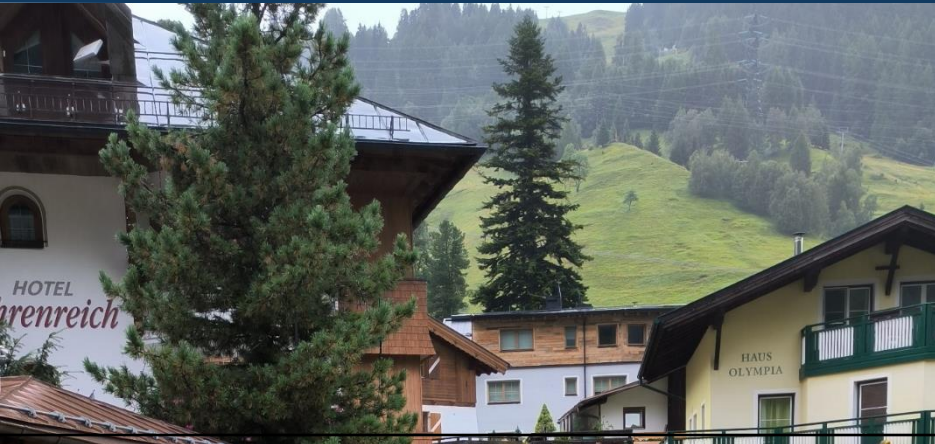
32 % diffuse agricultural pollution
20 % abstraction



Nitrates and pesticides in groundwater



Climate change makes water management more challenging



- › Floods and droughts are expensive
 - Lives and livelihoods are lost
 - 2021-2023 EUR 162 billion losses due to weather and climate extremes in EU
 - Investment needs to be put into prevention
- › Combined effects of climate impacts and pollution can lead to catastrophic events
- › Restoration and better pollution control can mitigate those impacts



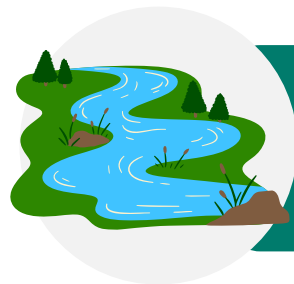
Having enough, good quality water for the future: achieving resilience



Reduce water use and prevent pollution



Reuse water to improve circularity



Restore rivers, floodplains and wetlands



Examples: Improving water resilience



Restoration of the Pärnu River basin for migratory fish, Estonia

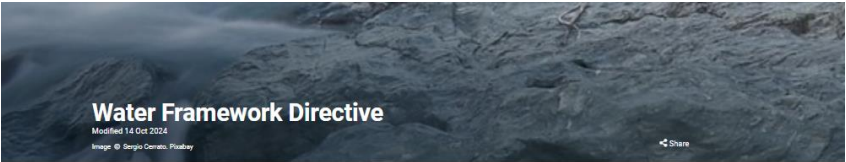
3300km river system reconnected. Improved conservation status of 32 species and provides opportunities for tourism and water sports



Wastewater reuse for irrigation in Puglia, Italy

Following wastewater treatment, water is reused for irrigation for horticulture, olive trees and vineyards. This replaces previous unsustainable groundwater abstraction





Europe's Freshwater > Water Framework Directive

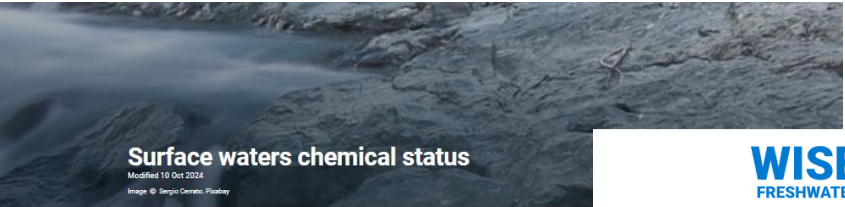


This section is dedicated to the Water Framework Directive and presents the results on the status and pressures on groundwater and surface waters in Europe, based on data reported electronically to EEA for River Basin Management Plans. The results provide an overview at EU, Member State and River Basin District level.



Key findings —>

WISE Freshwater WFD section



Europe's Freshwater > Water Framework Directive > Surface waters chemical status

WFD entry page



29% of surface waters are in good chemical status

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires assessment of the Assessment is based on a list of priority substances. EU-wide substances. If concentrations exceed the standard in a water body chemical status.

- The Water Framework Directive requires that all water bodies be in good status
- Chemical status in the Water Framework Directive refers to the quality of water
- Good status represents the water body condition being as it would be with
- Furthermore, the assessment of surface waters also includes ecological status

Chemical status of surface water bodies in the 3rd River Basin Management Plan

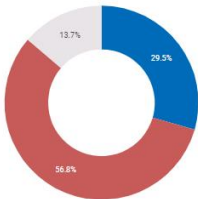
In Europe (EU-27), around 29% of surface water bodies currently reported (2022) are in good chemical status.

A large proportion of surface waters fail to meet good chemical status. This mainly owes to widespread pollution by mercury and brominated diphenyl ethers (flame retardants).

This chart shows the proportion of surface waters in good, failing to achieve good, and unknown chemical status for the EU-27 or selected country.

Country
EU27

Number of surface water bodies (%)



Table

Ecology

Surface

Chem

Priori

chem

Ecology

Ground

Ground

Pressi

Chara

Explanatory charts —>

Policy and Reporting Europe's Freshwater Countries Resources



Surface water bodies: chemical status with and without uPBT, by category [chart]

Dashboard | Published 11 Oct 2024 | Modified 12 Oct 2024

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Resources > WISE Freshwater resource catalogue > Water Framework Directive experts > Surface water bodies: chemical status

This dashboard shows the surface water bodies chemical status, with or without presence of uPBT (ubiquitous, persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic) substances, by water body categories. Several filters allow the user to explore the data for the 2nd and 3rd cycle of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) - River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). It is possible to select and display data from one or more countries, the EU 27 or 'All' reporting countries.

Send feedback ->



Expert dashboards

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1

Europe's water is under significant pressure, presenting serious challenges to water security, now and in the future.

2

Europe urgently needs to improve its resilience and ensure sustainable freshwater supplies for people and the environment.

3

All key results and reported data on the EU Member States and Norway can be found in the [WISE Freshwater](#) information system.



Thank you

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