

How polluted is the water in your country?

DENMARK

- **Groundwater:** Denmark had the fourth highest average groundwater nitrate concentrations in the EU in 2023, at 24 mg NO₃/L.
- **Drinking water:** Despite these relatively high groundwater concentrations, Danish drinking water generally complies with the EU legal limit of 50 mg NO₃/L. However, studies suggest that around 10% of drinking water supplies contained nitrate concentrations above 9 mg NO₃/L between 2018 and 2021, while another 10% exceeded 4 mg NO₃/L – levels which have been found to increase cancer risk.
- **Surface water:** agriculture is the main source of Danish land-based nitrogen load to coastal waters. A recent OECD case study says 98% of Denmark's coastal water bodies and 30% of its lake water bodies are affected by eutrophication pressures from agriculture.



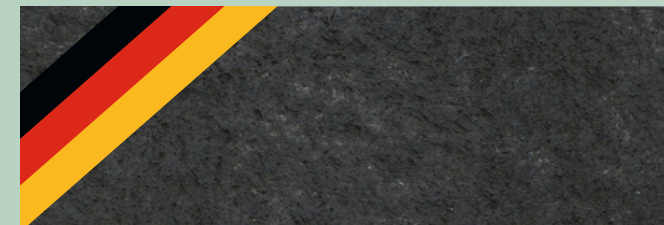
SPAIN

- **Groundwater:** Spain is the European country with the highest average groundwater nitrate concentration in the EU at 32 mg NO₃/L. In Catalonia (Spain), a region with more than 8 million pigs in factory farms, local authorities reported that nitrate pollution exceeded the 50 mg NO₃/L regulatory limit in 41% of groundwater bodies.
- **Drinking water:** Between 2016-2021, 411 municipalities had to impose tap water bans due to unsafe nitrate levels.
- **Surface water:** 23% of lake/reservoir monitoring points and 29% of transitional and coastal waters were eutrophic in 2016-2019. In 2021, the EU referred Spain to the EU Court of Justice for poor implementation of the Nitrates Directive, citing – among other complaints – insufficient action to tackle eutrophication



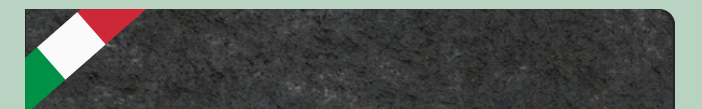
GERMANY

- **Groundwater:** Germany had the fifth highest average nitrate concentrations in groundwater in 2023, at 24 mg NO₃/L. At 15.7% of groundwater monitoring stations were above 50 mg NO₃/L, with substantially higher exceedance rates (25.6%) in monitoring stations located in agricultural areas.
- **Surface water:** 55% of Germany's coastal and marine waters have been classified total waters as “problem areas” and a further 39% as potential problem areas.

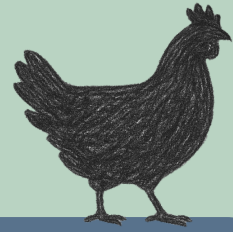


ITALY

- **Groundwater:** Italy had the ninth highest average nitrate concentrations in groundwater in 2023, at 18.80 mg NO₃/L. 11.7% of groundwater monitoring stations exceeded 50 mg NO₃/L between 2020-2023. Data shows a further 4.9% are at high risk, between 40 and 49 mg NO₃/L.
- **Surface water:** Roughly 35% of Italy's transitional lagoon sites – important ecological sites – are eutrophic. Notable severely altered ecosystems include the Comacchio Lagoon, the Orbetello Lagoon, and the Mar Piccolo in Taranto.



National-level statistics gives average pollution levels but can hide pollution hotspots. Regional analyses help reveal areas with both very high livestock concentration and nutrient pollution hotspots. For instance, despite Poland's low average groundwater nitrate levels, the Baltic Sea is a critical surface water pollution hotspot.



POLAND

- **Groundwater:** Poland has the 18th highest levels of nitrates in groundwater, according to Eurostat with an average level of 8.59 mg NO₃/L. Poland is one of the best-performing EU countries on groundwater nitrate, with more than 80% of monitoring stations below 25 mg NO₃/L.
- **Drinking water:** Drinking water quality in Poland is generally compliant with EU standards, although studies have identified nitrate contamination risks in some private and shallow wells in agricultural areas.
- **Surface water:** Poland contributes substantially to Baltic Sea nitrogen loads, transferring an estimated 25–50% of all nitrates and phosphorus reaching the Baltic Sea - making it an important region to control pollution in. Poland is facing infringement proceedings from the EU over a major and ongoing pollution event in the River Oder.

FRANCE

- **Groundwater:** France had the tenth highest average nitrate concentrations in groundwater in 2023, at 17.49 mg NO₃/L. 12% of groundwater monitoring stations exceeded in 2023 the limit of 50 mg NO₃/L, while only around one in five are below the 6 mg NO₃/L threshold. In Northern regions such as Loire-Brittany, Seine-Normandy and Artois-Picardy, around 24% of shallow groundwater exceeds 40 mg NO₃/L, compared to 8% in the south.
- **Drinking water:** 107 drinking water distribution units in France exceed the maximum nitrate level of 50 mg of nitrates per litre. This is the basis of a current case against France.
- **Surface water:** 8% of France's surface waters are eutrophic.

THE NETHERLANDS

- **Groundwater:** The Netherlands has the 19th highest levels of nitrates in groundwater. In rural, intensive-farming regions nitrate levels in groundwater still regularly exceed 50 mg NO₃/l. Sandy and low-lying areas, have the highest concentrations due to the ease with which nitrates leach through the soils into groundwaters. In many parts of this region, the average nitrate concentration is above the standard of 50 mg per litre.
- **Surface water:** 20% of the Netherlands transitional and coastal waters were eutrophic in the 2020-2022 period.



HUNGARY

- **Groundwater:** Like Poland, Hungary is one of the best-performing EU countries on groundwater nitrate, with more than 80% of monitoring stations below 25 mg NO₃/L. (However, Hungary has data gaps in some Eurostat reporting periods 2007–2023).
- **Surface water:** Around 56% of water bodies are identified as at risk due to pollution, with 60–70% of surface waters eutrophic.

