

Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation



Improving water quality is of prime importance in EU water policy.

Over the years, many European rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters have been polluted and aquatic ecosystems have been affected, which is why the EU has adopted **measures to restore the waters to their original state.**

The Commission regularly receives reports on the **quality of drinking water** from the member countries, which it analyzes carefully. In most EU countries, drinking water is of **excellent quality**, but the situation in rural areas is not so good.

Farms can be a serious source of pollution, as fertilizers, manure and pesticides regularly end up in rivers, streams and lakes. In the field, they support crop growth, but in the water they can cause serious algae growth. This leads to a decrease in oxygen in the water and hence to suffocation of fish and other organisms. Therefore, **strict checks are carried out on what is used in the field** and when.

Chemicals used to kill unwanted pests or plants can also have a devastating effect on aquatic plants and animals. That is why aerial spraying is prohibited and flowing waters are protected by buffer zones.

Some industries produce substances that damage the environment and human health, but strict laws and cleaner technologies have led to a reduction in water pollution from industry.

Most **wastewater is treated** to remove organic matter, and much is disinfected or treated to remove nutrients. However, in many areas of Europe, the collection and treatment of waste water still needs to be improved.

People can also be a direct source of pollution. We use pharmaceutical products. If they are not disposed of properly, they can end up in the soil, rivers and lakes, and this will have harmful effects on plants and animals.

However, **most bathing waters in the EU are currently clean**, with the percentage of freshwater bathing waters meeting the highest standards almost doubling between 1990 and 2021.

Reduce water wastage

It is not difficult to build and optimize your daily habits. Here are some tips to follow in the household to save water:

- Check whether you have tightened the taps of the faucet and shower, whether they are damaged and dripping. It has been proven that 75 liters of water per day can be wasted through a dripping tap.
- When washing dishes or brushing your teeth, don't let the water run for nothing. Stop it when not needed.
- When you shower, use the shower, not the bathtub. You will use three times more water in the bath than in the shower.
- Efficient use of water, reduction of leakages, construction of urban treatment plants for processing wastewater from households.
- If possible, install water-efficient faucets and water-efficient toilet cisterns. They reduce water consumption by mixing it with air.
- Collect and use rainwater. It is suitable for watering, washing the car, even for laundry.
- Keep a bottle of water in the fridge if you like to drink cold water. When you run the faucet until the water runs out to be cold enough, a lot of potable water is wasted.

Do not throw food waste down the drain

Organic, food waste should not be thrown into the sewers, because from the sewers they fall into the soil, becoming a source of extremely large numbers of bacteria and harmful microorganisms, which in the normal water cycle, fall into drinking water sources and groundwater. As a result, drinking water changes its taste and quality characteristics and not only that, it can lead to water pollution, spread of many diseases, which is extremely dangerous.

Do not dispose of oil or fuel down the drain

Oil and fuels cause serious damage to the water installation. They stick to the walls of the channels, clog them, accelerate the corrosion of the pipes, become a prerequisite for leaks, cracks and accidents. From the canals, they easily fall into the soil, from there into groundwater, into natural water sources, becoming a breeding ground for bacteria and microbes.

Do not use strong chemical cleaning agents in the household

Strong household cleaners such as bleach and acid are extremely dangerous. If possible, reduce the use of harsh chemicals to a minimum. Wastewater from households drains into water sources, gets into the soil, pollutes the water in nearby reservoirs. It can cause serious harm to both humans and animals, cause damage to the natural flora and fauna of water bodies.

Clean and maintain septic tanks regularly

If you use septic tanks in your household, keep in mind that they should be regularly maintained and cleaned at least twice a year. The very word "septic" suggests that it is a breeding ground for disease-causing bacteria and microorganisms, which, falling into the environment and soil, near drinking water sources, become the cause of the spread of diseases, infections, bacteria.

Use less chemical fertilizers, pesticides and soil conditioners in your vegetable and fruit gardens and farms

Artificial fertilizers and soil conditioners, as well as preparations for protecting cultivated crops, are one of the main causes of water pollution. The pesticides and chemicals used are deposited and accumulated in the soil, in the groundwater and thus easily enter the drinking water sources, causing irreparable damage.

Do not dispose of your garbage and waste indiscriminately

Garbage, domestic or industrial, is one of the main sources of water pollution. They have a controlled and regulated place where it is disposed of.

Change your habits, keep the environment clean. Dispose of your waste in regulated areas where it can be collected by cleaning services. Collect your waste separately so that it can be recycled and not pollute the soil, air and therefore drinking water sources.

When walking in nature, outings, sport hunting and fishing, do not throw away waste

If you enjoy walking in nature, then you have often seen piles of garbage, thrown indiscriminately, carried by the wind in all directions, tangled between grasses and bushes. This sight is unpleasant to say the least. Do not leave organic and inorganic waste behind. Collect them and dispose of them at a regulated waste site. Keep nature clean, fight pollution with plastic, bags and packaging.

A huge environmental problem is water pollution with plastic. Keep in mind that irresponsibly discarded plastic waste and various packaging will take hundreds of years to decompose. Plastics are made from petroleum and as they break down, they will break down into small plastic pieces over centuries and release harmful substances into the soil, groundwater, water bodies. More than 200 species of animals are threatened by entanglement or ingestion of plastic waste - mammals, birds, turtles, sea creatures. According to statistics, 15 tons of plastic are thrown into water sources every day. Items we use every day, bottles, caps, cups, bags, wet wipes are carried through the sewers of cities and villages.



They flow into rivers and flow into seas and oceans where they form plastic islands, causing water pollution damage to the environment and destroying the ecosystem.

Do not throw away or bury dead animals in the yard, pits and pits

The death of a pet is a traumatic event for a family. A common practice in such a situation is for him to bury himself in the yard. Or to throw dead animals from the farms into pits, cesspools. You need to be informed that such actions are actually very dangerous. One piece of advice - in such a case, it is best to contact your local veterinarian for assistance - he will explain to you the best course of action. The slow decomposition of corpses is a prerequisite for water pollution - for the development and spread of diseases such as tetanus, tuberculosis, dangerous bacteria. Precipitation from rain and snow drains them into groundwater, from which drinking water is often drawn.

Reduce the use of means of transport

Everyone is familiar with the pollution of water and the environment, which causes not only land transport with the release of harmful emissions and gases. You can see with your own eyes the thick smog of noxious gases over every major city. 30% of the harmful emissions of carbon dioxide in the air are caused by means of transport and mostly by land transport. Air pollutants through the natural water cycle enter the soil and water bodies and cause serious damage to the ecosystem and the quality of drinking water. For this, if you have the opportunity to move on foot, by bike, to use electric cars - do it. Movement is health, so is cleanliness.

Take an interest in the quality of drinking water in your area

If you feel a change in the taste, smell, quality of the drinking water - contact the local public utility and report the problem. Ask the environmental services and the city government to carry out regular monitoring of the water content and quality, it is never superfluous.

Participate in actions to clean up waste in your city or village

There are certainly places around you that are an unpleasant sight with indiscriminately strewn waste and need your intervention to preserve cleanliness and ecology. This way you will contribute to the fight against water pollution.

Initiate, participate in campaigns at the local level to clean the sewers

City sewer systems, as everyone knows, are not in good general condition. Major repairs and water shut-off regimes are often required. The quality of drinking water in accidents changes, and so does the taste. In such cases, report to the relevant services so that timely measures can be taken against water pollution, purity and edibility. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out frequent preventive cleaning of the sewage system - initiate and participate in these campaigns.

Recycle and compost

Household waste is one of the main pollutants. Collect household waste separately so that it can be recycled. Although the policy in our country regarding recycling is not at a good level - only about 35% of household waste is recycled, the process can be accelerated by yourself, with a little effort. Find out how and in what ways you can recycle and compost to fight water pollution.

Participate in campaigns to encourage factories, farms, industry to use safe methods and practices for storage and disposal of industrial waste

Since the 1950s, industrial waste and water pollution from agriculture have been a major problem for clean air and water sources. Participate, initiate campaigns to raise awareness of local businesses, factories, farms about the harm from industrial and chemical pollution and the consequences of their water pollution activities. Familiarize them with safe methods and practices for storage and disposal of industrial waste



Give a personal example in the fight against water pollution

Regularly clean the yard or the space between the blocks, the nearby playground or park, encourage neighbors and friends to do the same, and not once, but periodically. Make it a habit.

Be active in the fight against global pollution

Be active in campaigns, projects, programs for the various types of interventions for changes in sectoral policies and activities with a harmful impact on the environment. Cooperation at the local and global level on the policy of protecting water from pollution also builds the hope that every single person, reasonable and informed, with his unique example, can contribute to the policy of protecting the environment and water at the local level, and from there and globally.

Have a high environmental culture

Be responsible, protect nature - it is our home.

In view of the increasing interest in water, as a basic natural resource and the fact that, apart from everyday life, it is necessary in the production of every single product, the hope is also tending to arise that with the application in households and industry of efficient ways of spending water, through the introduction of innovative methods will prevent water wastage. By reducing water losses from leaks, reuse, recycling. Thus, by protecting and saving water as a basic natural resource, all natural resources are protected and saved for future generations.

