

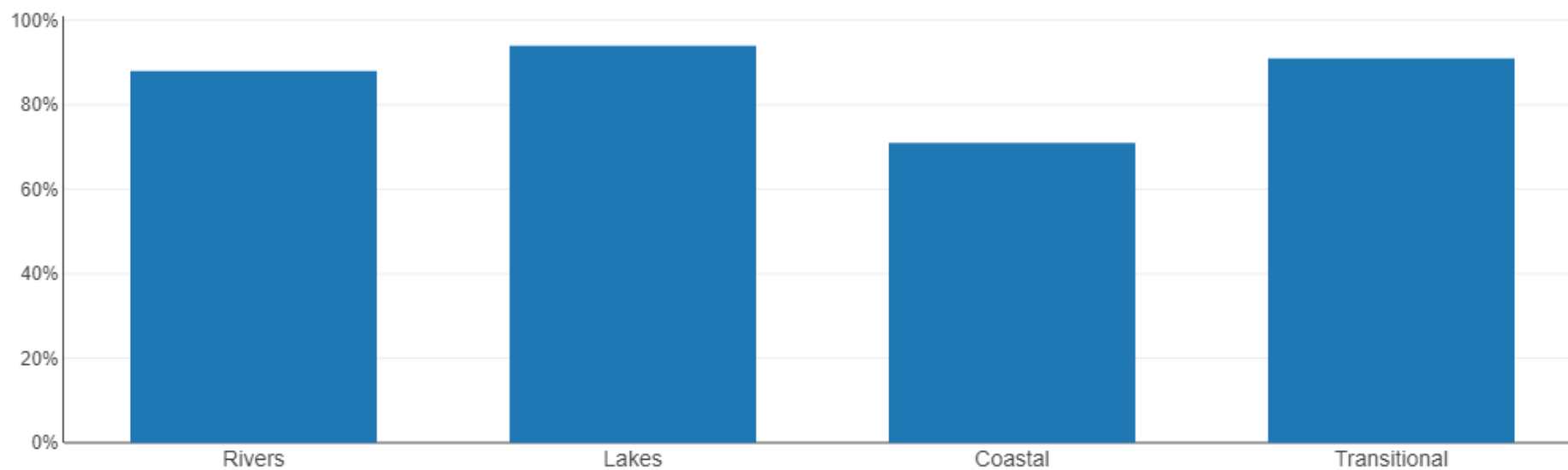
Urban Water Quality in Europe – is the Polluter Paying?

Dr Lynne Barratt - ELMEN

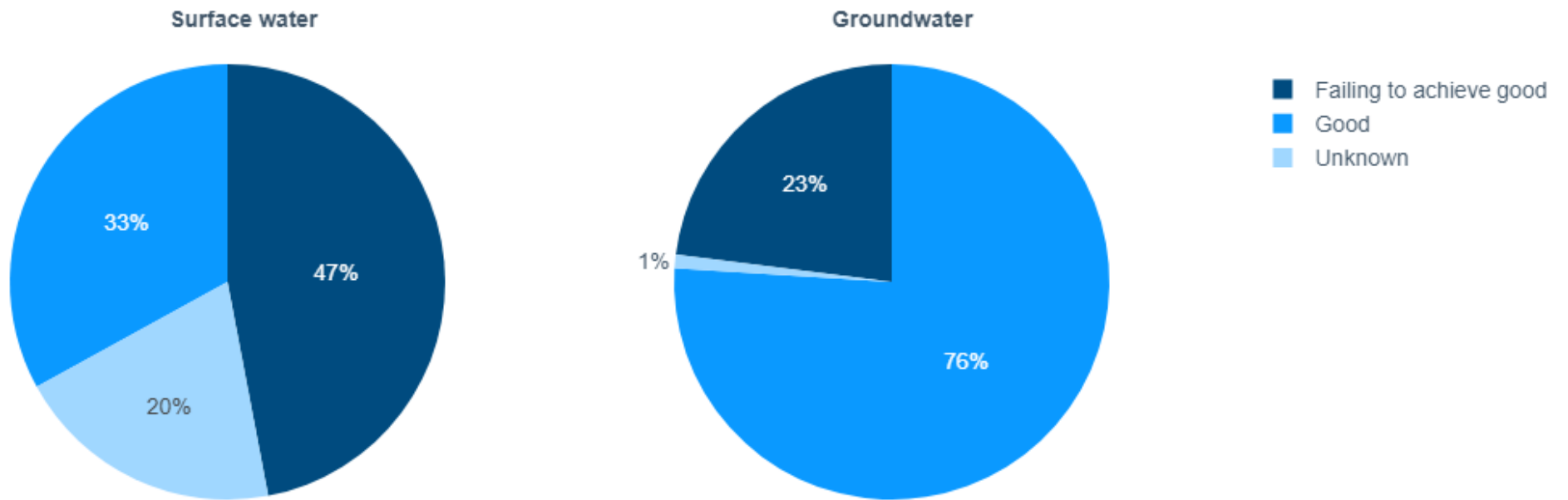


ELMEN

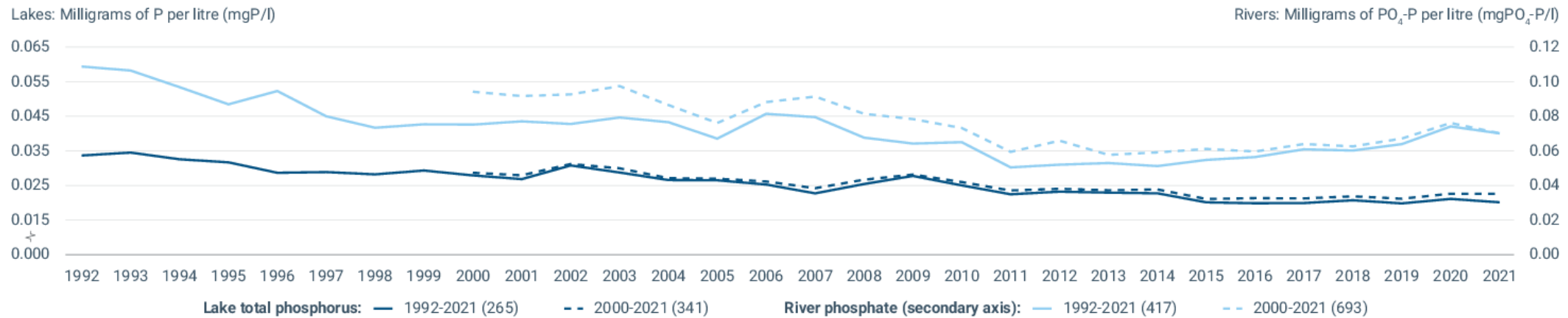
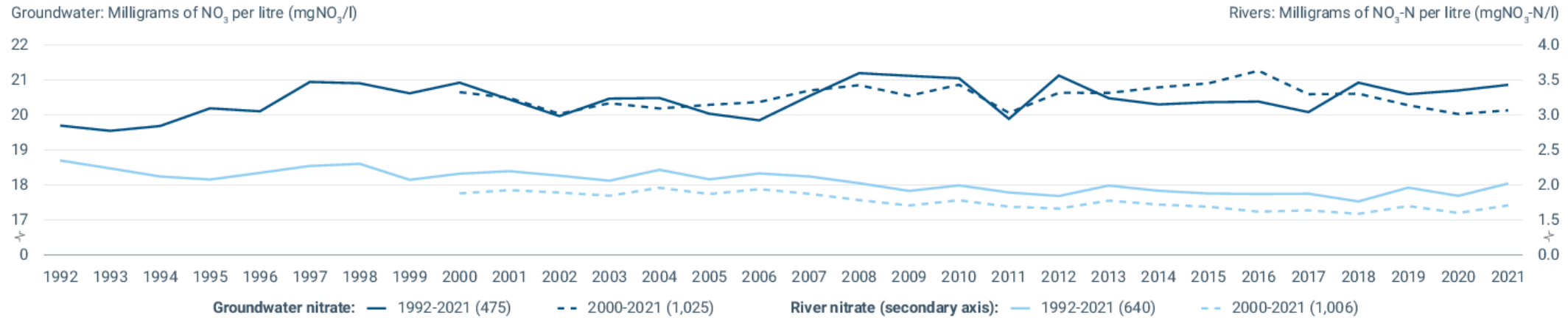
Percentage of water bodies that do not reach good ecological status (WISE Feb 2024)



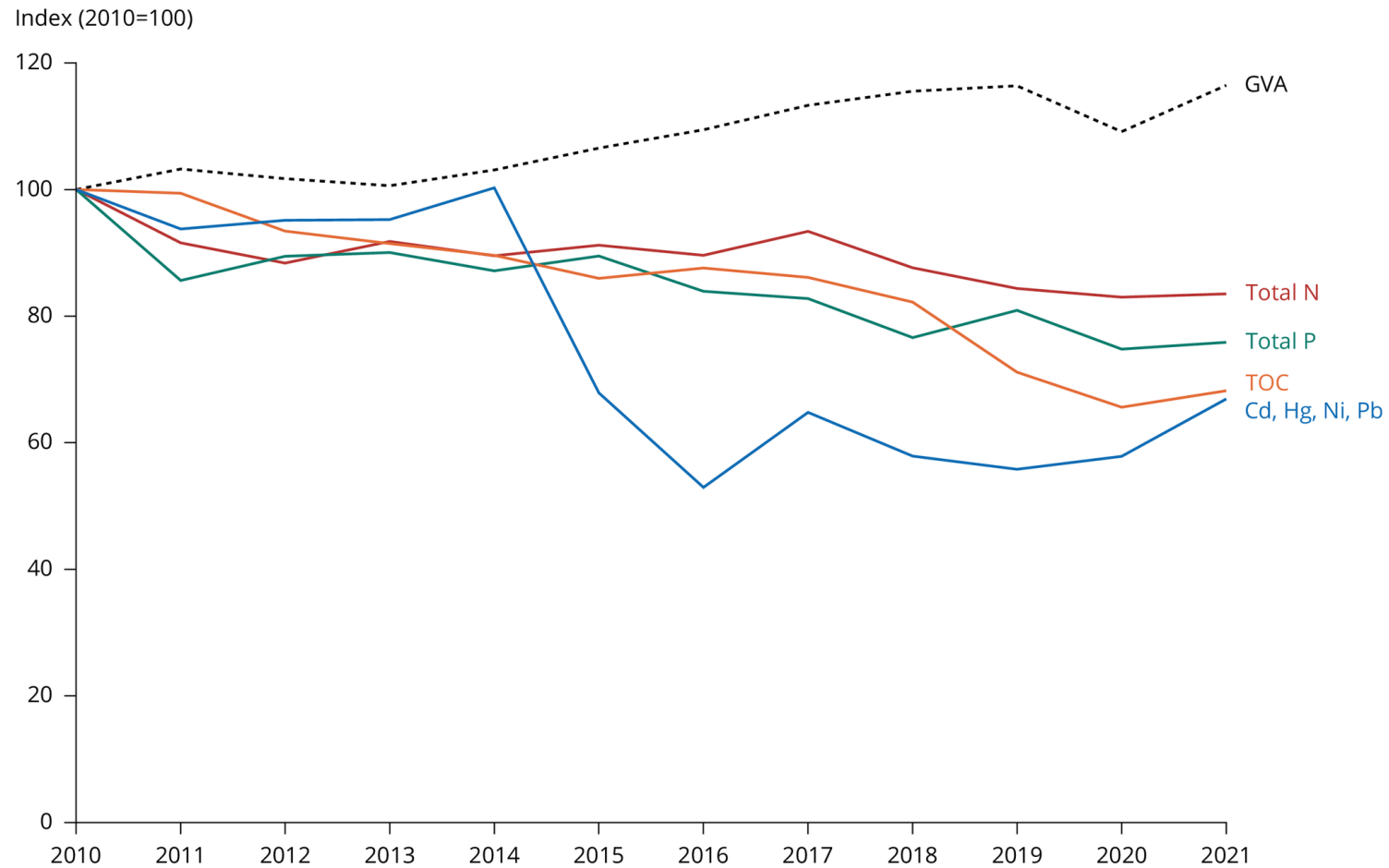
Chemical Status of European Water Bodies (EEA 2023)



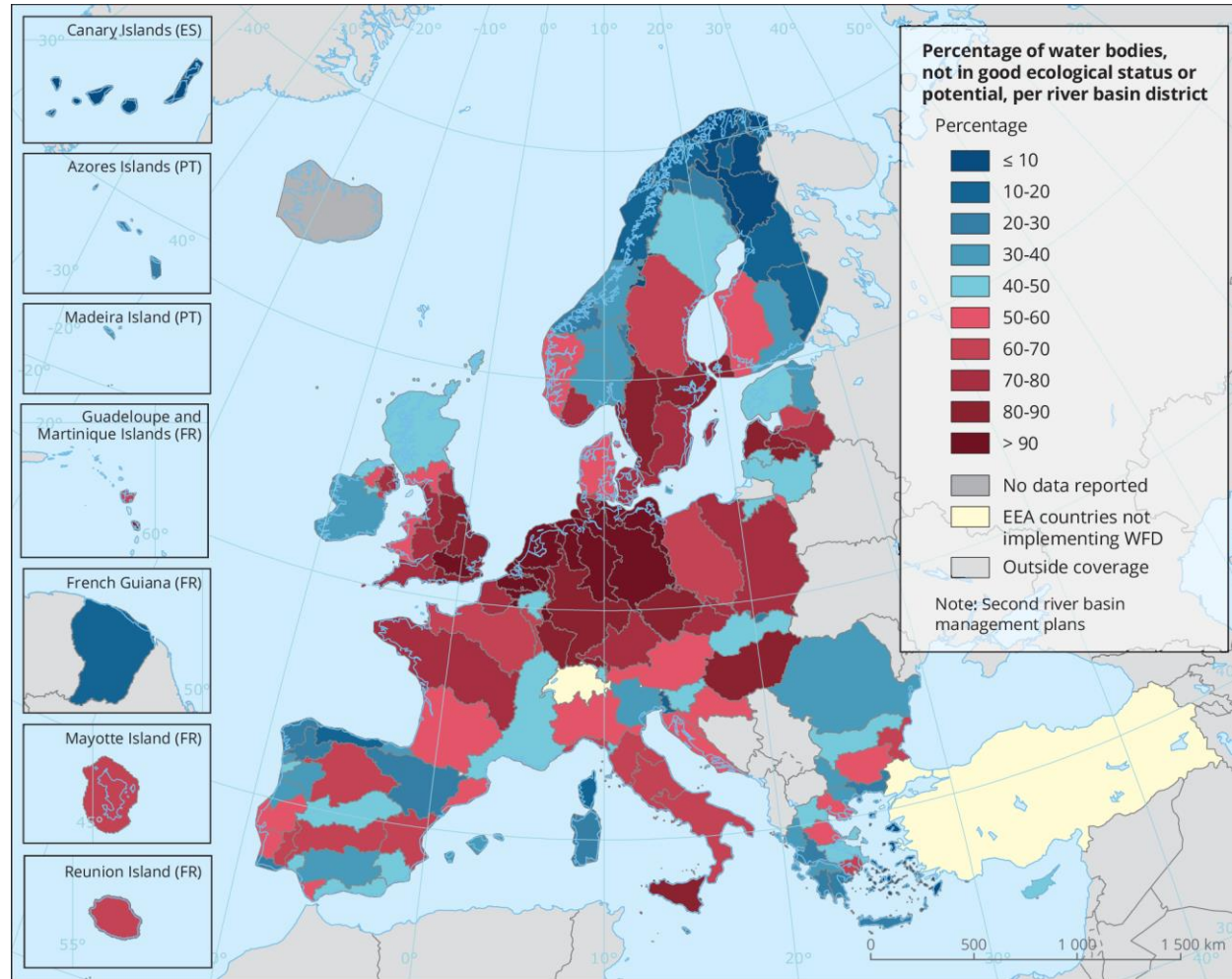
Nutrient status in European freshwater 1992-2021



Industrial releases of pollutants to water and economic activity since 2010 (EEA, 2023)



Percentage water bodies not in good ecological condition per river basin district (EEA 2021)



Reference data: ©ESRI | ©EuroGeographics

State of water in Europe

Waste water treatment and reductions in nutrient losses from agriculture have led to significant improvements in water quality in Europe. However, many of Europe's freshwater bodies are still not doing well and the condition of Europe's seas is generally poor, partly because of pollution.

Groundwater

75 %

of groundwater areas have good chemical status

Surface waters

(rivers, lakes and transitional waters)

44 %

have good or high ecological status

Main problems

- 1 Chemical pollution deposited by air
- 2 Built alterations
- 3 Nutrient pollution from agriculture

Sea

75-96 %

of assessed areas in Europe's seas have a contamination problem

Main problems

- 4 Chemical pollution
- 5 Nutrient enrichment and eutrophication
- 6 Pressures from coastal and maritime activities, including marine litter and underwater noise
- 7 Climate change

40 %

of Europe's need for drinking water and agricultural activities is covered by groundwater

1
Dams

2
Canals

3

1

Waste water treatment

4

7
Higher water temperature

5

4 6

Acidification
+CO₂ +CO₂
+CO₂

7

Windermere (2022 and 2024)



South West Water fined 2.1 million



Pollution is profitable !!

What happened to the polluter pays?

- The Polluter Pays Principle (PPP) underlies the EU's environmental policy and requires that polluters should bear the costs of their pollution including the cost of measures taken to prevent, control and remedy pollution and the costs it imposes on society.
- PPP is reflected to varying degrees in the different EU environmental policies but its coverage and application was incomplete
- While progress had been made in addressing specific pollutants, for many enterprises the price of water does not cover the costs imposed by the pollutants they release into the water. The recovery of the cost of water services is difficult to apply to pollution originating from diffuse sources, for example from agriculture.
- EU continues to fund projects that should have been paid for by the polluter

How timely is this project!

- **Recommendation 1 – Assess the scope for strengthening the integration of the Polluter Pays Principle into environmental legislation**
 - The Commission should assess the regulatory and administrative changes and the overall cost-benefit of better applying the Polluter Pays Principle, in particular dealing with diffuse water pollution from all sources, including agriculture by end of 2024
- **Recommendation 3 – Protect EU funds from being used to finance projects that should be funded by the polluter**
 - The Commission should in its supervisory capacity, make the use of EU funds for cleaning pollution conditional on checks, in collaboration with the Member States, that the relevant authorities took all the necessary steps to charge the polluter for the pollution they are responsible for

Water and the LIFE programme

