

Rip Currents in Europe

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More than half of the 46 European countries offer the opportunity of swimming in sea water. Basically, the risk of rip currents exists in all of these waters.

An assessment of the situation in European countries leads to a very differing picture depending upon touristic interest, (total) number and size of beaches, and financial possibilities for running prevention campaigns. Rip currents are the greatest hazard of injury and drowning when swimming in sea waters in all European countries.

Warnings for rip current hazards are the exception throughout Europe, and caution signs, which point to the hazards of rip currents, are often in the local language, only.

However, in Spain - according to official statistics - there are at least 2000 drowning fatalities annually, and in Germany there are between 400 and 600 fatal accidents. Other European countries rarely collect and/or publish drowning data. Accident analysis and studies for risk assessments simply do not exist. There`s only sporadic empirical research of rip currents. So far, the European Union does not conduct any research activities.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the annual number of drownings amounts to approximately 35.000, statistically seen about 100 people per day.

Blausand.de estimates the annual number of fatal drowning accidents in European sea waters to be 18.000, the portion of drowning fatalities when swimming as a recreational activity to 12.000, and the annual number of fatalities caused by rip currents between 4000 to 6000 people.

In the recent two years, Blausand.de conducted interviews at Spanish, Turkish, Portuguese, and German beaches with rip current hazards. Result: only three to four percent of interviewed bathers are aware of hazards. The part of interviewed people, who are informed of how to survive rip currents, is even lower.