

HEALTH - QUALITY - INNOVATION
EUROPEAN SPAS MAGAZINE

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**MINERAL
PELOIDS**

**THALASSO
THERAPY**

**THERMAL
& MINERAL
WATERS**

CLIMATE

30 YEARS **ESPA**
EUROPEAN SPAS ASSOCIATION

**SETTING THE STANDARDS
FOR EUROPEAN MEDICAL SPAS**

Issue 01 – Autumn 2025

ESPA Magazine – 30th Anniversary Edition
A European Insight into Medical Spas, Climate & Health

Publisher

European Spas Association (ESPA)

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Photography & Visual Material

Photo credits: ESPA Image Archive, Slovenian Tourist Board, National members Associations,
and individual contributors

Cover photo: Dean Duboković

Printing & Production

Birografika Bori, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Printed on FSC® certified paper using environmentally friendly inks.

Digital Edition / Online Availability

Digital edition available at www.europeanspas.eu

Special Acknowledgements

This celebratory edition of ESPA Magazine has been made possible through the support and collaboration of ESPA members, national spa associations, partner destinations, and our long-standing friends and colleagues who have shaped European spa culture over the past three decades.

Publication Date

September 2025

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A Word from the President

THE NEW HEALTH EQUATION: FROM RECOVERY TO RESILIENCE – MEDICAL SPAS IN EUROPE'S HEALTH FUTURE



This year, as we celebrate the **30th anniversary of the European Spas Association (ESPA)**, we feel both **proud and deeply humbled**. Proud, because today ESPA stands as a unique European community of **destinations, professionals, and innovators** - all united by a shared mission: to place **natural remedies and medical spa expertise** at the heart of modern healthcare and well-being.

Our **new ESPA President, Dr. Siyka Katsarova** assumes leadership at a moment when Europe's focus is shifting toward prevention, sustainability, and long-term health, ensuring that the principles of spa medicine remain relevant and forward-looking.

Our **First Vice-President's journey** began generations ago, when his family founded one of Europe's first mental health spas more than 160 years ago. Their pioneering vision continues to inspire him — and all of us — as we carry forward a tradition rooted in one timeless truth: the healing power of nature.

Over the past three decades, ESPA has become the unified voice of Europe's health destinations. Our Board reflects the diversity of our sector: doctors, spa-hotel and rehabilitation centre owners, health destination developers, and innovators. Each brings a unique perspective, yet we share the same challenges: supporting public health priorities, responding to private patient demand, and adapting to rapid demographic and societal changes.

The pandemic made our role undeniable. Patients deprived of medical spa therapies saw symptoms worsen, pain increase, and quality of life decline. This was not anecdote; it was evidence. Medical spas are not a luxury

but represent frontline infrastructure for prevention, rehabilitation, and resilience. And yet, despite centuries of clinical practice and mounting scientific validation, they remain on the fringes of Europe's health strategies. Today, chronic and lifestyle-related diseases are the leading cause of death in the EU, responsible for **over 80% of premature mortality and 70–80% of health costs**. Climate change adds another urgent dimension: in 2022 alone, **more than 60,000 excess deaths in Europe were attributed to extreme heat**—a stark reminder that health systems must integrate climate adaptation and resilience. And mental health is now Europe's silent epidemic: it already costs **€600 billion annually**, and the WHO warns that by 2050, mental illness will be the most common disease worldwide. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to address it thoroughly, where balneology and spa medicine have already proven effective in prevention, recovery, and resilience.

„Our spas and health destinations must be recognised not as tradition, but as the foundation of Europe's future health.“

Faced with this reality, Europe cannot afford to ignore proven, sustainable, and cost-effective solutions. Our spas, thalassotherapy centres, and health resorts already deliver evidence-based, person-centred care: from post-cancer recovery to cardiovascular rehabilitation, from stress and sleep disorders to healthy ageing. They also serve regions where health inequalities are deepest.

This is the moment for Europe to reset its health equation. Medical spas and health destinations must be recognised not only as places of care and recovery, but as strategic health infrastructures bridging prevention, rehabilitation, and resilience.

As we look to the future, ESPA's commitment endures — **to connect tradition with innovation, science with sustainability, and people with places that restore balance and health.**

Dr. Siyka Katsarova
President of ESPA

Thierry Dubois
First Vice-President of ESPA

A Word from the Editor FUTURE HEALTH: EUROPE'S MEDICAL SPAS LEADING INNOVATION AND PREVENTION



Europe's medical spas offer replicable models for:

- Rehabilitation after cancer, cardiovascular or musculoskeletal disease.
- Mental health support through stress reduction, sleep therapies, and climate treatment.
- Pediatric obesity prevention via supervised exercise, nutrition, and nature-based activity.
- Longevity care, enabling healthier ageing and resilience in later life.

These interventions sit at the crossroads of environment, medicine, and equity. They are accessible year-round, often in rural regions where other health services are limited. They provide low-barrier, affordable prevention at a time when healthcare inequalities are widening.

Greener tourism: Europe should blaze a trail "The EU's Transition Pathway for Tourism and the European Agenda for Tourism 2030 are solid frameworks. However, Europe needs to be more daring and ambitious to tap into its green potential."

We are launching this magazine to showcase Europe's competencies in medical spas, natural remedies, rural development, green energy, and digital health. At this strategic intersection of nature, science, and lifestyle, Europe can lead the global health reset and build resilience, longevity, and sustainable wellbeing.

The EU's health agenda prioritises cancer, mental health, cardiovascular disease, and resilience. Yet Europe's medical spas, thermal resorts, and climate health destinations remain underutilised assets. They offer clinically proven, cost-effective therapies that complement healthcare, reduce inequalities, and promote healthier ageing. Integrating them into EU frameworks would strengthen both public health and competitiveness.

Europe's USP is prevention, not parties. No other continent has the same heritage in balneology, medical spas, and climate health resorts. For centuries, climate health resorts, thermal spas, and thalassotherapy centres have combined natural remedies with clinical expertise to treat and prevent disease. Today, as stress, obesity, chronic illness, and mental health disorders reshape public health, these places are not relics of the past. They are evidence-based infrastructures for the future, fully aligned with Europe's ambitions.

The provocation is simple: if the EU is serious about prevention, why are nature-based therapies still marginal in health policy?

Stop punishing SMEs. Small operators don't need more reporting or green labels. They need EU-wide financing to maintain parks and natural infrastructure, switch to renewable energy, and modernise spa facilities.

Thermal water means thermal energy. Why isn't geothermal energy a flagship of Europe's green transition? Many health resorts already have the resource beneath their feet. Support them, and you get sustainable, self-powered destinations.

If the EU is serious about greener tourism, it must move beyond slogans. Prevention, balneology, and climate health resorts should not be sidelined; they are Europe's global USP. With real investment, digital innovation, and geothermal energy, Europe can lead the green transition in the health and tourism sectors. If not, others will.

Csilla Mezósi
European Spas Association, Secretary General

BALNEOTHERAPY IN EUROPEAN HEALTH RESORTS: NATURE'S MEDICINE FOR MODERN HEALTH

Balneotherapy - the therapeutic use of natural healing resources such as mineral waters, medicinal muds, gases, and climate - has a long and respected tradition across Europe. For centuries, Europe's medical spas have served as centers of healing and prevention, uniting nature, science, and medicine.

Today, balneotherapy remains an integral part of many national healthcare systems, with treatments provided only in state-recognized and medically supervised spa facilities. Each intervention is based on scientific research and clinical validation, ensuring that natural therapies meet modern standards of efficacy and safety.



EUROPEAN SPA ASSOCIATION PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN UNIFYING STANDARDS AND SHARING EXPERIENCE ACROSS COUNTRIES

From the interview with Prof. Patrick Carpentier, President of ESPA Medical Commission



"Importance of medical spas and health resorts within European healthcare is growing, especially as chronic diseases affect up to a quarter of the population. Traditional medicine alone cannot meet the long-term needs of these patients, while health resorts offer a unique combination of physical therapy, rehabilitation, well-being, and patient education, making them an effective complement to classical treatment."

"For medical spas to be fully integrated and recognized, Prof. Carpentier stresses the need for rigorous scientific evidence. Treatments must be evaluated with methodologies comparable to pharmacological research - randomized studies, control groups, and blinded assessments wherever possible. Only strong scientific validation will convince insurance providers, ensure affordability for all income groups, and prevent spa therapies from becoming a luxury accessible only to the wealthy."

“While artificial intelligence may support healthcare delivery, it cannot replace the human relationship essential in chronic disease care. Europe’s diversity in spa practices is both a challenge and an opportunity, and the European Spa Association plays a key role in unifying standards and sharing experience across countries.”

Looking ahead, Carpentier sees two priorities: significantly more research and better education for medical professionals, including integrating balneotherapy into medical training.

“Health resorts are not an alternative to medicine, but a necessary complement - combining rehabilitation, well-being, and patient education to meet the long-term needs of people with chronic disease.”

Prof. Patrick Carpentier



A Holistic European Spa Experience

Members of the European Spas Association (ESPA) offer a rich combination of health and wellbeing services - from medical rehabilitation and physical activity to nutrition, relaxation, and mental well-being programs - all designed to complement the traditional therapeutic spa experience.

Countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Central and Eastern European nations have fully integrated balneotherapy into their national healthcare frameworks. Treatments are recognized by health insurers for their clinical effectiveness and cost efficiency in managing chronic and lifestyle-related diseases.

Each European spa destination is unique, but all share the same foundation: local natural remedies. Thermal mineral waters are often combined with peloid therapy (healing mud), climatotherapy, drinking cures, and inhalations - creating a comprehensive therapeutic model that addresses a wide range of conditions and promotes long-term wellness.

Natural Resources with Proven Benefits

Mineral and Thermal Waters

Renowned for their therapeutic properties, mineral and thermal waters are used to treat:

- Musculoskeletal disorders: arthritis, fibromyalgia, chronic back pain
- Cardiovascular conditions: mild hypertension, peripheral circulation issues
- Respiratory diseases: asthma, bronchitis, COPD (via inhalation therapies)
- Skin disorders: psoriasis, eczema, and dermatitis
- Lifestyle-related diseases: obesity, stress, and post-COVID syndromes

Therapeutic Mud (Peloids)

Peloids are rich in biologically active minerals and organic substances. Applied as body wraps, compresses, or baths, they provide:

- Deep heat penetration for joint and muscle relief
- Anti-inflammatory and detoxifying effects
- Regenerative benefits for dermatological and cosmetic treatments

Moffettes (CO₂ Therapy)

Found in volcanic and post-volcanic regions, moffettes are used in dry gas baths to enhance:

- Peripheral circulation and oxygenation
- Post-stroke rehabilitation
- Muscle relaxation and pain relief through vasodilation

Mechanisms Behind Healing

Balneotherapy’s effectiveness stems from its multifaceted physiological mechanisms:

- Thermal effects: improve circulation, relax muscles, and stimulate immune responses.
- Mineral composition: sulfur, magnesium, and bicarbonates support anti-inflammatory and metabolic processes.
- Hydrostatic pressure and buoyancy: reduce joint strain, improve mobility, and assist physical rehabilitation.

Climate Health Resorts and Longevity

Many European health resorts are located in areas with **unique therapeutic climates** - offering clean air, optimal humidity, and natural tranquility. These environments have been shown to enhance respiratory and cardiovascular function, support stress reduction and mental health and promote **longevity and overall vitality**.

Scientific Evidence and Future Outlook

Evidence from across Europe confirms the **positive outcomes** of natural therapies in treating chronic and lifestyle-related diseases, post-COVID rehabilitation, mental health and stress management, cancer aftercare and cardiovascular rehabilitation, preventive and longevity programs

KNOW-HOW TRANSFER

Sharing 30 Years of Expertise for the Future of Medical Spas

Dr. Siyka Katsarova, ESPA Board Member

»True impact comes not just from what we know — but from how well we share it.«

ESPA know-how: from unity to impact

The European Spas Association (ESPA) brings together 20 national associations to shape EU policy and set common standards in spa and health tourism. Through evidence-based resources, and sustainability initiatives, ESPA fosters excellence across borders. Its congresses and awards drive innovation and dialogue, while a strong focus on spa heritage repositions tradition as a foundation for modern wellbeing and long-term impact.

30 years, many milestones

ESPA e-Library

A digital knowledge hub for balneology and spa medicine, enabling evidence-based decisions in health and policy.

ESPA Congress & Innovation Awards

An annual platform for sharing insights, showcasing best practices, and connecting professionals across spa medicine and wellness tourism.

Cross-Border Expert Working Groups

Specialist teams developing practical strategies for sustainability, policy, and the medical spa sector (balneario, terme, thermalism, kurort, heilbad).

European Studies

Coordinating research such as epidemiology projects and post-COVID treatment studies across member states.

Partnerships with the European Travel Commission

Joint promotion of Europe’s health destinations in overseas markets, positioning Europe as a leader in health tourism.

Proposals for EU Institutions

Advocating for regional hubs for balneology and environmental research, a European Health Destination Award, and spa-based health education in every country with a spa tradition.

Future Skills in Health Tourism

Working with six European universities to modernise curricula and prepare the next generation of health tourism managers.

EU Parliament Events

Organising annual events with the Health Tourism Industry to raise awareness of Europe’s medical spas and health resorts at the highest political level.

What’s next for ESPA?

ESPA’s future lies in patient-centered collaboration, working with patient organizations to document and share the proven benefits of natural healing. At the same time, it is driving sustainability with new guidelines for green energy, water use, and circular practices.

With these steps, ESPA is positioning European spas as global leaders in longevity, preventive health, and evidence-based natural remedies - uniting tradition with innovation to remain the trusted reference in spa medicine and wellness tourism.



BUILDING CONTACTS

Iztok Altbauer, ESPA Board Member

Success is built on trust — and trust starts face to face

»In health destinations, the strongest currency is trust — and that's earned in person, not online.«

ESPA & SPA-CE - The business heart of European medical spas

SPA-CE, ESPA's boutique B2B workshop, is Europe's premier matchmaking platform for spa business. Held over two intensive days within the ESPA Congress, it connects leading spa providers with carefully selected travel agencies, tour operators and patient organisation. Through pre-scheduled, one-on-one meetings, SPA-CE fosters direct, trust-based partnerships — promoting European spa destinations to key buyers in an efficient, targeted setting.

30 years, many milestones

2009 — SPA-CE is launched in Slovenia

First edition brings together spa providers and buyers in a boutique B2B format.

2013 — Event moves to Sárvár, Hungary

Regional outreach grows, hosting international buyers and wellness providers.

2021 — Hybrid SPA-CE in Slovenia

Post-pandemic format combines live and virtual meetings in Moravske Toplice.

2023 — Hosted in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

Expanded global reach with buyers from 14+ countries, including Israel, US, China, GCC, Central Asia.

2025 — SPA-CE returns in Estonia

Immersive programme in Haapsalu and Pärnu offer buyers and patients' organizations of in-depth experience.

What's Next for ESPA?

ESPA is committed to strengthening its role as a bridge between medical expertise, natural healing traditions, and patient needs. One of the most important next steps is to invite and actively collaborate with patient organizations. These groups maintain direct and continuous contact with patients, and they can provide valuable insights into the real-world impact of spa and natural therapies—insights that are often missing from purely clinical settings.

NETWORKING

Martin Plachy, ESPA Board Member

Connecting the Leaders of European Spa Excellence

»Born in Brussels in 1995, ESPA turned local traditions of natural healing into a European movement.«

ESPA: 30 years of networking excellence

What began in Brussels in 1995 as a small circle of medical spa visionaries has grown into Europe's most influential spa network. Today, ESPA brings together over 1,400 resorts, Spa hotels, rehabilitation centres, education partners and media across 20 countries — a unique alliance rooted on natural remedies and medical tradition. Nearly three decades later, this network encompasses rehabilitation centers, research institutions, health and wellness destinations, shaping the future of spa medicine and preventive healthcare in Europe.

30 years, many milestones

1995 — Founding in Brussels

The European Spas Association is established, uniting national spa associations under one umbrella for medical tradition and natural remedies.

1996 — Launch of the Annual ESPA Congress

The flagship event begins — a rotating platform bringing together spa leaders, policymakers, and experts across Europe.

2006 — ESPA Innovation Awards

A benchmark initiative spotlighting best practices, products, and destinations, boosting innovation in spa medicine and tourism.

2014 — First European Health Prevention Day

ESPA puts prevention at the centre of European health policy, positioning spas as pillars of public health.

2025 — ESPA Congress, Haapsalu (Estonia)

Celebrating 200 years of Haapsalu as a resort town, with focus on mud therapy, new health concepts, technologies and workforce development.

What's next for ESPA?

ESPA is stepping into a new era of innovation and global influence. By integrating digital tools and technology into spa medicine, expanding sustainability initiatives, and strengthening its international presence, ESPA is setting new standards with natural remedies, providing effective tools to address lifestyle-related challenges. By blending Europe's rich spa traditions with modern science, the association is shaping the future of holistic wellbeing worldwide.

QUALITY AND ACTION

Janka Zalesakova, ESPA Board Member

Setting Standards for Trust and Excellence in European Spas

»Quality is not a label — it's a living process that protects health, builds trust, and unites the sector.«

ESPA: three decades of defining quality

Since 2006, ESPA has led efforts to harmonise quality standards for natural healing resources across Europe. From healing waters and peloids to air quality and therapy procedures, ESPA's quality framework ensures that medical spas meet rigorous, science-based criteria. Today, these standards form the backbone of reliable health tourism, protecting patients and strengthening trust in spa destinations.

30 years, many milestones

2006 — Quality Criteria Adopted at General Assembly

ESPA introduces European-wide criteria for natural remedies, hygiene, and therapeutic application.

2008 — Launch of Quality Working Group

Experts across Europe begin shaping policy, technical tools, and shared guidelines for quality and safety.

2010 — First Europe-wide Application of Healing Water Standards

Harmonised methods for water testing and classification ensure transparency and comparability across borders.

2015 — Integration of Climate & Air Quality Assessments

New indicators expand quality standards to include bioclimatic factors and therapeutic air environments.

2023 — World Record "Drinking for Health" in Karlovy Vary

The highest number of people simultaneously enjoyed the benefits of healing mineral water, demonstrating both historical significance and a shared commitment to well-being.

2024 — World's Largest Mud Therapy Procedure

More than 137 participants from 27 countries simultaneously applied therapeutic mud to their hands. In total, 400 liters of mud from Lithuania's peatlands were used, highlighting the healing power of natural resources on a global stage.

What's next for ESPA?

2025. The world record of muddy handprints combines nature and creativity in a landmark initiative. We create the largest artwork using the therapeutic sea mud of Haapsalu, showcasing the healing power of natural resources through artistic expression. This project continues ESPA's mission of promoting the benefits of natural therapies, while connecting spa tradition, innovation, and cultural engagement for a wider audience.



Saša Požar, ESPA Board Member

"I firmly believe in the future of spa medicine and natural remedies because they represent a holistic approach to health that combines prevention, rehabilitation, and wellbeing. Medical spas harness the power of natural resources, evidence-based therapies, and modern scientific knowledge, making them key centers for promoting long-term health. I see the future of medical spas as increasingly integrated with healthcare systems, digital innovation, and personalized wellness, offering solutions not just for relaxation, but for addressing global health challenges and improving quality of life."

WELLBEING BY THE WAVES: EUROPE'S THALASSO VISION

Led by Chair Marlies Sobczak



Led by Marlies Sobczak (ESPA Board Member, The Netherlands), the Thalasso Working Group connects 28 participants from 15 countries, uniting coastal destinations, researchers, and industry experts. Thalassotherapy uses seawater, algae, mud, and marine climate to promote prevention, rehabilitation, and wellbeing. Rooted in medical science, it treats stress, respiratory and skin conditions, musculoskeletal issues, and immune disorders. The group collaborates closely with Norderney (Germany), where Dr. Friedhard Raschke provides scientific expertise on thalassotherapy's immune-supporting effects.

Q1: What recent developments has the group been involved in?

The group's latest expert exchanges blend heritage with forward thinking. In Bulgaria, the University of Varna demonstrated how thalassotherapy is being woven into medical curricula and insurance frameworks. In Germany, oceanBASIS introduced pioneering research on algae's therapeutic potential, while Institute Fresenius addressed environmental challenges, notably PFAS contamination. Belgium's Blue Growth Lab

explored the health value of coastal walking, particularly for older populations. Meanwhile, Norderney continues to lead in education, offering certified training for the next generation of thalasso professionals.

Q2: What are the group's strategic goals?

As interest in thalassotherapy rises, the group is setting a course for European leadership in marine-based health. A formal proposal to the EU Health Policy Platform outlines plans for a new Thematic Network—"Healing Climate & Thalassotherapy"—designed to unite sectors, collect scientific evidence, and shape policy supporting nature-based healthcare and health destinations across Europe.

Q3: What lies ahead?

Looking ahead, the group remains firmly focused on building alliances, advancing research, and influencing health and tourism, rural development policy. Its mission is clear: to elevate Europe's coastal zones as benchmarks of wellbeing, innovation, and sustainable growth in the global arena.

HEALING WATERS PUT EUROPE ON THE MAP OF GLOBAL HEALTH TOURISM

Led by Chair Iztok Altbauer



Led by Iztok Altbauer from Slovenia, our working group stands for many years with more passion and dedication to sharing our story with the world — a story built around the vision of being "Green, Active, and Healthy in the European's Spa Industry". At its heart lies our flagship initiative, The Healing Waters! — a symbol of nature's gift and a reminder that true wellbeing flows not only from what we eat, but also from what we drink. It is a call to return to balance, to recognize the wisdom of natural remedies, and to embrace sustainability as a way of life. From the world largest tourism event — the ITB Berlin, to different International Health, Spa and Medical Congresses, to the world Expo's, from global Sporting Stages, the Healing Waters has become more than a showcase. It is a movement — one that reflects Europe's unique strength in Health, Wellness, Sustainability and Harmony with nature.

Q1: What makes the "Healing Water" initiative stand out?

The "Healing Water" initiative stands out for its unique ability to connect people through shared wellness experiences. In Karlovy

Vary, it brought together international visitors to taste healing waters. In Druskininkai, hundreds participated simultaneously in therapeutic mud treatments. A major milestone was achieved in Slovakia, where spa therapy was officially recognized for long-COVID patients—an accomplishment that earned us the Best Health Destination Award 2024 at ITB Berlin.

Q2: How is the initiative keeping momentum?

We keep the initiative alive through constant innovation. In 2024, Slovenia introduced the Green Wellness Route, a 600 km cycling trail connecting spa towns and appealing to younger, active travellers. In 2025, Lithuania took the spotlight by winning the ITB Best Health Destination Award with its unique combination of sustainable infrastructure, green landscape and modern rehabilitation centres.

Q3: What lies ahead?

Looking ahead, our working group is actively shaping Europe's health tourism narrative at the highest level. We have already contributed to the European Public Health Week, applied for the EU Public Health Conference, and plan to present at the Rural Pact Conference in Belgium and the EU Health Summit. Our clear mission is to position Europe as the world's leader in sustainable, innovative, and health-focused destination.

REDEFINING HEALTH THROUGH SPA INNOVATION IN EUROPE

Led by President Gunnlaugur K. Jónsson and Chair Dr. Siyka Katsarova



The Innovation Working Group, chaired by Dr. Siyka Katsarova (Vice President of the European Spas Association and President of BUBSPA, Bulgaria), brings together leading minds from across Europe to spotlight the most forward-thinking developments in spa medicine and health tourism. It serves as a platform to identify and promote best practices in medical innovation, digitalisation, and integrative wellness concepts.

Q1: What recent developments has the group been involved in?

As Chair of the Innovation Working Group, we are proud to see how the European Spas Innovation Awards, which we founded, have grown into a key platform for recognizing excellence in spa and health innovation across Europe. These awards not only celebrate creativity but also inspire meaningful progress in our sector. In addition to the awards, our group is actively

fostering collaboration between health resorts, policy-makers, and insurers. We are building important bridges between traditional spa therapies and modern healthcare systems — ensuring that innovation is not just a concept, but a practical path forward for the future of European health tourism.

Q2: What are the group's strategic goals?

The Innovation Working Group is dedicated to advancing the transformation of European health resorts into forward-looking wellness destinations. Our strategic priorities include championing cross-border healthcare models, strengthening cooperation with health insurers, and supporting medical tourism that is firmly rooted in scientific research, clinical outcomes, and high standards of care.

Q3: What lies ahead?

In the coming years, the group will focus on expanding international collaboration, accelerating the integration of digital health solutions, and reinforcing the role of spa medicine within the broader healthcare system. Our goal is clear: to ensure that Europe's spa destinations remain at the forefront of innovation, credibility, and global relevance in the wellness and health tourism sector.

ADVANCING THERAPEUTIC BALNEOTHERAPY: EUROPE'S MEDICAL VISION

Led by Chair Prof. Patrick Carpentier



The ESPA Medical Commission, chaired by Prof. Patrick Carpentier (Université Grenoble – Alpes, France), is committed to advancing scientifically validated therapeutic and preventive balneotherapy practices across Europe. Its mission is to strengthen the role of balneotherapy within the medical community and contribute meaningfully to improved public health and quality of life.

Q1: How is the Medical Commission contributing to the evolution of balneotherapy in Europe?

The ESPA Medical Commission has recently sharpened its focus on advancing high-quality scientific research and ensuring its findings are effectively shared with the broader medical community. A major step in this direction is the creation of educational syntheses — clear, evidence-based resources aimed at increasing both understanding and trust in balneotherapy among healthcare professionals throughout Europe.

Q2: What strategic priorities is the Commission pursuing?

The Commission aims to build a pan-European expert network with active national representation to reflect diverse healthcare needs and expertise. A key initiative is a Europe-wide survey of balneotherapy practices to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for better integration into modern healthcare. At the same time, the Commission is strengthening ties with international organisations like ISMH and UEMS to develop joint programmes and promote cross-border alignment in spa medicine standards.

Q3: What are the Commission's next steps?

The Medical Commission will deepen cooperation among European countries and medical institutions through new bilateral and multilateral initiatives. It also plans to launch a dedicated "Medical Commission" section on the ESPA website, offering scientific updates and expert resources. At the same time, the ESPA E-Library will be expanded to provide broader access to peer-reviewed research on balneotherapy. These actions support the Commission's core goal: to establish evidence-based spa medicine as a trusted and integral part of Europe's healthcare systems — for both treatment and prevention.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE SPA INDUSTRY

Led by Claude-Eugène Bouvier



Since 2021, France has used a tool (OESTh) to measure the economic impact of the thermal industry. Managed by the French Thermal Federation, it is supported by CNETH (ESPA member), thermal municipalities, the Ministry of Economy, Caisse des Dépôts, and Atout France. This tool, run annually, provides

robust data for decision-making and policy support. Based on this successful model, it has been proposed to develop a similar instrument at the European level, under ESPA's coordination

Q1: What are the objectives of the OESTh?

The main goal is to promote the thermal spa industry by highlighting its positive impact on regional development and the national economy. The tool raises awareness among public authorities about the economic value of balneotherapy and related sectors (accommodation, catering, leisure, etc.). Reliable data supports dialogue with policymakers and helps secure subsidies and partnerships. Note: financial support from Health Insurance is granted only with proof of medical service rendered.

Q2: What are the outputs and lessons learned from the OESTh?

Over 50 key economic indicators were documented and monitored, supporting decision-making at national and local levels for spa therapy and wellness diversification. This required considerable effort: 260 participants and €880,000 invested by partners under Wavestone's supervision.

Q3: Could such an approach be implemented at the ESPA level?

Yes, at both national and EU levels. However, the tool must be adapted to reflect sector diversity and ESPA's limited financial resources. A simplified version with fewer indicators and realistic goals is needed—while still aiming high.

Building on the French CNETH experience, a European-level assessment tool coordinated by ESPA would provide comparable, evidence-based data on the economic, social and health impact of spa and climate-health destinations. Such an instrument would strengthen dialogue with EU and national policymakers, support investment decisions, and demonstrate the sector's contribution to regional development, prevention and healthcare sustainability.

SHAPING STANDARDS FOR THE FUTURE OF HEALTH & SPA TOURISM

Led by Chair Iuliana Tasie



Led by Iuliana Tasie, Director of Ana Hotels Eforie Nord in Romania, the working group brings a strong hands-on perspective to the challenges and opportunities faced by Europe's medical spas, health resorts, and hospitality sector. Her daily experience with therapy standards, service quality, and

cooperation with local authorities gives the group a grounded view on how to shape workable and effective solutions.

Q1: What are the group's main priorities?

Our main goal is to update and expand the quality standards for Europe's health destinations. Technological changes, environmental pressures, and new health needs push us to adapt existing certification frameworks. We are paying special attention to topics such as climate health, health destination management, and the growing demand for premium, personalised services.

Q2: How is the group addressing education and innovation?

As Chair, I firmly believe that quality goes hand in hand with knowledge and innovation. That's why we expanded the ESPA Innovation Awards to include educational opportunities. In 2024, the winning project was awarded the prestigious Les Roches and Glion Masterclass Education Programme, worth €20,000, enhancing professional skills and international visibility. In 2025, we took a major step forward by partnering with Wellandia. Award winners now benefit from a 12-month exclusive membership, offering access to a recruitment platform, promotional support, and targeted training programmes for managers, therapists, and front-line teams.

Q3: What impact will this have on Europe's health tourism sector?

I believe that by combining quality standards, innovation, and education, we can ensure that Europe's health destinations remain competitive, trusted, and future-oriented. Our approach strengthens excellence across the entire spa and health industry and creates a solid foundation for long-term growth and sustainable development.

ANNUAL EVENTS ORGANISED BY ESPA

European Spas & Balneology Congress

For the last 30 years, ESPA's annual congress has been the leading meeting point for industry professionals to exchange ideas, share knowledge, and build networks with key business partners and media representatives. Each year, the congress is hosted by one of ESPA's member countries, offering a valuable opportunity to showcase the destination's knowledge, good practice cases, and the space for networking and exchange with experts in medical tourism and preventive healthcare from all over the Europe.

Last year's edition took place in Druskininkai, Lithuania, in cooperation with the Lithuanian Resorts Association - led by Kristina Citvarienė, and the National Association of Medical Spa and Rehabilitation Centres in Lithuania. This year's hosts are the city of Haapsalu, Estonia and the Estonian Spas Association under the leadership of Maret Sukles.

With forward-looking topics and carefully selected international and local experts, the ESPA Congress always addresses the most pressing issues in the industry. This year's speakers will explore challenges such as digital health, climate resilience, and the epidemiology of stress-related disorders, among many others.

products through innovative, effective, and transformative concepts.

Applicants can compete in eight categories: Innovative Spa Destination, Medical Spa, Spa Design, Spa Concept, Health Spa Programme, Spa Products, Spa Education, and Spa Scientific Research. Submissions are evaluated by an international jury of eight experts.



The prestigious awards ceremony takes place each year as part of the ESPA Congress programme, honouring groundbreaking contributions to the future of spa and health tourism.



SPA-CE B2B Workshop

SPA-CE is a boutique B2B workshop that has been part of the ESPA Congress since 2021. It connects travel agencies, tour operators, and representatives of patient organisations with leading European medical spas and health resorts. The two-day programme features a study tour to selected spas in the host destination, first-hand experiences, and pre-scheduled business meetings.

ESPA Innovation Award

The ESPA Innovation Award celebrates visionary leaders and organisations who are redefining health destinations, spa resorts, medical spas, new health services, and



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EUROPEAN SPAS ASSOCIATION'S CONGRESSES

The European Spas Congress has steadily evolved into the leading platform for shaping the future of health and health tourism across Europe.

Haapsalu, Estonia, 2025

Most recently, in October 2025 in Haapsalu, Estonia, the program highlighted the "Return on investment of better health, digital health integration in cooperation with the WHO, and climate resilience strategies for spa regions.

Groundbreaking research on "blue health" and curative mud deposits reinforced the scientific credibility of spa medicine, while panels on skills and education addressed the evolving needs of modern health tourism.



Druskininkai, Lithuania, 2024

In Druskininkai, Lithuania, where congress was held in 2024 the focus was on the future of Europe health tourism and global trends, with keynotes from international

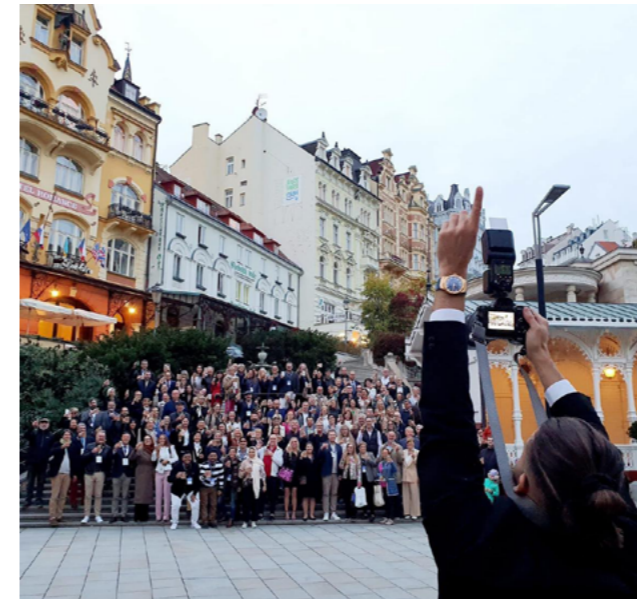
experts and discussions on forest therapy, spa business innovation, and integrative approaches to prevention and childrens health.



Karlovy Vary, Czechia, 2023

The Congress in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic in 2023 emphasized the evolving role of spas and balneology in prevention and rehabilitation, particularly in response to contemporary challenges such as Long COVID, chronic diseases, mental health issues, and population aging. The programme concluded with the Karlovy Vary Dec-

laration, reaffirming a shared commitment to medical evidence, sustainability, innovation, and cross-sector cooperation, and confirming European health resorts as essential contributors to healthier lives, resilient regions, and sustainable health tourism.



Piešťany, Slovakia, 2022

The Slovakian congress in Piestany in 2022 emphasized Spa Medicine and new demand in health tourism, featuring workshops for spa town mayors, data-driven

insights from Slovakia's National Central Statistics for Healthcare, and sessions on post-Covid rehabilitation, mental health, and boutique-style spa care.



Together, these congresses show how Europe's spas are combining tradition, science, and innovation to meet

new health demands and strengthen their role in preventive and rehabilitation healthcare.

Member country: Bulgaria

BULGARIAN UNION OF BALNEOLOGY AND SPA TOURISM (BUBSPA)



Bulgaria – 365 days of healing climate & thermal waters in affordable luxury

Reviving Bulgaria's spa heritage for modern health and wellness

The Bulgarian Union of Balneology and Spa Tourism (BUBSPA) is Bulgaria's national non-profit association for health tourism, working with the Ministries of Tourism and Health. Its members include leading spa resorts, municipalities, investors, and experts, supported by medical universities and professional associations. With roots in Thracian and Roman traditions, Bulgaria offers a unique therapeutic product, combining thermal waters, healing mud, sea resources, and mountain climates. Today, BUBSPA promotes the country as a year-round destination for spa medicine, prevention, and wellness.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal and mineral waters (with temperatures from springs up to 103 °C)
- Seawater and thalassotherapy resources
- Healing muds: sea mud, peat mud, spring mud
- Organic and inorganic peloids
- Unique bioclimatic conditions: clean air, many sunny days, forests, microclimates

Climate & environment

Bulgaria's health resorts include properties on the Black Sea coast, mineral springs, and clean mountain climates. The favourable climate, with over 2,200 hours of sunshine annually, air rich in light-negative ions, and low humidity, plays a crucial role in treating chronic lung diseases, asthma, and stress-related conditions. Forest therapy, sea breezes, and mountain air create natural environments for recovery and prevention.

Medical indications

Bulgarian medical spas specialise in treating cardiovascular and rheumatic diseases, locomotor system disorders, respiratory conditions, metabolic and gastrointestinal disorders, urinary and renal issues, skin diseases, gynaecological and reproductive health conditions, neurotic disorders, and stress-related illnesses.

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Preventive Health Programmes

1. **VitalStart** – Light therapy for pain relief (Albena Resort)
2. **Anti-stress programme "Stress Relief"** (Aquahouse Thermal & Beach)
3. **Pulmonary prevention** – innovative lung health programme (Pamporovo Resort)

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. **OrthoBalance** – complex therapy for joints and spine (Albena Resort)
2. **Aqua Recovery Programme** – underwater physiotherapy (Ensana Aquahouse Hotel)
3. **Therapy for injuries & trauma** – post-operative and neurological rehabilitation (Pamporovo Resort)

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. **PureSalz regeneration with Himalayan salt** (Albena Resort)
2. **SculptAura** – Body toning & metabolic health (Ensana Aquahouse Hotel)
3. **Lazy Detox** – Rose Valley rejuvenation (Kings' Valley Medical & Spa Hotel)

"Bulgaria ranks among Europe's leaders in hydrothermal resources and bioclimatic health resorts. With thermal waters, three types of healing mud, and a unique climate, our spas provide proven treatments for respiratory, musculoskeletal, reproductive, and metabolic disorders. This integration of nature, tradition, and medical expertise makes Bulgaria a true 365-day health destination."

Dr. Tatyana Angelova, MD – Chairman of the Supervisory Board, BUBSPA



**NATIONAL MEMBERS
& ADVISORY MEMBERS**

Member country: Croatia

ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH TOURISM CROATIA

A health destination in the heart of the Adriatic



Uniting Croatia's natural healing heritage with modern medicine

Health Tourism Croatia is the national association of leading providers of medical, wellness, and healing services. Its members offer boutique-style care that blends advanced medical technology, expert staff, and natural remedies, all within Croatia's Adriatic climate. With a health tourism tradition dating back to Roman times, Croatia today offers treatments along the Adriatic coast and in inland regions boasting thermal springs. Its central location, modern facilities, English-speaking professionals, and excellent value make it an ideal destination for international health and wellness travellers.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Seawater
- Organic and inorganic peloids
- Climate

Others: Naphtalan mineral oil, Mediterranean sea air, forests.

Climate & environment

In Croatia, the Mediterranean climate's mild winters and warm summers are enriched by the healing sea air and verdant natural landscape. All this makes Croatia ideal for year-round wellness tourism.

Medical indications

Overall focus on preventive health, medical rehabilitation, and recovery, supported by public and private institutions equipped with medical facilities, natural therapeutic factors, and experienced professionals.



Preventive Health Programmes

1. Healthness programmes
2. Stress-relief programmes

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Post-operation rehabilitation
2. Medical rehabilitation in spa and special hospitals

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. **Healthness programmes** — integrating holistic wellness, preventive health, and lifestyle optimisation.
2. **Stress-relief programmes** — focused on relaxation, mental wellness, and nature-based rejuvenation.

Croatian government has allocated €350 million for the renovation and modernization of health resorts nationwide. This bold investment supports the development of four-season tourism, ensuring that Croatia's medical spas and wellness centers remain attractive and accessible year-round.

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Member country: Czech Republic

CZECH SPA ASSOCIATION (Svaz léčebných lázní České republiky)

A year-round destination for healing, spa traditions, and modern wellness.



Uniting the Czech Republic's spa heritage and innovation

The Czech Spa Association represents the long-standing tradition of spa and wellness in the Czech Republic, where natural healing resources have been used for centuries. Established to support and promote spa care, the Association brings together leading spa facilities across the country, including those in the renowned destinations such as Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně, and Františkovy Lázně. Its members offer high-quality medical and wellness treatments based on mineral springs, peat, and thermal waters. International visitors are drawn by the combination of expert care, historic charm, and affordability. The Czech Republic offers a unique blend of traditional therapies and modern healthcare, making it a top choice for health and wellness travel.

Natural healing resources

- Harnessing the power of nature
- Thermal waters
- Potable mineral waters
- Healing mud & peat
- Organic & inorganic peloids

Climate & Environment

The Czech Republic's spa treatments also uniquely harness the local climate—clean air, moderate temperatures, and tranquil natural settings—to enhance healing, support respiratory health, and promote overall well-being.

Medical indications

Overall, 11 indication groups of diseases are treated in Czech spas such as Cardiovascular diseases, Locomotor system disorders, Rheumatic conditions, Neurological disorders, respiratory conditions and many others.

"Czech spa medicine masterfully combines centuries-old traditions with modern rehabilitation. Treatments like natural mineral baths, peat wraps, and therapeutic gas injections have been clinically proven to support prevention and recovery. This unique integration of natural resources and medical expertise makes the Czech Republic a leader in spa-based healthcare."

Eduard Bláha, M.D., president of the Czech Spa Association

Preventive Health Programmes

1. General Health Check & Prevention Stay
2. Immune System Booster
3. Burnout & Stress Prevention

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. **Musculoskeletal System Treatment** — focusing on rehabilitation after injuries, surgeries, or chronic joint and spine conditions.
2. **Respiratory Diseases Treatment** — utilizing clean air, inhalation therapy, and natural mineral waters for conditions like asthma or chronic bronchitis.
3. **Cardiovascular and Circulatory System Treatment** — aimed at improving heart health, blood circulation, and recovery after cardiac events.

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. **Detox & Regeneration Programme** — Includes special diets, body cleansing treatments, and massages.
2. **Weight Loss & Fitness Stay** — Guided by nutritionists and trainers, combined with spa treatments.
3. **Healthy Ageing & Vitality Programme** — Anti-aging treatments, mobility support, and relaxation therapies.



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Member country: France

FRENCH NATIONAL SPAS ASSOCIATION

Conseil national des établissements thermaux (CNETH)

Comprehensive, preventive and curative health care in France's most beautiful landscapes

Founded in 2002, the Conseil National des Etablissements Thermaux (CNETH), led by Thierry Dubois, represents all French spas. Its mission is to work with the public authorities to improve and enhance recognition of spa medicine. The CNETH has three main missions:

- Participate in the scientific evaluation of the medical service rendered (SMR) of balneology
- Disseminate educational information to the general public and the medical community.
- Defend the interests of spas in their dealings with various government and health insurance bodies.

The association gathers 103 spas in operation across the country, treating a wide range of chronic illnesses such from rheumatism and asthma to people in remission from breast cancer, long covid, mental health, obesity, diabetes and endometriosis, dermatology...

Several options are available (18-day session, short-term prevention-oriented stay) depending on the patient's needs. Complementary workshops can be offered to help patients take care of their health in a holistic way. Spa facilities are spread across the country, offering visitors the chance to enjoy France's rich cultural heritage in some of the world's most beautiful spa towns.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Potable mineral waters
- Healing mud
- Climate
- Microclimate

Climate & environment

French spas are located in diverse natural settings, from Alpine valleys and coastal landscapes to serene countryside. The favourable climate and pure environments enhance therapeutic outcomes, offering patients restorative surroundings that support both medical recovery and overall well-being.

Medical indications

French spas treat rheumatic, metabolic, respiratory, mental health, and skin conditions. They also address urinary, renal, and gynaecological issues, offering holistic therapies that combine medical expertise with natural healing resources.

Preventive Health Programmes

Le programme "Parcours Prévention Santé" | Thermes de Brides les Bains

Boost Your Health: 1-Week Preventive Program at Brides-les-Bains

The Health Prevention Programme of Brides-les-Bains includes:

- 1 individual consultation with a dietician to explore lifestyle and diet
- 1 Memory and Concentration workshop
- 1 cooking workshop on cardiovascular prevention
- 2 visits to the Physical Activity Area
- 1 lecture on My Sleep and Me

The 'Health Prevention Programme' is aimed at people who:

- are over 18 years of age,
- want to stay healthy
- want to prevent everyday ailments

This is a personal initiative based on voluntary participation. This programme is offered during the spa season and lasts one week.

More info at thermes@thermes-brideslesbains.fr

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

Cures post cancer | Médecine thermale Support and Recovery After Breast Cancer | Caring Thermal Therapy

The aim of this therapy is to assist women in their physical, social, professional, family and psychological recovery following breast cancer. Post-breast cancer treatment is based on a conventional spa treatment (rheumatology or phlebology) to which a specific module of activities and treatments is added. Firstly, aquagym sessions reduce lymphoedema. Then, consultations, support groups, relaxing massages and beauty treatments help to rebuild self-esteem. Dietary workshops promote weight loss. Combined with a programme of targeted physical activities, these workshops encourage patients to resume regular activity, which is beneficial for the future.

With the right support, these patients regain confidence in themselves and their femininity. They find it easier to reintegrate into social life.

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

Self-Confidence Workshop – Saujon Thermal Spa

The assertiveness training programme of Saujon includes:

- Psycho-educational workshops (12 people max.)
- Health workshops (sophrology, do-in, etc.)
- Individual psychological consultations
- Individualised assessment follow-up

Course objectives:

- Understand the benefits of good self-assertion
- Practical scenarios based on your expectations
- Regain confidence in your communication skills
- Learn techniques for managing difficult situations

"Benzodiazepine use in France is a major public health concern. To address this issue, the SPECTh protocol was developed, combining a three-week medical spa treatment with cognitive behavioural therapy-based psychoeducation. Results showed 41% stopped at six months, with a 75% average reduction. A 2023 study confirmed its effectiveness, showing that spa medicine combined with behavioural and cognitive therapy effectively treats chronic dependence on benzodiazepines, positioning France as a leader in this field."

Olivier Dubois, Doctor of Psychiatry, President of the Thermes de Saujon Group

CONTACT

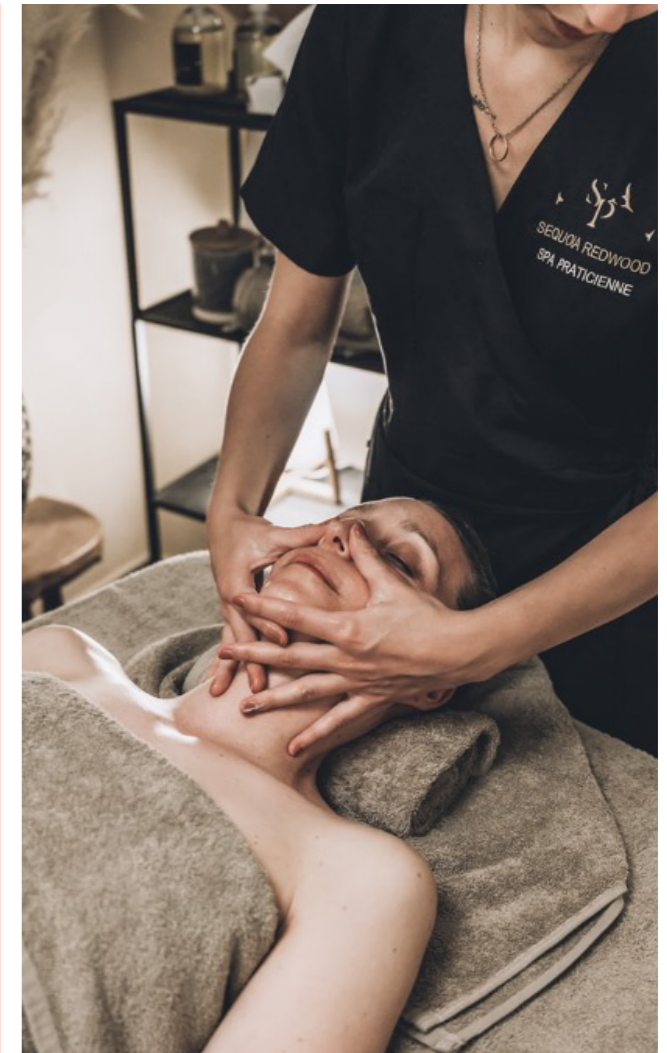
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Member country: Georgia

GEORGIA – SAIRME HOTELS RESORT

The healing power of nature, created for you.



Sairme is renowned for its unique thermal and mineral waters, which have been used for centuries to support health and well-being. Our mission is to offer guests a comprehensive, nature-based healing and wellness experience. Our team consists of experienced therapists, physiotherapists, rehabilitation specialists, nutritionists, and psychologists who provide individualized, results-driven care tailored to each guest.

Sairme is unique for its thermal baths, mineral spring waters, halotherapy, and hydrotherapy treatments. International visitors find a full spectrum of health, inner harmony, and restorative experiences in a natural setting that enhances both physical and mental well-being.

Natural healing resources

Mineral-rich thermal springs with healing properties – reduce inflammatory processes, improve blood circulation, calm the nervous system, and are effective in the rehabilitation of musculoskeletal and movement disorders.

- Drinkable mineral waters – support detoxification, metabolic balance, digestion, urinary health, and the proper functioning of the liver and biliary system.
- Pristine forests and clean air – the alpine zone and unique microclimate strengthen the respiratory system, increase energy, and reduce symptoms of chronic fatigue.

Climate & environment

Situated at the intersection of Europe and Asia, Georgia's diverse climate—from subtropical lowlands to alpine highlands—contributes to a range of therapeutic environments. The clean air, forested landscapes, and calm surroundings provide ideal settings for both preventive and recovery-based wellness programmes.

Medical indications

Gynaecological conditions, Respiratory conditions, Urinary issues, Gastrointestinal disorders, Skin diseases

Other: Mental health conditions; Neurotic disorders; Locomotor system disorders; Rheumatic conditions; Neurological disorders; Metabolic disorders

Preventive Health Programmes

- Detox and immunity-boosting program
- Preventive methods for chronic fatigue
- Natural regulation of metabolism and energy

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

- Digestive system regulation program
- Therapeutic program for urolithiasis
- Therapeutic program for urolithiasis

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

- Stress management and inner harmony program
- Weight loss and physical activity program
- Spa, halo therapy, and wellness rituals

“At Sairme, we continue to combine innovation and tradition in medicine and wellness: thermal waters, mineral drinking waters, hydrotherapy, and halo therapy allow our guests to experience a unique therapeutic effect. Our specialists provide personalized, therapeutic, and preventive approaches, where nature and modern medicine come together to create a results-oriented experience.”

Eliso Chakvetadze; Product Developer



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Member country: Estonia

THE ESTONIAN SPA ASSOCIATION (ESPAL) & FRA MARE THALASSO SPA

Healing mud, sea, and forest – Estonia's thalasso tradition



Reviving Estonia's spa heritage with thalassotherapy

Fra Mare Thalasso SPA, established in 1997 in Haapsalu, represents Estonia's unique thalasso and mud therapy tradition. Located by Haapsalu Bay and surrounded by pine forests, Fra Mare has grown into a modern health and holiday centre offering medical spa treatments, relaxation, and wellness. Guests come from across the region, predominantly from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Sweden, to restore health and energy. Its philosophy combines natural resources with professional medical competence, making it a destination for prevention, rehabilitation, and a balanced lifestyle.

Natural healing resources

- Healing sea mud of Haapsalu
- Seawater and thalassotherapy
- Sea air and marine climate
- Forests and natural surroundings

Climate & environment

Estonia's coastal climate, enriched by sea breezes and pine forests, enhances relaxation and supports treatments for respiratory health, mobility, and skin conditions. The tranquil bay of Haapsalu offers a natural environment that strengthens recovery and well-being.

Medical indications

Fra Mare specialises in locomotor and rheumatic conditions, metabolic disorders, respiratory and skin diseases. Treatments focus on prevention, rehabilitation, and long-term improvement of quality of life.



Preventive Health Programmes

1. Spa Relaxation package (5+ nights)
2. Anti-stress and vitality programmes
3. Lifestyle balance retreats

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. SPA Therapy with Haapsalu mud (5+ nights)
2. Senior Package (5+ nights)
3. Locomotor rehabilitation & post-trauma therapy

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Healthness programmes – integrating holistic wellness, preventive health, and lifestyle optimisation.
2. Stress-relief programmes – focused on relaxation, mental wellness, and nature-based rejuvenation.

“Therapeutic muds of Estonia are unique complexes of biologically active substances. Mud therapy can modify the course of diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, or spondylitis, prolong remission, reduce medication needs, and improve scar healing. Its exfoliating effect renews the skin while supporting deeper health benefits.”

Dr. Varje-Riin Tuulik, Head Surgeon, West Tallinn Central Hospital



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Member country: Germany

GERMAN SPAS ASSOCIATION Deutscher Heilbäderverband e.V.

Tradition and innovation in Europe's leading health destination



The German Spas Association unites more than 350 certified health resorts, spa towns, and climate-healing destinations across Germany. Rooted in centuries of balneology and climatotherapy, they are recognised as centres of excellence for prevention, rehabilitation, and holistic healthcare.

Through the rigorous recognition system of Prädikatisierung, every resort (Kurort) must prove the effectiveness of its natural healing resources, ensure medical supervision, and provide modern infrastructure. This guarantees the unique combination of evidence-based therapies, natural remedies, and sustainable regional development.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Potable mineral waters
- Healing mud & peat
- Salt and brine resources
- Healing caves and clean-air environments
- Climatic health factors (mountain, coastal, forest regions)

Climate & environment

Germany's health resorts are internationally recognised for their unique healing climates, from North Sea thalassotherapy centres to Alpine mountain spas and forest therapy resorts. Clean air, tranquillity, and distinct climatic factors enhance medical treatments, support respiratory health, reduce stress, and promote healthy ageing.

Medical indications

German medical spas specialise in treating a wide range of conditions, from musculoskeletal and rheumatic diseases to cardiovascular and respiratory disorders, dermatological and gynaecological conditions, neurological diseases, post-operative recovery, and increasingly, stress-related and mental health issues.

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Preventive Health Programmes

1. General health check & prevention stays
2. Burnout & stress prevention
3. Immune system strengthening

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. **Musculoskeletal and rheumatic treatments** – rehabilitation after injuries, surgeries, and chronic joint or spine conditions
2. **Cardiovascular and circulatory treatments** – recovery after cardiac events, improving blood circulation and heart health
3. **Respiratory treatments** – including asthma, chronic bronchitis, and allergy therapy through climatotherapy and inhalation

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Weight management & fitness stays
2. Detox & regeneration programmes
3. Healthy ageing & vitality programmes

German spa towns have been recognised with ESPA Innovation Awards for their excellence and innovation:

- *Heringsdorf: Child-focused Healing Forest*
- *Bad Pyrmont: Green medical spa destination with clinics, spa hotels, parks, and medical research.*
- *Norderney: Leading Thalasso destination, combining coastal climate therapy with modern wellness and evidence-based spa medicine.*



Member country: Hungary

HUNGARIAN BATHS ASSOCIATION Magyar Fürdőszövetség

Europe's natural healing powerhouse



Uniting Hungary's unique spa heritage and modern medical expertise

The Hungarian Baths Association represents the country's rich balneological tradition, built on one of the world's most remarkable geothermal resources: more than 80% of Hungary's territory is rich in thermal waters. With 34 certified medical spas, 98 accredited spa facilities, and 40 certified spa hotels, Hungary is a leading European destination for prevention, medical rehabilitation, and wellness. The association brings together health resorts, spa hotels, and medical experts dedicated to marrying natural therapies with innovative treatments that address pressing health challenges.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Potable mineral waters
- Healing mud & peat
- Salt caves and halotherapy centres
- Organic & inorganic peloids

Other: Salt caves and halotherapy centres, unique mofetta (dry carbon dioxide baths), and the healing cave of Tapolca (respiratory therapies).

Climate & environment

Hungary's spas offer more than mineral waters: many resorts also harness the healing power of microclimates, such as therapeutic caves, salt chambers, and clean natural environments. These enhance treatments for respiratory health, cardiovascular rehabilitation, and stress reduction, while creating ideal conditions for prevention and recovery.

Medical indications

Hungarian medical spas specialise in treating a wide spectrum of conditions, including musculoskeletal and rheumatic diseases, dermatological and gynaecological disorders, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory conditions such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, and allergies, as well as stress, burnout, and post-operative rehabilitation.

Preventive Health Programmes

1. General health check & preventive stays
2. Stress & burnout recovery
3. Healthy ageing & lifestyle balance

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Post-trauma and orthopaedic rehabilitation
2. Cardiovascular and circulatory treatment
3. Respiratory disease management in caves and salt chambers

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Detox & weight management stays
2. Fitness & vitality enhancement
3. Regeneration & immune system boost



"Hungary is not only the land of thermal waters – it is a living health infrastructure. From the world-famous Hévíz Lake to mofetta therapies and the invention of the underwater weight bath, Hungary's medical spas combine nature, science, and innovation to support prevention, rehabilitation, and resilience."

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Member country: Iceland

ICELANDIC SPA ASSOCIATION

Tradition and Innovation at the Crossroads of Nordic Health and Wellnes

The Icelandic Spa Association (HLSI), founded in 2007 in Reykjavík, is a non-profit umbrella organization that unites public and private spa and wellness providers across Iceland. As a non-profit organisation, it promotes collaboration, quality development, and international visibility of Iceland's spa sector. A key mission is fostering affiliation with the European Spas Association (ESPA), ensuring Icelandic members benefit from European standards, innovation, and recognition. Based in Reykjavík, HLSI serves as the national voice of Iceland's spas, supporting excellence, networking, and sustainable growth in health and wellness tourism.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Mineral waters
- Potable mineral waters
- Steam baths and geothermal mud treatments
- Climatic health factors (mountain, coastal, forest regions)
- Clean air and pristine natural environments
- Northern light and circadian health benefits

Other: These resources are valued for their effects on circulation, mobility, skin conditions, respiratory health, stress reduction, and overall vitality.

Climate & environment

Iceland's pure air, dramatic volcanic landscapes, ancient glaciers, and expansive unspoiled nature all contribute to a deeply therapeutic environment. Bathing in geothermal waters amid these dramatic settings provides profound stress relief, strengthens respiratory health, and supports mind-body balance.



Preventive Health Programmes

1. Preventive well-being and lifestyle stays
2. Stress management and immune-boosting retreats
3. Outdoor and climate-based rejuvenation

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Musculoskeletal and rheumatic rehabilitation
2. Skin and dermatological treatments (psoriasis, eczema)
3. Post-surgery recovery and chronic illness management

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Detox & regeneration programmes
2. Weight management & fitness stays
3. Healthy ageing & vitality programmes

Heilsustofnun NLFI – Iceland's flagship medical spa Located in Hveragerði and founded by Dr. Jónas Kristjánsson, Heilsustofnun celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2025. This pioneering institution integrates evidence-based medicine with holistic therapies, geothermal healing, and organic nutrition. It has received multiple ESPA Innovation Awards and is recognized as a European leader in post-COVID rehabilitation and stress management.

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ITALIAN THERMAL SPA FEDERATION Federterme

A timeless tradition of healing, science, and Italian wellbeing



Federterme is the national federation representing Italy's thermal spa sector, encompassing over 320 certified spa centres across all 20 regions. Based in Rome, it safeguards Italy's extraordinary thermal heritage and promotes the integration of natural spa medicine into the national healthcare system. Federterme supports scientific research in balneology, environmental sustainability, innovation, and the international positioning of Italian spas. The association serves as a key voice in policy, health, and tourism sectors, while its members offer a blend of medical care, wellness services, and Italy's world-famous hospitality — rooted in ancient Roman traditions and enriched by modern science.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal and mineral waters — rich in sulphur, bicarbonate, chloride, iron, and other curative elements
- Potable mineral waters — used in therapeutic drinking regimens for digestive and metabolic conditions
- Healing muds and clays — matured in thermal water, applied in anti-inflammatory and rehabilitative therapies
- Peloids — both organic and inorganic, used for joint, skin, and circulatory treatments
- Other: Italy's spa resorts feature steam caves, thalassotherapy, natural gas treatments, and ancient hydrothermal sites. Their unique blend of climate, geology, and history supports prevention, therapy, and recovery.

Climate & Environment

From Alpine resorts and volcanic springs to coastal and inland thermal parks, Italy's climate diversity enhances spa treatments. Mediterranean air, clean mountain environments, and naturally warm waters contribute to stress reduction, respiratory health, and immune support.

Medical indications

Italian thermal centres treat a wide range of conditions — from musculoskeletal, respiratory, and dermatological disorders to metabolic, post-operative, and gynaecological issues — all under medical supervision and within Italy's national healthcare system.

Discover Italian excellence in healthcare with Italcars: thermal and medical wellness. www.italcares.it

Preventive Health Programmes

1. Health check-ups and lifestyle assessments
2. Stress reduction and sleep regulation
3. Immune boosting and anti-ageing therapies

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Thermal mud therapy and balneotherapy
2. Inhalation and respiratory therapies
3. Post-operative rehabilitation
4. Metabolic and digestive support
5. Personalised medical spa care

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Thermal wellness holidays with Italian gastronomy
2. Anti-stress, detox, and energy-balancing retreats
3. Couples and family spa programmes
4. Thermal fitness and weight management

"Italy's thermal spas combine centuries of heritage with medical excellence, offering natural therapies recognised by science — and by generations of satisfied visitors."

Federterme



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Member country: Lithuania

LITHUANIAN RESORTS ASSOCIATION

Lietuvos kurortų asociacija

Tradition and Innovation at the Crossroads of Baltic Health and Wellness



The Lithuanian Resorts Association is a non-governmental organization that promotes health and wellness tourism throughout Lithuania. It unites four well-established spa towns: Birštonas, Druskininkai, Neringa, and Palanga, along with five developing resort areas: Anykščiai, Ignalina, Kaunas District, Trakai, and Zarasai.

Led by Director Kristina Citvarienė, the association focuses on strengthening infrastructure, raising service standards, and enhancing international visibility. It plays a key role in shaping national and international health tourism policy and is a strong advocate for balneology development. In recognition of these efforts, Lithuania was recently awarded the prestigious ITB Health Tourism Award 2025.

Natural healing resources

- Mineral waters
- Potable mineral waters
- Healing mud & peat
- Climatic health factors

Climate & environment

Lithuania's vast pine forests provide oxygen-rich air that supports quality sleep, balanced metabolism, improved liver function, stress reduction, and full nervous system restoration. The Baltic Sea coast and forest landscapes form a unique natural setting for holistic wellness tourism.

Medical indications

Lithuanian health resorts specialize in:

- Mud and mineral therapies (balneology)
- Rehabilitation and prevention of chronic conditions
- Stress management and mental wellness
- Post-operative recovery

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Preventive Health Programmes

- Preventive well-being retreats with fresh air, climate-based relaxation, and forest therapy
- Precision longevity programs integrating biomarker testing and personalized lifestyle coaching to enhance vitality and extend healthspan

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

- Mud and mineral therapy for chronic pain and disorders
- Post-illness and post-surgery rehabilitation
- Detox, vitality, and mental wellness programs

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

- Mindfulness and stress-reduction practices in natural settings
- Holistic wellness activities combining movement, breathing, and relaxation techniques

"Lithuania hosted the 2024 ESPA Congress, earning multiple spa awards and setting a world record in mud therapy."



Member country: Luxembourg

LUXEMBOURG – MONDORF THERMAL DOMAIN

Mondorf Domäne Thermal

Mondorf Thermal Domain - Far more than you can imagine



Mondorf Thermal Domain, located in Mondorf-les-Bains, traces its origins back to the discovery of the Kind spring in 1841, with officially recognized healing properties since 1847. Over the decades, Mondorf has welcomed generations of visitors from Luxembourg and neighboring countries, all benefiting from the virtues of thermal water. Since 1988, the domain has expanded into a comprehensive health and wellness destination, featuring two hotels, a modern spa, extensive aquatic leisure facilities, restaurants, and versatile spaces for private and professional events.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Healing mud
- Organic and inorganic peloids
- Forest environment

Climate & Environment

Nestled in the southern region of Luxembourg, Mondorf-les-Bains offers a serene landscape combining thermal resources, green forests, and fresh air. The mild climate and calm surroundings provide a therapeutic environment, ideal for prevention, rehabilitation, and holistic recovery.

Medical indications

The therapeutic use of Mondorf's thermal resources is especially beneficial for rheumatic conditions, metabolic disorders, respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases, as well as for patients recovering from Long Covid.

"Thermal water is used therapeutically for various conditions. Its benefits are proven in rheumatic diseases such as osteoarthritis or chronic polyarthritis, where heat and minerals relieve pain and improve mobility. It also supports rehabilitation after surgery or injury, and helps skin conditions like psoriasis or neurodermatitis through anti-inflammatory effects. Inhalation eases chronic respiratory diseases, loosening mucus and reducing inflammation. Thermal water also promotes relaxation in stress-related disorders and improves microcirculation in peripheral vascular issues."

Dr. med Max HAAG

Preventive Health Programmes

1. Building a healthier workplace with Lifestyle Medicine
2. Adapted physical activity program for oncology patients
3. Participation in global health awareness days (Diabetes, Cancer, Mental Health, etc.)

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. David Health therapeutic protocol for outpatient physical and functional rehabilitation
2. Preventing relapse in obesity-treated patients
3. In progress: Educational and physical reactivation program for overweight children

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

Sport and health: Prescribed adapted exercise for patients with chronic conditions (Diabetes, Obesity, Mental Health, Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, etc.)



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Member country: Netherlands

DUTCH THALASSO CLUSTER

Health by the sea



The Netherlands is redefining health tourism along its 450 km coastline through four certified seaside resorts – Cadzand, Domburg, Noordwijk and Texel. As pioneers in Thalassotherapy, they unite healing sea resources, medical expertise and pristine nature. Backed by Institut Fresenius and balneological studies, all four have achieved “Heilwasser” status and meet European Spas Association standards. Together, they form the Dutch Thalasso Cluster, bringing together wellness hotels, health centres and local authorities committed to prevention, rehabilitation and healthy ageing by the sea.

Natural healing resources

- Seawater (Heilwasser-grade; 3.2% saline concentration with high NaCl and Mg content)
- Beach sand (natural thermotherapy after solar heating)
- Seaweed/algae (antioxidant-rich, used in nutrition and therapy)
- Clean, stimulating marine climate (natural aerosol therapy, UV exposure, wind & humidity)

Other: Natural sea aerosols and antioxidant-rich seaweed support respiratory health, boost immunity, hydrate skin, and reduce inflammation and oxidative stress.

Climate & Environment

The Dutch coast offers a stimulating bioclimate where wind, sun, and salty air boost cardiovascular and respiratory health. Surrounded by dunes, beaches and forests, it's ideal for recovery and relaxation. Texel adds 390 km of trails for active, nature-based wellbeing.

Medical indications

Medical indications include the relief of skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis, support for rheumatic and orthopedic disorders, improved respiratory function in asthma and chronic bronchitis, metabolic regulation in obesity and diabetes, stress reduction, recovery after surgery or cancer treatment, support for gynaecological issues, and overall immune system strengthening.

“The Dutch coastline, with its high salt and magnesium content, is a natural source for outdoor treatment. It has a demonstrable effect on cardiovascular health and skin conditions.”

Dr. Johan Mezger (1838–1909)

Preventive Health Programmes

1. Thalassotherapy (sea water, seaweed, sand & climate treatments)
2. Natural aerosol therapy (inhalation directly on the coast or by inhalers)
3. Hydrotherapy in sea or pools
4. Nutritional programmes (sea-based, local products)
5. Stress management & mental resilience
6. Weight management and healthy ageing

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Skin conditions (e.g. atopic dermatitis, psoriasis)
2. Rheumatic and orthopedic diseases
3. Cardiovascular risk management
4. Respiratory issues (chronic bronchitis, asthma)
5. Post-operative recovery (oncology, surgery)
6. Gynaecological disorders
7. Psychosomatic disorders (burnout, stress)
8. Metabolic conditions (obesity, diabetes)

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Spine school
2. Obesity & stress management
3. Mind-body balance (yoga, Nordic walking, sea therapy)
4. Forest and beach mindfulness
5. Healthy ageing programmes (seniors' active life support)
6. Lifestyle coaching & group therapies



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Member country: Romania

THE EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATION OF SPA TOURISM IN ROMANIA

(Organizația Patronală a Turismului Balnear din România - OPTBR)

Romania - a healing experience



Healing traditions, rich resources, and accessible wellness in the heart of Eastern Europe

The Owners' Organization of Spa Tourism in Romania (OPTBR) is the only national association representing key investors in Romanian spa and health tourism. Its mission is to promote spa tourism as a national priority and a European quality benchmark through initiatives focused on prevention and the sustainable use of natural healing resources. OPTBR brings together leading spa tourism providers across Romania.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Portable mineral waters
- Seawater
- Healing mud
- Climate
- Mofettes

Climate & environment

The varied Romanian climate, which ranges from Alpine to coastal, coupled with pristine forests, unpolluted air, and saline micro-environments, offers a naturally therapeutic setting. OPTBR is championing “forest bathing” and eco-spa approaches that evolve the holistic wellness experience.

Medical indications

Therapeutic offerings in Romania span a wide spectrum, from musculoskeletal, respiratory, cardiovascular, and dermatological treatments to anti-ageing programmes, metabolic balance, fertility, emotional wellbeing, and holistic recovery via medical spa interventions.

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Preventive Health Programmes

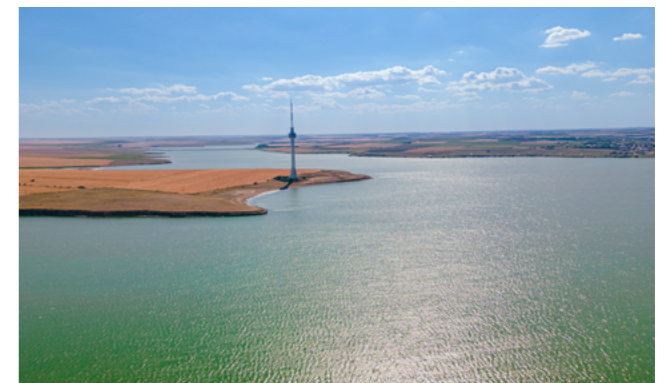
1. Relax & renew – mud treatments, saline baths with herbs, massages
2. Cardio-respiratory balance therapy – mineral water baths, mofettes
3. Boost immunity – mud treatments, massages, lymphatic drainage

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Intensive rheuma package – mud treatments, salt baths, hydrotherapies
2. Cardio circulatory treatments – mofettes, galvanic baths, mineral baths
3. Long COVID recovery package

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Mountain & herbal body treatments
2. Wellbeing & detox body ritual
3. Holistic anti-age spa rejuvenation



“Romania stands out as a rich spa ecosystem, showcased in over 300 spa centres and wellness resorts. Romania offers renowned skincare and therapeutic products, such as Gerovital H3, organic oils, therapeutic salts, and medicinal plants collected from unpolluted Alpine regions. Romanian spa centres take a holistic approach to health and well-being, addressing physical, mental, and emotional balance through a fusion of traditional and modern methods. Many embrace the medical spa model and focus on anti-ageing, metabolic optimisation, fertility, emotional and physical recovery.”

Dr. Mihaela Cucu, President of the Medical Commission of OPTBR, Medical Director at Ana Health Spa, Eforie Nord

Member country: Serbia

CLUSTER WELLNESS SERBIA

From medical to wellness treatments with the warmth of true hospitality



Bringing together spa tradition, medical expertise and contemporary wellness Cluster Wellness Serbia unites leading spas, resorts and wellness hotels, including Mövenpick Resort & Spa Fruske Terme, Premier Aqua, Planinka, Kuršumlijska, Prolom, Lukovska and Sijerinska Spa. Blending Serbia's rich Roman heritage with medical expertise and modern concepts, it positions the country as a unique destination for healing waters, quality healthcare and timeless wellness traditions. Through strategic promotion, training, consultancy and European Spas Association standards, the Cluster supports its members while strengthening Serbia's visibility on the global health and wellness tourism market.

Natural healing resources

- Thermal waters
- Mineral waters
- Healing mud
- Climate
- Forest

Other: Natural CO₂ and H₂S gases.

Climate & Environment

Serbia's natural spas combine thermal and mineral springs, healing mud, and unique mountain and forest climates. Clean air, peaceful surroundings, and diverse landscapes create ideal conditions, making Serbian spas attractive year-round destinations for health, recovery, and relaxation.

Medical indications

Locomotor system disorders, rheumatic conditions, neurological disorders, metabolic disorders, skin diseases

Others: cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, respiratory & vascular & mental health conditions

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Preventive Health Programmes

1. Obesity and diabetes prevention program
2. Stress management and body detoxification
3. Cardiovascular prevention program

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. **Rheumatic degenerative diseases:** Hydrotherapy, mud & physical therapy and kinesitherapy
2. **Injuries and diseases of the locomotor system rehabilitation:** Hydrotherapy, mud & physical therapy and kinesitherapy
3. **Skin diseases rehabilitation:** Bathing in thermal water, mud therapy & sunbathing

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Stress-relief programs
2. Nature based mindfulness programs (forest medicine)
3. Rejuvenation packages

Serbia's thermal spa tourism is defined by healing waters, therapeutic muds, natural gases, unspoiled nature and centuries-old traditions. Combined with rehabilitation expertise, modern wellness services and welcoming destinations, it offers exceptional experiences at affordable prices.

Natasa Ranitovic, President of the Cluster Wellness Serbia



Member country: Slovakia

ASSOCIATION OF SLOVAK SPAS (Asociácia slovenských kúpeľov ASK)

31. medical spas facilities in 26 spa locations



Slovakia is small country, but extremely rich in natural healing resources (natural mineral and thermal waters, peloids and climatic conditions suitable for treatment (mountain and high-mountain). Spectrum of types of healing waters are very rich – all types used for balneotherapy are occurring in Slovakia, except radon waters. Some are very rare and unique. It is for the quality and variety of healing waters that the spa industry has very rich many centuries history. Climatic conditions suitable for treatment are nowadays very important not only in treatment of respiratory diseases, but also in case of psychosomatic problems and for rehabilitation of oncological patients.

Did you know? Slovakia was the first EU country to provide medical spa services for post-COVID patients, demonstrating strong innovation and responsiveness in public health.

Natural healing resources

Thermal and mineral healing waters, organic and inorganic peloids, healing climate conditions, microclimatic healing conditions in caves.

Climate & environment

Slovakia offers varied therapeutic environments, from lowland spas to high mountain climates. Clean air, forested landscapes, and karst cave microclimates support respiratory, mental, and physical health, making the country an ideal year-round destination for spa and wellness tourism.

Medical indications

All 12 medical indication groups for spa therapy are in official Indication list
In recent years, Slovak Spas have also introduced specialized programs targeting spinal herniation, obesity, mental health, and cancer care – reflecting their commitment to evidence-based practice and patient-centered innovation.

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Preventive Health Programmes

1. Obesity as risk factor of the most frequent diseases
2. Burnout syndrome – program focused on early symptoms
3. "Back school" focused on early spine problems

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

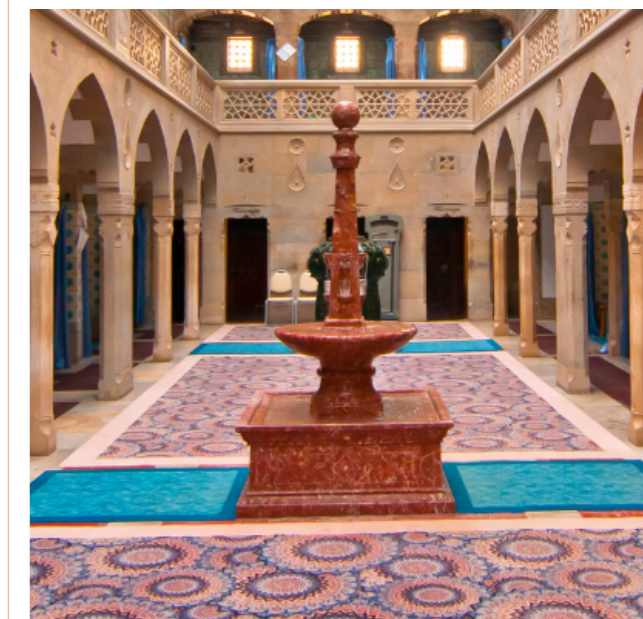
1. Early rehabilitation after operations and injuries
2. Rehabilitation after serious diseases (cancer, stroke...)
3. Rehabilitation as part of management of chronic diseases

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Antistress programme
2. Healthy life-style education programme
3. Relax in spa environment

"In Ministry of Health is working the State Spa Commission responsible for protection and recognition of all natural healing resources. This administrative body recognizes the spa as medical facility -part of healthcare system. Spa facilities offer complex therapy – internal and external balneotherapy, climatotherapy, therapies of physical medicine, physiotherapy, ergotherapy, psychotherapy, healthy nutrition – all recognised as part of health care."

Dr. med. Janka Zalesakova, President of Slovak Spas Association, Vice-chairwomen of State Spa Commission in Ministry of Health



Member country: Slovenia

SLOVENIAN SPA ASSOCIATION

Skupnost slovenskih naravnih zdravilišč

365 days for health and well-being



Slovenia is a globally unique health destination – on a small yet extremely diverse territory, it combines one of the highest concentrations and diversities of natural healing factors in the world, positioning Slovenia among the leading destinations for health, prevention, and long-term wellbeing. The Slovenian Spa Association (SSNZ) brings together 12 certified natural health resorts across Slovenia, each harnessing the power of unique thermal and mineral springs, situated at the crossroads of the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Karst, and the Pannonian Plain.

Natural healing resources

Slovenian natural health resorts feature thermal and mineral springs complemented by numerous other natural healing factors: seawater and brine, diverse climatic conditions, inhalation aerosols, healing mud, mineral peloids, and Pohorje peat. A unique feature of Slovenian waters is their exceptional diversity and efficacy – thermal water temperatures range from 32 to 73°C, including CO₂-rich Radenska and the black thermal water in Moravske Toplice.

Professional Tradition and Scientific Foundation

Slovenian natural health resorts have over 600 years of tradition in treating patients using natural healing resources. The system of certified natural health resorts is based on strict legislation and medical evidence, ensuring legitimacy and credibility on the international market.



Preventive Health Programmes

1. Healthy ageing and longevity
2. Anti-stress and immune-boosting programs
3. Detox and weight management programs
4. Healthy spine programs
5. Health screenings and early diagnostics
6. Maternity and women's health programs

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Hydrotherapy, balneotherapy, and thalassotherapy
2. Inhalation treatments, fango and peloid applications
3. Manual therapies
4. Physiotherapy and supervised exercise
5. Rehabilitation after injury or surgery
6. Personalized diagnostics and medical follow-up
7. Evidence-based therapies led by spa medicine specialists

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Holistic wellness and aquafun experiences
2. Forest bathing and eco-retreats
3. "Selfness and Mindfulness" concepts
4. Nature-inspired relaxation with local culinary experiences

Holistic Wellbeing Ecosystem
Slovenian natural health resorts create a comprehensive ecosystem of wellbeing. At the center is the individual, their needs, lifestyle, and active role in maintaining their own health.

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Member country: Spain

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPAS (ANBAL)

Balnearios de Espana

Natural healing, Spanish spirit



The National Association of Spanish Spas (ANBAL) brings together more than 60 certified thermal spas across Spain, each recognized for their natural mineral-medicinal waters officially declared of Public Utility. Situated across diverse regions – from mountainous interiors to coastal environments – Spanish spas combine ancient healing traditions with advanced medical spa services and wellness programmes. ANBAL's mission is to protect, promote, and innovate within the spa sector, ensuring high-quality therapeutic and preventive care grounded in natural healing and Spanish hospitality.

Natural healing resources

- Mineral-medicinal waters (thermal, sulphurous, bicarbonate-rich, etc.)
- Therapeutic gases (e.g. carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulphide in some spas)
- Peloids and healing muds
- Natural steam and inhalation therapies
- Saline and mineral-rich waters for hydrotherapy

Other: Spanish spas are located in diverse natural environments – from coasts to mountains – offering clean air, therapeutic microclimates, and ideal conditions for recovery, respiratory health, and relaxation.

Climate & environment

Spanish spas are located in serene natural surroundings: mountains, forests, riverbanks, and coastal areas. The diversity of Spain's geography ensures year-round spa access with beneficial climates that support physical and mental health, rehabilitation, and stress relief.

Medical indications

Musculoskeletal and rheumatic conditions, respiratory disorders, circulatory and metabolic diseases, skin conditions, digestive problems, and post-operative or post-COVID recovery.

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Preventive Health Programmes

1. Healthy ageing and longevity
2. Immune support and revitalisation
3. Cardiovascular prevention
4. Stress reduction and burnout recovery
5. Detox and metabolic balance
6. Women's and men's health
7. General wellness check-ups

Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

1. Hydrotherapy and balneotherapy
2. Inhalation and therapeutic gas treatments
3. Peloid applications and mud therapy
4. Physiotherapy and kinesiotherapy
5. Manual therapy and therapeutic massage
6. Post-surgical and chronic condition recovery
7. Personalised diagnostics and spa medicine supervision

Well-being & Lifestyle Programmes

1. Thermal wellness circuits and spa rituals
2. Relaxation and anti-stress retreats
3. Mindfulness and lifestyle coaching
4. Beauty and rejuvenation treatments
5. Couples, family, and solo spa holidays

Spanish spas integrate tradition with innovation through sustainable spa operations, digital wellness tools, and medical spa research. The Spanish Spa Club promotes international recognition of the sector, while "Q for Quality" certifications guarantee excellence. Spain is one of Europe's leading destinations for scientifically grounded, naturally inspired spa and wellness tourism.



THERMAUVERGNE

(Association Thermale d’Auvergne)

Healing Heritage, Innovative Future



At the heart of France, Auvergne’s spa towns have welcomed visitors for centuries, offering an exceptional combination of natural beauty, mineral-rich springs, and world-class therapeutic expertise. Thermauvergne is an intermunicipal organisation dedicated to advancing medical thermal cures and health stays, while safeguarding and enhancing this unique natural resource.

It unites 11 renowned spa resorts: Bourbon-l’Archambault, La Bourboule, Châteauneuf-les-Bains, Châtel-Guyon, Chaudes-Aigues, Le Mont-Dore, Néris-les-Bains, Royat-Chamalières, Saint-Nectaire, Vichy, and Évaux-les-Bains.

The association’s mission is to:

- promote the activities of spa towns,
- support development and diversification projects,
- strengthen the Auvergne Thermale brand to boost visibility and competitiveness.

In addition, Thermauvergne works to structure and market the region’s medical thermal offer, enhance accommodation standards through its furnished rentals classification system, and contribute to national initiatives such as observatories and promotional campaigns.

Natural healing resources of Thermauvergne:

- The hottest natural waters in Europe at Chaudes-Aigues (up to 82 °C)
- Bicarbonate-rich and CO₂-infused waters of Royat and Vichy
- Unique mineral compositions with distinct therapeutic benefits

Climate & Environment

Located in the pristine landscapes of the Massif Central, Auvergne’s spa towns are surrounded by forests, volcanic heritage, and microclimates that enhance therapeutic effects. Clean air and tranquil natural settings support recovery and prevention.

Innovation Spotlight

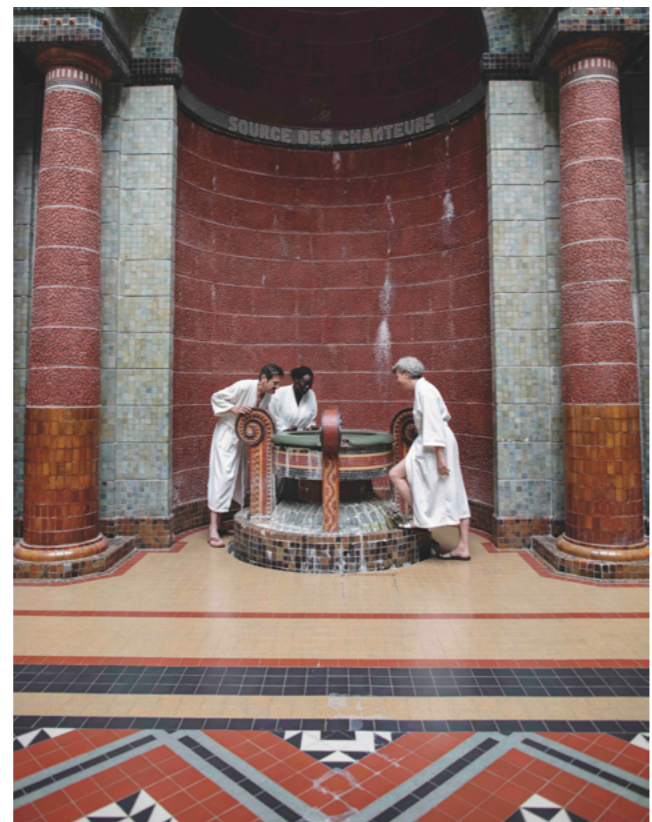
Thermauvergne European cooperation projects:

- **InnovaSPA (2017–2022)** – innovation in spa medicine
- **ThermEcoWat (2024–2026)** – sustainable water management, energy efficiency, and climate adaptation

- **ThermUSS Project** – led by the University of Clermont Auvergne and Thermauvergne, promoting the “Full Health Thermal Spa Resort” concept under the One Health vision.

“This unique combination of tradition, medical expertise, and forward-looking innovation positions Auvergne as a pioneer in European public health – a place where science, nature, and culture unite for lasting well-being.”

Marion Roussel, ThermEcoWat & GreenSPAS projects coordinator



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ENSANA HEALTH SPA GROUP

Europe’s Largest Medical Spa Network

– Where Nature Meets Science



About the Advisory Member

Ensana Health Spa Group is Europe’s largest medical spa operator, with nearly 30 hotels across six countries. Blending centuries-old balneotherapy with modern diagnostics, Ensana offers evidence-based health programmes focused on prevention, rehabilitation, and lifestyle medicine. Key areas include musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, dermatological, respiratory, metabolic, and post-oncology care. Renowned for its natural healing resources—thermal waters, healing mud, and therapeutic climates—Ensana provides personalised care with proven medical outcomes. International guests trust Ensana’s unique combination of tradition, science, and holistic health for long-term vitality and well-being.

The Advisory Member’s Mission

- To bridge natural resources with cutting-edge medical science
- To deliver holistic healing, rehabilitation, and prevention services
- To expand access to long-term health through personalised, innovative approaches

Ensana champions a multidisciplinary approach to sustainable health and wellbeing, aligning nature’s power with scientific precision.

Natural healing resources of of the Advisory Member

- Thermal mineral waters
- Healing mud and peat
- Seawater therapies
- Therapeutic climate and forest environments

Climate & Environment

Ensana’s spa destinations are set in naturally rich and climatically beneficial environments – from historical towns in Central Europe to coastal locations in the UK and Romania. Clean air, tranquil surroundings, and unique hydrogeological conditions support recovery, regeneration, and long-term vitality.

Innovation Spotlight

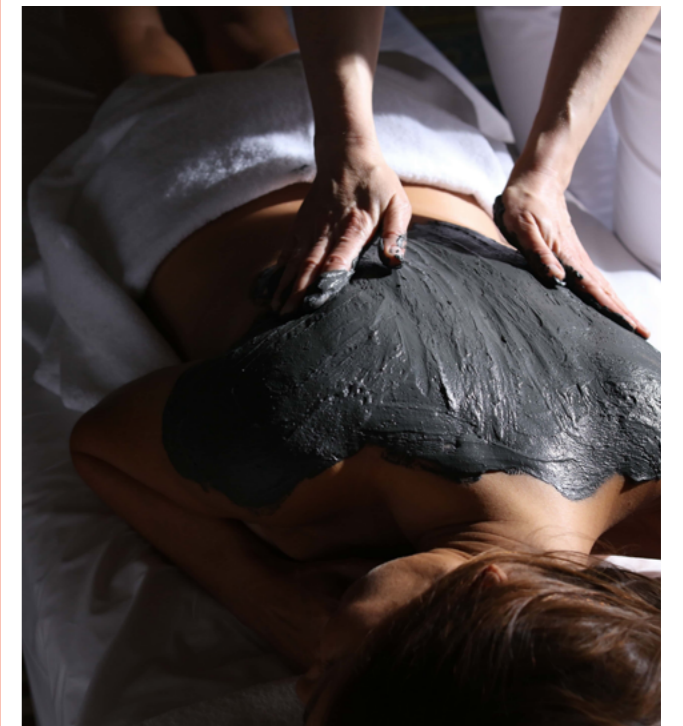
Ensana is redefining modern spa medicine by integrating scientific insight with nature-based therapies. Their diverse health programmes include:

- Preventive Health: Comprehensive Medical Check-up, Healthy Ageing, Cardiometabolic Risk Prevention

- Medical Rehabilitation: Oncology Recovery, Respiratory Therapy, Parkinson’s Rehabilitation
- Wellbeing & Lifestyle: Weight Loss Retreats, Detox, Hormonal Balance Programmes

“By combining Europe’s most powerful natural healing resources with science-backed diagnostics and functional health strategies, we are redefining modern spa health. Our programmes offer a fully personalised, prevention-focused approach to long-term vitality. We believe everybody has a right to good health – and it’s our long-term goal to make that possible.”

JUDr. Petra Bailey, MBA, Vice President, Ensana Health Spa Group & ESPA Board Member



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INSTITUTE OF SPA AND BALNEOLOGY (ILaB)

Rich Spa Tradition – Evidence-Based Balneology and Spa Medicine



About the Advisory Member

The Institute of Spa and Balneology (ILaB) is a public research institution in the Czech Republic dedicated to spa medicine, natural healing resources, and health tourism. Based in the historic spa region of Karlovy Vary, ILaB builds upon the centuries-old Czech balneological tradition while advancing modern clinical research, sustainability, and international cooperation. ILaB unites experts in medicine, natural sciences, and socioeconomics to restore the scientific foundation of spa therapy and promote holistic, evidence-based approaches to prevention, rehabilitation, and long-term well-being.

The Advisory Member's Mission

- To revitalise and modernise spa medicine through science
- To promote Czech spa traditions globally
- To support sustainable health tourism with clinical and economic impact

With a strong healthcare system and modern infrastructure, the Czech Republic remains a leading European destination for therapeutic spa care.

Natural healing resources of of the Advisory Member

- Thermal waters and potable mineral springs
- Peat, peloids (organic and inorganic)
- Radon, natural gases, microclimate
- Unique regional climate conditions

These resources form the basis of scientifically validated treatments for a wide range of chronic conditions, supported by traditional spa therapy protocols.

Climate & Environment

Karlovy Vary and the wider Czech spa region offer an ideal setting for healing: clean air, peaceful forests, and mineral-rich landscapes. The environment itself plays a therapeutic role, enhancing physical recovery and mental well-being.

Innovation Spotlight

ILaB pioneers research that merges tradition with innovation. Focus areas include:

- Spa therapy for lifestyle diseases and metabolic disorders

- Women's health and hormonal balance
- Mental wellness, active ageing, and digital detox programmes
- Post-oncology and renal recovery therapies

"Czech spa medicine uniquely combines centuries-old balneological traditions with modern clinical research. Our therapies offer scientifically validated benefits in the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases."

Ing. Alina Huseynli, MBA, Director, Institute of Spa and Balneology



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AQUA TREATMENT AD

Shaping the Future of Spa Luxury Through Strategic Investment

About the Advisory Member

Aqua Treatment AD is a Bulgarian real estate development and investment company dedicated to transforming spa tourism through visionary projects rooted in natural healing and high-end hospitality. In close partnership with the global Accor Group, the company spearheads the development of the prestigious Swissôtel Sapareva Banya resort and projects in Cyprus, Montenegro, Switzerland, and Finland.

The Advisory Member's Mission

- To develop tomorrow's spa lifestyle experiences through premium property and wellness design.
- To introduce world-class hospitality standards in health-oriented resorts.
- To unlock the potential of natural healing resources through modern investment and infrastructure.

Natural healing resources of of the Advisory Member

Situated in Sapareva Banya, one of Bulgaria's most renowned thermal locations, rich in healing mineral springs and home to the country's only geyser. The resort features a state-of-the-art spa and medical clinic, leveraging these natural assets for holistic wellness interventions.

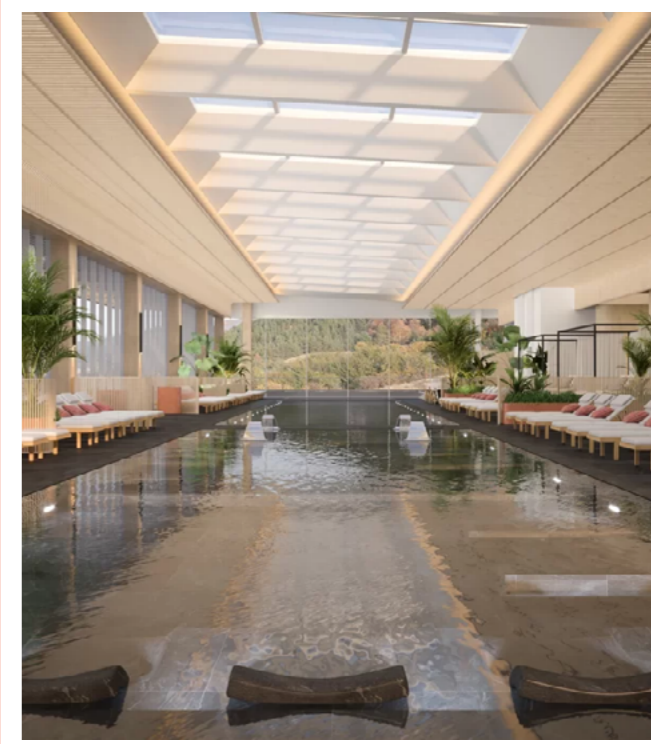
Climate & Environment

Set above the town of Sapareva Banya, the resort offers sweeping views of the valley and the Rila Mountains, nestled within untouched nature and pristine surroundings—an ideal setting for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Innovation Spotlight

The upcoming Swissôtel Sapareva Banya is a 5-star luxury spa resort spanning 22,000 m² across seven storeys, including medical facilities, wellness suites, and landscaped gardens, scheduled to open in 2026. The project redefines regional wellness tourism by integrating clinical-grade treatments with five-star hospitality.

"Our vision marries genuine natural healing with world-class wellness infrastructure, positioning this resort as a benchmark for spa luxury in the region."



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DEGGENDORF INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (DIT)

Germany's Rapidly Expanding Applied Sciences University

About the Advisory Member

Deggendorf Institute of Technology (DIT) is a public university of applied sciences in Lower Bavaria, Germany, established in 1994. With over 9,000 students and nearly half from abroad across more than 100 nationalities, DIT combines practical expertise with global insight in fields such as technology, business, digitalisation, and health.

The Advisory Member's Mission

- To deliver application-oriented education and cutting-edge research
- To cultivate an international and entrepreneurial mindset among students and staff
- To expand modern learning environments across multiple campuses

DIT promotes hands-on learning and innovation in eight faculties via its flagship Deggendorf campus, the English-only European Campus Rottal-Inn, and the specialised Campus Cham.

Natural healing resources of of the Advisory Member

While not a traditional health spa, DIT actively integrates nature and health into academic and research life:

- Access to therapeutic natural surroundings in Lower Bavaria, ideal for stress reduction and outdoor activity
- Health and sustainability incorporated into study programmes in Public Health, Environmental Technology, and Medical Informatics
- Research in digital health, climate adaptation, and smart mobility supporting long-term wellbeing

These resources reflect DIT's broader commitment to One Health principles—linking human, environmental, and technological health for sustainable futures.

Climate & Environment

Situated in picturesque Bavaria near Munich, Austria, the Czech Republic and the Alps, DIT's locations offer a unique blend of history, natural beauty, and modern facilities—perfect for both study and leisure.

Innovation Spotlight

DIT collaborates with more than 200 global institutions and hosts nearly 50% international students.

Its applied R&D focuses on real-world impact in digital health, smart energy, circular economy, and AI. Since 2023, DIT has held independent doctoral-awarding rights, confirming its research leadership among German universities of applied sciences.



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SHENZHEN ACADEMY

中欧温泉学院

Sino-Europe Spa Academy

About the Advisory Member

Founded in 2015, the Shenzhen Qianhai Sino-Europe Spa Academy connects the long-standing heritage of European hydrotherapy with the rapidly growing Chinese wellness and health tourism sector.

With strong links to thermal medicine and related services since the creation, the Academy acts as a vibrant bridge between cultures, combining centuries of European spa tradition with the millennial practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine. To best respond to the needs of its Chinese partners, the Academy has assembled a dedicated project team with top-level thermal medicine trainers, doctors, architects and operators. International consultants from the field of thermal services and hospitality sector contribute expertise, with education placed at the heart of its mission.

The Advisory Member's Mission

- Transfer European thermal medicine and hydrotherapy know-how into the Chinese market
- Provide the medical use of hot springs
- Build the first integrated concept Thermalism Traditional Chinese medicine in China and Europe.
- Conduct scientific research and innovation under the support of Chinese and French universities and hospitals.
- Full-cycle consultancy for spa projects
- medical use of hot springs, set up study, technical assistance, medical integration, sustainable operations.

Innovation Spotlight

Building a new education/certification system for Thermalism + Traditional Chinese Medicine in China and France, supporting talent exchange. A vibrant bridge between European hydrotherapy heritage and China's proactive health future, fostering education, sustainability and innovation.

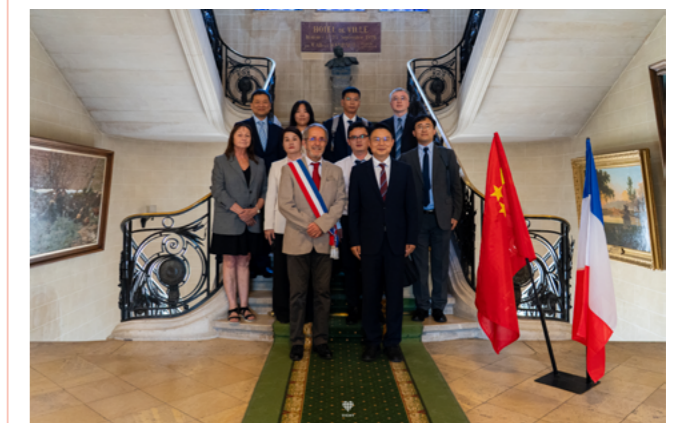
Unique Assets

Strong partnerships with BRGM, Bordeaux University, French Institute of Thermalism, French Association for thermal research, Vichy. Thermal medicine education programs for hydrotherapists, medical professionals and spa operators.

Achievements

East Lake thermal hotel, in Tengchong- Yunnan
Owned by Tengchong Hengyi Dongshan Health Tourism Development Co.Ltd
Opening November 15th 2022

Sijiguanghua project – Shuleshi thermal hotel in Chengdu - Sichuan
Owned by Millenium investment group - Singapore
Opening November 28th 2024



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TBILISI BALNEOLOGICAL SPA RESORT

Georgia's Premier Balneotherapy Destination



About the Advisory Member

Founded in 1938 and honoured with cultural heritage status in 1998, Tbilisi Balneological Spa Resort is a distinguished medical, diagnostic, and rehabilitation institution in the heart of Abanotubani, Tbilisi. Renowned for its sulphur-rich mineral waters and volcanic healing mud, the resort offers state-of-the-art medical and wellness services that blend tradition with modern excellence.

The Advisory Member's Mission

- To preserve and modernise Georgia's centuries-old hydrotherapy traditions.
- To deliver integrated therapeutic, rehabilitation, and wellness services.
- To provide exceptional patient and guest experiences with advanced diagnostics and spa care.

Natural healing resources of of the Advisory Member

- Sulphuric mineral springs with renowned therapeutic properties.
- Healing volcanic mud applications.
- A rich array of balneological treatments—including sulfur baths, Charcot showers, Thalasso Vichy, mud therapy, and specialised physiotherapy.

Climate & Environment

Nestled in historic Abanotubani, the resort blends Tbilisi's heritage architecture with tranquil healing spaces. The natural urban setting, combined with geothermal features and heritage charm, enhances both physical and mental restoration.

Innovation Spotlight

A fully renovated in 2017, the resort stands at the intersection of tradition and innovation. Its comprehensive offerings include wellness packages such as hydrotherapy, group fitness, cosmetology, and modern rehabilitation supported by medical diagnostics.

"Balneological tradition and modern medical rehabilitation converge here in Tbilisi's most historic corner—where sulphur rich springs meet cutting edge wellness."

Balneo Georgia team



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30 YEARS OF THE EUROPEAN SPAS ASSOCIATION

Interview with Csilla Mezősi, Secretary General of ESPA



The European Spas Association (ESPA) was founded in 1995 to unite Europe's diverse spa and health traditions under one roof. As ESPA celebrates its 30th anniversary, we spoke with Csilla Mezősi, Secretary General, about the association's milestones, the evolution of health tourism, and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Q1. Why was ESPA's founding in 1995 so significant?

The establishment of ESPA in 1995 marked a milestone for the industry, founded by Joachim Lieber and Reinhard Petry. For the first time, Europe's rich but fragmented spa and health resort traditions were united under one umbrella. At a moment when the EU was strengthening its internal market, ESPA gave the sector a common voice, established shared quality standards, and positioned spas at the European level. This laid the foundation for seeing spas not only as local or national resorts, but as key players in Europe's health and tourism landscape.

Q2. Since its founding, how has ESPA shaped cross-border cooperation and standards in spa and wellness tourism?

ESPA has become a platform for sharing knowledge, research, and best practices across borders. Through European conferences, joint projects, and initiatives such as the ESPA Innovation Awards, a culture of benchmarking was created. Quality standards for thermal and health destinations — currently being updated — now serve as a guide for investors, operators, and guests. To strengthen global recognition, ESPA has also supported the launch of the Medical Pavilion at ITB and awards for Europe's best health destinations. These efforts have increased credibility, innovation, and visibility on the international stage.

Q3. How would you define "health tourism," and how does it differ from medical and wellness tourism?

Health tourism focuses on preventive and health-promoting offers — from thermal and mineral baths to spa programs, exercise, nutrition, and relaxation. It is evidence-based, supervised by professionals, and rooted in natural remedies such as healing waters, therapeutic mud, or climates.

Medical tourism, by contrast, centers on necessary interventions such as surgeries or specialized treatments. Wellness tourism is lifestyle-oriented and emphasizes relaxation or fitness without a direct medical link.

Health tourism bridges both worlds: preventive, science-based, and non-invasive — but at the same time experiential and travel-related, thanks to its unique connection with natural local resources, which have healing effects.

Q4. The buzzword "longevity" often appears in wellness and health tourism. What does it mean in practice for the industry?

Longevity is about extending healthy life years through prevention, diagnostics, and lifestyle interventions. For spas, this means moving beyond relaxation to become true competence

centers for prevention and sustainable living. Today, health resorts combine natural remedies with modern diagnostics, digital health tools, and personalized therapies. This integration allows guests to receive programs tailored to their age, condition, and goals — supporting better health and quality of life over the long term.

Q5. Will longevity revolutionize tourism? How are spas, clinics, and resorts adapting?

Yes longevity is reshaping demand. Guests are no longer satisfied with short breaks; they increasingly seek programs that help them age healthily, manage stress, and prevent disease. Spas are responding with personalized stays that combine exercise, nutrition, sleep, mental health, and check-ups. Advanced services like micronutrient analyses, DNA and stress testing, and digital follow-up tools are becoming part of the experience.

At the same time, the unique value of natural resources — mineral waters, mud, or climate therapies — remains at the core, connecting medical expertise with tradition and nature.

Q6. What opportunities and challenges lie ahead for European spa and health tourism in the next ten years?

Opportunities:

- Rising demand for prevention and sustainable, green health destinations
- Integration of digital health tools for personalized care and continuity after the stay
- Positioning European destinations as global leaders thanks to unique natural resources and centuries-old traditions and know-how

Challenges:

- Adapting to climate change, ecological pressures, and economic shifts
- Securing skilled professionals in health and tourism
- Consistently embedding sustainability — energy, mobility, resource use — in line with EU programs

Overall, the strength of European spa medicine lies in its combination of tradition, natural resources, and innovation. This positions Europe as a pioneer in global health tourism for decades to come.

The takeaway

From its beginnings in 1995 to its role today as a driver of standards, innovation, and visibility, ESPA has shaped the identity of health tourism in Europe. The association continues to strengthen its position as a global pioneer — uniting tradition, natural resources, and modern health solutions to ensure that European spas remain at the forefront of wellbeing and prevention worldwide.

HEALTH TRAVEL WITH A PURPOSE

Interview with Claudia Wagner, Managing Director of FIT Reisen



The health travel sector is experiencing remarkable growth, driven by guests who are seeking not only relaxation but measurable health benefits. We spoke with Claudia Wagner, CEO of FIT Reisen, about what makes Europe unique in this field, which wellness trends are shaping the market, and how providers can stand out in an increasingly competitive industry.

Q1. The health travel segment is booming worldwide. What is driving this growth?

Travellers want more than relaxation. Increasingly, they're looking for holistic experiences that combine spa therapies, fitness, nutrition, and preventive health programmes. What makes Europe especially attractive is that many of these programmes are rooted in nature — thermal waters, healing mud, mineral springs, or a specific climate that you simply can't find anywhere else. These natural remedies turn a trip into something unique and authentic, where the medical benefits come directly from the place itself. This trend is particularly strong among the so-called Best Ager (50+) and guests who are focused on longevity.

"Authenticity and measurable results are the key to building trust and long-term guest loyalty."

Q2. Which types of programmes are most in demand right now?

We see seven clear trends shaping the market:

- **Longevity & Anti-Ageing** — Guests over 50 are especially interested in staying active and maintaining vitality. Programmes often include anti-ageing treatments, nutrition advice, fitness, and mindfulness practices. Natural remedies such as thermal waters and mud therapies often complement these approaches.

- **Active Retreats** — Yoga, hiking, cycling, and aqua fitness appeal to all generations, with personalised training helping guests build strength, flexibility, and mental balance. Many destinations make the most of their natural surroundings — from mountain trails to seaside climates.

- **Detox & Nutrition** — From fasting and anti-inflammatory diets to gut health programmes, often paired with spa treatments or nutrition workshops. Local spring waters and plant-based remedies are an essential part of many detox concepts.

- **Stress & Resilience** — Meditation, breathing techniques, digital detox, and relaxation therapies are increasingly popular, particularly with corporate and urban clients. Here again, natural environments — whether forests, sea air, or alpine climate — amplify the results.

- **Medical & Preventive Health** — Guests want solutions for modern lifestyle conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, or obesity. These packages combine health checks, tailored programmes, and expert consultations. In Europe, many also integrate balneology, climatotherapy, or traditional natural remedies.

- **Premium Escapes** — A growing segment combines therapeutic elements with luxury accommodation, healthy cuisine, and personalised services. The difference is that you can enjoy this in unique, nature-based settings — whether on the Adriatic coast, in the Alps, or in historic spa towns.

- **Mind-Body Integration** — Programmes that unite physical activity, nutrition, and mental balance for long-term lifestyle change. Natural remedies and the specific healing environments of spa regions are often key elements.

"Guests increasingly seek programmes that combine measurable health benefits with authentic natural remedies."

Q3. What are the key success factors for providers?

Personalisation and measurable results are critical. Guests expect programmes that not only relax them but also improve health outcomes. Equally important is authenticity: programmes tied to local remedies and nature give destinations a unique selling point in a global market. Health destinations that address modern health challenges — from stress to chronic conditions — and combine this with natural strengths have a strong advantage. The Best Ager and longevity segment is particularly valuable, but the demand is truly cross-generational.

The Takeaway

As health travel continues to expand, FIT Reisen shows how combining local remedies with modern health expertise creates truly distinctive experiences. By focusing on personalisation, authenticity, and tangible results, Europe's wellness destinations can secure their place as leaders in a global market that is shifting towards prevention, longevity, and sustainable wellbeing.



OPENING ISRAELI DOORS TO EUROPEAN HEALTH TOURISM

Interview with Adi Azoulay, President of Passport Group International



Through its media partnership with PassportNews, the European Spas Association (ESPA) has opened new opportunities for its members in the Israeli tourism market. We spoke with Adi Azoulay, Owner of Passport Group, the leading media for travel, aviation, and lifestyle in Israel, about the collaboration and its results.

Q1. PassportNews, part of Passport Group, is a key media outlet in Israel's tourism industry. How did the cooperation with ESPA begin, and why was it significant?

The cooperation grew out of a shared vision: to present European health destinations in a fresh, modern light to the Israeli market. Israel is a strong outbound tourism country, but health tourism was not always top of mind. Through our partnership with ESPA, we were able to highlight the unique value of Europe's spa resorts — not only for relaxation, but also for prevention, rehabilitation, and sustainable health.

Q2. ESPA also benefited from EU-funded cooperation projects. What role did these play?

In 2023, European Spas launched a successful EU-funded campaign with the European Travel Commission on European health destinations. The campaign focused on media and social media performance, raising awareness of the different health issues that medical spa resorts can treat, and showcasing the modern image and new services — such as sleep, nutrition, and climate programmes — at European health resorts. This was an important step in positioning Europe as a leading health tourism destination and in attracting Israeli travelers with high expectations for both quality and innovation.

Q3. What concrete results came out of this collaboration?

The results are already tangible. Following the ESPA Congress in Piešťany, Slovakia, the first contracts for charter flights were signed. Since then, these frequencies have expanded year after year, bringing a steadily growing number of Israeli visitors to Slovakia. A similar revival took place in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic, further cementing its position as both a traditional and modern spa hub.

Even more exciting has been the success in new territories. After the ESPA Congress in Druskininkai, Lithuania, charter connections to Vilnius and Kaunas were launched. For the first time, Lithuania welcomed two new charter destinations from Israel, and demand proved overwhelming. Lithuania's healthcare services — from competitive pricing and medical quality to rehabilitation standards and contemporary resort design — fully meet the expectations of Israeli customers.

New flights to Bulgaria have also created opportunities. Once primarily known for casinos, Bulgaria is now gaining recognition for its high-quality healthcare, mountain resorts, and attrac-

tive spa destinations. Charter flights from Israel now connect not only to Sofia and Varna, but also to the newly added destination of Plovdiv, encouraging travelers to explore a modern, wellness-oriented image of Bulgaria. For the first time, countries such as Slovakia and Lithuania have entered the list of preferred destinations for Israeli travelers, alongside long-established favorites like Hungary and the Czech Republic. This year, we expect a significant expansion of flights between Israel and Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Slovakia, reflecting both strong demand and deepening bilateral ties.

In addition, we succeeded in bringing Israel's leading TV channel to Sofia to film a special program on Bulgaria's spa offerings. The program was broadcast to millions of viewers in Israel and amplified across all Passport Group media platforms, further boosting visibility and interest in the region.

Q4. How do you see the future of this cooperation?

The potential is huge. Israel's market is very dynamic, and European spa resorts offer exactly what health-conscious travelers are looking for: professional healthcare services, natural treatments, and authentic destinations. Our role is to continue raising awareness, building trust, and showing how European spas combine medical expertise with modern hospitality. Together with ESPA, we will continue to expand media visibility and create new bridges between Israeli travelers and Europe's most attractive health destinations.

Israeli tourists, who on average travel abroad three to four times a year, have increasingly discovered the appeal of nature, wellness tourism, and a broad range of sustainable and diverse experiences in European destinations. We are confident these figures will continue to grow in parallel with the strengthening of our fruitful cooperation.

The takeaway

Through strategic partnerships, media visibility, and EU-backed campaigns, ESPA and Passport Group have succeeded in positioning European health resorts in the Israeli market as destinations of both medical expertise and modern hospitality. With growing demand, new flight routes, and expanded visibility, Israel is becoming a gateway for European health tourism — with ESPA leading the way.



A 360° UNIVERSE OF WELLBEING

Interview with Ioana Marian, Founder of Wellandia



The health spa and wellness industry is transforming, with careers, education, and innovation becoming just as vital as treatments and guest experience. We spoke with Ioana Marian, founder of Wellandia, about how her “360° universe” is helping to connect talent, training, and trusted experiences — and in turn, raising standards across Europe.

Q1. Wellandia calls itself a complete universe — “Wellbeing 360°.” What does this concept mean for your platform?

Wellandia is more than a directory. It's an ecosystem where people can find verified spas, health centres, wellness packages, and trustworthy information about relaxation, nutrition, recovery, and modern wellness technologies. At the same time, it's a professional space for education, career opportunities, and collaboration. “Wellbeing 360°” reflects our mission to support both spa guests and spa professionals — a holistic approach to health and well-being.

Q2. In 2025 you're launching new tools for recruitment, career management, induction, and internships. What industry gap are you solving with these services?

The spa industry struggles with high turnover, a lack of structured career pathways, and challenges in attracting new talent. With our recruitment platform, gamified career structures, induction tools, and internship programmes, we give spa managers practical solutions to retain and motivate staff while opening clear career opportunities for young professionals. This creates stability for employers and growth for employees.

Q3. Your recruitment platform connects spas with universities and schools. How will this shape the future workforce in wellness and spa?

It builds a direct bridge between education and employment. Students and graduates from specialised programmes will see the spa industry not just as a temporary job but as a long-term career. By giving employers unlimited job postings and access to this talent pool, we help professionalise the workforce and ensure a steady flow of well-prepared candidates into the market.

“We give spa managers practical solutions to retain and motivate staff while opening clear career opportunities for young professionals.”

Q4. Training, mentoring, and exchange programmes remain a core part of Wellandia. How do these initiatives support professional growth in the industry?

We believe continuous learning is essential. That's why we offer discounts on accredited training, free mentoring for spa

managers and therapists after their courses, and exchange programmes between spas. These initiatives allow professionals to upgrade their skills, share experiences, and grow within a supportive community.

“It's about creating excellence through collaboration.”

Q5. Wellandia also collaborates with ESPA, offering award winners exclusive memberships. How does this partnership help raise standards across the European spa sector?

ESPA celebrates innovation and quality in spas, and we are proud to support that mission. By offering award winners a 12-month membership with access to recruitment tools, promotion, and education programmes, we help them grow even further. At the same time, we highlight best practices for the entire industry. Together, we are raising the bar for professionalism, innovation, and the guest experience across Europe.

The takeaway

With its 360° approach, Wellandia is creating a bridge between guests, professionals, and the spa industry as a whole. By addressing talent gaps, supporting continuous learning, and fostering collaboration with organisations such as ESPA, Wellandia is setting a new standard — one where wellbeing is not just experienced, but also built into the very foundations of the industry.

SpaEdu by Wellandia is a winner of the ESPA Innovation Award 2025 in category Innovative Spa Education.

“Competency-based education means projects are not just submitted - they're corrected and refined until they are truly ready to be implemented in the Spa.”

Ioana Marian, Founder of SpaEdu & Wellandia



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF MEDICAL HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATOLOGY (ISMH)

Advancing Science and Collaboration

The International Society of Medical Hydrology and Climatology (ISMH) is a renowned scientific association dedicated to advancing knowledge on the therapeutic effects of natural mineral waters and climate in health and medicine. Guided by its motto - “The healing power of natural mineral water and climate: our concern for Science” - ISMH unites researchers, clinicians, and professionals from around the world to promote evidence-based spa medicine and balneology.

Under the leadership of its President, Prof. C.-F. Roques-Latrille, and with the support of ESPA Ex-President Thierry Dubois, a strong and lasting partnership was built: Every second year, ISMH coordinates the Medical Spa Section at the European Spas Association's Annual Congress, bringing together leading scientists and practitioners to exchange knowledge, present research, and strengthen the scientific foundations of spa and health tourism.

Through its scientific expertise, ISMH plays a key role in fostering collaboration between the medical and spa sectors, ensuring that natural healing resources are better understood, researched, and integrated into modern health strategies. By

bridging science and practice, ISMH enhances the visibility and credibility of spa medicine at European and international levels.

The 48th ISMH World Congress will be held in Banja Koviljača, from May 14-16, 2026.

Congress Topics:

- Pain management and aging
- Balneotherapy in musculoskeletal, dermatological diseases, metabolic conditions, neurological conditions, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular conditions, stress-related disorders, post-cancer, post-COVID
- Economy and management in health resorts
- Integrative medicine
- Balneotherapy in children



HTI - HEALTH TOURISM INDUSTRY

The leading hub for doing health travel and tourism business in Europe

HTI will return to the European Parliament on 24 February 2026, reaffirming its role as the annual flagship platform for dialogue between health and tourism stakeholders. Each year, policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators gather to explore the future of health tourism in Europe, with a special focus on medical spas and climate health resorts, medical services.

The European Spas Association (ESPA) has been a trusted partner since the beginning, ensuring that the voice of Europe's health resorts is heard at the highest policy level. The 2026 edition will highlight breakthroughs in topics like prevention,



longevity, climate therapy, and innovative medical programs. Key themes will include visa policy, mobility, and decarbonisation—pressing challenges that shape the competitiveness of Europe's health destinations.

Beyond policy, the event showcases best practices from across Europe, emphasizing the economic and social value of health tourism for regional development. It has become a catalyst for new EU frameworks that support sustainable growth, bridging the gap between ambition and practical financial support. Dialogue between governments, businesses, and civil society will remain at the heart of the program, strengthening Europe's holistic approach to wellbeing.

On 24 February 2026, the Health Tourism Industry Event will once again symbolize Europe's commitment to innovation, accessibility, and sustainable health and health tourism—powered by the enduring partnership with ESPA.



GreenSPAS – EUROPE’S CLIMATE BLUEPRING FOR SPA TOWNS

From France to Lithuania, partners are rethinking resilience, proving that collaboration and innovation can keep Europe’s thermal heritage alive in a warming world.

Written for ESPA by Marion Roussel, Coordinator of ThermEcoWat and GreenSPAS Projects

Europe’s spa towns are at a crossroads. Rising temperatures, water scarcity and environmental stress are no longer distant threats but daily realities. Communities, businesses and ecosystems feel the strain, while local authorities often lack the knowledge and the policies to respond at scale.

GreenSPAS, an ambitious initiative co-funded by the EU’s Interreg Europe programme, unites partners from France, Belgium, Poland, Austria, Lithuania, Italy and Portugal. Together, they are redefining resilience for spa towns – transforming climate risks into opportunities for renewal.

“Climate change need not erode Europe’s thermal heritage; with innovation and cooperation, it can make it stronger.”

Learning by doing

GreenSPAS has become a laboratory of innovation. Through study visits, workshops and expert exchanges, regions compare what works, uncover where gaps remain, and sharpen their ability to act. The focus is on practical measures: smarter water management, climate-ready infrastructure, greener mobility, and the protection of healing landscapes.

From local lessons to European impact

The project goes beyond dialogue. It is reshaping public policy instruments, equipping regions to redesign strategies and align them with Europe’s climate goals. Dozens of local authorities are already applying these insights – moving from fragmented pilot projects to coherent action plans with funding and measurable impact.

Two truths that matter

- Collaboration is the new currency of resilience. Spa towns that work together outpace those that face climate pressures alone.
- Adaptation is possible. GreenSPAS proves that climate change need not erode Europe’s thermal heritage – it can strengthen it, if innovation and cooperation go hand in hand.



Europe’s spa towns are more than destinations; they are living guardians of natural resources and cultural identity. By blending resilience with innovation, GreenSPAS is ensuring that these communities remain not only viable but vibrant – ready to inspire and thrive for generations to come.

More information: www.interregeurope.eu/greenspas

ThermEcoWat – SPA TOWNS ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Partners across Southern Europe are turning thermal water management into a new model for climate resilience

Written for ESPA by Marion Roussel, Coordinator of ThermEcoWat and GreenSPAS Projects

At the frontline of climate change

Across Southern Europe, spa towns face a common challenge: climate change is destabilising the delicate balance of their thermal water ecosystems – vital resources for health, tourism and local economies. Rising temperatures, shifting rainfall and changing groundwater patterns are placing mounting pressure on these communities.

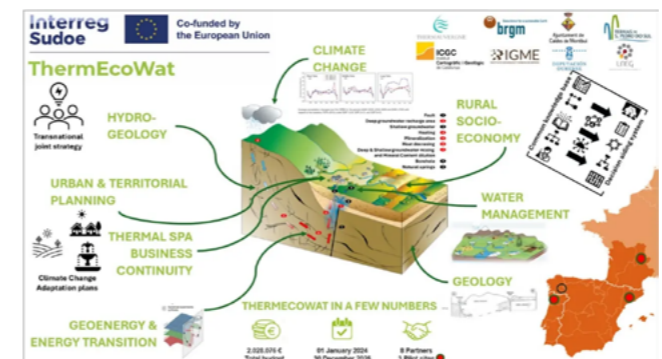
A cross-border response

ThermEcoWat, co-funded by the EU’s Interreg SUDOE programme, unites French, Spanish and Portuguese partners in an ambitious effort to build resilience. By blending hard science, social science and local expertise, the project is developing strategies that integrate energy efficiency, water management and climate adaptation.



Living laboratories

Three pilot sites – Chaudes-Aigues (France), Caldes de Montbui (Spain) and São Pedro do Sul (Portugal) – act as living laboratories. Here, vulnerabilities are assessed, sustainable multi-uses of thermal water are explored, and innovative solutions are tested on the ground.



“Thermal water is more than a resource – it is a lifeline for communities. Protecting it means protecting health, heritage and the future of spa towns.”

From pilots to policy

ThermEcoWat will deliver tangible outcomes: energy audits, optimisation plans, local adaptation roadmaps and regulatory recommendations. Equally important, it will establish a shared knowledge base to guide decision-makers and inspire replication across Europe.

Pioneers of sustainable spa management

By connecting results across borders, ThermEcoWat translates local pilots into a European blueprint. Spa towns emerge as pioneers of sustainable thermal resource management – proving that adaptation is not only possible, but also an opportunity to modernise, innovate and lead.

More information: www.interreg-sudoe.eu



SEA-POWERED HEALTH RENAISSANCE

Interview with Marlies Sobczak conducted by European Spas Association.

Article by Natalija Bah Čad



"Power by the sea. New spirit for thalassotherapy – the use of seawater and marine environment," says Marlies Sobczak, head of ESPA's Thalasso working group. She believes Thalasso is ready for something more than nostalgia.

A Steward of Thalasso's Future

Marlies Sobczak has emerged as a defining voice in thalassotherapy's renewal. As project manager of ESPA's Thalasso working group, she is guiding the shift from seaside tradition to a discipline shaped by standards, professionalism and science. At the recent DHV Congress in Norderney, her influence was clear—thalasso took centre stage as a theme of lifestyle and health.

In Focus

Stronger cooperation, clearer standards

Under Sobczak's lead, ESPA has deepened ties with the German Spas Association and partners across Europe. At Norderney, best practices—from clinics to coastal facilities—

were exchanged, refining criteria that give thalassotherapy consistency and credibility.

Thalasso meets science

The working group is gathering evidence from Germany, France and Romania, where studies confirm the health effects of seawater, marine climate and therapy protocols. The ambition is simple: embed thalasso within documented health outcomes.

Responding to demand

Interest in nature-based, preventive wellness is rising fast. For Sobczak, seaside resorts are ideally placed—where climate and coast converge, thalassotherapy can answer both lifestyle aspirations and medical needs.

Looking Ahead

For Sobczak, the task is clear: bring thalasso closer to people through standardised programmes, professional training and cross-border cooperation. She wants ESPA and its partners to shape services that are forward-looking yet rooted in nature, science and wellbeing. "It is ESPA's assignment to further develop opportunities for Thalasso," she says.

RESONANCE MEET WELLNESS

Interview with Mrs. Eszter Jopp conducted by European Spas Association.

Article by Natalija Bah Čad



*"Traditional healing methods with modern scientific insights"—*that's how Eszter Jopp describes the core of Klangschale Akademie's award-winning Training in Singing Bowl Therapy. For those seeking new paths in spa education, it's a harmonising force.

A New Voice in Spa Education

Eszter Jopp leads Klangschale Akademie, recently honoured by the European Spas Association for marrying sound therapy with wellness and rigorous training. Its modular certification system—most notably the Mother Earth Soundtherapy Center programme—balances artistic tradition with measurable standards. The 2024 Innovative Spa Education award recognised a model that equips spa professionals to introduce sound-based, transformative experiences into the fast-growing world of wellness tourism.

In Focus

Sound as story and science

The programme balances two worlds: the spiritual resonance

of singing bowls and the science of frequency and vibration. For Jopp, sound healing is no background soundtrack—it is a therapeutic practice with measurable outcomes.

Modular, tailored learning

Klangschale's training is designed to fit spa realities. Its flexible modules range from preventive therapy to immersive well-being rituals, with the Mother Earth Soundtherapy Center certification anchoring creativity in clear standards.

Spas, prevention & mental health

Jopp sees particular promise in mental health, one of Europe's pressing concerns. By combining sound therapy with balneology, she argues, spas can deliver swift, effective support for stress, anxiety and psychological balance.

Looking Ahead

For Jopp, the ESPA award is less a trophy than a springboard. Her next step is building alliances—with spas, health-tourism operators and research institutions—to anchor sound therapy in evidence and practice. She imagines spa education of the future where alongside massage and mineral water, resonant sound takes its place as a respected, preventive tool.

WATER'S NEW LANGUAGE

Interview with Marko Gajić conducted by European Spas Association.

Article by Natalija Bah Čad



"Water is not just something we drink—it defines standards, safety, and responsibility," says Marko Gajić, co-founder of the Bled Water Forum. At a time when global trust in what we consume is under scrutiny, his work reclaims water as a clarity and care symbol.

A Champion for Clean Water

Born in Bled, Slovenia, Gajić co-founded the Bled Water Forum to change how we perceive drinking water. What started in 2011 with informal water tastings has evolved into a movement defining new standards, creating the European Water Sommelier Association, and awarding international certificates for water excellence across multiple countries.

In Focus

Taste, trust and terroir

Gajić began with water tastings across Slovenia—simple, playful sessions that revealed how geology shapes flavour. They soon evolved into a platform for serious quality assessment and

public awareness.

Closing blind spots

The 2024 Forum highlighted unwelcome guests—microplastics, PFAS and hormone disruptors. For Gajić, regulation must move faster so that "clean" water also means transparent water.

Certify and educate

The Forum now issues Certificates of Water Excellence and promotes water literacy in schools, gastronomy and utilities—embedding knowledge where it matters most.

Looking Ahead

Gajić envisions a future where water is labelled as clearly as food—classified by use, rated for purity and trusted everywhere. "Knowing what we drink is not just taste—it's dignity," he says. As the Forum expands, partnerships with spas, thermal experts and ministries seem the natural next step.

BALNEOTHERAPY FOR THE MIND

Interview with Ass. Prof. Lolita Rapolienė conducted by European Spas Association.

Article by Natalija Bah Čad



"Natural remedies are not just traditions—they are effective tools against stress, depression and anxiety," says Dr. Lolita Rapolienė, Associate Professor at Klaipėda University. As mental health challenges rise, balneology is proving its relevance in healthcare.

A Researcher at the Forefront

Dr. Rapolienė is among Europe's leading voices in spa medicine. At the recent European Spa & Balneology Congress in Druskininkai, she presented data on how mineral waters and natural therapies restore balance and resilience. In a sector often dismissed as leisure, her evidence-driven work firmly places spa care within healthcare.

In Focus

Nature-powered therapy

A Lithuanian multicenter study confirmed that mineral water, mud and salt-based procedures reduce anxiety, depression and fatigue while improving sleep and skin condition. Benefits

lasted for months, underscoring balneotherapy's lasting effect.

Stress, visibly measured

Her research is notable for going beyond subjective feedback. By tracking biomarkers such as salivary cortisol and skin metrics, she demonstrated measurable improvements—especially in spas with richer mineral compositions. The data underline that nature's chemistry still matters in modern treatment.

Holistic safety & sustainability

Rapolienė also evaluated safety across centers. Side effects were mild, local and temporary, reinforcing that standardized spa medicine is both effective and safe. This positions balneotherapy as an accessible, preventive intervention with real social value.

Looking Ahead

Rapolienė envisions a future where spa medicine is integrated into mainstream healthcare, supported by ongoing research and education. "Balneotherapy is about prevention and dignity in care," she says. "Its future lies in proving measurable value for individuals and society alike."

PROVEN IMPACT – CASE STUDIES FROM ESPA INNOVATION AWARD 2024

Best Practices from Europe’s Leading Health & Spa Resorts

CASE STUDY 1: INNOVATIVE & HEALTH RESORT DESTINATION

WINNER: Druskininkai – Lithuania

Druskininkai, Lithuania’s premier health and climate resort, is redefining spa tourism through a holistic approach to destination development. Guided by a strong commitment to forest preservation, the city seamlessly combines large-scale leisure attractions—such as its landmark water park and the region’s only indoor ski arena—with authentic wellness experiences. Guests can explore a tree climbing park, train at an Olympic-level athlete centre, cycle along 60 kilometres of scenic trails, or engage with rural communities offering eco-farmed food and cultural traditions. Strategic public investments have stimulated private growth in sanatoriums and spas, while a 100% electric public transport system underscores Druskininkai’s dual role as both a wellness hub and an environmental leader.

Result: Druskininkai won as Europe’s most innovative health resort destination, showcasing nature-centric development and sustainable wellness infrastructure.

Jury’s Perspective: The jury praised Druskininkai’s seamless blend of large-scale leisure infrastructure with authentic, eco-friendly wellness offerings, applauding its fully sustainable public transport and strong environmental stewardship as a model for modern spa destinations.



CASE STUDY 2: INNOVATIVE CONCEPT

WINNER: Grifid Hotels

GRIFID Hotels earned top honours for its “360° Concept” Medical SPA Centre at Encanto Beach. Rooted in personalization and sustainability, this concept integrates cutting-edge technologies with locally sourced therapies. Starting with a nutritionist consultation and body-composition analysis, guests receive tailored detox menus and therapies—including hydrotherapy baths, Black Sea mud applications, seaweed detox treatments, and colon hydrotherapy. The program enriches experiences with local organic essential oils and CO₂ extracts from Bulgarian rosa damascena, supported by soft animations and wellness-themed entertainment.

Result: GRIFID Hotels was recognised for a holistic, tech-infused SPA concept merging personalization, authenticity, and green practices.

Jury’s Perspective: The jury highlighted GRIFID’s synthesis of innovation and tradition—its bespoke detox program, use of local botanical extracts, and sustainability ethos—as setting a new benchmark in the realm of spa concept design.



CASE STUDY 3: INNOVATIVE SPA RESEARCH

WINNER: Institute of Spa and Balneology, Czech Republic

The Institute of Spa and Balneology (ILaB) in the Czech Republic emerged as an innovation powerhouse through its CLV research initiative. Launched in mid-2024, the project expands scientific infrastructure across key spa towns like Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně, and Františkovy Lázně. It integrates medical, environmental, and socio-economic studies, creates new research jobs, hosts accredited seminars, organizes public ScienceCafés, and fosters international collaboration. The project elevates the region’s status as a science-led spa destination and reinforces long-term innovation and sustainability in balneology.

Result: ILaB’s award-winning CLV project strengthens spa research infrastructure and establishes Czechia as a leading scientific hub in balneology.

Jury’s Perspective: The jury lauded the Institute’s multidisciplinary research model—melding science, education, and community outreach—as transformative, advancing global spa research and reinforcing sustainable innovation in spa and health tourism.



MEDICAL SPAS WITH PURPOSE: IMPACT AND LEGACY REDefined

ESPA Innovation Award insights highlight the measurable value of wellbeing

Medical spas today is judged not only by the quality of the experience, but by its tangible impact. The industry is moving towards a results-driven model where therapies and environments are expected to demonstrate measurable benefits for health, society and the economy. From lowering stress and improving recovery rates to boosting regional development, the ripple effects of wellness are increasingly visible.

Spas and wellness centres are no longer isolated havens of relaxation; they are becoming recognised contributors to public health and community resilience. The emphasis is shifting towards data, outcomes and long-term value, creating a more accountable and credible sector that can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with healthcare.

“ True medical wellness leaves a legacy of measurable impact—on people’s lives, on society, and on economies.”

Ten Impact & Legacy Trends Redefining Medical Wellness:

- 1. Evidence-based outcomes** – therapies measured and validated by clinical standards.
- 2. Stress reduction** – proven links between wellbeing

practices, lower anxiety and better mental health.

- 3. Faster recovery** – wellbeing increasingly recognised as a complement to medical rehabilitation.
- 4. Boosted immunity** – prevention strategies rooted in lifestyle choices with measurable effects.
- 5. Workforce wellbeing** – corporate health emerging as a driver of productivity and engagement.
- 6. Social inclusion** – accessible services designed to meet the needs of diverse populations.
- 7. Community resilience** – health destinations strengthening local identity and collective pride.
- 8. Economic spillovers** – investments in wellbeing generating tourism growth and regional prosperity.
- 9. Sustainability gains** – health benefits increasingly tied to environmental responsibility.
- 10. Policy integration** – governments beginning to embed prevention into public health strategies.

Future outlook: Impact and benefits are emerging as the true benchmarks of success. The future of health resorts will be defined by its ability to demonstrate value – not only for the individual, but also for communities, economies and healthcare systems. The sector’s credibility will increasingly depend on proving that wellbeing delivers lasting returns.

EVIDENCE IN ACTION

ESPA Innovation Award insights reveal how clinical methods are redefining spa care

Across Europe, spas are moving from comfort-driven havens to clinic-grade programmes with measurable outcomes. New models combine balneology, movement science, psychology, and digital tools to address complex conditions—from fibromyalgia to oncology rehabilitation—while preserving the essence of spa traditions. The decisive shift is towards structured, interdisciplinary protocols, designed with clinical benchmarks and delivered with continuity of care. Evidence, accessibility, and innovation now converge—through reimbursed therapies, telemonitoring, and scalable models that extend benefits far beyond the spa stay.

“The Medical wellness earns trust when it measures what matters—and proves it.”

Ten Innovation Trends Redefining Spa Medicine

- 1. Multimodal rehab** – interdisciplinary, three-week programmes for chronic conditions.
- 2. Clinical benchmarking** – objective testing (6MWT, QoL scales) integrated into protocols.

- 3. Oncology survivorship** – lifestyle-based rehab embedded in reimbursed spa care.
- 4. Non-UV therapies** – blue-light as a safe, effective alternative for skin conditions.
- 5. Virtual rehabilitation** – MDR-certified VR systems combining therapy with engagement.
- 6. Climatotherapy redefined** – natural factors validated by biomedical science.
- 7. Digital continuity** – telemonitoring and apps extending adherence post-stay.
- 8. Professionalisation** – CME courses and public science cafés anchoring spa education.
- 9. Access and scalability** – urban rehab centres, group therapy efficiency, home-use solutions.
- 10. Early diagnosis** – spa-based pathways detecting overlooked conditions.

Future outlook: The next wave of medical spas will be judged not by ambience, but by innovation that delivers measurable, lasting outcomes—positioning the sector as a credible partner in prevention, rehabilitation, and healthcare.

HEALTH DESTINATIONS 2030: TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

ESPA Award Winners Reveal the Future of Health Destinations

1. Clinical-Grade Digital Therapies in Spas

Example: Nivamare's Sleep Balance with chronobiologic light therapy, Eglés Sanatorija Mobile apps for booking, health tracking, OnkoFit-SPA oncology rehabilitation program by Ensana, Telemedicine for obesity care at Savoy Westend

Impact: These programs bring hospital-grade treatments into the spa environment in a motivating and enjoyable form, combining evidence-based medicine with exercises in nature: Improves guest satisfaction, engagement, and repeat visits:

2. Scalable, Data-Driven Group Therapy

Example: VR Medical group sessions (1 therapist for 6+ clients) with automated tracking of motion, reps, reaction times.

Impact: Efficiency + personalization, measurable outcomes, better accessibility.

- **Parkinson's Programme, Pieštany:** Combines physiotherapy, sensory stimulation, and tailored nutrition.
- **Post-COVID Rehabilitation, Luhačovice:** Utilizes MLS laser therapy and VR respiratory training.
- **Cardiovascular Programme, Covasna:** Integrates mofettas and mineral water therapies.
- **Menopause & Andropause, Sairme Resort:** A new chapter in the Life Program addressing hormonal health and wellness.
- **Prevention & Cardio Rehab, Terme Krka:** Offers a comprehensive program combining preventive care with cardiovascular rehabilitation.

Impact: These programs demonstrate the integration of spa traditions, modern therapies, and evidence-based approaches to address specific health conditions while promoting recovery, prevention, and quality of life. Clear positioning, scientific credibility, better long-term outcomes.

3. Biofeedback & Environmental Intelligence

Examples: Mariánské Lázně climate spa with air-quality and weather stations prescribing outdoor activity; sensor beds in Sleep Balance.

Impact: Treatment plans respond to physiological and environmental data.

4. Nature-Powered Unique Therapeutics

Examples: Vranjska Banja, Birštonas mineral water (Dry Mineral Water® Sophia), Sts. Constantine & Helena combining sea climate with thermal waters.

Impact: Authentic, non-replicable assets with strong preventive and therapeutic effects.

5. Evidence-Based & Research-Integrated Spa

Examples: RCT-backed Hungarian medical-water essence; Boxberger Prize-winning osteoporosis research in Bad Pyrmont.

Impact: Measurable patient outcomes, stronger trust from doctors, patients, insurers;

6. Sustainability as Standard Practice

Examples: Preidlhof with hydro & solar energy; Albena with advanced waste management systems, Casa di Fiore, Bálványos with Solar and photovoltaic energy solutions; La Roche-Posay with digital tools to reduce water consumption

Impact: Lower carbon footprint, better reputation, alignment with eco-conscious guests.

8. Green Mobility & Seamless Year-Round Access

Examples: carfree zone at Margitsziget Budapest, EV charging at Eglés Sanatorija, Druskininkai cableway + winter-proof infrastructure.

Impact: Weather-independent spa access, lower emissions, guest convenience.

9. Food-as-Therapy & At-Home Continuum

Examples: Gut-Friendly Nutrition at SPA Vilnius (microbiome-focused dining); Heilsustofnun with the first class organic diet, Biofarm at Hot springs Banya

Impact: Extends benefits beyond the spa stay, reinforces preventive lifestyle changes.

"From nature to neuroscience — medical spas are becoming intelligent healing ecosystems."

Together, these award-winning innovations point to a clear future: health destinations that are smarter, greener, and more deeply personalized—where science meets sustainability to deliver measurable, meaningful impact.

ESPA INNOVATION AWARD

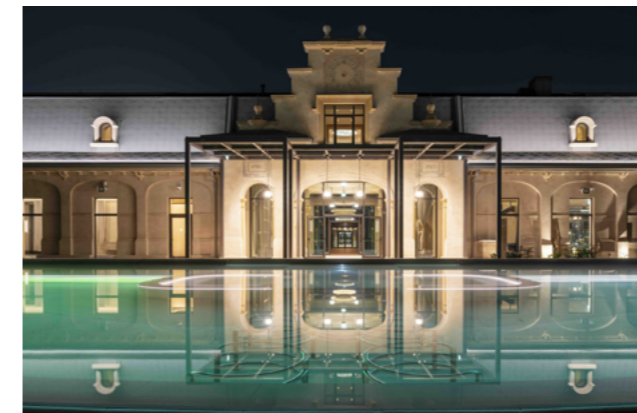
Highlights from the interviews with Innovation Award Winners 2025

De Montel – Terme Milano, Italy

winner in category innovative spa destinations

"De Montel is more than a spa; it's a catalyst for urban regeneration and a model that can inspire cities across Europe to rethink wellness in a sustainable way."

Massimo Caputi, President of Federterme



Gradiali Medical SPA & Wellness spa area, Lithuania

winner in category innovative spa design hotel

"Every element at Gradiali — from the rhythm of light to the whisper of sound - is designed to help guests reconnect with inner calm."

Irmantas Karpis, Head of Sales, Gradiali Medical SPA & Wellness



Medical spa Narva-Jõesuu, Estonia

winner in category innovative medical spa

"There is no strategy powerful enough to compensate for a brain that is running on half-capacity. Chronic stress makes people operate at only 50% of their true potential—and sleep is where that capacity is restored."

Karina Kyppas, CEO in Medical Spa Narva-Joesuu



Oncology rehabilitation programme, ENSANA, Czech Republic

winner of the special jury award in category innovative health spa programme

"One of the most powerful elements of ONKOFIT-SPA is the female community. Women arrive exhausted, but through shared experience and group activities, they rediscover strength, confidence, and hope."

Karel Kalivoda, Cluster General Manager at the Mariánské Lázně



SpaEdu by Wellandia, Romania
winner in category Innovative Spa Education

“CIDESCO accreditation was the goalpost, but not the finish line. The real challenge was aligning international standards with the daily realities of busy Spa managers — and proving that learning can directly improve P&L results.”

Ioana Marian, Founder of SpaEdu & Wellandia

Spa Business Shots - FREE - information of maximum topicality and applicability, but in small doses, as good for strong essences:



Multimodal fibromyalgia rehabilitation, Fürstenhof Klinik, Germany
winner of the specia jury award in category innovative spa research

“Even small step“s, like the 6-minute walk test, can help patients rediscover their ability to influence their own health.”

Dr. Martin Gehlen, Rheumatologist and Chief Physician



The Masak system by Bescored, France
winner in category innovative spa research

“For the first time, we can turn well-being into something measurable, trackable and actionable by combining subjective feelings with objective physiological and cognitive markers—all in under 20 minutes.”

Prof. Cristophe Hausswirth, CEO and Founder of the BeScored Institute and MASAK



Read the interviews at <https://europeanspas.eu/category/espa-innovation-award/>

With the Innovation Award European Spas Association honors visionary leaders and organizations who are redefining health destinations, spa resorts, medical spas, wellness services, and products through innovative, effective, and transformative approaches.

ORIGINALITY AS THE NEW THERAPY

ESPA Innovation Award insights point to a new era of experiential health and leisure

Originality in the nature based health field is increasingly intersecting with medical science. What was once the realm of leisure and relaxation is now evolving into evidence-based, health-oriented environments. The focus is moving from offering comfort to actively supporting physical and psychological wellbeing, harnessing both natural resources and advanced technologies.

Experts point to a decisive transition: spas and wellness centres are no longer passive spaces of indulgence, but adaptive platforms for preventive healthcare. By integrating biofeedback, environmental monitoring and personalised programmes, spa experiences are beginning to mirror the rigour of medical practice. The aim is not only to heal but to optimise – to strengthen resilience, reduce risk, and enhance quality of life.

“The future of wellbeing will be shaped by those bold enough to innovate.”

Ten Originality Trends Redefining Medical Wellness:

- 1. **Immersive architecture** – spaces designed to influence physiological balance.
- 2. **Therapeutic media** – controlled use of light, sound and

visuals for measurable outcomes.

- 3. **Multi-sensory therapies** – engaging multiple neural pathways to accelerate recovery.
- 4. **Programmable health environments** – tailored to circadian rhythms and patient needs.
- 5. **Bio-responsive systems** – integrating wearables and feedback loops into care.
- 6. **Preventive medicine focus** – positioning spas as frontline partners in healthcare.
- 7. **Nature meets science** – mineral waters and climate therapies refined by technology.
- 8. **Wellness as clinical adjunct** – bridging leisure with rehabilitation and recovery.
- 9. **Tradition redefined** – ancient practices validated and enhanced by modern research.
- 10. **Destinations as innovation hubs** – municipalities adopting bold, health-driven visions.

Future outlook: Originality in spa is not simply about aesthetics – it is about clinical relevance. As destinations and operators align more closely with health science, they are laying the groundwork for wellness as a credible form of preventive medicine. The message is clear: the future of wellbeing belongs to those who dare to be different.

SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CORE

ESPA Innovation Award insights reveal how sustainability is reshaping the future of spas

Sustainability is no longer a trend—it is the heartbeat of modern medical spas. Across Europe, spas are proving that green innovation can be as dazzling as it is responsible. From mineral waters drawn on-site to advanced filtration and energy-smart design, every detail is tuned to protect both people and planet. Destinations are embracing this ethos citywide. Druskininkai moves visitors with a 100% electric bus fleet and solar-powered attractions, while Mariánské Lázně safeguards forests and air quality through its new climatic spa status. Together, they signal a clear future: wellness that heals guests while caring for the world around them.

“The future will be judged not only by how it heals people—but by how gently it treats the planet.”

Sustainability in Action: Ten Trends Reshaping Medical Spas

- 1. **On-site resource use** – mineral water, mud, and climate harnessed locally.
- 2. **Low-impact pools** – advanced filtration reducing chemical use.

- 3. **Smart energy systems** – LED, automation, and climate controls.
- 4. **Eco-mobility** – electric transport integrated into resort ecosystems.
- 5. **Renewable power** – solar and geothermal energy fuelling attractions.
- 6. **Climatic spa status** - legal frameworks for preserving environments.
- 7. **Waste reduction** – digital registration, recycled paper, water refill stations.
- 8. **Sustainable/organics treatments** – organic cosmetics and natural product sourcing.
- 9. **Community regeneration** – beyond offsetting and greenwashing.
- 10. **Holistic destinations** – parks, forests, and nature therapy woven into spa experiences.

Future outlook: Sustainability is no longer optional—it is a strategic imperative. Spas that embed eco-conscious practices into every layer, from architecture to treatments and community, will not only earn lasting credibility but also define the global standard for responsible future.

COOLCATIONS: THE RISE OF SUMMER'S COOL ALTERNATIVE

A Shift in Summer Travel

Coolcation

A holiday spent in cooler destinations — such as mountains, northern regions, or coastal areas with mild climates — is chosen as an alternative to traditional hot-weather vacations. Coolcations focus on comfort, health, and sustainability, offering travellers a chance to escape rising summer heat, enjoy restorative nature experiences, and combine relaxation with active wellbeing.

Why It Matters

The trend is unmistakable. Climate change is reshaping travel habits. Health tourism, especially climate health destinations, is on the rise. And travellers are looking for experiences that feel both authentic and restorative. Climate health resorts are answering with offers that pair hiking, spa medicine, and local culture. Iceland's geothermal pools, as well as mountain resorts in France, Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, offer a great combination with thermal waters, and activities in nature stand out as early leaders of this new movement. Countries like the Baltic and the Netherlands are developed for a nordic thalasso movement and a refreshing health-oriented holiday, a hot spot.

"The coolcation isn't just a trend — it's the future of summer travel."



Evidence in Action

This is more than a novelty. Cooler destinations deliver space, stillness, and the simple luxuries of sound sleep, good food, and the energy to stay active without the burden of heat.

Nature as Therapy: Climate Health Destination features mountain climates rich in negative ions, low oxygen variance, and therapeutic air—ideal for treating respiratory ailments and supporting mental well-being. A medical study involving patients with COPD and chronic bronchitis showed that a 2- to 3-week stay led to significant improvements in lung function, walking capacity, dyspnea, and overall quality of life.

The Bottom Line

As summers grow hotter, the choice is simple: follow the sun-drenched crowds, or retreat to the calm and comfort of a cooler escape — at one of ESPA's health destinations.

EU4HEALTH, PREVENTION & NCDs: UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF EUROPE'S MEDICAL SPAS

Integrating medical spas into EU health policy for stronger prevention and NCD management

A Silent Epidemic Across Europe

When most people think of a spa, images of steaming pools, mineral mud, and a retreat from everyday stress come to mind. Yet across Europe, medical spas are emerging as something more significant: key allies in the fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

These chronic conditions — including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, respiratory illness, and depression — now account for nearly 90 percent of deaths in the European Union. They drain around €115 billion each year from healthcare budgets and are responsible for one in four premature deaths before the age of 65. Public health experts warn that medical treatment alone will not be enough. The emphasis must shift toward prevention, healthier lifestyles, and innovative models of care. This is where Europe's medical spas, from Hungary's thermal resorts to France and Italy's alpine clinics, are finding a renewed sense of purpose.

From Tradition to Modern Medicine

Medical spas are anything but a modern fad. For centuries, Europeans have travelled to natural springs and thermal waters in search of healing and relief. What once belonged mainly to tradition and local culture has, over time, gained scientific credibility. Today, treatments such as hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, stress-reduction programmes, and rehabilitation therapies are no longer seen as complementary extras. Backed by clinical research, they are increasingly recognised as effective ways to prevent illness, support recovery, and improve quality of life.

This blend of heritage and evidence positions medical spas uniquely: rooted in Europe's cultural past, yet aligned with the health challenges of its future.

"Medical spas are no longer just luxury retreats," explains Thierry Dubois, President of the European Spas Association (ESPA). *"They are health hubs that combine tradition with innovation. We offer prevention and rehabilitation in one place, helping people change their lifestyles before illness takes hold."*

A Perfect Fit for EU4Health

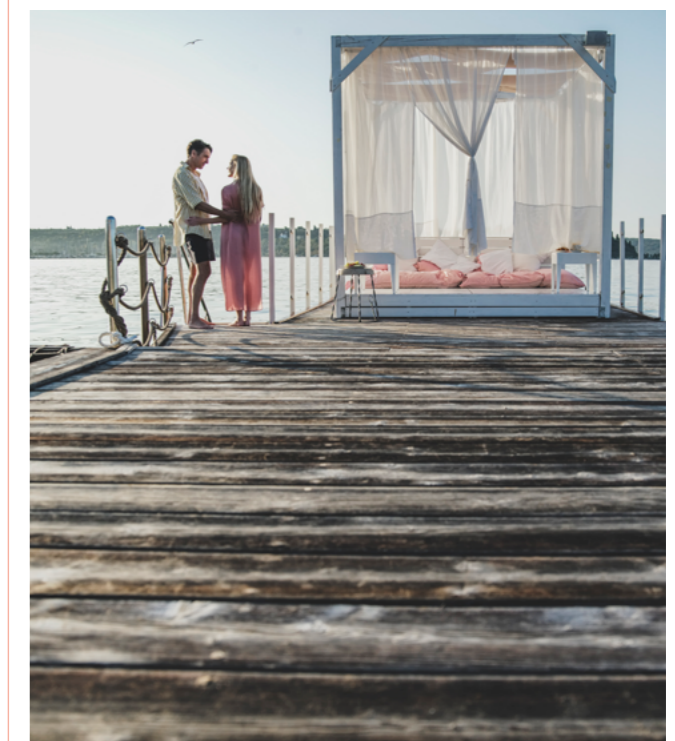
With a budget of €5.3 billion, the European Union's EU4Health programme (2021–2027) is the largest health initiative in the bloc's history. Its priorities are clear: preventing non-communicable diseases, improving mental health, and strengthening healthcare systems.

Medical spas are well placed to support these ambitions. They help to ease pressure on hospitals by providing rehabilitation and follow-up care, while also offering accessible health services in both urban and rural settings. Their role goes beyond physical recovery: many are now addressing the rising tide of burnout, chronic stress, and mental health concerns.

By combining medical expertise with restorative natural environments, spas can deliver outcomes that conventional healthcare facilities often struggle to achieve. As Europe looks for ways to build more resilient and sustainable health systems, medical spas stand out as a resource already embedded in communities — ready to be integrated into a future where prevention, wellbeing, and long-term health take centre stage.

Looking Ahead

Europe's health systems are under pressure from ageing populations, rising costs, and the long shadow of chronic disease. The statistics on non-communicable diseases are sobering, but they also highlight where new approaches are most urgently needed. Medical spas, with their mix of tradition, evidence, and accessibility, offer a model of care that is already in place — and waiting to be scaled.



The opportunity now is to move beyond borders: integrating spas more firmly into national health strategies, connecting them to EU programmes like EU4Health, and building stronger partnerships across countries. Such steps could not only improve health outcomes, but also reduce costs, create sustainable jobs, and enhance well-being in communities large and small.

For ESPA, the goal is clear: to show that medical spas are not peripheral to healthcare, but central to a vision of prevention and resilience. As Europe seeks ways to build a healthier future, medical spas stand ready — rooted in heritage, powered by science, and aligned with tomorrow’s priorities.



Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the EU

Cooperation potential

Power of Europe’s Medical Spas (ESPA)

<p>77% of Europe’s total disease burden</p> <p>86% of all deaths in the EU</p> <p>€115 billion/year in healthcare costs (≈0.8% GDP)</p> <p>1 in 4 die prematurely (before 65)</p> <p>NCDs = EU4Health priority (€5.3 billion investment 2021–2027)</p>	<p>Medical spas = partners with methods that are natural in reducing NCDs</p>	<p>Present in 20+ EU countries</p> <p>1,400+ spas & health resorts (ESPA)</p>
<p>Driven by lifestyle & environment: Musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, skin disorders, mental health, cancer aftercare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention - structured, medically supervised programmes for physical activity, nutrition, stress reduction —core pillars of NCD prevention that complement primary care. Early intervention & secondary prevention Rehabilitation & reintegration Health literacy & behaviour change 	<p>Employ ~350,000 people across Europe</p> <p>Serve millions annually for prevention, rehab & medical spas</p> <p>Spas = natural partners in prevention & healthy ageing</p> <p>Provide evidence-based prevention & rehabilitation aligned with EU4Health goals.</p>

LONGEVITY: EUROPE’S NEXT HEALTH FRONTIER

A Shift Towards Prevention

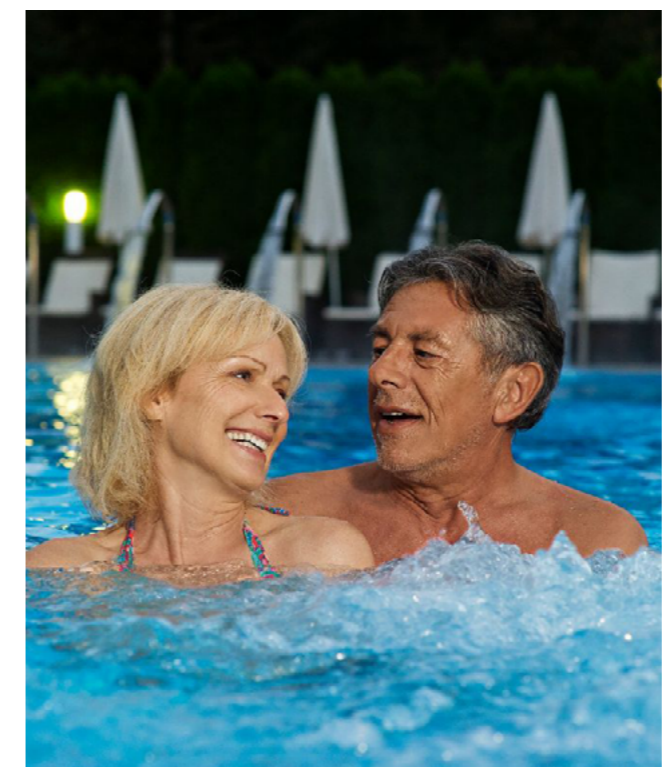
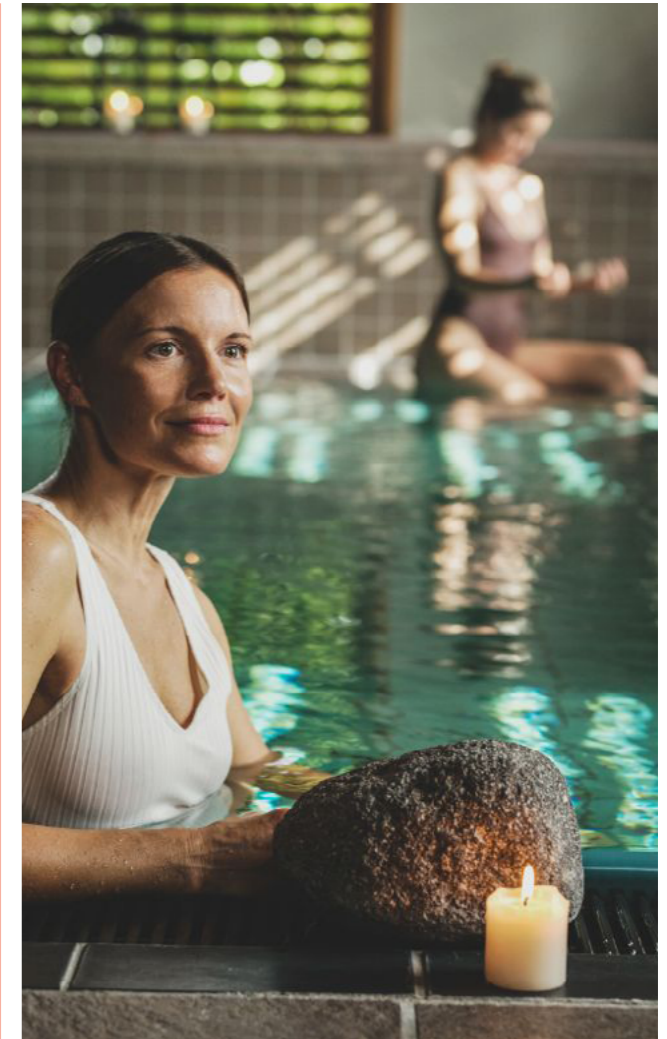
Longevity

Not just about living longer, but living better — with vitality, purpose and resilience. In Europe, the conversation on longevity is moving beyond medicine to embrace prevention, lifestyle and wellness. Medical spas and health resorts are stepping into this space, offering programmes where science, tradition and daily habits combine to extend both lifespan and healthspan.

Why It Matters

Europe faces demographic change and an increase in chronic diseases. At the European Health Summit 2024 in Brussels, policymakers, scientists and industry leaders highlighted longevity as a priority for the next decade. Prevention, healthy food, active lifestyles and wellbeing are now central to the EU’s health agenda. For ESPA and its members, this opens the door to showcase the unique role of spas — places where cardiovascular prevention, stress resilience and self-care become everyday practice.

“Longevity is not a number, but a strategy — built on prevention, balance and wellbeing.”



Evidence in Action

Longevity begins with prevention. Cardiovascular health, nutrition and active lifestyles are increasingly seen as decisive factors in how well — and how long — people live. At the same time, self-care is emerging as a driver of resilience, helping healthcare systems focus on what truly matters. With nearly half of Europeans facing mental health challenges, longevity is as much about protecting minds as it is about supporting bodies. Here, Europe’s spas — with their expertise in balneology, thermal medicine and restorative environments — are natural allies.

The Bottom Line

Longevity is Europe’s health horizon — a promise of more balanced years for citizens, and a chance for spas to show how prevention and innovation can extend not just life, but its quality.

MENTAL HEALTH: EUROPE'S SILENT EPIDEMIC

From stress to strength

Mental Health

Not a side note but a cornerstone of wellbeing. Stress, anxiety and burnout surged during the pandemic — and their shadow lingers: insomnia, fatigue, depression and post-traumatic stress are now woven into Europe's health landscape.

Why It Matters

Not a side note but a cornerstone of wellbeing. Stress, anxiety and burnout surged during the pandemic — and their shadow lingers: insomnia, fatigue, depression and post-traumatic stress are now woven into Europe's health landscape.

"Wellbeing begins where stigma ends — in nature, rhythm and care."

Evidence in Action

In Saujon, France, thermal centres offer evidence-based PTSD interventions, with psycho-educational protocols revised to integrate emerging knowledge on post-COVID stress. In Iceland, Heilsustofnun's "Stress Free Living" mixes mindfulness, exercise, balneotherapy, vegetarian cuisine and nature walks — powered by geothermal energy and local produce. Results, measured on international scales, show sharp reductions in anxiety and depression. Across Europe, research confirms: spa therapy improves quality of life, lowers stress and builds resilience.

The Bottom Line

Mental health needs credible, accessible answers. Europe's spas can deliver — blending science, tradition and place into care without stigma. Prevention and resilience: not treatment alone, but Europe's chance to lead.



BALNEOTHERAPY: TACKLING OBESITY WITH SPA SCIENCE

Prevention, Reinvented

Obesity

A chronic condition tied to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and weakened immunity — and one of the most visible risk factors during the Covid-19 pandemic. Across Europe, medical spas are stepping forward with structured, evidence-based programmes that go far beyond crash diets. They combine clinical oversight, tailored nutrition, physical activity and education to address the root causes of obesity.

Why It Matters

Obesity is no longer just a question of appearance; it is one of Europe's most urgent health challenges, fuelling hypertension, heart disease and diabetes. Medical spas are offering credible solutions. In Slovakia, 10-day prevention programmes are now partly covered by national insurers. In Serbia's Zlatibor Mountains, the "Čigota" centre has decades of expertise in treating obesity. The results are consistent: well-structured spa programmes help people lose weight, improve metabolic health and build stronger immunity.

"A few weeks in the specialised spa can do more than any fad diet."



Evidence in Action

Studies show that just three weeks of balneotherapy paired with diet and exercise can lower cholesterol, blood sugar and body weight, while boosting stress resilience and quality of life. Natural settings, from Slovak spas to Serbia's mountain climate, amplify outcomes and prove that prevention works best when rooted in place and science.

The Bottom Line

As obesity strains healthcare systems, medical spas offer a safe, credible response: programmes where prevention meets rehabilitation, and where evidence meets experience.



POST-COVID RECOVERY: EUROPE'S MEDICAL SPAS RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

From long COVID to renewed life

Recovery

Not just convalescence but a reset. Europe's medical spas address long-COVID with therapies that unite nature, science and personalised care to restore what was lost.

Why It Matters

Millions across Europe still grapple with long-COVID: fatigue, respiratory strain, neurological and heart issues. WHO estimates more than 17 million cases in the region's first two years. Europe's spas offer unique assets — thermal waters, balneology, mountain climates and tailored programmes — easing pressure on health systems while restoring quality of life.

"Europe's spas hold the key to long-COVID resilience."

Evidence in Action: Spa Medicine and Post-COVID Recovery

When COVID-19 shifted from an acute crisis to a long-term challenge, Europe's medical spas moved quickly. By May 2020, ESPA members were already welcoming post-COVID patients. By November 2020, the European Spas Medical Team had launched expert exchanges to evaluate outcomes. A year later, the EU InnovaSpa Project presented the first Europe-wide survey, mapping which medical spas were providing care for long-COVID patients.



Case Study: Slovakia — A European First

Slovakia became the first EU country to finance long-COVID treatments in medical spas through national health insurance. Patients can access week-long stays covered in part by the public system.

Pilot studies in mountain resorts demonstrate promising results:

- Improved lung function
- Higher energy levels
- Fewer persistent symptoms after just 16–18 days

Therapies ranging from thermal medicine and inhalation to physiotherapy, mud treatments, and psychosocial support prove most effective when customised to individual needs. Together, they form a credible model of recovery rooted in science and place.

The Bottom Line

Post-COVID recovery is a public health imperative. Europe must integrate spa therapy into healthcare, fund long-COVID programmes, tailor treatments — and anchor it all in science.

SUSTAINABILITY: NATURE, HEALTH, FUTURE

The Three R's: Recovery, Resilience, Regeneration

Sustainability

Not a slogan but a practice. Europe's health resorts show how prevention, nature and community can anchor tourism year-round — while generating green energy and rural livelihoods.

Why It Matters

The EU's Transition Pathway for Tourism and Agenda 2030 lay down strong frameworks. But Europe must dare to go further. Its true USP isn't short-term beach breaks — it's centuries of balneology, thermal waters, climate health resorts and medical expertise. Health tourism operates 365 days a year, revitalises rural areas, creates skilled jobs, and balances tourism flows away from overcrowded cities.



Evidence in Action

In countries like France, Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Iceland, medical spa services are covered by health insurance. These systems show how balneology can be anchored in public health, not just tourism. In Iceland, but in other countries like France, Slovenia, for example, thermal waters don't just power treatments — they also fuel geothermal grids, proving their value for health and sustainability alike.

Now imagine an EU-wide Digital Health Map: connecting lifestyle-related disorders with proven therapies and destinations. Prevention could be just a click away, guiding patients and travelers to where natural remedies meet modern science.

"Wellbeing is Europe's greenest export."

The Bottom Line

To make this future a reality, Europe's spa sector — dominated by SMEs, often family-run hotels and resorts — needs more than recognition. They don't need new labels; they need finance. Invest in their green transition, geothermal projects, and digital tools, and Europe gains not only healthier citizens, but also self-powered, resilient destinations.



THE CULTURAL CAPITAL OF SPAS

Why heritage could be Europe’s strongest advantage in a global wellness market

Europe’s spas are not just destinations for treatment — they are living witnesses of history, culture, and identity. From Roman aquae to Belle Époque colonnades, they tell two millennia of stories: of emperors and poets, of rituals and communities. In a global wellness economy where offers often look the same, this cultural capital sets Europe apart. Heritage becomes not only a memory, but a competitive edge.

That’s why ESPA launched the EU project “Roman Spas of Europe” — to showcase destinations where tradition is still alive and evolving into modern health tourism.



The UNESCO-listed Great Spa Towns of Europe — Baden-Baden, Karlovy Vary, Vichy and others — prove the point. Their architecture, promenades, and landscapes are not just backdrops but part of the therapy. In spa towns, heritage is experienced rather than observed: drinking cures under neoclassical arcades, concerts in grand bathhouses, literary walks on forest trails. Literary history adds another layer: from Goethe’s retreats to Rilke’s meditations, spa culture has long been a wellspring of inspiration.

Unlike luxury resorts in Asia or biohacking retreats in California, European spas can offer something different — a blend of health and heritage that no other continent can replicate. This differentiation matters in a market where wellness is booming but often interchangeable. For the next generations of travellers, authenticity is currency, and cultural immersion know-how is part of wellbeing.

The challenge is presentation. Cultural capital must not be treated as static heritage, but as a living experience. That means integrating music, art, gastronomy, and storytelling into spa journeys, making them feel contemporary without losing authenticity. Done well, spas are not just hospitals for the body, but theatres for the senses.

“In Europe, wellness is not invented — it is inherited. And heritage may prove the continent’s most powerful wellness brand.”

Looking ahead, the cultural capital of spas is more than a reminder of the past. It is a pathway to the future — one that positions Europe not only as the birthplace of spa culture, but as the place where culture itself heals.

Cultural Capital by Numbers

11 UNESCO spa towns: inscribed as the Great Spa Towns of Europe.

2,000 years of tradition: From Roman Baths to Today’s Balneology.

25 million visitors: Annual guests combining health and culture.

150+ cultural events: Concerts, festivals, and exhibitions in spa towns.

40% travellers seek culture: Four in ten tourists choose destinations for heritage. *Source: EHTTA, UNWTO, 2023*

What if Europe’s spas succeed in turning cultural heritage into a living health experience? They could gain a decisive edge in a global market starved of authenticity. And what if they fail? They risk becoming museum pieces of wellbeing — admired, photographed, but no longer lived.

DIGITAL NATIVE, NATURAL REMEDIES

Why Gen Z is rediscovering Europe’s oldest cure for modern stress

Europe’s spa culture has always been rooted in nature — mineral waters, clean air, healing muds. Yet today these traditional remedies may find their strongest resonance not with retirees but with digital natives searching for respite from constant connectivity.

Generation Z, raised on smartphones and streaming, is also the most screen-dependent and stress-burdened generation in history. According to Pew Research (2024), six in ten report high stress linked to digital fatigue. For them, wellness is not indulgence but survival: a way to unplug, reset, and restore equilibrium. This makes Europe’s natural assets unexpectedly modern. Thermal springs become sanctuaries for overstimulated minds. Climatotherapy — from Alpine air to Baltic breezes — offers a literal breath of fresh air. Balneology and mud therapies, once considered old-fashioned, are rediscovered as tactile, grounding experiences in contrast to virtual lives.



The paradox is evident: the more digital daily life becomes, the more valued analogue remedies are. For Gen Z, floating in a thermal lake or breathing pine-scented air is not a nostalgic experience, but a form of cutting-edge self-care.



“For digital natives, the most radical act of wellness is not plugging in, but unplugging — and nature remains Europe’s strongest signal.”

For the medical spa sector, the challenge is not to reinvent nature, but to reframe it: flexible, science-backed, short-format experiences that position thermal water, air, and mud as the ultimate digital detox.

If Europe’s spas succeed in aligning natural remedies with the mindset of digital natives, they will not only safeguard tradition but unlock an entirely new generation of guests. In a hyper-connected world, authenticity, stillness, and simplicity may prove to be the most powerful innovations of all.

Cultural Capital by Numbers

81% of Gen Z adults report digital fatigue and wish they could disconnect more easily from their devices *Source: Insider Intelligence, “Gen Z & Millennials are feeling digital fatigue” (2025)*

44% are already taking deliberate steps to limit screen time *Source: NuVoodoo, “Excessive Screen Time Sparks a Digital Detox Movement” (2025)*

Bookings for unplugged retreats rose by 209% in just one year. *Source: The European, “Digital detox retreats aren’t practical for most leaders” (2024)*

USD 52.3 billion market: Digital detox tourism was valued at USD 52.32 billion in 2024, with steady growth forecast to 2034. *Source: Polaris Market Research, “Digital Detox Tourism Services Market” (2024)*

Online searches for “silent travel” and digital detox retreats surged by **324%**. *Source: Europe Incoming, “8 Wellness Travel Trends Shaping European Bookings 2025/26” (2025)*

The digital detox movement offers Europe’s spas an opportunity to position themselves as the guardians of slow health: destinations where digital noise is replaced by nature, where cultural heritage meets modern prevention, and where a new generation can discover that silence, simplicity, and natural remedies may be the true luxuries of tomorrow.

FUTURE SKILLS IN SPA MEDICINE

Lessons from the HEALTHTOUR Project led by Technische Hochschule Deggendorf (THD)

Europe’s spa and health tourism sector stands at a crossroads. Heritage and tradition remain powerful assets, but the future will be shaped by new skills, new expectations, and a generation of young professionals preparing to lead. One initiative points the way forward: the HEALTHTOUR Future Skills Project, a collaboration between six European universities exploring the competencies the sector will need in the coming decade.

At its core lies a fundamental question: *What skills will ensure that European spa medicine stays relevant in a world defined by digitalisation, sustainability, and shifting health priorities?*



The project identifies three pillars — digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and sustainable management. Far from buzzwords, these represent the foundations of tomorrow’s spa leadership.

Digital literacy goes beyond mastering tools. It means weaving telehealth, data-driven diagnostics, and digital guest journeys into the very fabric of spa medicine.

Emotional intelligence addresses the human dimension: cultivating empathy, cultural sensitivity, and communication skills in every interaction.

Sustainable management redefines success, balancing economic performance with ecological responsibility and social impact — values increasingly demanded by Generations Y and Z.

For Europe’s spa sector, the THD initiative is more than an academic exercise. It is a signal: investing in future skills is not optional. It is the only way to maintain credibility—and leadership—in a global wellness economy that grows more competitive and conscious with every passing year.

“The next generation of spa leaders will not only manage facilities — they will manage ecosystems of health, technology, and sustainability.”

The lessons from Deggendorf are clear: the future of spa medicine will be defined by professionals who can balance tradition with innovation, science with empathy, and local heritage with global standards. These are the skills that will empower Europe’s historic spas to remain relevant, inspiring, and indispensable well into the 2030s.

Future Skills by Numbers

6 universities: A cross-border alliance shaping the skillset of tomorrow’s spa and health tourism leaders.

3 pillars: Digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and sustainable management — the new trinity of 21st-century spa medicine.

85% of employers: Expect digital competence — from telehealth tools to data-driven diagnostics — to be non-negotiable by 2030 (European Skills Forecast, CEDEFOP).

70% of Gen Z employees: Prioritise purpose and sustainability over paycheques when choosing careers (Deloitte Global Gen Z Survey, 2024). The next spa workforce will demand meaning as well as money.

50% of spa guests: Will integrate apps, wearables, and telehealth into their spa stays by 2030 (Global Wellness Institute). Digital journeys will sit seamlessly beside mineral springs.

The message is simple. If Europe’s spas adopt future skills, they can lead a global renaissance of spa medicine — one that is resilient, innovative, and globally competitive. If they don’t, they risk clinging to heritage alone: admired for the past, but unprepared for the future.

WHERE IS GEN Z IN PREVENTION, HEALTH TOURISM?

Wellness Beyond Silver: Why Young Generations Must Enter the Spa Story

At the Thermal Tourism Congress in Budapest, organised by the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA), one message cut through the noise: Europe’s spas are still talking mainly to the “silver” guest. Meanwhile, Generation Z — the most health-conscious, emotionally aware, and digitally native cohort in history — remains largely absent.

Tourism strategist Ivana Kolar, CEO of Julius Rose, director of the Tourism 365 and Health Tourism Industry Conference, put it bluntly: “Longevity does not begin at sixty — it begins in your twenties.” If spas and thermal towns fail to engage younger generations now, they risk missing the next four decades of demand.

Wellbeing for Gen Z is not treatment after illness. It is a lifestyle: a proactive pursuit of balance, mindfulness, and authenticity. They are also more willing than any previous generation to pay for sustainability and eco-responsibility



Why Gen Z Matters

Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z is already reshaping global health and travel.

- By 2030, they will control more than 25% of global income). Over 70% prioritise wellness when making travel decisions
- They are digital-first decision-makers: 90% plan trips via social media, 60% book via smartphones. Nearly two-thirds prefer experiences over possessions, choosing a dream holiday over buying a car

What’s at Stake

Traditional marketing still revolves around rehabilitation and ageing. But Gen Z already lives wellness differently. For them, digital detox, climate-conscious travel, and stress relief are as important as mineral water cures.



Gen Z by Numbers

25% of global income: By 2030, Gen Z will command more than a quarter of worldwide earnings.

70% prioritise wellness: Seven in ten Gen Z travellers place health and wellbeing at the centre of their travel choices

60% report high stress: Persistent mental health concerns are fuelling demand for digital detox, mindfulness, and stress-relief travel ().

90% use social media to plan trips: Travel decisions are driven by Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, making digital storytelling crucial.

65% prefer experiences over possessions: Nearly two-thirds would rather invest in a dream holiday than buy a car, underscoring the shift from ownership to experience

60% book via smartphones: Mobile-first behaviour means destinations must optimise the entire wellness journey for handheld devices
Source: (Dziadkiewicz, Lindell & Minga, 2023, McKinsey 2025; Pew Research Center, 2024)

What if Europe’s spas succeed in speaking their language — digital, authentic, purpose-driven — they can unlock a new wave of visitors and secure relevance for decades to come. If not, they risk fading into nostalgia: sanctuaries for the elderly, not destinations for the future.

SPRING — SEASON OF RENEWAL IN MINERAL-RICH WATERS

Slovenia · Czech Republic · Hungary · Spain



"Europe's spas hold the key to long-COVID resilience."

Spring is Europe's great cleansing ritual — a season where water becomes medicine and landscapes turn into open-air clinics. In Slovenia, thermal waters and forest therapies blend with mindful detox retreats. The Czech Republic's historic spa towns, with their neoclassical colonnades, invite visitors to sip curative mineral waters as part of time-honoured drinking cures. Hungary's geothermal wealth — from the steaming expanse of Lake Hévíz to the silence of Tapolca's healing caves — transforms balneology into living science. Spain, meanwhile, wraps renewal in Mediterranean light, offering sulphurous springs, hydrotherapy rituals, and the warmth of Spanish hospitality.

Most Popular Medical Rehabilitation /Treatment Programmes

Across Europe's spa capitals, spring programmes are designed to shake off winter's heaviness and prime the body for vitality. In Slovenia, anti-stress and detox stays combine balneology, inhalation therapies, and supervised exercise. The Czech Republic excels in musculoskeletal rehabilitation and respiratory care, supported by daily mineral water regimens. Hungary is a leader in post-trauma orthopaedic recovery, cardiovascular strengthening, and cave-based respiratory therapies. Spain offers hydrotherapy, mud wraps, and inhalation treatments to restore mobility, soothe skin, and improve lung function. Together, these evidence-based therapies bridge centuries of tradition with the latest medical insight — the perfect seasonal reset.

Where to go

Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

Karlovy Vary, with over 80 mineral springs and elegant colonnades, unites medical rehabilitation with cultural tradition, offering Europe's most iconic spa experience in a refined historic setting.



Signature ritual

Thalassotherapy and Mediterranean climate - an exceptional source of health for body and mind

Terme Portorož, Slovenia combines the soothing thalassotherapy of mineral-rich seawater with a unique Mediterranean climate, promoting regeneration and recovery. The air, saturated with salt and iodine, benefits the respiratory system, skin, and nervous system, while the seawater relaxes muscles and boosts circulation.



Coolcation

Lake Hévíz, Hungary

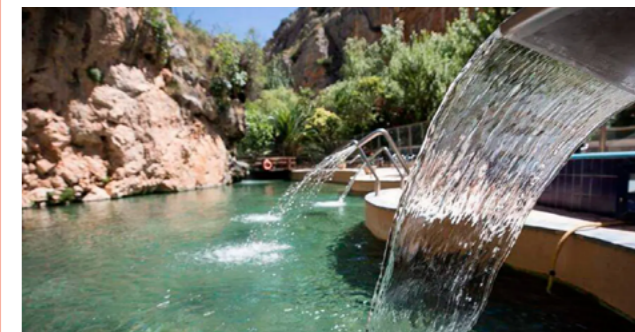
Europe's largest thermal lake (six and a half football pitches) surrounded by lush green forests. Here, you'll float among water lilies in naturally warm waters — a serene seasonal escape, best enjoyed before summer's peak. The water flow is about 410 litres per second; meaning the lake is completely replaced within 72 hours.



Off the beaten track

Balnearios in rural Aragón and Galicia, Spain

The rustic balnearios combine sulphurous waters for skin and joint care with the charm of medieval villages, creating a unique blend of natural therapy and cultural immersion rooted in Roman times. For a luxury spa visit the island of La Toja.



Hidden gem

Innovation and Education

The Institute of Spa and Balneology in Karlovy Vary has launched a long-term educational strategy that connects scientific research with clinical spa practice. This innovative model introduces continuous professional education for physicians and healthcare personnel from spa facilities, delivered monthly and covering both clinical and environmental dimensions of spa medicine. The programme directly addresses current health-system challenges, including the growing burden of chronic lifestyle diseases and the persistent underuse of spa medicine in preventive care.



SUMMER — NATURE IN FULL FORCE THROUGH HEALING AIR & CLIMATE

Lithuania · Germany · Netherlands · Estonia



Summer wellness drifts in on the breeze. In Palangas, Lithuania, 24 kilometres of pine-framed coastline become a vast open-air sanatorium, where iodine-rich sea air revitalizes lungs and strengthens immunity—forests, where deep breathing among pines balances the nervous system and restores mental clarity. In Germany, climatotherapy has been honed into a science — from the crisp Alpine air to the bracing winds of the North Sea. Along the Dutch and Baltic coast, barefoot trails, thalassotherapy pools, and antioxidant-rich seaweed treatments add a playful edge to healing.

“Summer is wellbeing in motion — lungs, skin, and soul restored outdoors.”

Most Popular Medical Rehabilitation /Treatment Programmes

Across Europe's spa capitals, spring programmes are de-Summer spa programmes channel the healing force of nature at its peak. In Estonia, thalassotherapy and climatotherapy revitalise lungs and strengthen immunity through iodine-rich sea air. Lithuania weaves forest therapy into rehabilitation for stress, chronic fatigue, and post-illness recovery, letting pine groves restore balance. Germany perfects climatotherapy with tailored treatments for respiratory, cardiovascular, and burnout conditions, anchored in rigorous spa medicine. In the Netherlands, thalasso rituals with seawater, algae, and curative mud nourish the skin, boost circulation, and renew vitality. Together, these therapies transform summer into a living pharmacy, where air, sea, and forest become a source of medicine.

Where to go

Fra Mare, Estonia (Baltic thalasso tradition)

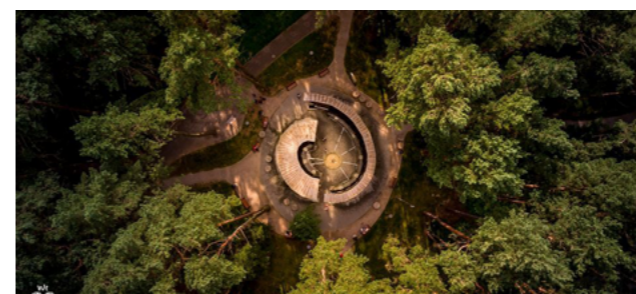
Set on Haapsalu Bay, Fra Mare harnesses Estonia's sea mud and thalassotherapy to ease rheumatic conditions and restore vitality in a calm coastal setting. Robotics, VR is also used in rehabilitation at the spa town, which is celebrating its 200th anniversary.



Signature ritual

Forest bathing in Heringsdorf, Germany, and Birštonas, Lithuania

Guided walks through pine forests offer scientifically proven benefits: reduced stress, balanced metabolism, improved sleep, and overall restoration of the nervous system. A simple ritual with profound impact.



Hidden gem

Local remedy, Dutch style - Cadzand, Domburg & Noordwijk

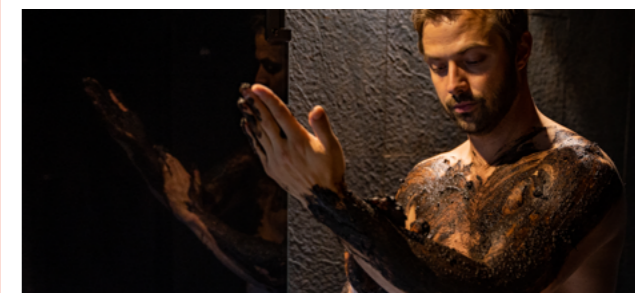
The Netherlands' certified health resorts combine North Sea thalasso traditions with lifestyle programmes. Mineral-rich sea air, therapeutic sand and saltwater, and active outdoor living - these resorts demonstrate how local natural remedies can anchor a healthy lifestyle by the coast.



Off the beaten track

Tradition and modern design, high-end rehabilitation in Druskininkai

reinvented itself from a historic spa town Birštonas into a hub of high-end rehabilitation and design spa hotels. Combining centuries-old mineral water traditions with modern medical expertise, it offers programs ranging from cardiovascular recovery to stress management



Coolcation

North Sea thalasso centres, Germany & Netherlands

Cool breezes, saline pools, and thalassotherapy rituals on the North Sea coast offer refreshing summer escapes, ideal for cooling down while strengthening lungs and skin.



Bad Pyrmont

Bad Pyrmont, one of Germany's most renowned Staatsbäder, continues to lead the field of evidence-based spa and rehabilitation medicine. Its latest innovation, the "Fibro-Aktiv Programme," was honoured with the Special Jury Award at the ESPA Innovation Awards 2025. Developed at the Fürstenhof Klinik for patients with severe fibromyalgia syndrome, the programme combines thermal brine therapy, relaxation methods, Feldenkrais-based movement, rheumatology, physiotherapy, psychology, and a modern neurocognitive therapeutic mindset.

AUTUMN — REINFORCING THE BODY WITH BALNEOLOGY & MEDICINAL MUD

Italy · Romania · Bulgaria · Serbia · Slovakia



Italy's perfect volcanic muds matured in thermal waters, used in anti-inflammatory rituals that restore balance and vitality. Romania combines centuries-old spa traditions with thousands of mineral springs, offering thermal baths and rehabilitative programs that strengthen circulation and support musculoskeletal health. Bulgaria draws on Thracian and Roman heritage, offering three types of healing mud combined with sunny mountain climates and thermal waters at the seaside. Serbia, with its rich peloid traditions and modern cardio-prevention programs, blends ancient bathing culture with cutting-edge medical expertise. Slovakia's thermal springs and speleotherapy caves provide warm retreats in Central Europe, offering restorative therapies for respiratory and musculoskeletal health. Together, these destinations transform autumn into a season of grounding, restoration, and holistic health.

"Autumn is resilience — clays, muds, and deep body repair."

Most Popular Medical Rehabilitation/Treatment Programmes

Autumn spa programmes strengthen the body ahead of winter. Italy leads with balneotherapy and volcanic mud wraps for mobility and inflammation. Romania prescribes mofette therapy for cardiovascular health. Bulgaria uses three kinds of healing mud in ortho-balance and trauma recovery packages. Serbia combines thermal waters, peloid therapy, and cardio-prevention programmes. Together these traditions and innovations deliver deep reinforcement of resilience, immune strength, and long-term wellbeing.

Where to go

Piešťany, Slovakia

Renowned for its sulphur-rich mud and thermal springs, it is celebrated for treating rheumatic and musculoskeletal conditions. The spa island blends medical tradition with Central European charm, making it an enduring destination for autumn resilience. Thermia Palace was the first luxury medical spa hotel, in a park, connected with the mud pool and therapy.



Signature ritual

Volcanic mud therapy in Abano Terme, Italy

In Abano Terme, volcanic muds matured in thermal waters are applied in age-old rituals under medical supervision. Anti-inflammatory and restorative, they remain a cornerstone of Italian spa medicine and wellness culture.



Hidden gem

Mofette treatments in Covasna, Romania

Covasna's natural carbon dioxide emissions, known as mofettes, support cardiovascular health and circulation. This rare natural therapy offers both scientific recognition and deep cultural roots within Romania's spa tradition.



Off the beaten track

Mineral springs in Velingrad, Bulgaria

Velingrad, Bulgaria's spa capital, is home to over 70 mineral springs. Nestled in the Rhodope Mountains, it combines authentic mud therapies with mountain air and year-round affordability.



Coolcation

Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia

Serbia's most celebrated spa blends historic colonnades, thermal waters, and modern wellness hotels. Its warm climate and affordable programmes make it an inviting autumn retreat before winter sets in.



Italy's Largest Urban Thermal Park

Terme De Montel, Milan, Italy

Italy's largest urban thermal park has opened in Milan, transforming the historic De Montel Stables into a 16,000-square-meter complex that blends wellbeing, sustainability, and innovation, with thermal water drawn from 400 meters underground and facilities for up to 700 visitors.



WINTER — WARMTH AND DEEP RECOVERY IN THERMAL SPRINGS

Iceland · France · Croatia · Luxembourg



Winter is for immersion and sanctuary. In Iceland, geothermal lagoons steam beneath northern lights, restoring circadian balance and soothing the nervous system. France offers 18-day programmes for chronic conditions, blending medical spa care with cultural landscapes. Croatia's Adriatic coast softens the cold with seawater cures and naphtalan therapies. Luxembourg provides thermal escapes with mineral-rich waters and exceptional sports rehabilitation, turning crisp winter days into restorative retreats.

"Winter is the hearth of health — warmth, water, and stillness."

Most Popular Medical Rehabilitation & Treatment Programmes

Winter spa programmes are crafted for deep recovery and lasting resilience. In Iceland, geothermal retreats combine stress management with immune-boosting therapies under the glow of northern skies. France delivers specialised rehabilitation for post-cancer recovery, cardiovascular conditions, and mental wellbeing, uniting spa medicine with modern psychiatric care. Croatia integrates seawater therapies and naphtalan oil treatments to ease pain and inflammation. Luxembourg's thermal programmes enhance respiratory function, mobility, and sports recovery, complementing mineral-rich waters with holistic health approaches. Together, these winter offerings transform the coldest months into a season of warmth, healing, and elemental renewal.

Where to go

Blue Lagoon & Hveragerði, Iceland

Geothermal pools nestled within volcanic landscapes provide a deep sense of relaxation. Hveragerði boasts a groundbreaking medical spa that combines evidence-based care with organic food in Iceland's most soothing valley.



Signature ritual

Saujon's mental health programmes, France

At Saujon, spa medicine meets psychiatry. Programmes combine thermal treatments with cognitive therapy to reduce stress, anxiety, and dependence, establishing France as a leader in mental health retreats.



Hidden gem

Naphtalan oil therapy in Croatia

Croatia's rare naphtalan mineral oil is used to treat skin, joint, and rheumatic conditions. This unique therapy is both deeply traditional and scientifically recognised, found in only a few global locations.



Off the beaten track

Mondorf-les-Bains, Luxembourg

Luxembourg's thermal spa town blends mineral-rich waters, medical expertise, and exceptional sports rehabilitation. Surrounded by vineyards and natural parks, it offers preventive health programmes and relaxation escapes in an elegant, intimate setting.



Coolcation

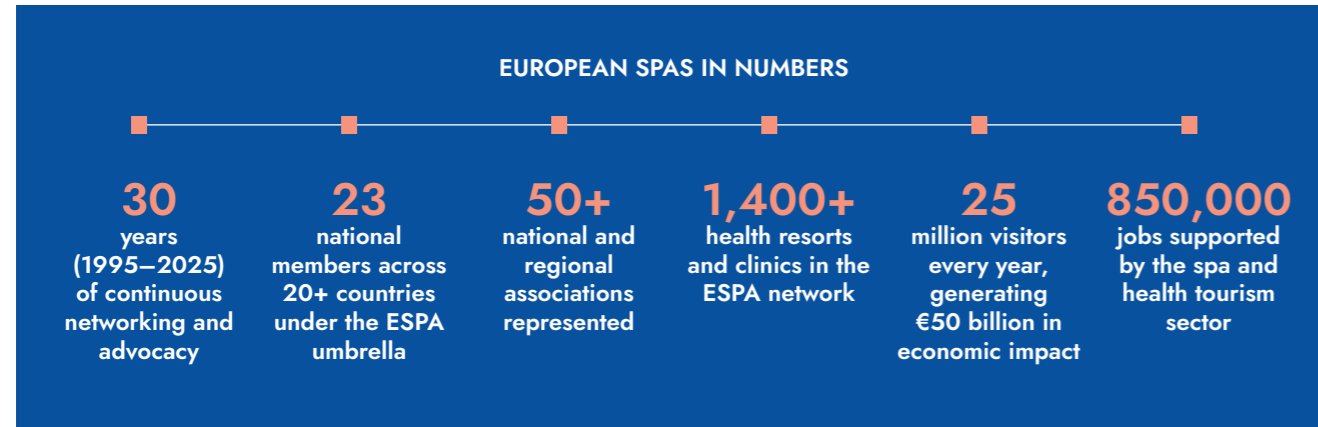
Auvergne, France

11 historic resorts — from Vichy to La Bourboule — safeguard spa heritage while advancing modern thermal cures and health stays. Timeless coolcation for body and soul at the heart of France, Auvergne's spa towns unite stunning natural landscapes with mineral-rich springs and medical expertise.



30 YEARS OF EUROPEAN SPAS' RESULTS

Since its founding in Brussels in 1995, the European Spas Association (ESPA) has grown into Europe's leading voice for health resorts and medical spas — combining tradition with innovation, and local heritage with international impact.



ESPA IN NUMBERS

- 1995**
ESPA founded in Brussels → the voice of European health resorts
- 2006**
Harmonised European standards for natural remedies, waters and climates introduced
- 2010–2025**
Over 70 Innovation Award winners, showcasing originality, excellence, evidence and impact
- European projects**
highlighting the Roman spas of Europe, European overview of post-COVID treatments, cooperation with ETC on overseas markets, and Healing Water Initiative
- 2014**
First European Health Prevention Day, a flagship public health initiative
- 6**
Expert working groups (Quality, Thalassotherapy, Medical, Communication, Economic Impact, Innovation) shaping European policy and practice
- Annual ESPA Congress**
Hosted in 25 European spa destinations → the continent's key platform for health tourism dialogue
- SPA-CE**
established as Europe's leading B2B marketplace for medical spa and health tourism, opening international markets for European resorts
- Member of the EU health policy network,**
BeActive sport week, Tourism Manifesto and the EU rural pact.

A LASTING LEGACY

For three decades, ESPA has proven that health resorts are far more than destinations — they are Europe's strongest platform for prevention, public health, sustainable wellbeing, and a healthier future for generations to come.

THE POWER OF EUROPEAN HEALTH SPAS

European health resorts are powerful engines of health, culture, sustainability and economic vitality — rooted in centuries of tradition yet continually renewed by science and innovation. Diverse dimensions of power are:

"The future of Europe's health begins where its healing waters flow."

Natural Power

With more than 2,500 mineral springs, including Europe's hottest waters after Iceland, at 103°C (Seperawa Banja), the continent's natural wealth is unmatched. Scientific studies confirm that balneotherapy can relieve stress, restore healthy sleep and ease depression.

Generational & Global Power

Future demand is driven by new generations: over 70% of Gen Z travellers prioritise wellness, while 81% of digital natives actively seek digital detox escapes. With global partnerships extending from Europe to Asia and beyond, spas are shaping the next chapter of health tourism.

Health Power

European health resorts offer proven benefits for managing chronic diseases, lifestyle disorders, promoting mental well-being, supporting post-COVID recovery, and enhancing longevity. Leading medical spa institutes combine natural remedies with modern diagnostics to provide prevention, rehabilitation, and holistic care.

Europe's Living Strength

The power of European health resorts lies in their unique fusion of natural resources, cultural heritage, scientific evidence and economic significance. They are not simply destinations — they are forces for healthier people, stronger communities and a more sustainable Europe.

Cultural Power

Europe's spas represent over 2,000 years of living heritage, where emperors, artists, and visionaries have come to recharge, regenerate, and inspire — places where tradition and culture meet health and renewal.

Longevity Power

Health resorts are Europe's longevity hubs: By combining preventive diagnostics, climate therapy, balneotherapy and personalised lifestyle interventions, spas support functional ageing, maintain independence and improve quality of life. They translate longevity science into practical, accessible care models.

Sustainable Power

EU initiatives setting new standards for sustainable health and health tourism. Resorts powered by geothermal energy operate year-round, cut carbon emissions and drive the revitalisation of rural communities.

Resilience Power

Health resorts strengthen societal resilience. They support iwth corporate health programs workforce reintegration and regional health capacity. In times of crisis, natural health infrastructures provide scalable, low-impact and people-centred solutions.

Economic Power

The spa sector generates around €50 billion annually, supporting 850,000 jobs across Europe. As part of the wider health and tourism economy, spas stimulate local supply chains — from agriculture and hospitality to scientific research and innovation.

Lifestyle medicine Power

European health resorts are real-life laboratories for lifestyle medicine. They integrate physical activity, nutrition, stress management, sleep regulation, social connection and exposure to nature into structured medical programmes. This makes spas ideal settings for preventing and supporting cardiovascular health, and extending healthy life expectancy.

EUROPEAN SPAS IN NUMBERS

30
years
(1995–2025)
of continuous
networking and
advocacy

23
national
members across
20+ countries
under the ESPA
umbrella

50+
national and
regional
associations
represented

1,400+
health resorts
and clinics in the
ESPA network

25
million visitors
every year,
generating
€50 billion in
economic impact

850,000
jobs supported
by the spa and
health tourism
sector

30 YEARS **ESPA**
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