

2nd Newsletter, March, 2020

Consistent to the aim of improving the policies that support the development of thermalism in their regions or countries, the partners of the [InnovaSPA](#) project, accompanied by relevant local stakeholders, participated in two exchange of experience sessions organised during the third semester of the project.

Organized as part of the international learning process, these events took the form of study visits. The study visits were hosted by the partners from **Lithuania** and **Portugal**, with the aim of preparing the exploitation of the lessons learned from the cooperation through the development of the action plans.

The participants visited thermal resorts, spa resorts, hospitals and other wellness and spa resorts. The lessons learned from the exchange of experiences sessions held in Lithuania and Portugal will be integrated in the action plans elaborated with the aim of improving the regional/national policies that support the development of thermalism in all eight partner regions.

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3rd International Study Visit of InnovaSPA

The 3rd Study Visit of InnovaSPA project took place at the beginning of July 2019, in Lithuania. Part of the interregional learning process, the Study Visit represented an opportunity for the participants to learn about the thermal ecosystem in Lithuania and discuss about the policies that support the development of the medical SPAs and wellness resorts in Vilnius area.



Photo: InnovaSPA project partners & stakeholders, Visit at Vytautas Mineral SPA, Birštonas

The event was hosted by the [Lithuanian Innovation Center](#) and included visits at medical SPAs and wellness centers in the cities of Druskininkai and [Birštonas](#), two of the oldest and most developed balneary resorts in Lithuania. During those three days, we had the opportunity to see in practice how the **mineral water**, **climate** and **mud**, are used in climate therapy, balneotherapy (drinking mineral water, mineral water baths, mineral water pools, mineral water inhalations) and peloid therapy (mud applications, mud baths). The **herbs** and **amber** are also natural remedies with healing properties that are successfully used by the Lithuanian health services providers.

The most interesting medical SPAs and balneary centers visited in the city of Druskininkai, the largest and the oldest Lithuanian mineral water, mud and climate therapies resort, and in the city of Birštonas, a resort endowed with natural riches as abundant mineral water springs, therapeutic mud, clean air and climate, were: **UPA medical SPA, Health Resort Druskininkai, Vytautas Mineral SPA, Medical Spa Egles Sanatorija, "Birutės Vila" Mineral Water Pavilion, "Druskupis" Mineral Water Graduation Tower**. [Click here to read more](#)



Photos: Vytautas Mineral SPA & Mineral Water Graduation Tower, Birštonas



Good Practices in the field of preventative health and thermalism from Lithuania

One of the most interesting Good Practices shared during the study visit in Lithuania was "***Development of the Innovative health tourism destination in Birštonas city***". In order to achieve the strategic goal of becoming an international innovative leisure and medical spa resort by 2030, the Municipality of Birštonas invested in infrastructure development and in creation of public medical spa services. Existing medical resorts were renovated and new high-class resorts were developed. The clear strategy and the vision of the municipality were at the core of the successful development of the innovative health tourism destination of Birštonas city. Essential to this successful project were both the close cooperation between the municipality, the community and the relevant stakeholders and the cooperation between the public and the private sectors. [Click here to read more](#)



Photo: Vytautas Mineral SPA, Birštonas

Lithuania has a strong service industry related to preventative health and thermalism. The resorts and resort areas significantly developed over the years with the support of the funds allocated from the state budget and the budget of the involved municipalities. Currently, new medical SPAs and wellness resorts are being developed and about to be opened in the next 3-5 years in Lithuania. Health and wellness tourism is a priority at national level, together with the eco-tourism, cultural and business tourism, which means that more and more public investments will contribute to the development of this sector and of new services. The public authorities together with the relevant stakeholders are important pillars in the development of the health and wellness resorts in Lithuania. In Lithuania geothermal waters have great potential for balneotherapy, also, but more scientific studies are needed to support geothermal water treatment for different types of diseases.

4th International Study Visit of InnovaSPA

The 4th Study Visit of InnovaSPA project took place in the **Norte Region** of **Portugal** in September 2019. Partners and stakeholders attended three days of interesting study visits at thermal SPAs in the sub-regions of **Tâmega e Sousa** and **Alto Tâmega**. The study visit was hosted by the [Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto](#) and highlighted the thermal ecosystem and SPA science in Portugal, the current developments of therapeutic SPAs and the official SPA treatments practiced in Portugal. The itinerary included visits at: **Termas de Caldas de Aregos (Resende)**, **Termas de São Vicente (Penafiel)**, **Termas de Amarante (Amarante)**, **Chaves Termas & SPA (Chaves)**. [Click here to read more](#)



Photos: Termas de São Vicente & Chaves Termas & SPA

Norte Region is the region with the highest number of thermal waters and mining-medicinal springs in Portugal. The mineral water bottling industry and the industry of thermal services in the region are very developed; from 42 thermal SPAs, 23 are located in the Norte Region: 19 SPAs are active and 4 SPAs are inactive, abandoned but with great potential in terms of natural and thermal resources.

The national legal framework of thermal sector in Portugal is provided by the **Ministry of Health** and the **Ministry of Economic Affairs**. According to the national law, civil servants, state employees, government employees and officials benefit from a maximum of two thermal cures per year, **minimum 12 days of medical SPA treatments**.

The National Health System reimburses 35% of the treatments costs, up to a limit of € 95.00 per day. The official SPA treatments in Portugal are those aimed at treating rheumatology, respiratory, skin, digestive, metabolic, circulatory, nervous system, gynecology, blood diseases.



Good Practices in the field of preventative health and thermalism from Portugal

One of the most interesting Good Practices shared during the study visit in Norte Region was the “[Thermal and Water Route of Chaves-Verín Eurocity](#)”, a project originally approved within the Spain-Portugal Cross-border Cooperation Operative Program 2007-2013 (Interreg POCTEP), and reapproved in its current version (2014-2020), under the name “**Eurocidade2020**”. The areas of Chaves-Verín have the greatest concentration of thermal water and mining-medicinal springs of Europe (eleven, in total, within a “line” of 40 km). In this context, the “Thermal and Water Route of Chaves-Verín Eurocity” was created as a route that connects the spa heritage of Verín with those in Chaves and Vidago, linking the main spring, SPAs and thermal waters of the area of Eurocity, continuing and shaping a global route within the geographical limits of this Euroregion (Alto Tâmega – Norte / Ourense – Galicia). The route combines the circular urban routes of both municipalities with a cycle-tourist route that follows along the river Tâmega. The urban routes of Verín, Chaves and Vidago show the historical, natural and cultural heritage. [Click here to read more](#)



Photo: InnovaSPA project partners & stakeholders became ambassadors of the “Thermal and Water Route of Chaves-Verín Eurocity”



Photo: InnovaSPA project partners & stakeholders, Visit at FMUP

An important role in the development of thermalism in the Norte Region and not only, plays the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto. A post-graduation training course in hydrology and climatology is held at the Faculty of Medicine, the only one in the country that habilitates for Thermal Medical Practice.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Study Visit in Savinjska Region

Country: Slovenia

Host organization: Development Agency of Savinjska Region

Study Visit in Centru Region

Country: Romania

Host organization: Regional Development Agency Centru

Study Visit in Riga Region

Country: Latvia

Host organization: University of Latvia

Study Visit in Warmia And Mazury Region

Country: Poland

Host organization: Warmia and Mazury Regional Development Agency

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Partners:



Thermoauvergne Association
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www.auvergne-thermale.com



University of Debrecen (HU)
www.unideb.hu



University of Latvia (LV)
www.lu.lv



Warmia and Mazury Regional Development Agency JSC in Olsztyn (PL)
www.wmarr.olsztyn.pl



Regional Development Agency Centru (RO)
www.adrcentru.ro



Lithuanian Innovation Centre (LT)
www.lic.lt



Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto (PT)
https://sigarra.up.pt/fmup/en/WB_PAGE.INICIAL



Development Agency of Savinjska Region (SI)
www.rasr.si