

InnovaSPA
Interreg Europe



European Union
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Development Fund

Project. Achievements. Results.

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final publication



INTRODUCTION

This publication aims at highlighting the main results of the InnovaSPA project, in terms of both quality and quantity, as a thermal ecosystem gradually drafted from the interregional learning process to the action plans developed and implemented.

InnovaSPA, has been developed as a project aiming to improve the policies that support knowledge transfer and strengthen opportunities for open innovation between the triple helix partners in the field of preventative health and thermalism, in order to accelerate the launch on the market of innovative solutions for developing healthy lifestyle.

InnovaSPA project addresses the societal challenge of ageing society and aims to demonstrate that thermalism could be, by introducing innovative cures and care solutions, a sector having a huge potential in making healthcare more efficient. Healthy lifestyle and prevention are supposed to be more and more relevant making wider the target group perspective for the territories.

The implementation of the project focused on the following three main dimensions: interregional policy learning and exchange of practices and experiences between the partners; improving the implementation of policies and programs related to health prevention and thermalism; implementation of concrete actions from the action plans developed based on the interregional policy learning and exchange of practices.

In terms of results, the most important achievements of the InnovaSPA project were:

- **action plans developed** by each partner territory, specifying the implementation of innovative actions operating in the field of preventative health and thermalism;
- **good practices** in the fields of preventative health and thermalism identified and shared by the project partners;
- **reciprocal improvement analysis elaborated**;
- **study visits** organised in 8 thermal spa regions/countries in Europe.



UTILS

Website

www.interregeurope.eu/innovaspa

Facebook

www.facebook.com/InnovaSPAproject

Context

To address the societal challenge of ageing society and to demonstrate that thermalism could be, by introducing innovative cures and care solutions, a sector having a huge potential in making healthcare more efficient. Healthy lifestyle and prevention are supposed to be more and more relevant making wider the target group perspective for the territories.

Partnership

8 partners (1 Association, 3 Universities, 3 Regional Development Agencies and 1 Innovation centre) from 8 countries (FR, HU, LV, PL, RO, LT, PT, SI). When relevant, authorities in charge of targeted policies are committed to provide their support. Relevant stakeholders within each area will be strongly involved in the exchange of experience at interregional level and planned adaptation of policy instruments.

WEB Link
Project summary



scan and enjoy

SUMMARY

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PROJECT PARTNERS & REGIONS

Termauvergne Association
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region (France)
Regional Operational Programme 2014/2020 of the
Auvergne Rhone-Alpes Region



Regional Development Agency Centru
Centru Region, Romania
Regional Operational Programme 2014 – 2020 Priority
Axis 1 (PA1) – “Promoting technology transfer”



University of Debrecen
Debrecen, Hajdú-Bihar County (Hungary)
Economic Development and Innovation Operational
Programme (GINOP) of Hungary



Lithuanian Innovation Center
Vilnius, Lithuania
Priority axis 1 - strengthening research and development
and innovation, investment priority 1.2 of Lithuanian
OP - Promoting business investment in R&I



University of Latvia
Riga (Latvia)
Latvian Operational Programme “Growth and
Employment”



Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto
Norte Region, Portugal
2014-2020 Norte Regional Operational Programme



Warmia and Mazury Regional Development Agency
Warmia and Mazury Region (Poland)
Regional Operational Programme of Warmia and
Mazury 2014-2020



Development Agency of Savjska Region
Savjska Region (Slovenia)
Slovenian Operational Programme for the
Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy in the period
2014-2020 “International competitiveness of research,
innovation and technological development in line with
smart specialisation for enhanced competitiveness and
greening of the economy”



POLICY INSTRUMENTS TACKLED BY EACH PARTNER

Policy Instrument 1

Regional Thermal Plan Auvergne-
Rhône-Alpes 2016 – 2021

Policy Instrument 2

Economic Development and
Innovation Operational
Programme (GINOP) of Hungary
Axis 2 - Research, technological
development and innovation
– NEC4.1 – Improvement of R&I
activity product, technology and
service development innovation
ecosystem

Policy Instrument 3

Operational Programme “Growth
and Employment”
Axis 1 - Research, technological
development and innovation

Policy Instrument 4

Regional Operational Programme
of Warmia and Mazury 2014-2020

Policy instrument 5

Regional Operational Programme
2014 – 2020, Priority Axis 1 –
“Promoting technology transfer”
Smart Specialisation Strategy of
Centru Region (RIS3)

Policy Instrument 6

Operational Programme for the
European Union Funds’
Investments 2014-2020
Priority axis 1 - strengthening
research and development and
innovation

Policy Instrument 7

Norte 2020 (2014-2020 North
Portugal Regional Operational
Programme)

Policy Instrument 8

Operational Programme for the
Implementation of the EU
Cohesion Policy in the period
2014-2020
Priority 1 - International
competitiveness of research,
innovation and technological
development in line with smart
specialisation for enhanced
competitiveness and greening of
the economy



III. REGIONAL **PROFILE**

8 regions



Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (France)

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region is the 3rd thermal region in France thanks to 24 spa towns with the 12 French different therapeutic orientations certified by the French social security: Child Developmental disorder (TDE), Respiratory tract (VR), Digestive device and metabolic diseases (AD), Bucco-lingual mucosa affection (AMB), Urinary tract and metabolic diseases (AU), Dermatology (DER), Gynaecology (GYN), Cardio-arterial diseases (MCA), Phlebology (PHL), Neurology (Neu), Psychosomatic affections (PSY), Rheumatology (RH).

All the thermal resorts of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes are built on notable geological points allowing the natural emergence of their mineral waters. Before emerging on the surface, these mineral springs have been through underground for hundreds of years, during which they have become mineral-laden in contact with the different rocks they have been through, and they rose to different temperatures.

The effects of thermal cures are directly linked with the chemical compositions of the mineral waters of their springs. In France a water is declared mineral when, springing up from an identified spring, it possesses fixed and constants physico-chemical characteristics, microbiological purity and it has demonstrated the existence of a health-benefit. According to its physical-chemical characteristics, the water could be used for one or more therapeutic orientations. Several times millennium, thermalism remained in France committed to its basic principle: to treat chronic diseases with mineral waters, muds and natural gases. According to the orientation, in France the basic package of the cure includes 4 to 6 daily thermal treatments (sometimes more, according to a double-orientation cure, allowing the simultaneous care of two illnesses), prescribed by the thermal doctor who follows the curist during all the stay, with visits at the beginning, during, and at the end of the cure.

Facts and figures of spa therapy in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region:

- Thermal treatments with medical benefits based on scientific proofs;
- Cure prescribed by a doctor (3 consecutive weeks of thermal treatments);
- Cure supported by Health Insurance (up to 65% of care);
- 130 000 curists in 2018;
- More than 20 000 jobs included 2 200 directs jobs;
- 2.5 million overnight stays;
- A consolidated turnover of thermal establishments of €100 million;
- €275 million in direct and indirect economic benefits;





Hajdú-Bihar County (Hungary)

Hungary is extremely rich in thermal waters - its thermal water reserve is significant on a world scale, while on European scale it is outstanding. Most of the mineral and medicinal waters contain dissolved minerals, providing medicinal and curative powers, and making them suitable for bathing- and drinking cures. Currently, there are more than a thousand wells in Hungary that provide hot water (above 30C), most of which is medicinal water. Medicinal waters can be found in almost all regions of Hungary, and about three-quarters of the wells are located in the Észak-Alföld region. Among the almost 100 hot water spa baths of the country (from which 22 are situated in the region), there are 36 special medicinal baths in which the water contains radioactivity, sulphurous acid, salt bromine

carbonate or iodine. The spas of Hajdú-Bihar county are situated in the neighbourhood of the Hortobágy, the Hungarian "Puszta", which is a world-famous UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Spa of Debrecen is located in the heart of the Big Forest – the lungs of the city. The recovery of the guests is promoted by some 40 treatments based on medicinal waters and the assistance of specialists. In addition to classical bath treatments, a wide range of physiotherapies, exercise therapies and psychological methods are applied. The classical, water-based therapies and natural treatments rely on three pillars: prevention, therapy and rehabilitation.

Medicinal water treatments, preventive massages, physiotherapy, special wellness and rehabilitation, treatments for young mothers, psychology and locomotive treatments are all offered among the services. The alkali chloric, hydrogen carbonated water is used against different diseases like chronic arthritis, chondritis, orthopaedic deformation, extended posttraumatic care, certain heart and circulatory disturbances, numerous gynaecological troubles and nervous complaints. All treatments are prescribed after making the necessary arrangements and medical examination by the physicians of the spa. Among the sessions the closeby tourist attractions can give the patients nice

memories – the new, award-winning Aquaticum Waterpark, the Big Forest itself, the Fog Theatre, the zoo, the stadium and many bars and restaurants are in a walking distance. The largest spa complex of Europe is at Hajdúszoboszló. The medicinal thermal water of this 70 year-old, world-famous thermal bath is welling up from 1100 metres to fill the pools with mineral water of different temperatures. The spa is open throughout the whole year and it is offering a wide selection of physiotherapeutic and balneotherapeutic treatments for the patients in the close proximity of tourist attractions, like the Aquapark or the Aqua Palace, which make the location perfect for a family time.





Latvia (Letonia)

Natural resources. Latvia has long and strong traditions of providing natural (thermal) resources for medical treatment. The sulphur springs of Kemerī were used in traditional medicine already in the second half of the 18th century and in the early 19th century when the ailing noblemen of the Kurzeme region came here for treatment and stayed with local foresters. The first public bathing establishment in Kemerī was built in 1838 on a state-owned land that had been allocated for sulphur water therapy purposes. Curative resources available in Latvia (e.g. mud, mineral water, climate) have an appropriate quality for the provision of medical services. In addition, these resources are available for long-term use and in a large quantity. Nowadays there is still a lot of unused potential regarding the use and processing of existing curative resources. Therefore, as regards the geothermal water, additional research is needed in order to explore the possibility for the usage of this thermal resource. Noteworthy heat power could be obtained from the water of the Cambrian aquifers, located in the area of 12,000 km²

in the Central and south-western parts of Latvia at the depth 1,350-1,730 m. After the analysis of heat demand volume and dynamics for different consumers in the geothermal zone, complying with the above conditions, researchers have come to the conclusion that bigger cities, such as Liepāja, Jelgava, and Dobele, are more suitable for the use of geothermal water for district heating and hot water supply. There are no suitable consumers in the rural areas, and such consumers are unlikely to appear in the near future, except in the virgin coastal areas suitable for the establishment of spas. The efficiency of using geothermal water depends on the cost of accessing it and couldn't be beneficial in all of the above-mentioned places. It should be noted that the Liepāja Regional Hospital is already using geothermal waters for healing purposes on a daily basis as they have made their own deep-drill to access the thermal water. However, it will take more time for increased the use of thermal waters in Latvia, as it requires more research work and high initial investment.

Treatments/therapies/cures. Latvian health resorts, medical rehabilitation centres and spa's mainly practice historical resort treatment traditions – mud and mineral water treatments, combined with modern rehabilitation methods - modern diagnostic and treatment combined with the use of natural agents like hydrogen sulphide, bromine mineral water and healing mud. They provide treatment for cardio-vascular diseases, lung problems, dermatological problems, neurological problems, oncological diseases, orthopaedic and rheumatologic problems, rehabilitation for handicapped persons, as well as medical rehabilitation programs for children. Since 2021, there are offered medical rehabilitation programs for the post COVID-19 patients and programs for health prevention.

Thermal/spa/health resorts. The largest and the most advanced health resorts in Latvia are the Jaunkemeri Resort Rehabilitation Centre, a modern private establishment, and the state run Vaivari National Rehabilitation Centre, where the most of quality medical and medical spa treatments are available for patients' rehabilitation after various illnesses, disabled people, as well as for prophylactic purposes. Both of them are located on the territory of the Jūrmala resort city – along the coast or in pine forests, which offer wonderful conditions for rehabilitation, health improvement and leisure. There are also other smaller health resorts and spa establishments, rehabilitations centres and/or spa's, working within hotels, hospitals and medical centres.





Warmia and Mazury Region (Poland)

In Warmia and Mazury (northeastern Poland), there is one health resort in Gołdap, which has been operating since 2001. Due to the unique climatic values of the region and natural resources, other towns are also interested in building health resort facilities. Miłomłyn, Frombork, Lidzbark Warmiński and commune of Górowo Iławeckie, which have the status of health resort protection areas. Thermal waters in the region are currently capitalised in Lidzbark Warmiński.

The Warmian Thermal Baths in Lidzbark Warmiński is the first thermal centre located in the north of Poland. The thermal facility uniquely combines the high standard of hotel services with a rich SPA offer. It is a perfect place for rest and relaxation. It is a 100 % natural SPA centre and all treatments are based on natural ingredients, including thermal water, healing mud, cranberries, herbs and spices.

Sanatorium Wital in Gołdap offers treatment for diseases of the musculoskeletal system, upper and lower respiratory tract, cardiovascular system and psychosomatic diseases, obesity and skin problems, balneotherapy and cryotherapy and many others. In addition, there is a mineral water pump room and brine graduation tower, promenade, playground, mini-golf area, walking and cycling paths and outdoor exercise equipment.

Hotel Ventus Natural & Medical SPA in Gołdap offers accommodation and beauty treatments in the Wellness zone, spine rehabilitation and general help in the treatment of orthopaedic and post-traumatic diseases.

The development of medicine, the increase of public expenditure on treatment and aging society are factors that combined with the natural health properties of the environment of Warmia and Mazury, may also become an opportunity for the regional economy. The Covid-19 pandemic, with its entire negative spectrum, also creates new opportunities for the economic development of the region. Local governments make efforts to jointly act for the development of health resorts in the region. EU funds allowed to partially implementing public investments in the health resort infrastructure but we are still the beginning of creating spa tourism in the region.





Centru Region (Romania)

Centru Region is located in the centre of Romania, partially overlapping the historic province of Transylvania. On the territory of the six counties (Alba, Braşov, Covasna, Harghita, Mureş and Sibiu) of Centru Region there are 37 (town, areas) with high potential in terms of balneary resources. Six of 37 localities hold the status of balneary / balneary-climatic resort, and these are Covasna, Băile Tuşnad, Borsec, Sovata, Ocna Sibiului and Bazna.

The most important therapeutic natural resources the Region has, are mineral waters (carbonated mineral waters, ferruginous mineral waters, iodized mineral waters, chlorinated-sodium mineral waters, sulphurous mineral waters) therapeutic gas (mofetta), salt mines, bio climate, therapeutic

mud and woods.

These natural balneary resources are valorised through treatments, therapies and rehabilitation programmes provided within the treatment centres, hospitals, hotels and traditional baths.

The most relevant actors for the development of the balneology and balneary tourism, both at regional and national level, supported the implementation of the project activities by participation at the international study visits and the local stakeholder group meetings organised.

As part of the interregional learning process the 5th Study Visit of InnovSPA project was hosted in Centru Region, Romania, by the Regional Development Agency Centru. Virtually organized at the end of October 2020 the two-day event offered the participants the opportunity to travel through the most representative balneary areas of the Region.

The event aimed at facilitating exchange of experience and good practices between the project partners and their stakeholders, by discovering the balneary ecosystem «spa resources, stakeholders, policy context» of Centru Region and by identifying aspects that can contribute to policies development in their regions.

During the event, there were highlighted the most important natural resources (mineral waters, thermal waters, salt waters, salty air, therapeutic mud, mofetta, microclimate) of Centru Region, the ways they are valorised through balneary treatments and therapies,

and the level of their use, the good practices and policies that support the development and innovation in the balneary areas (Regional Development Plan, Smart Specialization Strategy of Centru Region, Regional Development Programme).

The virtual journey through the region included stops at the balneary resorts of Sovata, Praid salt cave, Borsec, Băile Tuşnad, Covasna, Blvanyos - Turia, Bazna and Ocna Sibiului.

Policy makers and balneary resort representatives presented the richness of these areas in terms of spa resources, the importance of these resources for the people health and economic development of the areas and of the Region and their future development plans.





Lithuanian Innovation Center (Lithuania)

Druskininkai, Palanga and Birštonas are the main resort towns, which attract Lithuanian as well as foreign costumers. In Lithuania there is a tradition of a health resort which provides different services “under one roof” meaning that Medical SPAs and SPA hotels provide accomodation services including meals and treatments for their customers.

Resort town	Medical SPAs	SPA hotels	Hotels	Total capacity of rooms
Druskininkai	7	9	10	2200
Birštonas	3	4	4	1100
Palanga	4	12	16	1850

As having a small inner market, Lithuanian spa sector is strongly export oriented. Usually the foreign tourists spend 11 nights in the thermal establishments and it is an important tourism sector to be developed further.

Following the significant investments to the sector, the number of the visitors grew significantly during the last period. Druskininkai is the largest and the oldest Lithuanian mineral water, mud and climate therapies resort and the number of the visitors here grew from 39 000 in 2000 to 337 000 in 2018, in Birstonas from 37 000 in 2013 to 144 000 in 2018. In such towns as Birstonas thermal establishments account for 72% of jobs of the municipality and is a core economic activity.

The main natural curative factor in the resorts (Birštonas and Druskininkai) is water of different minerlization that contains sodium, calcium and magnesium chlorides. Mineral water is used for various baleological treatments and drinking. Druskininkai and Birštonas are balneological and peloid therapy (mud therapy) resorts of mild climate. Palanga offers treatment using sea water, mineral water, peat healing mud and other physical healing resources. All the resorts also offer a climate therapy as

an integral part of the treatment. The services are provided to solve the problems of locomotor system, nervous (neurological) system, blood circulatory, respiratory system, orthopedic, oncological diseases, endocrine, gynaecological diseases, digestive diseases, skin disorders, weight control, children rehabilitation, stress. The resorts also provide health prevention packages, wellness and beauty treatments.





Norte Region (Portugal)

The Norte is the region with the most SPAs in Portugal (22 active) and “Health” is one of its eight RIS3 priorities. The Norte 2020 financing instrument aims to develop health and well-being in the region and to make good use of its mineral waters.

Modernizing the regional network of thermal facilities is one of its objectives. Of the ten nationally approved thermal therapies, the Norte has eight available: rheumatology, respiratory, skin, digestive, metabolic, circulatory, nervous system, and gynecology. Several springs have water hot enough for reuse geothermally (heating) and a few others actually bottle and sell their mineral waters throughout the country and even abroad (e.g. Pedras Salgadas). All SPAs are within 30 minutes of a Natural or National Park but one of them (Gerês) is even inside the only Portuguese National Park (Peneda-Gerês). Most are located far from big cities, in regions of peace, quiet and nature contact.





Savinjska Region (Slovenia)

Savinjska Region in Slovenia is an area rich in pristine nature, thermal and mineral water. On its territory are located seven thermal spas: Zdravilišče Laško, Rimske toplice, Terme Zreče, Terme Dobrna, Terme Topolšiča, Zdravilišče Rogaška Slatina, Terme Olimia Podčetrtek.

Thermal spas have always been a source of health and well-being. People have always sought peace and relaxation in nature, in thermal spas, at the springs of thermal and mineral waters, and discovered the secret of well-being. The development and establishment of Slovenian health resorts was made possible by the richness of the unspoiled natural resources of our country. The most important are thermal and mineral water, sea water and brine, organic and inorganic peloids, and marine, Pannonian and pre-Alpine middle mountain microclimates.

The Savinjska region in Slovenia is a real treasure trove of natural beauty. It is extremely rich in thermal and mineral waters and it is this natural richness of this healing water that allows it to boast a centuries-old tradition of spas thanks to thermal springs. Throughout history, as many as seven Slovenian health resorts have developed that attract people from near and far: Termalna Laško, Rimske Toplice, Terme Zreče, Terme Dobrna, Terme Topolšiča, Rogaška Slatina Health Resort and Terme Olimia Podčetrtek.

In Slovenia, thermal spas, together with preventive health treatments and natural resources, implement programs that help reduce stress, which is currently the biggest cause of some diseases. In the Savinjska region, where there are seven spas, each of them treats various problems, namely gastrointestinal diseases, rheumatic diseases, gynecological diseases, skin diseases and even neurological diseases. Each of them specializes in a specific area of treatment.

Regional health resorts offer guests medical, dental, therapeutic and cosmetic services and complement the basic tourist and accommodation activities well. The Savinjska region is becoming a recognizable and successful tourist destination. With its seven natural thermal spas, it attracts more and more guests who seek and find relaxation, well-being and health. Spas account for as much as 97% of all overnight stays in the region.



STUDY VISITS

8th study visits

1th

The study visit in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region began with the presentation of the thermal national and regional context, the presentation of the organisational chart of the thermal regional ecosystem followed by a presentation of the French medical spa therapy. The participants discovered the Regional Thermal Ecosystem: the Thermal Regional Federation, Thermauvergne association, Route des villes d'eaux du Massif central association, Thermhôtel association, the Cluster Innovatherm and its collaborative projects, the Institute inter university of thermal medicine and the Campus of Trades and Qualifications Thermalism, Wellness and Full health.

The participants benefited from the presentation of the regional thermal plan 2016-2021 (a regional investment plan in favour of thermal towns of the region), the presentation of the thermal wellness

strategy of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes tourism and the presentation of the concept of Full Health Resort and its perspective of development.

After this introduction, the participants visited the Thermal Establishment of Royat, the wellness centre of Royat called Royatonic, the city of Châtel-Guyon in order to discover more about the local strategy of Châtel-Guyon as Pilot for the Full Health resort concept, with an operational illustration by the presentation of the private group France Thermes and its Full Health Resort in construction in Châtel-Guyon. The participants also visited the "Medical Spa" Vichy Célestins Thermal Spa, the Thermal Establishment Thermes Les Dômes in Vichy and the Chamalières Hospitality, Catering and Tourism High School.

THERMAL RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. Thermes of Royat: www.thermesderoyat.fr
2. Royatonic Wellness Center: www.royatonic.com
3. Thermal Les Dômes in Vichy: www.thermes-de-vichy.fr/en
4. Medical Spa Vichy les Célestins: www.vichy-spa-hotel.fr/en
5. Châtel-Guyon Resort Aiga: aiga-resort.com/en
6. Chamalières Hospitality, Catering and Tourism High School: www.lyceedechamalieres.fr



2th

The University of Debrecen hosted the 2nd Study Visit of the InnovaSPA project in May 2019, in one of the leading health tourism destinations in Hungary, Hajdú-Bihar County. During the three days spent in the region, the participants were able to learn about the Hungarian and the regional thermal ecosystem and

the policies and actions that support the development of preventative health and thermalism and find inspiration from the good practices in the fields of the InnovaSPA project. The values of the region were presented to the participants by the stakeholders of the project using of the triangle of Policy-Practice-Pleasure.

THERMAL RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. Aquaticum: <https://www.aquaticum.hu/en>
2. Hungarospa Hajdúszoboszló: <https://www.hungarospa.hu/en>
3. Debrecen Water Tower: <https://www.debrecen.hu/en/tourist/places/water-tower-2>
4. 'Pusztá' of Hortobágy: <https://www.hnp.hu/en>
5. University of Debrecen: <https://unideb.hu/en>
6. Thermal, Health Industrial Cluster: <http://www.termalegeszsegipariklaszter.hu/en>



Lithuania

The 3rd Study Visit of InnovaSPA project took place at the beginning of July 2019, in Lithuania and was organised by the **Lithuanian Innovation Center**. In order to see in practice how the natural factors are used in medical treatments and wellness services, visits at medical SPAs and wellness resorts located in Druskininkai and Birštonas were organized.

The sites visited in Druskininkai were:

- » UPA medical SPA, a SPA treatment centre and rehabilitation service that offers more than 80 different therapeutic treatments, rehabilitation, wellness, facial and body grooming services;
- » Health Resort Druskininkai, an institution of modern technologies encompassing centuries of SPA experience and traditions of personal health care, providing services of ambulatory health care.

The visit continued in the city of Birštonas a resort endowed with natural riches as abundant mineral water springs, therapeutic mud, clean air and climate.

The sites visited in Birštonas included:

- » Vytautas Mineral SPA, where guests can improve their wellbeing thanks to the unique minerals found in the water extracted from the exclusive Sofia source (discovered in 1960);
- » Medical Spa Egles Sanatorija, a medical SPA opened in Birštonas in 2013, that has residential quarters and a medical centre which offers more than 100 therapeutic treatments and services;
- » "Birutės Vila" Mineral Water Pavilion, an indoor pavilion that houses a mineral water basin fountain and mineral water vaporization wall where visitors can boost their health by inhaling the air saturated with minerals;
- » "Druskupis" Mineral Water Graduation Tower which creates a marine climate at 50-80 meters around it. The visitors of the tower can enjoy particularly healthy air with "sea effect".

THERMAL RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. UPA medical SPA: <https://upa.lt>
2. Health Resort Druskininkai: <https://www.akvapark.lt/en/health-resort-and-spa/health-resort-druskininkai/>
3. Vytautas Mineral SPA: <https://www.vytautasmineralspa.lt/en>
4. Medical Spa Egles Sanatorija: <https://sanatorija.lt/birstone>
5. "Birutės Vila" Mineral Water Pavilion: https://www.svjokubokelias.lt/en_US/member-municipalities/birstonas-municipality/birutes-vila-mineralinio-vandens-paviljonas/
6. "Druskupis" Mineral Water Graduation Tower: <https://www.visitbirstonas.lt/en/sight-seeing-places/open-air-graduation-pavilion-druskupis>



Norte Region, Portugal

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 event was hosted by the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto between 24 - 26 of September 2019 and started in Penafiel with a session of presentations highlighting the thermal ecosystem and SPA science in Portugal, the current developments of therapeutic SPAs and the official SPA treatments practiced in Portugal. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economic Affairs provide the national legal framework of thermal sector in Portugal. 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.

THERMAL RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. Termas de Caldas de Aregos (Resende): <http://www.termas-caldasdearegos.com/>
2. Termas de São Vicente (Penafiel): <https://termasdesaovicente.pt/en/>
3. Termas de Amarante (Amarante): <https://termasdeamarante.pt/>
4. Chaves Termas & SPA (Chaves): <http://www.termasdechaves.com/>
5. Thermal and Water Route of Chaves-Verín Eurocity





VIDEO (15:55):
Story of the springs
in Transylvania



scan and enjoy

Centru Region, Romania

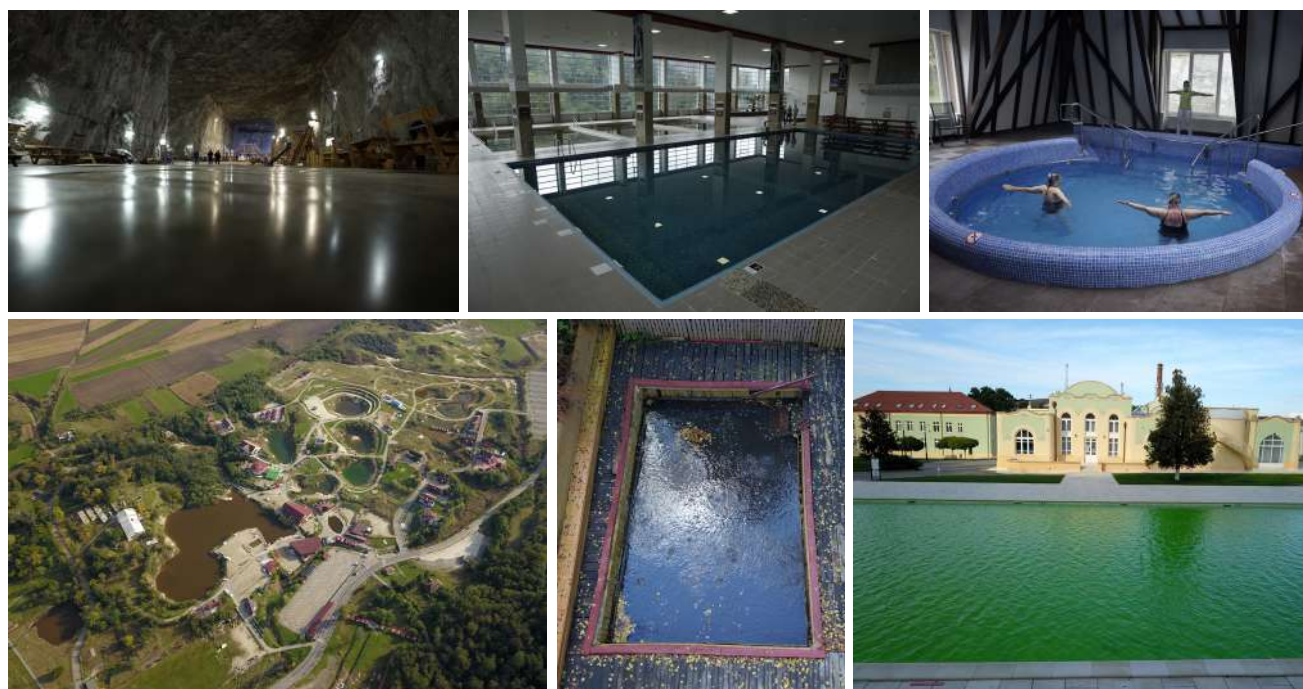
As part of the interregional learning process, the 5th Study Visit of Innova SPA project took place in Centru Region, Romania and the Regional Development Agency Centru hosted it. Virtually organized at the end of October 2020 the two-day event offered the participants the opportunity to travel through the most representative balneary areas of the Region.

The event aimed at facilitating exchange of experience and **good practices** between project partners and stakeholders from the partnering regions, by discovering the **balneary ecosystem «spa resources, stakeholders, policy context»** of Centru Region and by identifying aspects that could contribute to policies development in those regions.

As presented in Centru Region are available the following natural resources: **mineral waters, thermal waters, salt waters, salty air, therapeutic mud, mofetta, and microclimate**. The Study Visit mainly highlighted the ways these resources are valorised through balneary treatments and therapies, the level of their use and the good practices and policies that support the development and innovation in the balneary areas (Regional Development Plan, Smart Specialization Strategy of Centru Region, and Regional Development Programmes).

THERMAL RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. Sovata Balneary Resort
2. Praid Salt Cave
3. Borsec Balneary Resort
4. Băile Tușnad Balneary Resort
5. Covasna Balneary Resort
6. Blvanyos - Turia
7. Bazna Balneary Resort
8. Ocna Sibiului Balneary Resort
9. Jasmine Balneary Complex Ocna Sibiului
10. Dr. Benedek Geza Hospital of Rehabilitation in Cardiovascular Diseases in Covasna



online

Warmia and Mazury Region, Poland

The study visit of the InnovaSPA project partners in the region of Warmia and Mazury, due to the pandemic, took place virtually. The event organized as part of the interregional learning process, highlighted how the region uses the natural resources and what the directions taken in order to become a healthy region. The host of the event was the Warmia and Mazury Regional Development Agency. The virtual tour of the region took place in the health protection areas of **Lidzbark Warmiński, Frombork, Miłomłyn and Górowo Iławeckie** and the health resort of **Goldap**. Warmia and Mazury would become a destination for medical tourism

due to competitive factors such as natural and unpolluted environment, natural healing resources, a well-known tourist brand and spa investments made in recent years.

The natural resources available on the region will be used for treating respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, orthopedic and traumatic diseases, peripheral arteries disease and diseases of the nervous system. In terms of spa potential, Warmia and Mazury is rich in natural deposits of peloids, has favorable climate, clean air, beautiful glacial landscape, biodiversity, forests and thermal water as well.

THERMAL RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. Lidzbark Warmiński
2. Frombork
3. Miłomłyn
4. Górowo Iławeckie
5. Health resort of Goldap





online

VIDEO (05:40):
InnovaSPA Study
Visit in Latvia



scan and enjoy

Latvia

The 7th Study Visit of InnovaSPA project virtually took place in Latvia on 28 April 2021. The objective of this interregional learning event was to present the potential for health resort development based on curative resources in Latvia. The Study Visit was hosted by the **University of Latvia**. During the visit, InnovaSPA partners and stakeholders were introduced with the availability of curative resources, resort areas, particular health resorts and medical rehabilitation traditions, as well as promotion of the health tourism. Participants had a chance to learn about good practices and innovative use of natural resources in medical rehabilitation and production of organic cosmetics. Policies related to the development of medical rehabilitation, health resorts and health tourism were discussed by the representatives of the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia (responsible for tourism policy development), Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia and Latvian Investment and Development Agency (responsible for tourism policy implementation), while the Latvian Health Tourism Cluster and National Association of Resorts talked about the historical importance of resort areas for the

development of health resorts nowadays. Two of Latvian largest and most experienced medical rehabilitation centres – **Resort Rehabilitation Centre “Jaunkemeri”** and **National Rehabilitation Centre “Vaivari”** shared their good practices in using natural health resources and innovative technologies. The Dean of the Rehabilitation Faculty of Riga Stradins University presented study programmes providing information about skills and knowledge for professional staff working for health resorts and medical rehabilitation establishments, but the scientific evidence of the use of various curative resources in medicine and cooperation with service providers was presented by representatives of **Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia** and Riga Stradins University. The largest resort city of Latvia – **Jurmala**, shared its experience in promoting health resorts infrastructure and one of the Jurmala’s largest spa hotels – Jurmala SPA and conference hotel introduced the importance of spa services as reducing effect for seasonality in tourism. In addition, two producers of unique nature based organic cosmetics – **Madara Cosmetics** (internationally recognised) and Kemmern present their experience of producing innovative nature-based cosmetics.

HEALTH RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. Resort Rehabilitation Centre: “Jaunkemeri”: <https://jaunkemeri.lv/>
2. National Rehabilitation Centre “Vaivari”: <https://www.nrcvaivari.lv/en>
3. Resort city Jurmala: <https://www.jurmala.lv/>
4. Kemmern (mud therapy): <https://www.kemmern.lv/>
5. Madara Cosmetics: <https://www.madaracosmetics.com/lv>
6. Latvian Health Tourism Cluster: <https://healthtravellatvia.lv/en>



online

Savinjska Region, Slovenia

The 8th Study Visit of InnovaSPA project took place on 5th of May 2021 in Slovenia with the aim of facilitating the Phase I's last round of the exchange of experience between the InnovaSPA partners and stakeholders from the partnering regions. The visit was virtually organised by the **Development Agency of Savinjska Region** (RASR – Razvojna agencija Savinjske regije), in Savinjska region, the home to seven of the thirteen natural spas in Slovenia.

Savinjska region is an area rich in pristine nature, thermal and mineral water, which is why the region has seen the development of seven thermal spas: **Zdravilišče Laško, Rimske toplice, Terme Zreče, Terme Dobrna, Terme Topolšiča, Zdravilišče Rogaška Slatina, Terme Olimia Podčetrtek**.

During the virtual study visit in Savinjska region the participants had the opportunity to see Terme Olimia, Zdravilišče Rogaška Slatina, Terme Zreče

and Terme Dobrna, to find out about the preventative measures and treatments performed by the primary healthcare center Celje, learn from good practices on the development of complementary activities in the field of spas, as well as learn from cooperation models between the local partners and thermal spas.

The thermal ecosystem (regional and national level) was presented by the most relevant actors: the representatives of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Slovenian Tourist Board, National Institute of Public Health, Development Council of the Savinjska region, Institute for Research, Education and Sustainable Development Celje, Public institute for tourism and culture, Association of Municipalities and towns of Slovenia, Turizem Podčetrtek, Bistrica ob Sotli, Kozje (Commercial association for the promotion of tourism; the Mayor of the Municipality of Rogaška Slatina and the representatives of several spas in the region.

THERMAL RESORTS and GOOD PRACTICES VISITED

1. Slovenian Tourist Board
2. Primary healthcare centre Celje
3. Association of Slovenian Natural Spas
4. Medical center Rogaška
5. Olimia Podčetrtek Thermal Spa
6. Thermiana Laško
7. Terme Zreče
8. Dobrna Thermal Spa
9. Pomona Relaxing Nature Guest House, Rogaška Slatina



IV. GOOD PRACTICES

- Development of complex well-being and medical spa services – Medical spa Eglės Sanatorija with health rehabilitation traditions starting from 1972 developed a holistic approach to provide medical treatment. (LITHUANIA)
- Development of the Innovative health tourism destination in Birštonas city - Birštonas city municipality has set a goal to develop a concept of an innovative resort as health, wellness and leisure destination for the whole family. (LITHUANIA)
- Tickets for balneary treatment - Tickets for balneary treatment allocated to people assured in the public pension system and retired people in Romania. (ROMANIA)
- Innovative health services combined with natural resources at Jaunkemeri health resort - RRC “Jaunkemeri” is the climate and balneotherapy rehabilitation centre in Latvia offering innovative health services combined with natural curative resources. (LATVIA)
- Latvian Health Tourism Cluster (LHTC) - LHTC unites 60 members aiming at providing high quality medical services to local and foreign patients (LATVIA)
- Development of tourist attractions and services - Development of tourist attractions and touristic services to improve the regional economies and to create jobs (HUNGARY)
- Recycling and reducing the environmental impact of thermal waters - Efficient handling of the highly salinated and microbiologically contaminated drained wastewater of the thermal spas with innovative methods (HUNGARY)
- Chaves-Verin: the water Eurocity - Two trans-border thermal cities united, containing nine springs: a “water route” was established. (PORTUGAL)
- Full Health Thermal Spa Resort (FRANCE)
- Regional Thermal Plan Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes 2016 - 2021 (FRANCE)

V. ACTION PLANS

8 action plans

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region – PP1

Policy instrument aimed to be improved: The Regional Thermal plan of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region 2016-2021.

Action 1

Climate therapy as a key component of a new generation of thermal spa products

Source of inspiration: the concept of Medical SPA “Eglės sanatorija” visited in Birštonas and Druskininkai, 2 lithuanian resorts visited during InnovaSPA cooperation. These Medical spas are well known for medical spa treatments based on natural therapeutic factors – mineral water, therapeutic mud and climate therapy.

The therapies in Medical SPA “Eglės sanatorija” are:

- Balneotherapy: the treatment with mineral water
- Pelotherapy: the treatment with fango-paraffin and therapeutic mud
- Climate therapy: the use of a variety of climatic factors for the treatment. The purpose is to restore the biological link between the organism and the external environment (sun, air temperature, humidity, wind). A person loses these connections without even feeling it, by living in “premises climate” or “climate underneath the clothing”

conditions.

The objective of Action 1 is to include climate therapy in the design of new generation preventive health products in thermal environment of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region.

Historically the thermal resorts in France were Thermal and Climate resorts but in 2006 they lost the CLIMATE component by law. Thanks to the cooperation, the environmental and climate factor has been reintroduced into the Regional Thermal Plan of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes as a key component of the preventative health product.

Action 2: “Druskupis”

open-air mineral water evaporation structure

Source of inspiration: 3 architectural and

nature-based therapeutic elements as basement of the climate therapy in Birštonas. The Vytautas Jurgis Meška Park with the “Druskupis” open-air mineral water evaporation structure, the Kneipp Garden and the Mineral water pavilion “Birutės Villa” are nature-based therapeutic elements part of the thermal therapy.

Druskupis is an open-air mineral water evaporation

structure in Birštonas, which objective is to benefit from the healthy “sea air effect”. This structure in wood has an original architecture with a mineral water fountain and salt gallery. The air enriched with drops of mineral water has the same effect as breathing in sea air. The “sea air effect” by breathing in salt-saturated air is particularly beneficial for people with a variety of respiratory illnesses. Meditation by observing the tap water improves well-being and helps overcome nervous tension.

The stakeholder’s group of InnovaSPA project in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region found this nature-based experience very interesting and has the intention to use the Birštonas park planning and the “Druskupis” open-air mineral water evaporation structure as a good practice to be transferred in the future designing of a new generation of thermal parks in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region.

Hajdú-Bihar County, Hungary – PP2

Policy instrument addressed: Enterprise Development and Innovation Operational Program Plus (2021-27)

The bathing culture in Hungary dates back hundreds of years. The already well-established **medical and thermal health tourism service** and **hospitality system**, the existing operating **companies**, the efficient **marketing and sales network**, the **international recognition of the Hungarian balneological treatment**, as well as **the high level of training of doctors and medical staff** providing it can be a good basis for the innovation of services. Along with the excellent existing facilities, it is also perceptible that through the development of innovative services, spas in Hungary are able to supply and receive a larger health tourism clientele.

The planned actions of the Hungarian region of Észak-Alföld – which is one of the richest in geothermal waters – can be divided into two main actions:

- 1. Service development** (the source of the inspiring good practice is in brackets)
 - a) drinking therapy - although there are some drinking therapies, not all relevant spas can provide this service (Vichy)
 - b) McKenzie exercises to be supported by the social contribution – the red tape services inspired the sub-action (Lithuania)
 - c) therapeutic water inhalation – although traditional medicine uses this service, it is not yet very

- popular in Hungary (Auvergne-Rhone-Alps and Norte regions)
- d) complex series of therapies including gastronomy, night rest conditions, exercise, natural / close-to-nature activities, and ecosystem services
- e) product development from thermal water (Vichy and Portugal)
- f) establishment of visitor centers (Auverne-Rhone-Alpes)

2. Networking, cooperation

The action is based on the good practices of Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region *cluster-level professional cooperation* and the development of *innovative prevention and health programs* to improve people’s quality of life, but being a border region, the Chaves-Verín *cross-border cooperation* also had an effect on it.

Although in Hungary there are some similar predecessor programs, the activities can be developed based on the mentioned good practices by designing new regional thermal strategies, measuring the impact of health preservation and thermal therapies

The aim of the actions is to develop new tourism products and health care packages that promote health and prevention, in addition to traditional and applied products based on medical and wellness treatments, all supported by medical research.

Latvia - PP3

Policy instrument addressed: Republic of Latvia Operational Programme (OP) “Growth and Investment 2014-2020”

Priority Axis 1: Research, technological development and innovation. (Action 1)

Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness and innovation of SMEs. (Action 2)

Action 1

Supporting the extension of the Competence Centre of Pharmacy, Biomedicine and Medical Technologies (CCPBMT) that particularly focuses on the development of new drugs, food supplements and cosmetics based on natural curative resources in the framework of the Competence centres support program during the current planning period (2014-2020). Activities of the CCPBMT were re-evaluated before its extension took place. It was concluded that this is important to continue the research work related to the use of natural resources in bio-pharmacy and medicine, as well as the production of functional cosmetics also during the next stage of CCPBMT activity.

The Action is being implemented through organizing stakeholders’ meetings, involving stakeholders in study visits, and presenting good practices to stakeholders of the CCPBMT. Following innovative examples of producing cosmetics based on natural resources by Vichy Laboratories of France new ideas on the exploration of the use of thermal and natural resources in cosmetic products were introduced in the proposal for an extension of the CCPBMT and helped to get it approved in April 2019. The collaboration with the CCPBM will continue until the end of the InnovaSPA project as activities of the CCPBMT are going to continue until 2023 and new projects in the CCPBMT framework are under implementation.

Action 2

Supporting the extension of the Latvian Health Tourism Cluster (LHTC) the framework of the Cluster support program during the current planning period (2014-2020). A detailed analysis of the current Clusters program and developing

proposals for cluster policy improvement in the future has been conducted. It was concluded that this is important to continue the work of the LHTC also after 2020 to further promote Latvian health resorts and implement additional activities also after 2020 under the current OP (2014-2020), as well as to prepare for the next planning period (2021-2027), which envisages to continue supporting clusters. Therefore, the Cabinet Ministers of Latvia adopted a decision on 24.11.2020 to continue the funding of the work of the LHTC.

During the collaboration with the InnovaSPA project proposals for improved clusters program (based on target territory principle) for tourism industry were developed. Based on the lessons learned from good practices of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region of France, Debrecen of Hungary, Centru Region of Romania, as well as the conclusions of the analysis of the OP, proposals for improvement of clusters program in relation to health tourism, as well as health resorts, have been drawn.

The improved clusters programme for the next planning period will be based on two, but complementary types - geographical clusters and thematic clusters, the last ones impacts the activity horizontally. The renewed clusters programme has been created on analysis of geographical areas of Latvia by indicating 1) tourism export territories, 2) areas focused on the local and Baltic markets 3) local demand tourism areas. The thematic cluster will be based on strategic tourism products – culture, nature, MICE, health tourism. The territories and strategic tourism products are re-indicated by researching existing tourism products, their identity, regional functionality, destination management capability, tourism infrastructure availability, local strategies and development goals.

Warmia and Mazury Region, Poland – PP4

Policy Instrument addressed: Regional Operational Programme of Warmia and Mazury 2014-2020

The use of natural resources for the development of the spa sector is an idea that brought the partners of the InnovaSpa project together. As part of the project, Warmia and Mazury Regional Development Agency in Olsztyn, established a working group consisting of representatives of communes of our region with spa potential (Gołdap Commune, Lidzbark Warmiński Municipality, Górowo Iławeckie Commune, Miłomłyn Commune and Frombork Commune) and entrepreneurs from Gołdap and Lidzbark Warmiński operating in the thermal and spa sectors.

So far, there is only one health resort in Gołdap in the Warmia and Mazury voivodship; as part of this, there is a sanatorium providing about 500 places for patients. Since 2016, Miłomłyn, Frombork and Lidzbark Warmiński (city) have the status of a health resort protection area, and in 2019 it was also obtained by the commune of Górowo Iławeckie. Local governments make efforts to jointly act for the development of health resorts in the region.

One of the first effects of the project was the establishing by the stakeholder communes of the “Health resorts of Warmia and Mazury” association. Similar organizations associated SPA entities operate at the project partners: in Lithuania, Slovenia and in the French region of Auvergne - Rhône - Alps. The association promotes the theme

of spas through the participation of the association's authorities in regional events; participates in social consultations and monitoring of the Regional Operational Program, lobbying for favourable conditions for the development of health resorts.

Stakeholder's meetings and their participation in study visits also resulted in a discussion on smart specializations in the region. Stakeholders expressed the need to extend the catalogue of smart specializations to the medical and spa sectors, in addition to the three defined smart specializations in the Warmia and Masuria region. Therefore, the Warmia and Mazury Regional Development Agency has made efforts to obtain funds for the implementation of this goal in the frame of Regional Operational Program of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship 2014-2020.

In cooperation with stakeholders, analyses are prepared together with the necessary application for the establishment of another smart specialization of the region under the name of “healthy living”. In this way, the development of the medical and peri-medical sector will gain special importance in the economy of the region.

Centru Region, Romania - PP5

Policy Instrument addressed: Smart Specialisation Strategy of Centru Region (RIS)

“Set-up of a RDI working group with the purpose to unlock and enhance the innovative potential of balneary resorts in Centru Region” is the action inspired by the lessons learned during the InnovaSPA Study Visits in France. The most relevant and inspiring good practices for the development of the regional ecosystem were *The Regional Thermal plan of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region 2016-2021*, *Interuniversity Institute of Thermal Medicine*, *Campus of trades and qualifications for thermalism, wellness & full health and Inovatherm Cluster*. These practices were inspiring solutions for some of the challenges and problems identified in Centru Region, such as lack of collaboration and development of collaborative projects between the most relevant stakeholders, limited access to research-development-innovation services, lack of specialized and qualified staff, limited access to financing, lack of support policies for RDI in the balneary sector, etc.

Based on the lessons learned, the solution proposed to some of the challenges and problems identified at regional level in relation to the innovative development of spa resorts, was the creation of a working group. This group will act as a technical group of RIS3 (Smart Specialization Strategy of Centru Region), gathering stakeholders from two of the smart specialization sectors: HEALTH and TOURISM with specific interest in balneology and spa tourism. The working group will work to: identify solutions and propose collaborative projects with a high degree of innovation that have either better chances to obtain financing from EU programs and to consolidate

the regional innovation ecosystem; to discuss, identify and design projects that should respond to the main challenges of spa resorts; to design education and training programs to respond to the lack of medium and high qualified staff; to provide technical support/advice to public/private entities.

The activities envisaged to be implemented as part of the action are:

- Setting-up a working group with the following stakeholders: universities, research institutes, Transylvania Regional Balneoturistic Cluster, Romanian Association of Balneology, representatives of spa resorts and companies;
- Organization of 2 meetings in 2021-2022 with the working group and other stakeholders of the ecosystem in order to discuss projects of common interest for the balneary ecosystem, resulted from the analysis conducted under the InnovaSPA project, on RDI, and set up of technical groups/interest groups on each project discussed;
- Consultation of the working group and other stakeholders of the ecosystem in relation with the Guidelines of the calls that will be launch within the Priority Axis 1 of the ROP 2021-2027.

The action will be implemented by the Regional Development Agency Centru in partnership with Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster, Universities in the Region and the Balneary resorts & resort owners.

Lithuania – PP6

Policy instruments addressed: Financial support measure “Tourism innovations”;

Mission oriented innovation support instrument

Lack of the innovation activities and innovation absorption capacities are identified as one of the most important weaknesses of the Lithuanian health tourism sector. Representative of the National Association of Medical Spa and Rehabilitation canterers’ participated in the project study visits and it was stressed that support is needed for the associations and companies of the sector in order to strengthen their innovation capacities and use of the digital technologies in service provision.

In addition, there is a strong need to explore how natural resources in spas (mineral water, mud) can help address the effects of today’s pace of life and stress on the body, helping to improve people’s well-being and work capacity. It is necessary to unite the potential of different fields of science and to cooperate with practitioners. It would be important that research would involve medical professionals, universities, researchers from various fields and the thermal establishments could be used as an excellent basis for research. The scientifically proven results would help to support sustainable development of resorts and resort areas and will help to explore the possibilities for the implementation of innovative solutions. Variety of new services can be developed using natural resources such as geothermal water, mud therapy, forest therapy, herbal therapy. The development of these services is related to the need to preserve and improve

human health, which is becoming increasingly important due to the ever-accelerating pace of life, accompanied by psychological tension or stress.

Therefore, Lithuanian action plan focuses on the two main areas of improvements for the thermalism sector: supporting the uptake of the digital technologies for the service provision and strengthening the R&D capabilities of the sector.

In order to improve the innovation absorption capacities and the digitalization of the sector a totally new instrument dedicated especially for the tourism sector was introduced. It is a nation-wide financial measure “Tourism innovations” which intends to promote innovative activities in the tourism sector by encouraging the use of digital tools for the improvement of tourism services and creation of digital marketing strategies. Funding can be provided for the companies as well as associations of the tourism sector.

The possibilities to strengthen the R&D capabilities of the sector will be created through a new mission-oriented innovation policy instrument. Different stakeholders have been consulted in order to identify the priority thematic fields for the call and the preventive health measures using thermalism sector are intended to be included as one of the priority fields. Financial instrument is intended to fund collaborative business and research organization projects, which will implement innovative projects and will look for the new solutions, which can help to support the development of preventive health services. Therefore, it provides opportunities for the spa sector research to explore the potential of using natural resources such as geothermal water for the development of new services.

Norte Region, Portugal - PP7

Policy instruments addressed: NORTE 2020 (2014–2020 North Portugal Regional Operational Programme) and NORTE 2030 (to be launched in 2022).

“Promotion, surveys, and RID studies of mineral waters including preventative health benefits, also through specialized clinical trials, cluster(s) creation, facilities improvement, and eco-innovation” is the general title of the action inspired by the lessons learned during the InnovaSPA Study Visits in France, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania. The main inspiring good practices for the development of the regional ecosystem were *Vichy Celestins, Royatonic, InnovaTherm (FR), Aquaticum, Hajduszoboszlo (HU), Druskininkai (forest, clean air) [LT], Investment and Development Agency (doctor tours), Madara, Jurmala/Jaunkemeri (rehabilitation), Nature Conservation Agency (barefoot walks) [LV], Transylvania Regional Balneotouristic Cluster (RO)*.

Based on the lessons learned, we have built a list of five topics with several actions towards them:

1) Studies, surveys & promotion: all Norte SPAs will be involved on as many of our actions as they want; low client numbers will be analysed, and a workshop on cooking with mineral water promoted; a cost-benefit analysis of thermal treatments will be done, as well as the implementation of several types (and levels) of certification for SPAs; the only inactive SPA in the Norte region (Eirogo) will have studies for revival; lobbies will work towards having SPA treatments mentioned in the National Health Plan while, for the Norte, a rationalization plan will be made for distributing SPAs per population, depending on their distances and on the treatments offered; a detailed Norte Water Map will be produced, also based on actual physico-chemical and microbio analysis of the waters; health units with SPAs and their family doctors will attend a post-graduate course in Thermalism and will enjoy a full day of activities at their local SPA.

2) SPA thermal water and preventative health: calls will be prepared and opened to finance RID for mineral water reuse (e.g. for agriculture), for cosmetics development and for bottling (quadruple-helix involved: SMEs, research institutions, SPAs, municipalities, health units); the calls will include the creation of staffed labs at SPAs; there will also be a procurement call for an SME support of the establishment of “Full health station” programmes at Norte SPAs.

3) Drug-free therapeutic health: call(s) will be promoted to finance Research, Clinical Studies, and Clinical trials for new treatments at Norte SPAs; (an) other call(s) will be promoted for the physical and psychological/psychiatric rehabilitation of people at SPAs (pilot project(s)).

4) CIM Tâmega e Sousa (pilot subregion) – thermalism cluster(s) creation: municipal quadruple helix thermal clusters in Amarante, Resende, Penafiel, and Marco de Canavezes; intermunicipal cluster creation combining these four thermal municipalities and as many of the remaining seven in the NUTS3 subregion as possible; (inter)municipal card(s), linked to SPAs; modernization of historic facilities, including attached accommodation and eco-friendly solutions; all-weather covered walkways from the train station to the SPA/accommodation.

5) Healthy eco-innovation: nearby (<30mins) Natural Park nature walks and forest “barrier” for clean air, as well as forest gastronomy; green access to/within SPAs, Local Health Units, Hospitals (electric transfer vehicles from <20km train station, also going through the municipality centre).

The action will be coordinated by FMUP (PP7), supported and implemented by four of our stakeholders with the Regional Development Norte Authority at the head (CCDR-N), also including the Norte Regional Health Authority (ARS-Norte), the NUTS3 pilot Tâmega & Sousa Community (CIM-TS) and the national rheumatoid arthritis association (ANDAR).

Policy Instrument addressed: Operational Program for the Implementation of European Cohesion Policy in the period 2014-2020, namely on the implementation of the thematic axis International Competitiveness of Research, Innovation and Technological Development in accordance with the smart specialization for greater competitiveness and greening of the economy. The policy instrument will also be implemented in accordance with the Slovenian Smart Specialization Strategy. The project will contribute to the priority area Health - Medicine.

Action 1: Promoting the development of natural cosmetics from thermal water. The inspiration for this action comes from France, where Vichy has been producing natural cosmetics with thermal water extracts for many years and cooperating perfectly with each other. We also found the Competence Center for Pharmacy, Biomedicine and Medical Technology (CCPBM) interesting, focusing on the development of new medicines, dietary supplements and cosmetics based on natural healing resources.

The essence of the action is to offer additional, much-needed preventive treatment with the help of thermal water.

The goal is to be able to provide more efficient health care and a healthier lifestyle and a better quality of life on the basis of thermal treatment and the introduction of innovative medicine and care.

The action will **include all thermal spas in the region** - Terme Olimia, Thermiana Laško, Rimske toplice, Terme Zreče, Terme Dobrna, Terme Topolšiča and Zdravilišče Rogaška Slatina. **Terme Olimia** and **Thermiana Laško** are already carrying out activities in the field of preventive treatment and are also examples of good practice.

Action 2: Encourage the development of new relaxation and wellness programs. The inspiration for this action comes from Lithuania, which has a well-developed and fast-growing spa industry based on its historical heritage and natural resources.

One of the good examples is the health and wellness center "Eglė Spa", which consists of a rehabilitation center and a wellness and wellness center that offers a wide range of health services and procedures. The focus of the Center is a holistic approach to each individual who comes to this center.

The essence of the action is to provide additional anti-stress and relaxation programs that will affect the improvement of general well-being and well-being.

The goal is to ensure a more efficient and healthier lifestyle and a better quality of life based on thermal treatment and the introduction of innovative anti-stress programs.

We will take into account the experience of **Terme Olimia** and **Thermiana Laško**, which already provide preventive treatment and can be an example of good practice. At Terme Olimia, this is **Selfness**, where a lot of attention is paid to relaxation with the help of sound and frequencies that have a beneficial effect on the body and are in harmony with the frequencies of the human body, and support this relaxation with their specific thermal water. Thermiana Laško focuses on its employees by implementing **Workplace Health Promotion**, where they have created a special program with yoga, a good posture school, nature hikes, anti-stress lectures and access to thermal pools especially for the well-being of employees.

All thermal spas in the region will be included - Terme Olimia, Thermiana Laško, Rimske toplice, Terme Zreče, Terme Dobrna, Terme Topolšiča and Zdravilišče Rogaška Slatina.

The actions are expected to increase people's sense of belonging, to exist and be part of a functioning system and society, and to help them improve their well-being and health and improve their standard of living. Above all, greater satisfaction of people, a healthier lifestyle and an increase in the quality of people's lives are expected.

VI. MAIN OUTPUTS & FEATURES

The core of the InnovaSPA ecosystem was the **exchange of experience and good practices**, between the project partners and the most relevant stakeholders in the partnering regions/countries, on policy instruments that support innovation and development of thermalism and preventative health.

The interregional policy learning process, started from the identification of the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities** and **Threats** in five thematic areas related to preventative health and thermalism in the territory covered by the InnovaSPA project. All these valuable information were collected with the help of the regional, local or national stakeholders and was compiled in **8 SWOT analysis** at project level. At the same time, as part of the interregional learning process the partners identified and shared several **good practices** on policies supporting development of thermalism and health prevention (8 GPs published on the project website).

Based on the information collected

and the good practices shared, the partners exchanged experiences of innovative health solutions on preventative health and thermalism during **8 Study Visits** (onsite visits in France, Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal & virtual visits in Romania, Poland, Latvia, Slovenia) organised in the period of **March 2019 – May 2021**.

The interregional policy learning process has ended with the elaboration of **8 regional Action Plans** - the most important outputs of the project – with the aim of improving the tackled policies. The action plans have been developed based on the learnings of the study visits. The actions foreseen are inspired from the good practices shared during the eight study visits and will be implemented in the second phase of InnovaSPA project.

The delivery of all this activities was possible with the support of the stakeholders of the thermal ecosystem, provided within those **34 Local Stakeholders Meetings** organised during the first phase of the project.



Overview

8 partners (1 Association, 3 Universities, 3 Regional Development Agencies and 1 Innovation centre) from 8 countries (FR, HU, LV, PL, RO, LT, PT, SI).

When relevant, authorities in charge of targeted policies are committed to provide their support. Relevant stakeholders within each area will be strongly involved in the exchange of experience at interregional level and planned adaptation of policy instruments.

Website

www.interregeurope.eu/innovaspa

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European Union
European Regional
Development Fund