

REPORT FROM WORKSHOP ON FINALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE SPA DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT FOR HAJDÚ-BIHAR & BORSOD-ABAÚJ- ZEMPLÉN COUNTIES

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Project Partners



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1. Introduction

The project HealingPlaces - Enhancing environmental management capacities for sustainable use of the natural heritage of Central European SPA towns and regions as the driver for local and regional development is funded by the EU Interreg Central Europe programme and running between April 2019 - June 2022.

The project was implemented by the following project partners:

Poland

- Central Mining Institute (Lead Partner)
- Dolnoslaskie Region - Institute for Territorial Development

Austria

- Business Upper Austria - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH

Croatia

- City of Križevci

Czech Republic

- Mendel University in Brno

Hungary

- Hajdú-Bihar County Government
- BORA 94 Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Development Agency Nonprofit LLC

Italy

- LAMORO Development Agency
- Polo Tecnologico de Pordenone SCPA

Slovenia

- Development Centre Novo Mesto, Counseling and Development Ltd.

The well-structured process to achieve project goals was based upon the development of common tools for an integrated assessment of existing as well as future threats and pressures on mineral and thermal water resources in SPAs across Central Europe. Proceeding step-by-step, pilot actions supported the practical implementation of sustainable thermal water use in SPA, understood primarily as ensuring effective and rational use of identified resources and protection of ecosystems while realizing social and economic functions. The pilot action experiences were planned to affect the jointly formulated strategy for sustainable SPA management.

As a final joint action, partners established a shared Integrated Strategy for sustainable management of SPAs natural resources, building on tools application and pilot actions results, which brought practical elements for Integrated Strategy development.



As an outcome of the project, the Sustainable Spa Development Concept of Hajdú-Bihar and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén counties has been elaborated in Hungary. The following spas were involved in the project: Hungarospa Hajdúszoboszló, Aquaticum Debrecen, Hajdúnánás Medicinal Bath, Zsóry Thermal Bath and Spa (Mezőkövesd), Thermal Spa Bogács, Végardó Spa (Sárospatak).

During the elaboration of the concept, the development documents of the counties, the National Tourism Development Strategy, the analysis worked out in the frame of the project, the requirements of the “Methodology of Sustainable Spa Development Concept for Hajdú-Bihar & Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén counties”, as well as relevant professional events, interviews, suggestions arising during good practices were considered.

The most important objective of the spa development concept is to determine the main directions establishing economic development generated by tourism in the two counties, as well as to establish the conditions of competitiveness, keeping in mind that sustainability must be a basic principle during further developments of spas.

Spa developments have to consider moral, economic and social points of view, which are described in the concept.

2. Workshop

2.1. Background

The workshop has been organized as an onsite event following numerous informal bilateral discussions with all actors concerned.

The event took place in Debrecen on 16 June 2022 where the participants finally had the opportunity to have a deeper insight into the factors leading to the concept development, the ideas behind the concept and the potential this document can bring into future development and investment plans.

2.2. Discussion

The Sustainable Spa Development Concept was intended to serve as a document laying down some principles for greener, more responsible and engaged attitude of both municipality leaders, spa organisations, planning experts and practitioners when talking about spa development.

As the document was shared much before the event, the participants had the opportunity to define their comments to be shared during the workshop.

The core content of the document is built around the determinant topics for green solutions in spa development and management.



The following potential solutions, processes and approaches have to be considered and determined in all of the four areas, which can serve as a guidance to implement change toward sustainability, and becoming a “Green Spa”.

1. Sustainable use of thermal water
 - 1.1. Conscious extraction and use of thermal water
 - Conscious, sustainable handling of thermal water
 - Multipurpose use of thermal water
 - 1.2. Environmentally friendly handling of thermal water
 - Water treatment, cleansing products
 - 1.3. Handling and utilization of used thermal water
 - Desalination
 - Reinjection
 - Intelligent water treatment with modern filter and desalination equipment
 - Production of medical mud

2. Energy efficient and environmentally friendly development of building and infrastructure
 - 2.1. Eco-friendly construction and property development
 - Sustainable design
 - Big green areas
 - Use of nature friendly materials
 - 2.2. Eco-friendly buildings
 - Effective isolation
 - Applying green roof solutions
 - 2.3. Applying modern energetics
 - Producing electricity from solar energy
 - Utilization of thermal heat
 - Modern, efficient building and water engineering systems and their automatization
 - Heat recovery ventilation
 - Elaboration of complex energy concept
 - Energy saving electric systems and their automatization
 - 2.4. Optimization of water supply
 - Automatic building management



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- Covered pools
 - Applying the principle of efficiency
 - 2.5. Establishing modern lightening
 - Applying energy saving solutions
 - 3. Applying sustainable solutions in management and operation
 - 3.1. Applying Corporate Governments Systems
 - Operation of Environmental Management Systems
 - Operation of Quality Management Systems
 - Operation of Integrated Management Systems
 - 3.2. Eco-friendly human resource
 - Committed management and staff to environmental awareness
 - Organizing environmental education for employees and management
 - Establishing a sustainable work environment
 - Sustainable human resource management
 - 3.3. Sustainable and eco-friendly operation
 - Garbage separation
 - Green marketing
 - 4. Sustainable service development
 - 4.1. Sustainable development of medical and health care services
 - Healing based on thermal water
 - Introduction of burn-out programmes
 - Introduction of post-COVID treatments
 - Sustainable development of indoor and outdoor environment of spas
 - Infrastructural development of medical locations and community rooms
 - Strengthening relationship among employers and the target group, key actors
 - Separating state and market financing
 - 4.2. Sustainable development of wellness services, recreation
 - Exterior developments to introduce outdoor sport programmes
 - Introduction of well-being tourism
 - 4.3. Sustainable development of accommodation services
 - Information



- Daily measure of energy consumption
- Waste management
- Non-smoking hotel
- Charging stations for electric cars
- Green procurement
- Reuse of scrapped tools
- Purchase in bulk
- Establishing green offices
- Parking installations for bicycles
- Green Hotel qualification

4.4. Sustainable development of catering services

- Short supply chain
- Seasonal menu
- Reduction the wastage of food
- Use of bio ingredients
- Purchase of fair-trade products
- Purchase of domestic products
- Treatment of fatty wastewater from the kitchen
- Collection and shipping of cooking oil
- Shipping of organic waste
- Avoiding plastic

4.5. Organizing events according to the principles of sustainability

- Plant of trees, garbage collection campaigns
- Events and conferences

2.3. Implementation

Following a fruitful discussion, participants agreed to approve and validate the concept as an informal “knowledge base” for green solutions to be applied.

By signing the Declaration of Intent of the Green Spa Network of Eastern Hungary, actors engaged themselves to apply the suggested solutions and processes in as fields as possible considering the circumstances to demonstrate that the 6 municipalities selected and presented as pilot areas in the project (Bogács, Debrecen, Hajdúnánás, Hajdúszoboszló, Mezőkövesd, Sárospatak) and their spas, as well as the Thermal-Health Industry Cluster are committed to sustainability and the widest possible application of green solutions.



3. Conclusion

Health, wellness and medical tourism have grown exponentially in recent years to become increasingly relevant in many destinations. Health tourism is an emerging, global, complex and rapidly changing segment. Health tourism covers those types of tourism which have as a primary motivation the contribution to physical, mental and/or spiritual health through medical and wellness-based activities. The Global Wellness Institute defines wellness tourism as travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal wellbeing. Medical tourism can be defined as the process of traveling outside the country of residence for the purpose of receiving medical care. The sector is especially significant in several Hungarian municipalities both in Hajdú-Bihar and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén counties.

Due to large number of spas and the concentration of a large number of their guests, the environmental impact of tourism is quite significant in this area, so the sustainable development of spas is essential.

Green strategies of spas can be attractive for guests, it can save money, improve the image of spas while it can also improve the quality of the environment and protect the natural heritage.

During the sustainable development of spas, engaged spas and municipalities should focus on the following four areas:

- thermal water
- building and infrastructure
- management and operation
- services.