

Quality and innovation: a new European Thermal Survey

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ESPA gathers currently thermal associations from 20 European countries. Its main areas of intervention are focused on several important goals: to develop institutional relations in order to influence health and tourism policies in the European Union (*e.g. EU Health 2020 Agenda, Horizon 2020, EU Directive on Cross-border Healthcare, EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*); to stimulate and resource evidence-based research; to promote and improve quality standards in all spas and health resorts within Europe; to stimulate the exchange of experience and to reward best-practices and innovation.

“Quality in Health Prevention” is the first international cross-sector interest group with the aim of improving the quality of national and international health prevention measures. The association serves as a unique platform uniting all stakeholders of the European medical spa and balneology industry across borders. This includes, for instance, associations, health insurance companies, administration and politics as well as tour operators and scientific institutes. The second main task of the association will be the further development of the international EuropeSpa med quality standards of the European Spas Association (ESPA). The objective is to achieve more transparency with regard to consumer protection and a fairer competition in European health tourism.

ESPA launched the international quality seals EuropeSpa med and EuropeSpa wellness in conjunction with leading experts to boost crossborder transparency and fairness in competition.

EuropeSpa criteria are focusing on safety, hygiene and therapy infrastructure (EuropeSpa med – for medical spas) and safety, hygiene and wellness infrastructure plus service quality (EuropeSpa wellness – for wellness hotels). The certificates helps professionals like health insurances and tour operators as well as patients and guests to identify the good spa facilities in the balneotherapy and wellness sector in Europe. The multilingual EuropeSpa web-site is a platform for all stakeholders to search for all EuropeSpa med and EuropeSpa wellness certified spas.

The ESPA Innovation Awards reflects the ESPA aim to stimulate exchange of experience, best practice and know-how. The emphasis in judging applicants for the

ESPA Innovation Awards will be on how effectively the innovation addresses its stated objectives, which may be to improve quality, efficiency, to improve market position, to achieve environmental goals.

ESPA organized a e-Library exclusively dedicated to evidence-based balneotherapy with more than 1.100 scientific articles registered and 900 website monthly visitors - www.espalibrary.eu

SURVEY ON THE RULES OF REIMBURSEMENT:

After the first years of implementation of the EU Cross border Healthcare the European Parliament and the Council conducted a study aimed at analysing the functioning of the Directive. Some of the most important difficulties for the implementation were pointed out: there are problems with the reimbursement process and patients are generally unaware of the existence of the directive.

The Scientific Committee of ESPA is developing an important Epidemiological Study with several goals. Why this study? The vast majority of the Health authorities on European and national levels are not able to provide a relevant and reliable picture about the Balneotherapy care. Therefore the place of Balneotherapy remains unclear. Our study will progress in two stages. The first one will try to know the number of patients according to the Main disease treated and the breakdown of Spa Treatments according to the diseases treated in each ESPA member country. The 2nd stage has to objective to identify the health profile of the patients: conditions treated by balneotherapy and associated conditions (co-morbidities); to identify and quantify the treatments delivered to the patients in the thermal care facilities (TCF); to identify the European profile for balneotherapy – indications and treatments – as well as the discrepancies between the different countries.