

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

HealingPlaces NEWSLETTER #4 YEAR 3 | April 2021





Dear Reader,

In this issue we want to give you an overview of what happened in the life of the project during the fourth semester (1 October 2020 - 31 March 2021) within the three main activities of the project:

1. construct a common, innovative and web-based tool for assessment of threats and pressures on mineral and hot waters deposits in partners regions
and
elaborate environmental assessment tools, specifically dedicated to SPAs and easy to use, guidelines and trainings will improve the capacities of public authorities and other SPA decision makers to act more effectively on the existing SPA development problems and usage conflicts through integrated environmental management approach.
2. pilot actions in each region
3. develop an integrated strategy for SPA sustainable development

For HealingPlaces project, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak is a big threat, not only because of direct danger to health and life, but also due to the project focus on sustainable development of health resorts.

Despite the difficulties caused by COVID-19, the project partners, striving to take care of their health and minimize the risk, take action to carry out the planned activities in the most efficient way.

Stay with us and enjoy reading!

You are also welcome to our website for more project news and there you can subscribe to our Newsletter as well.

Visit: www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/HealingPlaces.html

Your sincerely,
Healing Places Team



PROJECT PROGRESS

The activities of this semester of the project were still affected by COVID-19. Although one of the biggest victims of COVID-19 is the tourism sector, including among others spas and health resorts, those committed to the profession are looking to the future and focus on their future developments. At partners different situations arise with different restrictions. At some SPAs are totally closed at some they are open to only medical/health services. Having this situation in the project's life partners adapted their activities accordingly. Thus, meetings and workshops (regional or international) were held online. Interactive study visits were also held in the virtual space.

Regardless of the difficult situation, overall progress continues to be made across the project. Check out the chart below showing activities status.



Planned in future

Just starting

On going

Finished



Please find under the activities project partner carried out to perform the planned activities in the most efficient way.

1. Construction of a common, innovative and web-based tool for assessment of threats and pressures on mineral and thermal waters deposits in partners regions and elaborate environmental assessment tools:

This thematic work package of the project has been substantially developed within this semester and some actions, delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have been completed or largely advanced.

First of all the web map of mineral/thermal water resources in the project partner regions have been completed and now is being tested by Project Partners. The map contains four thematic layers based on data provided by project partners in the google form, despite the difficulties caused by COVID-19 restrictions, and standardized (e.g. conversion to same units of measure).

The works on developing the common tool for integrated assessment of threats and on main SPAs resources have been much advanced. The working version of the tool was tested and discussed with the pilot group of Project Partners (Croatia, Austria, Slovenia and Czech Republic). The suggestion have been taken into consideration in the process of constant improvement of the tool. We are discussing possibilities and adequate form to combine it with the existing GIS - map.

In the meanwhile the works on combined database on most important threats and pressures for SPAs natural resources in partner's regions has started. This database will base on three reports elaborated earlier and in its final form will be also combined with the GIS map.



2. Progress of Pilot Actions in specific partner regions

This article is intended to provide an insight into the current status quo of the pilot actions in the various countries. Although the individual pilot actions in the different countries have progressed at different levels, in summary, it can be said that the countries have started the pilot actions, identified the most important target groups and laid a solid ground for the projects to move forward. Difficulties caused by the COVID-19 virus were compensated by the partners by flexibly switching to online communication and - where possible - postponing the planned project.

Poland

Pilot action 1:

Balanced and sustained management of mineral waters in Lower Silesia

The pilot action in Poland has continued to develop, although the pandemic and the resulting restrictions have seriously hampered the planned measures. This mainly concerned those activities that required the involvement of stakeholders from different institutions. In order to make good progress, Polish partners have increasingly concentrated on analyzing the threats and pressures for mineral water resources in the two pilot areas - Łądek Zdrój and Polanica Zdrój.

Italy

Pilot action 2:

Improvement of sustainable management of thermal natural resources in Colli Euganei area

The app of the pilot action by project partner Upper Adriatic Technology Park Andrea Galvani SCPA is under designing process and is likely to be made available to operators by September 2021. In addition, the planned construction of an immersive room was changed, which would be difficult to visit during the COVID-19 limitations. In order to still be able to reach the target group well, the partner decided to work with VR masks and thus bring the immersive experience to the people. 11 VR sets has been bought for target of public policy makers and 300 cardboards were purchased to reach students, their families and tourists.





Hungary

Pilot action 3:

Shifting towards nature-focused development of SPA potential

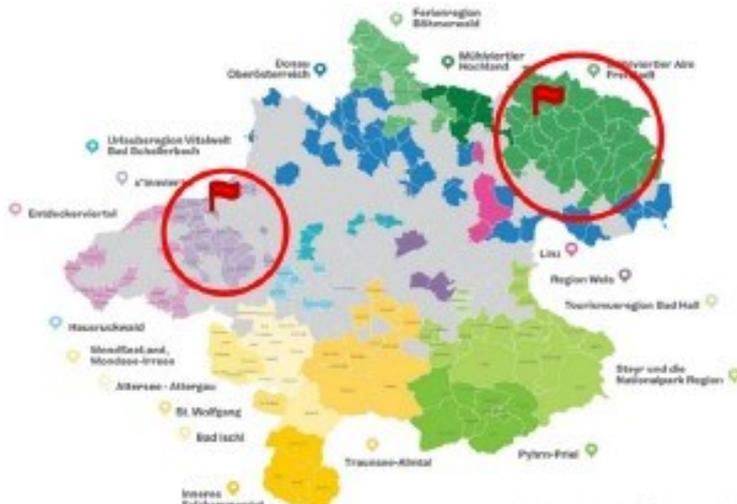
Hungarian pilot action was also slowed down by the COVID-19. The work was strongly affected by national restrictions like the shutdown of SPA institutions. During the summer season, there was a short opportunity for personal visits to the selected spa locations which will be the core members of the planned Green Spa Network. These visits made it possible to reach a common vision and create an applicable roadmap for a successful collaboration. During this period, the completed/ongoing relevant projects and researches were collected and studied; the same has been done with available and applied technologies, solutions, ideas, strategies and plans within the 2 pilot action counties.

Austria

Pilot action 4:

Strengthening regional partnership in selected SPA regions in Upper Austria

In pilot region 1 (Mühlviertel) different so called Bründl (little water sources containing healing water) have been researched, visited and documented in photographs. Water samples were taken in order to have them analysed by a state-accredited testing and conformity assessment body. In addition to the hard facts, the sagas and myths about the healing power of the Bründles were compiled in order to prepare the content for possible users. In further steps, the affected actors in the region are to be defined, the content prepared and regional networks formed around the topic of healing water. In pilot region 2 (Innviertel) an analysis of the existing offers in the region will be carried out to look at the intersections of health tourism and thermal water use. There is a special focus on best practice examples for the sustainable use of thermal water (cascading use). The aim of the analysis is to describe possibilities and examples of sustainable use, to show potentials and supply gaps in the region and to strengthen opportunities for regional partnerships. The activities in this region have started, the analysis of the offer has already been commissioned.





Croatia

Pilot action 5:

Eco-friendly SPA management in region and guidance for sustainable use of local thermal and mineral groundwater resources

In Croatia a multidimensional (environmental and geophysical) study on the circular way of using existing resources of thermal & mineral water providing sustainable use and preserve natural aquifer characteristics (such as pressure) & prevent depletion of groundwater was carried out. In order to better present the local conditions and the pilot region to the target groups, the partners from Croatia carried out an online on-site excursion, which can be visited here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRHPTeSMjWE>

Slovenia

Pilot action 6:

Sustainable management plan of thermal water use

Also in Slovenia, recent SARS-CoV-2 situation did not cause major delays or threats to pilot project's implementation, but slightly changed the timeline and the way of organising activities. Within the pilot region communication and joint activities with other thematic projects and working groups were set up. These made it possible to acquire new knowledge and connections necessary for the management of thermal water at national and regional level. A specific research was carried out in the field of biology where bioindicators are being analysed and researched. Therefore, samples were taken from water bodies with thermal potential in spa areas.

Italy

Pilot action 7:

Product Environmental Footprint testing in the Thermal District of Acqui Terme

The Italian partner LAMORO was exposed to what is probably the strongest influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the pilot actions. The most important regional partner - the company that manages the "Terme di Acqui" spa center - was involved in the pilot action from the start and at the center of the planning. Due to the current situation, however, he had to withdraw his participation, which means a big change for the pilot action. However, our Italian partners were able to change the procedure and have already been able to agree on a new plan for the pilot action, which they can now start to implement - with a little delay.



Czech
Republic

Pilot action 8:

Testing participative tool for improvement of SPAs water deposits sustainable management in Jeseniky

Also, Czech partners are a bit behind schedule due to COVID-19-Pandemic and subsequent delays in works on tools within work-package 1. Nevertheless, they were able to hold various events and round tables on the status quo of the thermal baths. At these events questions such as energy use of residual water, climate and pollution monitoring in saps and possibilities of partnerships and international cooperation of individual subjects or spas in general were dealt with. Thus, a good basis for the further processing of the pilot action could be created.

As shown, the activities in the countries have started and the schedule of pilot actions could largely be adhered to so far. However, a delay in the measures planned due to COVID-19 can be seen in all countries. This has a particular effect on communication efforts, since planned meetings can only be carried out to a limited extent or not at all. Of course, the closure of thermal baths and the limited accessibility of communities and similar information carriers also have an impact on progress. Overall, the partners reacted very flexible to the changed framework conditions and were able to avoid or cushion many delays. Nonetheless, the successful implementation of the pilot actions remains dependent to a certain extent on the current regulations - especially in the spa area.



3. Integrated strategy for SPA sustainable development

The main objective of the third thematic work package is to establish a shared integrated strategy for the sustainable management of natural spa resources in Central Europe, starting from the tools and information collected during the analysis and mapping phases and from the pilot actions implemented by all project partners.

In this semester of project implementation period, the activities made a lot of progress. The methodology for the elaboration of the integrated strategy was shared among project partners: this methodology represents the reference framework to better understand the process and the phases that will lead to the development of the strategy. The methodology is divided into three parts: the roadmap and pillars of the strategy, the general context and the main challenges, the objectives and the contents of the strategy.

In addition, a common report on Regional Working Groups (RWG) for stakeholder involvement in all project partner regions was produced. Firstly, each partner prepared a national report in their national language (with a summary in English), in which some key information was collected: how were the different RWGs developed? Which stakeholders participated? What was the approach adopted for their involvement and what are the main lessons learned? The common report includes all this information aimed at highlighting the most effective examples of the stakeholder engagement process, as well as the most useful information on how to carry out this process in the most effective way.

Finally, two fundamental deliverables were achieved for the construction of the strategy: the manual on most effective methods and approaches of stakeholders involvement and the handbook on best practices in environmental and socio-economic pressures mitigation and conflict solving. The manual and the handbook will be disseminated as practical tools to manage the main threats and seize the best opportunities for spa development in Central European regions.



EVENTS

01-02 of
October 2020

Poland (PL)
Organized by Spa 4
Development
project

HealingPlaces project at the conference "Common resources for common development. Cooperation of municipalities and SPA companies"

Participants of the conference were local governments from SPA communities, representatives of SPA companies and representatives of the scientific world from the Polish-Czech borderland. The leading theme of the conference was the cooperation between the local government and the spa company, both in terms of providing spa services, creating jobs and creating space. Important topics were also: protection of mineral and therapeutic water resources and broadly understood development of spa economy. The approach and current results from the HealingPlaces project were presented by representatives of the Central Mining Institute (GIG).

More information about the event [here](#).

Croatia (HR)
realized by City
of Krizevci

11th of
November 2020

First Regional Working Group Meeting in Croatia

Project partner City of Križevci has organized first Regional Working Group (RWG) at Associated partner LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin's Hotel SPA Golfer on Wednesday, 11th of November 2020.

Participants on the meeting were: Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar's researcher Sanja Živković Ph.D., Varaždin County's Branimir Nađ from Department for Economy and European Affairs, then Municipality of Stubičke Toplice's Mayor Josip Beljak and Julius Rose Ltd.'s director and Terme Tuhelj advisor Mrs. Ivana Kolar.

There was a discussion on reports that were made within the project by Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar as they have shown some good and some bad sides in environmental issues in SPAs and its municipalities, good examples are Sveti Martin na Muri and Stubičke Toplice municipalities with highest level of sewage network and biological purifiers of the waste water. There has also been discussion about what should be accelerated in the means of SPA business' cooperation with local public administration/government?

More information about the event [here](#).



12th
of November
2020

Croatia (HR)
organised by City
of Križevci

Study-visit to Terme Sveti Martin

On Thursday, 12th of November 2020, project partner City of Križevci together with Associated partner LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin, have organized a live-streamed on-site walk in pilot site - Sveti Martin na Muri, Croatia. Representatives of City of Križevci and LC Terme Sveti Martin were present on-site, while other participants (project partners, stakeholders and JS representative) joined on-line via web link making it an interactive event.



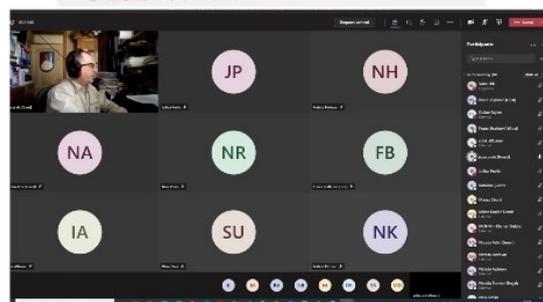
More information about the event [here](#).
You can watch the recorded study visit [here](#).

Slovenia (SI)
organised by
Razvojni center
Novo mesto

02-03
of February
2021

REGIONAL CONFERENCE: THE FUTURE OF SPA CITIES AND REGIONS: spa planning and management

On 2-3 February 2021, Razvojni center Novo mesto organized a two-day regional conference on health resorts and regions, which was held online due to the epidemiological situation. The regional conference was intended to define the development content of health resorts and regions and to exchange knowledge and experience in the management of health resorts from various perspectives. During the meeting 17 coauthors presented 13 topics related to spa cities and regions. The discussions and outputs will present important part of content for HealingPlaces project in Slovenia.



More information about the event [here](#).



**17th of
February 2021**

Croatia (HR)
organised by City
of Križevci

Energy transition in Križevci meeting

On 17th February City of Križevci organized a meeting with representatives of the North-West Regional Energy Agency, Green Energy Cooperative and local energy cooperative, established by the citizens (Križevci Laboratory for Climate and Innovation). The main topic of the meeting was the energy transition of the City and how it can be done in sustainable way by implementing good practice examples from other cities and countries. Also, as part of the energy transition, utilization of mineral-thermal water was discussed and the progress made so far within the Healing Places project. This meeting was a great opportunity for the City to hear more about the other geothermal projects and to discuss further collaboration and knowledge exchange.

More information about the event [here](#).



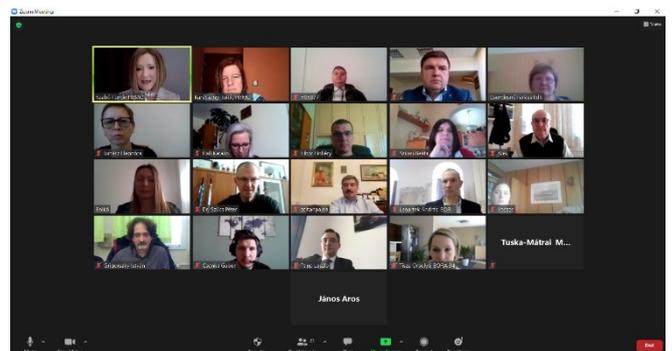
Hungary (HU)
organised by
Hungarian
project partners

**09th of March
2021**

Focus on nature-oriented, sustainable spa developments in eastern Hungary

The discussion of the first preparatory online round table discussion of the Eastern Hungary Green Spa Network on March 9, organized by the Hajdú-Bihar County Government and the BORA 94 Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Development Agency, was of great interest. The aim of the network to be established within the framework of the HealingPlaces project - funded by Interreg Central Europe and supported by the Hungarian State - is to focus on the nature-centered, sustainable development of Hungarian spas and health resorts. Participants are committed to having ecologically responsible spas in the area, so they will look for and, where possible, apply a variety of green solutions for water treatment, disinfection and abstraction, as well as building energy or health and events.

More information about the event [here](#).





12th of
March 2021

Czech
Republic (CZ)
organised by
Mendel University

Working meeting focusing on the natural healing resources of SPAs from the Jeseníky region

On 12.03.2021 Mendel University and Jeseníky - Tourism Association organized a working meeting focusing on the natural healing resources of SPAs from the Jeseníky region titled "PŘÍRODNÍ LÉČIVÉ ZDROJE LÁZNÍ JESENÍKŮ" via ZOOM.

Topics discussed were:

- The natural healing resources of the Jeseníky spas are an important phenomenon in Central Europe, which deserves special protection and use with respect to the principles of sustainability.
- Who and how uses, protects or potentially threatens these natural healing resources?
- How to improve their protection and at the same time not limit the developing tourism?



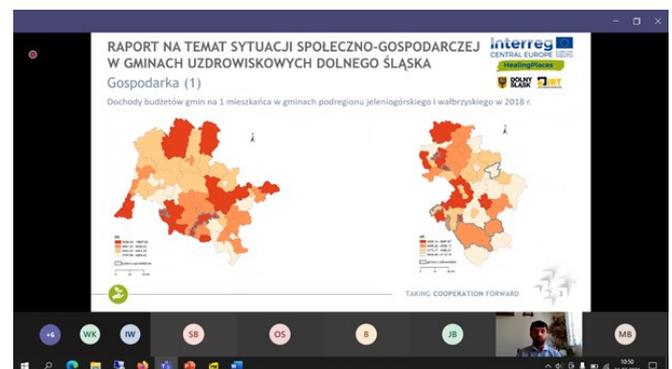
More information about the meeting [here](#).

Poland (PL)
organised by IRT

31st of March
2021

1st Meeting of the Regional Working Group for Sustainable Management of Healing Waters in Lower Silesia Health Resorts

On March 31, 2021 the 1st Meeting of the Regional Working Group for Sustainable Management of Healing Waters in Lower Silesian Health Resorts was held. It was organised, on-line, by project partner Institute for Territorial Development with the help of the Central Mining Institute. The meeting was attended by 9 external experts from regional scientific institutions and public administration, specializing on various issues related to mineral and thermal waters. The Regional Group's action is intended to help in linking and utilising the existing and ongoing research, analytical works and good practices to develop mechanisms and recommendations for better management of healing waters.



More information about the meeting [here](#).



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You can also find us on the following platforms:

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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPAASppx-rvXeVH64UL-g9w>