

INTRODUCTION CAFÉ DE EUROPA

Welcome to Ourense, thermal capital of Galicia and thermal province of Spain. It is a pleasure for me to welcome you in this Teatro Principal, which has hosted many thermal presentations.

Ourense has gone from being a province in which the neighbours had to emigrate to carve out a future for them, to being an innovative province in all its sectors. Agriculture, with the 4 appellations of wine origin that holds our province. Industry, with Tecnopole manufacturing parts for Airbus. Construction, with the railway line to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. And, of course, the services, where culture and thermalism play a crucial role, like the recent Termatalia fair that we support in Brazil. All this is possible because we believe in the cooperation and the possibilities of national and international networks, as demonstrated by the commercial missions to the United States, the participation in Partenalia, or the adhesion to the EHTTA.

The initiatives for the valuation and dynamisation of the Thermal Heritage in the province of Ourense have been coming one after another in different fields over the last decades, until they culminated in 2014 in the drafting of the *Plan "Ourense, Provincia Termal"* (Ourense, Thermal Province), promoted by the Provincial Government of Ourense with the support of the Xunta de Galicia, and currently being implanted.

The organisation of the Plan was possible thanks to the involvement of all public and private agents directly and indirectly linked to the thermal phenomenon, through a broadly participatory process consisting of personalized interviews and sectorial tables.

The resulting Plan was presented right here, at the Teatro Principal of Ourense, on 4th February 2014, in an event that included the participation of all the involved administrations and the attendance of many sector professionals. That same year the Plan was approved by the Council of the Xunta de Galicia on 24th July 2014.

The Plan's central objective is "to bring tourist value to natural and cultural resources of Ourense, structuring the supply, the resources and the services in such a way that they lead to the creation of the destination 'OURENSE, PROVINCIA TERMAL' (Ourense, Thermal Province)."

To achieve these objectives, five strategic lines are established, and each one is organized into action programmes and proposals. We define a total of 71 specific actions to be implemented in the period 2014-2020, 70% of which are executed or in process of execution.

Sustainability has been a fundamental criterion in the overall conception of the Plan and in the definition of its proposals. As an example, I would like to draw attention to the Programa de Estancias con Tren RENFE (Program of Stays with RENFE), which facilitates the sustainable mobility of the thermalist by offering thermal stays of 6 days in the spas of the province, including the transfer by train to Ourense from more than 40 cities throughout Spain and round-trip shuttle from the station to the spa.

This is just one of the proposals that have been developed under the Plan. During this Café of Europa, the person in charge of its writing will account for the main results achieved to date and the next milestones to be addressed.

Among the material delivered previously, you will find the catalogue "Ourense, la Provincia Termal" (Ourense, Thermal Province), which organises thermal resources in six categories according to its typology and its current use: spa hotels and spas or bathhouses with accommodation; spas and bathhouses; new

thermal projects or hot springs; pools; bottlers and fountains or springs). This is a special edition made for this meeting that is part of a wider publication on which we are working at the moment. The aim of this catalogue and the upcoming publication is to present the opportunities offered by thermalism and to encourage all interested agents to actively participate in the development, the dynamisation and the promotion of Ourense, Thermal Province.

I want to welcome you to Ourense and encourage you to extend your stay so you can tour the thermal province. Moreover, this is the best time to enjoy our waters, our landscapes and our heritage, because Ourense shines even more in "Ou-tono" ("autumn" in Galician).