

# President Manuel Baltar's speech to the EHTTA general assembly

Spa, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear representatives, politicians and technicians of the public entities that make up the EHTTA.

It is an honour to address all of you in my capacity as President of this organisation.

I am grateful, on my behalf, and of the new management, especially the Vice-Presidents, the unanimous confidence received to develop productive and fruitful work in favour of European thermalism.

I want my first words to be, to acknowledge the committed, kind and successful work of President Bellandi. No doubt the bar is very high and we hope to be worthy successors of a task admired by all, both inside and outside of our Association. Thank you very much my friend Bellandi. You are a true example to everyone.

Before continuing, I must thank all the team that has worked in EHTTA and especially to the task force: raffaella Caria, Marion Vansingle, Simone Zagrodnik, Anne-Kathrin Liehr, and also Luca Bruschi, Lia Perez, Charlotte Broyart... To all them, thank you very much.

This Association has proven to be an essential vehicle for transmitting the importance of thermalism and historical heritage for the cities and territories we represent. In its ten years of existence it has emerged as the most important thermal public association in the world. We have shown a shared vision and the benefits of networking, overcoming international borders.

Thermalism is health. Thermalism is life. And the thermalism is future. We say it here in Spa, in Brussels, or anywhere in the world, especially in the 51 thermal facilities we represent belonging to 17 different nations.

EHTTA is entering a decisive stage of its history. There have been many achievements of all this time, significantly having achieved the classification as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. That is why I also want to remember the previous Presidents but also all the people who have been part of the task force, executive committee or general assembly over the years and I also feel obliged to make a special mention to the Scientific Committee, its President Paul Simmons and Mario Crecente. Thank you all.

No one doubts that this association has always been guided by the healthy inspiring principles of Europeanism, by harmony and dialogue, by respect and ambition and it has been key to share management experiences in our public administrations, share problems and challenges. A network that is not unknown to me, given my status as President of Partenalia, the European Association of Intermediate Local authorities, and that of Vice President of CEPLI (European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities).

I solemnly commit myself to take advantage of that situation to give value to the EHTTA before the highest community authorities and make available resources that will undoubtedly be useful for the purposes of the association such as the headquarters of Partenalia in Brussels when necessary.

On October 19, 2016, almost three years ago, in Salsomaggiore Terme, I joined EHTTA as President of the Diputación de Ourense, the government of the territory of Spain with the greatest thermal potential. I did so because, like you, I am aware of the importance of thermalism as a strategic development, placing it as a priority commitment in my government action.

Approving a provincial thermal plan, involving other governments, planning actions and setting a compliance schedule, is an important fact that has the best guarantee and credibility in its fulfillment. Cooperating with the thermal municipalities of my province, 20 of the 92, is a must and coordinating their actions and programs a necessity. Innovating with social thermalism and an agreement with the government of Spain to access by train from forty capitals to my province to enjoy our spas is a reality whose success is completed with the use of one hundred percent of electronic administration. In less than 3 minutes, without a single paper, we assign the place in our spas. A province that in less than two years will be two hours and eleven minutes from Madrid by high-speed train, we will be a "land airport". Also coinciding with the Holy Year Jacobean of 2021. The Camino de Santiago. Why not think of a thermal route on the Camino de Santiago? Why not be able to make the leap to the United States of America? Why not negotiate at the UN the celebration of a "World Day of Thermalism?"

Undoubtedly, many new and ambitious projects, such as the Thermal Atlas, which will be an excellent vehicle to claim the strength of thermalism, not only economic but also social and cultural, or any other project that is born from the participation of all members by putting ourselves at your disposal to listen and work together proving useful for everyone's benefit.

We have done that to another level with innovative proposals, I speak again of Ourense, such as "sports spas" turning the water areas of our rivers, and the spas, into high-performance sports centres for international rowing and canoeing teams. A

young reality, an exciting and contagious thermalism as vital and optimistic. The importance of our mineral-medicinal waters, treatments and catalog of facilities in the spa sector, the wisdom and guidance of medical professionals..., all this means that we are called to strengthen the bonds of public-private cooperation, a reality that can also characterize the structure and operation of EHTTA itself.

We are in a moment of redesigning the organisation to a different dimension, where professionalism and visibility are authentic priorities. I come, we come, with enormous responsibility to enter a historical decisive stage of the association. I come, we come, aware of the relevant role that EHTTA is called to lead. We will increase institutional relations with political powers and the institutions and associations that operate in the sector. We will continue to carry the voice of thermalism, the voice of tradition and well-being, a thermalism that is a true value.

Thanks to our incredible cultural heritage, knowing that together we are incredibly stronger, as we have been able to demonstrate in these ten years.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for me to be the President of EHTTA. It is an honour for my colleagues to take charge of such a prestigious, capable and useful organisation. Thank you for your trust and attention I am at your entire disposal.

Have a great day.