



ESPA
EUROPEAN SPAS ASSOCIATION

Brussels Declaration on European Medical Spas, Prevention and the Life Sciences Agenda

Brussels, 30 September 2026

Representatives of European institutions, medical spa associations, universities, research infrastructures, spa towns, climate health resorts, and organisations active in prevention, rehabilitation and natural health innovation met in Brussels to discuss the role of **medical spas, natural therapeutic resources and climate-based treatments** within Europe's emerging **Life Sciences Strategy**.

In conclusion, the attendees agreed to issue the following declaration.

I. Natural Therapeutic Resources – A Strategic European Health Asset

Europe possesses a unique wealth of natural therapeutic resources: thermal and mineral waters, peloids, mofetta, marine and mountain climates, and centuries-old spa traditions. These resources have been used for generations to treat and prevent illness, improve functional outcomes, and support mental wellbeing.

Medical spas and climate health resorts represent a **scientifically validated, culturally rooted and environmentally sustainable** part of Europe's health ecosystem. Their therapeutic value is recognised in balneology, climatotherapy and functional medicine, and their benefits persist for months after treatment.

The attendees emphasise that these natural health assets must be **protected, researched and integrated** into Europe's future health strategies.

II. Medical Spas as Partners in Prevention, Active Ageing and Longevity

Europe's demographic trends – ageing populations, chronic disease burden, rising mental health challenges – require a shift from treatment to **prevention, active ageing and lifestyle medicine**.



Medical spas already deliver what Europe aims to build:

- evidence-based prevention
- rehabilitation and recovery
- stress reduction and mental balance
- healthy ageing and mobility
- nature-based therapies with no side effects
- personalised programmes supported by medical supervision

Natural therapies are **not alternatives to medicine** – they are partners of medicine, complementing biomedical innovation and reducing healthcare costs in the months following treatment.

The attendees call on policymakers to recognise medical spas as strategic actors in Europe's preventive health agenda.

III. Alignment with Europe's Life Sciences Strategy (COM(2025) 525 final)

The European Commission's Life Sciences Strategy aims to position Europe as the world's most attractive place for life sciences by 2030. To achieve this, Europe must combine **cutting-edge biomedical innovation with nature-based, climate-based and preventive health approaches**.

Medical spas and natural therapeutic resources contribute directly to the Strategy's objectives:

- **Optimising R&I ecosystems:** Spa medicine offers fertile ground for multinational clinical research, including water biochemistry, microbiome studies, immune modulation and functional recovery.
- **Strengthening research infrastructures:** Spa facilities can be integrated into European research networks (BBMRI-ERIC, ERDERA, ECRIN), enabling cross-border access and data harmonisation.
- **Supporting market uptake and health system efficiency:** Natural therapies deliver measurable improvements in quality of life, functional capacity and long-term recovery.
- **Enhancing citizen trust and combating disinformation:** Medical spas provide evidence-based, non-pharmacological therapies grounded in centuries of practice.



The attendees call for **formal integration of balneology, climatotherapy and natural health research** into the Life Sciences Strategy and related EU initiatives.

IV. Protecting Europe's Water and Climate Health Resources

Thermal and mineral waters, therapeutic landscapes and climate zones are part of Europe's **natural capital**. Their protection is essential for:

- public health
- environmental sustainability
- rural development
- climate resilience
- the future of medical spas and health tourism

The attendees urge European institutions and Member States to:

- recognise thermal and mineral waters as **strategic health resources**
- protect catchment areas and recharge zones
- ensure sustainable extraction and monitoring
- integrate water protection into EU climate and environmental policies
- support spa towns as models of circular resource use

Without strong protection, Europe risks losing irreplaceable natural health assets.

V. A Call for Policy Recognition and Integration

The attendees call on the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council, and Member States to:

1. **Integrate medical spas into EU health strategies**, including the Life Sciences Strategy, EU4Health, the Cancer Plan, the Mental Health Initiative and the Green Transition.
2. **Support research funding** for balneology, climatotherapy, microbiome studies and nature-based prevention.
3. **Include medical spas in European research infrastructures** and cross-border clinical networks.
4. **Recognise spa towns and climate health resorts** as strategic assets for rural development and the silver economy.



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5. **Promote digital health integration** to support personalised prevention and long-term follow-up.
6. **Protect natural therapeutic resources** as part of Europe's environmental and health security.
7. **Strengthen education and professional standards** in balneology, spa medicine and climate therapy.

VI. Europe's Commitment to Holistic, Nature-Based Health Innovation

The attendees affirm that Europe's future health ecosystem must combine:

- science and nature
- prevention and innovation
- climate resilience and healthy ageing
- medical expertise and natural therapies
- digital tools and personalised care

Medical spas and natural therapeutic resources are essential to this vision.

They represent a **holistic, evidence-based and sustainable approach** to health – one that can help Europe keep people healthier for longer, strengthen resilience, and support a thriving wellbeing economy.

VII. Conclusion

The signatories of the Brussels Declaration commit to working together to ensure that **European medical spas, natural therapeutic resources and climate-based treatments** are fully recognised, protected and integrated into Europe's Life Sciences Agenda.

Europe must lead not only in biotechnology and advanced therapies, but also in **nature-based prevention, healthy ageing and holistic health innovation**.

This is Europe's opportunity – and responsibility – to build a future where **health, nature and science** work together for the wellbeing of all generations.

30
YEARS



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Signatures