



GREAT SPA TOWNS *of Europe*

Media Release

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Great Spa Towns of Europe celebrate the creation of a new Association

The *Great Spa Towns of Europe*, one of the UNESCO's newest World Heritage Sites inscribed in 2021, has created a new European not-for-profit Association to deliver the future management and protection of the eleven member spa towns and cities which comprise the World Heritage Site. The Mayors Steering Group met yesterday 27th April 2022, in Spa, Belgium, to sign the statutes of the new body, The **Great Spa Towns of Europe Association**.

The inaugural meeting of the *Great Spa Towns of Europe* Mayors Steering Group took place in Paris in January 2011 and 34 meetings later, the political representatives of the eleven towns are now formalising their working relationship. Having started out as an unincorporated partnership, today the organisation formally becomes the **Great Spa Towns of Europe Association** to be registered in Austria.

Chair of the Mayors Steering Group, Lord Mayor Margret Mergen of Baden-Baden, said: "It is a great pleasure to have reached today's landmark following so many years of close cooperation between our eleven spa towns, spread across seven European countries. Having achieved inscription on the World Heritage List this is an important milestone as our organisation matures to take on the challenges of protection, presentation and management of these globally important places."

Paul Simons, Secretary General of the project added: "On achieving World Heritage status UNESCO has made it abundantly clear that the *Great Spa Towns of Europe* have a major responsibility to protect the thermal heritage of Europe and promote its continuing use for the health and well-being of all, including future generations."

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Contact the Great Spa Towns of Europe:

Contact: Paul Simons, Secretary General

Email: paul@simonsassociates.co.uk

Tel: +44 7785 506 338

Catherine Lloyd, Communications

Email: cl@simonsassociates.co.uk

Tel: +44 7875 275059

Web: www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu

Notes to Editors :

1. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* is a 'Transnational Serial' World Heritage Site, comprising 11 famous historic thermal spa towns and cities in seven countries. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 44th World Heritage Committee meeting in Fuzhou, China, on 24th July 2021.
2. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom represent a unique cultural phenomenon which reached its height in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as a particular urban type and form which deserves global recognition as a phenomenon which helped to shape Europe.
3. Inscription on the World Heritage List is the highest international recognition for global cultural and natural heritage sites. It is managed by UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) on behalf of the United Nations from its headquarters in Paris.
4. There are over 400 working spa towns across Europe and those selected are the *crème de la crème* of Europe's best. The eleven *Great Spa Towns of Europe* possess architectural ensembles, parks, gardens and landscapes which are maintained to the highest standards. They also maintain a wide range of outstanding cultural activities, welcome an international clientele and provide a continuing living tradition of leisure, health and well-being.
5. All of the *Great Spa Towns of Europe* are easily accessible, often by rail, and offer a wide range of quality accommodation. Cultural activities and heritage attractions compliment the health and leisure treatments traditionally associated with spa towns. Local gastronomy and wine present a distinctive feature of each spa town along with more contemporary well-being programmes. Rural pursuits, walking, hiking and cycling in the surrounding therapeutic spa landscape are available for all visitors.