

Youth Twinning project launches in Baden bei Wien

The first ever project involving young people in **Great Spa Towns of Europe (GSTE)** is taking place in the Austrian town of Baden bei Wien this week. The project, known as **INTERSPACE** (Inter-Spa Town Celebration of European Heritage), aims to encourage young people to discover their own and others' spa heritage, and is **funded by the European Union** through the CERV Town Twinning Programme.

After a year of intense planning and preparation, nearly 100 pupils from five of the eleven towns of the Great Spa Towns of Europe and speaking at least four different languages have travelled to Baden bei Wien for a three-day educational programme, coinciding with the GSTE Association's autumn General Assembly. The return twinning trip will take place in May 2025 at the spring General Assembly in the Czech town of Mariánské Lázně.

Online workshops have already taken place, where pupils aged between 12-15 from five schools in three separate countries started to work together with teachers and GSTE site managers. These sessions were led by external facilitators, **Socionaut**, a Czech-based interdisciplinary practice whose expertise in place-based co-design approaches is invaluable to the project. Socionaut is facilitating INTERSPACE on the ground too, helping to deliver the main aims of the project: promoting inter-cultural dialogue, mutual understanding, friendship and awareness of the unique European story embodied in the Great Spa Towns of Europe.

Pupils from Františkovy Lázně, Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně (Czechia), Vichy (France), and Bad Kissingen (Germany) have already joined their fellow pupils in Baden bei Wien for a packed programme based on Baden's three longstanding pillars of medicine, nature and fun. The programme includes:

- A celebration of the EU's anthem, Beethoven's Ode to Joy which was written 200 years ago in Baden bei Wien, performed by the BG/BRG Biondegasse school orchestra;
- A concert of Beethoven's piano music given at the Haus der Kunst by Wolfgang Capek and Municipal Council Member Michael Capek;
- A scavenger hunt through Baden bei Wien, allowing pupils to discover the town;
- Workshops to learn about heritage in the Great Spa Towns and expressing what it means to them;
- Planning for a future GSTE Youth Forum, to look after their World Heritage Site;
- Relaxing at the Römertherme Bade Thermal baths.

The GSTE's Instagram channel will also be taken over by the young people on the final day of the project, allowing them to share their impressions of their UNESCO World Heritage Site with a wider audience. Finally, to conclude the first half of the project, a representative group of young people will present their ideas to the Mayors of the GSTE and States Parties Representatives at the General Assembly on 14th November. They will have the opportunity to share their ideas for a future GSTE Youth Forum, before developing them further in spring 2025.

Mayor of the host town, Baden bei Wien and Chair of the Great Spa Towns of Europe, **Stefan Szirucsek** said:

"I am delighted to welcome nearly 100 young people from across Europe to Baden bei Wien for this groundbreaking initiative. It is fitting that we are hosting this first youth exchange in our town, where Beethoven composed the Ode to Joy - now the anthem of European unity. Through INTERSPACE, we are not just preserving our UNESCO World Heritage site; we are passing it on to the next generation who will become its future guardians. This GSTE Youth Forum is a chance to exchange ideas, discuss solutions and get to know each other. This important project for our young people is made possible by funding from the European Union and regional partners."

Chiara Ronchini, Secretary General of the GSTE said:

"It's wonderful to welcome our young participants to Baden bei Wien this week. Their enthusiasm during our online sessions has been inspiring, and we're excited to hear their fresh perspectives on our shared World Heritage. Their ideas will be invaluable in shaping how we engage with young people across our spa towns in the future."

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Municipalities of Baden bei Wien (Austria) Františkovy Lázně, Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně (Czechia), Vichy (France), and Bad Kissingen (Germany)

FACILITATED BY

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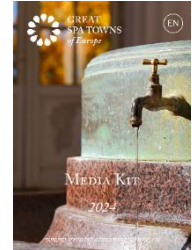
Web: www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu



Find our social media channels and much more on [LinkTree](#)

Images of the project will be available on request from comms@greatspatownsofeurope.eu

Please access the **GSTE Media Kit** [by clicking here](#).



Notes to Editors:

1. The [Great Spa Towns of Europe](#) is a serial transnational 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 on 24th July 2021.
2. **Outstanding Universal Value (OUV):** The Great Spa Towns of Europe “bear an exceptional testimony to the European spa phenomenon, which gained its highest expression from around 1700 to the 1930s”. The Great Spa Towns of Europe is inscribed on the World Heritage List with Outstanding Universal Value on the following criteria:
 - Criterion (ii) Influence on Modern European Towns.
 - Criterion (iii) Taking the Cure; human health and mineral springs.

The full statement of Outstanding Universal Value can be found here:

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1613/>

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Several different types of **responsible tourism** initiatives can be found in all of the Great Spa Towns:
 - Sustainable Tourism Products
 - Eco-Friendly Transport – including new mobility concepts
 - Preventing Mass Tourism
 - Environmentally-friendly public procedures
 - Re-use of thermal waters