
THERMAL BATHS AND WELLNESS IN ITALY

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Numbers and thermal baths

The network of Italian thermal baths represents an important resource for the health and wellness of its citizens as well as for the economy and the territory. There are 380 spas spread over 20 regions and 2 autonomous provinces (177 are in the north (46.7 %), 56 in the centre (14.8 %) and 146 in the south and islands (38.5 %)). They are located in 180 municipalities and employ over 16,000 workers. This is a resource to be communicated, valorized and promoted, by illustrating the proven scientific value of thermal therapy for one's health but also as preventative medicine and for rehabilitation. We must also consider its indirect contributions to the local economy. It creates jobs and acts as a tourist attraction [1].

With these numbers and these considerations, the president of Federterme Confindustria, Jannotti Pecci, opened the annual meeting of the Thermal World Forum promoted by ANCOT (National Association of Thermal Municipalities) in Salsomaggiore on 16 October 2008. For three days the experts on Italian thermal baths got together : doctors, entrepreneurs and institutional representatives, to discuss where we are and find appropriate answers to the new demand for spas and wellness, coming from a new group of clients, the young [2].

The 2008 assembly of Federterme, held in parallel with the Thermal World Forum at Salsomaggiore, identified the need to define the situation of thermal bathing in Italy and make the necessary choices to face the strong competition developing in the European Union 27 area. On that occasion the assembly decided to commemorate the first 90 years of activity of the Federation (1919-2009), the only organisation representing the system of Italian thermal baths, through a program of cultural initiatives showing, on the one hand, the evolution and the state of the art of thermal activity in Italy and on the other the main stages in the history of the Federterme system, "because", as President Jannotti Pecci said, on that occasion, "the history of thermalism is the story of the work and sacrifices of many colleague-entrepreneurs and an useful exercise to help us better understand the present and carry out the appropriate choices to build a future in which we will find success and personal satisfaction" [3].

The Thermal Bath Federation

For the origins of Federterme, as a national organisation representing the interests of the thermal enterprises in Italy as a category (small and medium sized companies, mostly

¹.Federterme, Italian Federation of Thermal Entrepreneurs

family run), one must go back almost a century. In fact, it was in 1919 that the newly founded Federation of Bathing, Climatic, Hydrologic and Thermal Resorts of Italy set up its offices in Rome on Piazza San Luigi dei Francesi 34, very close to the seats of the Government and the Parliament.

Right from the beginning, the Federation called for the Government and Parliament to recognise the scientific evidence of the proven therapeutic value of mineral waters, the economic and social roles of the thermal initiatives and enterprises. It supplied them with information so they could evaluate the state of the art of the Italian thermal system and the evolution of thermalism in other European countries. A complete picture of the situation and concrete proposals for intervention, dated 16 December 1922, in Salsomaggiore, carry the signature of the President of the Federation, AM Rebucci, as we find in the document, “For the National Thermal Bath Industry – a note to the Government” printed in Borgo San Donnino by A Mattioli [4].

Already in this phase the thermal bath enterprises were looking for opportunities to take advantage of new developments, both for thermal cures and to bottle mineral water, but they were also promoting the interests of the municipalities and local areas when they launched themselves as tourist destinations. It was only a question of valorizing thermal waters, once exploited in antiquity by the Romans (and Etruscans), that existed throughout the country and in particular in the Po River valley from Piedmont and Lombardy to the Veneto and Emilia Romagna and also in Tuscany, Lazio and Campania, by supporting the medical-scientific research [5].

The National Tourist Industry Agency (ENIT)

Both the Federation of Thermal Baths and ENIT were founded in 1919. Italy was just out of a war, victorious, but a victory only achieved with a large and painful sacrifice in human lives.

The spas, which before the conflict, had been frequented by a clientele from the upper classes with deep pockets now found themselves faced with a new situation characterised, on the one hand, by the burden of the physical reconstruction of the territory and on the other, by the duty of curing both the bodies and minds of the mutilated and wounded veterans from the front and civilian victims.

ENIT was given the task of promoting the touristic resources of Italy and attracting foreign tourists, even from countries which had been among Italy’s enemies in the Great War [6].

For entrepreneurs in the thermal and touristic system new perspectives and new spaces were opened. With subsidized trains, the budding tourist industry brought in new opportunities to show Italy to the Italians. This situation was totally different from that of the 18th century, when, though the tourist industry had not been invented, courageous foreign travellers and adventurers (mostly Germans, English and French) travelled the length of the peninsula so rich in natural and cultural beauty. The travel diaries kept by the more famous, became the travel guides for later travellers. One of the most well known was Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s Italian Journey, but also the *Bel Paese* by Abbot Stoppani

and, finally, the travel diary (on a bicycle) through southern Italy by LV Bertarelli published by Touring Club Italiano (TCI).

Touring was founded in Milan in 1894, as a club for Italian cyclists. Later its name was changed to TCI. It was started because of the members' passion for the bicycle and outings, this organization helped to create the thoughts and proposals that brought about the birth of the modern Italian tourist industry.

The new rail network also contributed in developing flows of tourists. As Italy celebrated its first 50 years as a united country in 1911, it was already possible to travel from east to west and from the north to the south easily and in safety, but also the tunnels under the Alps allowed new flows of travellers and tourist from central Europe.

The founding of ENIT was a compromise, after a long debate, between the Italian State Railways and TCI. The former interested in the development of new flows of passengers and of promoting a tourist industry, even outside Italy, based on rail travel, the latter, was a supporter of an ENIT which was no longer attached to the State Railways and wanted to give more space to other forms of travel such as maritime, automobile and air.

The Thermal Federation began its work amidst this fervour of initiatives, as the sole representative of the thermal resorts then in operation. Its objective was to help its members grow by encouraging a network of relations which already existed between the medical/scientific world which specialised in thermal cures and the institutions which regulated an activity which was becoming increasingly important for people's health and the economic development of the territory [7].

Visitor taxes in municipalities with hydrotherapeutic resorts starts tourist laws

It is significant to note that the first regulation in the thermal sector, but also in the tourist sector preceded the founding of both Federterme and ENIT. Law No. 863 passed on December 11th, 1910 instituted visitor taxes (see the *Official Gazette* No. 294 of 20 December 1910). This regulation gave municipalities the right to introduce a tax on visitors that stayed for at least five days "for health reasons" in consideration of the "special importance for the local economy of the existence of hydrotherapeutic, climatic or bathing establishments". The amount of this tax was fixed at a maximum of 10 lira per person and it was to be used to develop the resort itself.

Undoubtedly, the setting of a visitor tax represents an explicit and unquestionable recognition of the role of the thermal establishments in the local economies, but also a growing awareness of the economic value (for the public finances) of tourism.

This awareness of the economic value of tourism induced the Nitti Government to revise the 1910 legislation and a Commission chaired by Meuccio Ruini was set up to propose new measures which were transformed into law with the DRL of 12 October 1919 which contained :

- measures to favour hotels which had been damaged during the war,
- a reorganization of the juridical rules regarding the responsibilities of hoteliers,
- the institution of ENIT.

With a further decree (RDL 19 November 1921) the possibility of imposing a visitor tax on tourists (which in the 1910 law was limited to thermal establishments) was extended to all municipalities. Further regulations were adopted in the Fascist period in 1926 (an additional tax) and in 1938 (a tax on music and a contribution at health spas).

The visitor tax was cancelled by a law passed in 1983, because it was considered contradictory with the need to promote the arrival of tourists, but it has reappeared in municipal balance sheets since the *Jubileum* of 2000, as a source of revenue for local governments following the cuts to local financing found in recent national budgets.

There has been a growing awareness over the 1990s of the widespread value both of thermal cures for physical health and personal wellbeing and also for the development of tourism of a location. And the public-private dialogue has grown : in the public with specific measures and policies on several levels and in the private with new incentives and the Federation's proactive role in favouring the development of opportunities for the evolution of thermalism, with all its positive effects, both direct and indirect [8].

Federterme today : Water is life, water is the future

As it celebrates its 90th anniversary Federterme must keep in mind its roots and respect them to better understand the present and build a successful future of personal satisfaction, but also of solidarity, all this in a complex scenario, rich in continual and rapid changes in its frame of reference.

In particular there are some determining elements and both new and less new areas where it and its members are working :

- a permanent dialogue with central and local institutions to valorize the role of thermal enterprises in improving health and thermal wellbeing, but also thermal tourism [9] ;
- protecting of the role of thermalism in the national system of welfare and the establishment (in collaboration with Health Officials) of Essential Assistance Levels (LEA) ;
- the adoption by the EU of a directive for thermalism to guarantee shared and common quality standards as well as the free circulation of patients under treatment (in agreement with MEPs) ;
- the valorization of experimental results and research financed by the Foundation for Thermal Scientific Research and of specific training (information found in the report the Foundation presented at CNEL (National Economic and Labour Council) in July 2008) ;
- a new awareness of the value of water as the source of life and as a necessary precondition for future development (the day for Italian Thermal Baths at the Italian Pavilion at EXPO Zaragoza 2008 which was dedicated to water). Promoting knowledge among the young of the fundamental value of water, in particular for those who do not have enough ;
- new virtuous behaviour by thermal enterprises that have approved the European Manifesto for Thermalism (at the 2nd World Thermal Forum in November 2008 at Abano) ;

- a renewed and strengthened collaboration on shared objectives with ANCOT (National Association of Thermal Municipalities) for a reduction of various taxes (real estate and waste disposal).

In its awareness of working to contribute to the health and wellness of the people the Federterme enterprise system has suggested to the Federation that it promote awareness through internal and external information and communication programmes, paper based, in periodicals such as “*Acque e Terme*” and “*Terme e Riviere*”, and through its website www.federterme.it.

As future employees will be created in the universities and research centres, relations with them must be maintained. It is there that the young will train for positions in thermal establishments [10].

The new Federation for Curative Thermal Waters in contemporary Italy

The current legal and organisational structure of Federterme was reached after an evolutionary process which started on August 20th, 1944, before the end of World War II. Ambrogio Michetti pushed for and got a founding act and the adoption of the statutes of the Italian Mineral Water Association.

In the Constitution of the Republic of December 27th, 1947, the Federation has its base in Articles 1 and 41 (work and private enterprise) and also in 9, 32 and 117 ; in Article 9 in which the Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific research ; in Article 32 in which health is protected as a fundamental right of the individual and in the interests of the collectivity and it guarantees free health services to the poor ; in Article 117 in which the Regions are called on to issue rules regarding mineral water and thermal baths (and in the following Article 118 with the administrative functions on the subject).

Federterme is a designated negotiator and together with the national trade unions it draws up the national collective agreement between the employers and thermal workers. It participated in founding both a complementary pension fund “Fondo Marco Polo” (in 2001) and the setting up of the National Bilateral Thermal Agency in July 2005.

In 1953 the Association changed its name to National Association for the Hydro-Thermal Industry (A.N.I.I.T.) and then once again in 1960 to National Federation of the Hydro-thermal Industry, Federterme.

In 1971, an evolving market decided the industry to change names once again to Italian Federation of the Industries of Mineral Waters, Thermal Baths and Alcoholic Beverages. At the beginning of the 1990s (10 April 1990) the decision was made to separate the activity of bottling mineral water from that of thermal baths and the two sectors would from then on be represented by respectively Mineracqua and Federterme, but both under the Italian Federation for the Thermal Industry and Curative Mineral Waters.

In May 1993, Federterme participated in setting up, as a founding member, a new Fedeturismo di Confindustria (National Federation of the Travel and Tourism Industry).

This decision was dictated by the need to valorize the contribution of thermalism and thermal wellness, on the one hand, to the growth of the role of the tourism industry, as an attraction and an integrated system in the local economies, and on the other, to contribute to the adoption of tourist policies, within a public-private partnership.

The activity of the Federation has carefully followed evolving scientific medical research, life styles, customs and specific legislation.

At the end of Second World War, as in 1919, the Italian Thermal system was called on to help cure the wounded and the signs of the conflict on people, using thermal rehabilitation, until 1978 these services supplied by INAIL and then by INPS, the National Health Service.

Thermal scientific research received a new boost, Project Naiad, a scientific study started in 1996 and terminated in 2000, involved more than 300 thermal establishments and demonstrated the effectiveness of thermal therapy's contribution to healing. The experiments were carried out respecting all subjective and objective clinical parameters. Experience gained in Project Naiad and the growing request for "validated" thermal scientific research led Federterme to create (in January 2003) the Foundation for Thermal Scientific Research (FoRST), run by a public-private board of directors, composed of representatives of the Regions and the Ministry of Health, and financed by funds made available by the thermal companies. In July 2008, the Foundation presented an account of its activity and the research projects for which it is seeking financing.

The recent Resolution No. 2008/2115 (IN1) of October 8th, 2008 passed by the European Parliament must be seen in this light. "Together for health : a strategic approach for the EU 2008-2013" in which we find "the Commission and Member States are invited to recognize the positive qualities of thermal cures in healing and maintaining the health of the population" [11].

Notes

1. The "First Report on the Thermal System in Italy", Florence, Mercury, 2001 describes the characteristics of Italian thermal baths as a thermal system, its relations with the tourism industry, the potential of the tourist market and the Italian's attitude toward health. Analogously, the "Second Report on the Thermal System in Italy, 2004" by Federterme, Mercury and Il Sole24Ore supplies an updating of the evolution of the system and thermal wellbeing.
As regards specific information on Italian Thermal Baths and their locations see the guide "L'Italia delle terme" by Federterme and TCI, 2009.
2. Costanzo Jannotti Pecci, President of Federterme Confindustria (National Federation of the Thermal Industry and of Curative Mineral Waters), introductory speech at the Thermal World Forum, Salsomaggiore (16-18 October 2008).
3. Annual assembly of Federterme 2008, Salsomaggiore Terme, President's speech.
In the programme for the celebration of the 90th anniversary of Federterme we find among other items, several cultural initiatives such as the publication of a volume on the history of Federterme and of a Summary of the regulations in Thermalism. A cycle of "Open Thermal Baths" to foster an awareness among the young and families of the heritage of thermal baths is also planned.

The programme for the 90th anniversary of Federterme started on the 10th of January 2009 with a meeting at the Grand Hotel Terme in Telesse to present the volume “*I Bagni di Telesse fra Ottocento e Novecento* (The Thermal Baths of Telesse during the 19th and 20th centuries)” by Erminia Cuomo, 195 pages, 2008, Franco Angeli, Milano euro 19.50.

4. A. M. Rebucci, “*Per la Industria delle Terme nazionali – Memoria al Governo*”, Salsomaggiore, 16 December 1922.
5. “*Termalismo e ricerca scientifica, Un’alleanza indispensabile* (Thermalism and scientific research, an indispensable alliance)”, July 2008, Supplement to Il Sole24Ore Health, a booklet of documentation distributed at the Convention to present the Foundation for Scientific Thermal Research (FoRST) held on July 8th, 2008 at CNEL. For water’s function in purifying with baths and for the division of baths into hygienic baths, curative baths and lustral baths see Jean Marie Martin in the catalogue of the Exhibition “*Anima dell’Acqua* (Water’s Soul)”, from Taletto to Caravaggio, from Segantini to Bill Viola, at Palazzo Reale in Milan (from 29 November 2008 to 29 March 2009) by DNART Foundation, Catalogue “L’Erma” by Bretschneider.
6. For regulations on thermal issues see Federterme, “*Compendio della normativa in materiale idrotermale* (Summary of the norms in Thermalism)” 2 volumes, Rome 2001. An updated edition is being prepared for release during the celebration of the 90th anniversary of Federterme.
 Regarding the events of 1919 and in particular on the production of rules regarding tourism during the Fascist period see Aldo Agosto and Antonio Sereno, “*Fascismo and turismo (Politica e Storia del turismo sociale)* (Fascism and Tourism, policy and history of social tourism)”, Stampa Agnesotti, Viterbo, April 2007.
 In the same year, 1919, don Luigi Sturzo wrote and presented the volume “*Manifesto dei liberi e forti* (Manifesto of the free and the strong)” in the Hotel Santa Chiara in Rome.
7. For the activity and the contribution of conventions of science and thermal baths see the reports which are regularly published by the splendid magazine “*Terme e Riviere*”, founded in 1902 in Pisa by Vincenzo Lischi. This periodical has been purchased, together with its archive (which is being organised), by Federterme.
 The attention that Italian doctors were giving to thermalism issues takes on organised form already in 1888, 30 years before the founding of the Federation. In that year on October 12-3 the 1st Convention of the Italian Medical Association of hydro-climatology, oceanography and physiotherapy met in Bologna. The meetings continued over the years, to update participants on advances in research.
 On the close connections between the scientific world, thermal baths, local authorities, ministries and on their numerous participations, but also on the authoritative and *super partes* role which TCI has played, see the booklet “*Congressi di Monaco per favorire lo sviluppo delle stazioni idrominerali, balneari, climatiche e alpine delle NAZIONI ALLEATE* (Congresses of Monaco to favour the development of hydro-mineral, beach, climatic and Alpine resorts of the allied nations)” edited by the general delegation for Italian participation in the Touring Club Italiano Milan – Corso Italia 10 (in the Archives Lischi/Terme and Riviere-Federterme). From the descriptive booklet on the objectives of the Congresses of Monaco, promoted in France in 1914 and entrusted to His Highness Prince Albert I of Monaco, we discover that on the July 6th, 1917 Grand Officer LV Bertarelli, General Director of TCI was designated unanimously – on behalf of the general organising committee (of the Congresses of Monaco) – “General Delegate in charge of Italian participation at the Congresses and Exposition of

Monaco". To achieve the best results for this initiative, General Director Bertarelli proceeded by sharing out the preparatory work for each of the 6 Congresses that were planned : Hydrology and Geology ; Hygiene and Climatology ; Oceanography ; Cities of Water ; Sea bathing and Climatic Resorts ; Alpinism for the organization of the high mountains and the development of Alpine Resorts ; Tourism.

From the same booklet we learn that the Italian Exposition connected with the Congresses of Monaco, was overseen by Grand Officer Bertarelli, General Director of TCI with an Honourary Committee which included His Excellency Professor Luigi Rava, President of ENIT.

8. See Law No. 323/2000 for the reorganization of the sector which defines the terms: water, cure, pathology, territory, thermal establishment repeating that the "terms: "thermal baths", "thermal", "thermal water", "thermal mud", "hydro-thermal", "hydro-mineral", "thermae", "spa (*salus per aquam*)" are used exclusively when referring to phenomena which have recognized therapeutic efficacy as in paragraph 1, letter b). Law No. 323/2000 also recognised the value of the public-private partnership and recognized to Federterme the role of organisation to promote the quality of the Italian thermal system and a welfare model among the most advanced in Europe, coherent with the objectives adopted by the WHO.
9. Second Manifesto of European Thermal Baths, adopted at Abano Terme on 18 November 2008.
Thermal Bath and Wellbeing Working Group in the General Direction for the development and competitiveness in Tourism, in the under secretariat for tourism in the presidency of the Council of Ministers (February 2009)
10. One finds evidence of the growing interest by the public in thermal baths and thermal wellness in the new dedicated informative spaces, printed and digital, dailies and periodicals, different from those specialised in thermal baths and tourism. These are aimed above all at female, child, family and elderly readerships. For Federterme see the site www.federterme.it e "*Acqua e Terme*" and "*Terme e Riviere*" (new series).
11. For a systematic analysis see also "*Il termalismo terapeutico nell'Unione europea* (Therapeutic thermalism in the European Union)" by Alceste Santuari, Università degli Studi di Trento, 120 pages, euro15.50.
Recently (January 2009) the European Commission General Direction for industry and enterprise set up a working group to study social tourism (and social thermalism) to increase the use of each member's tourist experience and knowledge and the cohesion among the 27 Members.
Finally we mention the volume, "*Terme ed architettura, Progetti, tecnologie, strategie per una moderna cultura termale* (Thermal baths and Architecture, Projects, technologies, strategies for a modern thermal culture)", by Emilio Faroldi, Francesca Cipullo and Maria Pillar Vettori, 275 pages, Maggioli Editore, Rimini, 2007, euro 49.00. Here we find ample recognition and treatment of the thermal and wellness activities and initiatives in Italy and Europe, and its relations with the environment, territory and city, economic integration and tourism, with a rich and useful collection of references to regulations, a glossary, bibliography, iconography and indices of names and places.