## MEDIA RELEASE

Spa (Belgium), 16th October 2025

## **EHTTA welcomes new member Hisarya (Bulgaria)**

Good news from the European Historic Thermal Towns Association: the organization, certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, has grown to 51 members across 19 European countries. Including its international partners in the USA and Brazil, the network now comprises a total of 53 thermal towns and regions in 21 countries.

On its recent General Assembly in Montegrotto Terme (Italy) **EHTTA welcomed the historic thermal town of Hisarya in Bulgaria** following the recommendation of its Scientific Committee and decision of the EHTTA Executive Council. The small historic thermal town and major spa resort **Hisarya** extends the list of member towns and even adds Bulgaria as new country in Europe to the map.

**Hisarya** is located at the southern foothills of the Sredna Gora mountain range facing the Upper Thracian Plain. The settlement was founded thousands of years ago probably on account of its hot springs. Some prehistoric remains have been found in what is now the town centre. During the time of the Roman Empire, Hisarya became a fortified city, named Diocletianpolis. Many Roman ruins are visible everywhere — public buildings, a small amphitheatre, the barracks of the Roman garrison, the foundations of a couple of the oldest churches in Bulgaria, as well as the best-preserved Roman city walls in Bulgaria. It prospered again when the mineral springs were rediscovered and the place became a popular recreation spot.

Starting in the year of Bulgarias independence 1878, Hisarya was developed to a modern European Spa Town. Villas, hotels and parks from the late 19th and early 20th Century, the historic baths form the interwar time, the archeological museum and the open air theatre from the 1950th testify the flowerishing development of the Thermal Town during the last 143 years.

**EHTTA President Riccardo Mortandello**, Mayor of Montegrotto Terme, welcomed **Hisarya** and Mayor Iva Valcheva and her delegation: “It is with special and great pleasure to welcome a new EHTTA member here in my home town and an honour to announce the addition of a new country to our network. Bulgaria is a strong and recognised country in European thermal tourism and we are very much looking forward to working with Hisarya.”

Mayor **Iva Valcheva** values this recognition: “It is the result of the centuries-old history, the rich cultural heritage and the unique natural resources of our city. **Hisarya** is blessed with mineral springs that have been healing and inspiring for millennia. Romans, Thracians and Bulgarians have left their mark here, and today we continue their work by preserving and developing this gift.” She sees the membership in the Association not only as a prestige, but also as a challenge. It places Hisarya among an elite community of cities with deep traditions and an established tourist appearance. “We are expected to be worthy ambassadors of the Bulgarian cultural and balneological heritage.”, she says. “Heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Hans Hornyik and the Scientific Committee of the Association for the appreciation, trust and support they have given us. I also thank Mr. Riccardo Mortandello, Mrs. Simone Zagrodnik and the leadership of the Association for their leadership, for their inspiring vision and for their efforts to unite cities with such a rich history and culture.”

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**For further information please contact:**Simone Zagrodnik, EHTTA Executive Director: sz@historicthermaltowns.eu

Historic Thermal Towns on social media

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**Notes for Editors**

1. EHTTA is a membership organisation representing 51 members in 19 countries and two international partners in the USA and Brazil.
2. EHTTA was certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2010 and is one of 49 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe which provide a wealth of leisure and educational activities for all citizens across Europe and beyond and are key resources for responsible tourism and sustainable development. The certification “[Cultural Route of the Council of Europe](http://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes)” is a guarantee of excellence.
3. EHTTA was founded in 2009 with six Founding Members: Acqui Terme (Italy), Bath (UK), Ourense (Spain), Salsomaggiore Terme (Italy), Spa (Belgium) and Vichy (France).
4. Since 2019 EHTTA has been an Affiliate Member of UN Tourism, signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Thermal Tourism with the global organization in 2022.
5. In September 2022, EHTTA signed the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Change in Tourism.