

Framework of Reference for the Professional Activities of the Spa Therapist

**TRANSFERT DE LA CERTIFICATION EUROPÉENNE
D'AGENT DE SOIN THERMAL
(PROJET THERM 134098 LLP 2007 BG LMP) THERM_2**

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the project “Transfert de la certification européenne d’Agent de soin thermal (projet THERM 134098 LLP 2007 BG LMP) THERM_2”, co-funded by the European Union under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, one of the sectoral programmes of the Lifelong Learning Programme, was to answer the problematics around the evolution of competences of the profession of the Spa Therapist, which the professionals of the thermalism sector have been facing, providing a solution in terms of vocational training and professional qualification.

The traditional activities of thermalism, first created with a therapeutic goal, have been losing ground, these last years, in benefit of wellbeing activities. Nowadays thermal spas give more privilege to their wellbeing offer than their offer regarding therapeutic care. This displacement of activities implies an evolution of professional behaviors and skills, making it necessary to adapt to the new needs and expectations of the spa clients.

In this context, the innovative results of the project THERM 134098 LLP 2007 BG LMP were transferred to the beneficiary countries - Portugal and Turkey - enabling them to create, implement and/or adapt the Spa Therapist qualification and its modular training offer within their national qualifications framework, which will answer the needs identified by the professionals of thermalism. This transfer of innovation was piloted by two of the countries participating in the first THERM project – Bulgaria and France –, with the quality assurance and control of Italy.

The qualification is composed by several frameworks of reference or standards designed according to the Competency-Based Approach: Framework of Reference for the Professional Activities, Qualifications Framework of Reference, Knowledge Framework of Reference, and Certificative Units or Learning Outcomes Units. These frameworks of reference can be implemented in all countries wishing to follow the European policy of harmonization of qualifications.

The THERM_2 project consortium was composed of 12 partners with recognized experience in the vocational education and training, tourism and thermalism sectors - Escola Profissional de Espinho, Groupement d'Intérêt Public Formation et Insertion

Professionnelles de l'Académie de Grenoble, Greta Savoie, South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Instituto Superior de Espinho, Caldas da Felgueira, Aqua Hotel, Süleyman Şah Üniversitesi, Tuzla Termal Kaplıcaları, Kaplıca Talasso ve Kür Merkezleri Derneği, İstanbul İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü, Università degli Studi dell'Aquila – which made possible to successfully achieve the following results in the beneficiary countries of the transfer:

- R1: Two qualification standards in accordance with national regulations, both comprising a vocational training offer articulated with the European Qualifications Framework.
- R2: A modular vocational training offer for Spa Therapists common to both beneficiary countries.
- R3: A training program for trainers of Spa Therapists in each beneficiary country.
- R4: A training program for nine trainers in the beneficiary countries of the transfer.
- R5: An experimentation of the training program contents created within this specific training program (qualification standard, modular training and training of trainers) through the implementation of a training program in each beneficiary country, aimed at training fifteen future Spa Therapists.
- R6: Tools for the diffusion of the outcomes: website, newsletters, posters, leaflets and CD-ROMs.

THE AIM OF THE FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Framework of Reference for the Professional Activities (FRPA) defines the field of activities of the Spa Therapist. The FRPA describes the activities and tasks that Spa Therapists must perform in their professional lives. Experience is required, so that the holders of the qualification master the set of skills they need when responding to the complexity of the professional situations they face.

The activities described are inherent to the Spa Therapist job type, considering the typology of the facilities existent in the Portuguese context and the variety of professional situations, establishing thus a professional profile. The FRPA is, thus, based on an analysis of work-related situations, but it also takes into account the predictable evolution of the activities, as they are perceived by the agents of the health and wellness sector.

The FRPA allows the accomplishment of three main functions:

- A function of mediation between the different partners involved in the conception, elaboration or adaptation of the qualification, as employers and training organisms must agree on the objectives of the qualification.
- An instrumental function in the qualification development process, once the elements that emerge from the analysis of the professional activity form the basis on which the qualification framework of reference is built. The FRPA is used by trainers to better assimilate the professional goals of the qualification and to conceive skills assessment situations. The FRPA may also be necessary to analyze the applications for the recognition and validation of skills acquired throughout life, when available.
- A function of information on the career objectives of the qualification for all organisms and services of professional information and guidance.

CONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY OF THE FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

The term “framework of reference” is used in the field of training engineering to mean a document that contains references, a document to which reference is made to justify this or that choice. The references that the FRPA contains are related to the professional activities of a “job type”.

A job is a set of professional activities and tasks competing for the same professional purpose. The same job can have different settings according to the professional organization responsible for its creation or the region where it is located. As there is a common substrate to these different jobs, they can be grouped together into one family of jobs called “job type”. Jobs type are, therefore, undifferentiated from organizations and regions. The jobs that in the labor market are referred to within employment repositories are the jobs type.

The FRPA of the Spa Therapist that is now being presented is based on the Training Framework of Reference of the Spa Therapist, referred to by the code 729173, published in the Dispatch no. 13456/2008, of 14 May, published in the Official Gazette, 2nd Series, no. 93, which approves the initial version of the National Qualifications Catalogue, and which was first updated on 29th March 2013, as well as on the European FRPA of the Spa Therapist, developed within the project THERM 134098 LLP 2007 BG LMP.

The process of conceiving a job type always faces these difficulties:

- How to delete the specificities of particular jobs and conceive an abstraction - the job type - without distorting reality?
- How to anticipate future developments that are not mere illusions?

As far as the first question is concerned, the project team adopted the principle of not explaining the activities and tasks of the Spa Therapist referring to particular care procedures, particular therapeutic products and private work organizations.

When it comes to identifying the necessary skills, this principle has the advantage of allowing to formulate the skills in a transversal way. Moreover, the pedagogical teams involved in the trainings that lead to the acquisition of the Spa Therapist qualification must

re-contextualize the skills according to the particular procedures that the training participants may have to use. The process of de- and re-contextualization of skills is, in fact, one of the pedagogical foundations of professional training.

As far as the second question is concerned, the project team adopted the following perspective. It was considered that with the development of thermal tourism globalization and, consequently, the emergence of a progressive "standardization" of the services provided to customers, both international and national, customers' higher expectations regarding well-being have become an undeniable reality. Thus, the evolution perspectives of Spa Therapist job are already present in the professional activities of many Spa Therapists and in many health facilities of health and wellness. Hence they are also present in the current frameworks of references, such as the Portuguese Training Framework of Reference of the Spa Therapist into force in Portugal.

The FRPA definition that is used in the project is, thus, the following: a coherent set of tasks that a professional must accomplish with a common goal. In this sense, and considering a job tree analysis, the activities are part of a whole – the job - and the task is also part of a whole – the activity. It was this model that was upheld by the project team to proceed with the analysis of the Spa Therapist job type in Portugal. The following assumptions have been adopted:

- The construction of the FRPA came as a result of three levels of analysis corresponding to the activities, tasks and operations. The activities were decomposed into tasks and tasks were decomposed into operations.
- The task level was used to obtain the skills, which means that the skills were extracted from the tasks, in order to highlight the ability of the individual who performs them. Each task was divided into operations and the terms of the task Implementation were defined, as well as the degree of autonomy in the implementation and the expected results. The tasks were used to identify the necessary professional know-how for a proper performance. Knowledge provided the raw material from which the knowledge framework of reference was constructed.
- The number of activities is "empirical". The 5 activities that were adopted correspond to the activities described in the Portuguese professional profile of the Spa Therapist.

This number offers a set of skills, twenty in average. 23 skills were defined. If the number was higher, skills could be reduced to mere knowledge. In the scope of this project, the concept of skill corresponds to "an individual's ability to mobilize resources, including conceptual, methodological and practical knowledge". That is, the capacity to apply the knowledge and use the acquired resources in order to complete tasks and solve problems. This capacity may be cognitive, through the use of logical, intuitive and creative thought, and practical, involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments. Therefore, the task must be sufficiently "rich" so that the theoretical, methodological, practical and relational knowledge can be extracted. This question will be developed in the construction methodology of the qualification framework of reference.

For the formalization of the Spa Therapist FRPA, the grids designed and used in the scope of project THERM were adapted to the Portuguese context. Thus, this FRPA is organized in two grids: a grid with the list of activities and tasks and a grid with a detailed description of each task, including operations, implementation conditions, expected results and autonomy.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

LIST OF THE ACTIVITIES AND TASKS			
A1	Prepare and program the care services, according to the medical prescriptions.	A1.T1	Consult and interpret the medical prescriptions of the thermal spa customers.
		A1.T2	Program and ensure the implementation of the prescribed thermal techniques, using the appropriate technical means and equipment.
A2	Implement thermal treatments in accordance with the medical prescriptions and under the supervision of Higher Health Technicians, using different techniques.	A2.T1	Receive and direct the thermal spa customers to the thermal technique, showing them the equipment to use and assisting them in the procedures.
		A2.T2	Set the time, pressure and water temperature for each thermal spa customer, considering the thermal technique to be applied and the medical prescription.
		A2.T3	Use the equipment and apply the corresponding thermal techniques, respecting the medical prescription.
		A2.T4	Ensure the thermal spa customers' well-being, when applying the thermal techniques.
		A2.T5	Ensure thermal spa customers maintain a balanced body temperature after the treatments, advising their cooling during a certain period of time.
A3	Ensure the conservation, maintenance and hygiene of the	A3.T1	Correctly handle the equipment, utensils and specific materials related to each thermal technique.
		A3.T2	Ensure compliance with the rules concerning the

	equipment and thermal facilities.		use and operation of the equipment and thermal facilities.
		A3.T3	Ensure compliance with the rules concerning the hygiene of the equipment and thermal facilities.
A4	Register the implemented activities and any occurrence observed by the technician and/ or mentioned by thermal spa customers.	A4.T1	Register the activities performed by the thermal spa customers.
		A4.T2	Register any occurrences observed by the technician and/ or mentioned by the thermal spa customers.
A5	Provide first aid and basic health care and wellness.	A5.T1	Identify the situation and act in accordance with the first-aid norms.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSIONAL TASKS

Professional Activity A1: Prepare and program the care services, according to the medical prescriptions.		
Task A1.T1: Consult and interpret the medical prescriptions of the thermal spa customers.		
Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
Read and interpret the medical prescriptions of the medical staff and/ or senior health technicians. Know, interpret and apply the technical terminology.	Quality and safety procedures - medical documentation: medical prescription.	Interpret the medical prescriptions correctly, identifying the potential risks and reporting them to the hierarchy.
Autonomy: Total.		

<p>Professional activity A1: Prepare and program the care services, according to the medical prescriptions.</p>		
<p>Task A1.T2: Program and ensure the implementation of the prescribed thermal techniques, using the appropriate technical means and equipment.</p>		
<p>Task description:</p>	<p>Implementation conditions:</p>	<p>Expected results:</p>
<p>Define and organize the activities, methods, techniques and resources related to the indicated therapeutic processes.</p> <p>Prepare the conditions concerning the use of the equipment, tools and spaces, respecting the rules of cleanliness and hygiene, as well as of personal and environmental hygiene care.</p>	<p>Quality and safety procedures - documentation: medical prescription; individual planning of the thermal techniques; work instruction; professional conduct rules.</p>	<p>Give information to the thermal spa customers, concerning their daily treatment plans.</p> <p>Check the existence of the necessary conditions for the implementation of the techniques, the service provider and the thermal spa customers (equipment, necessary materials and hygiene), solving any flaws.</p>
<p>Autonomy: Total.</p>		

Professional activity A2: Implement thermal treatments in accordance with the medical prescriptions and under the supervision of Higher Health Technicians, using different techniques.

Task A2.T1: Receive and direct the thermal spa customers to the thermal technique, showing them the equipment to use and assisting them in the procedures.

Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
<p>Assess, direct and accompany the thermal spa customers, providing them with the necessary aid, according to the type of treatment, and adapting the contact to the characteristics of their age group.</p> <p>Apply the procedures concerning the preparation of the thermal spa customers for their treatments.</p>	<p>Quality and safety procedures - documentation: medical prescription; individual planning of the thermal techniques; work instruction.</p>	<p>Receive and direct the thermal spa customers to the place where the techniques are implemented, adjusting the posture and language.</p> <p>Giving information about the procedures related to each technique.</p> <p>Respect the hygiene and safety procedures.</p> <p>Position the thermal spa customers correctly, ensuring their comfort.</p>
<p>Autonomy: Total.</p>		

Professional activity A2: Implement thermal treatments in accordance with the medical prescriptions and under the supervision of Higher Health Technicians, using different techniques.

Task A2.T2: Set the time, pressure and water temperature for each thermal spa customer, considering the thermal technique to be applied and the medical prescription.

Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
Use the techniques for the natural mineral water regulation and for the preparation of the thermal techniques.	Quality and safety procedures - documentation: technical data sheets of the equipment; instruments and control equipment (pressure gauge, thermometer, thermostat, timer, probes).	Check the correct conditions to perform the techniques, alerting maintenance in case of non-compliance.

Autonomy: Total.

<p>Professional activity A2: Implement thermal treatments in accordance with the medical prescriptions and under the supervision of Higher Health Technicians, using different techniques.</p>		
<p>Task A2.T3: Use the equipment and apply the corresponding thermal techniques, respecting the medical prescription.</p>		
Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
<p>Apply and supervise the implementation of Otorhinolaryngology and Pulmonology techniques.</p> <p>Apply balneotherapy techniques (dipping, shower, steam).</p> <p>Apply the thalassotherapy techniques.</p> <p>Apply the hydrokinesiotherapy techniques.</p> <p>Apply the electrotherapy techniques.</p> <p>Apply the manual massage techniques.</p> <p>Apply the sludge techniques.</p>	<p>Quality and safety procedures - documentation: medical prescription; work instruction concerning each thermal technique; technical data sheets of the equipment.</p> <p>Equipment and specific material concerning each technique.</p>	<p>Comply with the procedures and the medical prescription.</p> <p>Follow the hygiene and safety procedures, alerting maintenance in case of non-compliance.</p>
<p>Autonomy: Total.</p>		

<p>Professional activity A2: Implement thermal treatments in accordance with the medical prescriptions and under the supervision of Higher Health Technicians, using different techniques.</p>		
<p>Task A2.T4: Ensure the thermal spa customers' well-being, when applying the thermal techniques.</p>		
<p>Task description:</p>	<p>Implementation conditions:</p>	<p>Expected results:</p>
<p>Identify the needs and expectations of the thermal spa customers in terms of the prescribed therapeutic processes.</p> <p>Detect signs or abnormal situations concerning the reaction of the thermal spa customers before the prescribed treatments.</p>	<p>Quality and safety procedures - documentation: medical prescription; technical data sheets of the equipment.</p>	<p>Accompany the thermal spa customers, identifying possible changes in terms of their welfare.</p> <p>Identify possible non-compliance, warning maintenance, if necessary.</p>
<p>Autonomy: Total.</p>		

Professional activity A2: Implement thermal treatments in accordance with the medical prescriptions and under the supervision of Higher Health Technicians, using different techniques.

Task A2.T5: Ensure thermal spa customers maintain a balanced body temperature after the treatments, advising their cooling during a certain period of time.

Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
Promote the satisfaction of the thermal spa customers' needs and ensure their welfare.	Quality and safety procedures - documentation: medical prescription; individual planning of the thermal techniques.	Accompany and direct the thermal spa customers to the resting zone, informing them of the need of resting.

Autonomy: Total.

Professional activity A3: Ensure the conservation, maintenance and hygiene of the equipment and thermal facilities.		
Task A3.T1: Use the equipment, tools and materials related to each thermal technique, taking into account the medical prescription and usage rules.		
Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
Use the equipment, tools and materials related to each thermal technique, taking into account the medical prescription and usage rules.	Quality and safety procedures - documentation: medical prescription; technical data sheets of the equipment.	Handle the appropriate equipment and materials, ensuring their good condition. Identify possible non-compliance, warning maintenance, if necessary.
Autonomy: Total.		

Professional activity A3: Ensure the conservation, maintenance and hygiene of the equipment and thermal facilities.		
Task A3.T2: Ensure compliance with the rules concerning the use and operation of the equipment and thermal facilities.		
Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
Give instructions on the proper use of the equipment and thermal facilities.	Quality and safety procedures - documentation: medical prescription; technical data sheets of the equipment.	Transmit information concerning the proper use of the equipment and materials. Collect and record the thermal spa customers' observations, concerning the equipment usage.
Autonomy: Total.		

<p>Professional activity A3: Ensure the conservation, maintenance and hygiene of the equipment and thermal facilities.</p>		
<p>Task A3.T3: Ensure compliance with the rules concerning the hygiene of the equipment and thermal facilities.</p>		
<p>Task description:</p>	<p>Implementation conditions:</p>	<p>Expected results:</p>
<p>Apply the hygiene procedures concerning the equipment and thermal facilities.</p>	<p>Quality and safety procedures - documentation: technical data sheets concerning the preparation of the hygiene products; hygiene and safety procedures.</p>	<p>Comply with the rules concerning the preparation and packaging of hygiene products.</p> <p>Use the appropriate products for each situation.</p> <p>Comply with hygiene and safety procedures.</p>
<p>Autonomy: Total.</p>		

Professional activity A4: Register the implemented activities and any occurrence observed by the technician and/ or mentioned by thermal spa customers.		
Task A4.T1: Register the activities performed by the thermal spa customers.		
Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
Record the data related to each treatment, considering the possibility of any further treatment by the competent services.	Quality and safety procedures - documentation: record sheets.	Register the verified situation.
Autonomy: Total.		

<p>Professional activity A4: Register the implemented activities and any occurrence observed by the technician and/ or mentioned by thermal spa customers.</p>		
<p>Task A4.T2: Register any occurrences observed by the technician and/ or mentioned by thermal spa customers.</p>		
<p>Task description:</p>	<p>Implementation conditions:</p>	<p>Expected results:</p>
<p>Use log supports, noting the activities and occurrences observed or referred to by the thermal spa customers, as well as their therapeutic evolution.</p>	<p>Quality and safety procedures - record documentation: record sheets.</p>	<p>Register the occurrences verified by the technician.</p> <p>Register the occurrences referred to by the thermal spa customers.</p> <p>Ask the thermal spa customers about their needs and therapeutic evolution, ensuring the information is sent to superior decision-making.</p>
<p>Autonomy: Total.</p>		

Professional activity A5: Provide first aid and basic health care and wellness.		
Task A5.T1: Identify the situation and act in accordance with the first-aid norms.		
Task description:	Implementation conditions:	Expected results:
Apply the procedures and first aid techniques in accident situations.	Quality and safety procedures - documentation: First Aid Manual; procedure in case of accident; occurrence record sheets.	Place the thermal spa customers safely, ensuring the provision of first aid until the arrival of medical personnel. Monitor the process, recording the situation.
Autonomy: Total.		



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