

## ASSEMBLY

Thermal Towns are an opportunity for rural development through the conservation and activation of thermal heritage in all its aspects: natural, cultural, and immaterial. Ourense is the Spanish province with the largest number of thermal villas. In addition to the city of Ourense, recognised since 2008 by the Galician Parliament as "Thermal Capital of Galicia", the province has 11 thermal towns: A Arnoia, Bande, Baños de Molgas, Boborás, O Carballiño, Cenlle, Cortegada, Leiro, Lobios, Muiño, and Verín.

Intermediate governments have an important responsibility in the valuation and dynamisation of resources in our territories, since we are the only administrative level with the capacity and the vision needed in order to strengthen the link between urban and rural areas. Since May 2018, I have the honour of presiding Partenalia, the European association of provincial governments of Europe, and throughout my presidency I aim to strengthen coordination and intelligent management, in line with the philosophy the provincial government has maintained for a few years.

Among the many initiatives carried out by the provincial government, I would like to highlight the project "Provincia Inteligente" (Intelligent Province) at the boost of cooperation, the optimization of resources and the reduction of costs, and its development will allow the provision of intelligent services in all areas, laying the foundations for a new technological and sustainable production model linked to knowledge and to our territory.

Nevertheless, we also work on other lines of action such as the "Plan Empregou", which improves the training of young people when accessing the labour market; the program "Chegou", to support the birth rate with aids for each childbirth or adoption in the municipalities of the province; the social service plan "BenOurense", which offers economic, technical, and legal assistance to municipalities of less than 20,000 inhabitants, including actions related to child care, dependence, active ageing, training and technical endowment; or the "Observatorio del Rural" (Rural Observatory), which will be launched soon and covers market analysis, competitiveness, employment prospects and innovation projects for the Ourense field.

Among all these actions, the one which is the key due to our resources, our history and our capacities is the thermalism, developed by the plan "Ourense, Provincia Termal" (Ourense, Thermal Province) and, in order to fulfil its proposals, we adhere to the EHTTA in 2016 and we have been involved in all their actions since then. I went to Brussels personally to present the Atlas project in the European Commission and I will be present in Budapest at the Thermal Heritage Day. All this is a sign of our commitment to take care and protect our thermal heritage, a phenomenon that has been present in Ourense for many decades. And when I say these words, I have to mention Luis Rodríguez Míguez, one of the pioneers of Galicia in the study of thermalism and recently awarded with the gold medal of the province posthumously.

Welcome.