

CARE-GET E-NEWSLETTER Nº 1
European Urban Initiative

December 2024 – May 2025



Introduction

The **CARE-GET project** (**Collaborative Advancement for Renewed Education, Generation, Economy and Technology Transition**) has been chosen as one of the 22 most innovative projects in the second call for Innovative Actions of the European Urban Initiative (EUI). This project has a total budget of 5,009,480 euros. This achievement positions the Municipality of Haskovo alongside renowned cities such as Barcelona, Bologna, Athens, and Rotterdam. The project is distinctive for its integration of health, care, and nature, combining education, technology, and innovation to create new jobs and strengthen the local economy.

The CARE-GET project aims to transform the abandoned building of the former orphanage in Haskovo into a MedTech Hub, which will include a telemedicine center. This hub will feature multifunctional spaces designed to attract, retain, and develop local talent. Shared workspaces and a digital corner will foster social integration and lifelong learning. Additionally, the building will include a wellness area, and the surrounding space will be designed with nature-based solutions. The center will host a variety of events and activities that bring together different generations and economic sectors, promoting both the physical and mental well-being of Haskovo residents while enhancing community ties and preserving the city's cultural heritage.

CARE-GET will commence on December 1, 2024, and run until May 31, 2028. Throughout this period, comprehensive studies, economic analyses, and strategies for the labor market and economic development of Haskovo will be conducted and executed. This project is being carried out by an international consortium comprising five countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Greece, and Italy. Representatives from these nations will collaborate to develop innovative solutions and transfer successful practices to other cities within the EU.

In this issue:

- 1 **The opening ceremony and press conference** for the **CARE-GET project** were held in Haskovo (D 4.1.2)
- 2 **The first in-person partnership meeting** took place (D 2.3.1)
- 3 Initiation of **promotional and informational communication activities** for the project (A 4.2)
- 4 **Baseline study on Haskovo labour market** and **Skills Gaps Analysis Report** (A 5.1)

01 Opening ceremony and press conference on the CARE-GET project

European Commission "Bravo, Haskovo!"

On March 20, 2025, in the "Haskovo" hall, the CARE-GET project was officially launched. The Kick-off event was organized by Haskovo Municipality as the lead partner in the Project, with the participation of all Project Partners.



[Read more
here](#)

Project Presentation

In the official part participated the Mayor of Haskovo Municipality Mr. Stanislav Dechev, the Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Bulgaria Ms. Yordanka Chobanova, the Deputy Rector of Trakia University - Stara Zagora Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emil Slavov, Dr. Yancho Delchev - holder of the honorary sign of Haskovo and head of a clinic at the Military Medical Academy (MMA), as well as experts and representatives of the partners.

A detailed presentation of the CARE-GET project was delivered by **Mr. Valentin Spendarov, the project manager**, and **Mr. Donal O'Herlihy, the project's innovation expert**.

01 Opening ceremony and press conference on the CARE-GET project

Press conference

At 11:15 a.m., a press conference was held to present the main goals, activities, and expected outcomes of the project.

Official Ceremony

At 12:00 PM, the official opening ceremony of the CARE-GET project took place at 9 Bulgaria Blvd., in the building that once served as a home for children deprived of parental care, known as "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov."

Ms. Yordanka Chobanova, Head of the European Commission Representation in Bulgaria, described the CARE-GET project as a visionary initiative that will become a symbol of Haskovo. She congratulated the city, stating, **"Bravo, Haskovo! Congratulations on succeeding in a highly competitive process among many cities from the European Union."**



02 The first in-person partnership meeting in Haskovo

A working meeting on the CARE-GET project took place in Haskovo Municipality **on March 19, 2025**, with representatives from all project partners attending the event.

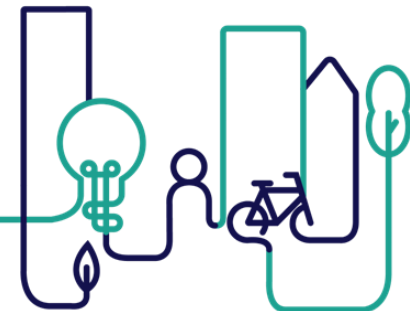
[Read more here](#)

Participants discussed:

- ✓ transparency and financial reporting requirements;
- ✓ the plan for publicity and communication measures;
- ✓ key aspects of the implementation of the CARE-GET project.



*Presentation on the role of the Innovation Expert in the project
Mr. Donal O'Herlihy*



03 Initiation of promotional and informational communication activities

Communication and Dissemination Plan D 4.1.1

Implemented Communication Activities

Partnership

Main urban authority:

- Haskovo Municipality, Bulgaria

Delivery partners:

- URBASOPIA, Romania
- Bulgaria Economic Forum, Sofia
- Lip Trade Ltd, Sofia
- Trakia University – Stara Zagora, Haskovo Branch
- General Hospital for Active Treatment – Haskovo JSC
- Alliance for Regional Cooperation and Development, Haskovo

Transfer Partners:

Transfer Partners are urban authorities that join the project to observe and learn. The involvement of Transfer Partners is vital for ensuring the project's innovative solutions are effectively adaptable and replicable in various contexts across the EU.

Transfer Partner 1
• Druskininkai Municipality, Lithuania

Transfer Partner 2
• Municipality of Komotini, Greece

Transfer Partner 3
• Municipality of Siena, Italy

Партньорство

Водещ партньор:

- Община Хасково, България

Партньори по изпълнение на проекта:

- URBASOPIA, Румъния
- Български икономически форум, София
- Лип Трейд ООД, София
- Трайкийски университет – Стара Загора, клон Хасково
- ИВАЛ Хасково
- Алианс за регионално сътрудничество и развитие, Хасково

Трансферни партньори:

Трансферни партньори са местни власти, които се включват, за да наблюдават и да се учат от опита на проекта. Участието им е от съществено значение за гарантиране, че иновативните решения на проекта са ефективно адаптирани и приложими в различен контекст в рамките на ЕС.

Трансферен партньор 1
• Община Друскинкой, Литва

Трансферен партньор 2
• Община Комотини, Гърция

Трансферен партньор 3
• Община Сиена, Италия

European Urban Initiative

CARE-GET Project

Collaborative Advancement for Renewed Education, Generation, Economy and Technology Transition

Haskovo Municipality

Location: Haskovo

Operation: 01/12/2024 - 31/05/2028

Total ERDF budget granted: EUR 4,007,584

Total project budget: EUR 5,009,480

МЕСТО: Хасково

Оперативност: 01/12/2024 - 31/05/2028

Бюджет, предоставен от ЕОФР: EUR 4 007 584

Общ бюджет на проекта: EUR 5 009 480

Проект CARE-GET

Сътрудничество за напредък в образованието, взаимодействието между поколенията, икономиката и технологичния преход

Община Хасково

www.urban-initiative.eu/en-cities/haskovo/home

Co-funded by the European Union

[Download the brochure](#)



European Urban Initiative



CARE-GET Project

Collaborative Advancement for Renewed Education, Generation, Economy and Technology Transition

Haskovo Municipality

Main challenges

- Population decline and brain drain.
- Youth unemployment and skill gaps.
- Healthcare access and workforce shortage.

Proposed solutions

- New MedTech Hub and wellness centre in a former orphanage.
- Digital skills and tailored training programmes.
- Business incubation and start-up support.

Start date
01.12.2024

End date
31.05.2028

Budget

5 009 480 € total project budget
4 007 584 € total ERDF budget granted received from European Urban Initiative

www.urban-initiative.eu

Co-funded by the European Union

Brochure, poster, banner and billboard design and printing

04 Baseline study on Haskovo labour market and Skills Gaps Analysis Report

The baseline study evaluates the economy and labor market in Haskovo Municipality by examining the workforce, industrial presence, and investment trends. The analysis covers the period from 2021 to 2023, with no data available for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected from official sources and through surveys conducted with employers and workers across various sectors.

Key insights and recommendations from the analysis

Haskovo experienced consistent economic growth from 2021 to 2023; however, it faces several challenges, including demographic issues, a shortage of skilled labor, and low levels of foreign investment. Wages in the region are below the national average, particularly in the manufacturing sector. To overcome these obstacles, active policies are necessary to attract investment, modernize businesses, and promote high-tech industries. Key steps include improving working conditions, stimulating local entrepreneurship, and aligning education with the needs of the economy. With timely and effective actions, Haskovo has the potential to become a significant economic center in the region.

[Read more here](#)

Skills Gaps Analysis Report Results:

Conclusions

- ❖ **Lack of adequately qualified personnel** in various sectors, especially in technical fields and healthcare.
- ❖ **Mismatch between education and labor market.**
- ❖ **Low average wages** leading to migration of skilled personnel to larger economic centers.
- ❖ **Shortage of medical personnel**, which leads to increased workloads and reduced quality of health services.
- ❖ **Lack of systematic efforts to develop digital skills among personnel**, which puts Haskovo at risk of falling behind in industrial modernization.

To ensure effective planning and implementation of development strategies, it is essential to enhance coordination among local administration, businesses, and educational institutions.

For future improvement, strategic measures should focus on attracting and retaining qualified personnel, adopting technological innovations, and enhancing working conditions through economic incentives and educational reforms.

Recommendations

1. **Integrated policies.**
2. **Improving vocational education.**
3. **Retraining and upskilling.**
4. **Attracting and retaining qualified personnel.**
5. **Retaining young people.**
6. **Coordination and analysis of the labor market.**
7. **Promotion of job and training opportunities.**
8. **Sustainable development and strategic investments.**
9. **Coordinated regional strategy.**

[Read more here](#)



**Lead partner of the
CARE-GET project**

**Municipality of Haskovo,
BULGARIA**

**[https://www.haskovo.bg/
bg/kontakti](https://www.haskovo.bg/bg/kontakti)**