



HEALTH CITIES

NEWSLETTER #1

HEALTH CITIES is an alliance of European cities committed to enhancing the quality of life and local economies by maximizing the potential of the fast-growing, high-value-added LSH industry, which integrates agents involved in R&D & manufacturing of pharma, biotechnology, medical devices, biomedical technologies, etc. and emphasizes technology and innovation as crucial elements for improving quality of life.

The partnership brings together 9 partners, 8 cities and 7 European countries, with a total budget of €1.84 M.

Three main areas of interest are highlighted:

- Governance and concertation models between public and private actors at local and regional level, exploiting synergies and complementarities to strengthen the life sciences & health value chains;
- Design and delivery of services and programmes to support the development and growth of start-ups and SMEs in the targeted industry;
- Development of support programmes for talent attraction and retention in small cities.

ACTIONS CARRIED OUT DURING THE FIRST SEMESTER



PRESS CONFERENCE IN SANT CUGAT

Sant Cugat officially launched the HEALTH CITIES project with a press conference featuring the Mayor, Biocat and Sant Cugat Empresarial. The session presented the Bioregion Report and the project's main goals. It was highlighted that HEALTH CITIES is the first initiative born from BIVA, strengthening the connection between the city's technology and health sectors. The project will provide new tools for governance, business support and talent development, reinforcing Sant Cugat's role as a key European hub for health innovation.



ONLINE KICK-OFF MEETING

The online kick-off meeting on 16 May 2025 gathered all partners to align their understanding of the life sciences ecosystem and discuss the challenges of moving innovation from research to market. Partners shared regional experiences and reflected on governance, services and talent needs. The meeting concluded with agreements on the upcoming Territorial Needs Assessment, stakeholder meetings and the preparation of the first Study Visit in Sant Cugat.

LOCAL STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETINGS



Throughout the semester, all partners organised meetings with their local stakeholder groups. These sessions served to introduce the project to regional actors, explain its objectives and gather early feedback on the main needs and opportunities identified in each territory. Stakeholders were also informed about the upcoming assessment results and next steps and the future interregional activities planned within the project.

TERRITORIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

During this first semester, all partners completed the Territorial Needs Assessment, a key analytical exercise designed to understand the structure, strengths and gaps of each region's life sciences and health and life sciences ecosystem.

The assessment examined governance mechanisms, support services for entrepreneurship and the availability of talent, while also identifying future opportunities for improvement. Its results provide the foundation for selecting the topics and locations of the project's study visits and will guide the exchange of good practices. The findings will also support the development of future policy recommendations and regional strategies to strengthen the sector.

SANT CUGAT DEL VALLÈS: STUDY VISIT



From 27 to 29 October, Sant Cugat hosted the first Study Visit of the project, welcoming delegations from Sweden, Hungary, France, Ukraine and the Netherlands. The visit showcased the city's innovation ecosystem, starting with an institutional welcome and contextual presentations delivered in collaboration with Biocat, Sant Cugat Empresarial and B.Link.

During the three-day visit, participants took part in discussions on early-stage funding at ESADE, explored leading research infrastructures at ALBA Synchrotron, the Autonomous University of Barcelona and Eurecat, and learned about strategies for talent development during visits to Boehringer Ingelheim and the BIVA Talent Day.



The study visit programme concluded with visits to HP and Roche, where European partners were introduced to cutting-edge projects in 3D printing, digital health, artificial intelligence and personalised medicine. The visit strongly reinforced Sant Cugat and Catalonia's reputation as a European benchmark in health and life sciences.

GOOD PRACTICES PUBLISHED

We have also published the first two good practices of the project, which showcase successful models from partner regions and will serve as a foundation for upcoming knowledge exchange activities.

Barcelona Innovation Valley Alliance (BIVA)



Sant Cugat has built one of the most dynamic innovation ecosystems in Catalonia, strengthened in recent years through the creation of the Barcelona Innovation Valley Alliance (BIVA). Launched in 2024, BIVA boosts talent, economic growth and international visibility, while improving coordination between companies, universities, research centres and the City Council. Its bottom-up model connects local ideas with major strategic actors, enabling smoother knowledge transfer, stronger collaboration and new opportunities for entrepreneurship and investment. BIVA now serves as the city's key platform to drive innovation and implement its Strategic Entrepreneurship Plan.

BIVA Talent Day



Sant Cugat is growing fast in technology and innovation, yet companies struggle to find qualified talent while many young professionals lack local opportunities. To address this gap, the city created BIVA Talent Day, an innovative format that combines a job fair, real business challenges and direct collaboration between companies, universities and students. Unlike traditional fairs, businesses present real cases, students showcase transversal skills and universities help shape the activities. Co-created with Sant Cugat Empresarial and Mobile World Capital Barcelona, the initiative strengthens local employability, fosters innovation and helps retain young talent in the city.

COMING UP

Over the next few months, we are preparing three key activities within the project. First, we will hold the second meeting with our local stakeholders, where we will continue refining the priority challenges identified and jointly exploring possible solutions. In parallel, we are planning the upcoming study visits to Utrecht and Lund, which will allow us to learn firsthand from their innovative approaches. Together, these activities mark an important step forward in the project's progression and will help strengthen collaboration and shared learning among partners.

HEALTH CITIES is an Interreg Europe project, co-funded by the European Union, led by the Sant Cugat del Vallès City Council together with Medicon Village Innovation, Pannon Business Network Association, Department of investment policy, projects, international relations, tourism and city promotion of Ivano-Frankivsk City Council, Medicon Valley Alliance, City of Lund, National Development Centre, Regional Development Agency Utrecht region, and Toulouse Métropole

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Further information is available on our website: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/health-cities>