Horizon Europe call HORIZON-HLTH-2025-03-DISEASE-02: seeking clinical partners for VR-based treatment trials for substance use disorders

Summary

Profile type	Company's country	POD reference
Research & Development Request	**Greece**	**RDRGR20250626010**
Profile status	**Type of partnership**	**Targeted countries**
PUBLISHED	**Research and development cooperation agreement**	**• World**
Contact Person	**Term of validity**	**Last update**
Wioletta POLITEWICZ	**26 Jun 2025** **26 Jun 2026**	**26 Jun 2025**

General Information

Short summary

A Greek SME active in digital health R&D, is part of a Horizon Europe consortium (HORIZON-HLTH-2025-03-DISEASE-02) developing a VR-based therapy for substance use disorders. Treatment centers/clinics are sought to join the project, host clinical studies, support patient recruitment, and co-develop digital interventions for real-world use.

Full description

Substance use disorders (SUDs) represent a significant societal and healthcare challenge, with high relapse rates and limited success of existing interventions. Current treatments, while sometimes effective at managing withdrawal and dependency, often fall short in addressing the psychological and behavioural roots of addiction, particularly under real-world stressors and relapse triggers.

The proposed project aims to transform addiction treatment by combining medication-assisted therapy with a personalised, immersive Virtual Reality (VR) program. This multidisciplinary intervention will support individuals with SUDs through realistic and adaptive VR experiences that simulate high-risk situations, teach coping strategies, and support emotional regulation — while also integrating evidence-based medications to stabilise physiological dependencies.

The project will use advanced technologies such as machine learning and biosensors to create a closed-loop

system: VR scenarios adapt in real-time to the user's physiological feedback (e.g., heart rate variability), enabling emotionally responsive and tailored therapy. Key innovations also include the use of photorealistic "future self" avatars to enhance long-term motivation and decision-making, and gamified elements to improve patient engagement and adherence.
The proposal is being developed under the Horizon Europe framework, specifically addressing the call HORIZON-HLTH-2025-03-DISEASE-02: Advancing innovative interventions for mental, behavioural and neurodevelopmental disorders. The call supports projects that develop and clinically validate innovative, safe, and inclusive interventions, combining pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches. It also emphasises patient co-design, digital innovation, and real-world monitoring of long-term efficacy.
The project duration is expected to be approximately 4 years, with:

- First stage submission deadline: 18 September 2025
- Second stage submission deadline: 16 April 2026

The Greek SME, active in digital health and AI development, is participating in the consortium. The consortium will include research institutions and technology developers across Europe. Treatment centres, clinics, or hospital departments with experience in addiction care are currently sought to join the project as clinical partners.
The ideal partner would:

- Have access to relevant patient populations (e.g., alcohol, opioid, or nicotine use disorders),
- Be able to host or coordinate clinical studies, under standard ethical approvals,
- Support patient recruitment, monitoring, and feedback collection,
- Contribute to co-design of therapeutic scenarios based on clinical realities,
- Engage in outcome evaluation and help shape the clinical protocols and real-world deployment models.

The project will generate FAIR-compliant clinical data and aims to contribute to European guidelines for digital health integration in addiction treatment. Participating clinical partners will gain early access to a scalable therapeutic tool, contribute to high-impact research, and benefit from visibility in a Horizon-funded initiative.
Expressions of interest are welcomed from clinics and treatment centres based in EU Member States or associated countries, particularly those with experience in conducting or supporting behavioural health research or EU-funded pilot studies.

Advantages and innovations

The project's main innovation lies in its dynamic personalization: immersive VR scenarios are continuously adapted to each patient's unique triggers and progress using machine learning and biosensor feedback, addressing the critical gap of real-time, individualized therapy. Unlike traditional approaches, the proposal employs photorealistic "future self" avatars to enhance motivation and strengthen future-oriented decision-making, a method shown to reduce cravings and support sustained recovery. The intervention does not stop at primary outcomes; it also targets secondary outcomes such as mood and anxiety management which are areas often neglected in standard treatments but crucial for long-term success. By combining pharmacological support with VR-based mindfulness and cognitive behavioral therapy, the proposal offers a comprehensive, scalable solution that addresses both the physiological and psychosocial dimensions of addiction. This multidisciplinary, user-centered approach positions the proposed solution as a pioneering model with the potential to set new standards in relapse prevention and holistic person well-being.

Technical specification or expertise sought

The expertise sought from clinical partners for the proposed project includes experience in addiction treatment and research, with access to relevant patient populations such as those with alcohol, opioid, or nicotine use disorders. Partners should have the capacity to host or coordinate clinical studies under appropriate ethical approvals, supporting patient recruitment, monitoring, and feedback collection. They will contribute to the co-design of therapeutic VR scenarios grounded in clinical realities and participate in outcome evaluation to help refine clinical protocols and real-world deployment models. Expertise in behavioral health research, especially involving digital or innovative interventions, is highly valuable. Familiarity with standard clinical trial procedures, patient-centered approaches, and data collection aligned with FAIR principles will enhance the consortium's ability to generate robust, clinically relevant evidence.

Stage of development

Concept stage

Sustainable Development goals

- **Goal 10: Reduced Inequality**
- **Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**
- **Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being**
- **Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal**

IPR Status

No IPR applied

IPR Notes

Partner Sought

Expected role of the partner

The expected role of the clinical partner in the proposed project is to actively contribute to the successful development, validation, and implementation of the innovative addiction treatment intervention. Specifically, the partner will be responsible for providing access to relevant patient populations with substance use disorders (e.g., alcohol, opioid, or nicotine use disorders) and facilitating the recruitment and retention of participants for clinical studies. The partner will host or coordinate clinical trials, ensuring all activities comply with ethical standards and regulatory requirements. They will support continuous patient monitoring and systematic collection of clinical and feedback data, which are essential for real-time adaptation of the VR therapy and for evaluating treatment efficacy.
Furthermore, the clinical partner will engage in the co-design process of therapeutic VR scenarios, contributing clinical expertise and insights to ensure that the interventions reflect real-world clinical challenges and patient needs. This collaboration will help tailor the digital tools to maximize their relevance, usability, and impact. The partner will also participate in the evaluation of both primary and secondary outcomes, including relapse prevention, emotional regulation, and quality of life improvements, providing critical input to shape clinical protocols and optimize the intervention for broader deployment.
In addition to clinical and research duties, the partner will contribute to dissemination activities, sharing findings with the scientific community and stakeholders to support the integration of digital health innovations into addiction treatment guidelines. By collaborating closely with technology developers, researchers, and other consortium members, the clinical partner will help ensure that the project's outputs are robust, scalable, and aligned with Horizon Europe's objectives for innovative, safe, and inclusive mental health interventions.

Type of partnership

Research and development cooperation agreement

Type and size of the partner

- **Other**
- **University**

Call Details

Framework program

Horizon Europe

Call title and identifier

Advancing innovative interventions for mental, behavioural and neurodevelopmental disorders – HORIZON-HLTH-2025-03-DISEASE-02

Submission and evaluation scheme

The submission follows a two-stage evaluation scheme: a first-stage outline proposal by 18 September 2025, followed by a full proposal submission by 16 April 2026 for shortlisted applicants

Anticipated project budget

6M-8M €

Coordinator required

Yes

Deadline for EoI

31 Jul 2025

Deadline of the call

18 Sep 2025

Project duration in weeks

208

Web link to the call

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-hlth-2025-03-disease-02-two-stage

Project title and acronym

VIRTUES – Virtual Reality Immersive Therapy for Unified Empowerment and Sustained Recovery

Dissemination

Technology keywords

- **01004001 - Applications for Health**
- **05002001 - Biosensor**
- **01005006 - Visualisation, Virtual Reality**

Market keywords

- **05003006 - Other therapeutic (including defibrillators)**
- **02007012 - Medical/health software**
- **05007007 - Other medical/health related (not elsewhere classified)**

Targeted countries

- **World**

Sector groups involved

- **Health**