



# VR Health Champions Open Call 2025

## Call text

This project has received funding from the European Union's I3,  
under the Grant Agreement No.  
101161333.

**Project acronym:** VR Health Champions

**Grant Agreement Number:** 101161333

**Project full title:** We Are Health Champions - Disrupting the European Healthcare  
Systems with Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality Applications

## History of changes

Version	Publication date	Changes
1.0	14 April 2025	Initial version
2.0	17 April 2025	<b>First amendment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.2.1 Geographic eligibility: List of eligible regions updated</li> </ul>
3.0	12 May 2025	<b>Second amendment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.3 Quality evaluation and scoring: The scoring procedure used to rank proposals and select the top three for the hearing and project selection phase has been updated.</li> </ul>

Any changes to this call are listed in the table above.

## List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
I3	Interregional Innovation Investment
ERDF	European Research and Development Fund
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
VR	Virtual Reality
XR	Extended Reality
AR	Augmented Reality
FSA	Financial Support Agreement
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
MGA	Model Grant Agreement
CA	Collaboration Agreement

**EISMEA**

**European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency**

## Table of Content

1. Call summary .....	4
2. Background .....	5
2.1. The Interregional Innovation Instrument (I3) Instrument .....	5
2.2. VR Health Champions project .....	5
2.3. I3 in the VR Health Champions project.....	6
3. Scope .....	7
3.1. Objectives .....	7
3.2. The 5 Flagship SMEs' Innovations .....	7
3.3. Challenges to be addressed.....	8
3.3.1. Work to be performed by the selected SMEs (expected activities, output), activities to be funded .....	8
3.3.2. Timeline .....	9
3.4. Duration.....	10
3.5. Available budget, form of funding and payment schedule .....	10
4. Call conditions .....	11
4.1. Admissibility.....	11
4.2. Eligibility .....	12
4.2.1. Geographic eligibility .....	13
4.2.2. Entities eligible to participate.....	14
4.2.3. Eligible activities.....	14
4.2.4. Eligible costs.....	14
4.3. Exclusion .....	16
5. Evaluation and Selection .....	16
5.1. Procedure .....	16
5.2. Admissibility and eligibility check .....	17
5.3. Quality evaluation and scoring .....	18
5.4. Grounds for appeal and appeal procedure .....	20

5.5. Legal and financial set-up of Commitment .....	20
6. Confidentiality and conflict of interest.....	21
7. Intellectual Property Rights rules .....	22
8. Gender equality .....	22
9. Communication and dissemination.....	23
10. Right to ex-post monitoring.....	23
11. Where to get help? .....	24
12. Disclaimer.....	24
13. Annexes.....	24
Annex 1 - Challenge Descriptions .....	24
MetaSkills.....	24
Lightspace.....	27
MedApp .....	29
MEEVA.....	31
Virtuleap.....	33
Annex 2 - Financial Support Agreement template .....	36

## List of Tables

**Table 1** – Call summary

**Table 2** - Timeline

**Table 3** – Payment schedule

**Table 4** – Quality evaluation criteria

## List of Figures

**Figure 1** – Consortium composition

**Figure 2** - Timeline

## 1. Call summary

Main Features	
<b>Why should you apply</b>	Apply to the VR Health Champions Open Call 2025 to receive up to €40,000 lump sum funding while addressing a real-world challenge defined by the project's five Flagship SMEs. Collaborate directly with these leading XR healthcare innovators, gain visibility within a high-impact European ecosystem—including Medtronic, XR4Europe, and EIT Health—and contribute to building interregional value chains.
<b>Who can apply</b>	SMEs as <a href="#">defined by the European Commission</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legally established in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A region covered by the VRHC consortium</li> <li>A less developed region in the EU</li> <li>An outermost region of the EU</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Key dates</b>	Call launch: 14/04/2025 Call close: 23/06/2025
<b>Budget and maximum funding</b>	The estimated available call budget is 200.000 €.  Each successful Applicant SME may receive financial support up to the sum of 40.000 € in the form of a lump sum grant.
<b>Link to the submission portal</b>	<a href="https://vrhealthchampions.eu/get-involved/">https://vrhealthchampions.eu/get-involved/</a>
<b>Documents to be submitted</b>	Applications must be submitted electronically through the application form on the VR Health Champions website Proposals must be complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Company Register Certificate: the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).</li> <li>SME declaration</li> <li>Declaration of Honour</li> <li>Ethics and security self-assessment</li> <li>Proof of activity of the latest closed financial year: balance sheet (no template provided)</li> <li>Budget table</li> <li>Best value for money justification: payslip</li> </ul>
<b>List of documents to take into consideration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VR Health Champions website application platform</li> <li>The present call document and its Annexes</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	Relevance and Experience (25%) Methodology and Work Plan (25%) Feasibility and Risk Management (25%) Impact and Value Creation (25%)
<b>Contact details</b>	<a href="mailto:cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu">cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu</a>

Table 1: Call summary

## 2. Background

### 2.1. The Interregional Innovation Instrument (I3) Instrument

The Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument addresses the innovation divide in Europe by supporting interregional collaboration. As part of the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF), it supports interregional innovation projects in their commercialisation and scale-up phases and brings them to the investment level. It uses smart specialisation as a coordination principle and empowers ecosystems in less-developed regions.

### 2.2. VR Health Champions project

**VR Health Champions** is a three-year project, co-funded by the I3 under the ERDF. The project aims to overcome market barriers for healthcare Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) applications in less-developed European regions. It addresses gaps in the value chains of five flagship SMEs and, by leveraging these experiences, customise innovation support services for other SMEs in the healthcare VR/AR sector.

The project focuses on five flagship SMEs—**Lightspace**, **MEEVA**, **MedApp**, **Metaskills**, and **Virtuleap**—at the forefront of this transformation. The goal is to increase their Technology Readiness Level (TRL) from TRL 6 to TRL 9 for VR/AR innovations in medical navigation during surgery, therapeutic immersive games, cognitive evaluation, medical education, and VR headset customisation for medical applications. These innovations will be accelerated by closing gaps in their value chains and providing customised services for XR solutions, ultimately paving the way for future breakthroughs in the sector.

**Specific objectives of the VR Health Champions project include:**

1. **Investing in five flagship SMEs:** Addressing their technological development, content and skill development, testing and validation, and commercialisation needs and supporting them in achieving market readiness.
2. **Creating interregional innovation value chains:** Building seamless connections around the flagship SMEs by bringing together quadruple helix actors from less and more developed regions, combining specialised knowledge and services.

3. **Expanding the European healthcare XR ecosystem:** Identifying and engaging additional SMEs through cascade funding to contribute to flagship investment cases, fostering cross-sectoral knowledge and technology transfer, and, in a second phase, scouting early-stage healthcare XR start-ups.
4. **Customising advisory services:** Tailoring support for healthcare XR investments to accelerate market uptake, aligning closely with the needs of patients, healthcare providers, payers, and regulatory requirements.
5. **Removing market barriers:** Adapting healthcare innovation services for SMEs to VR/AR, developing the skills of medical professionals and patients, and providing policy feedback to address remaining obstacles.

The project consortium consists of **18 partners** from **8 EU Member States**, embedded within **9 regional ecosystems**. A diverse network of healthcare units, research centres, universities, and industry leaders from **Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Germany** have joined forces to provide targeted support to the five flagship SMEs, driving innovation in medical diagnostics, therapies, surgeries, and training.



Figure 1: Consortium composition

## 2.3. I3 in the VR Health Champions project

VR Health Champions operates within the I3, aligning with its goal of fostering cross-regional collaboration and commercialisation of innovation. By leveraging

interregional cooperation and targeted investment, the project strengthens innovation value chains in the healthcare XR sector, particularly in less-developed regions.

The initiative goes beyond supporting individual SMEs by creating a structured ecosystem for XR healthcare innovation, integrating technology developers, healthcare providers, researchers, and business support organisations. This approach ensures efficient knowledge transfer, regulatory alignment, and market integration, contributing to the broader objectives of I3 in reducing innovation gaps and promoting digital transformation in healthcare across Europe.

## 3. Scope

### 3.1. Objectives

Through the VR Health Champions Open Call 2025, selected external SMEs will be engaged:

- to address specific needs/challenges from Flagship SMEs and to build the interregional value chain around them and;
- to transfer sectoral knowledge/technology to the healthcare VR/AR sector from other industries, building additional interregional value and cross-industrial knowledge transfer channels

### 3.2. The 5 Flagship SMEs' Innovations

#### MedApp

MedApp has developed CarnaLife Holo, an FDA and CE-marked augmented reality software for medical visualization to assist in pre-operative planning and intra-operative guidance during surgical procedures. Doctors can view 3D diagnostic images overlaid on the patient's body and interact with the visuals using hand gestures and voice commands. In this project, MedApp will advance CarnaLife to CarnaLife Holo MedNav, enabling real-time tracking of surgical instruments to provide true augmented reality surgical navigation without external trackers.

#### Lightspace

Lightspace has proprietary volumetric multi-focal display technology that allows a viewer to naturally refocus their eyes within a 3D scene in an augmented reality headset. Their Optical Reality headset aims to solve the vergence accommodation conflict in existing AR headsets. In this project, Lightspace will customize and optimize the Optical Reality headset for specific medical use cases like image-assisted surgery by integrating enhanced optics, sensors and intuitive controls based on clinician needs.

#### MetaSkills



MetaSkills has developed a virtual reality training platform to build interpersonal and communication skills of healthcare professionals through immersive scenarios. Trainees interact with virtual patient avatars to practice skills like dealing with difficult situations, conveying diagnoses or following protocols. The project will enhance realism through improved animation, voice interactions and learning analytics while developing condition-specific training modules.

### **MEEVA**

MEEVA's Zentastic is a VR application combining multiplayer serious games with biometric monitoring to provide therapeutic interventions for teenagers with neurodevelopmental disorders like autism. In the VR world, teens roleplaying through games and adventures to improve social skills, emotional regulation and executive functions. MEEVA will expand the game library, enhance the biometrics system and create a tablet version for gradual skill-building.

### **Virtuleap**

Virtuleap is developing Cogniclear VR, an immersive virtual reality application for self-administered cognitive screening and assessment. It features a battery of gamified tests evaluating domains like memory, attention, reasoning and visuospatial abilities to detect cognitive impairment at an early stage. The project will validate the solution through clinical trials and optimize it for easy deployment across clinical and research settings.

## **3.3. Challenges to be addressed**

Each Applicant SME must identify which specific Flagship SME's challenge their proposal aims to address from the list in Annex 1. A detailed description of the challenges is available in Annex 1. Please note that all deliverables must be submitted during the implementation period, with submission deadlines to be defined during the contracting.

### **3.3.1. Work to be performed by the selected SMEs (expected activities, output), activities to be funded**

The awarded SMEs are expected to:

- Actively collaborate with the specified flagship SME(s) and potentially participate in meetings of the consortium
- Provide the proposed specialized services/expertise to advance the flagship innovation
- Contribute to developing an interregional value chain in the VR/AR healthcare sector

The detailed list of eligible activities and deliverables for each challenge is provided in Annex 1.

### 3.3.2. Timeline

Milestone	Dates
Call opens	14 April 2025
Info session about the call	21 May 2025 at 14:00 CET
Submission deadline	23 June 2025, 23:59 CET
Evaluation	7 July 2025 – 18 July 2025
Hearings and Selection	18 July 2025 – 11 August 2025
Notification of Applicants	18 August 2025
Deadline for appeals	10 calendar days following receiving the letter of notification on the results
Activity closure, reporting	31 March 2026

Table 2: Timeline.

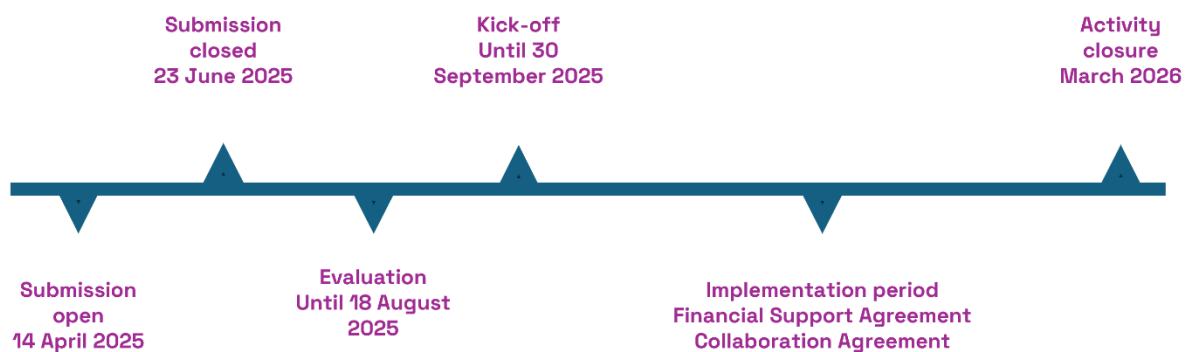


Figure 2: Timeline.

#### Step 1: Online applications

Eligible legal entities must apply online via VR Health Champions website application platform. Applicants must select one of the available challenges (MetaSkills, Lightspace, MedApp, MEEVA, Virtuleap) and justify their selection. The application must include details on the organization's relevant experience in similar projects, the team's qualifications and expertise, a proposed methodology and work plan, and an assessment of feasibility and risk management. Additionally, applicants must specify the resources allocated for implementation, including human resources, equipment, facilities, software tools, and datasets, while demonstrating how these will support the successful delivery of the challenge objectives.

In their application form, applicants describe their service and present the budget they need to implement the foreseen action in their proposal. The proposed budget

will be reviewed during evaluation and the selection process of SMEs will consider value for money.

Submitted documents will be treated as confidential. They will only be accessible to relevant VR Health Champions project staff and/or independent third parties bound by confidentiality provisions.

## **Step 2: Evaluation and selection**

The proposals will be evaluated according to the following process:

### **1. Admissibility and Eligibility Check**

All submitted proposals are initially screened to ensure they meet the admissibility and eligibility requirements specified in Sections 4.1. and 4.2.

### **2. Quality Evaluation (Shortlisting, hearings)**

Proposals that pass the eligibility check undergo a thorough technical assessment, which includes:

- a. Shortlisting – Proposals are evaluated based on predefined selection criteria, assessing their quality, innovation, feasibility, and potential for collaboration.
- b. Hearings - Shortlisted Applicants will be invited for hearings to further discuss their proposals.

### **3. Selection Outcome Notification**

Following the single-stage evaluation process, all applicants receive formal notification regarding the outcome of their application.

### **4. Contracting**

Successful Applicants proceed to the contracting phase, where Financial Support Agreements (**FSA**) are formalized to initiate project implementation.

## **3.4. Duration**

The projects selected through the open call are expected to have a duration of a maximum of 6 months. This timeline allows SMEs to effectively solve the challenges ensuring sufficient time for collaboration, validation, and scaling activities while aligning with the overall objectives and milestones of the VR Health Champions project.

## **3.5. Available budget, form of funding and payment schedule**

The estimated available call budget is 200.000 €. If the evaluation process does not yield sufficiently high-quality proposals, the available funds may remain partially or

fully unallocated, and no winners will be announced. Each successful Applicant SME may receive financial support up to the sum of 40.000 €.

A total of five SMEs, one per challenge, will be selected to receive Financial Support for Third Parties (**FSTP**) under this call for proposals. However, if a suitable SME is not identified for a particular challenge, we reserve the right not to announce a winner.

The financial support to SMEs will be calculated as a maximum 100% of eligible costs, up to 40.000 €, but the applicants may request lower grant rate / grant amount. The approved grant amount to selected SMEs will be provided as a lump sum contribution, subject to proper implementation of the action.

Selected Applicants are entitled to payments as follows:

Payment type	Maximum Amount	Payment schedule
<b>Advance payment</b>	20% of the grant	45 days after the signature of the Financial Support Agreement and Collaboration Agreement
<b>Final payment (payment of balance)</b>	80% of the grant	45 days after the approval of the final report.

Table 3: Payment schedule.

- Payments are conditional upon the achievement of the specified deliverables and milestones. Failure to complete the mandatory deliverables and/or meet the defined milestones may impact payments and could result in the application of the performance rate methodology to the balance payment, as well as potential payment recovery. In case of Applicants subjected to one of the exclusion situations that ban them from receiving European funding, the VR Health Champions consortium reserves the right to withdraw the funding at any step.
- Detailed payment schedule and payment conditions will be settled in the FSA.

## 4. Call conditions

### 4.1. Admissibility

Applications must be submitted electronically through the electronic submission form of VR Health Champions website before the closure of the call. Applications must be submitted in English using the templates and the form provided on the VR Health Champions website. Any potential oral presentations should be delivered proficiently in English.

The structure and presentation must correspond to the instructions given in the templates.

Applications must be readable, accessible, and complete and contain all the requested information and mandatory annexes and supporting documents. All templates must be completed, signed, and submitted in PDF format, except for the Budget Table, which must be submitted in the provided Excel format.

Submissions that are incomplete, late, or made through any other channel (for example, email or on paper) will not be accepted.

In addition to the above admissibility conditions, document, page, or section limits may be applied to parts of applications. The limits are clearly shown in the application templates and in the application form. After the call deadline, parts that exceed the limit and extra documents that are not specified as part of the application, will not be taken into consideration by the evaluators.

**Applicants are invited to submit their applications before the deadline:**

**June 23, 2025, 23:59 CET**

Proposals must be complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents as follows:

- Company Register Certificate: the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).
- SME declaration
- Declaration of Honour
- Ethics and security self-assessment
- Proof of activity of the latest closed financial year (no template provided): balance sheet
- Budget table
- Best value for money justification: payslip

Failure to comply with any of the requirements above will automatically rule the proposal out from the evaluation process. Only the requested documents will be accepted, any other document will not be considered for evaluation.

## **4.2. Eligibility**

In order to participate in the **VR Health Champions Open Call** process, applicants have to comply with the following requirements and key aspects:

- SMEs as defined by the European Commission in **EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC**<sup>1</sup>. Applicants must provide the relevant SME status confirmation template as part of their application.
- Applicants must be legally established in one of the following:
  - A region covered by the VR Health Champions consortium.
  - A less developed region within the European Union, as defined by the European Commission<sup>2</sup>, where GDP per capita is below 75% of the EU average.
  - An outermost region of the European Union, as recognized under Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)<sup>3</sup>.
- Applicants must provide proof of legal establishment and demonstrate at least one (1) year of business or professional activity before the application date.
- Applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) cannot participate in more than one proposal under this call for proposals

#### 4.2.1. Geographic eligibility

##### Regions covered by the VR Health Champions consortium:

- **Belgium:** Brussels Capital region
- **Germany:** Oberbayern region
- **Hungary:** Budapest region
- **Italy:** Trento region
- **Latvia**
- **Poland:** Malopolska region, Lodzkie region
- **Portugal:** Grande Lisboa, Centro region
- **Spain:** Madrid

##### Less developed regions:

- **Belgium:** Prov. Luxembourg (BE)
- **Bulgaria:** Severozapaden, Severen tsentralen, Severoiztochen, Yugoiztochen, Yuzhen tsentralen
- **Croatia:** whole country
- **Czech Republic:** Severozápad, Severovýchod, Střední Morava, Moravskoslezsko
- **Greece:** Thessalia, Ipeiros, Dytiki Ellada, Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki, Voreio Aigaio, Kriti, Kentriki Makedonia, Dytiki Makedonia, Ionia Nisia, Dytiki Ellada, Sterea Ellada, Peloponnisos
- **Hungary:** Pest, Közép-Dunántúl, Nyugat-Dunántúl, Dél-Dunántúl, Észak-Magyarország, Észak-Alföld, Dél-Alföld

<sup>1</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition_en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/how/is-my-region-covered\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/how/is-my-region-covered_en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/outermost-regions.html>

- **Italy:** Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna
- **Latvia:** whole country
- **Lithuania:** Vidurio ir vakarų Lietuvos regionas
- **Poland:** Małopolskie, Śląskie, Zachodniopomorskie, Lubuskie, Opolskie, Kujawsko-pomorskie, Warmińsko-mazurskie, Pomorskie, Łódzkie, Świętokrzyskie, Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Mazowiecki regionalny
- **Portugal:** Norte, Centro, Alentejo
- **Romania:** Centru, Nord-Est, Sud-Est, Sud – Muntenia, Sud-Vest Oltenia, Vest
- **Slovakia:** Západné Slovensko, Stredné Slovensko, Východné Slovensko
- **Slovenia:** Vzhodna Slovenija
- **Spain:** Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Andalucía, Ciudad Autónoma de Ceuta, Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla

**Outermost regions of the European Union (as recognized under Article 349 of the TFEU):**

- **France:** Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion, Saint Martin
- **Portugal:** Azores, Madeira
- **Spain:** Canary Islands

#### **4.2.2. Entities eligible to participate**

The call is open to the following legal entities: SMEs as defined by the European Commission in EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

#### **4.2.3. Eligible activities**

Selected Applicants must spend the financial support on activities detailed in the challenge descriptions in Annex 1.

#### **4.2.4. Eligible costs**

##### **Lump-sum**

VR Health Champions provides lump sum funding under this call, in order to reduce administrative burden, risk of financial error, and complexity. As a result, there won't be thorough cost reporting at the end of the project; instead, a detailed cost estimate and work plan must be included in the proposal, and payments will be made upon the completion of activities.

For lump sum grants proposals, the estimated budget must be described in a detailed budget table. This will be used as a basis for justifying and/or fixing the lump sum amount. As the lump sum must be an approximation of the costs actually incurred, the costs included in this detailed budget table must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see ERDF Interregional Innovation Investments

Instrument (I3) General Model Grant Agreement<sup>4</sup> (**I3 MGA**), Article 6). This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must ensure best value for money (or, if appropriate, the lowest price) and be free from any conflicts of interest. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grants may be reduced (even later on during implementation of the project or after they end).

For a lump sum cost to be eligible, the following criteria must be met:

- the costs must fulfil the general eligibility conditions for the type of cost concerned as described in Article 6.1 of the I3 MGA and listed below;
- the costs must be declared under one of the budget categories listed below;
- the costs must be necessary and justified by the activities proposed;
- the work must be properly implemented by the Recipient<sup>5</sup> in accordance with the work plan annexed to the FSA;
- the deliverables/outputs must be achieved in the period set out in the call and FSA (with the exception of deliverables/outputs relating to the submission of the final periodic report, which may be achieved afterwards).

General eligibility conditions:

- must be actually incurred by the Recipient;
- must be incurred in the project period set out in the FSA;
- must be declared under one of the budget categories listed below;
- must be incurred in connection with the action as described in the proposal and the Annex of the FSA;
- must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the Recipient's accounts in accordance with the accounting standards applicable in the country where the Recipient is established and with the Recipient's usual cost accounting practices;
- must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security.
- must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Eligible cost categories for cost estimation:

- Personnel costs;
- Subcontracting costs;
- Travel and subsistence (on the basis of the costs actually incurred and in line with the Recipient's usual practices on travel);
- Other goods, works and services.

Indirect cost for this project is not eligible. Applicants must ensure that the proposed activities are not already funded under another EU grant. For the list of Ineligible costs and contributions see Article 6.3 of MGA.

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<sup>4</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga\\_i3\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga_i3_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Signatory of Financial Support Agreement



Applicants must propose the estimated lump sum breakdown for the action in the budget template document (per SME beneficiary), based on the expected:

A. Direct Personnel Costs: costs hours of the staff of the Applicant dedicated to actual work under the project.

B. Direct Subcontracting Costs (External expertise) limited to 20% of the total project budget: work carried out by a provider should be limited.

C. Other direct costs: C.1 Travel and subsistence, C. 3 Other goods, works and service (consumables, PR costs, etc.)

The final amount of financial support will depend on the actual extent to which the action is implemented. The estimated budget must be based on expenditures planned to incur during the period of implementation of the project. It will be determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practices of the applicants. It will respect the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

### **4.3. Exclusion**

If an entity falls into one of the exclusion situations described in Articles 136 and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046, it will be excluded from participation at any time (during the evaluation, contracting or implementation phases).<sup>6</sup> Applicants will have to confirm that they comply with the above conditions for receiving EU funding by signing a declaration of honour.

## **5. Evaluation and Selection**

### **5.1. Procedure**

The call is subject to a single-stage submission and two-step evaluation procedure. The selection procedure will be managed by the VR Health Champions consortium. The consortium will oversee and validate the evaluation process, ensuring consistency of the selection process, and will check there is no conflict of interest, fraud, or double funding.

Proposals will first be reviewed for formal requirements, including admissibility and eligibility. The evaluation will then be conducted by an evaluation committee composed of three independent in-house experts, selected based on their expertise and experience. These experts will perform an independent quality evaluation, ensuring that they are not involved in the implementation of the action and have no conflict of interest. The responsibility for the selection process remains with the consortium. The evaluation will be carried out applying the evaluation criteria as described in Section 5.3 and following the established evaluation principles:

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<sup>6</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 [EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046](#).

- **Transparency:** funding decisions are based on clearly described rules and procedures, and all Applicants will receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals.
- **Independence:** evaluators assess proposals on an individual basis. Evaluators represent neither their employer nor their region or country.
- **Impartiality:** all proposals submitted to the Open Call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the Applicants.
- **Objectivity:** evaluators assess each proposal as submitted and not on its potential if certain changes were to be made.
- **Accuracy:** evaluators make their judgment against the official evaluation criteria of the Open Call, and nothing else.
- **Consistency:** evaluators apply the same standard of judgment to all proposals.
- **Confidentiality:** all proposals and related data, knowledge and documents are treated with confidentiality.

The top three highest-quality proposals will be invited to participate in a hearing and project selection process. A jury, composed of subject matter experts from the consortium members, will evaluate the presentations and select the final teams for funding.

Therefore, applying early will allow us to promptly review your submission and potentially schedule your hearing. All applicants will be notified of the final decision in writing within 5 working days of the decision.

If any selected applicants cancel their participation, the next applicants with evaluation scores closest to the selection threshold will be invited to the program. All applicants invited to the hearings will be granted access to the EIT Health Community Platform to support broader ecosystem engagement and cross-border collaboration in healthcare innovation. This enables knowledge exchange, networking, and matchmaking with startups, SMEs, and partners active in VR/AR health.

## **5.2. Admissibility and eligibility check**

All applications will be subject to an admissibility and eligibility check, as outlined in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

- **Admissibility** ensures that applications are complete, submitted via the VR Health Champions website, in English, and in accordance with the admissibility criteria, including required documents and formatting rules.
- **Eligibility** verifies that applicants meet the geographical requirements, qualify as an SME under EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC, provide proof of legal existence, and demonstrate at least one (1) year of business or professional activity before the application date. Additionally, Applicants must not submit more than one proposal under this call and must address one of the five flagship challenges.

Only proposals that pass both checks will proceed to the quality evaluation stage.

### 5.3. Quality evaluation and scoring

Criteria		Sub-Criteria	Max Score
Relevance	Relevance and Experience (25%)	1.1 Relevance of experience to the specific challenge	10
		1.2 Relevance, ambition, and effectiveness of the proposed approach in addressing the specific challenge	10
		1.3 Qualifications and experience of the proposed team	5
Quality	Methodology and Work Plan (25%)	2.1 Quality and clarity of the proposed methodology	15
		2.2 Objectives and extent to which the proposal matches the challenges and specific objectives of the call	10
	Feasibility and Risk Management (25%)	3.1 Approach feasibility within time and budget constraints, Best Value for Money - Justification of budget, cost breakdown, and alignment with market standards.	10
		3.2 Appropriateness of risk management approach	10
		3.3 Resource allocation efficiency	5

Impact	Impact and Value Creation (25%)	4.1 Added value compared to alternative approaches	10
		4.2 Potential for long-term collaboration	5
		4.3 Cross-industry knowledge transfer potential	10
TOTAL	Overall Maximum Score		100

Table 4: Quality evaluation criteria.

### Scoring guide

- 0-1: Does not meet the criterion
- 2-3: Partially meets the criterion
- 4: Meets the criterion
- 5: Exceeds the criterion (for 5-point criteria)
- 6-10: Exceeds the criterion (for 10-point criteria)
- 11-15: Significantly exceeds the criterion (for 15-point criteria)

Evaluation scores will be awarded for each criterion according to the defined scoring guide, ensuring a structured and objective assessment. There are no predefined thresholds; instead, proposals will be ranked based on their total evaluation scores. The overall score will be the average of all the evaluators. Based on the scores, the top 3 proposals with the highest ranking/challenge will be invited to participate in the hearing and project selection phase. For proposals with the same score, the priority order will be determined as follows:

- **Rule 1:** The proposals will be ranked based on their overall score.
- **Rule 2:** In case following Rule 1 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Relevance award criterion.
- **Rule 3:** In case following Rule 2 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Quality award criterion.
- **Rule 4:** In case following Rule 3 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Impact award criterion.
- If a distinction still cannot be made, the panel may decide to further prioritise by considering other factors related to the objectives of the call or to Horizon Europe in general. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

Following the hearings, one SME per challenge will be selected for funding, subject to the available call budget.

Other proposals will be rejected.

## 5.4. Grounds for appeal and appeal procedure

If an Applicant disagrees with the selection decision, they may appeal the process for the selection of their own proposal(s) within 10 calendar days of receiving the result notification.

### Reasons for Appeal:

- a) Process errors;
- b) Technical problems beyond Applicants' control (e.g., the technical failure of the electronic submission system);
- c) Obvious human/mechanical errors made by the VR Health Champions Consortium

### Non-Appealable Reasons:

Scores are awarded during the evaluation process based on various evaluation criteria.

### Appeal process:

Applicants should send their appeals in writing to the following email: [cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu](mailto:cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu) addressing the managing director of InnoStars as soon as they identify an error, but no later than 10 calendar days after the error occurred.

InnoStars assesses the claim and delivers a first response.

If there are grounds for appeal, the staff will attempt to remedy the consequences, e.g., if a technical error of InnoStars prevented the submission of a proposal or application, a late submission may still be accepted as eligible.

## 5.5. Legal and financial set-up of Commitment

Entities that are accepted for funding must execute a set of legal agreements (see the list below). Finalisation of the terms and conditions of such agreements will commence immediately after notification.

Sets of legal documents to be executed:

- The FSA outlines the terms and conditions for receiving financial support from the VR Health Champions project, including the start and end dates of the project, the form of grant, the cost eligibility, milestones, deliverables, reporting and payment arrangements. (See Annex 2)
- Collaboration Agreement (CA) with Flagship SMEs

The standstill period for accepting financial support is 15 days from notification to signature of the FSA.

## 6. Confidentiality and conflict of interest

All proposals submitted through the VR Health Champions website are accessible only to InnoStars e.V. staff members and the VR Health Champions consortium members for the processing of the application.

During the selection process, proposals are shared with assigned evaluators who are employed by the consortium members and are contractually bound to confidentiality. Furthermore, InnoStars may give access to the submitted data to sub-contractors who are tasked with maintaining the application and project monitoring platform. All such third parties are also bound by confidentiality provisions.

To comply with the obligations under the I3 MGA, the European Commission, OLAF, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), and other authorized EU bodies may access relevant project data for audits, reporting, and compliance checks in accordance with Article 25 of the I3 MGA.

Applicants and Recipients of the VR Health Champions Open Call 2025 must avoid any conflict of interest and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, and sound financial management, in accordance with Article 12 of the I3 MGA.

The General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU) guarantees that the processing of data is carried out in compliance with the fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the dignity of the data subject with particular reference to confidentiality, personal identity, and the right to data protection. By applying to the VR Health Champions Open Call, the Applicant agrees on the storage and use of Applicant's personal data for the execution of the VR Health Champions objectives and work plan. The VR Health Champions consortium commits to handling personal data confidentially except for the call results, which will contain the following information:

- Information about successful VR Health Champions projects that will be made publicly available before the end of the project containing: project title, names of project partners and short project description (as provided by the Applicant in the application template).
- Information about the successfully completed VR Health Champions projects that will be publicly available after the completion of the projects: project title, names of project partners, awarded funding, updated short project description and project results (as provided by the project partners in the Final Report).

The processing of data that VR Health Champions intends to carry out will be based on lawfulness and correctness in the full protection of its rights and its confidentiality pursuant to the general principles of the GDPR and its art.24. Therefore, the competitors are informed of the procedure that the data provided by

the Applicants will be treated exclusively with reference to the procedure for which they submitted the documentation.

For any inquiries regarding the processing of personal data, please kindly contact [cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu](mailto:cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu). Applications selection and evaluation will be performed under the appropriate ethical conduct and will respect the confidentiality of the information received.

For selected Applicants who will use Armstrong's software as part of the project implementation, Armstrong's **SAAS Terms of Service**<sup>7</sup> will apply in addition to FSA and CA. These terms govern software access, data handling, and service usage conditions. However, the VR Health Champions consortium ensures that all personal data processing under FSA and CA complies with GDPR and the applicable European data protection regulations. In case of conflicts between the SAAS Terms and GDPR requirements under the VR Health Champions grant, the GDPR framework will prevail.

## 7. Intellectual Property Rights rules

The Recipient and the Flagship SME shall sign the CA. Given the nature of the call, the results of the challenge will be obtained by the Flagship SME.

'Results' means any tangible or intangible effect of the action, such as data, know-how or information, whatever its form or nature, whether it can be protected, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.

The Granting Authority and the VR Health Champions consortium have the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the action and materials and documents received from the Recipients (notably summaries for publication, deliverables, as well as any other material, such as pictures or audio-visual material, in paper or electronic form) for policy, information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes – during the action or afterwards.).

For more information, please see Article 16 of I3 MGA.

For dissemination and use of results generated through the financial support from the VR Health Champions Open Call, the recipients must credit the VR Health Champions project with the proper citation and appearance of the VR Health Champions logo and EU flag (emblem), including the proper EU flag and citation throughout the project: "This project has received funding under the European Union's Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument (I3) under grant agreement **101161333**."

## 8. Gender equality

VR Health Champions seeks gender balance. Therefore, applicants are invited to take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://vrhc.mybertie.ai/terms-of-use>



implementation of the action. Applicants must aim for better gender balance at all levels of the personnel assigned to the action, including supervisory and managerial levels to the full extent possible

## 9. Communication and dissemination

All external communication from awarded sub-projects related to activities within VR Health Champions project have to mention that support has been received from the European Commission I3 fund for the development of the product/service. The communication must show the VR Health Champions project and the European Commission logos (these will be provided). Moreover, in case of digital network communication, VR Health Champions should be tagged. More detailed instructions will be provided.

The outcome of the call must be published on the Recipient' websites, including a description of the selected projects, award dates, project durations, and (where applicable, and in compliance with GDPR) final recipient legal names and countries. Communication activities of the Recipients related to the action (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.) must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement.

The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text. Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g. of Recipients or sponsors), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For more information, please see Article 17 of I3 MGA.

## 10. Right to ex-post monitoring

The Granting Authority may — during the action or afterwards — check the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Grant Agreement, including assessing costs and contributions, deliverables, and reports.

If needed, the Granting Authority may be assisted by independent, outside experts. If it uses outside experts, the Recipient concerned will be informed and have the right to object on grounds of commercial confidentiality or conflict of interest. The Recipient concerned must cooperate diligently and provide — within the deadline requested — any information and data including financial statements, contracts, and supporting documentation, in addition to deliverables and reports already submitted (including information on the use of resources). The Granting Authority may request Recipients to provide such information to it directly.

For more information, please see Article 25 of I3 MGA.



## 11. Where to get help?

If you have any questions or require any further information about the call, please contact us by email at:

To support the preparation of the call, a webinar will be held on: 21 May at 14:00 CET

## 12. Disclaimer

**Purpose:** This text explains the VR Health Champions Open Call for proposals for information purposes only. No rights can be claimed on the basis of this document. Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) of the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor EISMEA and the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

**Mistakes or inconsistencies:** The VR Health Champions consortium is not responsible for any mistakes or misinterpretations that this text may cause. In the case of inconsistencies, the VR Health Champions consortium will determine the steps to be taken, in cooperation with the Applicant concerned.

**Modification of the Terms and Conditions:** The VR Health Champions consortium partners, represented by the Coordinator are entitled to modify these Terms and Conditions (including re-opening/closing dates of the calls, in case of non-granting of funds and/or early depletion of the available funds, or as they see fit) at any time without notice. The current Terms and Conditions will be provided on the website always mentioning the version number. The most recent version of the Terms and Conditions of the VR Health Champions Open Call applies and prevails.

**Consequential damages:** In no event shall either party be liable to the other or any of its affiliates for any consequential, incidental, indirect, special, punitive, or exemplary damages (including, without limitation, lost profits, business, or goodwill) suffered or incurred by such other party or its affiliates in connection with this founding scheme, even if advised of the possibility of such damages.

The VR Health Champions consortium reserves the right to ask the Applicant for any document proving their existence, business or SME status during the process of selection and after, and to accept or reject their proposal.

## 13. Annexes

### Annex 1 - Challenge Descriptions

#### MetaSkills

- Solution: AI-Assisted VR Training for Medical Professionals' Soft Skills

### **AREA: Clinical Implementation & Business Viability**

Successful commercial implementation of AI-driven VR soft skills training in healthcare requires deep market knowledge, clear insights into procurement processes, and practical validation through pilot deployments in healthcare institutions. This business-oriented focus is crucial to accelerate market entry and drive wide-scale adoption in European healthcare settings. Additionally, successful scale-up depends on identifying and engaging potential commercial partners—such as healthcare training companies—who can integrate or resell the MetaSkills solution.

### **CHALLENGE: Feasibility Study, Market Strategy & Pilot Implementation for AI-Assisted VR Soft Skills Training in EU Healthcare Institutions**

Although AI-assisted VR soft skills training presents significant advantages, there is a clear need for targeted market research and pilot validation to facilitate rapid adoption in European healthcare institutions. Current knowledge gaps include detailed procurement pathways, pricing sensitivity, and real-world usability and acceptance. Furthermore, MetaSkills requires support in identifying and qualifying potential distribution partners and resellers in the healthcare training ecosystem, as well as building a partnership strategy aligned with its commercialization goals.

**Unmet need:** Comprehensive market-oriented analysis and pilot deployment including:

- Detailed mapping and procurement process analysis in selected EU healthcare markets
- Comprehensive buyer persona and stakeholder analysis (including non-VR competitors)
- Competitive benchmarking beyond VR solutions (including traditional training methods)
- Pricing strategy evaluation and identification of optimal revenue models (subscription, licensing, service agreements)
- Strategic recommendations for rapid commercial scalability
- Identification of potential distribution and training partners who could commercialize the MetaSkills solution
  - Evaluation of partnership models (e.g. white-labeling, reseller agreements, channel sales)
- Real-world pilot implementation with structured feedback analysis

#### **Challenge Details**

- Challenge Type: Healthcare market entry research, business analysis, and pilot implementation

- Applicant Contributions: Market research expertise, stakeholder analysis capabilities, and practical deployment experience
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

The project will deliver a precise roadmap for rapid market entry, focusing specifically on procurement processes, key stakeholders, and competitive positioning across selected European healthcare markets. It will also validate potential business and pricing models suitable for rapid market penetration.

A key objective will also be to identify and engage potential commercial partners, such as healthcare training providers or edtech distributors, who can support broader dissemination and integration of MetaSkills' solution.

A strategically chosen pilot implementation in at least one healthcare institution will provide essential real-world evidence of product acceptance, usability, and commercial viability. Results will be compiled into actionable deliverables, enabling MetaSkills to confidently approach prospective healthcare customers and commercialisation partners, and accelerate their commercialization efforts. This project will enable MetaSkills to establish a strong foothold in European healthcare institutions, creating a clear pathway for adoption and commercialization.

### Deliverables

- **D1: Procurement Process Analysis Report** - Detailed mapping of healthcare procurement pathways, decision-makers, and criteria
- **D2: Buyer Persona & Stakeholder Analysis** - Identification and profiling of key decision-makers and competitors beyond VR solutions, defining clear buyer profiles and market entry points
- **D3: Competitive Benchmarking and Positioning Report** - Comprehensive analysis of competitive solutions (including traditional training methods), identifying strategic market positioning
- **D4: Business and Pricing Model Validation Report** - Recommended business, pricing, and financing models tailored to European healthcare settings
- **D4a: Reseller & Partnership Strategy Report** - Identification and evaluation of potential commercial partners (e.g. healthcare training companies), recommended partnership models (e.g. licensing, reselling), and a shortlist of priority partner leads
- **D5: Pilot Implementation & Results Report** - Real-world pilot deployment results with structured feedback from healthcare professionals, insights, and practical recommendations for commercial rollout. Pilot deployment will be conducted in at least one selected healthcare institution within the target EU market(s). Pilot implementation will be executed within the available

budget, prioritizing key insights on adoption, usability, and business viability. If necessary, scope adjustments will be made to ensure feasibility within the allocated resources.

### Eligible Activities

- **Innovation services for the development of the business investment interconnecting value chains** - Involving extensive stakeholder interviews, detailed market and procurement research to identify viable commercial entry points. Stakeholder insights will be gathered through structured interviews, surveys, and targeted workshops with healthcare administrators and decision-makers.
- **Activities directly aiming at internationalising a product, service or process that involve adaptation to the target market** - Adaptation of VR soft skills training to specific European markets
- **Advisory support for investment (developing or implementing interregional business and "go to market" investment plans in specific value chains)** - Developing comprehensive go-to-market strategies and business model validation tailored to European healthcare procurement environments
- **Activities focused on identifying and establishing partnerships with commercial resellers, training providers, or other distribution channels that can facilitate scalable market entry and long-term business sustainability**

### Lightspace

- Solution: Optical Reality headset customized for medical use (Augmented Reality near-eye display)

AREA: XR World-observing sensors in the medical setting – especially considering surgical navigation – an Augmented Reality near-eye display system has to accurately sense the surroundings. The tasks include object tracking, marker or anchor tracking, hand tracking, depth sensing among other possible tasks.

Often it is impossible to do everything by regular stereoscopic pair of cameras. Thus, multiple camera sensors are required to adequately meet surgical navigation AR requirements. This in turn imposes a challenge of fitting multiple camera modules within a limited footprint and power consumption constraints, while ensuring superb multi-modal sensing quality.

### CHALLENGE: AR-Specific camera/sensor integration with focus on depth sensing

Standard camera modules have substantial footprint and power requirements – limiting the number of modules that can be effectively fitted within the head-mounted display. What is needed is camera modules that work with visible spectrum,

are small in size preferably tiny – with integrated optics and with correspondingly low power consumption. Particularly critical is direct depth sensing technology suitable for surgical environments.

**Unmet need:** AR-specific world-sensing sensor architecture with primary focus on:

- Direct depth sensing module (not Lidar/IR based as open tissue can interfere with IR radiation and provide erroneous readings)
- Multi camera module configurations for integration (either RGB or monochrome with world sensing, hand tracking)
- Electronics integration pathway
- Software/firmware integration approach
- Validation prototype at least on subassembly level (a laboratory prototype)

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Technical integration requiring expertise in sensor technologies and embedded systems
- Applicant Contributions: Expertise in camera modules, depth sensing technologies, and/or optical systems integration
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will produce a comprehensive analysis of world-, including direct depth-sensing technologies specifically suitable for surgical AR applications, accompanied by a detailed integration architecture for implementing these technologies within Lightspace's headset. Through careful evaluation and initial bench testing, the project will identify optimal sensor configurations that meet the stringent requirements of surgical environments while maintaining minimal footprint and power consumption. The deliverables will provide Lightspace with clear technical specifications, integration pathways for both electronics and software, and preliminary performance benchmarks that demonstrate the suitability of the recommended solutions for surgical navigation applications. These results will collectively enable Lightspace to enhance the tracking and sensing capabilities of their AR headset, reduce its form factor and power consumption, and improve overall system reliability in surgical settings. The findings will be technically validated with both Lightspace and MedApp teams, establishing a strong foundation for further development and comprehensive validation in actual surgical scenarios.

## Deliverables

- **D1: Depth Sensing Technology Assessment** - Analysis of suitable depth sensing technologies for surgical AR applications, with secondary consideration of supporting camera modules
- **D2: Integration Architecture Document** - Detailed technical architecture for integrating selected sensors with hardware and software systems
- **D3: A laboratory prototype** – a physical sample – evaluation kit enabling assessment of interoperability of sensors with the main system and limited software integration for comprehensive tests
- **D4: Preliminary Testing Results and Future Validation Recommendations** - Initial bench testing results and recommendations for comprehensive validation in surgical scenarios

## Eligible Activities

- **Activities directly aiming at producing plans, arrangements, designs or physical demonstrators for new, altered or improved products, processes or services** - Creating integration architecture for sensor modules in AR headsets for surgical navigation
- **Adaptation of existing prototypes and tailoring them to the companies' needs** - Evaluating and adapting existing depth sensing technologies to meet the specific requirements of surgical AR applications
- **Activities connecting or making complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities** - Utilizing available testing resources to conduct initial performance assessment of sensor configurations

## MedApp

- **Solution: CarnaLife Holo MedNav** - AR surgical navigation system (Software as a Medical Device) integrated with Head-Mounted Display for intraoperative support and guidance

## AREA: XR CLINICAL SAFETY

XR technologies in surgical settings introduce unique safety considerations that traditional risk assessment frameworks fail to address adequately. As these technologies become more prevalent in high-stakes medical environments like operating rooms, specialized safety protocols are essential.

## CHALLENGE: Developing a Clinical Risk Assessment Framework for XR in Surgical Navigation

Traditional clinical risk assessment methodologies don't adequately account for the unique risks associated with XR technologies in surgical environments, potentially creating safety gaps in critical procedures where perception accuracy is vital.

**Unmet need:** XR-specific surgical risk assessment framework with priority focus on:

- Mixed reality perception risk factors (depth perception errors, cognitive overload)
- Spatial registration safety parameters for surgical navigation

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Framework development requiring expertise in clinical risk management and XR technologies
- Applicant Contributions: Clinical risk management expertise, human factors engineering for XR, and regulatory compliance knowledge
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: €30,000 - €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will deliver a specialized risk assessment framework tailored to the unique challenges of XR technologies in surgical environments, with particular focus on mixed reality perception factors and spatial registration safety parameters. The framework will be accompanied by practical implementation guidelines that surgical teams can readily apply to enhance safety protocols for AR-guided procedures. By identifying and analyzing the priority risk factors specific to XR surgical applications, the project will provide MedApp with clear risk mitigation strategies that align with ISO 14971 and other relevant regulatory standards. These deliverables will collectively strengthen MedApp's regulatory position by addressing safety gaps that traditional assessment methodologies fail to capture, accelerate their path to regulatory approval by proactively addressing XR-specific concerns, and increase surgeon confidence in adopting their AR navigation technology. The framework and guidelines will undergo expert review by clinical and regulatory stakeholders and will be theoretically applied to representative surgical scenarios to ensure their practical relevance and effectiveness, creating a solid foundation for MedApp's continued development of safe and effective AR surgical navigation solutions.

### Deliverables

- **D1: XR-Specific Surgical Risk Factor Analysis** - Identification and analysis of priority risk factors associated with XR technologies in surgical environments, with focus on perception and spatial registration



- **D2: Surgical XR Safety Protocol Framework** - Structured framework for managing identified XR-specific risks during surgical procedures
- **D3: Risk Mitigation Implementation Guide** - Practical guidance for implementing mitigation strategies for the priority risk areas identified in D1, with alignment to ISO 14971

### Eligible Activities

- **Test beds and complementary activities needed to improve regulations, standards and/or to remove barriers and bottlenecks to innovation** - Developing specialized risk assessment methodologies for surgical XR applications that address gaps in current standards
- **Activities directly aiming at producing plans, arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services** - Creating implementation protocols for ensuring safety in AR-guided surgical navigation systems
- **Innovation services for the development of the business investment interconnecting value chains** - Facilitating integration of safety protocols across the surgical technology ecosystem including imaging systems, navigation technology, and display systems

### MEEVA

- Solution: Zentastic VR for therapy of teens with neurodevelopmental disorders

### AREA: AI Integration in XR Digital Therapeutics

Extended Reality (XR) Digital Therapeutics have shown significant potential for treating mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions, but their effectiveness can be dramatically enhanced through intelligent virtual agents that can personalize interactions and facilitate therapeutic processes.

### CHALLENGE: AI-based Virtual Agents (NPC) in XR Digital Therapeutics

Current XR therapeutic applications lack sophisticated, customizable AI virtual agents that can effectively address specific mental health conditions including autism, mild cognitive impairments, depression and social isolation - limiting personalization and therapeutic effectiveness.

### Unmet need: AI virtual agents framework including:

- Idea screening and evaluation methodology for therapeutic AI agents
- System and module requirement specifications for different mental health applications



- Implementation approach for AI agents in XR therapeutic environments

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Technical research and specification requiring expertise in AI and XR for mental health applications
- Applicant Contributions: AI development expertise, mental health domain knowledge, and XR integration capabilities
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will produce a comprehensive analytical foundation for implementing AI virtual agents in therapeutic XR environments, specifically tailored for neurodevelopmental disorders. The research will yield a detailed assessment of AI virtual agent alternatives with clear recommendations on approaches best suited for different mental health conditions, alongside a technical blueprint that outlines system architecture and module specifications for practical implementation.

These deliverables will provide MEEVA with established criteria for evaluating the therapeutic effectiveness of various AI agent designs, enabling them to make informed decisions about technology selection and integration pathways. The resulting framework will empower MEEVA to enhance the personalization of their XR therapeutic experiences, improve user engagement and therapeutic outcomes, and establish an advanced technical foundation for developing next-generation digital therapeutics. Throughout the process, both technical and clinical experts will review the findings to ensure alignment with therapeutic objectives, guaranteeing that the technological solutions recommended are not only technically sound but also clinically appropriate for the sensitive context of mental health interventions.

### Deliverables

- **D1: AI Virtual Agent Assessment Report** - Comprehensive analysis of AI virtual agent alternatives for XR therapeutic applications, focusing on suitability for neurodevelopmental disorders
- **D2: Technical Requirements Specification** - Detailed technical requirements and system architecture for implementing AI agents in therapeutic XR environments
- **D3: Implementation Framework** - Structured implementation approach with evaluation criteria for selecting appropriate AI agent technologies in mental health applications

### Eligible Activities

- **Activities directly aiming at producing plans, arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services** - Developing technical specifications and implementation approaches for AI-enhanced virtual agents in therapeutic VR environments
- **Adaptation of existing prototypes and tailoring them to the companies' needs** - Evaluating and adapting existing AI virtual agents technologies to meet the specific requirements of therapeutic applications in mental health
- **Activities connecting or making complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities** - Designing approaches to leverage existing AI technologies and platforms for therapeutic applications in XR environments

### **Virtuleap**

- Solution: Cognitive assessment tool in virtual reality for healthcare applications

### **AREA: REGULATORY COMPLIANCE & CE MARKING**

Bringing innovative VR-based cognitive assessment tools to European healthcare markets requires navigating complex regulatory frameworks. CE marking for such novel technologies demands specialized expertise combining VR technology understanding with deep regulatory knowledge.

### **CHALLENGE: VR-Specific Technical Documentation Framework Development**

Virtual reality cognitive assessment tools face unique regulatory hurdles in the EU market. Standard regulatory approaches often don't adequately address VR-specific considerations, creating uncertainty in documentation requirements and compliance pathways.

**Unmet need:** A structured methodology for preparing VR-specific technical documentation elements for CE Marking, with focus on:

- Preparation for Notified Body submission and regulatory approval, including:
- Device description and specification
- Information to be supplied by the manufacturer (label + IFU)
- EU Declaration of Conformity
- Design and manufacturing information
- General safety and performance requirements including the identification of applicable EU regulations and harmonized standards
- Benefit-risk analysis and risk management
- Pre-clinical data – Needs identification (Biocompatibility; Physical, chemical and microbiological characterisation; Electrical safety and electromagnetic

compatibility; Software Verification and Validation; Stability, including shelf life; Usability)

- Additional information for specific cases (for example: Devices to be connected to other device(s) in order to operate as intended)
- Clinical evaluation
- Post-market surveillance and vigilance strategy

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Regulatory documentation framework requiring expertise in CE marking for VR medical technologies
- Applicant Contributions: Regulatory affairs expertise with focus on software medical devices and VR technology understanding
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will deliver a specialized technical documentation framework tailored to the unique regulatory challenges of VR cognitive assessment tools, providing Virtuleap with practical templates and guidance for CE marking compliance. The framework will include a detailed analysis of VR-specific regulatory considerations with emphasis on software validation, usability factors, and benefit-risk assessment methodologies particularly relevant to cognitive assessment in virtual environments. The deliverables will enable Virtuleap to clearly understand the regulatory requirements unique to their technology, implement a structured approach for addressing priority documentation elements, and establish a solid foundation for comprehensive regulatory submissions. By addressing the regulatory challenges specific to VR cognitive assessment tools, this project will accelerate Virtuleap's regulatory planning process, reduce uncertainty around novel technology aspects, and enhance their ability to navigate the complex CE marking pathway with confidence. The framework and templates will undergo review by regulatory experts familiar with medical software and will be assessed by Virtuleap's product development team to ensure practical applicability and alignment with their specific technology implementation.

### Deliverables

- **D1: VR-Specific Regulatory Analysis** - Analysis of CE marking requirements with emphasis on aspects unique to VR cognitive assessment tools, including key regulatory challenges
- **D2: Priority Documentation Templates** - Templates and guidance for addressing the most critical and VR-specific documentation elements

(software validation, usability, benefit-risk analysis, General Safety Performance Requirements, and Clinical Evaluation)

- **D3: VR Regulatory Guidance Document** - Practical guidance document outlining approaches for addressing VR-specific regulatory challenges

#### Eligible Activities

- **Test beds and complementary activities needed to improve regulations, standards and/or to remove barriers and bottlenecks to innovation** - Developing specialized approaches to address regulatory challenges unique to VR cognitive assessment tools
- **Advisory support for investment** - Providing expert guidance on regulatory compliance pathways to enable market entry for innovative VR healthcare solutions
- **Activities bringing innovative ideas and new products to the market** - Creating documentation frameworks specifically designed to facilitate regulatory approval for novel VR cognitive assessment technologies

## **Annex 2 - Financial Support Agreement template**





# VR Health Champions Open Call 2025

## Call text

This project has received funding from the European Union's I3,  
under the Grant Agreement No.  
101161333.

**Project acronym:** VR Health Champions

**Grant Agreement Number:** 101161333

**Project full title:** We Are Health Champions - Disrupting the European Healthcare  
Systems with Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality Applications

## History of changes

Version	Publication date	Changes
1.0	14 April 2025	Initial version
2.0	17 April 2025	<b>First amendment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.2.1 Geographic eligibility: List of eligible regions updated</li> </ul>
3.0	12 May 2025	<b>Second amendment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.3 Quality evaluation and scoring: The scoring procedure used to rank proposals and select the top three for the hearing and project selection phase has been updated.</li> </ul>

Any changes to this call are listed in the table above.

## List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
I3	Interregional Innovation Investment
ERDF	European Research and Development Fund
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
VR	Virtual Reality
XR	Extended Reality
AR	Augmented Reality
FSA	Financial Support Agreement
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
MGA	Model Grant Agreement
CA	Collaboration Agreement

**EISMEA**

**European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency**

## Table of Content

1. Call summary .....	5
2. Background .....	6
2.1. The Interregional Innovation Instrument (I3) Instrument .....	6
2.2. VR Health Champions project .....	6
2.3. I3 in the VR Health Champions project.....	7
3. Scope .....	8
3.1. Objectives .....	8
3.2. The 5 Flagship SMEs' Innovations .....	8
3.3. Challenges to be addressed.....	9
3.3.1. Work to be performed by the selected SMEs (expected activities, output), activities to be funded .....	9
3.3.2. Timeline .....	10
3.4. Duration.....	11
3.5. Available budget, form of funding and payment schedule .....	11
4. Call conditions .....	12
4.1. Admissibility.....	12
4.2. Eligibility .....	13
4.2.1. Geographic eligibility .....	14
4.2.2. Entities eligible to participate.....	15
4.2.3. Eligible activities.....	15
4.2.4. Eligible costs.....	15
4.3. Exclusion .....	17
5. Evaluation and Selection .....	17
5.1. Procedure .....	17
5.2. Admissibility and eligibility check .....	18
5.3. Quality evaluation and scoring .....	19
5.4. Grounds for appeal and appeal procedure .....	21



5.5. Legal and financial set-up of Commitment .....	21
6. Confidentiality and conflict of interest.....	22
7. Intellectual Property Rights rules .....	23
8. Gender equality .....	23
9. Communication and dissemination.....	24
10. Right to ex-post monitoring.....	24
11. Where to get help? .....	25
12. Disclaimer.....	25
13. Annexes.....	25
Annex 1 - Challenge Descriptions .....	25
MetaSkills.....	25
Lightspace.....	28
MedApp .....	30
MEEVA.....	32
Virtuleap.....	34
Annex 2 - Financial Support Agreement template .....	37

## List of Tables

**Table 1** – Call summary

**Table 2** - Timeline

**Table 3** – Payment schedule

**Table 4** – Quality evaluation criteria

## List of Figures

**Figure 1** – Consortium composition

**Figure 2** - Timeline



## 1. Call summary

Main Features	
<b>Why should you apply</b>	Apply to the VR Health Champions Open Call 2025 to receive up to €40,000 lump sum funding while addressing a real-world challenge defined by the project's five Flagship SMEs. Collaborate directly with these leading XR healthcare innovators, gain visibility within a high-impact European ecosystem—including Medtronic, XR4Europe, and EIT Health—and contribute to building interregional value chains.
<b>Who can apply</b>	SMEs as <a href="#">defined by the European Commission</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legally established in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A region covered by the VRHC consortium</li> <li>A less developed region in the EU</li> <li>An outermost region of the EU</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Key dates</b>	Call launch: 14/04/2025 Call close: 23/06/2025
<b>Budget and maximum funding</b>	The estimated available call budget is 200.000 €.  Each successful Applicant SME may receive financial support up to the sum of 40.000 € in the form of a lump sum grant.
<b>Link to the submission portal</b>	<a href="https://vrhealthchampions.eu/get-involved/">https://vrhealthchampions.eu/get-involved/</a>
<b>Documents to be submitted</b>	Applications must be submitted electronically through the application form on the VR Health Champions website Proposals must be complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Company Register Certificate: the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).</li> <li>SME declaration</li> <li>Declaration of Honour</li> <li>Ethics and security self-assessment</li> <li>Proof of activity of the latest closed financial year: balance sheet (no template provided)</li> <li>Budget table</li> <li>Best value for money justification: payslip</li> </ul>
<b>List of documents to take into consideration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VR Health Champions website application platform</li> <li>The present call document and its Annexes</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	Relevance and Experience (25%) Methodology and Work Plan (25%) Feasibility and Risk Management (25%) Impact and Value Creation (25%)
<b>Contact details</b>	<a href="mailto:cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu">cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu</a>

Table 1: Call summary

## 2. Background

### 2.1. The Interregional Innovation Instrument (I3) Instrument

The Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument addresses the innovation divide in Europe by supporting interregional collaboration. As part of the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF), it supports interregional innovation projects in their commercialisation and scale-up phases and brings them to the investment level. It uses smart specialisation as a coordination principle and empowers ecosystems in less-developed regions.

### 2.2. VR Health Champions project

**VR Health Champions** is a three-year project, co-funded by the I3 under the ERDF. The project aims to overcome market barriers for healthcare Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) applications in less-developed European regions. It addresses gaps in the value chains of five flagship SMEs and, by leveraging these experiences, customise innovation support services for other SMEs in the healthcare VR/AR sector.

The project focuses on five flagship SMEs—**Lightspace**, **MEEVA**, **MedApp**, **Metaskills**, and **Virtuleap**—at the forefront of this transformation. The goal is to increase their Technology Readiness Level (TRL) from TRL 6 to TRL 9 for VR/AR innovations in medical navigation during surgery, therapeutic immersive games, cognitive evaluation, medical education, and VR headset customisation for medical applications. These innovations will be accelerated by closing gaps in their value chains and providing customised services for XR solutions, ultimately paving the way for future breakthroughs in the sector.

**Specific objectives of the VR Health Champions project include:**

1. **Investing in five flagship SMEs:** Addressing their technological development, content and skill development, testing and validation, and commercialisation needs and supporting them in achieving market readiness.
2. **Creating interregional innovation value chains:** Building seamless connections around the flagship SMEs by bringing together quadruple helix actors from less and more developed regions, combining specialised knowledge and services.

3. **Expanding the European healthcare XR ecosystem:** Identifying and engaging additional SMEs through cascade funding to contribute to flagship investment cases, fostering cross-sectoral knowledge and technology transfer, and, in a second phase, scouting early-stage healthcare XR start-ups.
4. **Customising advisory services:** Tailoring support for healthcare XR investments to accelerate market uptake, aligning closely with the needs of patients, healthcare providers, payers, and regulatory requirements.
5. **Removing market barriers:** Adapting healthcare innovation services for SMEs to VR/AR, developing the skills of medical professionals and patients, and providing policy feedback to address remaining obstacles.

The project consortium consists of **18 partners** from **8 EU Member States**, embedded within **9 regional ecosystems**. A diverse network of healthcare units, research centres, universities, and industry leaders from **Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Germany** have joined forces to provide targeted support to the five flagship SMEs, driving innovation in medical diagnostics, therapies, surgeries, and training.



Figure 1: Consortium composition

## 2.3. I3 in the VR Health Champions project

VR Health Champions operates within the I3, aligning with its goal of fostering cross-regional collaboration and commercialisation of innovation. By leveraging

interregional cooperation and targeted investment, the project strengthens innovation value chains in the healthcare XR sector, particularly in less-developed regions.

The initiative goes beyond supporting individual SMEs by creating a structured ecosystem for XR healthcare innovation, integrating technology developers, healthcare providers, researchers, and business support organisations. This approach ensures efficient knowledge transfer, regulatory alignment, and market integration, contributing to the broader objectives of I3 in reducing innovation gaps and promoting digital transformation in healthcare across Europe.

## 3. Scope

### 3.1. Objectives

Through the VR Health Champions Open Call 2025, selected external SMEs will be engaged:

- to address specific needs/challenges from Flagship SMEs and to build the interregional value chain around them and;
- to transfer sectoral knowledge/technology to the healthcare VR/AR sector from other industries, building additional interregional value and cross-industrial knowledge transfer channels

### 3.2. The 5 Flagship SMEs' Innovations

#### MedApp

MedApp has developed CarnaLife Holo, an FDA and CE-marked augmented reality software for medical visualization to assist in pre-operative planning and intra-operative guidance during surgical procedures. Doctors can view 3D diagnostic images overlaid on the patient's body and interact with the visuals using hand gestures and voice commands. In this project, MedApp will advance CarnaLife to CarnaLife Holo MedNav, enabling real-time tracking of surgical instruments to provide true augmented reality surgical navigation without external trackers.

#### Lightspace

Lightspace has proprietary volumetric multi-focal display technology that allows a viewer to naturally refocus their eyes within a 3D scene in an augmented reality headset. Their Optical Reality headset aims to solve the vergence accommodation conflict in existing AR headsets. In this project, Lightspace will customize and optimize the Optical Reality headset for specific medical use cases like image-assisted surgery by integrating enhanced optics, sensors and intuitive controls based on clinician needs.

#### MetaSkills

MetaSkills has developed a virtual reality training platform to build interpersonal and communication skills of healthcare professionals through immersive scenarios. Trainees interact with virtual patient avatars to practice skills like dealing with difficult situations, conveying diagnoses or following protocols. The project will enhance realism through improved animation, voice interactions and learning analytics while developing condition-specific training modules.

### **MEEVA**

MEEVA's Zentastic is a VR application combining multiplayer serious games with biometric monitoring to provide therapeutic interventions for teenagers with neurodevelopmental disorders like autism. In the VR world, teens roleplaying through games and adventures to improve social skills, emotional regulation and executive functions. MEEVA will expand the game library, enhance the biometrics system and create a tablet version for gradual skill-building.

### **Virtuleap**

Virtuleap is developing Cogniclear VR, an immersive virtual reality application for self-administered cognitive screening and assessment. It features a battery of gamified tests evaluating domains like memory, attention, reasoning and visuospatial abilities to detect cognitive impairment at an early stage. The project will validate the solution through clinical trials and optimize it for easy deployment across clinical and research settings.

## **3.3. Challenges to be addressed**

Each Applicant SME must identify which specific Flagship SME's challenge their proposal aims to address from the list in Annex 1. A detailed description of the challenges is available in Annex 1. Please note that all deliverables must be submitted during the implementation period, with submission deadlines to be defined during the contracting.

### **3.3.1. Work to be performed by the selected SMEs (expected activities, output), activities to be funded**

The awarded SMEs are expected to:

- Actively collaborate with the specified flagship SME(s) and potentially participate in meetings of the consortium
- Provide the proposed specialized services/expertise to advance the flagship innovation
- Contribute to developing an interregional value chain in the VR/AR healthcare sector

The detailed list of eligible activities and deliverables for each challenge is provided in Annex 1.

### 3.3.2. Timeline

Milestone	Dates
Call opens	14 April 2025
Info session about the call	21 May 2025 at 14:00 CET
Submission deadline	23 June 2025, 23:59 CET
Evaluation	7 July 2025 – 18 July 2025
Hearings and Selection	18 July 2025 – 11 August 2025
Notification of Applicants	18 August 2025
Deadline for appeals	10 calendar days following receiving the letter of notification on the results
Activity closure, reporting	31 March 2026

Table 2: Timeline.

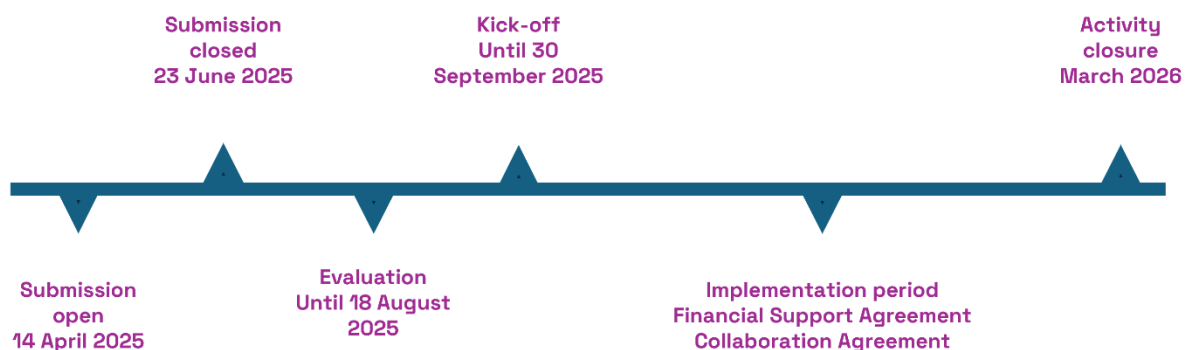


Figure 2: Timeline.

#### Step 1: Online applications

Eligible legal entities must apply online via VR Health Champions website application platform. Applicants must select one of the available challenges (MetaSkills, Lightspace, MedApp, MEEVA, Virtuleap) and justify their selection. The application must include details on the organization's relevant experience in similar projects, the team's qualifications and expertise, a proposed methodology and work plan, and an assessment of feasibility and risk management. Additionally, applicants must specify the resources allocated for implementation, including human resources, equipment, facilities, software tools, and datasets, while demonstrating how these will support the successful delivery of the challenge objectives.

In their application form, applicants describe their service and present the budget they need to implement the foreseen action in their proposal. The proposed budget



will be reviewed during evaluation and the selection process of SMEs will consider value for money.

Submitted documents will be treated as confidential. They will only be accessible to relevant VR Health Champions project staff and/or independent third parties bound by confidentiality provisions.

## **Step 2: Evaluation and selection**

The proposals will be evaluated according to the following process:

### **1. Admissibility and Eligibility Check**

All submitted proposals are initially screened to ensure they meet the admissibility and eligibility requirements specified in Sections 4.1. and 4.2.

### **2. Quality Evaluation (Shortlisting, hearings)**

Proposals that pass the eligibility check undergo a thorough technical assessment, which includes:

- a. Shortlisting – Proposals are evaluated based on predefined selection criteria, assessing their quality, innovation, feasibility, and potential for collaboration.
- b. Hearings - Shortlisted Applicants will be invited for hearings to further discuss their proposals.

### **3. Selection Outcome Notification**

Following the single-stage evaluation process, all applicants receive formal notification regarding the outcome of their application.

### **4. Contracting**

Successful Applicants proceed to the contracting phase, where Financial Support Agreements (**FSA**) are formalized to initiate project implementation.

## **3.4. Duration**

The projects selected through the open call are expected to have a duration of a maximum of 6 months. This timeline allows SMEs to effectively solve the challenges ensuring sufficient time for collaboration, validation, and scaling activities while aligning with the overall objectives and milestones of the VR Health Champions project.

## **3.5. Available budget, form of funding and payment schedule**

The estimated available call budget is 200.000 €. If the evaluation process does not yield sufficiently high-quality proposals, the available funds may remain partially or

fully unallocated, and no winners will be announced. Each successful Applicant SME may receive financial support up to the sum of 40.000 €.

A total of five SMEs, one per challenge, will be selected to receive Financial Support for Third Parties (**FSTP**) under this call for proposals. However, if a suitable SME is not identified for a particular challenge, we reserve the right not to announce a winner.

The financial support to SMEs will be calculated as a maximum 100% of eligible costs, up to 40.000 €, but the applicants may request lower grant rate / grant amount. The approved grant amount to selected SMEs will be provided as a lump sum contribution, subject to proper implementation of the action.

Selected Applicants are entitled to payments as follows:

Payment type	Maximum Amount	Payment schedule
<b>Advance payment</b>	20% of the grant	45 days after the signature of the Financial Support Agreement and Collaboration Agreement
<b>Final payment (payment of balance)</b>	80% of the grant	45 days after the approval of the final report.

Table 3: Payment schedule.

- Payments are conditional upon the achievement of the specified deliverables and milestones. Failure to complete the mandatory deliverables and/or meet the defined milestones may impact payments and could result in the application of the performance rate methodology to the balance payment, as well as potential payment recovery. In case of Applicants subjected to one of the exclusion situations that ban them from receiving European funding, the VR Health Champions consortium reserves the right to withdraw the funding at any step.
- Detailed payment schedule and payment conditions will be settled in the FSA.

## 4. Call conditions

### 4.1. Admissibility

Applications must be submitted electronically through the electronic submission form of VR Health Champions website before the closure of the call. Applications must be submitted in English using the templates and the form provided on the VR Health Champions website. Any potential oral presentations should be delivered proficiently in English.

The structure and presentation must correspond to the instructions given in the templates.

Applications must be readable, accessible, and complete and contain all the requested information and mandatory annexes and supporting documents. All templates must be completed, signed, and submitted in PDF format, except for the Budget Table, which must be submitted in the provided Excel format.

Submissions that are incomplete, late, or made through any other channel (for example, email or on paper) will not be accepted.

In addition to the above admissibility conditions, document, page, or section limits may be applied to parts of applications. The limits are clearly shown in the application templates and in the application form. After the call deadline, parts that exceed the limit and extra documents that are not specified as part of the application, will not be taken into consideration by the evaluators.

**Applicants are invited to submit their applications before the deadline:**

**June 23, 2025, 23:59 CET**

Proposals must be complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents as follows:

- Company Register Certificate: the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).
- SME declaration
- Declaration of Honour
- Ethics and security self-assessment
- Proof of activity of the latest closed financial year (no template provided): balance sheet
- Budget table
- Best value for money justification: payslip

Failure to comply with any of the requirements above will automatically rule the proposal out from the evaluation process. Only the requested documents will be accepted, any other document will not be considered for evaluation.

## **4.2. Eligibility**

In order to participate in the **VR Health Champions Open Call** process, applicants have to comply with the following requirements and key aspects:

- SMEs as defined by the European Commission in **EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC**<sup>1</sup>. Applicants must provide the relevant SME status confirmation template as part of their application.
- Applicants must be legally established in one of the following:
  - A region covered by the VR Health Champions consortium.
  - A less developed region within the European Union, as defined by the European Commission<sup>2</sup>, where GDP per capita is below 75% of the EU average.
  - An outermost region of the European Union, as recognized under Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)<sup>3</sup>.
- Applicants must provide proof of legal establishment and demonstrate at least one (1) year of business or professional activity before the application date.
- Applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) cannot participate in more than one proposal under this call for proposals

#### 4.2.1. Geographic eligibility

##### Regions covered by the VR Health Champions consortium:

- **Belgium:** Brussels Capital region
- **Germany:** Oberbayern region
- **Hungary:** Budapest region
- **Italy:** Trento region
- **Latvia**
- **Poland:** Malopolska region, Lodzkie region
- **Portugal:** Grande Lisboa, Centro region
- **Spain:** Madrid

##### Less developed regions:

- **Belgium:** Prov. Luxembourg (BE)
- **Bulgaria:** Severozapaden, Severen tsentralen, Severoiztochen, Yugoiztochen, Yuzhen tsentralen
- **Croatia:** whole country
- **Czech Republic:** Severozápad, Severovýchod, Střední Morava, Moravskoslezsko
- **Greece:** Thessalia, Ipeiros, Dytiki Ellada, Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki, Voreio Aigaio, Kriti, Kentriki Makedonia, Dytiki Makedonia, Ionia Nisia, Dytiki Ellada, Sterea Ellada, Peloponnisos
- **Hungary:** Pest, Közép-Dunántúl, Nyugat-Dunántúl, Dél-Dunántúl, Észak-Magyarország, Észak-Alföld, Dél-Alföld

<sup>1</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-fundamentals/sme-definition_en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/how/is-my-region-covered\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/how/is-my-region-covered_en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/outermost-regions.html>

- **Italy:** Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna
- **Latvia:** whole country
- **Lithuania:** Vidurio ir vakarų Lietuvos regionas
- **Poland:** Małopolskie, Śląskie, Zachodniopomorskie, Lubuskie, Opolskie, Kujawsko-pomorskie, Warmińsko-mazurskie, Pomorskie, Łódzkie, Świętokrzyskie, Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Mazowiecki regionalny
- **Portugal:** Norte, Centro, Alentejo
- **Romania:** Centru, Nord-Est, Sud-Est, Sud – Muntenia, Sud-Vest Oltenia, Vest
- **Slovakia:** Západné Slovensko, Stredné Slovensko, Východné Slovensko
- **Slovenia:** Vzhodna Slovenija
- **Spain:** Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Andalucía, Ciudad Autónoma de Ceuta, Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla

**Outermost regions of the European Union (as recognized under Article 349 of the TFEU):**

- **France:** Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion, Saint Martin
- **Portugal:** Azores, Madeira
- **Spain:** Canary Islands

#### **4.2.2. Entities eligible to participate**

The call is open to the following legal entities: SMEs as defined by the European Commission in EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

#### **4.2.3. Eligible activities**

Selected Applicants must spend the financial support on activities detailed in the challenge descriptions in Annex 1.

#### **4.2.4. Eligible costs**

##### **Lump-sum**

VR Health Champions provides lump sum funding under this call, in order to reduce administrative burden, risk of financial error, and complexity. As a result, there won't be thorough cost reporting at the end of the project; instead, a detailed cost estimate and work plan must be included in the proposal, and payments will be made upon the completion of activities.

For lump sum grants proposals, the estimated budget must be described in a detailed budget table. This will be used as a basis for justifying and/or fixing the lump sum amount. As the lump sum must be an approximation of the costs actually incurred, the costs included in this detailed budget table must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see ERDF Interregional Innovation Investments

Instrument (I3) General Model Grant Agreement<sup>4</sup> (**I3 MGA**), Article 6). This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must ensure best value for money (or, if appropriate, the lowest price) and be free from any conflicts of interest. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grants may be reduced (even later on during implementation of the project or after they end).

For a lump sum cost to be eligible, the following criteria must be met:

- the costs must fulfil the general eligibility conditions for the type of cost concerned as described in Article 6.1 of the I3 MGA and listed below;
- the costs must be declared under one of the budget categories listed below;
- the costs must be necessary and justified by the activities proposed;
- the work must be properly implemented by the Recipient<sup>5</sup> in accordance with the work plan annexed to the FSA;
- the deliverables/outputs must be achieved in the period set out in the call and FSA (with the exception of deliverables/outputs relating to the submission of the final periodic report, which may be achieved afterwards).

General eligibility conditions:

- must be actually incurred by the Recipient;
- must be incurred in the project period set out in the FSA;
- must be declared under one of the budget categories listed below;
- must be incurred in connection with the action as described in the proposal and the Annex of the FSA;
- must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the Recipient's accounts in accordance with the accounting standards applicable in the country where the Recipient is established and with the Recipient's usual cost accounting practices;
- must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security.
- must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Eligible cost categories for cost estimation:

- Personnel costs;
- Subcontracting costs;
- Travel and subsistence (on the basis of the costs actually incurred and in line with the Recipient's usual practices on travel);
- Other goods, works and services.

Indirect cost for this project is not eligible. Applicants must ensure that the proposed activities are not already funded under another EU grant. For the list of Ineligible costs and contributions see Article 6.3 of MGA.

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<sup>4</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga\\_i3\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga_i3_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Signatory of Financial Support Agreement

Applicants must propose the estimated lump sum breakdown for the action in the budget template document (per SME beneficiary), based on the expected:

A. Direct Personnel Costs: costs hours of the staff of the Applicant dedicated to actual work under the project.

B. Direct Subcontracting Costs (External expertise) limited to 20% of the total project budget: work carried out by a provider should be limited.

C. Other direct costs: C.1 Travel and subsistence, C. 3 Other goods, works and service (consumables, PR costs, etc.)

The final amount of financial support will depend on the actual extent to which the action is implemented. The estimated budget must be based on expenditures planned to incur during the period of implementation of the project. It will be determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practices of the applicants. It will respect the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

### **4.3. Exclusion**

If an entity falls into one of the exclusion situations described in Articles 136 and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046, it will be excluded from participation at any time (during the evaluation, contracting or implementation phases).<sup>6</sup> Applicants will have to confirm that they comply with the above conditions for receiving EU funding by signing a declaration of honour.

## **5. Evaluation and Selection**

### **5.1. Procedure**

The call is subject to a single-stage submission and two-step evaluation procedure. The selection procedure will be managed by the VR Health Champions consortium. The consortium will oversee and validate the evaluation process, ensuring consistency of the selection process, and will check there is no conflict of interest, fraud, or double funding.

Proposals will first be reviewed for formal requirements, including admissibility and eligibility. The evaluation will then be conducted by an evaluation committee composed of three independent in-house experts, selected based on their expertise and experience. These experts will perform an independent quality evaluation, ensuring that they are not involved in the implementation of the action and have no conflict of interest. The responsibility for the selection process remains with the consortium. The evaluation will be carried out applying the evaluation criteria as described in Section 5.3 and following the established evaluation principles:

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<sup>6</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 [EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046](#).



- **Transparency:** funding decisions are based on clearly described rules and procedures, and all Applicants will receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals.
- **Independence:** evaluators assess proposals on an individual basis. Evaluators represent neither their employer nor their region or country.
- **Impartiality:** all proposals submitted to the Open Call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the Applicants.
- **Objectivity:** evaluators assess each proposal as submitted and not on its potential if certain changes were to be made.
- **Accuracy:** evaluators make their judgment against the official evaluation criteria of the Open Call, and nothing else.
- **Consistency:** evaluators apply the same standard of judgment to all proposals.
- **Confidentiality:** all proposals and related data, knowledge and documents are treated with confidentiality.

The top three highest-quality proposals will be invited to participate in a hearing and project selection process. A jury, composed of subject matter experts from the consortium members, will evaluate the presentations and select the final teams for funding.

Therefore, applying early will allow us to promptly review your submission and potentially schedule your hearing. All applicants will be notified of the final decision in writing within 5 working days of the decision.

If any selected applicants cancel their participation, the next applicants with evaluation scores closest to the selection threshold will be invited to the program. All applicants invited to the hearings will be granted access to the EIT Health Community Platform to support broader ecosystem engagement and cross-border collaboration in healthcare innovation. This enables knowledge exchange, networking, and matchmaking with startups, SMEs, and partners active in VR/AR health.

## **5.2. Admissibility and eligibility check**

All applications will be subject to an admissibility and eligibility check, as outlined in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

- **Admissibility** ensures that applications are complete, submitted via the VR Health Champions website, in English, and in accordance with the admissibility criteria, including required documents and formatting rules.
- **Eligibility** verifies that applicants meet the geographical requirements, qualify as an SME under EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC, provide proof of legal existence, and demonstrate at least one (1) year of business or professional activity before the application date. Additionally, Applicants must not submit more than one proposal under this call and must address one of the five flagship challenges.



Only proposals that pass both checks will proceed to the quality evaluation stage.

### 5.3. Quality evaluation and scoring

Criteria		Sub-Criteria	Max Score
Relevance	Relevance and Experience (25%)	1.1 Relevance of experience to the specific challenge	10
		1.2 Relevance, ambition, and effectiveness of the proposed approach in addressing the specific challenge	10
		1.3 Qualifications and experience of the proposed team	5
Quality	Methodology and Work Plan (25%)	2.1 Quality and clarity of the proposed methodology	15
		2.2 Objectives and extent to which the proposal matches the challenges and specific objectives of the call	10
	Feasibility and Risk Management (25%)	3.1 Approach feasibility within time and budget constraints, Best Value for Money - Justification of budget, cost breakdown, and alignment with market standards.	10
		3.2 Appropriateness of risk management approach	10
		3.3 Resource allocation efficiency	5

Impact	Impact and Value Creation (25%)	4.1 Added value compared to alternative approaches	10
		4.2 Potential for long-term collaboration	5
		4.3 Cross-industry knowledge transfer potential	10
TOTAL	Overall Maximum Score		100

Table 4: Quality evaluation criteria.

### Scoring guide

- 0-1: Does not meet the criterion
- 2-3: Partially meets the criterion
- 4: Meets the criterion
- 5: Exceeds the criterion (for 5-point criteria)
- 6-10: Exceeds the criterion (for 10-point criteria)
- 11-15: Significantly exceeds the criterion (for 15-point criteria)

Evaluation scores will be awarded for each criterion according to the defined scoring guide, ensuring a structured and objective assessment. There are no predefined thresholds; instead, proposals will be ranked based on their total evaluation scores. The overall score will be the average of all the evaluators. Based on the scores, the top 3 proposals with the highest ranking/challenge will be invited to participate in the hearing and project selection phase. For proposals with the same score, the priority order will be determined as follows:

- **Rule 1:** The proposals will be ranked based on their overall score.
- **Rule 2:** In case following Rule 1 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Relevance award criterion.
- **Rule 3:** In case following Rule 2 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Impact award criterion.
- **Rule 4:** In case following Rule 3 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Impact award criterion.
- If a distinction still cannot be made, the panel may decide to further prioritise by considering other factors related to the objectives of the call or to Horizon Europe in general. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

Following the hearings, one SME per challenge will be selected for funding, subject to the available call budget.

Other proposals will be rejected.

## 5.4. Grounds for appeal and appeal procedure

If an Applicant disagrees with the selection decision, they may appeal the process for the selection of their own proposal(s) within 10 calendar days of receiving the result notification.

### Reasons for Appeal:

- a) Process errors;
- b) Technical problems beyond Applicants' control (e.g., the technical failure of the electronic submission system);
- c) Obvious human/mechanical errors made by the VR Health Champions Consortium

### Non-Appealable Reasons:

Scores are awarded during the evaluation process based on various evaluation criteria.

### Appeal process:

Applicants should send their appeals in writing to the following email: [cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu](mailto:cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu) addressing the managing director of InnoStars as soon as they identify an error, but no later than 10 calendar days after the error occurred.

InnoStars assesses the claim and delivers a first response.

If there are grounds for appeal, the staff will attempt to remedy the consequences, e.g., if a technical error of InnoStars prevented the submission of a proposal or application, a late submission may still be accepted as eligible.

## 5.5. Legal and financial set-up of Commitment

Entities that are accepted for funding must execute a set of legal agreements (see the list below). Finalisation of the terms and conditions of such agreements will commence immediately after notification.

Sets of legal documents to be executed:

- The FSA outlines the terms and conditions for receiving financial support from the VR Health Champions project, including the start and end dates of the project, the form of grant, the cost eligibility, milestones, deliverables, reporting and payment arrangements. (See Annex 2)
- Collaboration Agreement (CA) with Flagship SMEs

The standstill period for accepting financial support is 15 days from notification to signature of the FSA.

## 6. Confidentiality and conflict of interest

All proposals submitted through the VR Health Champions website are accessible only to InnoStars e.V. staff members and the VR Health Champions consortium members for the processing of the application.

During the selection process, proposals are shared with assigned evaluators who are employed by the consortium members and are contractually bound to confidentiality. Furthermore, InnoStars may give access to the submitted data to sub-contractors who are tasked with maintaining the application and project monitoring platform. All such third parties are also bound by confidentiality provisions.

To comply with the obligations under the I3 MGA, the European Commission, OLAF, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), and other authorized EU bodies may access relevant project data for audits, reporting, and compliance checks in accordance with Article 25 of the I3 MGA.

Applicants and Recipients of the VR Health Champions Open Call 2025 must avoid any conflict of interest and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, and sound financial management, in accordance with Article 12 of the I3 MGA.

The General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU) guarantees that the processing of data is carried out in compliance with the fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the dignity of the data subject with particular reference to confidentiality, personal identity, and the right to data protection. By applying to the VR Health Champions Open Call, the Applicant agrees on the storage and use of Applicant's personal data for the execution of the VR Health Champions objectives and work plan. The VR Health Champions consortium commits to handling personal data confidentially except for the call results, which will contain the following information:

- Information about successful VR Health Champions projects that will be made publicly available before the end of the project containing: project title, names of project partners and short project description (as provided by the Applicant in the application template).
- Information about the successfully completed VR Health Champions projects that will be publicly available after the completion of the projects: project title, names of project partners, awarded funding, updated short project description and project results (as provided by the project partners in the Final Report).

The processing of data that VR Health Champions intends to carry out will be based on lawfulness and correctness in the full protection of its rights and its confidentiality pursuant to the general principles of the GDPR and its art.24. Therefore, the competitors are informed of the procedure that the data provided by

the Applicants will be treated exclusively with reference to the procedure for which they submitted the documentation.

For any inquiries regarding the processing of personal data, please kindly contact [cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu](mailto:cascadecall@vrhealthchampions.eu). Applications selection and evaluation will be performed under the appropriate ethical conduct and will respect the confidentiality of the information received.

For selected Applicants who will use Armstrong's software as part of the project implementation, Armstrong's **SAAS Terms of Service**<sup>7</sup> will apply in addition to FSA and CA. These terms govern software access, data handling, and service usage conditions. However, the VR Health Champions consortium ensures that all personal data processing under FSA and CA complies with GDPR and the applicable European data protection regulations. In case of conflicts between the SAAS Terms and GDPR requirements under the VR Health Champions grant, the GDPR framework will prevail.

## 7. Intellectual Property Rights rules

The Recipient and the Flagship SME shall sign the CA. Given the nature of the call, the results of the challenge will be obtained by the Flagship SME.

'Results' means any tangible or intangible effect of the action, such as data, know-how or information, whatever its form or nature, whether it can be protected, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.

The Granting Authority and the VR Health Champions consortium have the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the action and materials and documents received from the Recipients (notably summaries for publication, deliverables, as well as any other material, such as pictures or audio-visual material, in paper or electronic form) for policy, information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes – during the action or afterwards.).

For more information, please see Article 16 of I3 MGA.

For dissemination and use of results generated through the financial support from the VR Health Champions Open Call, the recipients must credit the VR Health Champions project with the proper citation and appearance of the VR Health Champions logo and EU flag (emblem), including the proper EU flag and citation throughout the project: "This project has received funding under the European Union's Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument (I3) under grant agreement **101161333**."

## 8. Gender equality

VR Health Champions seeks gender balance. Therefore, applicants are invited to take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://vrhc.mybertie.ai/terms-of-use>

implementation of the action. Applicants must aim for better gender balance at all levels of the personnel assigned to the action, including supervisory and managerial levels to the full extent possible

## 9. Communication and dissemination

All external communication from awarded sub-projects related to activities within VR Health Champions project have to mention that support has been received from the European Commission I3 fund for the development of the product/service. The communication must show the VR Health Champions project and the European Commission logos (these will be provided). Moreover, in case of digital network communication, VR Health Champions should be tagged. More detailed instructions will be provided.

The outcome of the call must be published on the Recipient' websites, including a description of the selected projects, award dates, project durations, and (where applicable, and in compliance with GDPR) final recipient legal names and countries. Communication activities of the Recipients related to the action (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.) must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement.

The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text. Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g. of Recipients or sponsors), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For more information, please see Article 17 of I3 MGA.

## 10. Right to ex-post monitoring

The Granting Authority may — during the action or afterwards — check the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Grant Agreement, including assessing costs and contributions, deliverables, and reports.

If needed, the Granting Authority may be assisted by independent, outside experts. If it uses outside experts, the Recipient concerned will be informed and have the right to object on grounds of commercial confidentiality or conflict of interest. The Recipient concerned must cooperate diligently and provide — within the deadline requested — any information and data including financial statements, contracts, and supporting documentation, in addition to deliverables and reports already submitted (including information on the use of resources). The Granting Authority may request Recipients to provide such information to it directly.

For more information, please see Article 25 of I3 MGA.

## 11. Where to get help?

If you have any questions or require any further information about the call, please contact us by email at:

To support the preparation of the call, a webinar will be held on: 21 May at 14:00 CET

## 12. Disclaimer

**Purpose:** This text explains the VR Health Champions Open Call for proposals for information purposes only. No rights can be claimed on the basis of this document. Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) of the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor EISMEA and the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

**Mistakes or inconsistencies:** The VR Health Champions consortium is not responsible for any mistakes or misinterpretations that this text may cause. In the case of inconsistencies, the VR Health Champions consortium will determine the steps to be taken, in cooperation with the Applicant concerned.

**Modification of the Terms and Conditions:** The VR Health Champions consortium partners, represented by the Coordinator are entitled to modify these Terms and Conditions (including re-opening/closing dates of the calls, in case of non-granting of funds and/or early depletion of the available funds, or as they see fit) at any time without notice. The current Terms and Conditions will be provided on the website always mentioning the version number. The most recent version of the Terms and Conditions of the VR Health Champions Open Call applies and prevails.

**Consequential damages:** In no event shall either party be liable to the other or any of its affiliates for any consequential, incidental, indirect, special, punitive, or exemplary damages (including, without limitation, lost profits, business, or goodwill) suffered or incurred by such other party or its affiliates in connection with this founding scheme, even if advised of the possibility of such damages.

The VR Health Champions consortium reserves the right to ask the Applicant for any document proving their existence, business or SME status during the process of selection and after, and to accept or reject their proposal.

## 13. Annexes

### Annex 1 - Challenge Descriptions

#### MetaSkills

- Solution: AI-Assisted VR Training for Medical Professionals' Soft Skills



### **AREA: Clinical Implementation & Business Viability**

Successful commercial implementation of AI-driven VR soft skills training in healthcare requires deep market knowledge, clear insights into procurement processes, and practical validation through pilot deployments in healthcare institutions. This business-oriented focus is crucial to accelerate market entry and drive wide-scale adoption in European healthcare settings. Additionally, successful scale-up depends on identifying and engaging potential commercial partners—such as healthcare training companies—who can integrate or resell the MetaSkills solution.

### **CHALLENGE: Feasibility Study, Market Strategy & Pilot Implementation for AI-Assisted VR Soft Skills Training in EU Healthcare Institutions**

Although AI-assisted VR soft skills training presents significant advantages, there is a clear need for targeted market research and pilot validation to facilitate rapid adoption in European healthcare institutions. Current knowledge gaps include detailed procurement pathways, pricing sensitivity, and real-world usability and acceptance. Furthermore, MetaSkills requires support in identifying and qualifying potential distribution partners and resellers in the healthcare training ecosystem, as well as building a partnership strategy aligned with its commercialization goals.

**Unmet need:** Comprehensive market-oriented analysis and pilot deployment including:

- Detailed mapping and procurement process analysis in selected EU healthcare markets
- Comprehensive buyer persona and stakeholder analysis (including non-VR competitors)
- Competitive benchmarking beyond VR solutions (including traditional training methods)
- Pricing strategy evaluation and identification of optimal revenue models (subscription, licensing, service agreements)
- Strategic recommendations for rapid commercial scalability
- Identification of potential distribution and training partners who could commercialize the MetaSkills solution
  - Evaluation of partnership models (e.g. white-labeling, reseller agreements, channel sales)
- Real-world pilot implementation with structured feedback analysis

### **Challenge Details**

- Challenge Type: Healthcare market entry research, business analysis, and pilot implementation



- Applicant Contributions: Market research expertise, stakeholder analysis capabilities, and practical deployment experience
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

The project will deliver a precise roadmap for rapid market entry, focusing specifically on procurement processes, key stakeholders, and competitive positioning across selected European healthcare markets. It will also validate potential business and pricing models suitable for rapid market penetration.

A key objective will also be to identify and engage potential commercial partners, such as healthcare training providers or edtech distributors, who can support broader dissemination and integration of MetaSkills' solution.

A strategically chosen pilot implementation in at least one healthcare institution will provide essential real-world evidence of product acceptance, usability, and commercial viability. Results will be compiled into actionable deliverables, enabling MetaSkills to confidently approach prospective healthcare customers and commercialisation partners, and accelerate their commercialization efforts. This project will enable MetaSkills to establish a strong foothold in European healthcare institutions, creating a clear pathway for adoption and commercialization.

### Deliverables

- **D1: Procurement Process Analysis Report** - Detailed mapping of healthcare procurement pathways, decision-makers, and criteria
- **D2: Buyer Persona & Stakeholder Analysis** - Identification and profiling of key decision-makers and competitors beyond VR solutions, defining clear buyer profiles and market entry points
- **D3: Competitive Benchmarking and Positioning Report** - Comprehensive analysis of competitive solutions (including traditional training methods), identifying strategic market positioning
- **D4: Business and Pricing Model Validation Report** - Recommended business, pricing, and financing models tailored to European healthcare settings
- **D4a: Reseller & Partnership Strategy Report** - Identification and evaluation of potential commercial partners (e.g. healthcare training companies), recommended partnership models (e.g. licensing, reselling), and a shortlist of priority partner leads
- **D5: Pilot Implementation & Results Report** - Real-world pilot deployment results with structured feedback from healthcare professionals, insights, and practical recommendations for commercial rollout. Pilot deployment will be conducted in at least one selected healthcare institution within the target EU market(s). Pilot implementation will be executed within the available

budget, prioritizing key insights on adoption, usability, and business viability. If necessary, scope adjustments will be made to ensure feasibility within the allocated resources.

### Eligible Activities

- **Innovation services for the development of the business investment interconnecting value chains** - Involving extensive stakeholder interviews, detailed market and procurement research to identify viable commercial entry points. Stakeholder insights will be gathered through structured interviews, surveys, and targeted workshops with healthcare administrators and decision-makers.
- **Activities directly aiming at internationalising a product, service or process that involve adaptation to the target market** - Adaptation of VR soft skills training to specific European markets
- **Advisory support for investment (developing or implementing interregional business and "go to market" investment plans in specific value chains)** - Developing comprehensive go-to-market strategies and business model validation tailored to European healthcare procurement environments
- **Activities focused on identifying and establishing partnerships with commercial resellers, training providers, or other distribution channels that can facilitate scalable market entry and long-term business sustainability**

### Lightspace

- Solution: Optical Reality headset customized for medical use (Augmented Reality near-eye display)

AREA: XR World-observing sensors in the medical setting – especially considering surgical navigation – an Augmented Reality near-eye display system has to accurately sense the surroundings. The tasks include object tracking, marker or anchor tracking, hand tracking, depth sensing among other possible tasks.

Often it is impossible to do everything by regular stereoscopic pair of cameras. Thus, multiple camera sensors are required to adequately meet surgical navigation AR requirements. This in turn imposes a challenge of fitting multiple camera modules within a limited footprint and power consumption constraints, while ensuring superb multi-modal sensing quality.

### CHALLENGE: AR-Specific camera/sensor integration with focus on depth sensing

Standard camera modules have substantial footprint and power requirements – limiting the number of modules that can be effectively fitted within the head-mounted display. What is needed is camera modules that work with visible spectrum,

are small in size preferably tiny – with integrated optics and with correspondingly low power consumption. Particularly critical is direct depth sensing technology suitable for surgical environments.

**Unmet need:** AR-specific world-sensing sensor architecture with primary focus on:

- Direct depth sensing module (not Lidar/IR based as open tissue can interfere with IR radiation and provide erroneous readings)
- Multi camera module configurations for integration (either RGB or monochrome with world sensing, hand tracking)
- Electronics integration pathway
- Software/firmware integration approach
- Validation prototype at least on subassembly level (a laboratory prototype)

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Technical integration requiring expertise in sensor technologies and embedded systems
- Applicant Contributions: Expertise in camera modules, depth sensing technologies, and/or optical systems integration
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will produce a comprehensive analysis of world-, including direct depth-sensing technologies specifically suitable for surgical AR applications, accompanied by a detailed integration architecture for implementing these technologies within Lightspace's headset. Through careful evaluation and initial bench testing, the project will identify optimal sensor configurations that meet the stringent requirements of surgical environments while maintaining minimal footprint and power consumption. The deliverables will provide Lightspace with clear technical specifications, integration pathways for both electronics and software, and preliminary performance benchmarks that demonstrate the suitability of the recommended solutions for surgical navigation applications. These results will collectively enable Lightspace to enhance the tracking and sensing capabilities of their AR headset, reduce its form factor and power consumption, and improve overall system reliability in surgical settings. The findings will be technically validated with both Lightspace and MedApp teams, establishing a strong foundation for further development and comprehensive validation in actual surgical scenarios.

## Deliverables

- **D1: Depth Sensing Technology Assessment** - Analysis of suitable depth sensing technologies for surgical AR applications, with secondary consideration of supporting camera modules
- **D2: Integration Architecture Document** - Detailed technical architecture for integrating selected sensors with hardware and software systems
- **D3: A laboratory prototype** – a physical sample – evaluation kit enabling assessment of interoperability of sensors with the main system and limited software integration for comprehensive tests
- **D4: Preliminary Testing Results and Future Validation Recommendations** - Initial bench testing results and recommendations for comprehensive validation in surgical scenarios

## Eligible Activities

- **Activities directly aiming at producing plans, arrangements, designs or physical demonstrators for new, altered or improved products, processes or services** - Creating integration architecture for sensor modules in AR headsets for surgical navigation
- **Adaptation of existing prototypes and tailoring them to the companies' needs** - Evaluating and adapting existing depth sensing technologies to meet the specific requirements of surgical AR applications
- **Activities connecting or making complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities** - Utilizing available testing resources to conduct initial performance assessment of sensor configurations

## MedApp

- **Solution: CarnaLife Holo MedNav** - AR surgical navigation system (Software as a Medical Device) integrated with Head-Mounted Display for intraoperative support and guidance

## AREA: XR CLINICAL SAFETY

XR technologies in surgical settings introduce unique safety considerations that traditional risk assessment frameworks fail to address adequately. As these technologies become more prevalent in high-stakes medical environments like operating rooms, specialized safety protocols are essential.

## CHALLENGE: Developing a Clinical Risk Assessment Framework for XR in Surgical Navigation

Traditional clinical risk assessment methodologies don't adequately account for the unique risks associated with XR technologies in surgical environments, potentially creating safety gaps in critical procedures where perception accuracy is vital.

**Unmet need:** XR-specific surgical risk assessment framework with priority focus on:

- Mixed reality perception risk factors (depth perception errors, cognitive overload)
- Spatial registration safety parameters for surgical navigation

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Framework development requiring expertise in clinical risk management and XR technologies
- Applicant Contributions: Clinical risk management expertise, human factors engineering for XR, and regulatory compliance knowledge
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: €30,000 - €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will deliver a specialized risk assessment framework tailored to the unique challenges of XR technologies in surgical environments, with particular focus on mixed reality perception factors and spatial registration safety parameters. The framework will be accompanied by practical implementation guidelines that surgical teams can readily apply to enhance safety protocols for AR-guided procedures. By identifying and analyzing the priority risk factors specific to XR surgical applications, the project will provide MedApp with clear risk mitigation strategies that align with ISO 14971 and other relevant regulatory standards. These deliverables will collectively strengthen MedApp's regulatory position by addressing safety gaps that traditional assessment methodologies fail to capture, accelerate their path to regulatory approval by proactively addressing XR-specific concerns, and increase surgeon confidence in adopting their AR navigation technology. The framework and guidelines will undergo expert review by clinical and regulatory stakeholders and will be theoretically applied to representative surgical scenarios to ensure their practical relevance and effectiveness, creating a solid foundation for MedApp's continued development of safe and effective AR surgical navigation solutions.

### Deliverables

- **D1: XR-Specific Surgical Risk Factor Analysis** - Identification and analysis of priority risk factors associated with XR technologies in surgical environments, with focus on perception and spatial registration

- **D2: Surgical XR Safety Protocol Framework** - Structured framework for managing identified XR-specific risks during surgical procedures
- **D3: Risk Mitigation Implementation Guide** - Practical guidance for implementing mitigation strategies for the priority risk areas identified in D1, with alignment to ISO 14971

### Eligible Activities

- **Test beds and complementary activities needed to improve regulations, standards and/or to remove barriers and bottlenecks to innovation** - Developing specialized risk assessment methodologies for surgical XR applications that address gaps in current standards
- **Activities directly aiming at producing plans, arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services** - Creating implementation protocols for ensuring safety in AR-guided surgical navigation systems
- **Innovation services for the development of the business investment interconnecting value chains** - Facilitating integration of safety protocols across the surgical technology ecosystem including imaging systems, navigation technology, and display systems

### MEEVA

- Solution: Zentastic VR for therapy of teens with neurodevelopmental disorders

### AREA: AI Integration in XR Digital Therapeutics

Extended Reality (XR) Digital Therapeutics have shown significant potential for treating mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions, but their effectiveness can be dramatically enhanced through intelligent virtual agents that can personalize interactions and facilitate therapeutic processes.

### CHALLENGE: AI-based Virtual Agents (NPC) in XR Digital Therapeutics

Current XR therapeutic applications lack sophisticated, customizable AI virtual agents that can effectively address specific mental health conditions including autism, mild cognitive impairments, depression and social isolation - limiting personalization and therapeutic effectiveness.

### Unmet need: AI virtual agents framework including:

- Idea screening and evaluation methodology for therapeutic AI agents
- System and module requirement specifications for different mental health applications

- Implementation approach for AI agents in XR therapeutic environments

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Technical research and specification requiring expertise in AI and XR for mental health applications
- Applicant Contributions: AI development expertise, mental health domain knowledge, and XR integration capabilities
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will produce a comprehensive analytical foundation for implementing AI virtual agents in therapeutic XR environments, specifically tailored for neurodevelopmental disorders. The research will yield a detailed assessment of AI virtual agent alternatives with clear recommendations on approaches best suited for different mental health conditions, alongside a technical blueprint that outlines system architecture and module specifications for practical implementation.

These deliverables will provide MEEVA with established criteria for evaluating the therapeutic effectiveness of various AI agent designs, enabling them to make informed decisions about technology selection and integration pathways. The resulting framework will empower MEEVA to enhance the personalization of their XR therapeutic experiences, improve user engagement and therapeutic outcomes, and establish an advanced technical foundation for developing next-generation digital therapeutics. Throughout the process, both technical and clinical experts will review the findings to ensure alignment with therapeutic objectives, guaranteeing that the technological solutions recommended are not only technically sound but also clinically appropriate for the sensitive context of mental health interventions.

### Deliverables

- **D1: AI Virtual Agent Assessment Report** - Comprehensive analysis of AI virtual agent alternatives for XR therapeutic applications, focusing on suitability for neurodevelopmental disorders
- **D2: Technical Requirements Specification** - Detailed technical requirements and system architecture for implementing AI agents in therapeutic XR environments
- **D3: Implementation Framework** - Structured implementation approach with evaluation criteria for selecting appropriate AI agent technologies in mental health applications

### Eligible Activities



- **Activities directly aiming at producing plans, arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services** - Developing technical specifications and implementation approaches for AI-enhanced virtual agents in therapeutic VR environments
- **Adaptation of existing prototypes and tailoring them to the companies' needs** - Evaluating and adapting existing AI virtual agents technologies to meet the specific requirements of therapeutic applications in mental health
- **Activities connecting or making complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities** - Designing approaches to leverage existing AI technologies and platforms for therapeutic applications in XR environments

### **Virtuleap**

- Solution: Cognitive assessment tool in virtual reality for healthcare applications

### **AREA: REGULATORY COMPLIANCE & CE MARKING**

Bringing innovative VR-based cognitive assessment tools to European healthcare markets requires navigating complex regulatory frameworks. CE marking for such novel technologies demands specialized expertise combining VR technology understanding with deep regulatory knowledge.

### **CHALLENGE: VR-Specific Technical Documentation Framework Development**

Virtual reality cognitive assessment tools face unique regulatory hurdles in the EU market. Standard regulatory approaches often don't adequately address VR-specific considerations, creating uncertainty in documentation requirements and compliance pathways.

**Unmet need:** A structured methodology for preparing VR-specific technical documentation elements for CE Marking, with focus on:

- Preparation for Notified Body submission and regulatory approval, including:
- Device description and specification
- Information to be supplied by the manufacturer (label + IFU)
- EU Declaration of Conformity
- Design and manufacturing information
- General safety and performance requirements including the identification of applicable EU regulations and harmonized standards
- Benefit-risk analysis and risk management
- Pre-clinical data – Needs identification (Biocompatibility; Physical, chemical and microbiological characterisation; Electrical safety and electromagnetic



compatibility; Software Verification and Validation; Stability, including shelf life; Usability)

- Additional information for specific cases (for example: Devices to be connected to other device(s) in order to operate as intended)
- Clinical evaluation
- Post-market surveillance and vigilance strategy

### Challenge Details

- Challenge Type: Regulatory documentation framework requiring expertise in CE marking for VR medical technologies
- Applicant Contributions: Regulatory affairs expertise with focus on software medical devices and VR technology understanding
- Estimated Timeline: 4-6 months
- Estimated Capacity: 2-3 person-months
- Estimated Cost: Up to €40,000

### Expected Results

This project will deliver a specialized technical documentation framework tailored to the unique regulatory challenges of VR cognitive assessment tools, providing Virtuleap with practical templates and guidance for CE marking compliance. The framework will include a detailed analysis of VR-specific regulatory considerations with emphasis on software validation, usability factors, and benefit-risk assessment methodologies particularly relevant to cognitive assessment in virtual environments. The deliverables will enable Virtuleap to clearly understand the regulatory requirements unique to their technology, implement a structured approach for addressing priority documentation elements, and establish a solid foundation for comprehensive regulatory submissions. By addressing the regulatory challenges specific to VR cognitive assessment tools, this project will accelerate Virtuleap's regulatory planning process, reduce uncertainty around novel technology aspects, and enhance their ability to navigate the complex CE marking pathway with confidence. The framework and templates will undergo review by regulatory experts familiar with medical software and will be assessed by Virtuleap's product development team to ensure practical applicability and alignment with their specific technology implementation.

### Deliverables

- **D1: VR-Specific Regulatory Analysis** - Analysis of CE marking requirements with emphasis on aspects unique to VR cognitive assessment tools, including key regulatory challenges
- **D2: Priority Documentation Templates** - Templates and guidance for addressing the most critical and VR-specific documentation elements

(software validation, usability, benefit-risk analysis, General Safety Performance Requirements, and Clinical Evaluation)

- **D3: VR Regulatory Guidance Document** - Practical guidance document outlining approaches for addressing VR-specific regulatory challenges

#### Eligible Activities

- **Test beds and complementary activities needed to improve regulations, standards and/or to remove barriers and bottlenecks to innovation** - Developing specialized approaches to address regulatory challenges unique to VR cognitive assessment tools
- **Advisory support for investment** - Providing expert guidance on regulatory compliance pathways to enable market entry for innovative VR healthcare solutions
- **Activities bringing innovative ideas and new products to the market** - Creating documentation frameworks specifically designed to facilitate regulatory approval for novel VR cognitive assessment technologies

## **Annex 2 - Financial Support Agreement template**



# **EIT Health InnoStars Financial Support Agreement**

## **VR Health Champions Open Call 2025**

This project has received funding from the European Union's I3,  
under the Grant Agreement No.  
101161333.

**31/08/2025**

## Contents

<b>Article 1. Definitions.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. Definitions.....	3
1.2. Additional Definitions.....	4
<b>Article 2. Purpose.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Article 3. Entry into force, duration, and termination .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1. Entry into force and duration .....	5
3.2. Termination .....	5
3.3. Effects of termination.....	6
<b>Article 4. Implementation of the Project .....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1. General Principles.....	7
4.2. Proper implementation of the Project.....	7
4.3. Consequences of not properly implementing a Project.....	7
<b>Article 5. Monitoring and reporting.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Article 6. Financial provisions .....</b>	<b>8</b>
6.1. Financial support .....	8
6.2. Eligibility for financial support.....	8
6.3. Payment Schedule .....	9
6.4. Payments.....	10
6.5. Recovery .....	10
<b>Article 7. Visibility rules and communication.....</b>	<b>10</b>
7.1. Use of names, logos or trademarks.....	10
7.2. Co-branding.....	10
<b>Article 8. Intellectual Property Rights.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Article 9. Liability towards each other .....</b>	<b>11</b>
9.1. Limitations of contractual liability.....	11
9.2. Damage caused to third parties.....	11
9.3. Hold harmless.....	11
9.4. Force Majeure.....	12
<b>Article 10. Obligations from EIT agreements.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Article 11. Confidentiality .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Article 12. Miscellaneous.....</b>	<b>13</b>
12.1. Inconsistencies and severability .....	13
12.2. No representation, partnership, or agency .....	13
12.3. Notices and other communication .....	13
12.4. Assignment and amendments.....	14
12.5. Language.....	14
12.6. Mandatory national law.....	14
12.7. Applicable law .....	14
12.8. Settlement of disputes.....	14
12.9. Data Protection .....	14

This financial support agreement, hereinafter the “**Agreement**”, shall have retroactive effect as of **31 August 2025** and is entered into by and between:

**EIT Health InnoStars e.V.**

**Having its registered seat at Mies-van-der-Rohe-Str. 1C, 80807 Munich, Germany**

**Registration number: VR 206595**

**VAT number DE308252541**

**Represented by Balázs Fürjes, managing director  
(hereinafter referred to as: “InnoStars”)**

And

**<Entity Name>**

**Having its registered seat at: <XXXXX>**

**Registration number: <XXXXX>**

**VAT number: <XXXXX>**

**Represented by <XXXXX>**

hereinafter referred to as the “Recipient”;

Hereinafter, jointly or individually, referred to as “Parties” or “Party”;

#### **WHEREAS:**

InnoStars has entered into a Grant Agreement (“**GA**”) with the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (**EISMEA**) (‘EU executive agency’ or ‘**granting authority**’), with the effective date of 1 October 2024, establishing a long-term cooperation laying down the general terms and conditions under which InnoStars must operate under the Interregional Innovation Investments (**I3**) Instrument - EISMEA.

The GA lays down the provisions concerning the implementation of the activities through grants, which, among others, allows InnoStars to provide financial support to third parties for projects and actions related to its **Business Plan** in the GA (the “**Financial Support to Third Parties**”).

The Recipient has been selected as a Third Party receiving Financial Support under **Project 101161333 — VRHealthChampions**, as part of **InnoStars VR Health Champions Open Call 2025** (the “**Project**”).

In this Agreement the Parties wish to lay down the contractual arrangements between them regarding their respective rights and obligations for the implementation by the Recipient of the Project, transposing to the extent needed the provisions of the GA.

#### **NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:**

##### **Article 1. Definitions**

###### **1.1. Definitions**

Words beginning with a capital letter shall have the meaning defined either herein or in the I3 Programme or Grant Agreement, including their respective Annexes.

## 1.2. Additional Definitions

**“Authorised Representative”** shall mean the person or persons duly authorised to sign this Agreement, including its Annexes, on behalf of a Party.

**“Effective Date”** shall mean the date first referenced above.

**“EISMEA”** or **“granting authority”** shall mean the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency, currently regulated by Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 01, 2021 (**“EISMEA Regulation”**).

**“Flagship SME”** shall mean the five selected small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) participating in the VRHealthChampions project consortium, namely MedApp, Lightspace, MetaSkills, MEEVA, Virtuleap, which develop virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) innovations in the healthcare sector. VRHealthChampions project aims to upgrade the technology readiness level (TLR) of VR/AR innovations developed by Flagship SMEs from TRL6 to TRL9, in the subjects of medical navigation during surgery, therapeutic immersive games, cognitive evaluation, education of medical professionals and students, and VR headset customization for medical use. These use cases will be accelerated by closing the gap in their value chains and by assisting them with new services customized for the XR solutions in order to mitigate the market barriers.

**“Force Majeure”** shall mean any situation or event that:

- prevents either Party from fulfilling their obligations under this Agreement,
- was unforeseeable, exceptional situation and beyond the Parties’ control,
- was not due to error or negligence on their part (or on the part of other participants involved in the action), and
- proves to be inevitable in spite of exercising all due diligence.

**“Grant Agreement”** or **“GA”** shall mean the agreement signed by the EISMEA and the Beneficiaries including InnoStars (template available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga\\_i3\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga_i3_en.pdf)), setting out the rights and obligations applicable to the I3 grant awarded for the implementation of the Business Plan and as altered, amended, re-instated or replaced from time to time. The project number in the GA is 101161333.

**“Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument”** shall mean Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination.

**“Project”** shall mean the project selected under the InnoStars VR Health Champions Open Call 2025, which the Recipient shall implement as described in the “Project Business Plan”.

**“Third Party Receiving Financial Support”** shall mean a recipient of financial support to third parties, (in the form of grants, prizes or similar forms of support as described in Article 9.4 of the GA).

**“VRHealthChampions (VRHC)”** refers to ‘Project 101161333’ carried out under the Grant Agreement. VRHC aims to accelerate the adoption of XR technology in healthcare by reducing market barriers for VR/AR applications in less developed European regions by addressing the gaps in the value chains of 5 Flagship SMEs, and by learning from the experience, customize innovation support services for other SMEs in the healthcare VR/AR sector.

## **Article 2. Purpose**

The purpose of this Agreement is to lay down the contractual arrangements between the Parties regarding their respective rights and obligations pertaining to the implementation by the Recipient of the Project.

The Recipient acknowledges and agrees that in this Agreement, the conditions of the GA are transposed in the legal arrangement between InnoStars and the Recipient, in order to ensure that the InnoStars shall meet its obligations and exercise its rights (including those towards the EISMEA) under the GA.

## **Article 3. Entry into force, duration, and termination**

### **3.1. Entry into force and duration**

This Agreement shall have effect from the Effective Date and shall apply until the end date of the Project. The expected end date of the Project is 31.03.2026 (the period between the Effective Date and the end date of the Project being referred to as the “Project duration”)

However, this Agreement may be terminated in accordance with Article 3.2 of this Agreement.

### **3.2. Termination**

3.2.1. In the event that the Recipient is in breach of its obligations under this Agreement, InnoStars may give formal notice to the Recipient requiring that such breach will be remedied within 14 calendar days of this formal notice, unless such breach cannot be remedied.

If such breach is substantial and is not remedied within that period or, is not capable of remedy, InnoStars may decide to declare the Recipient to be a defaulting Party and to decide on the consequences thereof which may include termination of this Agreement upon notice and other measures (for example suspend/recover any payment of (part of) the financial support or stop the Project).

3.2.2. InnoStars may terminate this Agreement with immediate effect through written notice to the Recipient in the event the further implementation of the Project is prevented or delayed with more than two weeks by Force Majeure.

3.2.3. If the GA is terminated by the EISMEA or InnoStars, InnoStars shall have the right to terminate this Agreement upon notice to the Recipient.

3.2.4. InnoStars may at any time terminate this Agreement immediately upon notice if one of the following events occurs:

- a change to the legal, financial, technical, organisational or ownership situation of the Recipient is likely to substantially affect or delay the implementation of the Project or calls into question the decision to select the Project (including changes linked to one of the exclusion grounds listed in the declaration of honour, signed by the time of the signature of this Agreement);



- the Recipient is subject to bankruptcy proceedings or similar (including insolvency, winding-up, administration by a liquidator or court, arrangement with creditors, suspension of business activities, etc.);
- the Recipient is in breach of social security or tax obligations;
- the Recipient (or person having powers of representation, decision-making or control, or person essential for the implementation of the projects) has been found guilty of grave professional misconduct;
- the Recipient (or person having powers of representation, decision-making or control, or person essential for the implementation of the Project) has committed fraud, corruption, or is involved in a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking;
- the Recipient (or person having powers of representation, decision-making or control, or person essential for the implementation of the Project) was created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin (or created another entity with this purpose);
- the Recipient (or person having powers of representation, decision-making or control, or person essential for the implementation of the Project) has committed substantial errors, irregularities or fraud

### **3.3. Effects of termination**

#### **3.3.1. Survival of rights and obligations**

After termination, the Recipient's obligations that by their nature should survive the termination of this Agreement, including (in particular Obligations from GA: Articles 17 (Visibility and communication), 13 (Confidentiality), 33 (Liability), 43.1 (Applicable law) and 43.2 (Dispute settlement)), shall continue to apply.

Termination shall not affect any rights or obligations of the Parties incurred prior to the date of termination unless otherwise stipulated herein or agreed between the Parties. This includes the obligation to provide all input, deliverables, and documents for the period that the Agreement was still in force and effect.

#### **3.3.2. Measures towards defaulting Recipient**

InnoStars shall have the right to stop or reorient the scope of the Project. InnoStars shall also have the right to suspend any payment towards the defaulting Recipient and to request the defaulting Recipient to return the funds received (recovery or withdrawal of funds) without prejudice to its right to claim compensation for damages caused by Recipient's breach.

For the avoidance of doubt, InnoStars may decide to recover funds if and to the extent the Project implemented so far has not started or rendered, in the reasonable discretion of InnoStars, any substantial development or other benefit.

#### **3.3.3. Termination report**

The Recipient must – within 60 days from when termination takes effect – submit a termination report, for the open reporting period under the Project until termination, containing an overview of the progress of the work.

InnoStars will calculate the amount that might be due to the Recipient on the basis of the report submitted (i.e. Recipient's lump sum contributions for completed and approved Deliverables).

If InnoStars does not receive the termination report within the deadline, only costs and contributions which are included in the budget in Annex 1 and corresponding to an approved Deliverables report will be taken into account.

For the avoidance of doubt, after termination the Recipient's obligations in respect of providing further information, records and supporting documents in the context of checks, reviews, audits or investigations continue to apply.

## **Article 4. Implementation of the Project**

### **4.1. General Principles**

The Recipient is fully responsible towards InnoStars for implementing the Project.

The Recipient must:

- have the appropriate resources to implement the Project under its own responsibility.
- remain eligible under the I3 programme funding for the entire duration of this Agreement. Costs and contributions will be eligible only as long as the Recipient and the Project are eligible.
- promptly notify InnoStars of any significant information, fact, problem or delay likely to affect the Project.
- promptly provide all information reasonably required by InnoStars for the implementation of the Project.

### **4.2. Proper implementation of the Project**

The Recipient must implement the Project as described in the Project Plan ('Annex 1').

### **4.3. Consequences of not properly implementing a Project**

In the event of an improper implementation of the Project by the Recipient in accordance with the Project Business Plan, InnoStars, at its own discretion may apply one or more of the following measures:

- i. reduce the amount of financial support provided for the Project; and/or
- ii. stop the Project pursuant to the Go / no Go process;
- iii. suspend payment towards the Recipient;
- iv. request to reimburse the financial support, including pre-financing received for the Project.

## **Article 5. Monitoring and reporting**

The Recipient shall:

- comply with any reporting policy and instructions issued by InnoStars, in accordance with the timing and conditions it sets out as may be amended/modified by InnoStars;
- comply with any and all other monitoring and reporting requirements, including any future requirements by InnoStars, as the case may be pursuant to requirements of EISMEA.

The Recipient shall provide InnoStars with the progress and results of the project development when requested within a timeframe of 3 years after the completion of the project implementation. Failure to fulfill these information obligations could lead to exclusion from participation in any InnoStars programs in the future. InnoStars will provide the granted teams with a questionnaire once or twice a year to map the results of the project development.

## **Article 6. Financial provisions**

### **6.1. Financial support**

6.1.1. The Recipient shall receive financial support for the implementation of the Project, carried out in accordance with this Agreement and the Project Plan ('Annex 1').

The maximum amount of financial support to the Recipient under this Agreement is in total **EUR 40 000**. ("Project Budget")

6.1.2. The Recipient shall use the financial support transferred by InnoStars only for the implementation and execution of the Project as reflected in the Project Plan and Project Budget.

### **6.2. Eligibility for financial support**

#### **6.2.1. General**

The cost eligibility rules of Article 6 of the GA are hereby transposed in this Agreement. The cost eligibility rules are further described in the GA (template available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga\\_i3\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga_i3_en.pdf)).

Lump sum contributions are eligible ('eligible contributions'), if:

- they are set out in Annex 1 and
- the Deliverables are completed and the work is properly implemented by the Recipient and/or the results are achieved, in accordance with Annex 1 and during the period set out in Annex 1 and in Article 3.1.

\*

InnoStars shall be under no obligation to provide financial support to the Recipient unless

- the cost eligibility rules of Article 6 of the GA are complied with; and
- all reporting obligations are complied with by the Recipient.
- Payment shall be made upon the completion of the tasks / deliverables as outlined in the Project Plan. No payment shall be made for any deliverables/outputs that are not delivered in accordance with the terms set forth therein.

#### **6.2.2. Cost reporting**

InnoStars provides lump sum funding under this call to reduce administrative burden, risk of financial error, and complexity. As a result, there won't be thorough cost reporting at the end of the project; instead, a detailed cost estimate and work plan must be included in the proposal, and payments will be made upon the completion of activities.

For lump sum grant proposals, the estimated budget must be described in a detailed budget table. This will be used as a basis for justifying and/or fixing the lump sum amount. As the lump sum must be an approximation of the costs actually incurred, the costs included in this detailed budget table must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (GA, Article 6). This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must ensure the best value for money (or, if appropriate, the lowest price) and be free from any conflicts of interest.

For a lump sum cost to be eligible, the following criteria must be met:

- the costs must fulfil the general eligibility conditions for the type of cost concerned as described in Article 6.1 of the GA;
- the costs must be set under one of the budget categories listed below;
  - o A. Direct Personnel Costs: costs related to the time spent by the Recipient's staff on actual work dedicated to the project.
  - o B. Direct Subcontracting Costs (External expertise) limited to a maximum of 20% of the total project budget: work carried out by a third party provider should be limited.
  - o C. Other direct costs: C.1 Travel and subsistence, C. 3 Other goods, works and services (consumables, PR costs, etc.)
- the costs must be necessary and justified by the activities proposed;
- the work must be properly implemented by the Recipient in accordance with the work plan annexed to this Agreement;
- the deliverables/outputs must be achieved in the period set out in the Agreement as per Annex 1 and Article 3.1.

#### 6.2.3. Record keeping

The Recipient must keep the following to justify the lump sum contribution:

- a) documents prepared in accordance with Annex 1 justifying the completion of the tasks (deliverables/outputs)

The records and supporting documents must be made available upon request by InnoStars or in the context of checks, reviews, audits or investigations (see Article 10). If there are on-going checks, reviews, audits, investigations, litigation or other pursuits of claims under the Agreement the Recipient must keep these records and other supporting documentation until the end of these procedures. The Recipient must keep the original documents. Digital and digitalised documents are considered originals if they are authorised by the applicable national law. InnoStars may accept non-original documents if they offer a comparable level of assurance.

### 6.3. Payment Schedule

InnoStars will complete the payments via instalments linked to milestones / deliverables / acceptance conditions.

The Recipient will be paid as follows:

Each recipient is entitled to one pre-financing payment (Payment #1) and one final payment (Payment #2) as follows:

#### PAYMENT #1:

The recipient is entitled to one pre-financing payment equal to 20% of the total budget, payable within 15 days from the signature of this contract.

#### **PAYMENT #2:**

The recipient shall submit the final report to InnoStars latest by 15th April **2026**. The recipient shall report on all work performed in connection with the Project in 2025 as well as on all results achieved in line with the Project Workplan. InnoStars transfers the amount indicated and properly justified in the report to the respective Recipient after the approval of the final report by **30st April 2026**.

If the Agreement is terminated before the completion of the Project, the Recipient shall refund all payments it has received except the amount corresponding to the costs already incurred and accepted by InnoStars (see. Article 6.2)

### **6.4. Payments**

InnoStars notify the Recipient concerned promptly of the date and composition of the amount transferred to its bank account, giving the relevant references.

Payment by InnoStars to the Recipient hereunder, shall be made to the following bank account:

Official name and legal form of Recipient:

Bank name:

IBAN number:

SWIFT code:

Payments will be made from any of InnoStars' registered bank accounts. Any recoveries shall be made to the bank account that the InnoStars Project manager notifies to the Recipient.

### **6.5. Recovery**

In the event the Recipient did not use the financial support from InnoStars for the purpose of the Project or not in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement, it is under the obligation to return the unused or unjustified amounts within 30 calendar days upon notification from InnoStars.

InnoStars shall have the right to recover any undue financial support of InnoStars, if the terms and conditions of Article 6.2 of this Agreement (including the eligibility rules of Article 6 of the GA) are not complied with, or if the Recipient has not fulfilled all its other obligations pertaining to the implementation of the Project under this Agreement.

## **Article 7. Visibility rules and communication**

### **7.1. Use of names, logos or trademarks**

Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed as conferring rights to use in advertising, publicity or otherwise the name of InnoStars or any of its logos or trademarks without its prior written approval.

### **7.2. Co-branding**

The Recipient shall take into account and respect any co-branding guidelines and requirements provided and set by InnoStars.

The Recipient shall comply with these co-branding obligations in accordance with the monitoring processes as provided by InnoStars.

## **Article 8. Intellectual Property Rights**

Background means any and all data, information or know-how (tangible or intangible), including any Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) that is/are owned or controlled by a Party or that a Party has a right to license, prior to the Effective Date.

Parties agree that no rights in the Background shall be transferred under this Agreement.

The terms for the Use of Results and Background shall be agreed upon by the Flagship SME and the Recipient and the details of the agreement shall be set out in Collaboration Agreement concluded between the parties.

Flagship SME and the Recipient shall enter into Collaboration Agreement regarding the use of the Results and the Background.

## **Article 9. Liability towards each other**

### **9.1. Limitations of contractual liability**

The Parties shall take all the necessary steps to limit or mitigate any damage.

No Party shall be responsible to the other Party for any indirect or consequential loss or similar damage such as, but not limited to, loss of profit, loss of revenue or loss of contracts, provided such damage was not caused by a wilful act, gross negligence or by a breach of confidentiality.

The terms of this Agreement shall not be construed to amend or limit either Party's statutory liability.

### **9.2. Damage caused to third parties**

Each Party shall be solely liable for any loss, damage or injury to third parties resulting from the performance of the said Party's obligations by it or on its behalf under this Agreement.

### **9.3. Hold harmless**

The Recipient shall hold InnoStars and its respective assigns and employees, officers and directors harmless from and against all losses, costs, liabilities, claims, damages and expenses, resulting from or relating to or arising out of the breach or default in the performance of any obligation on the Recipient's part under this Agreement through a legal action, including any counterclaim, that has proceeded to final judgment by a court of competent jurisdiction, in either case to the extent it determined a breach or default by the Recipient in the performance of this Agreement, provided it is not caused by InnoStars' wilful act or gross negligence. The Recipient will be entitled to make observations towards InnoStars, regarding the Recipient's obligation to hold InnoStars harmless and InnoStars shall reasonably consider such observations by the Recipient. InnoStars shall take into account the reasonable requests of the Recipient with regard to the defence and the settlement of

such claims, including the selection of counsels, and it is understood that InnoStars shall not settle any claim without the consent of the Recipient.

#### **9.4. Force Majeure**

No Party shall be considered to be in breach of the Agreement if it is prevented from fulfilling its obligations under the Agreement by Force Majeure.

Each Party will notify the other Party of any Force Majeure without undue delay.

#### **Article 10. Obligations from I3 agreements**

The Recipient acknowledges and agrees that some obligations imposed on InnoStars following the GA are also applicable to the Recipient and Recipient shall do everything that is necessary in order to enable InnoStars to comply with these obligations. More specifically, the Recipient agrees to comply with the clauses mentioned 12, 14 19, 20 25 of the GA (template available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga\\_i3\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/i3/agr-contr/mga_i3_en.pdf)) related to inter alia:

- Conflict of interest (article 12 GA)
- Ethics and values (article 14 GA)
- General information obligations (article 19 GA)
- Record keeping (article 20 GA)
- Check, reviews, audits and investigations (article 25 GA)

#### **Article 11. Confidentiality**

The Parties must keep confidential any data, documents, or other material (in any form) that is identified as sensitive in writing, or when disclosed orally has been identified as confidential at the time of disclosure and has been confirmed and designated in writing within 15 calendar days from oral disclosure at the latest as confidential information by the disclosing Party, is “Sensitive Information”. Unless otherwise agreed between the Parties, they may use Sensitive Information only to implement the Agreement.

The Parties may disclose Sensitive Information to its personnel or other participants in the Project only if they:

- (a) need to know it to implement the Agreement and
- (b) are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.

It may moreover disclose Sensitive Information to third parties, if:

- (a) this is necessary to implement the Agreement or safeguard the EU financial interests and
- (b) the receiving parties of the information are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.

The confidentiality obligations no longer apply if:

- (a) the disclosing Party agrees to release the other Party.
- (b) the information becomes publicly available, without breaching any confidentiality obligation.
- (c) the disclosure of the Sensitive Information is required or permitted by EU, international or national law.



- (d) a period of 5 years after the disclosure of the Sensitive Information has passed, unless otherwise agreed upon between the Parties.
- (e) the Sensitive Information is subsequently independently developed by or on behalf of the receiving Party without use of the disclosing Party's Sensitive Information.

If, and when, the confidentiality obligations no longer apply, the receiving party of the information undertakes to return to the disclosing Party, or to destroy, on request all Sensitive Information that has been disclosed to the receiving parties including all copies thereof and to delete all information stored in a machine-readable form to the extent practically possible. The receiving parties may keep a copy to the extent it is required to keep, archive, or store such Sensitive Information because of compliance with applicable laws and regulations or for the proof of on-going obligations provided that the receiving party comply with the confidentiality obligations herein contained with respect to such copy.

If either Party becomes aware that it will be required, or is likely to be required, to disclose Sensitive Information to comply with applicable laws or regulations or with a court or administrative order, it shall, to the extent it is lawfully able to do so, prior to any such disclosure:

- notify the disclosing Party, and
- comply with the disclosing Party's reasonable instructions to protect the confidentiality of the information.

## **Article 12. Miscellaneous**

### **12.1. Inconsistencies and severability**

Should any provision of this Agreement become invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, it shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions of this Agreement. In such a case, the Parties shall be entitled to request that a valid and practicable provision be negotiated which fulfils the purpose of the original provision.

### **12.2. No representation, partnership, or agency**

No Party shall be entitled to act or to make legally binding declarations on behalf of the other Party.

Nothing in this Agreement shall be deemed to constitute a joint venture, agency, partnership, interest grouping or any other kind of formal business grouping or entity between the Parties.

### **12.3. Notices and other communication**

Any notice to be given under this Agreement shall be in writing to the addresses and recipients as listed below.

Formal notices:

If it is required in this Agreement that a formal notice, consent or approval shall be given, such notice shall be signed by a Party's Authorised Representative(s) and shall either be served personally or sent by mail with recorded delivery or e-mail with receipt acknowledgement.

Other communication:



Other communication between the Parties may also be affected by other means such as e-mail with acknowledgement of receipt, which fulfils the conditions of written form.

Any change of persons or contact details shall be notified immediately by the respective Party to the other Party.

#### **12.4. Assignment and amendments**

No rights or obligations of the Parties arising from this Agreement may be assigned or transferred, in whole or in part, to any third party without the other Party's prior formal approval.

Amendments and modifications to the text of this Agreement require a separate written agreement to be signed by Authorized Representatives of both Parties.

#### **12.5. Language**

This Agreement is drawn up in English, which language shall govern all documents, notices, meetings, arbitral proceedings, and processes relative thereto.

#### **12.6. Mandatory national law**

Nothing in this Agreement shall be deemed to require a Party to breach any mandatory statutory law under which the Party is operating.

#### **12.7. Applicable law**

This Agreement shall be construed in accordance with and governed by the laws of Belgium.

#### **12.8. Settlement of disputes**

The Parties shall endeavour to settle their disputes amicably.

All disputes arising out of or in connection with this Agreement, which cannot be solved amicably, shall be finally settled before the courts of Brussels.

#### **12.9. Data Protection**

The Recipient ensures that any processing of personal data shall be performed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

The collected personal data will be used solely for the implementation, follow-up, reporting and management of this Agreement by the Recipient and its subsidiaries and for dissemination of information and communication purposes foreseen for this Agreement. Data subjects have the right to access, rectify or delete their personal data. Data subjects can also object to its processing.

## Signatures

The Parties have caused this Agreement to be duly signed by the undersigned Authorised Representatives.

The signature of a Party via a scanned or digitized image of a handwritten signature (e.g. scan in PDF format) or an electronic signature (e.g. via DocuSign), shall have the same force and effect as an original handwritten signature for the purposes of validity, enforceability and admissibility. Each Party receives a fully executed copy of the Agreement. Delivery of the fully executed copy via e-mail or via an electronic signature system shall have the same force and effect as delivery of an original hard copy.

### For InnoStars

Name: Balázs Fürjes

Title : Managing Director

In :

On :

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Recipient: <xxxxxxx>

Name: <xxxxxxx>

Title: <xxxxxxx>

In: <xxxxxxx>

On: <xxxxxxx>

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex 1

### EIT Health InnoStars VR Health Champions Open Call 2025 Project Plan

#### Contact Information

First Name:	
Last Name:	
Phone:	
Email:	
InnoStars Contact:	
Email:	

#### Challenge of Interest

What is the challenge your organization is interested in addressing?	
--	--

#### Solution Description

Please describe your solution (product/service) briefly, considering its quality, how well it is outlined, and fits with the challenge.	
---	--

#### Outcomes & Impact

Describe the expected outcomes and potential impact of your project.	
--	--

#### Main Deliverables

What are the specific tasks you aim to complete? What will you deliver, and what are the significant milestones in your plan? <b>The end date for all tasks is 31.03.2026.</b>		
	<b>Start date: DD.MM.2025</b>	<b>Clarifying the Target: Deadline vs. Specific Goal</b>
Task One		
Task Two		
Task Three		

## Budget

EIT Health InnoStars offers **€40,000/per team** to facilitate and support the collaboration between the team members and the challenge owners.

Task no	Task title	Description of tasks / activities	Expected outcomes	Deliverables	Milestones	Estimated lump sum (EUR)	Justification (Explanation of how cost was estimated and why it is reasonable)
Task 1	[e.g., Management]	Overview of management & coordination activities				0 €	Based on estimated effort and resource allocation for project management.
Task 2	[e.g., Research]	Research activities and deliverables				0 €	Cost estimations reflect anticipated researcher involvement and material needs.
Task 3	[e.g., Dissemination]	Dissemination and exploitation activities				0 €	Justified by the planned communication and dissemination efforts.
Task 4						0 €	
Task 5						0 €	
Task 6						0 €	
Task 7						0 €	
Task 8						0 €	
Task 9						0 €	
Task 10						0 €	
<b>Total</b>						<b>0 €</b>	

## ANNEX 2

### Final report template

#### Final Reporting

The final report is concise and includes a description of the chosen challenge, details on completed activities, and project impact.

#### Contact Information

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Organization Name:</b>	
<b>Organization Registration Number:</b>	
<b>Name of the reporter:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Website if applicable:</b>	
<b>Program Manager/Email</b>	

#### Reporting Details

<b>Reporting Period Start date</b>	<b>2025-10-01</b>
<b>Reporting Period End date</b>	<b>2026-03-31</b>
<b>Project Progress Details</b>	<p>Please provide a general overview of the team's tasks during the reporting period:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Summary of completed activities</li> <li>2. Details of funding received and expenditures</li> <li>3. Overview of ongoing tasks</li> </ol>
<b>Differences Between Expected and Actual Work</b>	<p>If planned work was not completed, the Recipient must explain why. Please provide a detailed justification that clarifies the reasons for the discrepancies between the expected and actual work.</p>

#### The Accomplished Deliverables and Milestones

Kindly provide a detailed list of all deliverables and milestones outlined in the sub-granting agreement.

### Main Deliverables

The Deliverable	Description	Task No	Target value (e.g., amount, quantity, etc.)	Target date	Achievement date	Comments and detailed justifications in case of delay

The Milestone	Description	Target value (e.g., amount, quantity, etc.)	Target date	Achievement date	Comments and detailed justifications in case of delay

The Recipient hereby confirms that the information provided is complete, reliable, and true.

Place and Date:

The Recipient's Signature: