New EU Project to Transform Healthcare Education with Extended Reality and Entrepreneurship

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€ 1.3 Million for Next-Generation Healthcare Training

USTP - University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten is part of a new European research initiative that aims to revolutionise education and research in healthcare. The project, titled LEAPXR - Linking Education and Applied Practice for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in eXtended Reality, brings together 16 partner institutions across Europe to explore how extended reality (XR) technologies and entrepreneurial thinking can drive innovation in the health sector.

Europe's healthcare systems are facing growing pressure - from ageing populations to an increase in chronic conditions. XR technologies can provide powerful tools for training and collaboration, while entrepreneurship acts as a catalyst for sustainable innovation. LEAPXR brings these elements together to develop new approaches to healthcare education, clinical practice, and research.

Researchers and experts at USTP - University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten contribute their experience in interdisciplinary education, digital transformation, and innovation, helping to embed XR technologies into both teaching and applied research.

Podcast on Spotify

The LEAPXR project officially kicked off online in March, and this October, the consortium gathered in St. Pölten for a two-day on-site meeting. Representatives from partner universities and industry collaborators came together to exchange ideas, align goals, and strengthen interdisciplinary ties. During the meeting, the team recorded a special episode for the podcast "LEAPXR Talks" that captures the voices, visions, and collaborative spirit of the initiative. Available on Spotify, the episode offers insights into the project's ambitions and the dynamic energy driving its development.

Vanessa Leung, Senior Researcher at USTP - University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten, shared her perspective on the transformative potential of XR in training and rehabilitation: "Training is not one-size-fits-all. What the virtual environment can do is adapt to its user. We are trying to respond to physiological signals and the environment the person is in - either to calm it down or to stimulate it. That's where XR becomes truly powerful."

Annemarie Penders, project manager of LEAPXR, emphasised the interdisciplinary nature of the initiative: "LEAPXR is, for me, the intersection of different disciplines - entrepreneurial as well as innovative. XR will become a standard tool in healthcare education and innovation."

XR as a Driver of Innovation and Efficiency in Healthcare

Through immersive, lifelike simulations, XR enables healthcare students and professionals to practise complex scenarios, refine care processes, and tailor training to individual needs. This hands-on approach improves learning outcomes and enhances the quality of patient care. XR also supports collaboration across locations, thus offering new opportunities particularly in nursing and therapy.

Fostering Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Collaboration

LEAPXR aims to strengthen entrepreneurial mindsets within higher education and stimulate innovation across the healthcare economy:

* Establishing XR infrastructures accessible to research, practice, and industry.
* Creating an XR Innovation Hub to bridge universities and the business sector.
* Developing practice-oriented learning and training models building on successful EU projects such as CITE (https://eit-hei.eu/projects/cite) and E.I.N.S. (https://eit-hei.eu/projects/e.i.n.s/)
* Promoting a collaborative innovation culture to support international cooperation and start-up initiatives.

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€ 1.3 Million in EU Funding

The project is funded by the EIT Higher Education Initiative and the European Union, with a total budget of € 1.3 million. The investment underlines the project's strategic importance for Europe: LEAPXR helps to nurture talent, strengthen international networks, and boost Europe's innovation capacity in the health-tech sector. Through its participation, USTP - University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten reinforces its position as a European leader in forward-looking education and research.

A European Consortium for XR Innovation

The LEAPXR consortium brings together universities, research institutes, and industry partners from across Europe, including: Saxion University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands - external project lead), Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (Latvia), UCLL University of Applied Sciences Leuven-Limburg (Belgium), Fulda University of Applied Sciences (Germany), JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Accent Inkubator GmbH, Stichting WTC Twente (Netherlands), Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal (Portugal), Universitatea Politehnica Timi?oara (Romania), Aleksandër Moisiu University Durrës (Albania), University of the Aegean (Greece), XR4EUROPE AISBL (Europe), Crazy Town Oy (Finland), Ontwikkelmaatschappij Oost-Nederland N.V. (Netherlands), and Moovd B.V. (Netherlands).

Together, they are working to build a European centre of entrepreneurial excellence in XR and healthcare, while promoting sustainable regional development at the same time.

Further Information

* Project page (https://leapxr.eu) LEAPXR
* Project page E³UDRES²: https://eudres.eu/news/leapxr-1-3-million-for-innovation-in-healthcare-and-entrepreneurship & https://eudres.eu/news/leapxr-on-site-stpolten
* Project page (https://research.ustp.at/projekte/leapxr) USTP - University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten
* "LEAPXR Talks"-Podcast: What happens when health education, innovation, and extended reality come together? (https://open.spotify.com/show/0vD33KwVCwzKnh7BXXJNm2)featuring Senior Researcher and Project Manager Vanessa Leung (USTP) and Project Manager Annemarie Penders (Saxion UAS)
* More on the EIT Higher Education Initiative (https://eit-hei.eu/)

LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com/company/leapxrproject/posts/?feedView=all) project channel

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