

LEAP^{XR} – Linking Education and Applied Practice for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in eXtended Reality

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Project Title: LEAP^{XR} (Linking Education and Applied Practice for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in eXtended Reality)

About the project

LEAP^{XR} is a European initiative that brings together Higher Education Institutions, companies and other stakeholders to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship in Extended Reality (XR) for preventive healthcare. The project addresses challenges such as ageing populations, healthcare inequalities and regional innovation gaps by connecting XR technology, applied education and entrepreneurship.

The project runs from April 2025 to April 2027, with a total budget of €1.34 million, and is coordinated by Saxion University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. The consortium consists of 16 European partners and is anchored within the E³UDRES² European University Alliance.

Why did UCLL join?

For [UCLL](#), LEAP^{XR} is a natural fit with our ambition to make innovation and entrepreneurship an integral part of applied higher education. The project offers an opportunity to combine these ambitions with a technology that has clear potential for healthcare education and practice.

LEAP^{XR} also builds on activities UCLL was already developing in XR and healthcare. Through the UCLL Social Tech Hub in Hasselt, we explore how technology can contribute to social and healthcare innovation. The project allows us to connect these local activities to a European network of researchers, students, companies and other higher education institutions, exchange expertise and test and scale new ideas.

A concrete example is our VLAIO-funded [XR4Health](#) project, in which UCLL and Flanders Make investigate how XR can support efficient and evidence-based continuing education for nurses. In close cooperation with healthcare professionals, five XR training modules were developed and tested around bladder catheterization, suprapubic catheter care, port catheter care, ECG and sensory-friendly care. The lessons learned are being brought together in a practical guide for healthcare organizations and technology partners developing and implementing XR-based training.

UCLL is also involved in the VLAIO project “[Technology Testbeds for More Workable Work](#)”, together with Thomas More, PXL, Flanders Make and IMEC. Here, UCLL investigates the potential of VR training to improve workable work in healthcare and welfare. The project explores e.g. whether making VR training available directly at the workplace can create more flexible learning opportunities, reduce administrative workload and make staff training easier to organize. The results will be translated into a practical implementation guide for healthcare organizations and technology companies.

UCLL's role

UCLL contributes to stakeholder engagement, mentoring and training of students and staff as well as the exchange of knowledge and good practices across the LEAP^{XR} ecosystem.

UCLL leads **Work Package 3 (WP3)**, which focuses on increasing the funding readiness of the Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) partners in the consortium. We developed a structured training programme that takes participants through the different stages of developing a European proposal: understanding the European funding landscape, identifying relevant funding opportunities, developing a competitive project idea, designing strong work packages and preparing a successful proposal.

The training is not limited to LEAP^{XR} partners. Sessions are also open to researchers outside the project and are promoted through the E³UDRES² network. This helps us share expertise more widely while also expanding the LEAP^{XR} community.

What have we achieved so far?

The project has already strengthened the community around XR and entrepreneurship and increased the visibility of XR-health activities. It has also generated new collaborations, training opportunities and support for emerging start-ups.

Several concrete examples illustrate the added value of this approach:

- During a multidisciplinary hackathon, students from social work and IT developed a VR prototype (**VR Connect**) that allows young people to practice social situations and build confidence in a safe, controlled virtual environment. The concept won the UCLL Moving Minds Award and resulted in a follow-up internship.
- In the **InnoFlash** course, 84 students developed and tested XR-based healthcare concepts. The winning idea was an AR/MR mobile application helping patients navigate unfamiliar hospital environments.

The LEAP^{XR} project is also strengthening the connection between education and professional practice. Through stakeholder workshops, UCLL is exploring how XR and entrepreneurship can move learning beyond theoretical teaching towards more practical, cross-disciplinary experiences. Particular attention is also given to female entrepreneurship and inclusive role models in technology and innovation.

Looking ahead

A key ambition of LEAP^{XR} is to create a shared European knowledge base and community around XR, healthcare and entrepreneurship. By connecting existing expertise, initiatives and people through a central platform and through the E³UDRES² network, the project aims to make existing activities more visible, stimulate collaboration and accelerate innovation.

By 2027, LEAP^{XR} aims to support 25 start-ups, create two HealthTech start-ups, train 1,000 students and 330 staff members, establish 12 partnerships and develop six new structures for systemic entrepreneurship and innovation.

For UCLL, LEAP^{XR} provides a concrete way to strengthen the bridge between **XR technology, entrepreneurship and healthcare education**, while connecting our own expertise and initiatives to a wider European innovation ecosystem.

Project website: leapxr.eu

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