Week-long hackathon kicks-off bringing together the brightest entrepreneurs to tackle significant healthcare challenges

Over thirty individuals and teams will come together in Amsterdam for the EIT Health 'Wild Card' Hackathon and compete for up to €4 million funding to find game-changing solutions

- **Entrepreneurs will compete to find solutions to two European health challenges: "Mental and Brain Health" and "Digital Biomarkers" to improve diagnostic tools for diseases**
- **The Wild Card Hackathon is part of an EU-wide healthcare innovation programme where teams of entrepreneurs complete activities to win business support, mentorships and funding to solve the biggest healthcare challenges of our time**

Thirty of Europe's most promising healthcare entrepreneurs are joining forces in Amsterdam today for a week-long challenge as part of EIT Health's open innovation programme, Wild Card.

Wild Card is designed to take participants, collaborating in high-performing teams, on an entrepreneurial journey to evolve ideas into potentially transformative health products or solutions. The programme is EIT Health's open 'venture builder'; offering talented individuals the opportunity to build new healthcare innovations regardless of experience or background.

The intense week will see a diverse group of entrepreneurs form teams and collaborate on a series of tasks designed to maximise the benefits of team working and business skill improvement. The Hackathon will specifically challenge the participants on defining the medical and clinical unmet need, interrogating assumptions and feasibility of their proposed solutions, so that the original idea is strengthened, and a business model is designed. This is achieved through support provided by high-profile mentors and coaches. Following a pitch session with a judging panel at the end of the week, the winning team will receive funding to progress and build companies, bringing cutting-edge innovations to patients and citizens.

2019's Wild Card Programme will be addressing:

Mental and Brain Heath: *How to improve prediction, diagnosis and treatment to fight mental disorders and strengthen brain health*

and

Digital Biomarkers: *How to improve early diagnostics with the application of digital biomarkers*

The two selected topics aim to help improve diagnosis and treatment, and to contribute to reducing the impact on healthcare systems and wider society. The public health burden of conditions such as depression and Alzheimer's is staggering, costing EU Member States €113.4 billion and €105.2 billion a year respectively.

Similarly, the use of digital biomarkers in diagnoses has huge potential for unleashing the real benefits of capturing and using data, particularly in empowering citizens to manage their own health. The impact of this technology in managing chronic pain, improving cognitive function assessment and early identification of neurodegenerative disorders is significant.

"EIT Health is hugely excited to bring the second year of Wild Card to Amsterdam", said **Jorge Fernandez Garcia, Director of Innovation at EIT Health.** "The Hackathon is a great platform to push our shortlisted candidates beyond limits; of their own skills, but also of innovation and science itself. The week also provides the opportunity for all participants to form valuable networks with peers and mentors who can support them throughout their entrepreneurial journey."

"The Wild Card Programme, now in its second year, is a call to action for Europe's innovators and we are looking for the brightest minds to help solve some of our most pressing health challenges. Our hope is that by the end of the week, we are really on our way to find the next breakthroughs in medical sciences."

Following the pitches, a decision will be made on which teams and ideas go through to the next stage of Wild Card - Business Model Validation, a 10-week acceleration programme. The ultimate goal is to identify and award two winning teams with Wild Card project status.

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About EIT Health

EIT Health is a network of best-in-class health innovators backed by the EU. We collaborate across borders to deliver new solutions that can enable European citizens to live longer, healthier lives.

As Europeans tackle the challenge of increasing chronic diseases and multi-morbidity, and seek to realise the opportunities that technology offers to move beyond conventional approaches to treatment, prevention and healthy lifestyles, we need thought leaders, innovators and efficient ways to bring innovative healthcare solutions to market.

EIT Health addresses these needs. We connect all relevant healthcare players across European borders – making sure to include all sides of the "knowledge triangle", so that innovation can happen at the intersection of research, education and business for the benefit of citizens.

EIT Health – Together for healthy lives in Europe

For more information visit: www.eithealth.eu

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About the Wild Card programme

Wild Card is a game-changing health innovation programme pioneered by EIT Health. Each year, Wild Card sets out different healthcare challenge areas, with the goal of delivering solutions to enable European citizens to live longer, healthier lives. Focusing on applied research, entrepreneurial ideas and innovative thinking, Wild Card takes a venture-building approach that identifies, fosters and helps develop high-risk ideas into thriving commercial businesses.

Through this unique programme, EIT Health offers world class mentors and business coaches to equip participants with the knowledge and expertise necessary to start on the right path; supports and accelerates the formation of skilled and ambitious teams by facilitating connections with other like-minded innovators; and funds these teams on their journey, from ideation to start-up incorporation.

Find out more at https://wildcard.eithealth.eu/

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