



An Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership project Project period: 2021-2023

Approximately 20% of higher education students report feeling stressed most of the time, with nearly all experiencing stress sometimes or often. Additionally, 10% have received diagnoses of depression, anxiety, or other mental health conditions. Following a period marked by the pandemic, it is our duty as higher education institutions to establish environments that facilitate students' return to traditional classroom settings, alleviating stress, anxieties, and inhibitions.

The proposal of VRxanny is to create virtual reality tools to help our students to reduce stress when facing exams or presentations.

Virtual reality for anxiety and mental stress reduction in university students

VRxanny



Goals & Objectives

The primary objective of the project is to enhance the well-being of students experiencing acute, episodic, and chronic stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. By fostering mental health and social inclusion, the aim is to improve their ability to function effectively within university society and to prevent the recurrence of these disorders.



Results achieved

The primary outcome of this project is the implementation of a series of 'chill spots' across partner universities' campuses. Each chill spot will feature a motion-based virtual reality (VR) system equipped with applications designed to reduce stress and anxiety. The arrangement and design of these spaces are intended to induce a state of mental calm in the user.

The VR application scenarios and activities have been developed following a comprehensive survey among students and a Design Thinking workshop held in Vigo, Spain, during the summer of 2023. The collaboration among psychologists, designers, and engineers has been productive, resulting in a fully realized VR platform.

The final VR application will undergo testing during a Summer School in Lodz, Poland, scheduled for June 2024.



Next actions

We believe that VR can reduce mental stress thanks to interactive scenarios designed to address symptoms such as negative thinking, negative self-image, sleep problems, tension, powerlessness, etc. Scenarios developed for students will use three recognized methods (1) visualization, (2) guided breathing exercise, and (3) bilateral stimulation. VR technology will allow users to stay in a chillout environment that will affect them through the senses of hearing and sight. Bilateral stimulation will enhance the effects of relaxation.

The following intangible results are expected:

- rising awareness on mental health issues among students and academics;
- exchange of experiences in the field of research techniques and bio-signals analysis;
- development of VR knowledge, competencies and experience;
- enhancement of staff skills in the area of international cooperation;
- improvement of language skills of both academics and students;
- exchange of good practices among academics;
- enhancement of project management skills among team members.



Project partners

Coordinating institution:

Lodz University of Technology (Poland)

Partner institutions:

- Universidade de Vigo (Spain)
- Tartu Ulikool (Estonia)
- University of Lodz (Poland)

