

FROM EVIDENCE TO ECOSYSTEM

Testing, clinical validation and the infrastructure that moves health AI towards practice.



FEATURED INSIDE

Medusa Technologies: from a radiology pain point to a validated product path

A special section on success stories and best practices.

ADVANCING HEALTHCARE

AI4Health.Cro is the European Digital Innovation Hub focused on artificial intelligence in healthcare and medicine. Led by the Ruđer Bošković Institute, it brings together expertise from research, healthcare, technology, public institutions and business.

WE PROVIDE SOLUTIONS

The hub supports users through Test Before Invest, training and skills development, networking and guidance on access to finance. Its users include startups, SMEs, hospitals, public-sector organisations, researchers and innovation teams.

OUR TEAM IS OUR STRENGTH

The consortium combines clinical, scientific, technical and business expertise. That mix matters because digital health products rarely fail for one reason. They need evidence, usable workflows, responsible data handling, computing capacity, access to expertise and a clear implementation path.

“You are an SME, startup, hospital, public-sector organisation or research team with a digital health idea. AI4Health.Cro helps you test, learn and connect before committing resources at scale.”

What to expect?

- EDITORIAL** What defined the final months of 2025.
- TRAINING AND SKILLS** Autumn School 2025 and its practical learning agenda.
- CONFERENCE INSIGHTS** Healthtech Adria and the debate on clinical adoption.
- FROM HYPE TO IMPACT** Innovation Challenges at the Croatian Health Employers' Conference.
- HPC FOR HEALTH AI** Why computing capacity shapes validation and scale.
- SUCCESS STORIES & BEST PRACTICES** Medusa Technologies, medical data and user onboarding.
- EDIH CONTINUITY** National co-funding for Croatian EDIHs through 2026.

The final months of 2025: evidence before expansion

The final months of 2025 gave AI4Health.Cro a coherent story. The period began with a school built around practical skills and ended with a national funding decision that secured continuity for Croatia's European Digital Innovation Hubs. Between those points, the project kept returning to the same question: what must happen before a promising health technology can be trusted in practice?

At Healthtech Adria, the answer came from the realities of hospital adoption. A strong model still needs evidence, a workflow that fits clinical routines and a path through procurement and implementation. At the Croatian Health Employers' Conference, the Innovation Challenges model was presented as a way to begin with problems defined by healthcare organisations and move through structured testing. At Croatia's HPC Competence Centre Day, the discussion turned to the computing capacity needed to train, compare and reproduce results.

The success story in this issue brings those themes together. Medusa Technologies entered the AI4Health.Cro pathway with a concrete problem in radiology and an early-stage technical solution. Access to anonymised clinical data, radiologist feedback and additional data collection gave the team a firmer basis for iteration. The case shows what Test Before Invest means in practice: assumptions are checked before they become expensive.

The best-practice notes widen the view. Medical data needs governance, privacy safeguards and secure processing. Users need a clear route from first contact to service delivery. These operational details may attract less attention than a product demonstration, though they often decide whether innovation moves forward. The period closed with a decision that secured national co-funding for Croatian EDIHs through 2026. Continuity now gives the network room to turn lessons from the first phase into stronger services for users.

Editorial Team, AI4Health.Cro

#AUTUMN2025

AI4HEALTH.CRO

AUTUMN SCHOOL

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Autumn School 2025: practical skills for health innovation

13-30 October 2025 | Hybrid and online

The school was designed for people shaping the future of healthcare: users, SMEs, startups, public-sector organisations and researchers. Its programme linked artificial intelligence, data science and digital health with high-performance computing and business development.

A programme built around use, application and organisational needs

AI4Health.Cro opened applications for the 2025 Autumn School with a clear promise: the programme would concentrate on knowledge that participants could use. The school ran from 13 to 30 October in a hybrid and online format, with applications closing on 29 September.

The audience reflected the range of organisations expected to adopt or support health technology. The call addressed users, SMEs, startups, public-sector organisations and researchers. The curriculum combined artificial intelligence, data science, digital health, high-performance computing and business development.

That mix is important in healthcare. A technically convincing solution can still stall when teams lack access to data, implementation knowledge, business preparation or a realistic view of clinical workflows. The programme therefore treated technical learning as one part of a wider route to adoption.

The school also sat within AI4Health.Cro's broader service portfolio. Participants could connect the knowledge gained in the programme with testing, networking, digital-maturity assessment and support in finding investment.

In practice, this gave the school two functions. It built individual skills and created a shared language between professionals working in research, healthcare, technology and business. That common ground matters when a project moves from development to validation.

The programme's timing also placed it within an active autumn for the hub. Healthtech Adria followed in early October, the Croatian Health Employers' Conference took place in November and the HPC Competence Centre Day brought infrastructure into the same discussion. Together, these activities connected learning with the conditions under which health AI is tested and used.

EXPERT-LED LEARNING

Sessions covered AI, data science, digital health and implementation.

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

The programme connected tools with use cases and organisational needs.

BUSINESS READINESS

Participants considered development, financing and routes to market.

NETWORKING

The school linked users with experts and potential collaborators.



Healthtech Adria 2025 put clinical adoption ahead of spectacle

2-3 October 2025 | University of Split School of Medicine

More than 300 participants and 30 speakers gathered in Split. AI4Health.Cro used the conference to focus on the conditions that determine whether a health technology can move beyond a demonstration and become usable in clinical practice.

From performance metrics to clinical logic

The second edition of Healthtech Adria was staged at the University of Split School of Medicine, bringing together clinicians, founders, innovators and ecosystem builders. AI4Health.Cro joined the programme with a message that cut through the usual excitement around artificial intelligence: hospital adoption depends on evidence, fit and implementation.

The discussion moved beyond the quality of an algorithm in isolation. Participants considered what happens when a technology enters a clinical environment shaped by limited time, existing software, procurement rules and established responsibilities. A model can perform well in a controlled setting and still create friction if it does not fit the workflow of radiologists, nurses, doctors or administrators.

The conference also placed real-world evaluation and regulatory expectations alongside product development. That combination matters because adoption is rarely a single decision. It is a sequence of tests, consultations, documentation and organisational changes.

For AI4Health.Cro, the event reinforced a central principle: technical performance has to be translated into clinical relevance. That means defining outcomes, understanding the context of use and working with professionals who can identify where a tool helps and where it introduces new risk.

The argument was measured rather than sceptical. Health AI can improve care, though the route into hospitals is built through evidence, implementation work and sustained cooperation with users.

“A strong model is not the finish line. Clinical relevance, evidence and workflow fit determine whether an innovation can be adopted.”



Innovation Challenges presented as a pipeline for practical results

6-7 November 2025 | Croatian Health Employers' Conference, Opatija

The challenge model begins with a healthcare need, opens the problem to interdisciplinary teams and assesses solutions through structured testing, data access and expert feedback.

Why the challenge format matters

At the Croatian Health Employers' Conference, AI4Health.Cro presented its Innovation Challenges as a practical route between a defined healthcare problem and a tested solution. Around 500 participants attended the conference, giving the project a setting in which employers, public bodies, researchers and technology teams could examine the model together.

The process begins with a problem identified by a healthcare organisation or another relevant institution. Teams then enter a public competition and work within a framework that can include data access, validation conditions and expert assessment. This gives participants a clearer brief and gives healthcare partners a more disciplined way to compare results.

The model also changes the timing of clinical and operational input. Instead of waiting until a product is close to completion, experts can assess relevance during development. Teams can identify assumptions that do not hold, revise their approach and understand the conditions under which a solution might be used.

That structure does not guarantee deployment. It does, however, improve the quality of evidence available to decision-makers. It also keeps the competition anchored to healthcare needs rather than abstract technical performance.

Presented at the employers' conference, the challenge model became a wider argument about innovation policy: practical results depend on problem definition, access to evidence and a transparent route through testing.

REAL NEEDS

Problems are grounded in clinical or organisational constraints.

STRUCTURED TESTING

Teams work through defined data and validation conditions.

EXPERT ASSESSMENT

Clinical and technical experts examine relevance and implementation.

AI4Health.Cro at Croatia's HPC Competence Centre Day

Anja Barešić on scaling health AI beyond the demo

11-12 November 2025 | SRCE, Zagreb

At SRCE in Zagreb, the discussion turned to the computing infrastructure required for serious health AI. Anja Barešić linked high-performance computing with faster iteration, reproducible development and a more credible route from prototype to implementation.



HPC changes the development question from “Can the model run?” to “Can the work be repeated, compared and trusted?”

Computing capacity changes the pace and quality of development

A promising health AI prototype can remain fragile when the team behind it lacks the computing power to test variations, compare results and document experiments. That was the practical problem at the centre of AI4Health.Cro's contribution to Croatia's HPC Competence Centre Day.

High-performance computing can shorten model-development cycles and improve the consistency of testing. It allows teams to repeat experiments, benchmark alternatives and work with larger or more complex datasets. In healthcare, where claims need to be supported by evidence, these capabilities directly affect the quality of validation.

The value is not limited to speed. Reproducible pipelines create a stronger technical record. They make it easier for researchers, clinicians and potential partners to understand how a result was produced and whether it can be repeated.

For startups, this can reduce technical risk before investment. For researchers, it can strengthen the quality of comparative work. For healthcare organisations, it can support a more credible assessment of whether a prototype is ready for a broader trial.

The message from Zagreb was therefore less about computing as spectacle and more about infrastructure as a condition of responsible development.

SLOW ITERATION

HPC enables faster training and benchmarking.

FRAGILE EXPERIMENTS

Reproducible pipelines improve reliability.

PROMISING PROTOTYPE

Evidence and repeatability support implementation.

Real users, real constraints, practical lessons

AI4Health.CRO's success stories show the project from the user's side. They describe the point at which a startup, public institution or research team meets a practical obstacle: access to clinical data, uncertainty about user needs, a fragmented digital environment or the absence of a clear implementation route.

The Medusa Technologies case is included because it brings several project services into one story. The startup entered the Test Before Invest pathway with a radiology workflow problem and an early-stage solution. Access to anonymised clinical data, consultations with radiologists and additional data collection gave the team a more credible basis for development.

The best-practice notes explain how the project built the conditions around individual cases. One concerns medical data and the work needed to combine access with privacy safeguards and secure processing. The other concerns onboarding: how users are guided from first contact through needs assessment, service selection and monitoring.

Together, these stories show that innovation support is rarely a single intervention. It is a sequence of decisions, evidence checks and connections. The value lies in reducing uncertainty while there is still time to change direction.

SUCCESS STORY

Medusa Technologies and clinical validation.

BEST PRACTICE

Putting medical data at the heart of innovation.

BEST PRACTICE

User onboarding as a structured pathway.

Medusa Technologies: turning a radiology pain point into a validated product path

Medusa Technologies is a Rijeka startup founded in 2024 by Diego Ivanović and Leonard Martinis. The company is developing an operating system for radiology, designed to reduce the fragmentation that forces radiologists to move between multiple programs during routine work.

That fragmentation has practical consequences. Switching between disconnected systems slows workflows and increases the risk of error. It also adds pressure to a profession already working under demanding conditions. Medusa's proposed answer is to consolidate applications and software tools within a single operating environment.

The concept addresses a visible problem, though the decisive barrier for an early-stage health startup is often clinical validation. A strong technical proposition still needs access to authentic data and feedback from the professionals expected to use it.

Through AI4Health.Cro's Test Before Invest services, Medusa gained access to anonymised radiology data from a clinical environment. The team used authentic X-ray images to train its models while working within GDPR requirements.

The support also created connections with Croatian hospital centres and consultations with experienced radiologists. Additional anonymised data collection strengthened the team's testing process beyond its existing database.

These steps did not turn development into a simple process. They did something more useful: they gave the team evidence. Assumptions could be checked against clinical reality, workflows could be discussed with specialists and future conversations with hospitals could begin from a stronger position.

“Through AI4Health.Cro, we could train our models on authentic X-ray images.”

Diego Ivanović, Medusa Technologies

Validation comes before scale

Medusa's experience illustrates how health technology can be de-risked before a team commits to wider development, procurement discussions or investment.

CLINICAL DATA

Access to anonymised radiology data enabled model training on real X-ray images.

EXPERT FEEDBACK

Radiologists helped the team consider workflow expectations and product relevance.

STRUCTURED ITERATION

Additional data and a clearer validation route supported further testing.

Clinical validation is often described as a technical milestone. In practice, it also shapes strategy. Evidence can reveal that a feature works differently in a real setting, that users need another type of interface or that a planned workflow would create friction. Discovering those limits early can save time and money.

For Medusa, access to authentic data allowed the team to train and test under conditions closer to clinical practice. Radiologist consultations added another layer of assessment, connecting technical development with the routines and expectations of the profession.

The story also shows the role of an innovation hub as a connector. A young startup may have technical ability and a strong problem definition while lacking direct routes into hospitals, specialist feedback or data. AI4Health.Cro's value in this case came from combining those elements.

The broader lesson is relevant beyond radiology. Health AI products become more credible when data, expert input and structured iteration are available early. Scale should follow evidence, rather than substitute for it.

Putting medical data at the heart of innovation

Advanced AI in healthcare depends on relevant data. Medical data is also highly sensitive and subject to strict requirements around privacy, regulation and trust. AI4Health.Cro treated data access as a key part of service delivery rather than a problem to be addressed at the end of development.

The project established a focus group with expertise in data acquisition, management, processing and modelling. Ten of the 16 project partners took part. The group worked towards a regulatory sandbox, described in the Project Summary as a secure processing environment for the controlled use of real-life medical data.

In parallel, the Ruđer Bošković Institute team compiled a catalogue of publicly available datasets and access rules for different stakeholder groups. This gave SMEs and public-sector users a practical starting point when they had limited experience of working with medical data.

Innovation Challenges then demonstrated the secondary use of clinical data in practice. The 2024 challenge on early rehospitalisation attracted 99 applicants and 27 teams. The 2025 mammography challenge attracted 106 applicants and 14 participating teams.

The best-practice lesson is straightforward: data access, secure processing and innovation support work best when designed together.

DATA ACCESS

Real-life and public datasets provide the basis for relevant testing.

SAFEGUARDS

Privacy, anonymisation and secure processing protect trust.

PRACTICAL USE

Challenges show how clinical data can support structured experimentation.

User onboarding as a structured pathway to digital transformation

A broad service catalogue is useful only when users can understand what support fits their needs. AI4Health.Cro developed onboarding guidelines during the first two quarters of the project to make that process clearer and to operationalise the services provided by consortium partners.

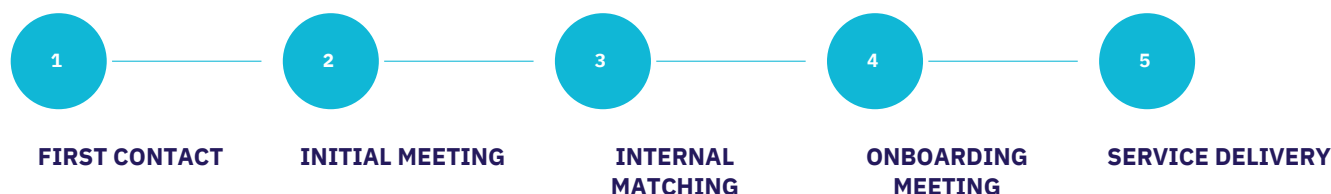
Users are recruited through the project website, professional networks, LinkedIn and direct recommendations. Internal statistics cited in the Project Summary identified professional networks as the strongest recruitment channel, followed by the website form.

The onboarding process is organised around two meetings. The initial meeting explores the user's needs and maturity level, while introducing the service catalogue, the Digital Maturity Assessment and administrative requirements.

After internal consultation, an onboarding meeting finalises the service package, documents and action plan. The project also created a dedicated user mailing list and a Users section in the Toolbox platform to track contact history, providers, timelines and selected services.

By February 2026, 59 users had accessed or were using consortium services: 40 SMEs and 19 public-sector organisations. Forty-three users had completed the T0 Digital Maturity Assessment and 27 had completed T1. The average increase between T0 and T1 was 11 percentage points.

The best-practice value lies in turning a complex support offer into a visible user journey that can be monitored and improved.





Croatia extends national co-funding for European Digital Innovation Hubs through 2026

In November, Croatia secured the legal and financial conditions for continued national co-funding of its four European Digital Innovation Hubs in 2026. Minister of Economy Ante Šušnjar signed amendments to the grant agreements with the heads of the coordinating institutions, including the Ruđer Bošković Institute on behalf of AI4Health.Cro.

The total value of Croatian EDIH projects stands at €10,266,599.16. Funding is split evenly between the Digital Europe Programme and national co-funding, with €5,133,299.58 from each source.

By 25 November 2025, the projects had mobilised €3,538,865.73. This included 979 state-aid decisions worth €2,259,312.09 and €1,279,553.64 in co-funded services for public-sector users. The deployment rate had reached 68.94 per cent of contracted funds.

For users, the decision means continuity. Testing, training, networking and access-to-finance services can continue into 2026 without a break in the support infrastructure.

€10.27M

Total value

50% + 50%

Funding structure

979

State-aid decisions

68.94%

Funds deployed

Five lessons from the second half of 2025

1

BEGIN WITH A HEALTHCARE NEED

Projects become easier to assess when the clinical or organisational problem is stated clearly.

2

BUILD SKILLS ALONGSIDE TECHNOLOGY

Teams need data literacy, implementation knowledge and confidence in real-world conditions.

3

TEST AGAINST REAL CONDITIONS

Clinical relevance, workflow fit and measurable outcomes shape the route to adoption.

4

USE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR REPEATABLE WORK

Computing capacity supports benchmarking, reproducibility and faster technical learning.

5

SECURE CONTINUITY OF SUPPORT

The co-funding decision allows Croatian EDIHs to continue serving users in 2026.

AI4Health.Cro supports healthcare organisations, public bodies, startups, SMEs and research teams through testing, skills, access to finance and ecosystem connections.