



InVirtuoLabs receives a €2.3M Eurostars grant to advance Virtual Cell Models for neurodegeneration drug research

InVirtuoLabs has been awarded a Eurostars grant of more than €2.3 million, strengthening the company's position in AI-driven drug discovery.

The 36-month project will advance a proprietary neurodegeneration program while scaling its Virtual Cell Models—AI-based simulations of diseased cells designed to predict how they respond to drug candidates.

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The grant marks a significant step for the biotech startup's transition from platform development to validated drug discovery activities. The project is run with OloBion SLU, 7HC s.r.l., and InSybio Private Company, combining complementary capabilities across biological data generation, software development, and bioinformatics/AI analysis as part of a Eurostars-funded collaboration spanning four countries (Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Greece).

The funding is non-dilutive, further reinforcing InVirtuoLabs' commercial traction as it expands its technology and partnerships.

The Virtual Cell Models are AI-driven "digital twins" of living cells that simulate how diseased cells respond to potential drugs. In practice, the technology helps research teams focus laboratory work on the most promising molecules, reducing trial-and-error and shortening research and development cycles.

The research effort aims to identify and experimentally validate 3–5 promising lead small molecules that could **progress toward future medicines for Spinocerebellar Ataxia Type 3 (SCA3), a rare neurodegenerative movement disorder**. The program targets key disease mechanisms, including reducing toxic protein build-up in cells, improving cell health, and increasing survival in preclinical disease models.

According to the **Founder & CEO Gianvito Grasso**, the project is expected to deliver three main impacts: higher preclinical success rates by reducing trial-and-error in the lab; faster progress toward neurodegenerative treatments, with the potential to expand beyond SCA3

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InVirtuoLabs is available for interviews and speaking engagements



into Alzheimer's and Parkinson's; and stronger commercial traction through co-development, industry collaboration, and licensing with biotech and pharma partners.

Next steps

Over the next 12 months, InVirtuoLabs will kick off the Eurostars program and build the high-quality biological datasets needed to train its platform. The company plans to deliver a first working version of the **Virtual Cell Models** in the second half of the year, demonstrate competitive prediction performance by year-end, and enable downstream experimental validation of AI-generated drug candidates.

In parallel, the biotech startup is expanding industrial partnerships through pharma co-development deals—customising the digital twin approach for partners' neurodegeneration projects using disease-specific data—while also building relationships with Contract Research Organizations to scale validation capacity. "InVirtuoLabs is also pursuing strategic compute collaborations with Nvidia, Google, Amazon Web Services, and Microsoft" confirmed Mr. Grasso.

Non-dilutive support remains a key pillar of the startup's growth. Alongside Eurostars, the company is participating in the **Innosuisse Flagship project ORION**, a Swiss flagship innovation initiative, and actively pursuing additional Horizon Europe, the EU's main research and innovation funding program, and Swiss financial opportunities to scale into new therapeutic areas.

On the research side, InVirtuoLabs continues to expand its academic network. "We are collaborating with the University of Milano-Bicocca's in vivo SCA3 model and maintaining strong links with the USI Startup Centre, IDSIA (Dalle Molle Institute for Artificial Intelligence), the University of Pisa, disease foundations, and clinical researchers across Europe" concluded the CEO.



About InVirtuoLabs

InVirtuoLabs is a **biotech startup** founded in Lugano, Switzerland in 2024. The startup closed its **pre-seed funding round of €2.85 million** in February 2025, marking a decisive acceleration in pharmaceutical research. Leveraging methods of advanced artificial intelligence and molecular simulations including generative models, the startup drastically reduces the time and cost of drug development, making treatments more accessible.

At the heart of InVirtuoLabs' innovation is **InVirtuoPlatform**, its Next Generation Virtual Lab, a proprietary platform that uses AI and molecular modeling to identify and optimize drugs with proven precision. This approach allows for doubling success rates compared to current research methods, drastically reducing both costs, currently exceeding €2.4 billion per drug, and development times, currently averaging 12 years.

In October 2025, InVirtuoLabs unveiled **InVirtuoGEN**, an AI model that outperformed NVIDIA on every benchmark the tech giant itself proposed, setting a new global performance standard for generative drug discovery. Following its record-setting performance, InVirtuoGEN has since been integrated into InVirtuoPlatform to support real-world pharmaceutical programs. The model has become part of the company's internal drug discovery pipeline, accelerating the design of new treatments with higher precision, faster turnaround, and lower costs.

The startup won the first prize at the Boldbrain Startup Challenge in 2024, an acceleration program for innovative ideas organized by the Agire Foundation in collaboration with the **Startup Centre of the University of Italian Switzerland (USI Startup Center)**, and with the support of the Department of Finance and Economy and BancaStato. InVirtuoLabs is also supported by the USI Startup Center within its incubation programs.

The InVirtuoLabs team brings together **researchers specializing in the AI-based drug discovery** process as well as **experts with decades of experience** in the pharmaceutical industry and business management.

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