

## PROJECT-COMFORT LAUNCHES TO REVOLUTIONIZE PATIENT-CENTRIC BLOOD COLLECTION

**December 2024, Helsinki, Finland** – Project-COMFORT, a public-private partnership supported by the Innovative Health Initiative Joint Undertaking (IHI JU), officially launched in November 2024, signalling a transformative shift in blood collection and diagnostics. This ambitious 42-month project unites 51 organizations from diverse sectors, including academia, research institutions, hospitals, foundations, SMEs, Medical Technology and Pharma companies, and other industry leaders, with the mission to make blood collection simpler, less invasive, and more accessible through innovative, patient-centred microsampling technology.

On behalf of the consortium, Project Leader Antoniu L. Fantana, PhD, Sr. Director, Eli Lilly and Company stated: *“Our goal is to redefine diagnostics by placing patient needs at the forefront and expanding healthcare access globally. Together with 51 dedicated organizations, we are committed to establishing a new standard in blood collection and diagnostics that combines patient comfort and accessibility with higher quality data.”*

Traditional blood collection methods, such as venipuncture, can be burdensome and uncomfortable, particularly for patients with limited mobility, children, the elderly, and those in rural or underserved areas. The need to visit a clinical setting often poses additional challenges, including time, cost, and travel barriers. Project-COMFORT addresses these obstacles head-on by advancing Patient-Centric Microsampling — an approach allowing smaller blood samples to be collected comfortably at home or in other convenient locations. This shift will greatly enhance diagnostic accessibility, reduce patient discomfort, and make timely health monitoring a reality for those who need it most.

*“By offering a minimally invasive, patient-friendly alternative, microsampling represents a major step forward in democratizing healthcare access,”* noted Scientific Coordinator Chi Pakarinen. *“Our project is about breaking down barriers to care and reimagining blood diagnostics as an inclusive, adaptable service that meets patients where they are.”*

Project-COMFORT leverages the diverse expertise of its partners, blending insights from healthcare providers, research institutions, patient advocacy groups, and technology innovators. The aim is to also involve regulatory and HTA experts from the start to ensure the best chances for successful project implementation and better uptake of project results. This unique collaboration integrates advanced clinical research, regulatory compliance, and technological development, creating a robust foundation for microsampling to emerge as a recognized standard. With expertise spanning a broad array of disciplines, the consortium partners are collectively building a model that can lead to more patient-centred, efficient healthcare in the future.

*“At the heart of Project-COMFORT is a commitment to patient-centred innovation,”* said Administrative Coordinator Professor Georgios Theodoridis, School of Chemistry, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. *“This project holds groundbreaking potential to make Patient-Centric Microsampling an accepted alternative to traditional blood draws, fundamentally transforming the diagnostic experience for patients. By reducing the burden of testing and enhancing accessibility, we are paving the way for data-driven healthcare advancements that will improve patient outcomes and support more effective healthcare planning worldwide.”*

The project’s ultimate goal is to generate impactful, data-driven insights that not only improve individual patient care but also guide public health strategies. The rich data made available through microsampling technology has the potential to influence healthcare policy, resource allocation, and preventive care measures, leading to a healthier, more resilient population.

With this launch, Project-COMFORT embarks on a journey of global impact, backed by €6,6 million in funding and an unparalleled commitment from its diverse network of partners. By engaging patient communities, healthcare providers, and regulatory bodies from the outset, the project will ensure that each stage of development is attuned to real-world needs and expectations. As Project-COMFORT progresses, regular updates and collaboration opportunities will be shared to welcome stakeholders into this groundbreaking healthcare transformation.

### About Project-COMFORT

Project-COMFORT is a pioneering public-private partnership supported by the Innovative Health Initiative Joint Undertaking (IHI JU). Bringing together 51 organizations from academia, healthcare, research institutions, and industry, Project-COMFORT aims to transform blood collection and diagnostics by developing, testing and validating patient-centred microsampling logistics infrastructure that can be implemented across diverse health systems in Europe, UK and beyond. This innovative approach seeks to make blood microsample collection an accepted alternative to venipuncture, making it less invasive, more accessible and available to patients worldwide, especially those in underserved communities.

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For more information, please visit:

- Project-COMFORT website: <https://ihi-project-comfort.com>
- Project-COMFORT LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/project-comfort>
- For IHI project factsheet: <https://www.ihi.europa.eu/projects-results/project-factsheets> (search for Project-COMFORT)

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