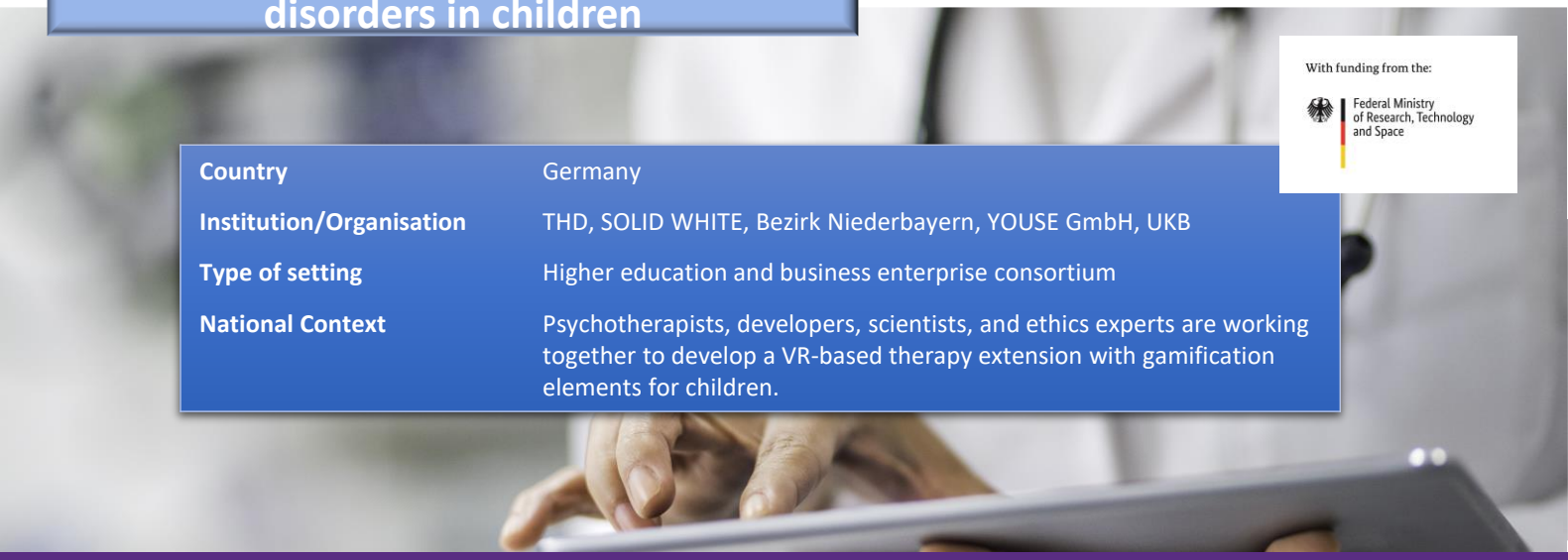
Hybrid Healthcare

Virtually alleviating social anxiety disorders in children



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Country	Germany
Institution/Organisation	THD, SOLID WHITE, Bezirk Niederbayern, YOUSE GmbH, UKB
Type of setting	Higher education and business enterprise consortium
National Context	Psychotherapists, developers, scientists, and ethics experts are working together to develop a VR-based therapy extension with gamification elements for children.

The project aims to develop and evaluate a real-time 3D VR system for children aged 8 to 12. This platform supports children to practice their social skills in a safe environment and different scenarios through playful elements and immersive experiences.

Implementation Process

- **Steps Taken**: Involve avatar and environment design, playful elements, Mulit-User-Approach, and Ethics, Law, and Social Affairs (ELSA).
- **Stakeholders Involved**: Psychotherapists, software developers for the VR world, children as pilot participants, and parents of children with social anxiety.
- **Timeframe**: Ongoing

Impact and Results

- **Quantitative Results**: A list of gamification features and functions was developed, a functional VR platform prototype was created, and an evaluation report demonstrated the platform's effectiveness through quantified changes.
- **Qualitative Outcomes**: Enhanced therapist and patient engagement and feedback evaluation of values identified by parents that guide technological development and finally workshops for clinical professionals and academics.

Success Factors

- Tailoring of scenarios to specific therapeutic situations.
- Support for deeper understanding of treatment mechanisms.
- Enablement of individually tailored treatment approaches.
- Focus on meeting the specific needs of the children.

Challenges and Barriers

- The system might face limitations in rural or under-resourced clinical settings due to the need for specific VR hardware and server infrastructure.
- Differences in children's comfort with VR.
- Controlled environments, such as clinics and therapy centers with technical

Key Lessons Learned

- Initial developments suggest that involving children, parents, and therapists in co-design processes could significantly improve system relevance and usability.

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