Press Release

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EU-PROJECT SHOTPROS: VR TRAINING FOR THE POLICE RECEIVES THE E AWARD

The VR training system co-developed by the AIT Center for Technology Experience was awarded the eAward in the category "Education and Social Issues" on Monday.

The development of an innovative VR training solution for police training in Europe and embedding it in a training curriculum was the focus of the Horizon 2020 project SHOTPROS. In the research project launched in 2019, the AIT Center for Technology Experience acted as scientific lead. The comprehensive project to improve the decision-making and action skills of police forces across Europe has now been awarded the eAward in the category "Education and Social Issues". The jury, chaired by Christian Rupp, Director of the National E-Government Competence Centre in Berlin, praised in particular the "project breadth of human and social factors, the cross-border cooperation, but also saw the VR training solution that has now been created as well as the training curriculum as a "quick win for the executive". In addition, the AIT Austrian Institute for Technology was also nominated for the eAward for the projects CATRINA www.catrina.at (diversity-sensitive playful promotion of civil courage) and IDSF https://idsf.io (conference and creation of a digital platform for cyber security) from a wealth of project submissions.

Reactions to the eAward for SHOTPROS

"We are very happy about this great award. For the first time, we have succeeded in bringing together police training organisations, researchers and technical solution partners in a project of this dimension. With Virtual Reality we succeed in increasing security in Europe," emphasised AIT project manager Helmut Schrom-Feiertag. Training in virtual reality offers enormous advantages, especially in the police sector. A wide variety of operational scenarios - whether terrorist attacks, assassinations or domestic violence - can be trained and analysed at different levels of difficulty. Project coordinator Birgit Harthum from the consulting company USECON said that "above all, the human being, the user, must always be the focus – in this case, this applies both to police officers who use the solution and to trainers who use it to train and develop emergency forces.

Rapid innovation through agile, user-centred adaptation

The VR training solution was shaped by the continuous feedback from the participating police agencies in the project. To enable realistic training, the SHOTPROS project developed a specific tactical belt with realistic police equipment that can be used in the VR training situation. In addition, the training area was enlarged to 70 x 100 metres in order to be able to train large scenarios such as rampages or incidents in public places. "Our studies have shown that about three quarters of the police officers find their way around the virtual environment very well," says Helmut Schrom-Feiertag, scientific project manager at the AIT Center for Technology Experience. In particular, the integrated real-time stress measurement developed in the project, which provides the trainers with

additional information about the individual stress level of the trainees, brings great additional benefits. The project has shown that the tasks of trainers are also changing and that new digital technologies can provide decisive support," underlines Schrom-Feiertag: "The trainer dashboard and the after-action review for an evidence-based debriefing of the training, gives trainers the opportunity for improved interaction with the trainees during and after the training and provides trainers with meaningful data on training performance.

Police officers and trainers convinced of advantages

Especially the training of complex operational situations can be carried out very efficiently with the help of SHOTPROS compared to real training. The vast majority of the trainees (97 per cent) were completely convinced: With the new VR-based training system, you can acquire better skills and are therefore much better equipped for real incidents. The safe environment allows for more repetitions and a detailed debriefing with the trainers. This results in better learning outcomes and a more intensive learning experience. In total, more than 1,500 police officers in the partner countries Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania and Belgium have tested the new VR training system and their feedback has enabled the system to be further adapted and improved to their needs.

Final conference in Belgium and "VR and Police" network

At the final project conference in Belgium at the Campus Vesta training ground, all project partners and many international guests came together on 14 and 15 September. SHOTPROS was also presented to the Belgian Minister of the Interior, Annnelies Verlinden, who tested the system herself on site. The project has also created a new Europe-wide community called "VR and Police", which will serve as a basis for further thematic exchange and the continuation of research activities even after the project ends in October 2022. A team of 13 European project partners (coordinated by Markus Murtinger) has been working together on the European research project SHOTPROS since 2019. It was funded by the Horizon 2020 programme of the European Union (grant agreement no. 833672) and ends in October 2022. https://shotpros.eu

Photos for download: Flickr Gallery: AIT eAward 2022
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