



## EU project develops computer role play game to help prevent bullying at school

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Currently over 1,000 children from around Europe are involved in pilot studies exploring the impact that the software may have in the reduction of bullying among pupils.

The scientists following the studies are members of the EU-funded Kaleidoscope project, a pan-European research network addressing on technology-enhanced learning.

In the specially developed computer game 'FearNot!', each child takes the role of an invisible friend of the victimised character, discussing problems and exploring possible solutions and coping strategies. The advice given subsequently influences the actions of the victim.

With 'FearNot!' the researchers are using a new and innovative approach to get children to reflect on the sensitive topic of bullying. 'This 3-D interactive virtual environment provides a safe haven for individual children, where they witness bullying scenarios without being directly involved,' says Rui Figueiredo, a scientist at the Institute of Computer and Systems Engineering in Portugal and one of the Kaleidoscope researchers. 'We use emergent narrative techniques, which enable the learner to direct the path the story should follow,' he added.

The problem of bullying among schoolchildren is often underestimated. Studies show that this behaviour can be found in nearly every school, and that the incidence is

quite high. Bullying can take many different forms, including name-calling, spreading rumours and lies, as well as threatening, blackmailing and violence.

The Kaleidoscope research group will be presenting more of their work at the upcoming Kaleidoscope 2007 Symposium, which will take place on 26 and 27 November in Berlin.

## Countries

Germany, Portugal, United Kingdom

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