



EUMEPLAT
European Media Platforms:
Assessing Negative and Positive Externalities for European Culture

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The EUMEPLAT Delphi+ Workshops: A Manual
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The EUMEPLAT Delphi+ Workshops: A Manual

Nico Carpentier & Miloš Hroch

1. Introduction

The Delphi+ method is an old method for future scenario-building and forecasting. To illustrate: Gordon (2009)¹ relates this method to the work of RAND in the early 1960s, with for instance, the *Report on a Long-Range Forecasting Study* by Theodore J. Gordon and Olaf Helmer-Hirschberg from 1964.² There many variations of this method, but there are a number of characteristics that are more transversal. As Gordon (2009) summarizes it, it is a “controlled debate”, which allows to establish consensus through a series of iterations. How these iterations are organized varies to a great extent.

The Delphi method is a method for future scenario-building and forecasting with a long history. To illustrate: Gordon (2009: 1-2) relates this method to the work of RAND in the early 1960s. Developed in the early stages of the Cold War, in order to predict the impact of technology on warfare (San-Jose and Retolaza, 2016: 3), its consolidation started with the RAND projects, which were established to predict the probability or intensity of possible enemy attacks. These think tanks, such as RAND, “provided the methods and techniques for the military and strategic planning of US administrations” (Seefried, 2014: 3; see also Amadae, 2003). Currently, the Delphi method – as a technique that offers a “systematic means of synthesizing the judgments of experts” (Gordon, 2009: 11) – is used across various academic disciplines and fields. There are many variations of the Delphi method itself, but several characteristics are still transversally present. Landeta (2006: 468) defines the Delphi method as “a method of structuring communication between a group of people who can provide valuable contributions to resolve a complex problem.” As Gordon (2009: 4) summarizes it, the Delphi method is grounded in a “controlled debate” which allows for the establishment of consensus among experts, through a series of iterations. This implies that expert-participants can discuss the responses of others and the work of the group as a whole, but also that they can alter their own positions during the process.

Despite its limitations (Winkler and Moser, 2016: 63), the Delphi method is often used in future studies, while it is met also in other fields (Poli, 2018). The field of future studies is defined by Inayatullah (2012: 37) as “the systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future.” As a field, future studies has moved “from predicting the future to mapping alternative futures to shaping desired futures” (Inayatullah, 2012: 37). These three components refer to three different approaches—with different ontological assumptions—namely, forecasting (to predict the most likely future), scenario-building (to explore alternative futures) and backcasting (to assess the feasibility of a desired future). As it is often emphasized in future studies publications: “Futurists do not know what will happen. They do not claim to prophesy. However, they do claim to know more about a

¹ <https://www.millennium-project.org/publications-2/futures-research-methodology-version-3-0/>

² <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P2982.html>

range of possible and desirable futures and how these futures might evolve” (Glenn, 2009, see also Robinson, 1988: 325). In the end, future studies relate to “thinking the unthinkable” (Kahn, 1962).

In our case, we adjusted the Delphi method into a 3-and-a-half-hour face-to-face scenario-building workshop, which focussed on five pre-given themes (surveillance and resistance, algorithms and choice, toxic debate and pluralistic values, destructive technologies and war, and gender in society). The four workshops³ we organized had two stages. Stage one consisted of small group discussions, with one moderator for each of the subgroups, with the aim of producing three future scenarios for each theme. In stage two, which was a plenary stage, the participants introduced a selection of scenarios to the entire group. The four workshops were organised in three different European cities, with in total 29 participants (see Table 1 for an overview). As a method, these adjusted (and time-compressed) workshops approximate what Pan et al. (1996) called a mini-Delphi, although we prefer to label these four workshops ‘Delphi+’ workshops.

Table 1: The EUMEPLAT Delphi+ workshops

Number	Date	Location	Participants
1	5 July 2022	Malmö, Sweden	Science fiction writers and foresight researchers, experts on science communication or philosophy of science, and specialists in digital marketing and applied predictive models (6 participants)
2	4 October 2022	Sofia, Bulgaria	A theatre artist, a Roma activist, a journalist, and a former representative of the Bulgarian government in the field of culture (6 participants)
3	13 April 2023	Rome, Italy	Expertise ranging from cultural relations, bioethics and AI to political science and the futures of electronic music (7 participants)
4	23 June 2023	Sofia, Bulgaria	A film maker and producer, a TikTok influencer, journalists, media studies professors, and chatbot and new media experts (10 participants)

In this document, we have collected all documents that we have used to organise the EUMEPLAT Delphi+ workshops, documenting our research practice but also making it accessible to other researchers for replication and usage.

2. The core structure of the EUMEPLAT Delphi+ workshops

In our case, for the EUMEPLAT project, we have been using two-stage workshops, with the first part of the workshop aimed at developing a series of future scenarios, and the second part at

³ Before, we had a pilot Delphi+ workshop in Prague, on 5 May 2022. These data were not used.

achieving consensus about the nature and importance of the different scenarios. In part one, the (about) 9 participants were divided into three subgroups, and they were then invited (after an introduction) to develop three future scenarios in each subgroup, in relation to the following five EUMEPLAT topics (always in relation to digital platforms and Europe):

- Surveillance and Resistance
- Choice and Algorithms
- Toxic Debate and Pluralistic Values
- Destructive Technologies and War
- Gender in Societies

In the second part of these workshops, the developed scenarios were then ranked, using a dimension of likelihood, allowing the participants to elaborate a selection of these scenarios, further validating them through discussion.

Participants were selected, from a variety of societal fields, on the basis of their affinity with, and knowledge about, the topics and their imaginative capacities. As we organized these Delphi+ workshops at the moments and locations where the EUMEPLAT consortium (or some of its work packages) met, we also selected participants on the basis of their proximity to the meeting locations (not restricting us to one country, but also including the neighbouring countries).

We have kept these workshops closed to most of the EUMEPLAT consortium members, not to disrupt the process too much. Only one or two members were included as moderators, and they were carefully briefed beforehand, so that they could help to protect the procedure and the focus of the workshops.

3. Participants and Roles

1/ The overarching moderation (Nico Carpentier, CU): Introduction, Division into subgroups, Moderation of short wrap-ups, and Moderation of joint presentation

2/ The subgroup moderation (Miloš Hroch, CU and two team members from the hosting university): Moderation of cluster discussions

Guidelines for subgroup moderators

The EUMEPLAT subgroup moderator will help to protect the procedure and the focus of the workshops (as semi-moderator) without intervening in the discussions. The moderator also helps to protect the focus (platforms, Europe and the future).

a/ The moderator introduces topics and a limited number of key questions related to these topics.

b/ Moderator does not take space for himself/herself/themselves. The subgroup is not a platform for the presentation of personal observations. The main task is to keep the debate going (with scenario production as outcome)

- c/ The moderator keeps an eye on time, and guarantees that each subgroup produces three scenarios per topic (15 scenarios for 5 topics in total).
- d/ The moderator is responsible for the documentation of the scenarios on the scenario cards. If needed, the moderator can propose scenario titles or help the Delphi+ participants to express themselves in a more coherent and concise way.
- e/ The moderator also ensures that a rapporteur is selected for the wrap-up sessions (e.g., for the presentation of the favourite scenario card). If needed, the moderator takes the role of the rapporteur.
- f/ The moderator is responsible for recording the session and handing the audio files to the coordinators after the Delphi+ workshop.

3/ The Delphi+ participants

As mentioned before, the Delphi+ workshop participants were selected, from a variety of societal fields, on the basis of their affinity with, and knowledge about, the topics and their imaginative capacities. As these Delphi+ workshops were organised at the moments and locations that the EUMEPLAT consortium met, we also selected participants on the basis of their proximity to the meeting locations.

We looked for participants whose work is future-oriented and related to Europe and digital media platforms. It did not matter whether these platforms were their main area of interest or whether they used them as tools for distribution or production. Participants could have been tech journalists writing for a mainstream newspaper about streaming industries, or digital media artists working with AI. They might have been science fiction authors who published dystopian novels about digital surveillance turning into a totalitarian state. They might be feminist activists who use TikTok to amplify their agenda.

We highly appreciated the help of the hosting universities because their knowledge of the local context was essential for us. When collaborating with local hosts, we offered a series of participant profiles, while we welcomed other suggestions. Participants could be urbanists, graphic designers, mathematicians, videogame developers or academics, inside or outside of media studies. In general, we were looking for people with imagination.

Participant profiles and strategies for finding the participants

- a/ Artists (Intermedia, digital media, conceptual artists)
Check the lists of recently awarded artists in your country or look for any suitable future-oriented candidates from the exhibited artists at art [biennale](#) in the country.

b/ Writers (Science fiction)

Are there any reachable future-oriented Delphi+ candidates featured among awarded persons?

<https://www.esfs.info/next-current-esfs-awards/>

<https://euprizeliterature.eu/>

c/ Activists (Civil society, Human rights, Feminism)

Are there any reachable future-oriented Delphi+ candidates featured in the awarded lists?

<https://europeanmovement.eu/women-of-europe/>

d/ Philosophers & theorists

Are there any reachable future-oriented Delphi+ candidates from your university or department (or from anywhere reachable)? They might have published a new book and were present in the media recently. Or look for Digital Aesthetics research groups, Art-based researchers or any futurologists at your university?

e/ Journalists

Are there any reachable future-oriented Delphi+ candidates featured in the awarded lists?

<https://www.europeanpressprize.com/shortlists/year-2021/>

f/ Policy-makers

Check the boards of media organisations in your country for any Delphi+ candidates with future visions for the media sector.

g/ Left-hand of the state (public sector and welfare state)

For instance, was there any doctor who became a prominent media figure during the pandemic who might be a good fit for Delphi?

h/ Public service media representatives

Are there any reachable future-oriented Delphi+ candidates?

<https://www.ebu.ch/about/members>

4. Organisational plan

4.1 Steps for organising a Delphi+ workshop

1/ Contact the responsible person from the hosting university's team two to three months prior to the Delphi+ workshop (pass on the relevant information about the needed material, room requirements, and moderation)

2/ Creation of the participant suggestion list in collaboration with the hosting university (2 months prior to the meeting)

3/ The CU team will decide on the final selection of the participants and start contacting the participants with the official invitations (targeting 9 persons) (1-2 months prior to the meeting)

4/ Administrative issues, handled by CU:

- a) preparation of the 'expert fee' contracts
- b) estimation of additional costs for the room & coffee + snacks (if the hosting university does not provide them) (1 month prior to the meeting),
- c) production of the so-called 'order' for the CU administration to make these expenses

5/ Collection of the signed contracts from the confirmed participants (allowing for their payment) and passing the documents to the responsible department at the CU (14 days prior to the meeting)

6/ Briefing of the moderators beforehand (14 days prior to the meeting)

7/ Sending the reminder (7 days prior to the meeting)

8/ Presentation and the script for the Delphi+ workshop ready (7 days prior to the meeting)

4.2 For the hosting university: Materials and room requirements

Material

- empty scenario cards (pre-printed) 40x
- pens 10+
- a pack of empty A4 paper
- post-its
- audio recording devices
- coffee + snacks (if possible, can otherwise be covered by CU)

Room requirements

- room needs to be large enough to have three groups sit separately several meters apart, so that subgroups will not disturb each other
- room needs to have a large table, with a flat surface, and sufficient space to sit and stand around it

4.3 The (indicative) budget

The following budget was used for a workshop in Sofia, Bulgaria. Several (non-mentioned) elements were provided by the host university free of cost.

Item	Cost per unit (in Euro)	Total Cost
9 participants fee	75	675
Snacks + coffee for 9 participants and 4 moderators	150	150
Cost for post-workshop lunch or dinner	30	390
Additional travel costs for participants	200	200
Return flights two CU moderators	250	500
Accommodation two CU moderators (2 nights)	75	300
Transcription	500	500
Total		2715

4.4 The prepared scenario card

Title of the scenario:
Short description of the scenario:

5. Process

5.1 Time Table

The total estimated time of a Delphi+ workshop was 3,5 hours (215 minutes).

General time table

- 1/Introduction: 15 minutes
- 2/ Division into 3 groups: 5 minutes
- 3/ Cluster 1) with two topics (40 minutes in total)
- 4/ A short wrap-up (10 minutes) >> **75 minutes checkpoint**
- Coffee break 15 minutes
- 5/ Cluster 2) with three topics (60 minutes in total)
- 6/ A short wrap-up (15 minutes) >> **170 minutes checkpoint**
- 7/ Joint presentation (45 minutes) >> **end at 215 minutes**

5.2 Instructions, detailed time plan and support questions for during the workshop process

1/ General introduction – Moderator (15 minutes)

2/ Division into 3 groups – Moderator (5 minutes)

Small groups of 3 people with one EUMEPLAT moderator added to each. The EUMEPLAT moderator who will help to protect the procedure and the focus of the workshops (as semi-moderators) without intervening and who will help to keep the focus on track (platforms, Europe and the future).

3/ Cluster 1) with two topics (40 minutes in total)

Participants will have 20 minutes to come up with core ideas about the future scenario related to each of the following two topics. Please keep in mind that these ideas will be more of snapshots and sketches.

C1a. Surveillance and Resistance – intro by Moderator

What will the state of surveillance and resistance to it look like in the future? Will Europe and digital platforms play a significant role in the development? Is there any positive surveillance and how to resist the destructive forms of surveillance?

C1b. Choice and Algorithms – intro by Moderator

How much weight will algorithms have in the future – in the way how we consume and produce culture? And elsewhere? Are there any issues specifically European in relation to choice and algorithms? Can we resist and do you think platforms can help? Or the opposite?

4/ A short wrap-up (10 minutes)

Each of the groups will delegate one speaker who will present their favourite scenario for the two topics. If there are three groups, we will thus have three presentations.

(coffee break)

5/ Cluster 2) with three topics (60 minutes in total)

Participants will have 20 minutes to produce three future scenarios related to each of the following three topics.

C2a. Toxic Debate and Pluralistic Values – intro by Moderator

What will the future bring for online debates and what will be the role of platforms? How will we handle fake news in the future and are there any threats? How we will ensure respect for pluralism and diversity in the future European media landscape?

C2b. Destructive Technologies and War – intro by Moderator

How will cyberwar look in the future? What are the challenges for the environment through our use of (media) technologies? What will be the role of European platforms and European landmass in the future?

C2c. Gender in Societies – intro by Moderator

What will European gender activism look like in the future? Can platforms contribute to the diversity and de-dichotomisation of gender?

6/ A short wrap-up (15 minutes)

Each of the groups will delegate one speaker who will present their favourite scenario for each of the three topics.

7/ Joint presentation (45 minutes)

Groups first orders their scenarios on a table from the most likely to the least likely.

They then present these scenarios to each other, explaining what each scenario is about. If time permits, all scenarios are discussed. If not, the more extreme scenarios get priority.

After a series of explanations, the participants select a few (five) scenarios and explain how these scenarios will (1) create more or less Europe (and how). Here, we provide post-its, to stick on the scenario cards.

5.3 General introduction

Welcome to our Delphi+ workshop. For starters: You might have noticed the maybe strange organization of the room. We have one big table which will be our working table and then we have made little islands which is a place where the subgroups will go, because we will split you into groups later, and these islands is where the subgroups will move to.

What we want you to do is to think about the future. That is the main assignment, and it is an incredibly difficult one. Obviously, the future does not exist yet, it is not fixed, it is to be made by us, within in our societies, but sometimes we do have hints of what is going to happen, and that is what we actually want to hear from you: What you think will happen in a number of areas that are related to the project that we are involved in. It is a reflection about our futures, it is not an easy one, we know that because future is unpredictable. But we will guide you through the process in different steps, so that you can develop a series of scenarios. That is also why we have organized the room as it is.

And I should say welcome again, because it is good to have you here. Thanks for spending your time with us: from an academic perspective your time is a gift to us and we really appreciate it.

(self-introduction removed)

Then, I want to introduce EUMEPLAT to you. It is what it is called, in European research language, a Horizon 2020 project. It is financed by the European Union. We do many things within EUMEPLAT, and one of our activities is about trying to predict the future in relationship to the main topic of what we are studying, which is Europeanisation and platformisation. In EUMEPLAT, we study the interaction between platforms, the digital world, and Europe. This also means that we are interested in understanding possible scenarios of the future in these two areas.

In organizing this reflection, we do not want to have only academics—the academic researchers in our team—to study the future, but we want to engage in dialogues with a wide diversity of people with different backgrounds, some of them are what we call ‘hybrids’ (half academics), some with no connection with academia whatsoever. Our intention is to look at the diversity, at the different ways of thinking. Because, when it comes to predicting the future, one needs creativity, and creativity comes from a variety of backgrounds, not just from academia. The arts is one of the areas, activism is one of the areas, the digital media world is one of the areas, politics is another area, academia, of course, is an area as well. But it is about the confrontation of these worlds.

What we will invite you to do might sound as asking you to take out this famous crystal ball and predict the future, but we will do it in a very organized way. This means that we will guide you through the process, by taking different steps. What we will not do is ask you to sit down and write five sentences about the future of Europe, that is not how we will work. It is much more detailed, always keeping in mind that the future is not fixed. We do not have the capacity of knowing what the future will be, obviously, but we all have ideas what it could be. And that is why we work with: scenarios. We are not going to ask you for the one story about the future, we are going to ask you for several different scenarios. Our ambition is to try to understand how people think about and through these different scenarios.

As I said, you saw that we created little islands in the room, so that is where subgroups will work together in creating these scenarios. But it is never an individual process. Our method is inspired by what is called the Delphi+ method, keeping in mind that there are all sorts of labels for what we are doing. The Delphi+ method is a very old method, which was developed in the 1960s for many different purposes, mostly, of course, predicting the future in relation to technological development. That has often been the area where the Delphi+ methodology was used, but there is an endless set of variations. What we will use is one of these variations: It is a two-stage format. We will divide you in small groups, have you discuss scenarios, capture your discussion and then come back to the main group and report. That is when this large table, where we are now sitting, comes in. The Delphi+ method is aimed at creating some degree of consensus, in our case in these small groups first, even though we also know that there is no ultimate consensus.

We have five topics for you to discuss. For all five topics, we will ask you to produce three scenarios each. The first one, and we will explain them more in detail later, is surveillance and resistance. How people are being surveilled but also about resistance against this surveillance. Algorithms and choice: How much space for choice is there, if everything is pre-set and how you deal with that. Or better: How will we deal in the future with that. Toxic debate and pluralism: How we will interact with each other in the future. Whether we shall continue to insult each other online or maybe we will find peaceful ways of collaborating. Disruptive technologies and war: How will we use technologies to harm us and others. And gender and society, that is out last area. We did not choose these five topics at random; they were actually part of the original project proposal, and they are important debates. For instance, surveillance and resistance is very much about the political dimension in a very broad sense, how we

accept surveillance and how we resist it, how we bypass it possibly, and what will happen there. Algorithms and choice is also a key philosophical debate, about how much space we will have to make our choices if everything is pre-set without us even noticing it. Gender, today, the last one, is equally important because it is one of the areas where there are potential changes, where some would argue that we develop towards more equal relationships but others would say that sexist language is actually so important on platforms that it is making things worse. There are always different future directions possible. We will provide you with slightly more elaborate explanations for each of these five dimensions later on, when we will introduce them to. Still, we will only say a few sentences more, as we do not want to direct you too much.

After these introductions, we will invite you to move to your island, and think about what will happen about these topics in the future. After a few rounds of discussions, we will bring you back to this main table so we can discuss about what you came up. Then we will have a break, with some drinks and snacks.

The main idea is to have you moving back and forth from the islands now, we are not going to discuss all five themes at once, because that will be too stressful for you. What we will do is that we will cluster them. So we will do two topics first, which are surveillance and resistance and choice and algorithms, as they are actually related. We will discuss them and then we will come back to the table, have a conversation about them and then we can do the three others.

When you will go to the island, you will see small forms lying there. Each of these forms is a very simple white A5 page, which has a space for a title and then space to summarize the scenario. The plan is that you discuss a future scenario. Then, you are requested to decide on a title for that scenario, so that we have label for it. For each of these topics, for instance, for surveillance and resistance and for choice and algorithms, the plan is to have three of these forms filled out, in each subgroup. Now, the forms are not that big; they are an A5-format. The small size is intentional, because we do not want you to write a large essay, but to capture the discussion, and to have a trace of your discussion.

There will always be one of the team members sitting at your island, to help you. This is a moderator, not another debating partner. They will be there to help you with the discussions and to keep things going. They will also keep track of time. I, as the main moderator, will act as a master of ceremony for this workshop, I will just move around the room and see if I can help somewhere, if there is a problem. I will thus just move from island to island.

What we will do, in the second part of the workshop, when we have collected all these scenarios, we will then use this large table. On one of the sides of the table will be a note saying “unlikely”, the other side will have an “likely” note. We will then ask you to order the scenarios on this scale from unlikely to likely. And then again, we will ask you to talk about these scenarios, this time why they are likely or unlikely. At the very end, we will ask you to address the European dimension of these scenarios. During the earlier parts of the workshop, you will not necessarily always talk about Europe. You might be more inclined to talk about platforms in the digital world, more than about Europe. This is why that, at the end, we will ask you to link these scenarios, where possible, with Europe, when we are at the large table. In other words, if Europe does not come up too much during the island conversations, that is fine, because we will return to this topic at the end. Then, we will explicitly ask what the role of Europe in these different scenarios might be, so that there is a clear connection with the European dimensions that we are interested in.

Finally, on ethics. This is academic research, which means that what we do is very strongly embedded in the ethical. There are a couple of issues I want to address. Before we started recording, I already asked for permission for recording, and this is still ok for you?

I also want to ask for permission to use your recorded speech and the scenario-forms that you will produce, for academic research and for academic publications. Our plan is to use that material to analyse it, and to publish excerpts from it. Is this OK for you?

Importantly, if you change your mind about this permission, you can do that anytime. This is one of these elements of choice that I think that are important for you to know: You can always revoke your permission. Practically speaking: for instance, if there is something that is said, where, like tomorrow morning, when you wake up and you think: "I should not have said that", please do tell us, and we will erase it. It is not a problem whatsoever, because you are always entitled to adjust this agreement about us using the material.

We will record the conversations, and we will transcribe them, but when we use excerpts in publications, we will not mention your names in connection to particular citations. It is a basic practice. Some of you will say: "I do not mind if my name is mentioned, that is OK", but we use anonymisation as a standard practice so that we are sure that nothing goes wrong. I prefer to avoid a situation where in ten years' time somebody gets confronted with a statement with which they do not want to be confronted with. That is why we anonymize statements. This is mostly to protect you, but basically everybody. This is also how we will proceed: When we transcribe recordings, we will still have names in the transcriptions, but when we start using the transcriptions, they will be replaced by codes.

If for some reason, there is something happening during the workshop, that you are not comfortable with, if you want to leave, there is no problem. You are always free to leave. Do not feel obliged to stay if you are uncomfortable. That is my last comment about the ethical aspects of our research, and this concludes my introduction.

Are there any questions from your side? Anything you still want to know?

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