

# The Delphi report

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## Summary

In accord with the literature we used the Delphi method as a way to structure group communications. The Delphi questionnaires, which consist of 4-5 questions each, have been given to the participants of the five online conferences prior to the conferences. The participants have expertise because the conduct or own an internet portal (conference 1), they belong to a local authority (conference 2), they were a journalist or media expert (conference 3), and so on. The Delphi process consists of the online questionnaire, the categorising of the answers, and the feedback given as an input in the online conference.

With respect to the results of the Delphi method in the conference reports, there is good evidence that the Delphi method can help to structure the topics of the conferences. The questionings help to identify facts, opinions, and interests relevant to start and maintain online discussion.

The results of the Delphi questioning with the moderators were positive at all.

- The benefits: The moderators agree that the Delphi method is a good starting point for any online discussion.
- The difficulties: The main problem of the Delphi method is the additional work both for the participants and the moderators. The experts have to answer the questions, and the moderators have to categorise them.
- The actual usage: The moderators have used the Delphi categories to start the online conference, and maintain discussion during the online conference.
- The future usage: All but one moderator will use the Delphi method again in future online conferences.

This leads to the recommendation that the efficiency of an online conference can gain a lot from an online Delphi questioning at the beginning.

## 1 What is the Delphi method?

The use of a research methodology usually depends on the research question of a study. This may especially be the case for the Delphi method. Because the definition of the Delphi method has to account for the various purposes of studies, we use the term Delphi in a broad sense. According to a definition of Linstone and Turoff (2002a) the *Delphi method is a method for structuring group communications*. As they pointed out: "Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (Linstone & Turoff, 2002a, 3).

The Delphi method can be characterized by 2 important **features**. First, as with car racing the Delphi process may consist of many "laps" and each "lap" consists of 4 steps: Questioning the experts – assembling their knowledge, interests or opinions – analysing it – giving feedback to the experts. Then the next "lap" will start, and so on. Second, a degree of anonymity is necessary to assure the experts privacy. On face-to-face conferences the group dynamics sometimes contradict the intended results. But if the participants are incognito, no one has to justify his opinion or to contain himself.

The structure of the group communication and the end of the Delphi process heavily depends on the purpose of the study. When reviewing the papers of an international

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Delphi-Symposium, Welker reports relevant **purposes** and applications of the Delphi method (Welker, 2002, (6); see also Linstone & Turoff, 2002a, 4):

- 1) to explicate future developments
- 2) to show the consequences of a development
- 3) to reach a consensus among experts
- 4) to assert dissensus among experts
- 5) to modificate the knowledge or opinions of the participants itself
- 6) to develop an artefact or product

From finding a new research field to structuring a field of research that is widely un-structured and from problem finding tasks to problem solving tasks, the variety of purposes is surprising. This leads to some **variations** of the Delphi method.

- 1) *Relaxation of anonymity.* With computerized conferencing the view on anonymity changes. For example neither the nick name nor the real name may be truth. As the editors Linstone and Turoff pointed out: "It is the view of the editors that the question of anonymity or its degree is less crucial to the definition of Delphi than the concept of designing the human communication structure to be used" (Linstone & Turoff, 2002b, 484).
- 2) *Changing media:* Paper-pencil discussion – face-to-face discussion – online discussion group. Often the participants of a Delphi study have to answer a questionnaire. The researchers evaluate the answers and give the participants a feedback. The questionnaire can be supplemented by face-to-face discussion. And if a face-to-face discussion group is impossible because of costs or time to meet, the computerized discussion put things right. The computerized discussion is often called online- or HTML-Delphi.
- 3) *Changing feedback.* The feedback may consist of medians, quartiles, quintiles or frequency distributions.
- 4) *Pre-Delphi.* A small group of experts answer the questions first and the results of this questioning are given to all experts.
- 5) *Quantity of "laps".* This means that a minimum of one "lap" is necessary when the feedback coincides with the results of lap 1. Without explicit feedback the results will be presented to the experts of lap 2. Two, three oder more "laps" are necessary to reach a consensus between experts considering a specific task or stability in their opinions.

Please note that the efficiency of the chosen Delphi technique is heavily dependent on the purpose of the study. The degree of anonymity is one of the other question-able **prerequisites** of successful Delphi. The third condition that should be carefully considered is the sample of experts. It is not necessary to get a random sample of experts, but to assure that many facets of the research problem can be discussed. Literature recommends three or more persons, an equivalent of men and women, an equivalent of theorists and practitioners, and so on. But it is necessary that the experts are competent experts and that there knowledge is heterogeneous.

But be careful that the number of experts is big enough to pass two, three or four repetitions. The number of drop outs over the time is outstanding.

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The last questions to be considered are “What are the **advantages** of computerized or online Delphi?” or “Which properties lead to the need of employing Delphi?” In summary it will be the possibility to get an international expert group and some economic reasons, e.g. the costs and time to organise a face-to-face meeting. Linstone and Turoff emphasize the attractiveness of computerized Delphi as compared to other forms of communication, but only when the following conditions are met (from Linstone & Turoff, 2002b, 485):

- (1) “the group is spread out geographically;
- (2) a written record is desirable;
- (3) the individuals are busy and frequent meetings are difficult;
- (4) topics are complex and require reflection and contemplation from the conferees;
- (5) insufficient travel opportunity is available;
- (6) a large group is involved (15 to 50);
- (7) disagreements exist which require anonymity promote the discussion (e.g., Delphi discussions) or free exchange of ideas.”

And what about the **problems** of online Delphi? The Delphi method can resolve some of the disadvantages of online research, e.g. the sampling of experts and the anonymity of answers, but its imprudent application can create new problems. However a carefully employed online Delphi seems to create no more problems than other online questionings (Welker, 2002, (12)).

## 2 How we adapt the Delphi method?

Remember that the VISIONARIES-NET project consists of 5 online conferences with different participants and different topics. Each conference lasted 4 weeks. Because of these conditions a modified Delphi approach was applied. Let’s consider first the purpose of the Delphi studies, second the participants and third the Delphi process.

### **Purpose:**

In order to make sure that the experiences, interests and expectations of all participants can be considered for the conference, it was decided to make a Delphi questioning at the beginning of each conference. The participants should help to structure the topics – that was the purpose of each Delphi study.

### **Participants:**

The participants of each conference were about 20 to 40 experts from over the world (look at the conference reports 1 to 5 for details). They have expertise because they conduct or own an internet portal (conference 1), they belong to a local authority (conference 2), they are a journalist or media expert (conference 3), and so on.

### **Procedure:**

The Delphi questionings of the experts preceded the discussions. All participants were asked to answer 3-4 short questions related to each of the four topics of the week. The participants’ answers were categorized and served as a starting point for the conference’s discussions (look at appendix A, chapter 5). From a methodological viewpoint the Delphi process consists of the online questionnaire, the answers of the

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experts, and the analyzing/categorizing of the moderators. The feedback of results was provided at the starting point of the online conference.

We intended to administer one Delphi questionnaire right at the beginning of each conference, but we started the first conference with one questionnaire related to each topic of the week. But as experience did show we asked too much of the participants. From a methodological viewpoint our views and preconceptions of the topics may have overspecified the structure of the Delphi, or – in other words – our views are “... not allowing for the contribution of other perspectives related to the problem” (Linstone & Turoff, 2002a, 6).

In the other conferences we made better experiences with the first option as having one questionnaire at the beginning of the conference.

## 3 Results: The Delphi method in the conference reports

Below there is a short overview about the questions given in the Delphi questionnaires and a summary of the categorised answers. In the appendix A (chapter 5), you will find the categories, and each of the categories is illustrated in most cases with one selected quotation. The appendix emanated from the conference reports.

### 3.1 Conference 1

#### Delphi questions

- 1) Where do you see the benefits of the internet for dealing with school bullying and violence (SBV)? Is there any “additional value” the internet offers compared to other media or personal encounters?
- 2) Are there specific problems or challenges related to SBV for which the internet is a more appropriate medium than other media are? Are there other kinds of problems for which the internet is rather contra productive?
- 3) If there are any groups of persons who do profit more from internet resources on school bullying and violence than others do, which groups do rather profit, which groups do not?

As a result of categorizing, the first question leads to the categories “easy access to information, easy dissemination of information, facilitation of communication, low costs, anonymity”, and so on.

The answers of the second question concern the problem of the information quality, the problem with the increased consequences of bullying through internet, because many read it, nothing can be really deleted, and the problem, if internet is the only way of help.

With respect to the third question the following persons will profit from internet sources: Persons with similar problems, teachers in order to prevent bullying, victims and parents who want support. Persons who can not profit from internet sources on SBV are those of lower socioeconomic level, who have no computer and therefore are not familiar with it. (See the examples in the attachment.)

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## 3.2 Conference 2

### Delphi questions

- 1) Who do you consider should be involved in the process of School Bullying and Violence prevention at local level? Which are, in your opinion or from your experience, the key local institutions that should play a role in SBV prevention?
- 2) What are your major sources of information to get a diagnosis on school bullying and violence in the community, region, school etc. you are working with? What type of information is useful for your work?
- 3) When you are dealing with SBV issues, in which way and to what extent do you cooperate with other local actors/partners?
- 4) Is there any specific topic related to the involvement of the local authorities when coping with school bullying and violence that you would like to discuss?

The evaluation of these questions brought up a variety of categories.

The answers to the first question show that a wide range of persons and institutions should be involved in the process of SBV, e.g. pupils, parents, schools, teachers, director, social workers, urban safety department and municipal police.

Among the major sources of information to get a diagnosis on SBV (question 2) are questionnaires, interviews and conversation methods. The information should be qualitative and statistical.

The answers of the third questions state that the partnership on a local level is not homogenous and that cooperation with university is part of the treatment of SBV.

With respect to the last question there are several other topics the participants want to discuss at the online conference. (See the examples in the attachment.)

## 3.3 Conference 3

### Delphi questions

- 1) Are there any new forms or trends related to school bullying and violence that you currently witness in your country? If yes, please try to name them and give examples.
- 2) Why or why not in your opinion are those new forms of school bullying and violence in the public agenda in your country now?
- 3) Which factors – in your opinion - are stimulating these new forms and technologies?
- 4) What can be done to deal with these new forms of school bullying and violence?

The following categories are the results of the evaluation of the participants' answers.

The new forms of SBV seem to be cyberbullying, bullying by mobile phone and happy slapping (question 1). Cyberbullying is labeled by hate web pages, flaming, messaging, using E-Mail, instant messages, etc. Bullying by mobile phone means using the video function of the mobile phone to make pictures e.g. of a naked class mate and put them in the internet. Related to mobile phone bullying is happy slapping, where some children bully another kid, make a video of him or her and put it into the internet. There are other forms of bullying which are new because they are

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currently in the attention of the media: Offences against special needs children, homophobia, stalking and violence against females.

“Interest” and “lack of information” are the reasons that were named with respect to the second question. The experts agree that bullying only gets in the public agenda when there is currently an increased interest. Reasons for an increased interest in bullying can be the motivation to understand and tackle youth violence or providing safety and welfare for children. If it’s not in the public interest the experts believe that a lack of information and awareness is the reason.

With respect to the third question, the experts name several stimulating factors: a) Easy access / dependence on new technologies; b) Lack of consequences; c) Society as a whole / role models; d) Lack of control by parents; e) Anonymity / lack of tangible feedback; f) Violence in the media, etc.

The answers to the last question deal with three main intervention strategies: a) Foster public discourse / raising awareness; Training especially of the teachers, but also of the children and parent; c) The teaching of moral values.

## **3.4 Conference 4**

### **Delphi questions**

- 1) In your opinion, how is School Bullying and Violence reflected by the media in your country?
- 2) Which do you think are the benefits and/or disadvantages of the media involvement in SBV? Please try to use a short example to support your opinion.
- 3) How do you think media may contribute at reducing/preventing SBV?
- 4) What can you personally do or what have you previously done to contribute at reducing/preventing SBV?
- 5) Is there anything else you would like to discuss related to our topic „School Bullying and Violence: The Role of Media”?

With respect to the first question, the participants state an insufficient reflection of SBV in the media, a climate of no interest and little or no attention to SBV problems. The media seem to look for headlines, they report only if somebody gets hurt. The media even don’t help in the prevention process of SBV. A typical quotation is presented below:

“Generally the media deal with SB and Violence only when heavy incidents happen. So the subject is considered only in a partial way, only perpetrators are focused and often it’s lacking an in-depth analysis and the evaluation of important role of the whole group of peers.”

To sum up the opinions, the role of the media is not positive at all.

Among the benefits of media involvement in SBV (question 2) there is an information function, e.g. media can create awareness, media bring it in public attention, and a showcase function, e.g. media can gather interested people together, media keep parents connected, or involved. In this context the following quotation clarifies a desirable effect of media.

“It helps the decision makers to accelerate some behavior regulating or lawmaking processes to strengthen the peaceful climate in scholar environment.”

The main disadvantage of the media involvement in participants answers is that media can contribute to widespread the phenomenon, either in the form of modelling the

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aggressive behaviour like in movies, or in ignoring the larger phenomenon or deeper roots of SBV.

With respect to question 3, some participants state, that the media can educate student, parents and teachers. This will be one function of media, another function is to raise people's awareness of SBV. Examples to promote the functions will be reports about school children which are actively engaged in SBV, broadcasts with young people who suffered school violence, or newcasts about children's rights and institutions that can provide help and redress.

Question 4 demands for past or present activities of the participants dealing with the prevention of SBV. The answers can be summarized to four categories:

- *Projects.* Some participants report institutional based and collaborate based projects, e.g. between local authorities and police.
- *Discussions.* In order to make the phenomenon of SBV public, to inform and to debate, the participants organised regular meetings, visited talk-shows, participated in face-to-face and online conferences, they conduct workshops and seminars. Quite a few have a web site.
- *Publications.* This category represent the journalistic approaches, e.g. publishing articles about SBV or editing stories.
- *Research.* In one country a research project was done to relate violent manifestations to social variables. This leads to the development of a violence observatory.

In summary there are many opportunities to prevent or reduce SBV. The online conference, which follows this Delphi questioning, will profit from the facts the participants have in mind.

With respect to the fifth question, the participants want to discuss several other topics (see more examples in the attachment):

Need for information:

- About the laws in other countries against bullying?
- Examples of initiatives for the prevention of violence in Europe
- Important factors in reducing SBV?
- Methods of educating the young people in order not to practice SBV

Other topics:

- Sexual harassment
- Institutional racism
- Ethical conduct in covering this issue

## 3.5 Conference 5

### Delphi questions

- 1) Is it possible to talk about a unique concept of SBV? Which are its main defining features? Are these defining features also suitable for new forms of SBV, e.g. dating violence, cyber bullying, happy slapping, etc?

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- 2) Is current research able to explain SBV changes over the time? E.g. levels of incidence, new forms of manifestation, the dynamics within the peer group, etc.
- 3) Recently, a wide number of tools have appeared to assess the SBV problem in its different facets. In your opinion, has this fact introduced accuracy on the understanding of the problem or, on the contrary, has it contributed to generate uncertainty? Why?
- 4) How could be the development of instruments be optimized?
- 5) Which are, in your opinion, the new focuses of interest of research on SBV?

Concerning question 1 researchers show high agreement. The scientific definition of SBV consists of by three factors: repeated aggression, imbalance of power, and intent. In general this definition could be also applied to new forms of SBV. But as in the case of “happy slapping”, the repetition component in the definition has to be commented. The aggression can be repeated only by the repeated showing of a video, not in the sense that the victim is directly attacked again and again.

The answers to question 2 show, that we still have to learn a lot to be able to explain SBV problems in our schools, their causes and effects. As some participants pointed out, researchers should also elaborate their theories (including literature on aggression, social dynamics, socio-cognitive processes, etc.) to analyse SBV in a more valid way.

With respect to question 3 researchers think that the number of different methods to some extent reflects the mismatch between definitions of bullying and measurement of bullying. However, they feel that different methods don't obscure the SBV problem, but illuminate some other facet of the problem.

Researchers are convinced that the quality of these tools is necessary, and that it's necessary to specify the concept of SBV which they are using. Otherwise their results won't get the validity which is required to increase the knowledge on this field.

The answers to the fourth Delphi question lead two distinguishable ideas.

The first idea is to develop measures which rely much less heavily on implicit ideas of what bullying is. It is better to ask directly about the occurrence of specific behaviours, whether they believe there to be intent and power imbalance, how frequently behaviours have occurred and for how long. Secondly, cross-cultural work also helps by allowing more direct comparisons between different countries.

Researchers on SBV should focus on the following research questions (question 5):

- How the group dynamics operate within bullying groups
- The psycho-social effects of the ways in which victims interpret and respond to their predicament
- The effect of SBV on children and young people's developing sense of self
- The new forms of SBV, e.g. dating violence, cyberbullying
- Development of effective educative interventions
- Early detection of students involved in SBV

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## 4 Results: The Delphi method from the sight of the moderators

Instead of starting a new thread in the forum it was decided to ask the moderators by a separate Delphi questioning. It is like a Delphi questioning over the Delphi method – a Delphi Delphi. The categorised answers from the four questions are presented below (The answers of five moderators are summarized in Appendix B).

### 1) Which were - in your opinion – the benefits of the Delphi questioning with regard to the conference you moderated?

The results to this question can be summarized as follows:

- The moderators see the overall benefits of the Delphi questioning in getting a first idea of an unknown field of research. And even in the case the field of research is somewhat known, the Delphi questioning helps to structure the formerly unstructured topics.
- The moderation process later on seems to be positively influenced by the Delphi questioning, because moderators know some of the questions and problems, the participants are interested in. On the other side the Delphi method seems to be an instrument that helps him/her concentrate on the topics of the discussion.

For this reasons, it is not astonishing that the moderators agree that the Delphi method is a good starting point for any online discussion. The following quotation will illustrate this:

“We had the chance to find out participants’ opinion regarding the subject approached by the conference, thus having a good starting point for the discussions and having a base about the specific topics that should be discussed during the conference.”

### 2) Which were the difficulties, limits and problems you experienced related to the Delphi method?

In the eyes of the moderators, the main problem is the additional work the Delphi questioning causes. Originally it was planned to let the participants answer one Delphi questionnaire for each week of the conference. But as experience in the first conference show, it was difficult to get back the questionnaires of the second week, and the answers were very short. One questionnaire related to each of the topics of the week causes too much work both for the participants and the moderators. Only if the Delphi method is limited to one single questionnaire that is given to the participants prior to the conference, this was no longer a problem.

The other argument is a methodological one. As we pointed out in chapter 2 of this report, the intended 4-5 questions each week multiplied with 4 weeks are too much effort for the participants. Our views and preconceptions of the topics seem to have over specified the structure of the Delphi.

But even with one Delphi questioning the time consuming character was considerable:

- “The difficulty was to make the participants take a little time and answer to the questionnaire.”

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- “I think the most crucial problem was that not all participants answered the Delphi questions.”
- “Short answers.”

A second limitation belongs to the method of Delphi. One moderator reflects the subjectivity of categorising the answers of the participants. May be, but this is due to qualitative methods, and not specific to the Delphi method. A corrective is to formulate rules and to make the categorising process transparent to other researchers.

One moderator wrote that the Delphi method is less helpful for a field of research for which studies etc. already give a better orientation. This is absolutely right. The Delphi method depends heavily on the purpose of a study, but the application is restricted to new, unknown, or future developments, as pointed out at the beginning of this report.

### **3) In which way did you use the results of the Delphi questioning with respect to the online discussion?**

The moderators absolutely agree in two aspects. They use the Delphi method

- to start the online conference, and
- maintain discussion during the online conference.

They start the online conference by the summarised results of the Delphi questions. Or they use the four Delphi questions as a topic in the following conference.

The Delphi method was helpful for moderators in two ways. The knowledge of the opinions and issues is driving on the first discussion at all. The later on discussion was stimulated because moderators could talk about specific remarks from the Delphi questioning.

### **4) When you look back to your online conference, would you use the Delphi questioning again? If yes why? If not, why not?**

All but one moderator would definitely use the Delphi method again. But they would prefer a single questionnaire given the participants prior to the conference's start. The moderator who was against future usage justified his/her decision: “In our case, we didn't find any new idea from we expected ...” In his/her eyes the questions or the participants are accountable for the effect. Maybe it is the well-known domain specific knowledge about SBV, the moderating team and the participants share in.

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## 5 Appendix A: Summaries of the outcomes of the Delphi questionings

### 5.1 1<sup>st</sup> Conference - Coping with SBV Using the Internet

Below there is a short overview about the overall questions given in the (first) Delphi questionnaire together with keywords that resulted from the categorisation of the participants' answers (see also conference report 1).

**Delphi question 1: Where do you see the benefits of the Internet for dealing with school bullying and violence (SBV)? Is there any “additional value” the Internet offers compared to other media or personal encounters?**

The following categories – that more or less correspond with the outcomes of other studies related to the benefits of the Internet in other fields – resulted from the evaluation of the participants' answers. Each of the categories is illustrated with one selected quotation.

- Easy access and availability of information  
*Example: “The benefits I can see is the internet's capacity to disseminate the information with a low cost and the easy access.”*
- Low costs  
*Example: “The economic benefits of the Internet dealing with SB is from our side that it is cheaper to use than sending brochures which is rather expensive. For free you can give a lot of information on a web site“*
- A good way to disseminate information  
*Example: “The internet is the best way to disseminate the information. By the way, the visitors must know about the theme they are looking for.”*
- Almost unlimited amount of information  
*Example: “Internet has the capability to give information just about everything, most victim's are more 'open' to us if we show that we take their problems serious. You have the ability with internet to share each other's experiences, problems, just about everything. If you can put all of this in a good controlled information-flow, you have a powerful tool of helping people with each others experiences.”*
- Outlasting information  
*Example: “The information on the Internet is staying there eternally in antagonism to other media.”*
- The Internet ensures anonymity  
*Example: “The benefit of the internet in bullying prevention and intervention is without measure. The Internet provides students (who are appropriately orientated by school officials) with a tool where they can safely report bullying without being -seen- by other students walking into an administrator or counsellor's office. This anonymity cannot be matched. It is surprising that this effective use of the internet has not been widely discussed among experts in the field of bully prevention.”*
- The Internet facilitates communication  
*Example: “We can deal with school bullying and other violence; but there are many*

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*additional values if we lead with internet, mainly, the possibility to make a large dialog with many people, for example about a specific problem or a incidental case.”*

**Delphi question 2: Are there specific problems or challenges related to SBV for which the Internet is a more appropriate medium than other media are? Are there other kinds of problems for which the Internet is rather contra productive?**

The following categories resulted from the evaluation of the participants' answers:

- Information quality can not be ensured  
*Example: „Information online are not supervised and anybody can present wrong information. It could be dangerous in this way.”*
- The Internet has the potential to greatly increase the consequences of bullying  
*Example: “The internet and cyberspace have the potential to greatly increase the consequences of bullying. For example, negative comments written on a toilet wall can be erased with only a few students seeing them. Hate websites set up by bullies can reach many students instantly, and can never truly be erased. You could 'google' the site for ever.”*
- Anonymity increases the risks for some groups  
*Example: “People are anonymous which means if a child is suicidal for instance it may not be so easy to find them if they have taken an overdose etc.”*
- Internet is contra productive if it is the only way of help and support  
*Example: “Internet is contra productive if you rely too much on it, you have to keep a social connection with everyone you help or support.”*

**Delphi question 3: If there are any groups of persons who do profit more from Internet resources on SBV than other groups, which groups do rather profit, which not?**

The evaluation of this question brought up the following categories:

***Persons who do profit from Internet resources on SBV:***

- Persons who share similar problems  
*Example: “Moreover, the internet facilitates to contact people with the same problems and easily makes visible the projects and solutions.”*
- Groups who profit from a good socioeconomic situation  
*Example: “I would think groups with more access would benefit more i.e. wealthy, highly literate groups.”*
- Groups who are familiar with the Internet  
*Example: “Maybe kids -victims- have more occasions to use internet (friendless, social exclusion...) and this medium is useful to help them to face their problems of school bullying . “*
- Teaching staff  
*Example: “School directions and teachers can profit too from internet resources on school bullying to prevent and also to find news intervention pathways”*
- Victims and their parents  
*Example: “Groups which do profit from internet, are victims, school/workplaces who actively want to support their students/employees.”*

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## **Persons who do not profit from Internet resources on SBV**

- Groups with socioeconomic problems who don't have access to the Internet  
*Example: "Here in Brazil we have some difficulties because most Brazilians don't have access to the internet, or even have a computer"*
- Groups that already have found their own solution  
*Example: "Groups who don't profit, are groups which already have found their own solution against bullying, people who bully"*

## **5.2 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference – Coping with School Bullying and Violence at the local/regional level**

Below there is a short overview about the overall questions given in the Delphi questionnaire together with keywords that resulted from the categorisation of the participants' answers (see also Conference report 2).

**Delphi question 1: Who do you consider should be involved in the process of School Bullying and Violence prevention at local level? Which are, in your opinion or from your experience, the key local institutions that should play a role in SBV prevention?**

The following categories resulted from the evaluation of the participants' answers:

- A wide range should be involved:  
*Example: Pupils, Parents, schools, local community and international community*
- In school : not only the teachers but also:  
*Example: Director, educator, mediator, medical staff, social workers,*
- Different services of the local authority must be engaged :  
*Example: Educational department, Urban safety department, municipal police*
- Local authority give an assistance:  
*Example: Local authorities are able to research and assess what is happening within the schools and create effective approaches in conjunction with the schools.*

**Delphi question 2: What are your major sources of information to get a diagnosis on school bullying and violence in the community, region, school etc. you are working with? What type of information is useful for your work?**

The evaluation of this question brought up the following categories:

Type of information useful:

- Statistic information  
*Example: "Number of student who are not coming at school every day and numbers of fact"*
- Qualitative information  
*Example: "In conducting our research we focus on bullying and victimation and include other types of information related to issues on bullying such as coping skills, anger expression and self concept"*

Major sources of information:

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- Questionnaires, interviews, conversation conducted with students  
*Example: Research which is done at those schools, using qualitative methods*
- Self-report questionnaires with students are the most useful sources of information  
*Example: They include a large number of participants, the process is not time consuming and we have the potential to gather information on a wide-range of other psychosocial factors*

## **Delphi question 3: When you are dealing with SBV issues, in which way and to what extent do you cooperate with other local actors/partners?**

- Partnership on a local level is not homogenous  
*Example: We communicate with partner organisations involved to find solutions which are practical for students, teachers, schools and the departments managing the schools.*
- Research is one local partner  
*Example: We cooperate with University of Florence (Dep. Psychology) to elaborate the research, to choose two schools from different areas of the city representative of different kinds of life, and in the end – when the research it will completed – in socialization of results.*

## **Delphi question 4: Is there any specific topic related to the involvement of the local authorities when coping with school bullying and violence that you would like to discuss in this week?**

*Examples: What are the criteria for admitting individual programme? What are the roles of teachers to activate prevention and contrast actions in relation to the other local authorities? What would be a suitable approach to prevent school bullying and violence with regard to a multi-agency approach?*

### **5.3 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference - New forms of School Bullying and Violence**

#### **Delphi question 1: Are there any new forms or trends related to school bullying and violence that you currently witness in your country? If yes, please try to name them and give examples.**

In the first thread of the discussion in the first week, for which the outcomes of this questionings were used, the participants differentiated between two types of new forms and trends: First, there are those forms and trends of SBV which happen via new media and new technologies and are therefore new in the sense that they have not been existing for a long time. Cyberbullying as well as all those new forms that rely on the use of mobile phones, like e.g. the fast spreading new phenomenon “happy slapping” would fall into this category.

Second there are other forms of SBV – like for example homophobic bullying and violence against females – which have been happening for a long time, but which are only lately brought to public attention by the media.

New trends belonging to the first category that were mentioned by the participants are:

- Cyberbullying: With 10 participants naming cyberbullying as a new form of SBV, this phenomenon was the one most mentioned in the questionnaire.  
*Example: “cyber bullying by email, msn messaging, texting by mobile phone, derogatory websites, flaming”*

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- Use of mobile phones: The use of mobile phones as a means of bullying was mentioned five times. In this context there was also mentioned (thrice) the combination of cell phones and the internet.  
Example: "Pupils take pictures on cell-phone when other pupils during gymnastic are naked when changing. Picture is placed on the internet and can follow the person even in grown up age."
- Happy Slapping: Four participants named happy slapping as a new means of bullying. Interestingly, it was mainly the Europeans who reported about happy slapping in their countries, so – at least at the time of the conference – the phenomenon didn't seem to have spread over the ocean yet.  
Example: "Lately it is happening the trend of "happy slapping". As you must know a group of children bully another kid laughing at him/her while they make him or her do silly things or spite on him/her or even hit him or her and make photos or videos of it with their mobil phones."

The following types belonging to the second category (types of SBV that are not really new, but currently in the attention of the media) were mentioned by the participants:

- Offences against special needs children: Bullying against special needs children was mentioned by two participators. One of them pointed out, that this type of bullying occurs as early as in third grade.  
Example: "I have witnessed first hand, that with inclusion for special needs children, comes to these children being bullied, often only verbally, but it is bullying."
- Homophobia, stalking and violence against females: Homophobia, stalking and violence against females were mentioned each by one participant.  
Example: "Homophobia has doubled in our schools since 1984 see the [www.schools-out.org.uk](http://www.schools-out.org.uk) site"

## **Delphi question 2: Why (or why not) in your opinion are those new forms of school bullying and violence in the public agenda in your country now?**

There were only seven answers to that particular question, as obviously some of the participants misunderstood the question and mixed it up with question 3 (stimulating factors). Those answers were analysed together with those to question 3.

While one person said, that yes, the new forms of SBV were on the public agenda, all the others reported a different situation in their countries: two of them said no and four of them said, that the new forms are only partly brought to public interest yet.

Several reasons were given for that matter:

- Interest: The experts agreed (three namings) that bullying only gets on the public agenda when there is currently an increased interest in the matter for one reason or another. So in two countries, new forms of SBV are on the public agenda, because there obviously is an (at least temporary) interest in the matter, in one country it is not, apparently due to a lack of such an interest. Reasons for an increased interest in bullying can be (as the experts mentioned) an interest to understand and tackle youth violence or an interested in providing safety and welfare for children and adolescents).  
Example: While many Canadian schools claim to have a zero tolerance for bullying, many won't listen to those who are victims of the bullies, this issue is not at the top of any one's agenda at the moment.

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- Not enough information and awareness: Two experts complain about the fact that society as a whole and especially public leaders do not seem to be aware (enough) of the problems with SBV.  
Example: “We believe, that more comprehensive research needs to be conducted to accurately inform policymakers on how to address such issues, and in turn, how school officials, administrators, faculty, parents and law enforcement will cope with this type of bullying.”

Other reasons mentioned (especially in the context of homophobic bullying) are for instance that there are concepts for dealing with the problems, but they have not been implemented in the school curricula and social and religious issues.

## **Delphi question 3: Which factors – in your opinion – are stimulating these new forms and technologies?**

The participants named a several stimulating factors. Interestingly there was a high agreement among them, as many of them gave basically the same answers.

- Easy access / dependence on new technologies: As many as eight experts agreed on the theory that the increase of new forms of SBV was due to the further spreading of new technologies, so that in countries like the USA, Australia and New Zealand as well as central Europe most of the schoolchildren have internet access. In addition more and more of them depend on those new technologies as they have become a very important part of their lives.  
Example: “Young people are using technology to bully others; it is a new technologically adapted form of bullying because young people use these methods of communication for their social life.”
- Lack of consequences: Six of the participants named the fact, that e.g. cyberbullies do not have to fear any consequences as one of the most important reasons for the popularity of those phenomena. This, of course, is highly related to the factor of anonymity (see below), because a bully who can not be identified can – naturally – not be punished.  
Example: “The anonymity and instantaneous nature of cyber crime, in particular, allow kids access to the victim and oftentimes protect the perpetrator from punishment.”
- Society as a whole / role models: Another six of the experts said, that society as whole was to blame for the recent developments. They complained about the absence of educating values in society, that violent behaviour has become sort of a social norm. They also mentioned the problem of model aggression from parents and siblings as well as peer pressure.  
Example: “Model behaviour of older students; parents; society as a whole. Many see violence as acceptable behaviour.”
- Lack of control by parents: The aspect of lacking control by parents was mentioned four times. The problem seems to be, that parents either don't want or don't have the time to spend time with their children and check what they are doing or that many of them have a far smaller understanding of new technologies than their sons and daughters and therefore might be willing to, but unable to control and put a stop on violent behaviour. Especially those parents, who have little if any knowledge about modern technologies might not even know that they can be used for bullying.

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Example: “Parents do not spent enough time with their children. Families do not watch television together and comment about what they are watching.”

- Anonymity / lack of tangible feedback: Closely related to the factor “lack of consequences” is the anonymity the internet provides. Therefore the perpetrator neither has to fear any consequences (see above) nor does he have to see his victim suffer – so that the bully doesn’t see when he has gone too far. The problem of anonymity was mentioned three times in the questionnaire.

Example: “Cyberbullying allows the perpetrator instant access to his victim while protecting his identity. The anonymous nature of the contact, i.e. user names, anonymous posting to message boards, insulates the offender from punishment and may in turn embolden him, leading to an escalation in the bullying.”

- Violence in the media: Three experts also pointed out the role of the media: Children see a lot of violence in the media and might be motivated to imitate the violent behaviour their role models show in films, television shows and video games. (There even is a video game called “bully” where the player plays the role of the school bully in a school called “Bullworth Academy”- Screenshots can be found here).

Example: “The media and the glorifying of violence and verbal abuse.”

The following further reasons were mentioned only once or twice:

- Lack of education (especially concerning bullying of special needs children)
- The fact that teachers are not trained enough and/or do not have the power to intervene.
- Belittlement of the problem
- Blunting (closely related to the point “violence in the media” – the more violence children see, the more they consider it as something ordinary)
- Lack of consciousness by politicians
- Fear that raising the issues could bring a backlash from the right wing and religious right (when it comes to phenomena like homophobic bullying)
- Immigration
- Children growing up in an environment lacking intimate emotional communication
- Speed of modern technologies.

## **Delphi question 4: What can be done to deal with those new forms of school bullying and violence?**

- Public discourse / Raising awareness: Seven experts shared the opinion that, as a first step, the problems have to be brought to public attention to stimulate a discourse on the matter. It seems to be mostly teachers and pupils who are aware of the bullying, but many adults – often not even the parents of victims and bullies – are completely in the dark.

Example: “Schools need to take on more responsibility to help parents become aware of the dangers of the internet.”

- Training: The aspect of training – for several target groups – was mentioned rather often (by six experts) in the questionnaires. Most of them agreed upon the teachers needing training to successfully intervene, but there was also the claim

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for training children as well as parents.

Examples: Teachers: "Up to date training for all school staff in developing both proactive and retroactive strategies to address all forms of bullying."

Pupils: "I heard that some private school are working with their students about the good use of the internet."

- Teaching of moral values: 5 Participants claimed the teaching of moral values for youngsters. According to the experts they should especially be trained to respect each other, to feel empathy and to accept all forms of diversity so that they learn to tolerate and accept e.g. children with disabilities.

Example: ALL schools need to teach tolerance and acceptance of children(people)with disabilities empathy education, emphasis on productive relationships by all members of our society

The following other intervention strategies were offered, but only once or twice:

- Mobilizing the bystanders not to close their eyes
- More support for the victims
- Independent inspectors to work with the schools
- Community involvement
- Peer mediation
- Harsh consequences for bullies
- More research to identify characteristics of bullies, victims and bystanders

## **5.4 4<sup>th</sup> Conference - School Bullying and Violence: the Role of Media**

The idea of the Delphi questionnaire was to gather all of the participants' experiences, interests and expectations before the start of the online conference (for details look at conference report 4).

**Delphi question 1: In your opinion, how is School Bullying and Violence reflected by the media in your country?**

Insufficient reflection of SBV in the media

"In the Czech republic SBV is not an interesting issue for the media. Media have no prevention role here"

"You can read news about violence in schools, as nude facts. Not too much about how to prevent such situations, or presentation of initiatives in the field"

"Moldovan media is more interested in major security problems rather than domestic violence or other forms of violence"

"The coverage of the topic is almost non-existing as such. There are stories about serious cases, when serious violence acts are registered and kids have to suffer physically. Unfortunately, the permanent, low-level (read non-sensationalistic) bullying is overlooked and it is not perceived even as a problem. School violence is dually reported: both with teachers as perpetrators and as victims. Violence in the ranks of the students is not sufficiently reported. As a rule, the media cover "cases", not the phenomenon"

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“Little or no attention has been paid to what is happening in Bulgarian schools. The Bulgarian media is not addressing the issue of school bullying”

„In Uganda, School Bullying and Violence are reflected in media as a break down in the administrative structure of schools“

Media is looking for headlines

“The media wants news, headlines; something must happen that is in the field of Media’s interest. If somebody gets hurt, it’s in the headline for a day or two, until next time; it is quiet”

„The SBV cases are treated by the media in a sensationalist way ... without further reflection“

“There are sporadic articles about school violence and they usually are published when something really bad happens in a school and all the media have to reflect it”

The media doesn’t help the prevention of SBV

“In the sense of prevention SBV is not reflected at all. But there is a growing number of aggressive and violent movies, news, information, etc”

“In general, there isn’t even a public discourse on school bullying and violence and nobody talks about it”

“Generally the media deal with SB and Violence only when heavy incidents happen. So the subject is considered only in a partial way, only perpetrators are focused and often it’s lacking an in-depth analysis and the evaluation of important role of the whole group of peers”

“Sometimes, TV chains use to organise debates on such subjects, but rarely enough to pass unobserved or without determining real changes in public understanding of the phenomenon”

Bad way of presenting SBV cases

“SBV is handled by the media in a bad way. The present a (preferably crying) victim or parent and let them tell what had happened. This is followed by an 'expert' (always the same one) who will try to convince us that a child is bullied because he/she is different from the rest. (Who isn't?) The blame is always put on the school”

**Delphi question 2: Which do you think are the benefits and/or disadvantages of the media involvement in SBV? Please try to use a short example to support your opinion.**

*Benefits*

“The good point is that media can gather together people interested in the topics, and present good examples”

“For instance if media would be more interested the relevant authorities and the public would take attitude, people would perceive this as a negative phenomenon”

“Bring in public attention the existence of the phenomenon”

“It helps the decision makers to accelerate some behavior regulating or lawmaking processes to strengthen the peaceful climate in scholar environment”

“It keeps parents connected (involved) with the school topics”

“Information”

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“It creates awareness on what transpires in schools that need attention“

“The media could divulge strategies and interventions in SBV and participate in social actions that offers to the school community the opportunity of knowing your own reality, as well as propitiating good conditions in order to modify and improve this reality“

## *Disadvantages*

“Media can offer exposure to such facts and without critical thinking can contribute to widespread the phenomenon”

“Headlines from times to time can do more harm then constant information”

“By not covering properly the issue, media waste a big chance to properly fulfil their role as a public interest guardian. Emphasizing the violent aspects and the separate incidents, it creates the wrong impression that these are separate events, not part of larger phenomenon, with deeper roots and requiring a systemic answer”

„Spreading the violent and aggressive model of behaviour (by movies, stereotypes, etc.)”

“The media is more concentrated on the news and not on using its “positive” power to inform society, prevent social problems, mobilize social awareness”

## **Delphi question 3: How do you think media may contribute at reducing/preventing SBV?**

“Media play a huge role in preventing and reducing SBV. I consider that role hasn’t been enough played in Romania”

“By raising awareness campaigns”

“Media can educate people: students, parents and teachers”

“By telling stories of what happens when the issue is ignored”

“Reports unearthing SBV activities in which society can participate to correct for good citizens“

“Scenes depicting school children actively engaged in SBV for concerned parents’ attention“

“Broadcasts on what has transpired at schools so that society takes a collective stand“

“Prepare the possible “targets” and their parents, help them understand their rights and advertising the institutions that can provide assistance and redress”

“They can make people understand that SBV is not a given and that they don’t have to put up with it”

“Media should give voice to the children and young people who have suffered school violence ... can help to create a “stereotype” that school bullying is BAD and not that school bullying “is just a normal part of our life””

“By passing on positive values”

## **Delphi question 4: What can you personally do or what have you previously done to contribute at reducing/preventing SBV?**

### Projects

“The project - City of Prague in cooperation with Police Czech republic”

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“Everybody has his rights and obligations - first stage focused on elementary school children. This project used precautionary measures presented in a simple and entertaining way as a means of enhancing legal awareness of young generation in particular. It sought to highlight possible dangerous situations that may occur every day, especially those connected with the children’s free time and give advice how to handle them ... the second stage of this project was realised through releasing a videotape on “screwed-up lives”, for children attending 5 – 9 grade of elementary schools and for secondary school children. Both videotapes were highly appreciated not only in Prague but also countrywide, in regions”

“Projects-institution based and collaborative based to reduce and prevent SBV“

”As a employee in a NGO I am planning on starting a project dealing with school violence”

Information and education

“As people working in the communication area, I can get experience in how to address such situations”

“I am planning to organise regular meetings to debate SBV and to try finding ways to educate public for fighting efficiently against SBV. Then, I could act as teacher trainer for keeping teachers up-to-date with the ways to cope with SBV efficiently”

„Encourage debates on merits and demerits of SBV“

„Create awareness on SBV“

„Encourage parent, community active involvement in school activities denouncing SBV“

“Organise and conduct workshops, seminars on SBV“

“I work in primary and early secondary schools in Trento, focusing my interventions on classrooms dealing with bullying and other forms of diseases. I have my web site where I give some information on bullying and counselling to parents and teachers that write to me. Sometimes I give interviews to local newspapers or local radio and TV. I would like to increase the services of the site (more documents, more advices to target people, mailing list, forum, etc)”

“Inform myself on subject, help students understand what’s real and not, Transmit positive values, listen to students”

“Trained staff and pupils in schools written policies given key note speeches set up 2 websites [www.schools-out.org.uk](http://www.schools-out.org.uk) [www.lgbthistorymoth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthistorymoth.org.uk)”

Journalistic approach

“Unfortunately, as journalist I have not report on such incidents, and I did not investigate this problem before”

“I am interacting every day with journalists and I always tried to persuade them to filter the news they published and to act for supporting reduction of violence”

“I am an editor. I can solicit stories on the topic”

“I’ve have been writing for a lot of articles about these subjects, which contain helpful information”

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“Training for journalists, developing “media dossiers”( including lists of resource persons, hints for journalists, ethical rules for covering this topic, etc...) and made them available for all those interested”

Addressing the authorities

“As an organisation for parents of victims of SBV, we contact Norwegian Administration and the Parliament; we ask them to place SBV at the agenda again”

Making the phenomenon public

„Engage in talk shows“

„Create a website to discuss“

„Conduct; participate in face to face or online conference on SBV,,

„I have been in 3 lawsuits, one TV program, have had an radio interview, I'm writing a book about the horrible way SVB is handled by schools, police, Dutch Anti Mobbing Groups, Judges etc. You can find me nearly every day on our website where we try to help children and youngster and even parents to stop SVB”

Researches

„Recently, after the realization of a great research in public or private high schools in the city of Ribeirão Preto, in which research proved that there is no association with violent manifestations and social extract, I am developing a project in order to introduce a Violence Observatory in the city of Porto Velho-RO. Therefore, we can start making multicentric researches and determine which variables are common in such different realities“

“I have done a scientific research”

**Delphi question 5: Is there anything else you would like to discuss related to our topic „School Bullying and Violence: The Role of Media”?**

- Examples of initiatives for the prevention of violence, of events taking place with the involvement of civil society, in Europe
- Similar situations in South-Eastern Europe
- Sexual harassment
- What is important in reducing SBV? Spreading the news by media, educating parents, educating and training teachers, or promoting more tuff legal regulations against?
- Methods of educating the young people in order not to practice SBV
- Approaches of the issue from different countries
- Ethical conduct in covering this issue. How to meaningfully (and attractively) report violence against kids while protecting the privacy and abiding by the rules of the protection of minors. In the same respect, I think that not only the media should be aware of these aspects, but also the school authorities should know more about how to balance the access to information rights to the privacy rights
- What are the benefits for media from school violence and do they have any “profit” in reducing it. Where do they put the problem of school bullying among all the other issues they inform about

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- What is the law in your country doing against bullying and what is the result?
- Institutional racism

## **5.5 5<sup>th</sup> Conference – Researching: A Way to Deal with School Bullying and Violence**

The Delphi questionnaire comprised five questions and the answers received were the starting point for the discussions.

**Delphi question 1: Is it possible to talk about a unique concept of SBV? Which are its main defining features? Are these defining features also suitable for new forms of SBV, e.g. dating violence, cyberbullying, happy slapping, etc?**

Researchers show high agreement when they think it is possible to talk about a unique concept of bullying like scientific definition, defined by three factors: repeated aggression, imbalance of power, and intent. This definition could be applied to new forms of SBV, although sometimes it would be necessary some comments: like the repetition in some forms of cyberbullying: the aggression can be repeated only by the repeated showing of a video (i.e. in happy slapping) not in the sense that the victim is directly attacked again and again.

Some contributions also remarked the relevance of cultural factors when we want to define or understand SBV in its different forms.

**Delphi question 2: Is current research able to explain SBV changes over the time? E.g. levels of incidence, new forms of manifestation, the dynamics within the peer group, etc.**

The main opinion is that, even when we know much more than few years ago about the SBV phenomenon, we still have to learn a lot to be able to explain SBV problems in our schools, their causes and effects. Some participants pointed out that researchers should widen their theories (including literature on aggression, social dynamics, socio-cognitive processes, etc.) to analyse SBV in order to get other points of view about this problem.

**Delphi question 3: Recently, a wide number of tools have appeared to assess the SBV problem in its different facets. In your opinion, has this fact introduced accuracy on the understanding of the problem or, on the contrary, has it contributed to generate uncertainty? Why?**

Researchers think that the number of different methods to some extent reflects the mismatch between definitions of bullying and measurement of bullying. However, they feel that different methods don't obscure the problem they always illuminate it, they simply shed light on different faces of the problem and/or different interpretations (according to cultural differences).

However, researchers pointed out that it is necessary to guarantee the quality of these tools, and to specify the concept of SBV which they are using, otherwise their results won't get the validity which is required to increase the knowledge on this field.

**Delphi question 4: How could be the development of instruments be optimized?**

Two ideas:

- a) To develop measures which rely much less heavily on implicit ideas of what bullying is. Seems to be a better option to ask directly about the occurrence of

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specific behaviours, whether they believe there to be intent and power imbalance, how frequently behaviours have occurred and for how long. All this information together allows the researcher to define who is bullied and who not.

- b) It should also help cross-cultural work by allowing more direct comparisons between different countries.

## **Delphi question 5: Which are, in your opinion, the new focuses of interest of research on SBV?**

- (1) How the group dynamics operate within bullying groups.
- (2) The psycho-social effects of the ways in which victims interpret and respond to their predicament.
- (3) The effect of SBV on children and young people's developing sense of self.
- (4) New forms of SBV: dating violence, cyberbullying.
- (5) Develop of effective educative interventions.
- (6) Early detection of students involved.

## **6 Appendix B: Answers of the moderators to their Delphi questions**

The answers below will be the base of the interpretation in the chapter "Delphi from the sight of the moderators" in this Delphi report. It is a kind of Delphi over the Delphi method.

### **1) Which were - in your opinion – the benefits of the Delphi questioning with regard to the conference you moderated?**

The outcomes of the Delphi questioning (which in the case of the 1<sup>st</sup> conference were given before the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the conference) contributed to that is still widely unstructured.

The outcomes were helpful for getting an overview about the topics that – according to the participants – seemed to be the most relevant and interesting ones in this field of research. They also helped in depth in the main threads of the conference.

In my opinion the additional value of the Delphi method compared to other methods lays in its capability of etc. for which there are neither studies no other kind of data yet. I personally consider the Delphi method as a good starting point for online discussion e.g. within an online conference, a focus group etc.

Due to the Delphi questioning, it was easier to were, before the conference even started. That way, we could and leave out those where there was no or hardly any interest.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> conference it was useful to introduce some 'critical points' in the debate. Two ways to do it: searching open questions in the participants' answers, and trying to be in front of the original ideas from the participants (more or less, as discussant).

(this could be understood also like disadvantage because lack of interest/motivation).

We had the chance to find out participants' opinion regarding the subject approached by the conference, thus having a good starting point for the discussions and having a base about the specific topics that should be discussed during the conference. It also

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gave us some information about the participants experience in the issue approached by the conference.

- To help me to precise subject and introduction for the discussion.
- To help the participants to think about the subjects they would like to discuss on.
- To structure the discussion.

## **2) Which were the difficulties, limits and problems you experienced related to the Delphi method?**

Considering our experiences one of the main problems might be that the Delphi questionings cause additional work for the participants. As long as the Delphi method is limited to one single questionnaire that is given to the participants prior to the conference this might not be considered as a problem. It only gets a problem when additional questionnaires (e.g. one for each week of the conference) are given to the participants.

One further problem might be that the ways of categorising the participants' answers – like for other qualitative methods as well – is highly subjective. Nevertheless, as long as the outcomes mainly aim at being a starting point for discussions, the selections of main topics etc. this problem is still “acceptable”.

The Delphi method might be less helpful for a field of research for which studies etc. already give a better orientation. In this case the Delphi might not be helpful for giving an overview about the topic in general but rather about the interest of the participants.

I think the most crucial problem was, that not all participants answered the Delphi questions. So, of course, we had no idea about their special interests and opinions which could therefore not be included in our discussion topics beforehand.

- the few number of questionnaires.
- Short answers.
- Homogeneous thoughts between participants.
- Difficulties to get the questionnaires from people.

The difficulty was to make the participants take a little time and answer to the questionnaire. This was one of the reasons we only used 1 Delphi questioning during the conference

Lack of time: Delphi questionnaires are time consuming which is not easy to handle in a uninterrupted 4 weeks online conference.

One Delphi questionnaire for each topic (each week) is too much: to prepare, to send to the participants, to get their answers and to treat them.

## **3) In which way did you use the results of the Delphi questioning which respect to the online discussion?**

In the first conference we used them as starting point for the selection of the conference's main topics and also for getting an overview about the relatively new field of research “Coping with SBV using the Internet”.

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We analysed the Delphis and used them as a starting point for the discussion threads we used. In those threads we usually started by summarising the results of the Delphi.

With little differences, each question was used like topic of the week. See also my answer to the first question.

The results of the questioning were used for choosing the specific topics of the conference discussions and also for specific discussions during the conference, as they provided us with some of the participants' opinion on different issues.

The first and only Delphi questionnaire was very useful to drive the first topic discussion as thanks to them I knew what would be the subjects approached by each participant.

For some subjects and during the discussion, thanks to the Delphi Q, I was able to stimulate the discussion by talking about a remark of one participant.

## **4) When you look back to your online conference, would you use the Delphi questioning again? If yes why? If not, why not?**

Yes, but only in form of applying one single questionnaire to the participants prior to the conference's start. One questionnaire related to each of the topics of the week causes too much work both for the participants and the moderators.

Yes, I would definitely use it again. As already stated in 1), I think it gives the moderators the chance to find out some important pieces of information about the participants.

I also think it is a good tool to structure the conference.

I wouldn't do it. In our case, we didn't find any new idea from we expected, and somehow I thought the previous questioning stopped the spontaneity of participants (something like: 'I already answered this before'). Maybe it was a problem with the design of the Delphi questionnaire, or just the characteristics of our target group.

Yes, definitely. But I will be more aware of the limits, particularly related to the time consuming. Maybe I will use one for the overall Conference...Or maybe less questions...

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