

PARLIAMENTARY TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT IN SWITZERLAND

A Bridge between Science and Society

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- The Swiss Centre for Technology Assessment
- Expectations of the Parliament to a TA-Institution
- TA-SWISS Products

THE SWISS CENTRE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT TA-SWISS

- Evaluates technologies using “classical” TA studies involving scientific analysis and expert discussions (interdisciplinary studies)
- Evaluates technologies by participative methods (PubliForum, publifocus, etc.) involving the general public
- Communicates its results to decision makers and to the general public

THE SWISS CENTRE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT TA-SWISS

- Is affiliated to the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences
- Has a mandate to support (political) decision making related to new technologies

OUR OBJECTIVES ARE

- To provide scientific reliable, interdisciplinary studies for target groups in order to improve public debate
- To initiate a debate about technology at a pre-political level
- To support political decision-making by providing reliable, prospective and independent TA materials

OUR OBJECTIVES ARE

- To create platforms for a mutual dialogue between various groups by establishing participative forums (PubliForum, publifocus, PubliTalk)
- To enhance responsibility in R&D
- To strengthen national and international TA-Networks

PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL TA

- Transparency
- Institutional independence
- Timely identification and communication of topics and issues

MAIN PROBLEMS OF TA

- Timing of TA is an inherent challenge
- Discrepancy between fast scientific progress and slow societal value development
- Too early TA based on marginal data results in low quality debate
- Too late TA results has little impact on already ongoing societal conflicts

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

- Quality of the report (for TA-Studies): Comprehensive, interdisciplinary, neutral, scientific
- Quality of the procedure (for TA-Studies and participative projects): Transparency, fairness, neutrality, independence
- Continuous communication: Press-releases, short versions, meetings with members of Parliament, etc.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING TOPICS

- Relevance, in view of pending political decisions and current research activities
- Degree of controversy involved
- Impact (number of people affected) of the probable consequences of a given technology
- Availability of foreign studies
- Possible synergies with other TA-activities (EPTA-Network) of scientific or administrative bodies

TA-PRODUCTS

- **TA-Reports**
 - Scientific reports
 - Short versions
 - Citizen reports
 - Fact sheets
- **Participatory TA**
 - PubliForums
 - Publifocus
 - PubliTalk

TA-PRODUCTS

- **TA-Events and communication**
 - Meetings with politicians
 - Press release
 - Public conferences
 - Web-site
 - Information booklet
 - Newsletter

MANY PubliForums

- **1998** « Electricity and Society »
- **1999** « Genetic engineering and Food »
- **2000** « Transplantation medicine »
- **2004** « Research involving human beings »
- **2010** « Internet of the future »

FIVE PUBLIFOCI

- Stem cell research **(2002)**
- In-vitro fertilization **(2003)**
- Road pricing **(2005)**
- Nanotechnology **(2006)**
- E-Health **(2008)**

ROLE OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

Wide range of possible political roles

- Early introduction of a theme into the political agenda
- Definition of objectives
- Evaluation of various options

Indirect roles also possible

- Fostering dialogue between science and society
- Raising consciousness of technology's social aspects

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PROJECTS

- **Biotechnology and medicine**
 - Human Enhancement
 - Personalized medicine
 - Robotics and autonomous devices in the social sector
- **Information Society**
 - Internet of the future
 - Localisation Technologies

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PROJECTS

Nanotechnology

- Nanotechnology and Environment

Mobility/Energy/Climate

- Opportunities and risks of electro mobility in Switzerland

OUR VISION IS . . .

- to seek public acceptance as reliable, prospective and independent TA centre (national and international)
- to facilitate the dialogue between the scientific community and society at large on controversial issues
- to integrate participatory TA in policy-making processes on science and technology issues (e.g. through parliamentary hearings)