

25 Years Scientific Advice for Politics: Technology Assessment with the German Bundestag

Successful Advisory Work of KIT - Ceremony on “Mensch-Maschine-Entgrenzung” in Berlin



Since 1990, the Office of Technology Assessment has been advising German Parliament. (Photo: Markus Breig, KIT)

Modern power grids, 3D printing as well as electronic media and addictive behavior presently are among the wide range of topics covered by the Office of Technology Assessment with the German Parliament (TAB) that is operated by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). Since its establishment in 1990, TAB has published nearly 200 reports on impacts of scientific-technical developments on society. The ceremony on the occasion of the 25th anniversary will be opened by Professor Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag, on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, 14.30 hrs, in the entrance hall of the Paul-Löbe Haus des Deutschen Bundestages, Berlin.

Representatives of the media are cordially invited.

During the ceremony (in German only), Patricia Lips, who chairs the Committee on Education, Research, and Technology Assessment of the German Bundestag, will speak about the importance of technology assessment (TA). The rapporteurs of the four parliamentary groups will outline the benefit and use of TA from the perspective of

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the members of parliament and the parliamentary groups. “In any case, it can be stated that the TAB reports always provide members of parliament with independent, objective, and highly substantiated scientific expertise. The success of TAB is due to the transparent and understandable communication of complex matters,” Patricia Lips says.

Professor Dr. Armin Grunwald, Head of the TAB and of the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS) of KIT that runs the TAB in Berlin, will speak about “Mensch-Maschine-Entgrenzung” (dissolution of boundaries between man and machine). This topic is not only the subject of a current TAB project, it has also been in the focus of ITAS for some time now: “Direct coupling of human brain to machines currently takes place mainly for therapeutic and diagnostic reasons. Still, these neurotechnologies are highly dynamic and of very explosive nature, as these interventions do not only subject the human body, but the human self to a technical design and optimization will,” Grunwald says.

Today’s and future neurotechnologies, their benefit for society, but also potential risks from the theoretical and practical perspectives will be subject of the discussion “Cyborgs und Maschinenmenschen – zwischen Therapie und Utopie” (cyborgs and machine men – between therapy and utopia) presented by science journalist Volkart Wildermuth. Apart from Professor Armin Grunwald, Professor Christiane Woopen, Chairperson of the German Ethics Council, Professor Tanja Schultz, Chair for Cognitive Systems of the University of Bremen, and Professor Thomas Stieglitz, Chair for Biomedical Microtechnology of the University of Freiburg, will represent science. The views of developers and users will be represented by Enno Park, Chairman of the Association “Cyborgs e.V.”, Karl Heinz Ammon, user of a highly modern myoelectric arm prosthesis, and Martin Pusch, Otto Bock HealthCare GmbH.

“The Invisible Drumset” performed by the duo of “Christopher Rumble” (Berlin/Dresden) and Dr. Marc Bangert, Dresdener Institut für Musikermedizin, will introduce the ceremony. The performance will combine findings of neurotechnology research with high-tech and cultural-artistic overaccentuation.

Scientific Analyses for Politics

To date, TAB has submitted to the German Bundestag about 200 reports on the impacts of scientific-technical developments on society. Among the last topics covered were synthetic biology, modern power grids, climate engineering, or electronic media and addictive

behavior. The analyses are made by TAB on behalf of the committees and parliamentary groups. Then, they are discussed there and in the plenum of the German Bundestag and, thus, support the members of Parliament in their political work.

Enquete commissions, federal and state ministries, research and education institutions, authorities, companies, and the interested public also use the results presented by the TAB reports for selected scenarios and action options. At public events, selected results of the projects are put up for discussions by the scientists and the Commission on Education, Research, and Technology Assessment.

For more information, click: www.tab-beim-bundestag.de/en/.

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) pools its three core tasks of research, higher education, and innovation in a mission. With about 9,400 employees and 24,500 students, KIT is one of the big institutions of research and higher education in natural sciences and engineering in Europe.

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