

Federal Parliament Wants KIT to Continue Counseling

KIT to Continue Operation of the Office for Technology Assessment with the German Bundestag (TAB) for another Five Years



Counseling of the German Bundestag: The Office for Technology Assessment monitors and analyzes scientific-technical trends. (Photo: Deutscher Bundestag/Lichtblick/Achim Melde)

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) will continue operation of the Office for Technology Assessment with the German Bundestag (TAB) in the next five years. This unanimous decision was made by the Committee for Education, Research, and Technology Assessment (ABFTA) of the German Federal Parliament on February 27. So far, TAB has published more than 180 reports. Recent reports focused on regenerative energies and base load supply, new mobility concepts as well as on the change of media and its impact on politics.

Future cooperation partners will be the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ GmbH, Leipzig, the IZT – Institute for Future Studies and Technology Assessment, Berlin, and the VDI/VDE Institute for Innovation and Technology (VDI/VDE-IT), Berlin. This unanimous decision reflects the high acceptance of TAB by all parliamentary groups. “For years, the number of inquiries by parliamentary committees has been increasing. This reflects the

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high appreciation of our work by the German parliament. The expert public, interest groups in society, and the general public also respond positively to our reports,” says Professor Armin Grunwald, Head of TAB and the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS) of KIT that runs the TAB in Berlin. “This is probably also due to the fact that TAB – in spite of its vicinity to politics – processes and comments current and highly sensitive issues in a balanced, scientifically founded, and understandable manner.” Currently, the TAB is working on fervently discussed issues like synthetic biology, climate and geo-engineering, and modern electricity grids. The scientists come from various disciplines ranging from biology to philosophy, physics and economy to political science and sociology.

During the next term of office from August 29, 2013 to August 28, 2018, the tasks of TAB will include the conception and implementation of technology assessment projects (TA projects), the monitoring and analysis of scientific-technical trends and, hence, developments in society (monitoring) as well as investigations of innovation activities (innovation report). TAB work is aimed at identifying social, economic, and ecological opportunities and risks associated with new developments in order to develop action options for political decision-makers. Thus, TAB improves the information basis of the German Parliament and contributes to scientifically sound opinion-forming and decision-making. Already in 2002 did the Parliament evaluate the activities of TAB with highly positive results. An evaluation in 2010 confirmed these results, pointing out that many members of Parliament use TAB studies and consider them helpful for their work. TAB offers meet the needs of Parliament and are adapted well to parliamentary procedures.

Every five years, the Federal Parliament decides on the operator of TAB. Since 1990, TAB has been operated by ITAS. In the past ten years, the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, Karlsruhe, was the cooperation partner. Success in the recent application procedure is linked with cooperation with new partners. They are to set new courses and to extend the catalog of parliamentary advice. For this purpose, they will contribute their specific expertise to the identification and processing of topics: UFZ has expertise in the areas of environmental economy, environmental legislation, and sustainable development, IZT focuses on dialog processes and discourse analysis, VDI/VDE-IT mainly concentrates on technology foresight. In cooperation with these partners, perspectives of potential scientific-technical development and action options of Parliament will be identified much earlier, also with respect to innovations in Germany.

TAB is contracted by ABFTA. In agreement with TAB, it decides on topics proposed by committees and parliamentary groups. Apart from the members of parliament and parliament bodies, such as enquete commissions, the members of parliamentary groups and members of parliament are addressees and potentials users of the results. Other users are the federal and state ministries, companies, authorities, research and education institutions, and the interested public. Together with the Parliament, TAB frequently presented its results at public events.

During the more than 20 years of business of TAB, a number of main topics were identified. Among these were energy, resources, the environment and transport, nutrition, agriculture, and green genetic engineering, key technologies, information and communication technologies as well as biological and medical technologies. Under the heading of "Society, Innovation, Technology", innovations in Germany, strengths and weaknesses of German industry as well as current challenges in education, research, innovation, and science policies were studied.

More information: www.tab-beim-bundestag.de

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is a public corporation according to the legislation of the state of Baden-Württemberg. It fulfills the mission of a university and the mission of a national research center of the Helmholtz Association. KIT focuses on a knowledge triangle that links the tasks of research, teaching, and innovation.

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