



The PACITA initiative Parliaments and Civil Society in Technology Assessment (PACITA)

During the last decades Europe has seen the rise of Internet and mobile technologies; we have seen the birth of emerging technologies such as geoengineering, nano- and biotechnology. We see how society looks to new technologies when confronted by challenges such as terrorism, climate change, consumerism and aging populations. Surely, technology is one of the strongest forces of change in society today. As a consequence, the choices we make on the use and implementation of new technologies affect directly or indirectly the social, ethical, political and ecological dimensions of society.

The best technology policy rests on thorough understanding of how science, technology and society interact. As the pace of technological development increases, making informed decisions has never been more important. Participatory and knowledge based choices may open for new possibilities, innovation and sustainability.

The PACITA initiative is a response to this challenge. As the number of lobbyists and interest groups grow, parliamentarians across Europe need unbiased and balanced advice on the technological challenges ahead. Parliamentary Technological Assessment (PTA) provides exactly this. PTA institutions are national institutions that provide analysis and advice to politicians about issues related to the interplay of technology and society. PTA put large emphasis on involving science, civil society, public and private sector in this process, ensuring that the advice given is informed and legitimate.

Today, PTAs are already established by the governments of United Kingdom, Netherlands, France, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Austria and Italy and in the regions of Flanders and Catalonia. Now, funded by the EU commission, PACITA seeks to increase the capacity and enhance the institutional foundation of European technology assessment by helping countries that are interested in establishing a new PTA institution.

To reach this aim, the PACITA initiative will arrange parliamentary debates, practitioner training and summer schools, establish knowledge databases and pan-European networks. Also, there will be three large European cooperative TA projects on Ageing Society, Sustainable Consumption and Public Health Genomics. Citizens and experts will be heavily involved in these issues – a trademark of good technological assessment.

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The PACITA partners are: Danish Board of Technology (Denmark), Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Germany), The Rathenau Institute (Netherlands), Norwegian Board of Technology (Norway), The Institute of Technology Assessment (Austria), Applied Research and Communications Fund (Bulgaria), Institute of Technology of Biology and Chemistry (Portugal), Institute Society and Technology (Flanders, Belgium), Catalan Institution Foundation for Research Support (Catalonia, Spain), Swiss Centre for Technology Assessment (Switzerland), Knowledge Economy Forum (Lithuania), Technology Centre ASCR (Czech Republic), University of Liège, SPIRAL Research Centre (Wallonia, Belgium), University College Cork (Ireland), Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Hungary).

