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About STOA



STOA in Brief:

The Assessment of Scientific and Technological Policy Options for the European Parliament

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The impact of science and technology on EU policy

Today many of the issues coming before the European Parliament have a scientific or technological dimension to them. Technological and scientific advances lie at the heart of economic growth, and it is necessary to both understand how to support scientific and technological innovation and to understand the impact of these technologies. Some issues directly relate to our research and development policies, and the structures that need to be put in place for a technology to become widespread. Others focus on the impact on society and the environment.

STOA: a resource for Committees of the European Parliament

The European Parliament defines its position on these issues through reports prepared by its Committees. If Committees decide that it would be helpful to their policy making role to seek out expert, independent assessments of the various scientific or technological options in the policy sectors concerned, then they have STOA at their disposal: the Parliament's own Science and Technology Options Assessment unit.

Access to independent, outside expertise

STOA is an official organ of the European Parliament, but its work is carried out in partnership with external experts. These can be research institutes, universities, laboratories, consultancies or individual researchers contracted to help prepare specific projects. STOA increasingly focuses upon round-table expert discussions, conferences and workshops with associated or consequent studies. Members of Parliament and invited experts from EU institutions, international institutions, universities, specialist institutes, academies and other sources of expertise worldwide can jointly participate in the analysis of current issues at these events.

The STOA Bureau and Panel

The STOA Bureau runs the activities of STOA and prepares the Panel meetings. The STOA Panel is politically responsible for STOA's work. It is composed of MEPs nominated by six of Parliament's Committees. The STOA Panel in turn elects three members of the Bureau, the Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, and the third member is the Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for STOA. The Panel receives proposals from the various Committees and from individual members. Projects must have a clear scientific and/or technological impact.

STOA Annual reports

STOA produces annual reports detailing the remit of STOA's work and lists its activities and partners for the given year. Annual reports are available from the year 2003 to last year.

New STOA rules

In 2009, the rules and regulations of STOA were updated in order to streamline the process and become more effective as an institution.

How Committees make use of STOA expertise

EP Committees may request assessment projects from STOA throughout the year. Suggestions are examined by the STOA Panel which decides on STOA projects to be executed out of the STOA budget and finally approved by the Bureau of the European Parliament. MEPs may attend the STOA Panel and STOA meetings, which are also open to EP officials/political group staff and MEP's assistants, as well as representatives of other institutions. A STOA Newsletter is sent to all those who have asked to be placed on the mailing list. STOA's details and publications are available from the STOA website accessible via the Europarl site. STOA Final Studies can be downloaded in pdf format, along with many other items of interest. Archival materials can similarly be downloaded from this site.

The STOA Team

Operational responsibility is with the STOA team within Directorate C (Impact Assessment and European Added Value) of the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS). A permanent staff of nine officials working in Brussels carries out STOA's programme. Additionally, visiting unpaid researchers and scholars paid under the Robert Schuman scheme work with the permanent staff on the basis of 5 month scholarships.

STOA Partners

STOA is committed to cooperation with the best and most up-to-date expertise in Europe and worldwide. STOA's scholars and contractors have been drawn from all the EU Member States, candidate countries, Switzerland, Russia and the USA.

As well as its external contractors, STOA has established good relations with relevant Directorates-General of the Commission, the Joint Research Centre, its Institute for Prospective Technological Studies in Sevilla, and with such bodies as WHO, UNEP and OECD. It is also in permanent dialogue with other technology assessment agencies.

The EPTA Network

STOA is an active member of the European Parliamentary Technology Assessment Network-EPTA, which it chaired in 1998. The other partner organisations are the national/regional parliamentary technology assessment bodies of Catalonia, Denmark, Finland, Flanders, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the , Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. EPTA holds an annual conference and issues a regular Newsletter.



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