

Facts and Figures

- founded 1987 (1994)
- 22 staff members, among them 15 scientists
- Director: Doz. Dr. Michael Nentwich
- Budget: approx. 1,5 M€, among them 30-40 % third-party funds
- Member in: Network Technology Assessment (NTA); European Parliamentary Technology Assessment (EPTA); European Technology Assessment Group (ETAG)
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The Institute of Technology Assessment of the Austrian Academy of Sciences

The Institute of Technology Assessment (ITA) is an interdisciplinary research institute that analyses technological change in terms of its underlying societal conditions, the options available for shaping it, and the impacts that may result from it.

Scientific TA applies a broad array of methods stemming from a multitude of fields. An essential element of technology assessment methodology is the inclusion of various bodies of knowledge, values and interests via participatory procedures. Internal project teams, often in collaboration with external partners, carry out interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific analyses.

The aim of applied and scientifically-oriented technology assessment is to generate knowledge relevant for decision-making and to identify the intended and unintended consequences of development options. This knowledge is targeted at supporting politics and administration, on the one hand, and at the general public on the other hand. Our academic work seeks to achieve a better understanding of the societal relevance of technology and to further develop the methodological basis of technology assessment.

Working Mode

As an interdisciplinary institute the ITA is part of the OeAW. The institute is advised by a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). About two thirds of the ITA's work is financed by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BWF) through the budget of the Austrian Academy of Science; currently one third stems from third-party funds (EU, funds, further ministries etc.).

Team

At present, we comprise a team of twenty with a broad range of expertise. Half of the scientific team was originally trained in the natural and engineering sciences, the other half in the social sciences and humanities. The disciplinary backgrounds range from philosophy, sociology, political science and law, to economy, informatics, process engineering, biology and human ecology.

Projects

Our scientific work is organized in projects. Besides thematic working groups, collaborations are often established between the various fields of activity. Depending on requirements, the internal research teams can be temporarily supplemented by external experts. Each project has an internal project advisory board and some also have an external board. Project seminars in which the whole academic ITA team participates take place regularly for the purpose of quality control.

Topics

Technology assessment is as multifaceted as technologies themselves and their fields of application. The ITA team deals with a number of topics which derive from the four research focuses defined in its Medium Term Research Program. These topics overlap in parts and we look at them always from a TA perspective. The current topics include: Cyberscience, E-Democracy, Green Biotechnology, Information Society, Smart Grids, Sustainable Cities, Nanotechnology, Participatory Methods, Privacy, Security, Synthetic Biology, Engineering Education, Technology Controversies, Technology Foresight, Technology and Sustainability, Transdisciplinarity, Surveillance as well as Networked Environments.

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