

TA-INSTITUTIONEN UND -PROGRAMME

CACIT – The Newest Member of the EPTA Network

by Jordi Mas, Catalan TA office

The Catalan TA office CACIT is the second member of the EPTA network that reports to a regional Parliament. In 2005 its full membership was approved. Actually, the office organizes the next Euro Science Open Forum conference (ESOF 2008) which will take place in Barcelona.

1 Background

Catalonia is constituted into an autonomous community in accordance with the Spanish Constitution of 1978, which recognizes the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions that make up the state of Spain. The “Generalitat” is the institution that politically structures the self-government of Catalonia. The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia constitutes the basic rules of the Catalan community, which, in accordance with the constitution, define the Generalitat’s powers, institutions and finances. Catalonia governs itself in all those areas defined by the Statute as exclusive of the Generalitat; in other areas, it develops the basic rules dictated by the State and, in others, only carries out the legislation emanating from the state. The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia establishes the Generalitat as a complex entity made up of three institutions: the *Parliament*, the *President* of the Generalitat, and the *Cabinet or Government*. The Parliament represents the people of Catalonia. Its democratic origins give the Parliament supreme force and make it the most important institution of the Generalitat, from which all the rest is created. The Parliament of Catalonia is made up by only one house, which is independent and inviolable.

The Catalan TA office CACIT (Comissió Assessora de Ciències i Tecnologia) was created in 1999 as a committee, that reported to the presidency of the Catalan Government to

advise the president in matters related to science and technology. The secretariat was and still is held by the Catalan Foundation for Research and Innovation (FCRI). On April 29, 2003 it became formally linked to the Catalan Parliament when the Parliament of Catalonia agreed the new tasks of CACIT:

- Provide scientific and technological assessment to the Parliament of Catalonia;
- Provide support in assessing strategic lines of research and technological development.

(Motion 240/VI of the Parliament of Catalonia on the Research Policy (302-00350/06)

The objective was then to acquire international standards and raise the quality and methodology of the work undertaken by benchmarking with older and more experienced offices in Europe; these especially were members of the EPTA network. After some EPTA meetings participating as observers, the full membership of the Catalan TA office was approved by the EPTA delegates at the EPTA Council meeting on October 18, 2005 held in Brussels, under the presidency of the Flemish Institute of Science and Technology Assessment, viWTA. In words of Robby Berloznik, president of the EPTA network at that moment: “I can assure the other members we will not misuse the fact that we are joined by a second regional parliament, but we will prove this has an extra value.”

2 Strategy

Although the common feature of the EPTA members is that they are bodies performing science and technology assessment studies in order to advise parliaments on possible social, economic and environmental impact of new sciences and technologies, each one of them has its own particularities.

The vision of the Catalan TA office is that parliamentary debates on science policy or involving scientific and technological issues will be held on an informed and rigorous scientific basis. Then, its mission is to provide sufficient, rigorous, and easily accessible scientific and technological information to the Members of Parliament. Our objectives are:

- Perform data collection, analyses and reporting of TA about new scientific and technolo-

logical developments in due time fulfilling the needs of the parliamentary action

- Create links between the research and innovation community and parliament. Develop innovative participatory methods to enhance the interaction between MPs and society about scientific and technological issues
- Create updated multi-channel S&T information for MPs
- Analyze and monitor S&T indicators in Catalonia

3 Structure

CACIT is based at the premises of the Catalan Foundation for Research and Innovation (FCRI), a private non-profit institution funded mainly by the Catalan Government. CACIT has a very flat organizational design with a secretariat constituting of a director, a secretary and two project managers. The TA work is undertaken by panels of experts from different disciplines and different backgrounds. The expert panels cover several disciplines such as:

- Life sciences and Health
- Energy and the Environment
- Information Society and Technology
- Social Sciences and Humanities

4 Operation

Annual operations start with the definition of the annual plan, but we also work upon request of specific commissions of the Parliament. Typically the expert panels are formed by 5 to 10 members coming from academia (universities, research centers), social representatives and business companies. Subgroups within the main thematic areas and other temporary committees devoted to specific topics may be formed. Meetings are subordinated to the needs of the parliamentary commissions and debates. It is always intended that an interdisciplinary approach is taken to deal with the issues. Unfortunately, reports by the committees are elaborated in the official Catalan language which impedes the distribution to other Spanish regions and abroad.

Besides reports derived from the expert panels deliberations and evaluations, the Catalan TA office organizes and collaborates with events and meetings of different formats re-

lated to science and society interaction. CACIT's actual activities are the projects „Energy situation in Catalonia” and “Public Debate on the Catalan Energy Plan 2006-2015”. Further Information on the ESOF conference 2008 is available at <http://www.esof2008.org>.

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