

STOA-NEWS

After elections to the European Parliament in June the **new STOA Panel** has been constituted. The STOA panel consists of 15 Members of the European Parliament delegated by standing parliamentary committees plus a representative of the presidency of the parliament. Paul Rübige MEP (Austria) member of the panel in the last legislative period, has taken over the chair from Philippe Busquin who did not stand for elections again. Paul Rübige will be supported by three colleagues acting as vice chairs of the panel: António Fernando Correia de Campos (Portugal), Malcolm Harbour (United Kingdom) who acted as vice chair in the last panel; and Silvana Koch-Mehrin (Germany) as acting vice president of the parliament.

For the period of 2009/2010 four new medium to long term **STOA projects** have been decided that will be carried out by ETAG. Abstracts of the project plans are given below. More information on the projects will be available soon on the ETAG website (<http://www.itas.fzk.de/etag>).

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Members of the new STOA Panel

<i>Name (Member State)</i>	<i>Committee on...</i>
Reinhard BÜTIKOFER (DE)	Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)
Françoise CASTEX (FR)	Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)
Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS (DE)	ITRE
António Fernando CORREIA DE CAMPOS (Vice Chair) (PT)	Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO)
Malcolm HARBOUR (Vice Chair) (UK)	IMCO
Esther HERRANZ GARCÍA (ES)	Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)
Dieter-Lebrecht KOCH (DE)	Transport and Tourism (TRAN)
Silvana KOCH-MEHRIN (Vice Chair) (DE)	EP Vice-President
Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (NL)	Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)
Vittorio PRODI (IT)	Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)
Teresa RIERA MADURELL (ES)	ITRE
Paul RÜBIG (Chair) (AT)	ITRE
Csaba Sándor TABAJDI (HU)	AGRI
Salvatore TATARELLA (IT)	ENVI
Silvia-Adriana TICAU (RO)	TRAN

New STOA Projects

“Making Perfect Life” (Start: August 2009)

The project aims to explore the techno-scientific development towards artificial life forms and forms of artificial intelligence. It delivers insight into the future directions of both the life sciences and the info-cogno sciences. In the projects broad approach is offering a “trans-technological” view which is helpful in understanding the technological implications of the new ‘life’ forms we are witnessing, and provides the framework for tying together existing research initiatives under the European frameworks. Thus it both consolidates existing research efforts and networks, while also providing the tools and input for discussing wider policy implications across existing research fields.

More specifically, the project investigates the role and meaning of new bio- and cogno-engineering fields within the European research area and explores why and how these fields are being developed. What are the visions, expectations and demands that are driving the different R&D fields? Moreover, the project explores the various social, ethical and legal issues - or better impacts -, that are connected to these new technological skills. The focus will be on comparative issues related to artificial life and intelli-

gence. Central issues concern the definition or meaning of life and intelligence, the boundary between the “natural” and “artificial”, and the “standardization” of biological and cognitive functions. The leading thought is to explore ideas, features and problems that the different fields may have in common and that are related to the ambition of “making *perfect* life”.

“Nanosafety” (Start scheduled for January 2010)

The project will deal with the potential environmental, health and safety (EHS) risks of engineered nanomaterials (ENM). Because of the great uncertainties regarding their actual health and environmental effects and numerous methodological challenges to established risk assessment procedures (e. g. toxicology, exposure and hazard assessments, life cycle assessment, analytics), risk management of ENM is confronted with serious challenges. On the other hand, precautionary regulatory action with regard to ENM is demanded by a number of stakeholders and parts of the general public.

In the face of such uncertainty fundamental political questions have to be addressed: How should the legislative body regulate risks? To explore this issue in greater detail, the project focuses on two important perspectives of regulation: Risk management strategies for ENM as discussed or proposed for the EU or its member states, and risk communication problems and needs for EHS risks of ENM. Findings of the project will be discussed with MEPs in several workshops. In addition, the project will use participatory methods in order to investigate the risk communication expectations of the general public.

E-Democracy: Technical possibilities of the use of electronic voting and other Internet tools in European elections (Start scheduled for January 2010)

The project will deal with the potential of Internet-based applications to improve political participation and the quality of democratic decision-making at the European level. To this end, the role of new media technologies in creating a European public sphere will be in-

vestigated. A major focus of the project will be the formal opportunities for European citizens to participate at the European level by the means of Internet-based applications, including e-voting solutions. Good practice examples of e-participation activities of the Member States will provide a useful basis for recommendations for European decision-makers.

Technology Options in Urban Transport: Changing paradigms and promising innovation strategies (Start scheduled for January 2010)

In a Draft Report on an action plan for urban mobility the European Parliament’s Committee on Transport and Tourism states that both the complexity and interdependence of travel systems as well as personal and collective modes of transport in urban areas make a purely technical approach focussed on various modes of transport very limiting. The report emphasises the need for an integrated “urban travel systems” approach together with a “user-centred” approach taking the behaviour of the users adequately into account. In line with these statements, the STOA project will look at technologies from an innovation-oriented angle. The project will provide an inventory of both existing and future technology options in urban transport as well as an overview on the scientific knowledge about their (potential) impacts on health and/or environment. Taking this as a basis, the project will also look at the socio-economic context in which these technologies are or will be implemented. It will analyse the knowledge about perceptions, motivations and the changeability of behavioural patterns of the actors, in particular users, which are relevant for the successful implementation of technological and organisational innovations in urban transport. The overall aim will be to highlight promising innovation pathways to a more sustainable urban transport system.

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