

STOA NEWS

Two new TA projects run by the European Technology Assessment Group (ETAG) on behalf of the European Parliament's Science and Technology Options Assessment panel (STOA) have recently been launched.

ETAG is a consortium of eight European institutions active in the field of technology assessment and innovation research. The group's work on behalf of STOA is co-ordinated by ITAS/KIT on the basis of a framework contract with the European Parliament.

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Technology options and systems to strengthen participatory and direct democracy

The growing use of ICT tools and social media significantly affects the way citizens can become involved in policy- and decision-making processes. Digital tools might create stronger connections between European citizens and the EU decision-making process and, by doing so, can contribute to reducing the EU democratic deficit. On a local and national level, and to some extent also an EU level, digital tools have already been used for citizen involvement in policy- and decision-making.

The proposed project will investigate what lessons can be drawn from local, national and European experiences of the use of digital tools for the functioning of EU decision-making procedures and institutions. For that purpose, a review of current literature on e-democracy, the EU governance system and the European public sphere will be carried out; 15-20 local, national and EU experiences with existing digital tools will be investigated and evaluated; and an analysis will be made of the suitability of the most promising digital tools for implementation and

use at EU level. Informed by the review of current literature, an evaluation framework will be formulated for the assessment of experiences of existing digital tools, and for the assessment of the usability of the tools at EU level. The project will provide recommendations with regard to the use of digital tools at EU level.

Duration: 8 months, End: January 2017

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Assistive technologies for the inclusion of people with disabilities in society, education and jobs

The project focuses on future trends in assistive technologies (ATs) and their impact on disabled people, specifically on their learning and working environment and their inclusion into society. Following the foresight methodology of the STOA unit, the current and emerging trends and prospects of ATs and regulatory frameworks pertinent to ATs will be analysed forming the basis for an interview and survey founded evaluation that links ATs to the needs, perceptions and opportunities for people with disabilities in the EU.

To accomplish these aims, a horizon scanning as 360° envisioning method will be employed which involves also the contribution of external experts. This will provide for a solid knowledge basis for the development of four scenarios which will be complemented with a video-sequence. The work is designed to inform members of the European Parliament for knowledge-based decision making on assistive technologies for people with disabilities.

Duration: 14 months, End: April 2014

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