

Presentation of EPTA

Objectives and operations

I. Objectives

The EPTA Partners advise parliaments on the possible social, economic and environmental impact of new sciences and technologies.

The common aim is to provide impartial and high quality accounts and reports of developments in issues such as for example bioethics and biotechnology, public health, environment and energy, ICTs, and R&D policy.

Such work is seen as an aid to the democratic control of scientific and technological innovations, and was pioneered in the 1970s by the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) of the US Congress.

EPTA aims to advance the establishment of technology assessment as an integral part of policy consulting in parliamentary decision-making processes in Europe, and to strengthen the links between TA units in Europe.

II. Organization

The EPTA network was formally established in 1990 under the patronage of the President of the European Parliament, Mr Enrique Baron Crespo. The network has a light structure, guided by the EPTA Council and by meetings of the Directors of the EPTA partner organizations.

The EPTA Council is the steering committee of the EPTA network, and consists of members of Parliament or representatives of the advisory boards for the respective EPTA organization. The council decides on organizational matters such as co-operation within the network and the status of members and associates.

The presidency of EPTA moves each year. The tasks of the EPTA member organization holding the presidency are to coordinate the EPTA network activities and to host the annual EPTA Conference, Council Meeting and Directors' meeting.

III. Members

The members of the EPTA network are European organizations, which carry out TA studies on behalf of parliaments.

The following criteria for full EPTA membership were accepted at the Council Meeting in Helsinki in October 2001:

“Regular EPTA membership can be obtained by a unit that

- pursues TA activities and

- operates in Europe,
- is devoted to TA or related activities,
- serves the parliament,
- has its own budget and secretariat,
- has a competence regarding issues with a scientific and technological component, and
- submits a written membership application.”

Europe is by EPTA regarded as the geographical Europe as defined by The Council of Europe. Associate membership can be granted to salient TA units, which have a TA program and resources to realize it, but do not fully live up to other criteria for full membership. Associates are involved in all EPTA activities but are not represented in the EPTA council. Further, units interested in the work of EPTA can act as observers.

Parliamentary TA is institutionalized in different ways, ranging from permanent parliamentary committees for TA; separate TA units as part of the parliamentary administration; to independent institutions with a mandate to serve as a permanent consulting institution for the parliament.

IV. EPTA projects

EPTA can decide to make “common EPTA projects”, in which EPTA members and associates can join forces and make trans-European TA activities. EPTA projects are based upon the “Joint EPTA Project Framework”, which makes use of a bottom-up principle, according to which three or more members can initiate a project if it is open for active participation from other EPTA members. The project is decided during a Directors' meeting or Council meeting after being scrutinized by the boards of the members. The outcome of an EPTA project is the sole responsibility of the participating members.

V. Presidency/Contact

Presidency:

For the year 2015, the presidency is held by the French Parliamentary Office for Scientific and Technological Assessment (OPECST).

Contact:

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VI. Mailing list

If you want to be currently informed on EPTA and related TA activities, join the EPTA mailing list.

E-mail: eptamail-join@eptanetwork.org

If you have problems with the mailing list, please contact: postmaster@eptanetwork.org