The Study Commission „The Internet and the Digital Society“ in Germany

PACITA’s 2nd European TA Conference, Berlin

Britta Oertel
IZT – Institute for Futures Studies:

- A nonprofit research institute based in Berlin
- Works on futures studies, sustainability design and technology assessment
- Investigates early identification of opportunities and risks, with a focus on transformation, participation and stakeholder integration
- Has been a cooperating partner of the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag (TAB) since 2013
- Thereby focuses on civic participation and stakeholder integration
Agenda

- TA project »Online civic participation in parliamentary work«
- »Study Commission on the Internet and Digital Society« of the 17th German Bundestag
- Novel approach for the Bundestag’s work with regard to online civic participation
- Results of first scientific analyses following the work of the »Internet Enquête«
- Conclusions and further research
Online civic participation in parliamentary work
TA project

▶ Starting point and focus: Assessment of novel approaches of the »Internet Enquête«
▶ Furthermore: Options for parliamentary work
▶ At the suggestion of the »Internet Enquête« commissioned by the German Parliament (Bundestag)
▶ Conducted by »Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag«, briefly: TAB
▶ Preliminary study, 2013-2014 by IZT
▶ Main study, 2014-2015, in cooperation with partners from science (work in progress)
IZT’s methodological approach and data basis

- Ca. 430 online contributions (enquetebeteiliung.de)
- Ca. 200 online articles (heise.de)
- Ca. 400 blog posts from ca. 50 blogs
- Ca. 900 press articles
- Ca. 9,500 Tweets #eidg

Description
Thematic analyses
Network analyses
Options for action

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Study Commission on the Internet and Digital Society
Study commissions at a glance

Study commissions and other commissions

Upon a motion of one quarter of its Members, the Bundestag is obliged to set up a study commission for the preparation of decisions on wide-ranging and significant issues. The members of study commissions are nominated in line with an agreement reached between the parliamentary groups.

Study commissions, which are composed of parliamentarians and external experts, are charged with submitting reports and recommendations to Parliament before the end of a particular electoral term. On the basis of these reports and recommendations, Parliament is then able to decide in the following electoral term whether the study commission in question should continue its work.

https://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/bodies/study
»Internet Enquête«

- Study commission of the 17\textsuperscript{th} German Bundestag
- Work phase 3 years, completed its work in spring 2013
- Focused on the participation of citizens in the fact-finding work (according to resolution of the German Bundestag)
- Tried new approaches and a wide range of innovative measures
- Considered active citizenship and online participation on an equal footing with a study commission’s external expert
- Discussed experiences gained with novel approaches in final report intensively
Study commission’s timeline and topics

- **Beginning of the investigation period**
  - Set up Internet Enquete
  - Start participation tool enquetebeteiligung.de

- **End of the investigation period**

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- **Copyright (law)**: Sep 2010 - Jul 2011
- **Media literacy**: Sep 2010 - Jul 2011
- **Net neutrality**: Sep 2010 - Jun 2011
- **Data protection and privacy issues**: Oct 2010 - Jun 2011
- **Democracy, democratic state**: Jun 2011 - Oct 2012
- **Economy, Labour, Green IT**: Jul 2011 - Oct 2012
- **Education and research**: Sep 2011 - Jun 2012
- **Access, network structure and safety**: Sep 2011 - Nov 2012
- **International issues, Internet Governance**: Jun 2012 – Dec 2012
- **Culture and the media, the public**: Jun 2012 - Nov 2012
- **Consumer protection**: Jun 2012 - Dec 2012
- **Interoperability, standards, free software**: Jun 2012 - Dec 2012

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Internet Enquête

Novel approaches for the Bundestag’s parliamentary work
Novel approaches of the »Internet Enquête«

- Almost daily updated reports on the work progress on its website
- For the first time working papers not yet adopted were made public
- Sessions were broadcast on the Internet (live or with a time delay)
- Blog and Forum, Twitter (Online editor)
- Citizens could personally attend project meetings or were actively involved through Twitter (moderated by Online editor)
- Participation tool 'enquetebeteiligung.de' by means of which interested citizens (later: organizations) could submit suggestions or positions (operated by Adhocracy without pay)
- Arranged for archive of the information stored at the online platform
Participation tool 'enquetebeteiligung.de'

![Image of the participation tool](image-url)
Suggestions by individuals on the participation platform over time

Term of the 17th German Bundestag

Number of suggestions

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Selected findings of participation analyses

- The necessity of a participation tool was disputed, the platform finally was provided free of charge due to the high commitment from several different angles.

- Some members of the study commission have been actively promoting the supporting civic online participation over the entire project.

- The platform was used by interested individuals (whether as private persons or not cannot be determined).

- Civic engagement was generally lower than expected by members of the Internet Enquete and irregular.

- One suggestion was adopted by the Internet Enquete in its final report.
Twitter/ #eidg

Die Enquete-Redaktion verabschiedet sich und sagt danke für das Interesse, für RTs, Anregungen, Lob & Kritik! #eidg #danke #bisbald

Es gibt noch einige Exemplare der 4-bändigen Ausgabe mit Enquete-Berichten. Nur solange Vorrat reicht: bundestag.de/internetenquete... #eidg
Tweets with hashtag #eidg refer to...

- Regular parliamentary members of Internet Enquete
- Deputy parliamentary members of Internet Enquete
- Expert members of Internet Enquete
- Internet Enquete Commission
- Other Members of Parliament
- Political parties
- Press and broadcasting
- Blogger

n=5.621
Selected findings of Twitter analyses

- Twitter was used for information and communication purposes
- Information was provided with regard to
  - topical information
  - Temporal information regarding the Commission's or other important meetings
  - Links to documents, press articles, pictures and videos
- Conversation topics include
  - Requests for further information
  - Exchange of views
  - Furthermore: classic tweets (I am having lunch with ..., campaigning)
It’s the Parliament, (stupid)!

Selected issues and challenges
Issues and challenges

- The understanding of the term »Online civic participation in parliamentary work« and user expectations differ: To what degree can citizens truly become involved in
  - Decision-making processes
  - Consultation processes

- Pooled experience and specialist expertise is needed to avoid mistakes and public criticism. Users expect that commitments and promises are kept.

- With regard to data protection: Should the German Bundestag allow registration or login via Twitter or Facebook?

- With regard to privacy or data safety and privacy issues: Which user data should be collected and stored?
Preliminary study on behalf of the German Bundestag (in German)

https://www.tab-beim-bundestag.de/de/untersuchungen/u10700.html
Thank you for listening

For more information and to answer your questions please contact:
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Besuchen Sie auch www.izt.de