

# **Mediating between expertise and Parliament: Daily Experiences**

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# The Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag (TAB)

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- Founded upon a Bundestag's decision in 1989
- Operation by an external partner (an independent research institution) at the basis of a contract with the Bundestag
- Five-year contractual periods, then the game is opened again
- Operation by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)
- Cooperation with IZT (Berlin), UFZ (Leipzig), and VDI/VDE IT GmbH (Berlin) for specific tasks
- Annual Budget: 1 mio. Euros for the office (staff etc.) and 1 mio. Euros for cooperation partners and external expertises
- TAB office: small interdisciplinary team and secretariate, close ITAS cooperation

# Mode of operation

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- Responsible: the Bundestag's Committee on Education, Research, and Technology Assessment
- Group of rapporteurs (one MP from each fraction represented in the Bundestag)
- Principle of Consensus regarding decision on TAB's agenda and related questions
- TAB's agenda (about 10 projects p.a.) is determined by the Bundestag, upon requests by Bundestag's Committees and fractions
- Conduct of the projects in scientific independence by TAB and its partners, frequently involving external expertise
- Integrated reports (including options for the Parliament) to the Bundestag and presentation to involved committees, sometimes public events
- Political evaluation and debate separated from formal approval „mission fulfilled“



# Lessons Learned from Daily Experience (1)

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- Extremely tight time schedule of MPs – continuous struggle for time slots (with rapporteurs, for presentations to the Committee ...)
- Important Role of the Committee's Secretariate and of assisting personnel to the MPs
- TAB went „upstream“, following the requests of the Bundestag – most of our issues are not close to today's political agenda but of a more future-oriented and strategic nature
- Nevertheless: close communication in the course of projects necessary to keep MPs „on board“
- ‚Positivistic‘ division of labour (MPs are in charge of values, TAB is in charge of scientific facts) is only the formal model – in practice it is acknowledged that things are not that simple
- Increasing openness to participatory elements over the last years

## Lessons Learned from Daily Experience (2)

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- There is high sensitivity at the side of the Parliament with regard to public perception (this sometimes affects the use of specific notions)
- Public awareness sometimes helps creating political impact
- Very different types of impact on political debate in the Bundestag occur which often are difficult to trace and to document (e.g. because of huge time delays)
- Often, the initiative of individual MPs is decisive
- A wide range of impact often occurs outside of the Parliament (ministries, agencies, NGOs, citizens ...)

# Some theses as response to the session organizer's questions

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- Successful expert-based policy advice needs intermediary institutions – the direct way from expertise to politics often ends up in naive expectations and recommendations
- In the field of policy advice the mandate of experts including its borderlines and restrictions must be made as clear and transparent as possible
- And because in reality those borderlines often are ‚grey zones‘ and show smooth transition areas instead of being sharp and distinctive mutual trust is an essential prerequisite of scientific policy advice

**Thank you for your attention!**

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