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Europäische Akademie

zur Erforschung von Folgen
wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen
Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH

Direktor:

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Newsletter *Akademie-Brief*

Editorial

In May 1996 the newly founded European Academy was fortunate to find accommodation in a part of the historical administration building of the Apollinaris AG. From the beginning it was already foreseeable that with an increasing number of staff a new location would have to be found. One of the European Academy's partners, Rhineland-Palatine, was responsible for finding suitable accommodation.

At the beginning of October 1999 the European Academy moved into its final accommodation. It is an entirely renovated school building, formerly known as „Paul Joerres Gymnasium III“. The location is in the center of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler very close to the railway station „Ahrweiler“ as well as to the arterial roads. The overall size of 1100 m² covers the two top floors of the four-storey building and permits an excellent view over the vineyards of the Ahr-Valley.

The staff enjoys working in the spacious, modern offices. Now it is possible to accommodate smaller conferences and other scientific meetings of project groups or study groups in one of the two seminar rooms or in the library. The European Academy now has enough room available to forge ahead with two activities, which were neglected up to now due to limited space: The research fellowship programme and the PhD-programme.

All readers are kindly requested to take note of our new address and phone number. We shall be happy to welcome you in the new premises of the European Academy!

Focus

The Platform for Science and Ethics in the Netherlands. Review of an experiment

Nanne E. van de Poll

The Dutch Platform for Science and Ethics was set up by NOTA (now Rathenau Institute) on the basis of a more general initiative of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, to stimulate societal debate on ethical issues related to scientific and technological developments. It started its activities in 1994 for an experimental period of four years. During that period various activities were employed all aimed at articulating the societal and ethical aspects of these developments and involving relevant parties in the debate including laymen citizens. This article presents an overview of the framework of the Platform and its activities during this experimental period. The Platform now has been formally evaluated and its mission and methods have been structurally made part of the Rathenau Institutes programmes.

It is not too much to say that modern society is dominated to a large extent by science and technology. This is in some way reflected in all forms of social interaction, ranging from individual communication to the management of different kinds of institutions, including science and technology itself. Living in a democratic society, these developments do not come to us without problems and it is especially the planning and management of science and the societal absorption of its resulting applications and technology that lead to many kinds of friction.

In 1991 the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science issued a memorandum entitled 'A framework for discussions on the ethical aspects of scientific research'. This comprised an attempt to institutionalise the debate about questions of this kind. Societal debate and discussions raised by scientific developments logically appeal to the operative norms and values and it is against this background that the initiative to set up a platform for societal debate on ethical questions was taken by this

minister. The initiative not only concerned the topical developments in biological and medical sciences which frequently lead to the explicit questioning of prevailing values, but also pointed to issues that can be observed in other areas such as information technology and environmental issues. Discussions about such issues often generate strong emotions and not infrequently prevent sound and thorough political decision-making. On the basis of a perception of the pluriformity of normative premises operating in society, it was proposed that technology assessment could chart these various aspects and support political opinion forming on scientific and technological developments. Therefore, in 1992, the minister of Education and Science asked the Rathenau Institute (NOTA at that time) to orient itself to a coordinative role on a 'platform' to be installed for dealing with such issues.

The proposal offered to the minister comprised a plan to set up a platform in consultation with other organisations, including the National Health Council and the Royal Dutch Academy

of Arts and Sciences. This proposal was put into effect in 1994 for an initial experimental period of four years. The Platform for Science and Ethics was given the task to organise discussions and debate. People and organisations that could contribute by identifying key issues and clarifying basic premises and visions in society were to be invited to the ensuing debate. Part of this process could also involve determining what governmental bodies or groups would be able to use the results. The Platform itself would function as a network-like construction in which the participating organisations could put forward their own topics for the agenda and contribute to the elaboration of subjects.

Charged with the task of organising debate on normative issues, the Platform was confronted with the question of what, exactly, is to be understood by the term 'debate'. Here, 'debate' was defined as „that complex of activities which aims to develop and clarify the formulation of ideas and opinions surrounding normative aspects of the interaction between science, technology and society“. This definition does not exclusively refer to debate as vis-à-vis interactions. The formulation does require, however, that pluriformity of ideas and considerations is mapped, along with their cohesion, and that people and groups receive an opportunity to contribute.

The following presents an overview of the different activities of the Platform. The initiative for most of these was in the hands of the Platform with the exception of the 'Public Hearing: Computer Language, Human Language' where the Platform joined a project of the Dutch League of Humanists. The position of the Platform within the Rathenau Institute and the intensive interaction with its programs, stimulated collaboration especially within the activities on sex-selection for non-medical reasons and privacy. The work on privacy forming the final project of the Platforms experimental period was only recently finished.

Predictive Genetic Research, where are we going

The debate was modelled in accordance with the Danish consensus conference and an earlier debate organised by NOTA (now Rathenau Institute) on biotechnology. However the scope of debate was extended to include a series of workshops and an expert meeting on specific issues in

this field, Ethicists, experts, representatives of relevant societal organisations (such as patients organisations and industry) and managing civil servants in this field participated in these workshops. An accessible summary of the discussions and conclusions of these workshops were available at the start of the public debate. A panel of 16 laymen was well prepared during two weekends in which a long list of questions was formulated. About 300 interested people with a diverse background formed the audience, which at regular intervals could actively participate in the discussions. The debate resulted in a final document, worded by the laymen panel, which at the end of the conference was handed to a representative of the parliament. The document pleaded for more ethical deliberation on fundamental and applied research, further public debate and, as one of more specific issues, a proper protection of people against genetically oriented discrimination.

Nature Development: why and how

The structure of the debate differed in several respects from the first on genetic research. The panel of 32 men and women not only consisted of laymen but also comprised people that were involved (such as farmers) or could offer some specific expertise. The panel concluded in an elaborate document that 'nature development' is only one way of taking care of nature, various people and governmental bodies having busied themselves with the general management of nature over the years. Each approach results in its own, characteristic 'type' of nature. The various efforts in the past have led to highly diverse manifestations of nature in the Netherlands. At the moment, policy in the area of nature development must acknowledge this pluriformity. It is not the intention that large-scale nature development be pursued at the cost of the other valuable nature that already exists. In order to provide an impression of the pluriformity of nature and nature management, various forms were suggested, with all manner of transitions being conceivable. Much attention was paid to the social and psychological relevance of proper political management of the implementation of the plans.

Public Hearing: 'Computer Language, Human Language?'

Still further away from the consensus model as a means of stimulating public

participation and debate on normative issues, was the public hearing on information and communication technology where the computer was charged with violating humane values. A prosecutor read out the charge and the computer was defended by a lawyer. Several witnesses, both for the prosecution and for the defence were called before the court. More than 200 hundred interested parties witnessed the public hearing into the social consequences of the information society. The inquiry was organised by the Dutch league of Humanists while the Platform introduced and supported the jury of 12 laymen. During the day, several fact-finding committees focused upon aspects such as democracy, computer illiteracy, the quality of work and life, privacy and emancipation.

Sex-Selection for Non-Medical Reasons

The Rathenau Institute and the Platform studied the public perception of norms and values on sex-selection and organised a debate on the outcome of this study as a contribution to societal debate in the Netherlands at that moment. Apart from the timely political arguments to consider this subject, it was also the direct practical and concrete nature of developments like this that led to its selection. The study consisted of a quantitative survey among the Dutch population, plus group discussions to cover the views of ethnic minorities. The results of the study formed the theme of a debate meeting for experts, interested parties and public. The survey revealed that sex selection is seen as a step along a path towards selecting children by other characteristics. However, a ban on sex selection techniques received significantly less support from the participants in the debate than from the respondents to the survey.

Further activities of the Platform consisted of a survey, a round-table conference on *Professional ethics*. Another topic was *Perception of Privacy in the Information Society*. Research on how citizens experience privacy in the information society was carried out.

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Working groups

Electronic Signatures

On 16/17 September 1999 the project group *Kulturelle Beherrschbarkeit und die moralische Verantwortbarkeit digitaler Signaturen* had its constitutional meeting in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler. The project had been evaluated positively by the Scientific Advisory Board of the European Academy. Members of the new project group are: Professor Dr. Gerhard Banse (Universität Potsdam), Dr. Helmut Bäumler (Datenschutzbeauftragter Schleswig-Holstein), Professor Dr. Jos Dumortier (Universität Leuven), Notar Dr. Riccardo Genghini (Mailand), Professor Dr. Andrzej Kiepas (Universität Kattowice), Professor Dr. Bernd Lutterbeck (TU Berlin), Dr. Petr Machleidt (Universität Prag), Professor Dr. Andreas Pfitzmann (Universität Dresden), Professor Dr. Georg Rudinger (Universität Bonn), Professor Dr. Reinhard Voßbein (UIMC Wuppertal).

Chair: Dr. Otto Ulrich (Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik, Bonn)

Project Manager:

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Climate Prediction and Precautions

On 25 June and 7 September the project group *Klimavorhersage und -vorsorge* held two meetings, which aimed at the discussion of legal and political aspects of climate change. Corresponding stock-takings and theses were presented by Professor Dr. Meinhard Schröder, Trier („Climate protection as a juridical problem“), Dr. Volker von Prittwitz, Berlin („Questions of public acting in environmental politics“) and Detlef Sprinz, PhD, Potsdam („Political aspects of international climate policy“). Both latter persons were invited guests of the working group.

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News in Brief

New Vice-Director

After nearly four years working for the European Academy as vice-director, Professor Dr. Armin Grunwald left the Academy on 30th September 1999 to become director of the Institut für Technikfolgenabschätzung und Systemanalyse (ITAS) at the Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe. Professor Gethmann and all colleagues would like to thank Armin Grunwald and wish him all the best for the future.

Dr. med. Felix Thiele, M.Sc. was appointed as the new vice-director of the European Academy.

Workshop „Innovation“

The concept of innovation is of great importance for all areas of policy making. The semantic analysis however shows that the word ‚innovation‘ is by no ways clearly defined. By the means of an expert workshop on 27th September 1999 the meaning of the word ‚innovation‘ in different contexts was specified. The results of this workshop will be the basis for further activities of the European Academy in the corresponding field.

Visit

Professor Dr. Armin Grunwald visited the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Silesia, Katowice, and the Higher School of Management and Social Sciences in Tychy. According to the cooperation agreement which has been signed recently, he discussed with several colleagues how to establish or to improve scientific exchange via common projects, conferences and exchanging scientific staff.

International Conference on „Environment Across Cultures“

From the 21st to 23rd of September 1999 the European Academy and the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) held a joint symposium chaired by Eckart Ehlers and Carl Friedrich Gethmann in Bad Neuenahr. The conference was opened by an evening lecture given by Jürgen Mittelstraß (Konstanz) on the concept of nature. It aimed at reviewing the scientific understanding of „nature“ from a historical and epistemological perspective as a working basis for the following sessions. Michael Thompson (London) gave insights why and in what way cultural and behavioral diversity may cause disparities in environmental perception. Dipak Gyawali (Kathmandu) continued by reporting on the impact of

„social carriers of technology“ in perceiving the environment from the specific evidence in developing countries. Contributions of different religions to environmental ethics were compared and summarized by Harold Coward (Victoria, Canada). Dieter Birnbacher (Düsseldorf) asked whether universal environmental values could be found or constructed and in which way the sustainability paradigm may be applicable. The session was closed with a statement given by Paul Claval (Paris). The final session opened with a talk by Michael Redclift (Canterbury, UK) on the concept of sustainability from the perspective of human livelihoods and life chances, illustrated by a development case study on the Caribbean coast. Hong-Key Yoon (Auckland, New Zealand) and Rolf Peter Siefert (Mannheim) gave additional statements from religious and historical perspectives.

The conference was co-sponsored by the Strukturförderungsgesellschaft Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahrweiler. A book on the basis of this conference will be published.

Lectures

Carl Friedrich Gethmann:

„The Ethics of Outer Space“, Seminar „On the Ethics of Outer Space“, Unesco Paris, 09.09.99

„Gradierung und Diskontierung von Verbindlichkeiten bei der Langzeitverantwortung“, 18. Deutscher Kongress für Philosophie, Konstanz, 05.10.99

„Vernunft als gesellschaftliches Fundament“, Symposium der Karl Heinz Beckurts-Stiftung Bonn, 07.10.99

Armin Grunwald:

„Die Zukunft des Buches und die Rolle der Technikfolgenbeurteilung“, International Conference „Informational Society and Socio-Cultural Space of Books“, Moskau 22.9.1999

„Nachhaltige Entwicklung. Umweltpolitik zwischen langfristigen Planungserfordernissen und Akzeptanzproblemen“, International Independent University of Ecology and Politology, Moskau, 23.9.1999

„Technisches Handeln und seine Resultate. Grundzüge kulturalistischer Technikphilosophie“, Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moskau, 24.09.1999

„Langzeitverantwortung und Technik – eine Einführung“, 18. Deutscher Kongress für Philosophie, Konstanz, 5.10.1999

Eva Neumann-Held:

„Organism. A Prejudice?“, Konferenz der International Society of History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Biology, Oaxaca (Mexiko) 7.-11.07.99

„Führt die moderne Molekular- und Humangenetik zwingend zur Eugenik?“, forum philosophicum: Aktuelle Probleme der Angewandten Ethik, FernUniversität Hagen, 23.09.99

Karl-Michael Nigge:

„A Method for the Site-Dependent Life-Cycle Impact Assessment of Human Health Effects From Airborne Traffic Pollutants“, 9. Jahrestagung der Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) Europe, Leipzig 27.05.99

Science, Technology and Environmental Issues. Budapest: MTA Szociologiai Intezet, 1999, S. 5-25

S. Lingner: „Klimavorhersage und -vorsorge. Aufgaben und Ziele eines interdisziplinären Forschungsprojekts“, in: TA-Datenbank-Nachrichten No. 2 (8), Karlsruhe, Juli 1999, S. 26-28

E. M. Neumann-Held: „Genes and Development-Interacting Processes or Hierarchical Organization?“, in: Bioethica 28, p. 8-10

E. M. Neumann-Held, C. Rehm-Sutter: „Individuation and Reality of Genes. A Comment to P.J. Beurton's Article „Was sind Gene heute?“, Theory Biosci. (1999) 118, p. 85-95

M. Schröder, S. Lingner (eds.): „Modelling Climate Change and its Economic Consequences. A Review“, Graue Reihe Nr. 15, Europäische Akademie, Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, June 1999

Personalities



Dr. med. *Felix Thiele*, M.Sc. studied Medicine at the universities of Hamburg and Heidelberg. He was awarded a doctoral degree in 1997 for experimental work in the field of high blood pressure research. He studied philosophy at the University of Heidelberg and at the London School of Economics, where he was awarded a Master of Science in Philosophy and History of Science. 1997 - 1998 he worked at the Max-Delbrück-Center for Molecular Medicine Berlin-Buch in the field of science management.

Since July 1998 he has been working at the European Academy as a member of the scientific staff. He is the project manager of the project group „Human Genetics. Ethical Problems and Societal Consequences“. Since 1st October 1999 he has been vice-director of the European Academy.

His research is in the field of medical ethics, especially the ethical implications of human genome research.

New Publications

M. Decker (Hrsg.) Robotik. Eine interdisziplinäre Einführung. Graue Reihe 16, Europäische Akademie Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, September 1999

C. F. Gethmann: „Die Rolle der Ethik in der Technikfolgenabschätzung“, in: Th. Petermann, R. Coenen: Technikfolgen-Abschätzung in Deutschland. Bilanz und Perspektiven, Frankfurt a.M., New York 1999, S. 131-145

P. Griffiths, E.M. Neumann-Held: „The Many Faces of the Gene“, BioScience 49, p. 656-662

A. Grunwald: To What Extent Should an Engineer be Familiar with Ethical Competence? Proceedings of the International Conference „History, Problems and Prospects of Technical Education“, S. 327-333, Erfurt

A. Grunwald: Rationality in Shaping Technology? Remarks on Technology Assessment from a Planning Theoretical Point of View. In: Imre Hronszky (ed.): Studies on the policy of

Research Fellowship Programme

With the beginning of the year 2000 the European Academy is starting its Research Fellowship Programme. The purpose is to invite highly qualified foreign scholars to carry out research projects in the field of the study of consequences of scientific and technological advance at the European Academy in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler. Research fellowships for a stay between 3 and 6 months are offered on a European-wide competitive basis. Selective criteria is - besides quality and feasibility - the relatedness of the proposed projects to the scientific work of the European Academy.

Approximately 3 to 5 research fellowships are available per year. Financial support (grant) is negotiable. Applications can be submitted as of today. For further information please visit our Homepage
<http://www.europaeische-akademie-aw.de>.

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