

## **EPTA Conference, Berne, October 27, 2003**

### **Welcome Address by Klaus Hug, President TA-Swiss**

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Dear members of the EPTA-Council  
Dear participants of the EPTA-Meeting  
Dear friends and guests  
Ladies & Gentlemen

As President of the TA-SWISS Management Committee, I welcome you cordially in the Swiss capital Berne and thereby open this year's conference of the European Parliamentary Technology assessment Network EPTA.

I am very happy that Switzerland, although not a member of the European Union, was accepted as a full member of the EPTA network and could be attributed the presidency of the EPTA network in 2003.

We are here in the heart of the Swiss Ministry of Finance. Switzerland is a very special country. We are – as said before – not member of the European Union, but nevertheless we have with you a lot in common. We create every year large budget deficits. So please feel at home here. Welcome to you all!

In 1994 a book was published, written by the English professor Hamish McRae: “The World in 2020, a Vision of the Future”. In the Chapter “Technology” I read the following sentences:

*“ Technology seems to be moving so rapidly that there is a great temptation to assume that life in the future, at least in the developed world, will be transformed by wondrous advances of which we at present know nothing. The reality is quite different. There will be important changes which will indeed alter the lives, and certainly the jobs, of many people a generation from now, but the technologies involved will be ones that in some form already exist”.*

Later on in this book one can find a lot of statements about electro-mechanical technology, electronics, information revolution, telecom and so on and their influence on society, how societies will use their new technological power. But you don't find one single word about life sciences, biotechnology, stem cells or cloning. The field with the most enormous development in the last decade has been totally faded out.

What do I want to say with this? We see that what is obvious, but we are not able to see what will be tomorrow. Technology development is full of surprises, but the true visionaries are very rare. I remember when some years ago an American company presented a new worldwide finance information system which was able to show every minute of every development of the currencies. The head of our National Bank reacted as the following: I would give this new system free to everybody if someone could tell me what will be the Dollar value tomorrow.

So what is Technology assessment? Is it the assessment of real existing things and of the development on their way on or has it also to assess what we have to expect if the things develop as we do not expect them to do so? I am convinced that Technology Assessment is an art and the assessors have to be artists: precise in the assessment of the evidence, serious in the appraisal of the less evident consequences in the future and in this way helping to bridge the gap between sciences and citizens.

TA is more important today than ever:

- We live in a highly "technologised" world
- the speed of development is enormous
- the dilemma between the many chances and risks of technological development is larger than years before.

Two weeks ago, we had a very interesting conference of the Academia Engelberg about "Pervasive Computing". The advantages of the technological progress in this field were painted so overwhelmingly that the critics had sometimes difficulties to express their concerns.



I wish that everybody feels in Heaven the next two days and that the Conference will be a full success.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Rosmarie Waldner. She is a member of the TA-Swiss Management committee and the president of the supervisory group of the PubliForum Research on Human Beings which will come to its end by January 27 2004. Mrs. Waldner will chair this afternoon-conference.

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