

THE YEARLY WORKING PLAN IN A NUTSHELL, May 2010

IST Working program 2010

This Working program 2010 describes the research projects that the IST initiated in the course of 2010. The Scientific secretariat has put this working program together, on the basis of an analysis of current trends at the interface of society and technology (Document 62 (2009-2010) -Nr. 1 trend note Institute Society and Technology). When determining the policy relevance, we have been taking into account the start of a new term for the legislative power. That new beginning will be characterized by new policy options, which will to a large degree also determine the agenda of the Flemish parliament. By doing so, the IST tries to come to a selection of projects presenting a connection with the subjects that will be under discussion in the Flemish parliament in the years to come. At the same time, the new projects constitute a balanced mix of desk research and more encompassing participatory projects, short- and long-term research, etc. As far as the output is concerned, we both deliver reports and other documents and organize events. The Board of Administrators approved the Working program during its meeting of 3 March 2010. At the same time, the Board decided that in carrying out the Working program 2010, priority will be given to specific missions the IST might be made responsible for by the Flemish Parliament

ICT, ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA?

For some time, the Flemish authorities have been pleading for a well-considered use of ICT applications for elderly people. The main focus lays on possible contributions in health care and other services, but ICT applications for elderly people are not necessarily limited to that area. The slogan 'active ageing' can as well refer to the desire to keep on taking part in the social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and political life. The project 'ICT, always a good idea?' explores possible ICT applications from a wide point of view: not only from the (health) care perspective but also with respect to an optimization of the life quality of senior citizens.

Older people in Flanders, however, do not form a coherent group. Not only do their needs strongly vary; their opinions on how to fulfill these needs may also diverge considerably. That aspect too is taken into account in this IST project. We ask the question of freedom of choice. Take online

banking that is certainly an ICT opportunity, but because of the gradually disappearing alternatives, sooner or later an ICT constraint of obligation too.

The project "ICT, always a good idea?" has a triple objective: to explore situations in which older people might make a meaningful use of ICT applications, to detect obstacles that prevent appropriate ICT applications from developing or from winning acceptance in a suitable way, and to draw up a list of actions and initiatives that are capable of removing some of the obstacles mentioned before.

The project asks in which situations and under which circumstances various international sources consider ICT as a welcome type of support, which of those situations might be relevant for older people in Flanders, what the target group itself thinks of it and which policy recommendations may be deduced from it. Both organizations representing (future) users and individual senior citizens are involved in this exploration.

RESULT: A report on this project will come out at the end of 2011.

Project leader: Marian Deblonde

IMPACT OF NOISE POLLUTION ON OUR ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH IN FLANDERS

Hearing loss in young people that is resulting from too loud music at festivals, controversy on noise nuisance from kindergartens and playing children, sound pollution from airplanes. Our media and policy makers pay attention to it, but in a rather fragmented manner.

In this study, the IST therefore places this and other cases of noise pollution together in a broader framework.

The IST investigates the impact of noise pollution on our environment and public health in Flanders and the corresponding social controversy and debate. Before, the institute has conducted similar research into cell phone radiation and fine dust.

The final report and the accompanying dossier (scheduled for 2011) describe different sound sources and various type of exposure. The IST intends to draw up a state of the art report on the existing legislation and research, in order for possible gaps and special points of interest to become apparent. In addition to this, the IST looks into the question whether certain cases ask for a participatory process or not.

Project leader: Els Van den Cruyce

CLIMATE ADAPTATION: THE CHALLENGES FOR FLANDERS

In scientific circles, as well as in IPCC circles, alarming warnings can be heard about the hypothesis that the global emissions of greenhouse gases are increasing faster than had been assumed in the basic business-as-usual scenario, i.e. without policy changes. This would signify that the scenarios on which the European Union had based its climate objectives have become out of date. A policy that aims at reducing the greenhouse gas emissions remains absolutely necessary but is no longer sufficient. Little by little, we come to realize that time is not on our side, nor on the side of our authorities. It is not a minute to soon to start thinking about policy adaptation to the new circumstances. In their discussions on the climate summit of Copenhagen, the negotiators spent a lot of time on adaptation.

This project is an attempt by the IST to give shape to an adaptation policy to be outlined by the legislative power(s). This report is complementary to the initiatives of the Flemish government and will build on the results achieved in policy areas such as water, agriculture, environmental planning, ...

In a first period, efforts will be directed at creating a set of decision criteria to assess the degree of impact of future situations. An expert panel will give a hand with the selection. This will be a fundamental element in informing the policy makers on emergency situations that call for actions.

The second phase might become a thinking exercise to understand to what extent our government has the adequate policy instruments at its disposal. Emergency situations, regarded as “absolutely to be avoided”, should be firmly and timely countered. That is why it is important to prepare the implementation of such ‘emergency plans’ within the framework of an ‘adaptation policy’.

The report of the first phase will be finished by the end of 2010.

Project leader: Donaat Cosaert

TRANSITION FROM A WASTE POLICY TOWARDS AN ENVIRONMENTALLY DRIVEN PRODUCT POLICY

The Flemish economy depends upon the supply of raw material, energy and natural resources, which become scarce and thus more and more expensive. The total materials demand in Flanders fluctuates around 140 ton per capita. A more sustainable materials management would benefit both the Flemish economy and the Flemish environment. Production and consumption patterns will have to change if we want our planet to remain a livable place. In the past years, lots of concepts have been introduced to come to a sustainable materials management: sufficiency, sustainable entrepreneurship, product-service systems, industrial ecology, ecological efficiency, cradle to

cradle, ... The government, knowledge institutes and the industry all demonstrate a growing interest in the various concepts. Little by little, the idea is settling in that a transition, a step-by-step process will be necessary for our economy to change into a green recycling economy, which deals with materials and energy in a sustainable way.

The purpose of this project is to give an overview of the conceptual evolutions in sustainable materials management, to discuss the possible connections of these concepts with our policy instruments and to identify new policy opportunities.

The first part of the project would consist of an information document, based upon a literature study, but complemented with a series of interviews with the actors. The project will be concluded with a lunch debate or an interactive panel discussion with experts (e.g. from OVAM, VITO, the industry, ...) about the political challenges connected with such a transition.

Project leader: Anouk Lanckriet

SMARTLY UNDERGROUND

“Vlaanderen in Actie” (ViA) has to turn Flanders (again) into a top region by 2020. An important spearhead activity of this action plan (Flanders’ role as a smart turntable within Europe) is the optimization of the transportation modes (road and railway traffic, inland navigation). Apart from the dominant mobility infrastructure, these efforts should also be aimed at a maximal use, a revalorization and — if necessary — an expansion of other transportation modes. Nevertheless, ViA focuses on the optimization of our surface transportation infrastructure. Little or no effort is taken to look into the opportunities of underground transportation of goods. That is why the present study is likely to be considered as an exploration of a complementary policy option. This IST project has 2 important objectives. On the one hand, it wants to bring together the scientific knowledge about the current transportation-economic system in Flanders and the technological expertise and knowhow on underground transportation of mixed cargo within our region. On the other hand, it intends to explore the social advantages and disadvantages of underground transportation systems for cargo.

This research mission has in mind a scientific report and an accessible IST dossier.

Project leader: Johan Evers

GENDER AND TECHNOLOGY

How could we explain that, in some other countries, significantly more women opt for engineering studies and careers than in Flanders? Why do boys and girls with comparable study results not move up to the same extent to the higher levels in the research world? Which relationships can we discover between gender and cognitive styles and how do these cognitive styles affect the choice of an education? What is the added value of gender diversity for the research method of various disciplines? How do novel technologies affect the experience of femininity and masculinity? When and where do opinion-makers use or misuse scientific theories in support of male or female stereotypes? The subject 'gender and technology' gives rise to lots of very different questions. The Flemish government attaches special importance to some of them, such as the necessity to have more women contribute their ideas to our knowledge economy. The government also wants that gender mechanisms should no longer lead to unequal opportunities and inequality. These changes will require a sharper gender awareness in Flanders.

The IST will invite several authors — both men and women — to make a contribution to this essay bundle, which will be published in 2011. At the occasion of this publication, the IST will organize a conference, where the various essays will provide the subjects under discussion.

Project leader: Marian Deblonde

Colophon

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