

Definition

Interactive TA aims at influencing the innovation process through early interactions between suppliers, users and parties affected. An *Hybrid Working Group* of about 15 people is formed after a sociological survey whereby *worldviews* are identified. The Working Group follows a process of deliberation on the issue during six to ten days on a period of six months. Deliberation involves: definition of the frame of the problem; hearings; foresight exercises; and preparation of recommendations. The Working Group produces a report, which is delivered to the initiator and which should be made public.

Rationale

Technology Assessment is generally performed according to the worldviews of promoters of technology. The participation of the *parties affected* by innovation in an interactive TA is required to influence *development paths* in a desirable direction.

Applicability

ITA is more suitable in situations characterised by a high uncertainty regarding facts and value-dissent regarding technology-in-its-context. In such unstructured situations, ITA may influence the technology process through co-construction between users and producers.

Advantages & disadvantages

ITA may be compared to Consensus Conference since it requires a similar budget and time span.

ITA is better suited for co-construction since it favours direct interactions between producers and users of innovation. Also this should favour the implementation of recommendations, which may better take into account technico-economic constraints.

However, Consensus Conference performs better when techno-development lacks legitimacy and when it is necessary to engage in public debate.

The procedure step/step

Step 1. Draw a contract between the commissioner and the project team

Step 2. Sociological survey of the worldviews

Step 3. Selection of the members of the Working Group

Step 4. WG deliberation (framing, hearing, foresight, preparation of recommendations)

Step 5. Reaction of the initiator and announce of decisions to be taken

Step 6. Assessment report

Working Group selection

The WG should include the diversity of worldviews of the population concerned by the issue at stake.

Characterization of worldviews may be performed by a qualitative survey which allows at the same time to identify potential members of the WG. The selection of the members is based on the use of socio-professional criteria as well as diversity of worldviews.

Although using the same criteria, they are two main possibilities in the setting up of the WG:

- either invite representatives of formal groups
- or invite individuals

In the latter case, the co-construction process may be deepen. However, the link between deliberation and action will be weaker.

Members of a WG have to devote six to ten days to the ITA experience. It is essential that they stay on board from the beginning to the end of the process. It may be necessary to propose them an indemnity.

Actors

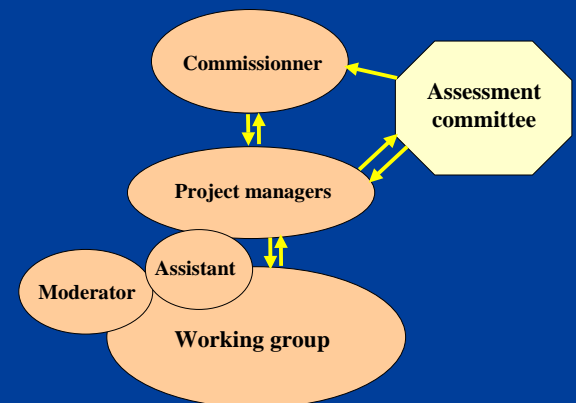
Commissioner – institution which calls for an ITA and which is responsible of the implementation of recommendations.

Project team – responsible for the ITA. Execution of the projects' tasks such as developing the agenda, logistical issues, managing the hearings and the follow-up evaluation along with the necessary publicity. The project staff protects and preserves the integrity of the process.

Working group – is the core of the project. Members of the WG explore the issue in all the relevant dimensions, deliberate and make recommendations. The WG is composed of up to 15 members. Even if difficult, it is much better if the report is collectively written by the members of the WG.

Moderator – one moderator is necessary to assist the jurors' deliberation and the decisional and recommendation process.

Assessment Committee – Its members are independent of the initiator and they have an acknowledged competence in participatory TA. The assessment committee prepares a report on the whole ITA procedure. This report is meant to be public.



Budget

The average budget of an ITA exercise is in the range 100-150 000 euros.

Do not forget to include a budget for video-taping and for the assessment committee!

References

The basic methodology:

Grin, J., van de Graaf, H., Hoppe, R., (1997). *Technology assessment through interaction. A guide*. Den Hag, Rathenau Institute (available at <http://www.rathenau.nl>)

On the French ITA on GM Vine:

<http://www.inra.fr/Internet/Directions/SED/science-gouvernance/>