

Letter From The Editor

by Philipp Steger

Welcome to the 2nd English-language edition of “Voices on U.S. Science & Technology (S&T) Policy”. As evidenced by the wide range of topics that our authors wrote about in the May edition of “Voices”, we look at S&T policy in the broadest sense of the term.

Therefore, the articles you’ll find in this publication go beyond the immediate concerns of S&T policymakers and look not only at the issues that are strongly shaped and influenced by new technologies, new scientific findings and overall innovation, but also at the framework under which S&T either flourishes or withers.

Stephan Neuhäuser’s article about the different approaches and attitudes towards genetically modified organisms (GMO) in the U.S. and the EU is an example of how new technologies – in this case, the various applications of biotechnology – raise a whole new series of questions that need to be addressed by policymakers, hopefully while relying on the advice of scientists. The very recent failure of talks between the U.S. and the EU on opening Europe to GMOs shows how deep the divide over this issue is threatening to become. Donal Nugent, an Irish science journalist, takes a look at some of the more mind-boggling products of biotechnology.

Jutta Kern’s article provides a general overview of what is, without doubt, one of the most relevant frameworks out of which the S&T enterprise draws its continuing strength: the American education system and the current administration’s efforts at reform. Talking to European educators, be it on the level of primary or secondary education, one cannot fail to notice certain misconceptions and a certain lack of knowledge about the general lay-out of the U.S. educational system – this article aims at addressing this perceived deficit.

Environmental policy is the area that will likely be most influenced by the availability of both good science and new technologies. Sylvia Pilz and Himangi Zanpure-Sattler provide a very informative outline of the environmental policy issues that are currently at stake in the U.S. in what is the first in a series of articles about how the U.S. deals with the various environmental challenges. This article is complemented by an analysis of the President’s “Hydrogen Initiative”. With this new initiative, the Bush administration is laying the foundation for an innovation process, the consequences of which will likely be irreversible for a long time given the long cycles the implementation of major innovations, especially in the transportation and energy sector, require.

Achim Seifter, an Austrian scientist working at Los Alamos has also contributed to this edition of “Voices” with an article about this famous laboratory, which as the institution at the center of the “Manhattan Project,” has for better or worse shaped the history of 20th century science.

Last, but not least, Sabine Herlitschka’s contribution about the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) LINK aims at informing our European audience about this truly outstanding organization. Let’s hope that this is one more step to creating an organization that is similarly beneficial to the advancement of science in Europe.

>><<

For further copyright information please contact:

Office of Science and Technology
Austrian Embassy
3524 International Court, NW
Washington, D.C., 20008-3027
United States of America

Phone (202) 895-6754
Fax (202) 895-6750
office@ostina.org