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Preface

This volume gives an updated picture of technology assessment (TA) in Europe and provides outlooks towards the establishment of a common European TA capacity for knowledge-based policy formation.

The volume gathers contributions from participants in the PACITA (Parliaments and Civil Society in Technology Assessment) project, which ran from 2011 to 2015. The volume is divided into three parts, which are preceded by Introduction that posits the expansion of TA capacities across Europe as a necessary supplement to existing European institutions, as well as a re-print of the so-called PACITA Manifesto, which urges policy makers at national and European levels to support such an expansion.

Part I of the book – Expanding Technology Assessment – pushes the concept of TA beyond its traditional limits and shows how TA may be institutionalized as a flexible system of collaborative efforts among a diverse range of actors across Europe. Chapter 1 examines existing TA institutions and their institutional roles and argues that TA as an umbrella term in fact applies to a broad range of 'TA-like' policy support functions that might meaningfully be termed 'policy-oriented technology assessment'. Chapter 2 gives an account of the practical efforts and successes within PACITA at expanding TA geographically to the participating countries, yet without formal parliamentary TA institutions, namely Belgium (Wallonia), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania and Portugal and shows the multiplicity of ways in which

TA may be adapted to the different national contexts. Chapter 3 takes the point of view of institutional entrepreneurs in the post-communist partner countries and depicts the process of adopting TA and adapting it to established national and organizational cultures. Chapter 4 conveys the outcomes of a series of parliamentary dialogues about the possible value of TA for parliaments in which parliamentarians called for a cross-European TA capacity to support reflexive European governance of science, technology and innovation. Chapter 5 sums up the decade-long experience in the TA field of developing cross-European forms of collaboration as well as the practical experiences gained in PACITA. Here, the common lesson is that not only is European collaboration in TA methodologically and organizationally feasible but it also adds greatly to the value of individual TA projects by allowing cross-national learning and comparison.

Part II – Exemplifying Cross-European Technology Assessment – digs into three example projects that were part of PACITA. Here, three different methodological approaches were applied on three highly policy-relevant topics. Chapter 6 describes a cross-national 'Future Panel' of parliamentarians from different member states, which facilitated a strategic learning process about the possible contributions of public health genomics to the healthcare systems of the future. Chapter 7 tells the story of a process of structured parallel national stakeholder dialogues about the future of ageing, which fed into and connected national and European policy debates on ageing society. Chapter 8 describes and analyses a cross-European citizen summit event concerning European policies on sustainable consumption, which made it clear that nationally rooted deliberation on highly complicated matters can serve as a filter to sort the real wishes of citizens out from the fears of decision makers about citizens' reactions to policy measures. Overall, the three chapters show that developing practices of cross-border TA is both practicable and valuable, but it needs to be institutionally rooted at national level – with European support.

The final part, Part III, of the book – Building Capacities for Cross-European TA – takes on the concrete question of how to proceed in establishing cross-European TA capacities. The chapters explain some of the steps already taken within the PACITA project and point to future perspectives for building on those efforts. These include the development of common training courses for practitioners (Chapter 9), educational seminars for policy makers and journalists (Chapter 10), international

TA conferences (Chapter 11) and a common IT-platform for exchange and collaboration among practitioners (Chapter 12).

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