



SECOND INTERNATIONAL NANOTECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND COOPERATION

Abstract

Societal Implications of Nanotechnology

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While societal impacts and implications are mostly a matter of promise (and incidental) concern, they are already a matter of discussion and interaction, up to what is called “upstream public engagement” in the UK. The challenge is to bridge the gap between innovation (linked to nanoscience and technologies) and Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects (ELSA). Experiments with Constructive Technology Assessment are a promising entrance point (cf. also the proposed Real-Time Technology Assessment in the programs of the USA Centers for Nanotechnology in Society). There are bottom-up initiatives of various kinds, as well as support and stimulation from various government agencies, in particular at the European-Union level. As to substantial issues, the structural ambivalencies of nanotechnology will have to be addressed; for example that “size matters” in creating novel and interesting effects, but also additional environmental, health and safety issues.