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## International conference Towards Knowledge Democracy

### Consequences for Science, Politics and Media

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*Public Science Debates*

In the run-up of the German parliamentary elections, one of the two German Science Journalists' associations, the German Science Writers TELI (<http://www.teli.de>), founding member of the European Union of Science Journalists' Association EUSJA (<http://www.eusja.org>), started a public science debate (<http://teli.de/blog/>), following a successful model of US authors, film makers and science journalists (<http://www.sciencedebate2008.com>). The US science debate has not only changed the priority of research and science in the Obama administration, but also rose the esteem of science in the US public.

Science and technology are of utmost importance in modern democracies, but seem not to be very transparent to those who pay for them. Public debates focus on real debates between science, the public and politicians about the targets of science and decisions made for the progression of science. They shall facilitate the real participation of the public in democratic societies in scientific issues. The media, i.e. the science journalists, focus in this case on one of their roles, which is the role of an independent mediator. Thus the media can contribute to a responsible and not only a responsive participation.

Due to the lack of adequate education on all levels in many, if not most, societies, a democratic process with regard to participate in shaping the future through participation in scientific issues is still not existing. However, the free basic science, which is a prerequisite of all further research and technology, is a kind of democratic process in itself, but restricted to the scientific community. Science debates may introduce some more transparency into this process and thus build bridges. A challenge remains: To overcome the barriers of insufficient education.

The current status of the German Science Debate as of end of August will be reported. If successful in Germany, EUSJA will transfer the tool of science debates to all European states through its national member associations.

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