Do we need to reconsider our understanding of life and what it means to be human? Meet us at the crossroad of technology and biology and register at www.rathenau.nl/makingperfectlife

Making Perfect Life
Bio-engineering in the 21st century

Living bacteria with artificial DNA, supercomputers designed to function like a real human brain or robots showing human-like emotions. Biology is increasingly engineered in much the same way as technology, while technology is becoming more and more life-like. In short: biology is becoming technology and technology is becoming biology.

These two engineering trends intensify current debate about the desirability and acceptability of genetic engineering and human enhancement. They also raise novel issues, such as who is in control of machines with a life of their own? The social and political implications of these two bio-engineering trends are discussed at the conference Making Perfect Life.

Programme

12.30 Registration

13.00 Welcome address by Malcolm Harbour (STOA Vice Chairman)

13.15 Introduction: Bio-engineering in the 21st century by Rinie van Est (Rathenau Instituut)

13.30 Round table: How biology is becoming technology, chaired by Malcolm Harbour (STOA Vice Chairman)
On stage interviews by Frans Brom (Rathenau Instituut) with neurosurgeon Veerle Visser-Vandewalle (University of Maastricht), stem cell scientist Stephen Minger (GE Healthcare) and social scientist Andrew Webster (York University), followed by discussion with MEPs and broader audience.

14.15 Round table: How technology is becoming biology, chaired by Malcolm Harbour (STOA Vice Chairman)
On stage interviews by Frans Brom (Rathenau Instituut) with computational neuroscientist Anders Lansner (Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm), philosopher Marc Bedau (Portland State University and Reed College), roboticist Brigitte Krenn (Austrian Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence) and social scientist Jutta Weber (Technical University Braunschweig), followed by discussion with MEPs and broader audience.

15.00 Coffee Break

15.45 Short presentations of EU funded research projects on bio-engineering

16.30 Panel discussion: Political and policy implications of bio-engineering in the 21st century, chaired by Vittorio Prodi (STOA Panel Member)
Discussion moderated by Bernd Beckert (Fraunhofer ISI) with Members of European Parliament, ethicist Inez de Beaufort (European Group on Ethics), law expert Judit Sandor (Central European University), philosopher of science Roger Strand (University of Bergen) and economist Andrea Bonaccorsi (University of Pisa), followed by Q&A and discussion with Members of European Parliament and broader audience.

17.45 Closing remarks by Vittorio Prodi (STOA Panel Member)

18.00 Reception

The conference is free of charge. Participants should register before 2 November 2010 via www.rathenau.nl/makingperfectlife

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The conference is organised by the Dutch Rathenau Instituut in cooperation with STOA at the European Parliament.