

In a recent Global Risk Network Report, emergence of nanotechnology risks was included for the first time (World Economic Forum 2009). Still, there are important differences between expert opinions and lay attitudes regarding the risks and benefits of nanotechnology. Several research groups have recently presented their empirical studies in different countries on cultural predispositions and religiosity in the context of nanotech by public (Kahan et al. 2009, Pidgeon et al. 2009 and Scheufele et al. 2009). However, so far little attention has been paid to those ideological factors advanced by experts and officials, expressed in governmental and regulatory documents. By these ideological factors I refer to viewpoints and assumptions in these documents that are accepted without clear scientific or other evidentiary support. In simplest form these factors include the claim that nanotechnology is revolutionary is not a value-free statement, but a positive socio-ethical evaluation (Sandler & Kay 2006). There are, however, more subtle and implicit factors to be found. Furthermore, the differences related to specific cultural and values in various societies have their own impact. In my dissertation I analyzed the ideological factors of the health care rationing discussion, and the purpose of this postdoctoral research project is to conduct similar analysis by explicating ideological claims in the debate about nanotechnology. This is done by a conducting three representative case studies within the U.S., European and Asian NT-frameworks. By analyzing the regulatory and other documents published by these multi-agency actors (e.g., NNI in the U.S., EU institutions such as REACH, and those in Asia, such as AIST in Japan), it is possible to distinguish ideological notions and make a comparison between the regions. To become conscious of the ideological content in the current nanotechnology debate is relevant for all those interested in exploring the ethical and societal implications of nanotechnology.