

working on, based on an HIV regulatory protein called Tat, to three other products. IAVI President Seth Berkley agreed to work with AVIP to “strengthen the European effort,” with no special emphasis on Italian research, he says. “We won’t do it otherwise,” says Berkley, adding that “anything we do would be subject to our scientific review methods.”

Although Ensoli’s Tat vaccine is but one part of AVIP, some researchers take strong exception to the appropriation because they have doubts about her preparation, which she has just begun testing in humans both to treat and to prevent HIV infection. Gallo, in whose lab Ensoli once worked, says he was

“shocked” by the appropriation. Gallo says NIH had turned down his request to test a different therapeutic Tat vaccine that he believes has a better chance of working. “How do you think we feel when we can’t get support, but they can come over, do some politics, and get funding?” asks Gallo. “This is not so nice.” Glenn, Young’s spokesperson, insists that Congress has not earmarked funding for the Tat vaccine. “The intent was never to fund a specific project,” he says.

Even the central players seem confused about just what will eventually be funded, however. Ensoli believes that Congress wants to “cofinance” AVIP. Glenn says the \$10 mil-

lion explicitly aims to foster collaborations with Italian and American researchers. Stern says if the money does not end up helping Italian researchers, “someone in the State Department will have his head cut off.” Adding another twist, Congress specified that the money be spent “in cooperation with” a new NIH global AIDS vaccine program. NIH’s Edmund Tramont, who organized the program, says anything it supports “has to pass a scientific review.”

The \$10 million earmark has been folded into the massive omnibus appropriations bill (see p. 1636) that the U.S. Congress is expected to pass in January. —JON COHEN

## ITER

## E.U. Puts France in Play for Fusion Sweepstakes

**CAMBRIDGE, U.K.**—The race to land one of the biggest prizes in experimental physics is coming into the home stretch. Last week, after much delay, the European Union (E.U.) chose Cadarache, France, as its candidate site to host the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), a \$5 billion test bed for harnessing nuclear fusion to generate electricity.

ITER will be twice the size of any existing fusion reactor if it comes on line, as scheduled, around 2014. It aims to show that such a machine can generate more power than it consumes for extended periods and so pave the way for fusion power stations. The decision has allowed E.U. officials and representatives from the other ITER partners—Canada, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States—to begin deliberations on the final choice for siting the giant project. Cadarache and Rokkasho, Japan, are now the main contenders; an agreement is expected before the end of the year.

The ITER partners had hoped to have the site and financial details sewn up by last summer, but the process got bogged down in part by the war in Iraq and the SARS epidemic. Perhaps the biggest impediment, though, was the E.U.’s impasse over whether to put forward Cadarache or Europe’s other contender, Vandellòs in Spain. A technical report by David King, the U.K. government’s science adviser, concluded that both would be excellent hosts, but it did not pick a favorite (*Science*, 12 September, p. 1456). E.U. ministers in September couldn’t decide, either. As the pressure mounted, Spain, the underdog because of its comparative lack of fusion experience, offered late last month to double its

financial contribution to ITER.

Ending the suspense, the E.U.’s Competitiveness Council on 26 November opted for France. Spain, as runner-up, will host the European Fusion Agency, the administrative center of Europe’s contribution to ITER, and one of two European ITER directors will be a Spaniard. The consolation prize has failed to console Spanish officials. Andreu Mas-Colell, head of research for the government of Catalonia, where Vandellòs is located, labeled the decision “another demonstration of



**Then there were two.** Cadarache (above) is going head-to-head with Rokkasho, Japan, in bid to land ITER.

the power of the French-German axis.” But at a press conference, science minister Juan Costa was more philosophical: “It’s not the gold medal, but it’s still a medal since our participation will be most relevant.”

The predominant mood across Europe is one of relief. “We’re delighted. At last we have a single European site,” says Alex Bradshaw, head of the Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics in Garching, Germany’s largest fusion research facility. Cadarache is popular because it is already home to

France’s fusion program. “It is a significant advantage siting next to an existing institution, to have a scientific life and a pool of experts to draw on,” says Christopher Llewellyn-Smith, head of the U.K. fusion program in Oxfordshire. The lack of an E.U. champion, he adds, “was holding things up a bit. Lots of countries are ready to approve ITER. ... We have to seize the moment.”

That moment is at hand, with the ITER partners set to meet in Vienna after *Science* went to press. But negotiations were not expected to be easy. “I don’t know how we are going to reach a decision” on a site, says E.U. delegation leader Achilleas Mitsos, director-general of research at the European Commission. “We must rely on consensus.” The Rokkasho site, in the north of Japan’s main island, is next to a newly built nuclear fuel-recycling facility. A third candidate, Clarington in Canada, is likely to be discounted because of a lack of support from Canada’s federal government.

According to Mitsos, the cost-sharing arrangements are nearly set. The host country will foot 20% of the bill to cover construction and infrastructure. The remaining 80% will be shared among the partners. Much of the payment will be in-kind contributions of reactor components.

A potential stumbling block is that the U.S. delegation does not want to enshrine the ITER agreement in a treaty, which would require the United States to guarantee its funding for the project’s duration and would impose liability and arbitration measures in case of a dispute. Other partners “want commitments to be as permanent as possible,” says Mitsos. But he thinks this will not be a showstopper, as long as the partners can reach a long-sought agreement over basics such as where to put the machine and how they’ll pay for it.

—DANIEL CLERY

With reporting by Xavier Bosch in Barcelona.

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