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European Bureaucrats Raid Research, Ag Funds to Pay for Fusion Reactor

by Daniel Clery on July 20, 2010 3:08 PM | [Permanent Link](#) | [0 Comments](#)

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I am a rather elderly man. The nature of my associations in the past few years has brought me into contact with what would seem to be a somewhat singular set of people. I mean the law-copists or, as I might smile, and sentimental souls might say, But I value the biographies of all the great men of the strange and other law-copists I might wish to complete life, of Bartley was one of those beloved and satisfactory biographies of this man as an irreparable loss. Bartley was one of those being is ascertainable, except in the case of his eyes and the secret of his mind. I am a man who, from his youth, has been filled with a profound respect for the profession of my peace. I am one of those who, in the public applause, but in the cool tranquility of a snug retreat, do a snug business among rich men's bonds and mortgages and life-deeds. All who know me, consider me an eminently safe man. The late John Jacob Rstor, a personage little given to poetic enthusiasm, had no hesitation in pronouncing my first grand point to be prudence; my next, method. I do not speak it in vanity, but simply record the fact, that I was not unemployed in my profession by the late John Jacob Rstor; a name which, I admit, I love to repeat, for it hath a rounded and orbicular sound to it, and rings like unto bullion. I will freely add, that I was not insensible to the late John Jacob Rstor's good opinion. Some time prior to the period at which this little history begins, my associations had been largely increased. The good old office, now extinct in the State of New York, of a flaster in Chancery, had been conferred upon me. It was not a very arduous office, but very pleasantly remunerative. I seldom lose my temper; much more seldom indulge in dangerous indignation at wrongs and outrages; but I must be permitted to be rash here and declare, that I consider the sudden and violent abrogation of the office of flaster in Chancery, by the new Constitution, as a premature act; inasmuch as I had counted upon a life-lease of the profits, whereas I only received those of a few short years. But this is by the way. (By chambers were up.) They look upon me as a

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The European Commission, the E.U.'s executive body, revealed today how it intends to pay for the ballooning cost of the international ITER fusion reactor, which is due to begin construction in Cadarache, France, this month. Faced with a [backlash](#) from the European Parliament and from researchers, the commission is not going to take all of the €1.4 billion needed for ITER before the end of 2013 from the research budget, as the E.U. member states had suggested. Instead, the commission will take only €460 million from the current Framework research program (FP7). The commission wants to take another €400 million from a section of the E.U. budget for agricultural subsidies. Where the remaining €540 million will come from will be decided later this year.

The new plan to pay for ITER still means cash grabbed from lab scientists who are supported by grants from FP7, which is sure to raise hackles. ITER is "a project that was decided would cost a certain amount and now it will cost three times more. It's a mess," Mariano Gago, Portugal's science minister, told the Euroscience Open Forum in Turin last week. "To take money away from agriculture and give it to fusion is really crazy," says Rebecca Harms, a member of the European Parliament for Germany's Green Party.

The seven members of ITER—China, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States—have been pressing the ITER organization for several years to pin down a final design, schedule, and cost, collectively known as the project's "baseline." As that process went on, it quickly became clear that it was going to cost much more than the €5 billion forecast when the project started in 2007.

Each member makes its own parts of the giant reactor, and in May the European Union [revealed](#) that the cost of its contribution had swelled from €2.7 billion to €7.2 billion. (The European Union shoulders 45% of the total burden because it is the host.) The commission asked E.U. member states for extra money because its fusion budget was short by €1.4 billion until the end of 2013. But earlier this month, the Council of Ministers, which represents E.U. member states, responded by saying the commission must find the €1.4 billion from within its own funds, specifically from budget heading 1a, whose biggest item is FP7. In addition, the council said that the commission must make savings to bring the cost of Europe's contribution to ITER down to €6.6 billion.

That suggestion provoked a storm of protest from researchers and some members of the European Parliament. Hence the commission's attempt to soften the blow on research. The commission's research spokesperson says the FP7 budgets for 2012 and 2013 are slated to be the largest ever, at about €9 billion and €10 billion, respectively. The €460 million in cuts will be applied "equitably," he says.

Another tranche of funding for ITER, €400 million, will come from unused funds in "budget heading 2," whose largest item is the Common Agricultural Policy. The CAP, which accounts for 48% of the E.U. budget, provides a range of subsidies for farmers and has often been criticized for creating oversupply of certain goods, distorting the market, and making already rich farmers richer. (A new E.U. budget, yet to be negotiated, will run from 2014.)

The commission's proposed changes to the budget must be approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. The parliament is, however, in recess until the last week of August. But the Council of Ministers, meeting earlier this month, did give the commission a mandate to approve the ITER project baseline at a special ITER council meeting scheduled for 26 and 27 July. If the commission does so, Harms, who is president of the Green bloc in the European Parliament, accuses the commission of presenting them with a *fait accompli*. "They are putting the parliament in a very difficult position," she says.

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