



**EU Commission Jobs**  
We prepare you for EU  
Commission recruitment

**A Face for Europe**  
Exhibition in Brussels  
presenting the new European

**EU business**

[home](#) [members](#) [documents](#) [presszone](#)  
you are

[home](#) » [afp](#) » [eu bids to force japan's hand in nuclear haggle](#)

## EU bids to force Japan's hand in nuclear haggle

25/11/2004

Europe is bidding to force Japan's hand in negotiations on a revolutionary nuclear energy project, by pledging to go it alone unless Japan gives in and agrees to a French site for the facility.

In the latest twist in the high-stakes haggle, EU research ministers are expected Friday to approve changes to Europe's negotiating strategy on the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project.

The new strategy was proposed last week by the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, after the latest round of six-party talks failed to break the deadlock over the choice of site, whether Japan or France.

"The Commission will try to reach a positive conclusion with all the parties as soon as possible," said the executive at the time, while EU research commissioner Louis Michel said he hoped for an accord by the end of the year.

"If, nevertheless, the parties do not reach the hoped-for consensus, the EU would launch the construction of ITER within the largest possible framework," the Commission added.

Tokyo has denounced the EU attempt to play hardball.

"(The EU's) negotiating stance is worrisome and regrettable," said Takahiro Hayashi, deputy director of Japan's Office of Fusion Energy. But he added: "I think it would be good to agree on a site quickly."

But barring upsets -- negotiations are reportedly continuing all the time -- the EU ministers are set to rubber stamp the new mandate at their talks in Brussels Friday, officials say.

The two candidates to host ITER, which would emulate the sun's nuclear fusion to generate inexhaustible electricity, are Cadarache in southern France and Rokkasho-mura in northern Japan.

So far of the six partners in the talks China and Russia support the French site, while the United States and South Korea back building ITER in Japan.

The ITER budget is projected to be 10 billion euros (13 billion dollars) over the next 30 years, including 4.7 billion euros to build the reactor. The European Union plans to finance 40 percent of the total.

The project is not expected to generate electricity before 2050.

The EU says it has already offered a "sweetener" to allow France to host the project.

"I cannot elaborate on the sweetener, but I think we have made reasonable offers," commission spokesman Fabio Fabbi said earlier this month, after the latest round of ITER talks in Vienna failed to make any progress.

Sources at the commission in Brussels said Tokyo might agree to a tradeoff scenario in which it lets ITER go to France if Japan gets to be host country for a new international scientific computing centre.

Fabbi, without specifying what the EU is offering Japan, said the 25-nation bloc had always believed the ITER project should adopt a "broader approach to meet the needs of (nuclear fusion) research across the world".

Diplomats say this month's talks in Vienna made some progress but failed to break the essential deadlock over the site. The European Commission said it still hopes for progress by the end of the year.

"I hope that we will succeed by the end of the year," commissioner Michel said. "If we need several days or several weeks more to be sure of having the six partners on board I think that it is worth it."

### **ITER – International Fusion Energy Organisation**

*Text and Picture Copyright © 2004 AFP. All other copyright © 2004 EUBusiness Ltd. All rights reserved. This material is intended solely for personal use. Any other reproduction, publication or redistribution of this material without the written agreement of the copyright owner is strictly forbidden and any breach of copyright will be considered actionable.*