

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM - FRANCE

These are followed by:

- **Information and communication technologies:** telecommunications, cryptology, software products and nanotechnologies, with the creation of a Comité de coordination des TIC [ICT Co-ordination Committee] and progress being made by the national telecommunications research system.
- **Humanities and social sciences** with the creation of the Conseil national pour un nouveau développement des sciences humaines et sociales [National Council for the New Development of Humanities and Social Sciences] and, as part of the Université du troisième millénaire (U3M) [University of the Third Millennium], the creation of a network of social sciences centres.
- **Energy** with a new focus on renewable energies and continuing research on the nuclear cycle and nuclear safety, and the creation of a fuel cell technology research and innovation network.
- **Transportation and quality-of-life**, with confirmation of the Programme de recherche et de développement pour l'innovation et la technologie dans les transports (PREDIT) [Research and Development Program for Innovation and Technology in Transportation], research on aeronautics technologies of the future, and the creation of an urban civil engineering technology network.
- **Earth and environmental sciences**, with the creation of a Comité de coordination des sciences de la planète et de l'environnement [Co-ordination Committee on Earth and Environmental Sciences] mandated to develop an action plan for water and the environment, natural disasters, research on the "Earth" system, biodiversity and environmental safety.
- **Space**, by continuing earth observation programs, implementation of the European satellite navigation program and Mars exploration with the European Space Agency and National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA).

Tools

In 1999, as it had announced, the government implemented mechanisms for setting national priorities in the future that will simultaneously reinforce basic and applied research. Two funds will be the mechanisms of choice for implementing France's new S&T policy:

- the **Fonds pour la recherche technologique (FRT)** [Technology Research Fund] to develop leading-edge technologies directed mainly at creating innovative businesses (FF630 M);
- the **Fonds national de la science (FNS)** [National Science Fund] to develop and co-ordinate basic multidisciplinary research requiring the co-operation of several agencies (FF500 M).

The *Loi sur l'innovation* [Innovation Act] received unanimous assent in the National Assembly in July 1999. The Act is an important tool for modernizing French research by removing the main obstacles to the creation of innovative businesses by individuals, universities, major engineering schools or research agencies. The Act streamlines regulation - overly cumbersome and complex in France - and removes barriers to the commercial application of public research to promote expansion. For example, under the Act, researchers are able to take temporary leave from public laboratories to create businesses, and act as scientific advisors to companies, own an interest in those companies or sit on their Boards of Directors.