

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM - FRANCE

- the research population is aging (50% will retire in the next 12 months) and there are problems integrating young researchers;
- the assessment of researchers and laboratories is too "soft" and not really conducive to competition - in the French system, the majority of researchers are staff researchers.

2. Recent Developments in S&T

S&T policies and priorities

France's S&T policy is the responsibility of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Recherche et de la Technologie (MENRT) [Ministry of National Education, Research and Technology], which administers the government's entire R&D budget. Other ministries manage S&T programs and activities, but are funded by MENRT. The Comité interministériel de la recherche scientifique et technique (CIRST) [Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Technical Research] determines the major directions for the coming years.

There are numerous public research agencies employing close to 50,000 researchers and engineers. The key agencies are CNRS, INSERM, the Centre national d'études spatiales (CNES) [National Space Research Centre], INRA, the CEA and the Institut national de recherche en informatique et automatique (INRIA) [National Informatics and Automation Research Institute].

3. Current Directions

At its June 1, 1999 meeting, the CIRST determined the two major objectives of France's scientific policy: restore French research to a leadership position in all sectors and use research as a means of economic growth and controlling unemployment. The current government's key objectives are:

- support and promote innovation, i.e., the development of technologies for commercial applications and to create jobs;
- support the creation of businesses by researchers and promote entrepreneurship in the scientific community;
- streamline administration and improve researcher mobility;
- improve co-ordination among strategic sectors and in emerging sectors, mainly the life sciences and information technologies;
- develop a scientific employment policy that makes more room for young people.

Priorities

The most significant new development in France's scientific policy is without a doubt the priority being given for the first time in France to the life sciences.

- **Life sciences:** genomics, post-genomics, technologies for medical applications, neurosciences, cognitive sciences and the combatting of infectious diseases.