

The budget of the 6th Framework Programme includes €750M for the EURATOM Framework Programme for research into controlled fusion (the European portion of the *ITER* project). More specifically, the construction of a "European research area" – a concept that is important to France - will come closer to becoming a reality following the adoption of two key decisions that apply to the 6th Framework Programme: the definition of strategic thematic areas, and the establishment of new structures: *networks of (scientific) excellence*, or integrated projects. It is anticipated that these groupings will lead to a level of excellence in S&T that will give Europe considerable weight in the international arena.

But it must not be forgotten that even if the EC's-Framework Program plays an important role in structuring the European research area, its investment represents only 5% of European research and development. That is why France believes it is essential, at first, to better co-ordinate bilateral national policies between European Union member countries.

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