of the conditions of the award is that the agency be informed promptly if any potentially patentable results emerge from the research. **David Dickson**

EEC science policy

Grand Plan to flop?

Brussels

The European Commission is preparing a grand strategy on the European Community's research policy for the 1980s which is to be the basis of a Council of Science Ministers on 9 November .

The policy paper, which is still undergoing revisions, has been put together under the direction of Viscount Etienne Davignon, the European Commissioner who has the main responsibility for scientific affairs in Gaston Thorn's Commission. Davignon has chosen to continue with the basic priorities that have been the staple diet of past community policies: energy research, particularly fusion and nuclear safety, environmental protection, raw materials and the coordination of indirect action programmes.

There are some changes though. Davignon wants to bring together under his direction all of the Community's research and development programmes, including agricultural research, research and development for the use of developing countries and data processing. Some see these proposals as examples of Davignon's ambition, but he seems more concerned with creating more efficient administration.

Davignon intends to do away with many of the advisory and expert committees which clutter up the decision-making process. But to achieve greater flexibility in decision-making, Davignon suggests that the Council of Ministers should set up a standing committee.

The council in November will consider fixing the Community's research activities up to 1986. To this end, Davignon suggests a budget which would progressively increase by 2 per cent a year. This is well below the inflation rate in any of the ten member countries and thus represents a decrease in expenditure; however, it bears comparison with expected increases in national research budgets.

Davignon will be pushing for increased expenditure in a few fields. He would like more spent on nuclear fission research and industrial innovation. In this he has the support of the two other commissioners involved, the German Karl-Heinz Narjes with responsibilities for industrial innovation and nuclear safety, and the Englishman Ivor Richard who has responsibilities for education and social affairs. Davignon is especially keen for the Commission to take a lead in promoting nuclear safety research in areas not covered by national programmes. The aim would also be to lessen public mistrust of nuclear power.

The French, having taken a decision to go ahead with the old regime's nuclear power programme and increase the entire national research budget, will probably support the new plans. The rest of the Community is doing its utmost to reduce public expenditure in all fields. There are strong signs that some governments regard community research as a luxury — for example, the Dutch want to reduce their direct contribution to the EEC research centre at Petten. **Jasper Becker**

Energy in France

Small change

President Mitterrand's honeymoon is over. His government won the vote in the National Assembly last week for a large nuclear power programme (six new reactors to be begun in the next two years), but only at the cost of opening up divisions in the Socialist Party and calling into question its electoral promise of "a new politics" of energy.

M. Paul Quilès, socialist deputy for Paris and author of the party's electoral energy report, has been trounced; and a member of ex-President Gisacard's party described the new energy policy as similar to Giscard's — only with less courage.

On just one point, M. Quilès won a concession: the restarting of construction at the reactor sites where work was "frozen" a few months ago, pending the definition of government policy. Before these sites are reopened, local authorities will be consulted.

However, the affected local authorities — at Cattenom, Golfech, Chooz, Civaux and Le Pellerin — will have to move fast. They have less than a month to say yes. If they say no, the decision will move up to the regional assembly concerned. If, within the same month, this assembly cannot agree or choose a new local site, the decision reverts to parliament and government — which then have to decide if the construction is in the essential national interest. If it is, the reactor goes ahead regardless.

There are other differences between the Giscard and Mitterrand plans. Giscard wanted to start eight reactors at 1,300 MW

UK universities redundancy plans

As the vice-chancellors of British universities struggle to draw up a national redundancy scheme for academics, more universities are estimating the number of posts that will have to go over the next three years. Many hope that economies for the current year can be made by cutting recurrent expenditure, by voluntary redundancy and by early retirement schemes. They plan to stave off compulsory redundancies until 1982–83. Others do not enjoy that luxury.

The universities of Stirling and Aston in Birmingham, for example, both among the most severely penalized, expect to move quickly. Stirling's problems are complicated by the low average age of its academics, which means that there are few candidates for early retirement Among the less heavily cut, however, there are also some surprises. The University of Bristol, for example, says it must lose 400 posts over three years, 150 of which it have to be met by compulsory redundancy.

The vice-chancellors' plan to draw up national guidelines for compulsory redundancy is hampered by the large variety of contracts of employment for academics. They hope to have more concrete proposals after their next committee meeting at the end of the month. But any plan will not be welcomed by the Association of University Teachers (AUT), the academic trade union, which does not acknowledge the need for compulsory redundancy. AUT is prepared to fight cases in the courts as soon as they arise, saying that it will contest decisions to sack academics even before individuals have been named. In that case, arguments will rest on independent assessments of a university's finances and the conditions of employment for academics laid down in its charter.

The accompanying table gives the number of full-time equivalent jobs that the universities estimate will have to be lost over the next three years. Some estimates are firmer than others, but few at this stage show how many posts can be lost voluntarily. **Judy Redfearn**

Estimates of full-time post losses at selected universities

University	*Academic*	*Non-academic*	*Total no. of existing posts*
Bristol	259	141	3,500
Hull	110	100	2,000
Sussex	78	157	1,272
Aberdeen	300–350*	*	2,696
City	60 (314)	90	552†
Aston	150 (600)	300	2,000
Stirling	60 (260)	120	1,100
Salford	200	300	1,500
Bradford	150–180 (495)	—	—
Exeter	70 (500)	—	1,900

Figures in parentheses give the current number of academics.
*Includes both academic and non-academic posts.
†Academic, clerical and technical posts.

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