

EU states angry over cuts of nuclear, satellite projects

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The site of the future International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) in August 2011 in Saint-Paul-les-Durance. Britain and a clutch of European Union states are protesting the removal from the EU budget of a next-generation nuclear reactor and an Earth observation satellite they consider vital for Europe.

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London, along with Germany, France, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Italy and the Netherlands, sent a letter to the European Commission demanding that the multi-billion-euro projects be reinserted in the plan for 2014-2020 spending period.

French research minister Laurent Wauquiez warned that striking the two

projects from the EU budget would have "very harmful consequences."

"It would be interpreted as a sign of [disengagement](#) by the European Union from major strategic sectors," said Wauquiez, one of seven ministers to have signed the letter, which was obtained by AFP.

The Earth monitoring programme, called Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES), would lose 5.7 billion euros (\$7.7 billion) in funding. The Commission is proposing a total budget for the seven-year cycle of 1.0 trillion euros.

The GMES system is based on satellites as well as airborne and water instruments such as balloons and floats that would collect data that EU states could use for climate change policies.

The nuclear fusion reactor, [ITER](#), is an international project based in France and funded by the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, India and the EU, which contributes the largest slice.

But 2.36 billion euros for ITER was removed from the draft EU budget for 2014-2020. Another 1.3 billion euros is being negotiated as part of the 2012 EU budget talks.

Governments are locked in tough negotiations with the [European parliament](#) over the EU budget.

European lawmakers voted last month for a 5.2 percent increase in the 2012 budget, defying EU states demanding less spending at a time when the eurozone [debt crisis](#) is forcing them to implement drastic austerity measures.

ITER and GMES face stiff opposition within the 736-member parliament. The commission is proposing that the two projects be funded

through agreements between EU states instead of including them in the EU budget.

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