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While ITER's governing council mulls a revised schedule and cost, construction continues at its site in Cadarache, France. © ITER ORGANIZATION

UPDATED: Panel backs ITER fusion project's new schedule, but balks at cost

By [Daniel Clery](#) | Apr. 28, 2016 , 12:30 PM

At one of the most critical time in its history, leaders of the ITER fusion project are struggling to find a way to keep the project on track as schedules slip, costs rise, and budgets tighten. The project's management last year **put forward a revised schedule and cost**, and the council of representatives from its member states asked a panel of independent experts to review them. Yesterday, the council met in special session to hear a report of the panel's conclusions. The report—which has been seen by *Science*—concludes that, while the new schedule is feasible (powering up the reactor in 2025 for the first time), the extra funding needed to achieve it (€4.6 billion) is too much to hope for.

The council has now tasked the ITER management with finding a way to keep to the schedule while remaining within the financial constraints and differing budget cycles of the seven partners in the project—China, the European Union, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States. “There is now a credible estimate of the schedule and cost envelope with respect to the financial capabilities of all the members,” says ITER director general Bernard Bigot. “All the pieces are in place to make a decision.” That decision will come at the council's next meeting in June.

ITER, a roughly \$20 billion international project that is the largest attempt so far to show that generating energy by fusing atoms together is at least scientifically feasible, has been plagued by delays and cost overruns. It has been 30 years in gestation but its site in Cadarache, France, is now abuzz with construction, and the components of its gigantic reactor are arriving from around the world. When the construction agreement was signed 10 years ago, ITER was due to be finished this year at a cost

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