Management of a research program

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1) Michel Ferrier, Président, Comité National d’Evaluation

(deals mostly with Academic research)

Most laboratories or research institutions have absolutely no management tools. They write proposals, in order to start a research program, but if this proposal is accepted, they have no idea at all whether they can finish the work. For instance, do they have enough resources, in terms of available time?

One should distinguish between constant expenses (the salaries of the researchers) and proportional costs (depending on the project).

2) Jean-Paul Gillyboeuf, Inspecteur Général des Armées, Conseiller du Ministre

The question "should the Ministry of Defense have fundamental research ?" comes back at regular intervals and is never correctly addressed. One should keep the following scale in mind :

If fundamental research costs 1 Euro, technological research costs 10, then technique is 100, then development is 1000, and finally production is 10 000.

But poor initial research leads to considerable waste of money.

The Ministry of Defense does not address small companies well enough, due to a poor (too strict) understanding of the rules of public contracts.

French defense research compares well to English or German defense research, but is well behind the US defense research.

European integration has not succeeded so far.

An interesting idea to investigate is "homeland security", since the Ministry of Interior has no capability to pursue research on such matters.
3) Dominique Vignon, chairman, Gemplus

(Gemplus is the world's leader in credit cards)

Formerly, M. Vignon was Chairman and CEO, Framatome-ANP, so he describes research in both areas: cryptography and the nuclear sector.

Research is always finalized. The preliminary concern should be: who asks the question?. Who chooses the questions? who checks that they are correctly defined? and then, who checks the validity of the answers brought by the researchers?

If the question is not correctly set, then certainly the answers will not be useful. But conversely a good question does not necessarily lead to a good answer.

A good question should always associate the researchers and the external need.