Hans-Otto Wüster

With the death on 30 June of Hans-Otto Wüster, Director of the JET European fusion experiment, European science lost one of its most influential and colourful figures.

Wüster's long and productive career in accelerator physics led him to the Directorate of the German DESY Laboratory. He joined CERN in 1971 to take on the key role of deputy to John Adams during the construction of the SPS machine. He took charge of many of the financial and personnel aspects of SPS management, and with the completion of that machine, went on to play a similar role in the CERN Directorate.

His contribution towards the success of the SPS construction led to him being invited in 1978 to become Director of Euratom's JET (Joint European Torus) project, housed at Culham, the UK fusion research centre. Under Wüster's leadership, JET construction was completed and the project is poised to make significant advances towards the goal of mastering thermonuclear fusion by plasma confinement.

He was keenly aware of the human problems of laboratory management. At one of his last visits to CERN, for a memorial meeting to the late Sir John Adams last year, he said, 'I believe the most important and difficult task in creating a laboratory is to maintain the spirit of collaboration and lively discussion, and not to allow it to separate into little compartments with unassailable walls between them.' His managerial, technical and human contributions to Europe's science will be sadly missed.