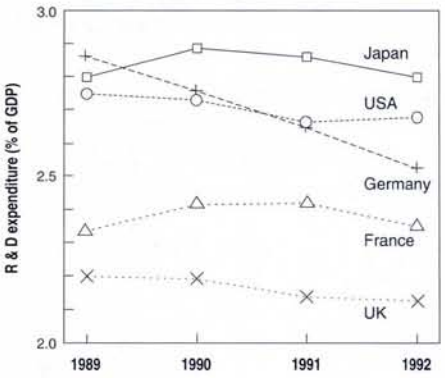
OECD

Spending Stabilising



R&D expenditure. Source: OECD

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the latest issue of its six-monthly *Basic Science and Technology Statistics* has published data showing that the main trends are an OECD-wide drop in overall spending on research and development during the recent recession and a continuing increase in the amount industry spends as compared to government. Industry's cut-backs were responsible for the faltering spending in Japan whereas in the USA both government and industry spending declined. The good news is that the decline in overall spending seems to have halted in some countries in 1992 (see figure), at least in terms of the percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on R & D, with industry being largely responsible.

Sources Need Structures

The OECD's Megascience Forum met for the fifth time in early July following expert meetings on particle physics and on neutron beams and synchrotron radiation sources. Regarding the latter, the Forum endorsed the experts' conclusions that although both types of facilities share much in common, neutron sources need a regional mechanism to reduce the number of small and generally fairly old national sources. It should operate within the context of a strategic plan to build new, world-class sources. In order to preserve the increasing complementarity with synchrotron sources, the next generation of large neutron sources could proceed in a staggered manner if institutionalised international collaborations are not feasible. The Forum felt that global scientific bodies equivalent to the International Committee on Future Accelerators might by necessary to help planning. It welcomed an invitation by the USA to host an international meeting on neutron sources in November in view of the proposal to the US Department of Energy to build a M$3000.- Advanced Neutron Source offering a significantly higher flux than the Institut Laue-Langevin in Grenoble. (The refurbished ILL high-flux reactor was ready to start up at the end of July but government approval is pending following a routine public enquiry which ended in June). Meanwhile, the three world-class synchrotron sources (ESRF, SPring-8 and APS) provide models of international cooperation that should be adapted by national synchrotron sources (there are six European proposals – see page 133).