make German science leaner and more efficient. There is a growing sense that a lack of competition has left many institutes ill-equipped to cope with tightening budgets. "There's always criticism that institutions get old and unresponsive," says Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker, who will head the DFG for 3 years starting in January.

The next few years will certainly test their ability to adapt. The Ministry of Education and Science's proposed $8.8 billion 1998 budget, expected to be approved by parliament late next month, is only 1% larger than the 1997 budget—a boost that is unlikely to keep pace with inflation. The budget will hold level Germany's contributions to five international labs—including the CERN particle physics center—that suffered deep cuts in 1997 (*Science*, 6 December 1996, p. 1606). And the DFG and the Max Planck Society (MPG), which have regularly won healthy budget increases in recent years, have found their promised 5% boost in 1998 trimmed to 3.9%. The reduction, MPG President Hubert Markl told *Science*, will force the society to delay the creation of an ethnology institute in east Germany. (MPG is still pushing ahead with plans for a new center on evolutionary anthropology in the east German city of Leipzig—see story at right.)

The small shift in funds to peer-reviewed grants has already had a big effect on scientists' attitudes. "By using these competition mechanisms," Markl says, Rüttgers "has produced a psychological change which is larger than what you can read from the budget." Markl and others warn, however, that the new emphasis on peer review won't ameliorate growing concerns over R&D spending by the government and industry, which in recent years has grown slower than inflation; these concerns were laid out in an open letter signed by Markl and four other top science administrators last January (*Science*, 24 January, p. 475). The decline, contends MDC director Detlev Ganten, "is a catastrophe for the country." Rüttgers told *Science* that the downward trend "has been stopped."

Perhaps the boldest initiative Rüttgers is backing in the 1998 budget is the introduction of competition to the national research centers, collectively known as the Helmholtz Association. The Strategy Fund, which will be spent entirely on collaborations with non-center scientists, has provoked a flurry of networking between institutes and disciplines: "activities never seen before in that direction," says Joachim Treusch, director of the Jülich Research Center and outgoing head of the Helmholtz Association. "It's really changing the culture."

The Helmholtz Association's senate, which will administer the competition, has already received proposals requesting about twice the money available. It will announce the winners

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ANTHROPOLOGY

All-Star Cast for New Max Planck Institute

With Germany mired in a post-reunification economic slump, and researchers across the country feeling the budget squeeze, the last thing you might expect is a big, bold new science undertaking. But last month, the Max Planck Society (MPG) signed up four star scientists from the United States and Europe to found a center in the eastern city of Leipzig—an institute that looks poised to become a powerhouse of interdisciplinary research on evolution in humans and our closest primate relatives.

The hallmark of the center, called the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, is a mixture of fields that seems unusual at first glance, but which all four department heads hired so far told *Science* was a strong enticement to move there. "It will be a unique environment for getting at human diversity through the different perspectives of language, social development, genetics, and primatology," says one, linguist Bernard Comrie of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. And bringing together research on humans and the four great ape species provides "a rare opportunity" to compare them directly, says another recruit, psychologist Michael Tomasello of Emory University and the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center in Atlanta. The other two signed up so far are molecular geneticist Svante Pääbo of the University of Munich in Germany, and primatologist Christophe Boesch from the University of Basel in Switzerland.

J. OBERHEID/ARGUM

Leipzig bound. Hires for the new Max Planck Institute include molecular geneticist Svante Pääbo *(right)* and, probably, molecular anthropologist Mark Stoneking.

As word of the new center spreads, outside reactions are enthusiastic. "I'm excited," says evolutionary biologist Daniel Povinelli of the New Iberia Research Center, part of the University of Southwestern Louisiana, who participated in an early planning meeting. "The concept is excellent ... and [the comparative approach] long overdue. It's a wonderful opportunity to help move the whole field forward."

A major lure for the new hires is the sumptuous conditions offered by the MPG, which funds 78 research centers (*Science*, 27 October 1995, p. 568) and was spared harsh post-reunification funding cuts so it could build new institutes in the east—although this meant trimming centers in the west and even closing a few. The Leipzig institute will have a staff of 250 to 300, including those on outside money, and an annual budget of $14.1 million. And, following MPG tradition, this generous support is virtually guaranteed for life, freeing researchers from grant writing and enabling them to tackle long, difficult projects, which otherwise can be hard to fund. "I look at it as a 17-year grant," says Tomasello, counting the years until retirement, and one which is a "significant increase" over his present funding.

He is also jubilant about the "gorgeous" outdoor and experimental facilities to be set up for chimps, bonobos, orangutans, and gorillas at the Leipzig Zoo, which he says are "simply not duplicable in the U.S., period." Not only will the facilities boost his work on the development of cognition in apes and humans, he says, but they will enable him and Boesch to collaborate in comparing the behavior of wild primates with those in captivity—a crucial issue in the field.

The apes and the mixture of disciplines were also big attractions for Pääbo, who is best known for his work on ancient DNA, and especially for the recent stunning analysis of DNA from a Neandertal bone (*Science*, 11 July, p. 176). Pääbo is eager to compare the different ape genomes with the human one and to pinpoint the roughly 2% that differs between them—a small difference with obviously profound effects, he says. He will also continue work on the coevolution of genes and language in living human populations, together with Comrie and molecular anthropologist Mark Stoneking of Pennsylvania State University in University Park, who is also likely to move to Leipzig. And there is increasingly common ground with primatologist Boesch, a pioneer in using genetics to answer questions about the reproductive strategies and behavior of apes in the wild.

With these top positions filled and only an anthropology department head still being negotiated, the institute will now gradually start taking shape. Boesch will arrive first, moving into temporary space in early 1998, with the others following him over the next year while a permanent home is built. "People often speak about interdisciplinary research, but it's very hard to do," says Boesch. "Hopefully ... the new [Max Planck Institute will] be an example."

–Patricia Kahn