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UK Science & Innovation Network

Japan Newsletter

October 2014

CONTENTS

Foreword

It may be autumn in the UK but it is still warm and sunny in Japan. We have been out and about over the summer (see the report on Tohoku University, first in a series) and have a busy season of events coming up.

We also have updates on funding (including our new UK-Japan S&I funding brochure); our recent work; and the latest S&I policy developments from Japan, including a special report on MEXT‟s spending plans for FY 2015.

For more on our activities, including photos and comments on science and innovation activity in Japan, please follow us on Twitter (@UKScienceJapan) and LinkedIn (Choshu 500).

Elizabeth Hogben, Head of Science &

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To subscribe to this newsletter, please email: science.tokyo@fco.gov.uk or science.osaka@fco.gov.uk

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Visit our website: http://bit.ly/SINJapan

Special Report: Japan Science Budget Request

Every year, Japanese ministries submit open requests for their next year"s budget, giving valuable insight into their plans. This year"s request from the Ministry for Education Science and Technology (MEXT) highlights an increasing emphasis on innovation (including space technology applications), plans for more international S&T activity and new agency for coordination of health research.

Announced in mid-September, MEXT"s S&T budget request for FY 2015 was 1,147 bn JPY (around £6.7bn). This is an 18% increase against FY2014, vs a 10% overall increase in MEXT"s budget. According to NISTEP statistics, total Japanese R&D expenditure (including industry and public sector) has changed little since 2009. The request includes three key pillars:

1) Innovation – improving the environment for innovation, in particular working with MEXT R&D institutions to develop innovation hubs; and more widely based on the "Revitalization Strategy 2014" and "S&T Innovation Strategy 2014".

2) New institutional arrangements for national research institutes, including the new Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMD), to boost basic research, human resource and research infrastructures. AMD was allocated 66.8 bn JPY (a 9.7 bn increase from last year) to promote research and development through basic to clinical research focused on regenerative medicine, brain science, and translational research.

3) Accelerating R&D plan for decommissioning of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Interestingly, the request also proposes that MEXT establish a new 4.5 bn JPY strategic international innovation network. The primary aim is to stimulate brain (knowledge) circulation and develop science diplomacy in targeted countries. Their approach is to boost multilateral collaboration to tackle global issues such as infectious diseases and climate change, using Japanese star scientists and business representatives based overseas. It therefore seems likely that JST, the Japan Science and Technology Agency, will expand its Science and Technology Research Partnerships (bit.ly/1yxDVN9) in coming years.

The budget request also reveals MEXT plans to establish a new "international space exploration innovation centre" to spark innovation in space exploration technology. The operational budget will be 2 billion JPY, also included in the FY2015 budget request. The new base will be set up within JAXA Tsukuba around April 2015 as part of the "innovation hub" approach. Approximately 60 experts including researchers and engineers from JAXA, industry, universities and other research institutions will be called to join. Technologies including soft landing and robot exploration are to be developed over 2-3 years, followed by demonstration and spin-offs.

Additional translations from EU Delegation in Japan

Spotlight on Tohoku University

In September, we were privileged to visit Tohoku University to learn more about their research activities. Tohoku is one of Japan‟s top research universities. It has extensive international links including over 1,500 international students, 1,763 foreign research fellows and almost 200 academic exchange agreements with foreign establishments.

Tohoku University is home to the Advanced Institute for Materials Research (AIMR) (bit.ly/1rHia8J) one of Japan‟s World Premier Institutes. AIMR has strong links with Cambridge University and we met visiting researchers who spoke highly of the opportunities at AIMR and its international atmosphere.

Tohoku University also has a particular focus on research into disaster mitigation and resilience, through the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (bit.ly/1uyaUOD), which signed an MoU for research with UCL in November last year. Tohoku‟s Dr Takeshi Kanno will be speaking on „Resilience‟ at TEDx Taipei (bit.ly/1tg2tBW) about his involvement in reconstructing the medical system in the Tohoku region after the 2011 Tsunami. Tohoku University is based in the city of Sendai, which will host the UN conference on disaster risk reduction in March 2015.

More on the visit is available here: http://bit.ly/YFBkjN

Funding Opportunities

SIN Japan – Introducing Our New Funding Brochure

http://bit.ly/1oywpYq

It‟s a perennial challenge for researchers – information about funding can be hard to come by, and one always seems to hear about calls just when they‟ve closed. To help, SIN Japan have published a 3rd edition

of our handy guide, “Japan-UK Science and Innovation Collaboration: Sources of Funding”. This booklet is intended as a quick overview of the key sources of funding available to researchers interested in collaboration on science or innovation between the UK and Japan.

Please download a copy here and share as widely as you like. We intend to keep the contents under review. Let us know if you have feedback, or if you are aware of funding sources we missed.

BBSRC International Workshops

http://bit.ly/1uAufyw

The annual call for this fund is now open until mid November. The funding aims to stimulate joint working – for instance workshops – on topics important to BBSRC‟s strategy, as well as match numbers of scientists from the UK with other countries to identify common interests and explore potential for international collaboration focussed on supporting work in biotechnology and biological sciences. There are around 8 awards each year, of approximately £10,000 each. The workshop can be held overseas or in the UK.

Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation

http://bit.ly/1xA5vYx

Small Grants are available from £1,000-£5,000 to individuals, societies, associations or other bodies in the UK or Japan to promote and support interaction between the two countries. Applications are accepted throughout the year and decisions are made in May and November.

Shionogi Science Programme

http://bit.ly/1oxSUwO

Major Japanese pharmaceutical company Shionogi offers funding of JPY 5-15m (c £29k-£90) per project per year for innovative, world-class proposals in a range of areas. Shionogi aims to match „needs to seeds‟ – pairing its own R&D needs with innovative ideas, focussed on using novel molecules, analytical methods and biomarkers to address a range of conditions. Younger researchers will be given preference. Call is open at URL above from 1:00 am 1st October 2014 - 8.00 am 31st October 2014.

BIS Global Partnership Fund

Funding is available through the UK government‟s Science and Innovation Network (SIN) to help UK researchers build sustainable collaborations with overseas counterparts. Projects are managed by SIN officers and funding is used to support international travel, workshops overseas (or in the UK) or short term

researcher exchange. Projects should support SIN priority areas, benefit a wide range of UK universities and institutes, and involve strong participation and ideally co-funding from overseas researchers and research funding bodies.

Projects ideas should be developed in consultation with SIN officers in the country where you are interested in building collaboration. Funding decisions are usually made in early in the New Year but in-year funding may also be considered.

Please contact SIN Japan (see contact details section below) to discuss your ideas for collaboration with Japanese researchers.

Science Slam Japan

http://bit.ly/1rx2TIo

Not quite a funding opportunity, but an exciting contest t EU-Japan science communications – Science Slam Japan is a presentation contest where researchers present their work in front of a non-expert audience. The focus is on making research interesting, engaging, entertaining and thrilling to the audience. Researchers based in Japan have the chance to showcase their work and communications talent, and to win a trip to Europe.

The Science Slam is in Tokyo on 10 November; entries due 20th October. The contest is open to all fields, at PhD student level and above. For more information, please see the website (bit.ly/1rx2TIo).

SIN Japan Activities

Solar Fuels Workshop

On 18 and 19 September, SIN Japan organized a workshop on solar fuels at the British Embassy in Tokyo. Solar fuel research aims to develop fuel production using light as an energy source, and has great potential for the 21st century challenge of transition from fossil fuels to a sustainable energy economy. The topic is extremely challenging; Japan is a pioneering country in the field and a world leader in photocatalyst development.

World leading researcher Prof Kazunari Domen (Dept. of Chemical Engineering, University of Tokyo) led the workshop with UCL"s Dr Junwang Tan. Nine UK and thirty Japanese scientists covered development of new materials, mechanistic study and surface catalysis, over the course of the two-day event.

During the workshop UK and Japan researchers exchanged information on new materials development and fundamental understanding of solar fuel synthesis. The discussions successfully established further stronger collaborations between Japan and the UK.

For more information please email Seiichi Asano (Seiichi.Asano@fco.gov.uk)

Now Recruiting: Science and Innovation Officer, Osaka

http://bit.ly/1vueC8U

We have a vacancy in the UK‟s Japan Science and Innovation Network, working as Science and Innovation Officer in Osaka. Our team in Osaka oversees UK-Japan Science and Innovation collaboration across western Japan, from Nagoya to Okinawa. The role involves real personal responsibility for shaping and delivering projects, and helping to promote UK-Japan links across the region – working with key players across a wide range of exciting fields, including regenerative medicine and advanced materials.

For more information about the role and the kind of person we‟re looking for, please click here. If you know someone (or a group of people) who might be interested or well-suited to the role, please do pass this on.

Other News

New Ministers Appointed to Abe Cabinet

There were two major changes in the Abe government‟s September reshuffle that affect science and innovation. Mr Shunichi Yamaguchi was appointed as the Cabinet Office State Minister for Science and Technology, as well as Information Technology Policy, Space Policy and Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs. This is his first Cabinet position, although he previously served as Vice Minister for Communications. In his early comments in the role he called for a stronger Cabinet Office role in promoting science and technology, and noted the key influence of space research and development in the development of Japan‟s academic and industrial base.

Ms Yuko Obuchi was appointed as Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry (overseeing METI) - one of five ministers in charge of Minister in charge of Industrial Competitiveness, Minister in charge of the Response to the Economic Impact caused by the Nuclear Accident and Minister of State for the Nuclear Damage

Compensation Facilitation Corporation. She is one of five female cabinet members and one of the youngest. She is Daughter of former 84th PM Keizo Obuchi (1999-2000). She was Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs under Aso Cabinet in 2008.

Japan industry: strong IP, R&D investment maintained, but high-tech competitiveness falling

According to NISTEP S&I statistics (bit.ly/1vtyM2R), Japan ranked number one in the world in share of patents (patent families) during the 2000s, but the competitive superiority of Japan"s high-technology industries is falling. Competitiveness in medium high-technology industries is maintained at a high level. R&D investment has increased five years in a row, and 4% in comparison to FY2013, according to a Nikkei Shimbun R&D activity survey involving 264 major companies. It also highlighted the trend of expanding R&D capabilities abroad – 20% of companies have either set up or reinforced their overseas R&D centres. The total R&D investment amounts to 11.625 trillion JPY (c.£65 bn). The top 3 investors are automobile manufacturers – namely Toyota, Honda, and Nissan (in that order). Companies hope to localise product development in overseas markets, and to secure skilled HR. By teaming up with leading overseas universities, they hope to speed up technology development. For example, Toshiba will reinforce their bases in Vietnam and India to develop cloud computing skills. Hitachi will target South West Asia, China and India in developing technologies in energy, environment and infrastructure. http://s.nikkei.com/1uAurOo

Riken to launch reforms in wake of stem cell scandal

The Riken institute said Wednesday that it has yet to determine whether so-called STAP cells actually exist, while acknowledging that its researchers have yet to reproduce the technique, which was first cited in research papers co-authored by a Riken scientist that were subsequently retracted amid misconduct allegations. Efforts to reproduce the cells will continue through March next year, officials said. Riken also said it will halve the scale of the Center for Developmental Biology, which failed to prevent the alleged misconduct, and replace senior centre officials.

In the budget request by MEXT announced on the 29th, the operational budget requested for Riken was 52.8 billion JPY (c.£296.7m), 500 million JPY or 1% down compared to the FY2014 actual budget. It is also 20% lower than the 64.8 billion JPY budget initially requested last year. This is the first time that Riken's budget request has been reduced since its institutionalisation in 2003. Of all the R&D institutions under MEXT, Riken is the only organisation that will suffer a cut in budget, against common practice of increasing budget requests by 10-20%. http://s.nikkei.com/1DYuMx6

A new specialised unit to prevent research misconduct

Following several apparent research misconducts including the controversy surrounding STAP cells, MEXT has revealed that it will set up a specialised unit – a "research integrity promotion office" within MEXT in FY2015 to support prevention of misconducts at universities and research institutions. New guidelines to prevent misconducts will be implemented in April next year, and the new office will act as the HQ to ensure proper ethics education at universities, etc. The budget to set up this new office is also included in the FY2015 budget request that was just submitted end Aug.

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASDG2800R_Y4A820C1CR0000/

Forward Look

Science and Technology in Society Forum, Kyoto - 5,6,7 October 2014
Japan Innovation in Cool Earth Forum, Tokyo - 8 October 2014
UK Energy Innovation Showcase at British Embassy Tokyo - 9 October 2014
Japan- UK Nuclear Dialogue - 9,10 October 2014
Japanese Energy & Smart Technology: Webinar – 9 October 10am UK time
Commercialising technology in Japan: Webinar – 16 October 10am UK time
Japan-UK Ninth Joint Commission on Science and Technology – 4, 5 November 2014

For even more events on technology in Japan, see the *Export to Japan* website: http://www.exporttojapan.co.uk/events

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