



## Deutsch-Japanische Wirtschaftsthemen / 日独経済だより

### HIDDEN OPPORTUNITIES – A Personal View of German-Japanese Scientific Cooperation

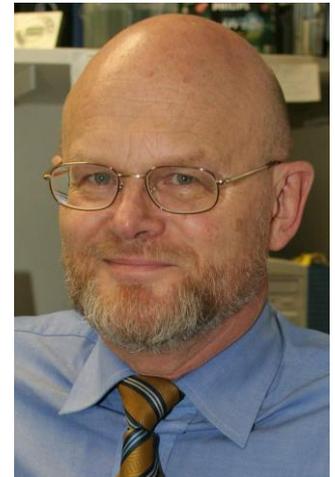
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Both Germany and Japan enjoy a well-developed university system and a non-university organization dedicated to basic research – here the Max Planck Society, there the RIKEN conglomerate. Both organizations have quite a bit in common: they are world-famous, funded to a large extent by the government, and, although home for a large number of graduate and postgraduate students, they are not allowed to award graduate degrees. Consequently, for this reason alone, researchers at both organizations are forced to maintain close interactions with national and international universities. Thus a natural question is "What are the attitudes of researchers in both countries towards international research cooperation, and specifically towards German-Japanese exchange activities and interactions?"

Let us first look at Japanese scholars visiting Germany. Germany is – after the United States, Great Britain and Australia – the fourth most important host country for international students. In 2011, for the first time, more than 250,000 foreign students from all over the world were enrolled at German universities: this accounts for 11.4 % of all students in Germany (lots of rattling statistics can be found at [www.wissenschaftweltoffen.de](http://www.wissenschaftweltoffen.de)). Interestingly most of them came from China (25,564 in 2013), followed by Russia (10,912), Austria (8,655), Bulgaria (6,764), Turkey (6,666) and Poland (6,575). In this context the figures of students from East Asian countries are of interest, and they can be found far down the table: Republic of Korea 4,279, Japan 1,908 and Taiwan 1,377. To get a better grasp of the significance of these figures we need to put them into proportion: per million inhabitants there are 19 Chinese students in Germany, 15 Japanese, but 58 Korean and 60 Taiwanese scholars.

Germany has always been an attractive country for foreign students, but it has become even more appealing over the last twenty-five years since unification. Especially the younger population has "chilled out" of xenophobic fears, become European, even world citizens. Berlin has become an international hot-spot again; English has lost the image of a "Fremdsprache" (foreign language) and is accepted as simply a means of communication. And German universities are rapidly adapting too. They are still free of exorbitant tuition fees, they strive with excellence – and some are even conducting a good part of their teaching in English. And exchange programs funded on national and European levels have young people mix with each other all over Europe.



What about postgraduate scientists? In 2012 Russia was top (1,717), closely followed by the USA (1,654) and China (1,360). Next are India, Italy, Poland, France and the UK – Japan ranks 12<sup>th</sup> with 372 postgraduate scientists at German universities. Or, in other words, there are more than 5 US-American scientists in Germany per million inhabitants, 3 Japanese, but only 1 Chinese. This would support the personal impression that for various reasons Chinese scientists tend to flock to the USA, Japanese scientists to Canada and Germany. Interestingly, 66 % of the visiting scientists from Japan, Korea or Taiwan are women, while for Chinese scientists the ratio is 50:50.

Looking at the numbers of Japanese students, graduates and even staff of universities or research institutes coming to Germany over the years, one notices an at first inexplicable decline. There is no indication that Germany has become less attractive to scholars – and actually this de-



cline has been observed for other countries like the USA and UK as well. Thus the decrease might reflect a presumed inward-looking attitude of current Japanese students, a growing number of whom apparently have no interest in studying overseas.

But what about international students attending Japanese universities? In 2008 there were 100,000 foreign students registered in Japan, and the Japanese government announced an ambitious plan to host 300,000 students by 2020. However, there is a significant difference to the German situation: 93,3 % of these students are from Asia, 62 % alone from China – understandable, as almost all teaching is done in Japanese language and with Japanese textbooks. Japan is – subsequent to France, Austria and Canada – the eighth most important host country for international students.

What about German scholars visiting Japan? In 2009 Germany had 115,500 domestic students studying abroad. However, over the last 15 years the number of German students in Japan has risen only slowly, from 250 to 450 per year. By contrast the mobility of German students to China increased in ten years from 1,300 to more than 6,000 annually! One reason might be the currently 750 collaborations between German and Chinese universities, which cover not only the exchange of students and scholars, but also the joint development of curricula or even export of entire education programs to China.

For two highly industrialized countries like Japan and Germany the relatively low level of academic exchange cannot be caused by dire financial straits. And in fact, a closer look at the situation reveals a plethora of funding opportunities – which seem to be not used to their limits.

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For more information on the above mentioned funding opportunities please see the whole article on the [DJW website](#), in which the author also covers other interesting aspects relevant for scientific cooperation, such as differences in the appreciation in Germany and Japan regarding studies abroad and foreign living experiences, reflections on the different working and living conditions for Japanese expats versus Japanese scientists in Germany and much more. The author welcomes very much comments to his e-mail address.

You can find out more about his activities at his website.