

Norwegen: Förderung der Forschungszusammenarbeit mit Japan

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Englischsprachiger Artikel des Norwegischen Forschungsrats über die Forschungszusammenarbeit zwischen Norwegen und Japan. Anlass ist der Japanbesuch einer Delegation unter der Leitung des norwegischen Forschungsministers und des Generaldirektors des Forschungsrats.

Headed by Norway's research minister and the Research Council director general, a delegation of key Norwegian players in the research arena recently visited Japan.

"Japan is an obvious choice on the list of countries with which we are seeking to increase research cooperation," says Arvid Hallén, Director General of the Research Council of Norway.

"Not only is Japan a leader in science and technology. Our two countries also have important characteristics in common: we both have extended coastlines and large maritime and fisheries industries. Both countries have ageing populations and are experiencing a decline in the number of students applying to technology and engineering studies. So we share many of the same societal challenges."

Focusing on selected areas

Norway and Japan have had a state-to-state agreement on research cooperation since 2003. Currently, the two Norwegian institutions with the most extensive cooperation with Japanese researchers are the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and the SINTEF Group. In total there are 34 active agreements between institutions of the two countries.

Norwegian efforts are directed towards fostering research cooperation particularly within the areas of nanotechnology and new materials, food safety, the environment, energy, and polar research.

During her visit, Norwegian Minister of Research and Higher Education Tore Aasland toured the Tsukuba Science City, headquarters of the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST). Also on her itinerary were political meetings, the launch of the "NorAlumni Japan" alumni network (see separate news article), and a visit to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

Cooperation on space research

JAXA is responsible for everything from basic research to implementation of practical space missions and other space activities such as satellite activity. JAXA cooperates closely with several Norwegian players, including the Norwegian Space Centre and Kongsberg Satellite Services (KSAT), both of which were represented in the minister's delegation.

In September 2010, JAXA and the Norwegian Space Centre signed an agreement on general cooperation in space. Bo Andersen, Director General of the Norwegian Space Centre, sees good potential for Norwegian trade and industry to sell technology to Japanese space projects. "The new cooperation agreement will make it easier to start up new projects that involve joint technology development, and it fits in very well under the state-to-state bilateral research and innovation agreement."

Kongsberg Satellite Services (KSAT) is a commercial company that provides services based on downloading data from polar-orbiting satellites. Cooperation with JAXA includes the receiving and relaying of data from Japanese satellites through KSAT ground stations.

Svalbard as a research hub

For several years the Japanese solar physics satellite Hinode has been transmitting its observational data to the SvalSat ground station on Svalbard. From there the information is sent to a data centre at the University of Oslo, which distributes the readings to researchers all around the world.

Japanese scientists are also active in northern lights research, and Japan participates in the EISCAT cooperation ' the system of enormous radar antennas on Svalbard and in Northern Scandinavia used to monitor changes in the earth's ionosphere and magnetic field. In addition Japan has established its own research station in Ny-Ålesund on Svalbard.

"Dynamic, stimulating cooperation already exists in space research between our two countries," points out Dr Hallén, "so this is a promising field for further development."

Many forms of cooperation

Dr Hallén emphasises that the Research Council wishes to expand cooperation with its Japanese counterparts ' the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) ' as part of the overall collaborative effort.

"The objective must be to strengthen cooperation between research groups so that together we can develop technological solutions for the global market," said Dr Hallén during the visit. He also stressed the importance of cooperating within international organisations.

He pointed out that Norway, as a full member in the EU Seventh Framework Programme on Research and Technology, could open doors for Japan in terms of EU cooperation. A cooperation agreement between Japan and the EU will likely be ratified at the end of February.

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