

System Reforms for the Advancement of S&T

In order to achieve the goal of S&T system reforms raised in the 3rd S&T Basic Plan, the CSTP is taking a variety of systematic reform measures.

To solve the problems prevalent in the research field —

systematic obstacles to the advancement of S&T and the benefits of research results to society —the CSTP compiled 66 reform topics across seven titles in December 2006.

Systematic reform (main points)

1. System to attract talented foreign researchers to Japan

In order to gather the talented world class foreign researchers and help them to fully exhibit their talents, the CSTP recommends to reform the immigration management system.

2. Environment to improve the mobility of researchers

In order to promote research activities in Japan, the CSTP recommends measures to improve the mobility of researchers, such as the creation of a pensions system that is not disadvantageous to those who have changed research organizations.

3. Achieving effective and fair use of research funds

For the effective use of budgets, the CSTP recommends to create better environment on the usage of research funds, such as earlier allocation of research funds.

4. Boosting research support

The CSTP recommends to improve the research support systems and to create an environment in which

researchers can dedicate themselves to their work through measures such as integrated management of research supporters at all educational institutions.

5. Improving environment to promote the activities of female researchers

The CSTP will make system reforms on female researcher's work styles, such as ensuring their careers are not affected due to interruptions arising from child birth/rearing.

6. Comprehensive support for clinical research including trials

In order to promote clinical research including clinical trials, the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency's screening system will be improved, and reforms made so that the Japanese public can have quick access to the most advanced medical care in the world.

7. Improving the public's understanding of science

The CSTP will create systems to encourage public understanding of science in order to make Japan a science and technology oriented nation.

Reforms for the research fund system

One of the basic stances mentioned in the 3rd S&T Basic Plan is an “emphasis on fostering human resources and competitive research environments — Shift of emphasis from “hard” to “soft” such as human resources; greater significance of individuals in institutions” It calls for an enrichment in competitive funds and indirect costs, and reforms in the system surrounding competitive funding. The competitive fund system is one in which, after calling for suggestions from researchers and research groups, the suggestions are screened by specialists, adopted, and funds for their promotion and support are allocated. In 2007, the funds for the eight agencies and 37 systems involved totaled 476.6 billion yen (13.6% of S&T related budgets).

In an attempt to make the most of these competitive funds, the CSTP has since 2003 eagerly supported improvements to the evaluation system and systematic

reform by the recipient institutions, such as cost management. In June 2007, a document about the improvement of competitive funds and promotion of systematic reform was drawn up, and concrete improvement policies indicated for the support of basic research and creation of innovation. These included, for example, structures for the succession and development of outstanding research, improvements and reinforcement of support for young researchers, greater support for female researchers, strengthening high risk research, improving evaluation criteria and trustworthiness, making it easier to use research funds in successive years, fair and transparent allocation of public research funding, and the encouragement of its effective use. The relevant ministries and funding agencies are promoting these systematic reforms and seeking to improve competitive funding.