

# A Survey of European Researchers in Japan

In preparation for the launch of  
ERA-Link Japan

(A networking tool for European researchers in Japan)

## Executive Summary



*Study commissioned by:*



European Commission, Directorate-General for Research



European Union  
Delegation of the European Commission to Japan

*Survey conducted and report produced by:*

The Evaluation Partnership  
[www.evaluationpartnership.com](http://www.evaluationpartnership.com)



The full report and appendices can be downloaded from the website of the Delegation of the European Commission to Japan. <http://www.deljpn.ec.europa.eu/ERA-Link>

## **1 Introduction**

The European Researchers Abroad-Link Japan network (ERA-Link Japan) will be launched in 2008 to help European researchers based in Japan stay in contact with researchers in Europe. The purpose of the ERA-Link network is to provide information about European research policy, opportunities for research funding, international collaboration and international mobility targeted at European researchers working abroad. The initiative is based on the ERA-Link network successfully launched in the United States in early 2006.

Prior to the launch of the ERA-Link network in Japan, a survey was conducted to assess the landscape of European researchers in Japan and to understand the needs of this target audience. In particular, the survey was designed to develop recommendations for the establishment of the network and identify the types of information and services that would be helpful to European researchers in Japan.

## **2 Survey Approach and Methodology**

The survey was structured into four sections, each exploring different issues pertinent to the further development of the network. Respondents were asked to respond to a series of questions under the following headings:

- Background
- Information and Services for European Researchers
- European Research
- Researcher Profile

The survey was conducted online, and developed in close cooperation between The Evaluation Partnership (TEP), the European Commission's Directorate General for Research, and the Delegation of the European Commission to Japan in collaboration with the Embassies of the EU Member States in Japan and the other European countries associated with the European research Area. It was officially launched on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007 at the occasion of the "EU-Japan Cooperation Forum on Research and Innovation" in Tokyo, and kept open until the end of September 2007. The target group for the survey consisted of European researchers currently living and working in Japan.

To target this group, a range of methods were employed. Emails promoting the survey were sent to key multipliers including:

- All Japanese research organisations known by the Delegation (universities, companies, research agencies, various S&T networks, etc.)
- Science counselors at all of the European embassies in Japan
- MEXT (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)
- JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science)
- The European Business Council (EBC) IN Japan

The survey was also promoted on the website of the EU Delegation to Japan, on the European Researcher's Mobility Portal and on other websites with links to European and Japanese research. European organisations in Japan, in particular the European Business Council in Japan, assisted the Delegation in reaching out to a large number of European researchers working in Japan. The survey also benefited from the help of the Japanese authorities, in particular JSPS and MEXT.

571 researchers responded to the survey. A random probability method of sampling was used, meaning that no groups of researchers were consciously targeted more than others or given different weightings in the final analysis of the results. Due to the diffuseness of the

definition of researcher, and the lack of an up-to-date database of contacts for European researchers in Japan, it is difficult to say whether the sample of researchers reached by the survey is truly representative of the community of European researchers in Japan. The evaluation team does not claim that the representativeness of the survey results is absolute, but under the circumstances feels justified in having employed as random a method of sampling as possible, with promotion assured through the institutions most likely to be in contact with European researchers in Japan.

### **3 Conclusions**

#### **3.1 *There is a great deal of enthusiasm about the ERA-Link network among European researchers in Japan***

- 93% of respondents to the survey are interested in being kept up-to-date on the development of the network.
- The level of interest in the proposed services is very high. The average proportion of respondents who when prompted found a particular aspect of the network “very useful” or “useful” was 74%.

Average number of responses across all the proposed benefits of the network	
Very useful	36%
Useful	38%
Neutral	19%
Not very useful	4%
Not useful at all	2%

#### **3.2 *While the profiles of European researchers in Japan are diverse, they share a number of characteristics***

- The table below summarises the main conclusions about the generic profile of respondents to the survey, based on their responses to the questions in section one and section four of the survey.

	Generic Profile of Respondents
<b>Research Position</b>	•Pre- and post-doctoral researchers (58%), with a significant minority of senior researchers (20%)
<b>Field of Research</b>	•Natural sciences, but the single most represented field is the social sciences and humanities (21%). Certain other dominant specialities, such as the life sciences and biotechnology (11%) and information technologies (8%).
<b>Place of work</b>	•R&D institutions and universities in the public sector (82%), some private sector (11%)
<b>Location</b>	•65% outside of Tokyo, respondents from a large majority of Japanese prefectures
<b>Level of Japanese</b>	•Most respondents had either a basic or conversational level of Japanese (63%), with very few having no knowledge of the language (10%)
<b>Length of stay in Japan</b>	•Majority of researchers have spent less than 5 years in Japan (67%)
<b>Plan to stay in Japan</b>	•Majority are likely to move within 5 years (67%), with only 8% stating that they are likely to remain for more than 15 years
<b>Reason for mobility</b>	• Many researchers moved for career reasons, such as access to opportunities within a particular team, though a large number had an interest in Japanese culture and language (49%). Few moved due to family connections (18%).

Generic Profile of Respondents	
<b>Nationality</b>	•Similar balance between Eastern, Southern and Western Europe, Northern Europe under-represented (15% of respondents)
<b>Gender</b>	•Over-representation of males, 69% of respondents
<b>Age</b>	•Majority (54%) between 25-35 years of age

- The main types of European researchers responding to the survey are pre- and post-doctoral researchers, who together make up almost 60% of respondents. These two key target groups exhibit some significant differences in terms of their profile. This information can be useful to build on when developing the ERA/LINK network in Japan.
- Post-doctoral European researchers in Japan are most likely to be employed in fields within the natural sciences. They are predominantly male (73%), and are more likely than other types of researchers to work in specialised R&D institutions or research laboratories in the public sector (41%, compared to 13% of pre-doctoral researchers). Post-doctoral researchers are more likely than other groups to be motivated to move for career reasons (access to specialist facilities, and opportunities to work within a particular team), and generally do not plan to stay in Japan over the long term (78% plan to leave within five years). Most have little fluency in Japanese (65% have basic or no knowledge of the language), perhaps because they work in highly internationalised fields which use English as the main language of research.
- Pre-doctoral researchers are a more diverse group than the post-doctoral researchers. Female researchers are over-represented among pre-doctoral researchers (46%), as are researchers in the social sciences and humanities (35%). Pre-doctoral researchers are more likely to be conversational or fluent in Japanese, and more likely to be located at universities (rather than the private sector or public R&D institutions and laboratories). They are strongly motivated by an interest in Japanese language and culture (64%, compared to 48% of post-doctoral researchers), and more likely to envision staying in Japan over the long term.
- It can be concluded from this that European researchers are likely to face very different challenges in terms of how to further their careers based on the current stage of their research careers. While post-doctoral researchers in Japan may be more interested in exploiting the knowledge they have gained in Japan in Europe in the future, a large number of pre-doctoral candidates see the challenge as finding a position that will allow them to stay in Japan, or at least keep close links with Japan in the future.

### **3.3 Respondents are very keen to develop their contact network, and are interested in assistance to develop their careers and fund their research**

- The five most valuable types of information and services to the respondents of the survey are:
  - Europe-Japan cooperation opportunities
  - Sources of funding
  - Career opportunities
  - Improved contacts with researchers
  - Improved contacts with scientific organisations
- The services and types of information perceived as most useful by the respondents are designed to assist researchers in furthering their careers, primarily by providing information about Europe-Japan cooperation opportunities, and by offering access to job offers.

- The types of information that are least likely to interest the respondents to the survey are practical information about living in Japan, activities designed to increase the social network of researchers, information about research policy and mechanisms for input into European research policy.
- While a large number of researchers, especially at the pre-doctoral level, are interested in activities designed to build their social network, the majority of post-doctoral and senior researchers are not very interested in such activities. Post-doctoral researchers often work in established research teams which provide ample opportunities for social networking, and senior researchers are likely to have their own, established social networks due to the length of their stay in Japan.
- While researchers are on the whole very interested in information about career opportunities, there are indications that they see the hiring process for a research vacancy as complex, and less a function of knowing of the vacancy itself as of having the right networks and contacts to be considered for the position. This may explain the high level of interest among all researchers for improving their contacts with other researchers and scientific organisations.
- Information about themes such as European research policy is mostly of interest to senior researchers. Likewise, senior researchers are among those most interested in having input into European research policy; all other types of researchers consider this service a low priority.
- There is varying demand for information and services among pre- and post-doctoral researchers, two important target groups for the network. Since post-doctoral researchers tend to be embedded in a strong and well-funded professional environment with established links to other research centres, they are less interested in services and information about scientific conferences and networking activities. They are also less likely to be interested in research articles, as they have access to this type of information through their work.
- Pre-doctoral researchers are on the whole most likely to find a wide range of services and information very useful, while post-doctoral and senior researchers are more likely to be interested in specific services. For example, senior researchers are less likely to find a local contact point for help and advice useful, while they are more likely than many other types of researchers to be interested in improving their contacts with scientific organisations.
- Senior researchers are more likely than other groups to be interested in research policy and to find an electronic newsletter useful, as their managerial role perhaps makes it necessary for them to follow policy developments more closely than other types of researchers.
- While gender did not have a great impact on the types of information and services most likely to be perceived as useful, female researchers are on the whole more enthusiastic about networking activities and improving their contacts with other researchers. This may be explained by two factors: female European researchers are in the minority in Japan and so may feel a more urgent need to build their networks than male researchers, and they are more likely to be active in the social sciences and humanities, where researchers are perhaps less likely to be integrated into strong and well established professional networks.
- According to a significant number of the respondents to the survey, a wide range of practical information is already available, but there is little accessible information about how to develop professionally in Japan as a European researcher and the effects that it has on a research career. Providing such information, based for

example on detailed surveys of researchers, would almost certainly elicit a great deal of interest not only from the community of European researchers, but also potentially from more general audiences.

### **3.4 *While interest in the proposed benefits of the network is very high, respondents know little about European research programmes***

- The survey suggests that awareness of European research policy, funding and mobility initiatives is low among European researchers in Japan. Respondents are more likely to be familiar with European funding bodies/programmes, such as the European Research Council (43% of respondents have heard of the ERC) and the Seventh Framework Programme (37%), than with general policy initiatives such as the European Research Area (23%).
- While researchers are very interested in information about careers in Europe, very few are familiar with the European Researcher's Mobility Portal (83% of respondents have not heard of the ERMP). This suggests that researchers in Japan could benefit from further information on and links to the European (and National) Researcher's Mobility Portal(s).
- There is a high level of interest in collaborating with researchers in Europe (76% of respondents claimed to be interested in this type of research collaboration in the future). This suggests that there is scope for ERA-Link Japan Network to potentially assist researchers in Japan in finding research partners in Europe.
- European researchers in Japan are most likely to access information about research opportunities through colleagues and friends (67%) and via the internet (50%). This suggests that initiatives such as a database of contacts available online would be highly relevant to the researchers.

## **4 Recommendations**

### **4.1 *The ERA-Link network should be developed and launched as planned***

- The large number of respondents to the survey, representing different types of researchers, makes a strong case for the viability of offering information and services targeted at European researchers in Japan. It is recommended that work on establishing the ERA-LINK network should continue, as there is clearly a great deal of interest from researchers.
- While the differences in the profiles of the researchers identified should not be exaggerated, it is recommended that the profile information uncovered by this survey be used to target services and information at specific groups of researchers, such as pre-doctoral or post-doctoral researchers.

### **4.2 *Services and information should be adapted to the needs of the substantial body of European researchers currently in Japan***

- It is recommended that information and services are designed primarily to provide information and assistance on finding research funding, and on helping researchers further their careers in Europe, thus strengthening European research. Being a source of practical information on living in Japan and a source of policy information about European research should be less of a priority.
- Due to the importance of networking to developing a career in research, it is recommended that work shops and seminars be set up, focusing for example on

ways of furthering a career in research or giving an overview of how to apply for European funding programmes.

- Activities designed to promote networks between researchers should be targeted specifically at different types of researchers. Activities should be designed with a specific target group in mind, for example post-doctoral researchers who are looking to transition into a research career in Europe.
- The Delegation should consider using the contact database to conduct regular career surveys of researchers, gathering information for example about how they develop professionally after their stay in Japan and their perceptions of the challenges facing European researchers in Japan.
- It is recommended that the contact database be made as relevant to researchers as possible, by including for example detailed information on each researcher's specialist field and their publications. This will make it easier for researchers to find other researchers with a profile similar to their own for networking purposes.
- The services and information should be designed and promoted in a way that makes it clear to the target groups what they can expect to gain from participating in the network. For example, the website could be organised to give an overview of different tools that will allow researchers to obtain assistance in key areas such as identifying sources of funding and careers information.
- Based on further research carried out on the target groups, it might be beneficial in the future to further target different types of researchers by offering bespoke tools on the website of the network designed to assist researchers in different research fields or of varying levels of seniority.
- The website of the network should not include an online forum targeted at researchers in general; as this would be unlikely to generate the traffic needed to keep it interesting and frequently updated. Allowing researchers to share specific career-related experiences and making them accessible by means of a database or a "Wiki" approach could be explored, as this type of information is seen as very useful by the respondents.
- Specific services, especially networking activities, should be designed to target female European researchers in Japan, as they show very high levels of interest in improving their contacts with other researchers.

#### **4.3 ERA-Link Japan should leverage and build on the strengths of existing European programmes in the field of research**

- It is recommended that a strategy is developed for how the ERA-Link Japan Network will leverage other European initiatives. More specifically, evidence from this study indicates that ERA-Link Japan should provide information on and links to European mobility services such as the European (and National) Researcher's Mobility Portal(s) and the ERA-MORE Network of Mobility Centres.
- Additionally, ERA-Link Japan should provide information on European research with a particular focus on funding bodies and programmes, as well as some information on developments in EU research policy.