

German scientists set up platform to help Japanese colleagues

Berlin. Scientists of the Leibniz Association, together with colleagues from other organizations, have set up an initiative to help Japanese scientists, whose work is endangered by the devastating impact of the quake and the tsunami. Nippon Science Support Network was established as an internet-based platform where German institutes can offer funding resources, exchange schemes and open positions for visiting students and research fellows from Japan.

The scientists, research institutions and scientific agencies wish to send a strong signal to Japanese colleagues that concerted efforts are being pursued to intensify and support scientific education, as well as research activities between the two countries.

The initiative and realisation of the platform including a Japanese translation came from Sascha Wiswedel, Steve Goyette, Yasuhiro Murakawa, Toshiaki Kogame, Fred Wouters, and Phil Selenko.

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The Leibniz Association is the umbrella organisation for 87 institutions conducting research or providing scientific infrastructure. Some 7,100 scientists and scholars work in the humanities and social sciences, economics, spatial and life sciences as well as in mathematics, the natural and engineering sciences and in environmental research. Altogether, ca. 16,000 people are employed at Leibniz Institutes, which have an annual budget of 1.3 billion euro. Characteristic of the Leibniz Association is the enormous diversity of themes addressed by the institutes as well as its decentralised organisational structure: by far the majority of institutes are scientifically and organisationally independent. They conduct strategic, theme-based research and constantly strive for academic excellence and social relevance. In this way, the Leibniz Association makes direct reference to its eponym, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who was the epitome of a great universal scholar. It is in this spirit that the non-university research institutes and the service facilities adopt an interdisciplinary approach. They provide scientific services and the relevant infrastructure and cooperate with universities, institutions belonging to other science organisations and commercial enterprise.