

The Funding Agency Presidents' Meeting

The Funding Agency Presidents' Meeting was held on October 4, 2010 in Kyoto, on the occasion of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology in Society (STS) *forum* in order to share and discuss common experiences and findings for facilitating and enhancing networking and cooperation among the funding agencies.

13 representatives of funding agencies from countries all over the world participated in the meeting which was co-chaired by Professor Koichi Kitazawa, President of the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and Professor Dr.-Ing. Matthias Kleiner, President of the Deutsche Forschungs- gemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation). The discussion summary is described as follows.

科学技術振興機構 (JST)とドイツ研究振興協会 (DFG)は、2010年10月4日京都にて「科学技術と人類の未来に関する国際フォーラム (STSフォーラム)」第7回年次総会開催時に、ファンディング機関長会合 (The Funding Agency Presidents' Meeting)を開催致しました。

北澤宏-JST理事長とマティアス・クライナーDFG会長が共同議長を務め、世界各国より13名の ファンディング機関代表者が出席し、共通して抱える関心事や問題に関して議論したサマリーを以下に掲載致します。



Summary: Funding Agencies Presidents' Meeting, October 4, 2010

Co-Chairs:

Prof. Koichi Kitazawa, President, Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), JP
Prof. Dr.-Ing. Matthias Kleiner, President, German Research Foundation (DFG), GER

Participants:

Dr. Carlos Aragão de Carvalho Filho, President, National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), BR
Prof. Dr. Dieter Imboden, President of the National Research, Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), CH
Prof. Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker, Secretary General, Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP), DE
Prof. Aly El-Shafei, Executive Director, Science and Technology Development Fund (STDF), EG
Dr. Minh-Hà Pham-Delègue, Chief Research Officer and Head of The European Research and International Cooperation Office (DERCI), French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), FR
Dr. Norbert Kroó, Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Member of the Science Council, European Research Council (ERC), HU
Prof. Hanoch Gutfreund, Executive Committee Chairperson, Israel Science Foundation, IL
Prof. Motoyuki Ono, President Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), JP
His Excellency Prof. Juan Carlos Romero Hicks, Director General, National Council For Science and Technology (CONACYT), MX
Dr. Andreas Göthenberg, Executive Director, The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation In Research and Higher Education (STINT), SE
Dr. Göran Marklund, Deputy Director General, external matters, VINNOVA (Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems), SE
Dr. Thaweesak Koanantakool, President, National Science and Development Agency (NSTDA), TH
Prof. Ömer Anlagan, Vice President, Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), TR

During the meeting it was acknowledged that funding agencies play a large role in promoting science and technology and innovations through supporting researchers.

The following topics were discussed in detail:

Discussion Topic I: Bottom-up Basic Research and Top-down Thematic Programs

How can the funding of bottom-up basic research and top-down thematic programs be harmonized?

The participants' statements once again underlined the existence of a broad variety of bottom-up and top-down approaches as well as a balance in the procedure of funding instruments for science and research. Regardless of the diversity, all participants were convinced of their shared potential to fund projects together, especially as cooperation has already been implemented, for instance between the funding agencies JST and the DFG – represented by the chairs of the meeting – in the field of green innovation. Another example is the G8 initiative, which involves the JSPS and the DFG. The diversity of procedures and underlying principles is mutually viewed as a chance for joint activities as it provides an opportunity to apply the respective mechanisms to differing issues. Also, the support of excellent research is considered beforehand and flexibility is demanded for the benefit of science and researchers. Furthermore, the bottom-up and top-down approaches may complement each other with regard to funding agencies in their close interaction and intermediary position between scientific communities, politics and society.

Funding agencies use their voices, based on the recommendations by scientific communities, to assist politicians in identifying the most urgent issues.

All participants agreed that with new challenges of political relevance constantly emerging, neither bottom-up nor top-down funding will become obsolete. Grand societal and technological challenges can be addressed and solutions may be found using different approaches. More complex questions sometimes require long-term commitments, larger programs or even the establishment and funding of new institutions in order to approach solutions. In such a situation, political support, directed funding and steering of cooperation can be just as important as scientific excellence.

The participants proposed discussing how different bottom-up and top-down approaches could “work together” at the next Funding Agencies Presidents' Meeting during the *STSforum* in October 2011. The platform could be used to address concrete examples of international cooperation.

Discussion Topic II: Funding for Global Issues

What shall be fundamental issues with regard to the increasing significance of global issues like energy and the environment?

How can funding agencies more effectively support research collaborations addressing specific global R&D issues such as Green Innovation?

Many of the “grand challenges” are in fact multinational or even global challenges – thus, the endeavor to productively deal with them must be global as well. The ever-increasing, but not evenly distributed world population and the associated consequences require “grand ideas” in order to sustain the current standard of living in the developed world and to reduce the hardship in developing countries. Climate change, dwindling water resources, demands for energy to be fulfilled in a more sustainable way, infectious diseases on the rise and declining effects of antibiotics: these are just a few of the commonly known topics which call for scientific attention on an international scale.

In dealing with global issues, the participants identified shared efforts and challenges which funding agencies face in their efforts to create ideal conditions for science and research. These include the question of resources, the need for global infrastructure, allowing both diversity and competition, open access to grants as well as networking activities and incentives which not only arouse researchers' interests in global issues, but also create situations and formats adequate to research and to developing new technologies.

Besides the need for global activities, the participants exchanged their experiences with regional cooperation as a model for unified collaboration as well as an example for fostering engagement and concentrating local expertise for solving urgent global matters. Examples are bi- and trilateral projects, the Mediterranean Union, the Baltic Sea countries, the multinational actions of the EU, and the ERC activities respectively. In many cases, global issues have local as well as regional implications. And therefore, it seems to be important to discuss ways of encouraging and fostering regional cooperation around these issues at such international meetings.

Discussion Topic III: International Collaboration

How can funding agencies collaborate to enhance the efficiency of their funding activities?

How can funding agencies promote international cooperation among their projects?

All participants agreed on the promising prospects of this first meeting, which was held within the framework of the *STSforum*, and thanked Chairman Omi for initiating it and the chairs for giving the initiative a concrete start. As the identified necessity of multilateral cooperation is intended to be pursued and implemented, it was viewed as a kick-off meeting to be followed by further meetings. Small countries in particular should be encouraged to seek international collaboration, foster the mobility of researchers and with this support the mobility of ideas and “brain circulation”. In addition, access to grants should be organized more globally within a certain range.

Beyond the agenda, Prof. Kleiner of the DFG raised the issue of financial contributions on a voluntary basis to the *STSforum* by participating funding agencies. A letter of Professor Kleiner will follow accordingly.