Section 3  Promotion of investment in human resources

1. Acceptance of foreign workers

Regarding the acceptance of foreign workers into Japan, the Basic Plan for Immigration Control (5th Edition) set forth the policy of actively accepting foreign workers who bring dynamism to the Japanese economy and society. As shown in Figure III-4-3-1, the number of foreign workers in professional and technical fields who were qualified to stay in Japan has been rising in recent years: the number was 271,288 at the end of 2016, an increase of 33,246 people from the end of 2015.

Figure III-4-3-1  Number of foreign nationals residing in Japan with expertise in specialized or technical fields

![Bar chart showing the number of foreign nationals residing in Japan with expertise in specialized or technical fields from 2012 to 2016.]

Source: "ZAIRYU GAIKOKUJIN TOKEI" (MOJ).

In May 2012, Japan introduced the Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals, under which points are awarded to foreign nationals based on their academic achievement, working career, revenue and other factors and those who have acquired a total of more than 70 points are recognized as highly skilled foreign professionals. Persons recognized as highly skilled foreign professionals are eligible for preferential measures, such as the provision of the right to stay in Japan for up to five years, the permission for their spouses to work, the permission for bringing parents and domestic servants to Japan, and easing of the requirements for the permission to stay in Japan for an indefinite period of time.

In April 2015, Japan established the Highly Skilled Professional resident status related to the
Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals. This status is divided into the Highly Skilled Professional (i) and Highly Skilled Professional (ii) categories. Workers who have engaged in the activities prescribed in the requirements for the Highly Skilled Professional (i) for three years or longer can shift to the Highly Skilled Professional (ii) category, for which further preferential measures are provided, including the right to stay in Japan for an indefinite period of time. The number of workers recognized by the Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals since the system’s introduction is as shown in Figure III-4-3-2.

Figure III-4-3-2  Change in the number of foreign professionals recognized under the Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals (total)

Source: Materials released by MOJ.

In order to more actively accept foreign workers, the Japan Revitalization Strategy 2016 (Cabinet decision on June 2, 2016) stipulated that “the Government will issue constructive messages to accept highly skilled foreign professionals, while further improving the living environment of Japan, wages and employment personnel systems, as well as immigration and residence control systems so that these are made attractive for highly skilled foreign professionals who are pursuing employment outside their countries, and create a strategic mechanism whereby those professionals can actively work over a long period of time in Japan,” and the following initiatives have been conducted.

(1) Establishment of the Japanese Green Card for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals system and revision of the requirements from the viewpoint of facilitating the use of the Points-based
System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals

In order to attract foreign workers with a high level of skills and knowledge, including those in the IT field, who are expected to contribute to Japan’s economic growth and encourage them to stay in Japan for a long period of time, it is necessary to develop immigration and residency management systems that are more attractive than other countries’ systems. Therefore, in April 2017, Japan established the Japanese Green Card for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals system. Under this system, the period of stay in Japan required for application for permanent residency is shortened to three years from five years for persons who have been recognized as highly skilled foreign professionals by acquiring 70 points or more under the Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals. For those who are regarded as particularly highly skilled (persons who have won the recognition by acquiring 80 points or more), the required period is shortened to one year.

At the same time, in order to facilitate the use of the Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals, workers engaging in an advanced project in a growth field in which relevant ministries and agencies are involved and workers who have graduated from top universities have become eligible for special additional points.

(2) Enhancement of job-hunting support for foreign students

The Japan Revitalization Strategy 2016 (Cabinet decision on June 2, 2016) aims to increase the share of foreign students who find jobs in Japan from the current 30% to 50%.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology will encourage foreign students to stay in Japan by supporting Japanese universities’ joint initiatives with local governments and industries to create an environment that enables them to acquire skills necessary for them to find a job in Japan, including Japanese language training and career education concerning Japanese corporate culture and other matters and participate in medium- and long-term internship programs in an integrated manner.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs plans to accept into Japan competent young foreign workers who will support industrial development in Asian countries as foreign students, have them receive master’s or doctoral course education in English at Japanese universities and organize visits to companies and research institutions, and internships. Over the five years from fiscal 2017 to 2021, a total of 1,000 foreign students are planned to be accepted.

The Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry is implementing a program to provide foreign people, including students studying in Japan, with opportunities to participate in internship programs with a period of around three months at Japanese companies in order to help them understand Japanese corporate culture and acquire business skills necessary at Japanese companies. In fiscal 2016, internship opportunities were provided to around 100 people. In addition, in order to help Japanese companies employ necessary foreign workers, the ministry holds job fairs. In fiscal 2016, job fairs were held in five cities in Japan, Indonesia, Viet Nam and Singapore.

International Students Support Network is operating a job hunting support network system for foreign students that was launched under the Asia Human Resource Fund program, which was implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry
of Economy, Trade and Industry. It provides foreign students with Japanese language training and information necessary for job hunting activities. As of March 2017, 87 schools (52 national and other public universities and 35 private universities were members of the network, which were being used by around 800 companies and around 3,000 foreign students).