

(I) Basic Concept behind Review

Three Perspectives (Vision) for Review

The Technical Intern Training Program and Specified Skilled Worker System shall be reviewed with emphasis on the following three perspectives in order to gain international understanding and to make Japan the country of choice for foreign human resources.

Protection of Human Rights of Foreign Nationals

Protect human rights of foreign nationals and improve their labor rights.

Career Advancement for Foreign Nationals

Create an easy-to-understand system that allows foreign nationals to play an active role while improving their careers.

Safe, Secure, and Cohesive Society

Contribute to the realization of a cohesive society where all people, including foreign nationals, can live safely and securely.

Four Directions for Review

1. Review the Technical Intern Training Program in line with the actual situation, by the ways such as creating a new system aimed at securing and developing human resources.
2. To make sure Japan is chosen by foreign human resources, create a system that foreign human resources can improve their skills and knowledge step by step and the results of human resources development can be checked objectively, thereby clarifying career paths available to them and ensuring a smooth transition to the Specified Skills Workers System through the new system.
3. From the perspective of protecting human rights, allow workers to change employers based on their intention under certain conditions, and take measures such as tightening requirements for supervising organizations, accepting organizations, and registered support organizations and clarifying the roles of related organizations.
4. Aim to realize a cohesive society by building a system to gradually improve Japanese language proficiency of foreign nationals and working to improve the accepting environment.

Consideration

1. Consideration for users of the current program and system

Give careful consideration to ensure that the review does not cause unnecessary confusion or problems to users of the current Technical Intern Training Program and the Specified Skills Workers System, and that no one suffers undue disadvantages or adverse effects.

2. Consideration for local areas and SMEs

Give careful consideration to securing human resources, especially in rural areas and small- and medium-sized enterprises where labor shortages are serious.

(II) Recommendations

1. Positioning of the new program and SSWS and the relationship between the program and the system, etc.

- Dissolve the existing Technical Intern Training Program and establish a new program aimed at securing and developing human resources.
- Develop human resources at the level of Specified Skilled Worker (i) basically within the period of three years of human resources development.
- Maintain the Specified Skilled Worker System while making necessary improvements.

* Among the technical training programs provided by individual companies, as for those that conform to the purpose and objective of the new program, they will continue to be implemented while making necessary improvements, and as for those that have different aims and objectives from those of the new program, but are still worth implementing, they will be considered to be accepted under a different framework from the new program.

2. Scope of fields where foreign nationals will be accepted and the function to develop human resources under the new program

- Specify the fields where foreign nationals will be accepted, rather than automatically maintaining the job categories under the existing Technical Intern Training Program, and limit the scope of such fields to those designated as the Specified Industry Fields under the Specified Skilled Worker System.
* Exclude fields that are not appropriate for human resources development through working in Japan.
- Align the scope of jobs which foreign nationals will be permitted to engage in with the job categories of specified skills workers system, and develop and evaluate foreign nationals for their "main skills" (requiring foreign nationals to take an exam at the time when one year has passed since the start of human resources development).
- Consider the acceptance of foreign nationals and their engagement in work depending on the situation in the fields of seasonal work (agriculture, fisheries).

3. How to decide the expected number of foreign nationals to be accepted

- Decide the expected number of foreign nationals to be accepted for each field where foreign nationals will be accepted under the new program as in the case of the Specified Skilled Worker System (as the maximum number of foreign nationals to be accepted).
- Review the expected number of foreign nationals to be accepted under the new program and the Specified Skilled Worker System and the fields where foreign nationals will be accepted in a timely and appropriate manner, depending on changes in circumstances such as economic situation. The government will decide these matters including the evaluation of exam level in light of the opinions of a panel consisting of experts.

4. Employer changes under the new program

- Expand and clarify the scope of "cases of unavoidable circumstances to permit employer changes of foreign nationals", and make the procedure more flexible.
- Permit employer changes of foreign nationals based on their intention under the following conditions.
 - From the perspective of planned human resource development, establish requirements for employer changes (whether the foreign national has engaged in work at the same organization for more than one year, whether the foreign nationals has passed the basic grade of trade skill test, and the A1 or higher level of a Japanese language proficiency test (e.g., Japanese - Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N5) ; whether the organization which the foreign nationals would be accepted is appropriate (e.g., the number of foreign nationals accepted from other organizations as employer changes), and permit employer changes only in the same job category.
- Take measures to ensure that the organization for which the foreign national originally worked can receive reasonable compensation for the payment of the initial costs from the new employer.
- Ensure that support for employer changes will be provided by supervising organizations, public employment service centers, or Organization for Technical Intern Training (OTIT).
- For foreign nationals who have returned to their home country before the completion of human resources development, permit their re-entry into Japan for a different field or job category from the previous human resources development, if the foreign national has stayed in Japan for not more than two years under the new program.
- Use the rate of successful foreign nationals in tests as an indicator for granting permission to accepting organizations or supervising organizations and recognizing them as excellent organizations.

5. Supervision, support, and protection

- Strengthen OTIT's functions to supervise accepting organizations and supervising organizations and to support and protect foreign nationals, and its cooperation with labour standards inspection offices and regional immigration services bureaus; introduce the consultation service for specified skilled foreign workers as an additional service of OTIT.
- Tighten the requirements for permission for supervising organizations.
 - Restrict officers of supervising organizations who are closely related to accepting organizations from being involved in the supervision of the accepting organizations; ensure the independence and neutrality of supervising organizations by strengthening external supervision.
 - Tighten the requirements for permission in terms of staffing, financial base, consultation system, etc.
- Establish requirements applicable to accepting organizations, such as improving the human resources development and support system (including the quota of foreign nationals to be accepted per accepting organization) and joining field-specific councils.
* Preferential treatment (e.g., simplified procedures) will be applied to excellent supervising or accepting organizations.

6. Measures to improve the Specified Skilled Worker System

- Allow transition from the new program to Specified Skilled Worker (i) under the following conditions.
 - (1) Pass Grade 3 of the trade skill test or Specified Skilled Worker (i) evaluation test
 - (2) Pass the A2 or higher level of a Japanese language ability test (e.g., JLPT N4)
* For the time being, attendance of a Japanese language course equivalent to the above requirement will be allowed as a transitional measures.
- Allow those who have failed in the tests to continue to stay in Japan for up to one year for the purpose of taking a test again.
- Allow only registered support organizations to undertake the support service and tighten the requirements for registration (e.g., staffing); require these organizations to disclose the records of their support service and service fees. Career building support will be also covered.
- Permit transition of foreign nationals to Specified Skilled Worker (i) during training under the new program in consideration of the requirements for employer change based on their intention.

7. Roles of national and local governments

- Prevent inappropriate acceptance and employment through cooperation among Regional Immigration Services Bureaus, the reorganized OTIT, and labour standards inspection offices.
- Ensure the ministries and agencies having jurisdiction over the program and system should play central roles in operating the program and system and act as liaisons and coordinators with ministries having jurisdiction over the business.
- The ministries and agencies having jurisdiction over the business will formulate acceptance guidelines and a career building program, and leverage field-specific councils.
- Ensure proper and reliable implementation of Japanese language education by Japanese language education institutions and maintain and improve the level of education.
- Ensure local governments will actively take part in regional councils under the new program and promote initiatives to improve the environment for accepting foreign human resources from the perspective of achieving an inclusive society and implementing regional industrial policy.

8. Sending organizations and how foreign nationals should be sent

- Strengthen regulation on sending organizations by means of bilateral arrangements (Memorandum of Cooperation).
- Enhance the transparency of information on sending organizations and accepting organizations, promote competition among sending countries and prevent mismatch in employment after foreign nationals come to Japan.
- Hold down the fees and introduce a system for ensuring appropriate sharing of fees between foreign nationals and accepting organizations.

9. Measures to improve Japanese language proficiency

- Improve Japanese language proficiency in stages through continuous learning.
 - Pass the A1 or higher level of a test (e.g., JLPT N5) or take a Japanese language course equivalent to the level of the test before starting.
Pass the A2 or higher level of test (e.g., JLPT N4) upon transition to Specified Skilled Worker (i).
* For the time being, attendance of a Japanese language course equivalent to the above requirement will be allowed as a transitional measures.
Pass the B1 or higher level of test (e.g., JLPT N3) upon transition to Specified Skilled Worker (ii).
* It is possible to make it a requirement to pass a higher level test for each field for which foreign nationals are accepted.
- Effort to support Japanese language education should be a requirement of accreditation of excellent organization.
- Leverage the mechanism of the Act on the Accrediting of Japanese-Language Institutes to Ensure Appropriate and Reliable Implementation of Japanese-Language Education and improve the quality of education.

10. Others (for the new program)

- Ensure the government should promptly deal with human rights infringements as much as possible even under the current program.
- Ensure the government should secure sufficient transition period and carry out careful public relations activities in advance.
- Ensure the government should consider providing necessary transitional measures, including permission to set a period longer than one year depending on the field as the period of work that is a requirement for employer changes based on their intention foreign nationals for the time being, to avoid any unreasonable disadvantage suffered by relevant parties, such as users of the current program and to mitigate sudden changes.
- Ensure the government should provide information on the new program and the specified skilled worker system properly and promote understanding by relevant parties.
- Even after the implementation of the new program, ensure the government should constantly verify and review its operation.