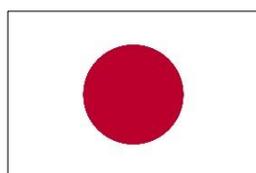


Regional Outlook 2019 JAPAN

Regional Development Policy in Japan



General policy approach

The National Spatial Strategy (National Plan) is Japan's comprehensive and long-term strategy for regional development. Its adoption by the government was preceded by an intensive exercise in inter-ministerial co-ordination and consultations, backed by the National Land Council, which brings together parliamentarians, academic experts, representatives of the private sector, elected officials from cities, regions and others. Numerous other national laws reference the National Spatial Strategy, stipulating that their provisions must be implemented in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy. Many other key plans on regional development, in both urban and rural areas, drawn up by ministries and other bodies, are to be coherent with the National Spatial Strategy.

Based on the National Plan, the central government and the relevant prefectural governments work together to formulate regional plans for eight broad regions defined in the legislation. The National Spatial Strategy, adopted in 2015, focuses on issues of depopulation and regional revitalisation, as well as disaster resilience and environmental sustainability. The new plan also places a particular emphasis on competitiveness and innovation.

Recent policy changes

- At the top of Japan's agenda is managing demographic changes for the next 30 years, which comes with a necessary adaptation of the size and distribution of infrastructure, and an emphasis on networks of cities and places. Following the great earthquake of 2011, disaster resilience has also been prioritised by the government and steps have been taken in that direction.
- Governance changes emphasise a network approach to regional policies and a common framework shared between ministries at the national level.
- The main addition is the definition of systems of cities as part of regional policies, building on connections and complementarities, in particular between large metropolises and lower tier cities as a potential for the economy.
- Rural policies are set around three main objectives: 1) facing demographic challenges; 2) ensuring thriving yet sustainable rural economies; 3) preserving heritage, by also considering the specific challenges of mountainous and semi-mountainous rural areas.

Institutional arrangements to prepare for global megatrends

The Office of the Headquarters for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalising Local Economy, housed within the Cabinet Secretariat, seeks to address national demographic challenges and support each region to create region-specific, autonomous and sustainable societies. Regional policy considerations are central to the unit's competencies. Specifically, the unit assists in ensuring the generation of stable employment in non-urban areas; creating new inflows of people to non-urban areas; fulfilling the hopes of the young generation for marriage, childbirth and parenthood; and ensuring safe and secure living in non-urban areas as well as co-operation between regions.

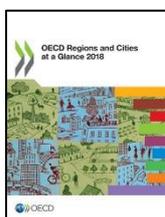
The unit pursues these goals through drafting the Long-term Vision; Basic Guidelines; and Comprehensive Strategy for Communities, People and Work. For instance, the Long-term Vision for Communities, People and Work analyses the current conditions and future forecasts of Japan's demographic trends and proposes basic perspectives and directions to tackle the issue. The Comprehensive Strategy for Communities, People, and Work then outlines goals, policy directions and specific policy tools for the coming five years to prepare for the future society of Japan, as described in the Long-term Vision.

At the national level, the National Spatial Strategy (National Plan) also sets directions for national development in the coming ten years. The plan's basic land concept includes promoting active interaction-led national land development; multi-layered, resilient compact and networked structures; and correcting excess concentration in Tokyo. In addition, Japan develops sector-specific forward-looking plans; for example, the Growth Strategy 2018; the 5th Scientific and Technology Basic Plan; or the Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas.

At the regional level, the National Spatial Strategy (Regional Plan) sets the basic conception of regional plans, which assess each region's current situation, challenges, and opportunities for co-operation and mutual co-ordination between regions. Local governments in urban areas create urban plans, which determine principles of land use, facilities for public use and development plans, taking into account trends in population, number of commuters, size of densely populated areas, traffic, etc.

Looking for statistical information to complement this?

Take a look at our publication Regions and Cities at a Glance:



<https://oe.cd/pub/2n9>

OECD Regional Outlook 2019: Leveraging Megatrends for Cities and Rural Areas

The 2019 edition of the *OECD Regional Outlook* examines the regional dimensions of global megatrends and their implications for the well-being of people living in different places. It discusses how place-based policies, public investment and multi-level governance reforms can respond to these megatrends to revive productivity growth, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life and increase sustainability.

Consult the full publication and the other country profiles on line: <https://oe.cd/pub/2vq>.

