



**A message from Koh Ichi Masaki,
BJA Cultural Committee Chair
and Head of European Affairs,
Japan Management Association-JMA**

Dear Members,

At last, the long confinement is starting to be eased. Many of you might be thinking of meeting family members and friends again, and to finally plan day trips and summer vacations.

Unfortunately, activities or events with larger groups of people are still restricted for the moment. We all look forward to hearing more good news from the experts and the government soon in the coming weeks. It is frustrating but we are still in a critical period.

Due to the lockdown measures against COVID-19, the BJA Cultural Committee was obliged to cancel our planned events during all these months. I do hope we will be able to meet sooner than later again.

In the meantime, we have launched our YouTube “**BJA Cultural Channel**” enabling to dynamically maintain the connection with our members through cultural activities but with respect to physical distancing. The BJA Cultural Channel provides the same level of interesting and fascinating contents as usual onsite events. I suppose many of you have

started to enjoy watching our “**Virtual Cooking School**” with the Japanese Michelin Star Chef Mr Kamo, a series of 4 videos to entice your taste buds!

To continuously provide interesting cultural events and activities, the Cultural Committee members are devoting time to find ideas and subjects from each their own fields of expertise and experiences with Belgo-Japanese relations.

Using this opportunity, I would like to introduce the team of the committee members:

Mr Robert Lievemont: Advisor and appraiser of art. / **Me Eric Resler:** Lawyer, Japanese commercial law. / **Mr Pierre Bonneels:** Philosopher, Cool Japan member. / **Dr Takeshi Morisato:** Philosopher. / **Mr Jan Lambrechts:** Management consultant, Tax advisor for Japanese Co. / **Mrs Minako Kono:** Japan Information and Cultural Center, Embassy of Japan. / **Prof Andreas Thele:** on Japanese Philosophy. / **Prof Dimitri Vanoverbeke:** on Japanology – Law and Society. / **Prof Willy Vande Walle:** on Japanology, Sinology. / and myself, joined by the BJA Office.

The next theme to be presented soon via the BJA Cultural Channel is the “**Virtual Forum on Philosophy**”. It sounds heavy. But it is not to pick trivial matters or a narrow approach in deep academic subjects of philosophy. On the contrary, it leads us into thinking about the values of daily life. How the COVID-19 crisis has influenced our way of life; private and business life – the different reactions of people, behavioral changes in Japanese society and in western society. During this lockdown, business has been communicated through internet and mobile links. Restrictions on face to face contacts and a ban on mobility have created huge losses in business and personal revenues. But at the same time, it gave us an opportunity to be more creative and efficient. Thanks to teleworking, office workers could eliminate commuting time: no exhaustion by traffic jam or rush hour with public transportation. Thanks to the rise of tele-meetings, total hours spent for discussions diminished and efficiency increased. After the COVID-19 crisis, we will most probably not go back to NORMAL as before. With all the lessons learned, we will not only live with the potential risk of virus contamination but also will maintain gains obtained from the creative invention pushed by the hard times during the crisis.

I am sure that the coming “Virtual Forum on Philosophy” will provide meaningful opportunities to think and prepare post COVID-19 strategies and plans for each audience.

Moreover, we are planning to organize a series of different themes for broadcasting through the BJA Cultural Channel: comparative socio-culture behavior themes between Japanese and Westerners / I Ai Do 居合道 / and many more...

It would be our pleasure if the BJA Cultural events and activities via physical distancing means or hopefully soon again through onsite venues, could be of our members' support to understand both Belgian and Japanese people and society from cultural viewpoint.

The BJA Cultural Committee is also interested in knowing more about the cultural movements in the member companies. "What does culture mean to your company?" in terms of Inclusive diversity / Gender equilibrium / Work-life balance / CSR (corporate social responsibility) / Environmental friendliness / Energy efficiency /...We would like to know more about these kind of engagements within your company, so we would be grateful if you could inform us by contacting the BJA Office. The Cultural Committee members would then like to visit you for an interview to introduce your companies' dedication to culture through our Cultural Channel.

Lastly, on behalf of the Cultural Committee, I express my gratitude for your continuous participation to our events. Your suggestions for a future event or ideas of improvement (KAIZEN 改善) are always appreciated.

Koh ichi Masaki,
BJA Cultural Committee Chair
Head of European Affairs, Japan Management Association-JMA
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