

Belgium-Japan Association
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日白協会兼商工会議所
50 YEARS Belgium-Japan Association
Chamber of Commerce



EDITORIAL



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BJA AND THE HISTORICAL FRIENDSHIP
BETWEEN BELGIUM AND JAPAN

By His Excellency Mr Mitsuo Sakaba, Ambassador of Japan

Congratulations for the 50th anniversary of the Belgium-Japan Association! I express, on behalf of the Japanese Government, our highest appreciation for its contribution to the promotion of our two countries' friendship and co-operation. The association is the most reliable non-profit organization in Belgium for the Japanese Government, in particular for the Embassy of Japan under my responsibility.

It is almost four months ago that I arrived in Brussels as new Japanese Ambassador in Belgium. In fact, I feel that I came back to my "home town", as I served once at the Embassy from 1976 to 1978. Thirty-four years passed so quickly, while I have been posted meantime in France, India, Egypt, the USA and Vietnam besides many posts at headquarters in Tokyo. Assistant Vice-Minister for parliamentary affairs and Press Secretary were the two most exciting jobs for me at the Foreign Ministry; and now I assume a new challenging responsibility in Belgium.

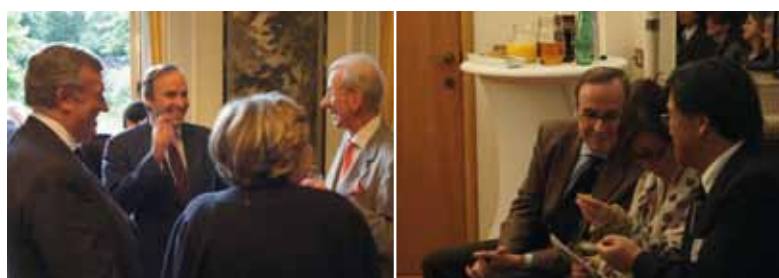
Referring to the diplomatic history between Japan and Bel-

WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL

By Mr Thomas Leysen, BJA President

It is now 6 years since I took on the chairmanship of the BJA, at the request of my predecessor, Mr Luc Willame and HE Ambassador Shohei Naito. For me, it was an honour to be asked by this prestigious association. But I have to say that it has been above all a privilege to serve together with such a group of fine and enthusiastic people, working towards a common goal: fostering the economic and cultural ties between our two countries and the friendship between our people.

Thinking back about these years, many memories come flooding back. One of my first official duties did not go unnoticed: during the first new year reception I had to host, I took



gium, I am the 26th Japanese Ambassador since our two countries opened their diplomatic relations in 1866. It is amazing to know that Japan learned a lot from Belgium in the 19th century soon after the Meiji Revolution. Many official missions from Japan visited, one after another, the newly industrialized country which was the Kingdom of Belgium under Leopold. Members of these Japanese missions included senior officials who became, at later years, top political leaders in the newly born Japan. In 1921 when Emperor Hirohito made an official visit to Belgium as then Crown Prince of Japan, He stated at the welcoming banquet hosted by King Albert I as follows, “At the time of Meiji Revolution when Japan opened diplomatic relations with European countries, it was Belgians who in fact represented Japanese interests in Europe. So, we can say that the first page of Japanese diplomatic history in modern age was written by the hands of Belgians. Many Japanese made their studies in Belgium in such fields as law, industry, military under the wise guidance of Belgians and those Japanese numbers increased year after year. If Japan has made a noteworthy progress in the history of human

civilization, it is to Belgians that we owe the most.” What an impressive message Emperor Hirohito delivered at a crucial moment of our bilateral history! We should not forget this.

The reason why I mentioned the above is that the Belgian-Japanese Study Society was first established in Brussels in 1906, contributing to the development of bilateral friendship and cooperation since Meiji era. This Society, which was renamed as the Belgo-Japanese Society in 1922, was in a sense the pioneer of today’s Belgium-Japan Association, leaving behind a long tradition of activities and surviving ups and downs before and after the World Wars. We are the successor of this history of friendship, so it is our common duty to do the utmost to further develop the Association. I, as a representative of the Japanese Government, am proud of being part of it.



part in the traditional sake barrel breaking (Kagamiwari) with HE Ambassador Hayashi. I however somewhat misjudged the force needed to carry out this task. The result was that the ambassador, myself and quite a few others found ourselves splattered by sake. We literally started the year with a bang...

My wife and I also cherish the memories of the many cultural activities we participated in: from concerts by Mrs Yuzuko Horigome to the recent visit at the Bruno Lussato & Marina Fedier Institute, but also the special evenings in the Antwerp fashion museum and the flower arranging events. And recently, I have been very happy to have been associated with the

innovative Marilo Fund, which takes imaginative actions to foster better understanding of Japan in Belgium. The origami shimbun-bag which the Fund showcased and which still sits in my office, reminds me of this regularly.

The most difficult time was obviously when Japan was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake. All of us at the BJA had friends, colleagues or relatives to worry about. At the same time, the BJA was instrumental in channeling the wave of solidarity with Japan that rose throughout Belgium, and that hopefully brought some comfort to the stricken. I still think back with emotion of the dignified ceremony which was organised at the Japanese Garden in Hasselt, to commemorate the victims one year after the event.

As the BJA approaches its fiftieth anniversary, we will continue to work at continuing to strengthen ties between Belgium and Japan. The small, but enthusiastic and highly dedicated staff, the directors and all those who volunteer on the various committees of the BJA are all dedicated to this task. Together, we will endeavour to go on building bridges between our nations, our economies and our people.



HISTORY



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF BJA IN 2013

The Belgium-Japan Association was founded and officialised in 1963, just after the return to Belgium of a Princely Economic Mission to the Far East.

Already at the time, the members of the mission had the opportunity to observe the strength of the Japanese industry and economy in general. Consequently, they thought it would be a wonderful idea to create an association having as purpose the organization of meetings between Belgians and Japanese living in Belgium (about 400 at that time).

This initiative was supported by HRH Prince Albert of Belgium who personally attended the inauguration ceremony. Viscount Obert de Thieusies, Honorary Ambassador and Chairman of the Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce Abroad, took up the chairmanship of the new association.



1963





Belgium-Japan Association
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HISTORY

In the early nineties, the Belgian-Japan Trade Federation (BE-JAT) merged with the Belgium-Japan Association and hence the name became the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce (BJA). The aim of the new association was not only to develop cultural and social events, but also to focus on the promotion of commercial, industrial and financial relations between Belgium and Japan.

In 2008, the BJA was informed by the Japanese Embassy in Belgium that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan had awarded officially in Tokyo on July 15 of that year the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce a commendation for the outstanding role the BJA plays in fostering the relations between both nations. The certificate of commendation was bestowed upon the BJA at a reception at the residence of HE Ambassador Hayashi on 2 October in Brussels.

On the commendation it was informed: “Many people have been working in various fields concerned with international relations

in recent years, and have been largely contributing to promoting friendly relations between Japan and other countries.

The commendation aims at praising the outstanding achievements of individuals and groups among them, and gaining the further understanding and support of various strata of Japanese nationals for their activities. “

The association at present counts over 650 members, including Belgian, Japanese and multinational companies as well as numerous individuals residing in Belgium. It has grown into a very dynamic organization offering a wealth of activities. The publications, books on Japanese investments in Belgium and Belgian export to Japan, newsletters, the lobbying with regards to the Social Security Treaty, Visa and Immigration Procedure improvements, support to trade missions and other visits to Japan, surveys conducted in the framework of improving trade, the YES Program, the many events – seminars, business luncheons and cultural visits - succeed in their goals because of all the dedicated members and friends sharing their expertise, time and zeal.



The BJA Structure



Memories from the past



VOICES FROM THE EARLY DAYS



**THE MORE WE WORK WITH THE JAPANESE,
THE MORE WE HAVE TO LEARN**

Mr Beherman looks back at a history of over 40 years of doing business with Japan – a country he knows very well, having visited the land of the rising sun more than 85 times.

The love for Japanese cars carried him from Mazda to currently Mitsubishi. While praising both brands, he points out that these companies are completely different in organization and business strategy. It is precisely this difference that is so enriching.

Going from the difference in business strategy between Japanese global companies, Mr Beherman went on to discuss the way he got involved in Belgian-Japanese trade and co-founded in the eighties the Belgian-Japanese Trade Federation (BEJAT), something very precious to him. At that time, Europe witnessed a lot of strong headwind against Japanese business success - not only politically, but economically as well. According to Mr Beherman, there was a deep misunderstanding among the Europeans about what the Japanese were willing to achieve in Europe.

As this problem needed a more consistent and permanent solution, Belgians and Dutch people came together to see what was going on at each side of the border, and see how they could promote a better understanding in order to improve business with Japan. The Dutch-Japanese Trade Federation (DUJAT) had been founded a few years earlier by a group of companies representing Japanese products, primarily wanting to stimulate export of Dutch products to Japan.



Interview with Mr Jacques Beherman



In Belgium this desire to improve business with Japan took the shape of BEJAT, founded by Mr Moorkens, Mr Blondé and Mr De Beukelaer of (then) Nikon and Mr Beherman, together with the great visionary business leaders of Honda, Toyota, Nissan and some others. In BEJAT, the emphasis was equally put on Export & Investment. Free trade promotion was at the core of the organization. As for all great things in life, culture was needed and indeed welcome. BEJAT merged with the Association Belgo-Japonaise (founded in 1963) and the current BJA was born in 1991.

Mr Beherman praised the work and dedication Mr Moorkens has put into the association and emphasized it is thanks to Mr Moorkens' zeal, encouragement and way of convincing others to support the efforts together that the BJA can do the things it is doing today.

One of the personal highlights for Mr Beherman was the set up of a Belgian mission to Japan to promote the exquisite expertise of Belgian manufacturers and to have the Belgian contractors meet up with Japanese producers. With the great assistance of Mr Roland Charlier, General Manager of the Belgian Economic Affairs Office and the Belgian Embassy in Tokyo and His Excellency Ambassador Nothomb, the BJA managed to send off 25 different companies specialized in selling equipment to the automotive industry. The mind boggling effect of this enthusiasm and the drive of all participants was that the doors were opened and all the companies were welcomed by the Japanese manufacturers.

There was also a great effort to train the Belgian companies to go to Japan. For instance, cross-cultural etiquette was taught to businessmen. The help of His Excellency Baron Nothomb, Belgian Am-

bassador to Japan at that time, cannot be underestimated in this endeavor as well.

Thanks to these kinds of missions and other activities, the BJA gained a solid reputation and became well known by the authorities and royal family as well, notes Mr Beherman.

Today as before, the great asset the BJA brings is the two-way traffic between our two countries: it is extremely crucial to keep on promoting mutual understanding in business and in culture. Belgium and Japan both benefit greatly from free trade. Belgians learn great skills and discipline from Japan while Japanese learn various cultures and languages from Belgium. One should never impeach free trade!

Thanks to its present position and reputation, the BJA can organize events ranging from seminars to improve business to cultural events that explore the charms of both countries, as our culture and languages are so varied, Mr Beherman added. One of his fond memories in this regard was the golf tournament with colleagues and friends and of course the many dinners and networking cocktails following the events. For Mr Beherman, it is extremely important to keep on supporting the bilateral relations, perhaps increasing this also into the virtual world.

Mr Beherman summarizes his deep interest in the relations between Belgium and Japan by these concluding words: "The more we work with the Japanese, the more we have to learn".

*By Mrs Mika Matsumoto and Mrs Anja Oto-Kellens,
Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce*

Memories from the past



Interview with Mr Frans Blondé

MANY, MANY FRIENDSHIPS WERE CREATED AND ARE STILL BEARING FRUIT TODAY

Mr Frans Blondé was intrigued by Japan, one of the reasons being the hidden powerful worldwide potential of its industry. Toyota for example was considered at that time (the seventies) the only genuine entrepreneurial force in the automotive industry.

The precision instruments' makers were even stronger in market domination, Mr Blondé states, because of their extreme quality requirements in manufacturing and also their image in general.

Blondé started printing for distributors of Japanese durable consumer goods in 1966. Their crisp 'high-density-colour-Blondé-quality' was much appreciated by the image-conscious Japanese multinationals. European companies were not interested in it.

In 1974 came the breakthrough through the help of Baron L. Moorkens with acquiring as client a worldclass manufacturing company willing to conquer the European Market.

In 1976 Mr Blondé undertook a first business trip of three weeks to Japan. During this trip, Mr Blondé deliberately searched for traditional Japanese companies: those close to genuine Japanese values, and maybe even a bit willful and stubborn. His reasoning was twofold. First, he wanted to deliver exactly what was expected: on-time high quality at a fair price. But secondly, he also wanted to become their primary European partner. He clearly understood that few Japanese companies truly recognized how the European mentality functioned and the way in which they worked and lived.

A year later his company took care of the print-communication for three top groups of manufacturing durable consumer goods and precision instruments. Mr Blondé notes that his company could organize their increased communication ("value-added-printing") needs very smoothly.

In the eighties Japanese Entrepreneurship was considered in-



Memories from the past





vincible, as it created a unique synergy of global reach and of advanced production technology and methods.

“If you cannot beat them, join them, if you cannot join them, bash them...” was often heard in the Europe of that time. In this atmosphere BEJAT was founded and one year later Baron Moorkens recruited Mr Blondé as a Director of BEJAT, as he got more involved in Japanese business and was elected as a non-resident director of BLCCJ to assist Belgian businessmen in Japan. Baron Moorkens appreciated the synergy Mr Blondé could offer.

Later on the BEJAT and BJA merged, Mr Blondé continued assisting Belgian exporters to Japan as a Board member. Mr Blondé notes that Baron Moorkens always insisted on a “working” Board, and work he did!

Mr Blondé gave the YES Program his full and absolute support, realizing that this was an ideal way for young people to learn Japanese ways from the inside out. But less business related activities also gave him great satisfaction. He remembers the catastrophic earthquake in Kobe and conceiving the idea to sell Charity Christmas cards to BJA members and the general public. In fact this BJA venture raised an amount which was at the same level as that of the Belgian government and Mr Blondé himself

went to Japan to hand over the donations on behalf of the BJA to the Head of Hyogo Prefecture in Japan.

Many, many friendships were created and are still bearing fruit today. This served as the basis of many visits to Japan and making numerous Japanese friends and contacts in Belgium.

Mr Blondé experienced the legendary BJA leadership of Baron Velge and after a pause he again became active when Mr Leyssen became president. It was also the period when he, together with Mrs Blondé, established the Marilo Fund, to encourage opportunities to connect Belgium and Japan through mutual interest and understanding.

Few were surprised when Mr Blondé (who was very surprised himself) received the exceptional decoration of the Order of the Rising Sun. It also proves his passion for a country he knows so well and the appreciation he has received from the Japanese people. It is the same passion that has continuously motivated BJA members to improve the vision and image of Japan throughout Belgium. It may well be true—as some suggest—that Mr Blondé is probably more Japanese than most Japanese people.

By Mr Kris Sierens, Managing Partner, BeforeTheHype, and BJA Editorial Committee Member

2004



Interview with Baron Jean-Albert Moorkens

LONG LIVE THE BJA

It all started with his father's passion for motorcycles. Baron Moorkens' father owned a small business distributing a variety of brands, many of which no longer exist. In those early days, his father also realized the need for a well-built and inexpensive small car. That company subsequently became one of Belgium's principal importer of Japanese and later Korean cars, including Suzuki, Mitsubishi, Isuzu, Hyundai, and Ssang Yong. A strong and lasting relationship with Japan was built one brick at a time. That relationship has continued to dominate Baron Moorkens' life. His unshakable support of the

comfortable, and cheap. Belgians—along with other European manufacturers and assembly plants—were rightfully anxious that their products were not competitive and that jobs would be lost.

Baron Moorkens' primary aim was to change this perception. At that time, Baron Moorkens was a board member of FEBIAC (Belgian Federation of the Auto Industry). Based on the Dutch model, he managed to gather not only all of the Japanese car importers but also importers of audio visual equipment, of-



Japanese automotive industry and his modesty and dignified manner were major contributors to his being honored by the Emperor with an appointment as Commander of the Order of the Sacred Treasure.

In the late eighties, there were strong negative feelings across Europe directed at Japan, especially within the automobile industry. The reason was that the Japanese were offering something completely new: cars that were reliable,

fice automation systems, opto-electronics, capital goods and chemicals, to create together the Belgian-Japanese Trade Federation (BEJAT). All members were asked to donate 450,000 BEF to make this a reality. This was a significant amount at that time. The organization had three goals: to promote Belgian exports to Japan, attract Japanese investors to Belgium, and to promote free and fair trade. From its very inception, the organization represented 70% in value of Japanese imports within Belgium.

2004



Welcoming HRH Prince Philippe of Belgium at Toyota Motor Europe for the YES IV briefing session.

The guests savouring delicious chocolates during the Belgian Chocolate Tasting evening held at the premises of Scabal.

One of the first things on the BEJAT agenda was to organize a trade mission to Japan. This proved to be an immediate as well as hugely important success. After the Japan Europalia Exhibition, the public and private perceptions of Japan quickly began to change. Although the Belgium-Japan Association had been in existence for quite a while, its activities were mostly cultural in nature. They did however have one very critical credential; they had established the Belgium-Japan Chamber of Commerce. It was always the Baron's wish to combine both organizations and this finally occurred in 1991.

years. One was certainly the visit of the Japanese Crown Prince and Princess. Who can ever forget the warm friendliness of the lovely Princess to all of those who had the opportunity to meet or simply see her? The other key event was the establishment of the Yes Program (Young Executive Stay), an initiative inspired by HRH Prince Philippe who suggested that more young Belgian entrepreneurs should join the Trade Missions. The BJA fulfilled the wish with the creation of the YES Program. It gives every 2 years to 10 young entrepreneurs the opportunity to promote their products on the Japanese market. From



It was immediately clear that the BJA name should be kept as the common brand.

From the outset, it was Moorkens' vision to have a Belgian as BJA president who had serious investments in Japan. That was a major factor in the election of Baron Velge as president. A Velge quote from 1992 is often recalled by members: 'The world will become a safer place through international trade and investment'. Two events in particular highlight the early

the start most participants were successful in establishing contracts. Those are two of the many actions by the BJA, but more importantly is the fact that a new generation continues to build day by day new bridges of understanding and mutual appraisal while the founders slowly fade away.

Long live the BJA!

By Mr Kris Sierens, Managing Partner, BeforeTheHype, and BJA Editorial Committee Member

Memories from the past



ARTICLES

**SWEET MEMORY OF THE BJA**

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to congratulate the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce (BJA) on its 50th anniversary. Indeed the BJA was my partner during my assignment as Ambassador of Japan to Belgium from late 2003 to late 2006. The BJA is not only the forum of friends of Japan, but also the pivot of business networking and exchange promotion between Belgium and Japan. It was quite natural that I committed myself to collaborate fully with the association and I still keep fond memories of its many programs I participated with.

Soon after my arrival at Brussels, I took initiative to convene Belgian business leaders to the residence of Ambassador with a view to attracting their attention to the merit of the



2004

2005



Hanami event at the Japanese Garden of Hasselt organized by the BJA Youth Committee (today Friendship Committee).

BJA. I pronounced at the reception that I personally held the guiding principle of the BJA in great esteem, namely “Mutual understanding of cultural backgrounds is the key to successful business relations between Belgium and Japan.” I commended enthusiastically that the BJA policy of combining business with culture is the effective way to sustain and strengthen further the bonds of friendship between the two countries. An illustrative episode was arranged later by the BJA Cultural Committee in October 2005.

The Belgian Biscuit Tasting evening was an excellent undertaking in bringing into the limelight the product of traditional dairy farming on the soil of Belgium. I took the floor at the gathering and focused on the long lasting wonder in the mind of Japanese children who could have a chance to appreciate the sweets. Back in Japan after my office in Belgium, I am always heartened to see Belgian biscuits on display in corner supermarkets.

I am convinced that the BJA will continue to foster friendship and cooperation between Belgium and Japan under the judicious guiding principle.

*By Mr Shohei Naito, Former Ambassador
of Japan to the Kingdom of Belgium*



Memories from the past



The BJA invited the members to the Kodan (comic story-telling) Performance of Mr Ichiryusai Teisui, a National Living Treasure, who came to perform in the Palais des Beaux-Arts.

MEMORABLE EVENTS AT THE BJA



I have been the chair of the Investment Committee of the BJA for more than 10 years. For professional side, I have been an adviser to Japanese investors in Europe at KPMG - not only to those investing in Belgium but also in Central & Eastern European countries and Russia & CIS. I have also advised the European headquarters of Japanese companies in Belgium and in the Netherlands as to their strategies in developing their European business.

My experience has taught me that it is important to provide potential investors a realistic view of the business environment of a country. Promotional materials are abundant but realistic views are rare.

The Investment Committee of the BJA has been doing just that. Our focus has been to produce materials that are objective, realistic and value-added from the point of view of investor.

We have published the 'Experience of Japanese Companies in Belgium' – a collection of the first-hand experience by Japanese companies that have invested in Belgium for three times.

We also published 'Belgium and its Neighbours' Business Environment Compared' in 2010 and are now updating it.

These publications demand truly dedicated efforts of committee members in researching, interviewing, writing and editing. Although the process is sometimes crucifying, we always feel rewarded when a publication is finally published. Not only because we are relieved but also because we see that the results of our efforts are valued by potential investors. The latest edition of 'Experience of Japanese Companies in Belgium' was presented to Prince Philippe when he was in Tokyo for a trade mission. I am proud of what we have been publishing and believe that each publication should be counted as one memorable event.

Although I am the chair of the Investment Committee, I must confess that the most memorable event for me personally was not one that this committee organised. It was an evening in May 2009 that took place in the workshop of venerable Debailleul with the collaboration of the chef of Comme Chez Soi and its pâtisseries.

To start with, it was difficult to get to the workshop. It showered heavily earlier in that afternoon and a part of Brussels was flooded as the result. It took two hours to manoeuvre in the traffic to get there. What we could taste, however, was eye popping. To be able to taste their whole range of cakes and chocolates including the Brussels style waffles of Comme Chez Soi was an incomparable experience. The difficult access

2005



Toasting upon the signing of the Agreement between Japan and Belgium on Social Security Treaty.



made the reward all the more precious.

Investors may decide to come to this country by basing their decision on harder facts such as logistics and the availability of highly skilled researchers. Culinary culture is none the less an important element of the attractiveness of the country, which this association has promoted vigorously.

In Japan, Belgian waffles are very well known. They are typically of Liege style. It is said that a lady at the Mission of Belgium in Tokyo was asked to provide a recipe of waffles. She turned to her mother who produced a recipe of Liege style waffles because she is from Liege.

That person once was a member of this committee. It is a fine and memorable example of the combination of culinary culture with investment promotion.

I hope that the two countries will have even stronger economic and cultural ties in coming years.

*By Mr Masatomo Nomura,
Chairman BJA investment Committee*



BJA members at the Economic Trade Mission to Japan led by HRH Prince Philippe of Belgium – Aichi World Expo.

Exclusive visit to the plant of Toyota Motor Manufacturing France, located in Valenciennes, France.

WHY I LIKE THE BJA

It is a big honour for me to write a little word for the Trade Flows & Cultural Newsletter, dedicated to the 50 years of the Belgium-Japan Association.

My name is Ann Blondé, and I joined the Association in 1991, on the request of Mr J.A. Moorkens. As a graduate in Japanology at the University of Leuven, I was asked to replace the Executive Director Assistant of BEJAT, being on a maternity leave on that moment.

It was the beginning of a long career at the Association and I personally witnessed the fusion of the Association Belgo-Japonaise and BEJAT into the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce.

Mr Moorkens, then Vice President of the newly created association, prepared me a big challenge: to create a division especially for young people - as the Association was at that moment mainly business focused.

With a group of very enthusiastic people, all having links to Japan we started with the Youth Committee.

Recruiting members became a big challenge and we needed to have our personal messengers in all Belgium-Japan related institutions, for example the Catholic University of Louvain. I do not need to mention that Professor Vande Walle was a big supporter of the Youth Committee.

The inauguration ceremony in 1993, was a big success, grouping more than 300 people including the entire board of the Association. In 1 year 400 members were attracted...

After a few years, I became mother and indeed 'youth' was maybe not longer the applicable to me... Evelyne Bosteels, also graduate of Japanology at the Catholic University of Louvain, became my successor... I am very grateful for that!

Mr Moorkens, knowing that I was not longer involved in the Youth Committee, prepared me the following challenge: Become the assistant of Mr Dominique le Hodey, Chairman of the Cultural Committee.

This was a very enriching period in my life: not only being involved in the organisation of the numerous interesting cultural events linking Belgium to Japan, but also working with Mr le Hodey, an inspiring personality.

At this moment I am proud of being the Chairwoman of the YES committee. YES, the Young Executive Stay is probably the most interesting project at the Association.

The YES program aims to train young business people in Japanese business practices and is organised every 2 years. The program was initiated 16 years ago under the Auspices of HRH Prince Philippe of Belgium and under the chairmanship of Mr Frans Blondé, my father. And indeed next year we will organise the 9th edition.

2006



The organisation of such an event is only possible thanks to the enthusiasm of a team, and I really wish to thank Mrs Anja Oto-Kellens for that as well as her predecessor, Mrs Fabienne Fujii-l'Hoost.

As you can notice, I invested a lot of time in the Association, but in return I received a lot. The most rewarding for me, are the inspiring people which I was honoured to meet. From the Japanese Imperial Family to HRH Prince Philippe of Belgium, high level Belgian and Japanese business people, famous Belgian and Japanese artists, Representatives of the Regions...

I am really grateful to all the people who gave and still give me the opportunity and the confidence to play a role in the Belgium-Japan Association.

That's why I like BJA... and really would like to congratulate all the members on the 50th anniversary, because it is only thanks to the members that an association can celebrate its anniversary!!!

By Mrs Ann Blondé, Chairwoman BJA YES Committee



Memories from the past



The selected candidates to the YES V join the second briefing session in presence of HRH Prince Philippe

2013 WILL BE MY 20ST YEAR OF A NICE VARIETY OF RELATIONS WITH AND WITHIN BJA !



My membership in BJA was directly associated and is one of the major remaining evidence of a major reorientation of my professional life: in 1993 I was appointed “Regional Manager for Asia” at the International Department of Generale Bank (“G Bank”, today BNP Paribas Fortis). It was the beginning of a never ending re-development of my interest for Asia, in general, and Japan in particular.

If I was so motivated for that new job, it was due to my “Project Financing” period, 10 years before, when I first learned to know, but too briefly, this part of the world for which Europeans have such a partial view and often lack so much of understanding of its diversity.

As it was a tradition, I entered into a rotating membership of the Board of BJA, shared between the three large Belgian (at that time!) Banks. I enthusiastically took over that position in parallel with my discovery of Japan and soon was proposed to create and chair the new “Investment Committee”. In that context, I

was much honored to be kept as a member of the Board although, at the end of the year, my turn was ending in the Belgian Banks rotation. With the nice support of its members, including the present Chairman of this very active Investment Committee, we launched, among other initiatives, in 1996/1997, the first “Survey on Japanese Investment in Belgium”.

During each of these years, from 1993 to 1999, I traveled more or less five times to Asia, including, in the majority of the cases, at least a stopover in Japan where “G Bank” had a Representative Office under my responsibility. Due to the distance and the objective to group the visits in a limited number of roundtrips, I, most of the time, stayed two weeks in a row and seized the opportunities of the week end in between to learn more about the countries visited, beyond the limited Banking and finance point of view. That little free time, together with the efficiency of the Shinkansen and other regional railways, gave me the fantastic opportunity to add, piece by piece, new aspects of my perception of Japan and of the way Japanese

2006



Waving together with ASIMO - Exclusive visit to ASIMO Studio and the Honda Europe in Ghent.

Business Seminar on 'Japanese Economy' by Dr Masaru Yoshitomi, President and Chief Research Officer of the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry in Japan.



people view the world, at home and outside. Of course, the more it developed, the more I came to the evidence that pretending to “know” and “understand” would be very over-confident. The only thing I can say is that it never stopped developing in the same direction of a wish to continue together with a strong feeling of seduction!

Those who know the end of the history of G Bank on one side, and some aspects of my personality on the other side, will understand why, in 1999, I jumped on an opportunity to leave the Bank... I joined a European Institution established in Paris, active in cross border bank transactions. I had to resign from the Board of BJA and, during four years, had almost no relationship with Japan and Japanese people.

But, when, at the end of 2002, I was appointed as representative in Belgium of that institution and made in charge to open its Branch in Brussels, I was back home and soon came across good old friends I knew in BJA. One of the most valuable ones, the late Dominique le Hodey, easily convinced me of an obvi-

ousness: It is not because, businesswise, I had no more relation with Japan, that I should not come back in the BJA circle.

Since then, I participate in the Cultural Committee of which Dominique was Chairman and I try, on my turn, to bring to the BJA as much good as Japan, the Japanese people and BJA brought to me. If needed, I feel extremely motivated in supporting the personal aspects that BJA can add to the Business relationship between Belgium and Japan.

By Baron François Boels, BJA Cultural Committee Member

2007

Memories from the past



Exclusive Visit to the Port of Zeebrugge and the Logistics Centre of Bridgestone Logistics Europe.



A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS GO TO THE BJA OFFICE, WHOSE CONTRIBUTION IS NOT ONLY VITAL TO THE PUBLICATION, BUT TO THE ASSOCIATION AS A WHOLE

Back in the second part of the eighties, a certain number of industries in Western Europe were developing ideas of protectionism and corresponding tariff barriers against the so called dumping of quality products from outside their territory. By using one-liners, such ideas spread easily. Even worse, often they did not meet with serious criticism.

So, rather than waiting, Baron Jean-Albert Moorkens invited a number of companies familiar with the import and distribution of Japanese products and other companies offering services to them to establish an action platform. The aim was clear: to find a base where, along with the mutual understanding and respect of differences in history and culture this body should build on the further development of trade in both directions and of investments on both sides. This was of course under the umbrella of free trade and competition.

Our family company had been founded back in 1949 by Hugo De Beukelaer, for whom it took 37 hours of flight when he first visited Japan... The setting up of the business relations with Elmo, Sankyo, Nikon, Olympus, Minolta, Tamron, Velbon, Pentax, Ricoh, Hitachi and Hoya and the serving of such companies during many decades was only

2007



An EU Business Seminar with keynote speaker, Mr Ruete, Director-General Directorate General for Energy & Transport of the European Commission.

Friendships flourish at a typical Belgian farm in Vieux-Genappe.

Teaching how to cook healthy Japanese food for the residents of the Third House of Le Huitième Jour Foundation, a BJA cooking event for charity.

possible through his proper understanding of the values of Japan and his helping the counterparts understand ours.

So it was quite natural for us to accept the proposal to participate in this challenging journey.

After a short nemawashi with major external stakeholders like the Ambassador of Japan in Belgium and the Nihonjinkai, the Belgium Japan Trade Federation was born in 1987. It evidently merged with the Belgium Japan Association and Chamber of Commerce, created in 1963 and very active in developing mutual cultural understanding. The so much regretted Mr Dominique le Hodey and Mr Philippe Verhoosel were instrumental to this merge.

It has been a real pleasure to see the Association grow extremely fast in setting up numerous very successful committees, study groups, task forces, seminars, cultural events, company visits, missions, luncheons, receptions and publications. As time passed, we could all witness the improvement of the trade and investment climate and, as a result, the growth of business on both sides. At the same time the ties between the two nations grew closer.

I had the luck I had been given very early in the life of the association the responsibility to coach the Editorial Committee, mainly responsible for the publication of this Trade Flows and Cultural News. The actual issue is the 98th.

The change of the role of the Association is reflected in the gradual change of this quarterly magazine. In the beginning it was a very efficient and sober informative publication on major economical and political news, as well as on daily life in both countries. It now tries to cover on top more and more aspects of history, geography and cultural life. It has in the meantime been complemented by the BJA website offering updated information.

A special word of thanks go to the members of the Editorial team: Mr Kris Sierens, Mr Matthias Lommers, Mrs Tiene Vertriest and Mr Dirk De haene, to their valuable predecessors and, not the least to the BJA Office, whose contribution is not only vital to the publication, but to the association as a whole.

By Mr Edward De Beukelaer, BJA Vice-President

Memories from the past



A visit to the Belgian Federal Parliament with networking opportunity with Mr De Croo, President Belgian Chamber of Representatives

One of the most exciting events at the BJA - Annual BJA Golf Cup and Golf Initiation.

I WISH BJA WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN PROMOTION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL TIES



It's already been 2.5 years since I left Belgium in June 2010. It is truly my honor to have this opportunity to write my reminiscences at this special occasion.

I lived in Brussels for 10 years from 2000 till 2010 and was a member of the BJA Board for 7 years. There are a lot of things which I still remember very well and I would like to introduce some of those.

Firstly it was a great opportunity for me to get acquainted with so many wonderful people, such as business people, influential people in various fields and some politicians through BJA functions. As far as the BJA Board meetings are concerned, initially I felt it was quite a burden to attend those meetings regularly because of my fairly hectic schedule, but I found it incredibly useful and was impressed by the passion of Belgian

members who always think how they can make Japanese companies conduct business easier in Belgium.

Since then I felt almost an obligation to be there and asked my staff members to attend some of the important committees as much as they could.

Secondly, the YES Program, we at Toyota Motor Europe had fully supported this program and we were very pleased to offer the reception at our Office for young Belgian business people. It was an interesting get-together to converse with those ambitious people and also a tremendous opportunity to welcome His Highness Prince Phillippe to our Office. His visit motivated not only the participants of this reception but also our employees so much.

2007

2008



Annual General Assembly of the BJA – handing over the chairmanship from Mr Luc Willame to Mr Thomas Leyens.

VIP Visit at Lutosa, with delicious tasting



Thirdly I was elected to chair the Investment Seminar in March 2006. This kind of event in public was very new to me so I remember I was a bit nervous, but thanks to a proper guidance given by BJA staff, I could successfully manage this. I hope, despite today's tough economic situation, investment between two countries will continue to rise in both ways.

Finally, I would like to send my special thanks to former and current BJA Chairmen, namely Luc Willame and Thomas Leysen for their leadership. I personally learned a lot from them as well as other Board members.

I wish BJA will continue to play a key role in promotion of cultural and social ties between the two nations for the coming years.

By Mr Tadashi Arashima, Former BJA Vice-President



Memories from the past



Master of Flowers, Mr Daniel Ost, enchanting members



OMODETO GOZAIMASU - CONGRATULATIONS WITH YOUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

Dear Belgium-Japan Association and members,

My first contact with Japan dates back to 1964, when as a young boy, I watched a documentary about the Olympic Games which took place in Tokyo that year: I was very intrigued by this strange and far away country.

Many years later, I was able to discover Japan through numerous business trips and I even lived there with my family between 1985 and 1989. Quickly I discovered the rules of “doing business in Japan” and how ancient traditions and modern techniques could perfectly work together in harmony. I used to compete in calculations with my chief trader: he on his abacus and I on my HP12C!

In 1986 I attended a sumo tournament in Tokyo – and so did His Imperial Highness Emperor Hirohito and we cheered for the same athlete!

Many years later, in 1998 and meanwhile back in Belgium, Mr François Boels, a colleague of mine, invited me to a meeting of the BJA. “You lived there a long time ago. It will do you good to remember Japan”, he said and so it did. I went on to serve the BJA first as a member, then Chairman of the Investment Committee and later I was “convinced” by Mr Jean-Albert Moorkens to chair the Business Committee (currently Executive Committee).

2008



Exclusive visit inside the Hydraulic elevator of Strépy-Thieu which can lift 20000t barges over 70 m heights

I have only good memories of my tenure at the BJA: the energy with which the committee members, both Japanese and Belgian, worked together but also the dedication of its permanent staff; we worked on several seminars, projects, participations to trade missions and numerous publications. I keep a special memory for the contribution of the BJA to the social security treaty between our two countries.

However, the BJA is more than a Chamber of Commerce: it is a unique institution which represents not only the business interests of our two countries but also the friendship and the solidarity between Japan and Belgium, throughout good and bad times.

Dear Belgium-Japan Association, I wish you a happy anniversary!

*By Mr Daniel Thielemans,
Honorary Vice-President of the BJA*



Memories from the past



Fujifilm Europe welcoming a delegation of BJA members

BJA – A CIRCLE OF GREAT PEOPLE

The 50th anniversary of the Belgium-Japan Association and Chamber of Commerce (BJA) marks another related anniversary for me. It is also the 20th anniversary of my involvement in the Association.

In January 1993, I came back from Japan where I had spent a year and a half working for a local law firm and studying Japanese. It was natural for me to become a member of the BJA and I gradually participated actively in its events and then its organisation.

2001). That was the birth of our Legal & Tax (L&T) Committee.

The launching of the L&T Committee was quite timely as we became very quickly involved in the development of the future social security treaty between Belgium and Japan, one of the most important successes in which the BJA actively participated. The support we provided towards the adoption of the treaty was multi-fold including numerous meetings with officials from both countries. This effort lasted over three years and culminated on



After a few years contributing to the BJA activities, I contacted Mrs Fabienne Fujii-l'Hoost, then Executive Director, and Mr Jean-Albert Moorkens, then Vice-President, to propose the launching of a new committee. At that time, the BJA had a limited number of committees compared with today. There was no committee dedicated to legal and tax issues.

With their kind support, I made the necessary contacts to identify the members of the future committee, almost all coming from in-house legal departments of large Japanese companies and from Belgian law firms. I designed a business plan and organised a first meeting on 24 April 2001 (after a “dry run” on 13 March

23 February 2005 with a ceremony of signature of the treaty by H. E. Mr Shohei Naito, then Ambassador of Japan to Belgium, and H.E. Mr Karel De Gucht, then Minister of Foreign Affairs. I was invited to attend together with all other BJA members involved.

The L&T Committee was also at the forefront of various other actions, including the review and update of the BJA's articles of association to make them compliant with Belgian law. It also led to numerous other initiatives, including publications and conferences in a large variety of legal fields to the satisfaction of the BJA members. I had the pleasure to chair the committee until February 2007 (when I became Vice-President of the BJA) and recall the friend-

2009



Briefing Session on REACH

Savoring Life of Belgium – Belgian desserts by Debailleul and Pierre Wynants

ship and active participation of many members who made it a successful instrument for the visibility and strengthening of the association. Today, Ronny De Prest has taken over its leadership and continues its fruitful action making me proud of what I still consider my “baby” in the BJA.

In parallel with the launching of the L&T Committee, I joined the Business Committee (now the Executive Committee) which was then led by Mr Daniel Thielemans. I was quickly thereafter of-

President of our Association and Chairman of its Executive Committee, functions that I am still very proud to exercise today.

During those years, I had the honour to meet and work with a number of real gentle(wo)men with a great sense of professionalism. There are so many that I cannot pay tribute to all in these few lines. However, among those who are no longer involved in the BJA, I very much remember Mrs Fujii-l’Hoost, Mr Moorkens, Mr Thielemans and Mr Willame, who was one of our former Presi-



ferred a position of Director at the BJA Board in November 2001.

On 30 September 2003, Mrs Fujii-l’Hoost tendered her resignation as Executive Director. That was a deep loss and, together with Mr Thielemans, we started looking for her replacement. We held a series of interviews and had the good fortune to meet with Ms Anja Kellens. In November 2003, we decided to appoint Anja who is still supporting the Association to our great satisfaction.

At the end of 2006, Mr Thielemans also tendered his resignation since he had been promoted by his company as CEO of its UK affiliate. I was then appointed as his successor, both as Vice-

dents and had the great idea to convince Mr Thomas Leysen to be his successor. I place them in alphabetical order as I do not want to make any priority. They all played a significant role in the growth of our Association. They also supported me and gave me the enthusiasm to help deepen the role of the BJA in the relationship between Japan and Belgium and its strong reputation towards the public authorities in our country.

I look forward to many more years continuing my efforts together with the BJA staff and members.

By Mr Tanguy Van Overstraeten, BJA Vice-President

Memories from the past



Savoring Life of Belgium – Belgian beers

Being in good company at the BJA



THE GOOD OLD DAYS DURING MY STAY IN BELGIUM

First of all, I would like to congratulate the BJA on its 50th Anniversary.

I am very glad to still realize what activities and events the BJA is carrying out because the Office of BJA is kind enough to send me BJA's quarterly magazines. Judging from the articles, the BJA is very active and well organized - even better and more than before. Furthermore, whenever I discover many old friends in the articles and photos published, they remind me of the good old days during my stay in Belgium.

I stayed in Belgium for 12 years in total by three times of assignment, actually from 1972 to 1975, from 1990 to 1994 and from 2002 to 2007.

Therefore, during the old times, I remember I even participated in the activities of BEJAT. During my last stay, I belonged to the BJA EU Committee and it was a pleasure to discuss and exchange the opinion with the EU officials and other members.

When I returned to Japan and at the same time retired from the ordinary business life, I decided that I wanted to contribute to the Belgian society in Japan. This thought came from my belief that whenever we live in another country,

2009

2010



Exclusive Pre-Opening Viewing: bringing beauty closer at the Castle of Beloeil with flowers and members

we will receive a lot of favors visibly and invisibly from that country and also its people. Therefore, I applied for a position of Advisor to the board of BLCCJ (Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Japan) and they willingly accepted me. My role is to introduce the members of BLCCJ to the Japa-

role of board member of JBS (The Japan-Belgium Society) to form a bridge between BLCCJ and JBS and to make two organizations closer and more collaborative.

Thus I am delighted and honored to still keep relations with



nese companies if requested and give advice from a Japanese viewpoint. For example, as for the jointly organized program with BJA, 'YES', I give the supporting students such guidance as how to behave in the Japanese business world and sometimes I play myself the role of business coach so as to make the stay of the Belgian participants in Japan as effective and valuable as possible. In addition, I was asked to assume the

Belgium for over forty years since 1972.

Last but not least, I wish BJA will realize further expansion and fruitful success.

By Mr Hidenori Tsutsui, Former BJA Board Member

Memories from the past



VIP Visit at BJA Company member, Pierre Bleue Belge

MAY THE BJA CONTINUE ITS GOOD WORK

May I first of all offer my heartfelt congratulations to the BJA on its fiftieth anniversary.

I had the good fortune to be posted in the Kingdom of Belgium as Ambassador and have spent a blissful three years plus until October 2012 before returning to Japan.

Ambassadors are expected to promote both political and eco-

get to know about the country and its people quickly. I will not bore you by listing the events that I have participated, but they are many, as photos in the periodical "Trade Flows and Cultural News" and the web page of the BJA will show.

My stay in Belgium was marked by a number of events. I recall the visit to Japan by the former Prime Minister Mr Yves Leterme and former Foreign Minister Mr Steven Vanackere, the visit of the



nomic interests of your country, and, in the case of a Japanese diplomat, he (or she) usually doesn't have much time to do so because of the relative shortness of his posting.

It is perfectly natural then, that as a newcomer to Belgium I started to participate in various events organized by the BJA to

economic mission led by HRH Prince Philippe and accompanied by HRH Princess Mathilde, participation by my Government in the exhibition "Passage to Asia" organized on the occasion of ASEM 8 (I remember this vividly because I had quite a hard time bringing first-rate ancient artifacts from Japan.) and the prolonged "absence" of a Government in Belgium, to name a few of them.

2010



Ending the year in beauty BJA Bonenkai 2010 at Cercle de Lorraine

Business seminar on new BJA publication "Belgium and Its Neighbours' Business Climates Compared" during the official opening of the Belgian Embassy in Japan

None, however, surpasses the Great East Japan Earthquake as an event that marked my stay in Belgium. Watching the horrific scenes unfold on TV, there was an outpour of sympathy and solidarity from the Belgian people that was really heart-warming. Providing, in a timely manner, accurate information as can reasonably be obtained about the rapidly evolving events taking place back home to the Japanese residents, Belgian Government, Press and the general public became the top

comparisons between countries.)

On the first anniversary of the catastrophe, the BJA organized a solemn Remembrance ceremony in the Japanese Garden at Hasselt. On that occasion, President Thomas Leysen and I planted a cherry tree to honor the victims of the tsunami and the earthquake. I look forward to returning there one day to check how big it has become.



priority for the Embassy.

The BJA lost no time in starting to raise funds for the benefit of the victims of the earthquake and collected a considerable sum of money which was sent to the Japanese Red Cross. (We are not disclosing the breakdown per country so as not to invite

May the BJA continue its good work so that the already excellent relationship between our two countries will flourish even more.

*By Mr Jun Yokota,
Former Ambassador of Japan to the Kingdom of Belgium*

2011

Memories from the past



Mr Kawashima, goal keeper at K. Lierse SK, surrounded by BJA members at a private meet & greet

High-level business luncheon with HE Mr Van Rompuy, President of the EU



BRIDGING THE PEOPLE AND CULTURE OF BELGIUM AND JAPAN

I had the honour to attend a first BJA event back in 1991, year of its creation. Having just started to work at Mitsubishi Electric Europe Brussels Liaison office, the BJA was a perfect introduction to Japan and the Japanese community in Brussels.

One of the committees with the most regular meetings was the Editorial Committee. This was a group of enthusiasts who, under the leadership of Mr E. De Beukelaer, succeeded in publishing every quarter the BJA Trade Flows magazine full of facts on Belgian-Japanese relations, relevant news from Belgium and Japan and above all the activities of the BJA. Next to its expert staff, its members, this BJA Trade Flows was and still is part of the representative image of the BJA. For many, the magazine is a first introduction of what the BJA is and its activities. It was a great pleasure for me to support this tool permitting numerous people to know the BJA.

Following the development of the European Union, the BJA transformed, back in 1996-1997, its Services Committee into an EU Committee, which had a close link to my function at Toyota Motor Europe. Whereas the first years of the Committee were dedicated to better understand Europe, to explain to our Japanese friends what Europe is about, the last couple of years were more focused on bridging the gap in relations and contacts between the BJA members

2011

Memories from the past



Discussing Data Protection with EU MEPs, experts and business leaders

Competition Law Seminars informing the members of the latest updates

Charity concert at the BoZar 'Together for Japan'

on one side and officials of the European institutions on the other.

Such allowed the BJA EU Committee to invite numerous EU officials and high-level representatives as guest speakers and participants to BJA events. The most notorious was the 2011 special luncheon with current President of the European Council, Mr H. Van Rompuy. Having the honour to introduce Mr Van Rompuy, it is without doubt one of the most remarkable BJA events I participated in. I'm sure the BJA will continue to organise such high-level events and bring the Belgian-Japanese community and the European representatives closer together in formal and less formal ways.

For me personally, two particular events proved the BJA is also considering the families of the members: the visit to the famous Delvaux factory and the presentation and exhibition of world famous floral designer Daniel Ost. Both events were particularly appreciated by our family, especially the latter since we had the honour to win the second prize the flower tombola (a tower of green and colours).

I am certain that the BJA will continue to play this bridging role between the people and culture of Belgium and Japan.

By Mr Didier Stevens, Chairman BJA EU Committee



2012



BJA members honored to be at AGC Moustier Float Glass Plant



Surrounded by the beauty of the Mingei Art Movement

MY EXPERIENCE WITH JAPAN AND JAPANESE BUSINESS



My real contact with the Japanese culture has been fairly recent: in spite of a long history of majority shareholding into Glaverbel, it was only during the last three years of my executive experience with the Japanese group, AGC Ltd that I have been regularly in contact with Japan. As Glaverbel CEO, I had indeed very few contacts with Japan : once a year, I went to Japan for an extremely short period, just one or two days, for a very formal budget presentation, and for the rest, Glaverbel management was fully responsible and autonomous for the development of its own strategy in Europe.

It was only in early 2000, when AGC Ltd took over 100% of Glaverbel and when I was appointed Executive Vice President of the Japanese Group that I started to learn about Japan, its culture, its business traditions, its style of decision making. I realized very deeply that both cultures, Japanese and Western, were really very complementary and how we could develop together a new model of an industrial group with a truly international vision. It was at the same time that Baron Moorkens proposed me to join the BJA and to become its new president.

I saw then the opportunity to meet here in Belgium with Japanese expatriates and Belgian executives highly motivated by their own experiences with Japan.

At the BJA, I received the opportunity to meet with a wonderful team, highly motivated to improve by all possible means the relationships between the two business communities, through the YES program, through the seminar which was initiated to improve our knowledge as to the cultural differences and similarities on the way of doing business in our two countries, as to the BJA contribution to the signature of the treaty on social security matters, etc...It created a unique sense of understanding and solidarity between the members. I know that under the leadership of Thomas Leysen, and with the support of the committees, the BJA will continue to be a unique contributor to a better understanding between our two countries. I wish to all of you a very good anniversary and a very long life.

By Mr Luc Willame, Honorary BJA President

2012



The official ceremony – handing over the BJA 2012 Investment Book to HRH Prince Philippe of Belgium

THANK YOU FROM THE BJA OFFICE

Celebrating 50 years of existence as an organization is only possible through the dedication of people to this organization that inspires them to give their expertise, their financial support and their precious time.

At the Office, I have a lot to be grateful for as every day I am blessed with being surrounded by the best of people on my side, with as a first Mrs Mika Matsumoto and Mr Joachim Durnez.

Every day we can stand on the shoulders of giants – our dearest Board Members, Committee members and relentless friends of the BJA -, helping to reach further to the stars in the sky and the hands that should be linked to move some mountains – find some missing budgets, create some breathtaking events, link companies and people to each other and tighten the bond and interaction of our communities.

We receive so much at the organization from all the members and partnering friends. Watching businesses as



they flourish and friendships deepen through time, is an inspiration to us.

The BJA has become what it is because who we all are and do. Because without you, there is nothing. But with you all, beautiful and worthwhile things be-

tween people are abundant, with sometimes even moments of magic.

Thank you for making all this possible all these years.

*By Mrs Anja Oto-Kellens,
BJA Executive Director*

Memories from the past



Combining knowledge and pleasure – Japanese Food Workshop at Kamo Restaurant

International Trade and Customs Seminar – sharing ways to improve business



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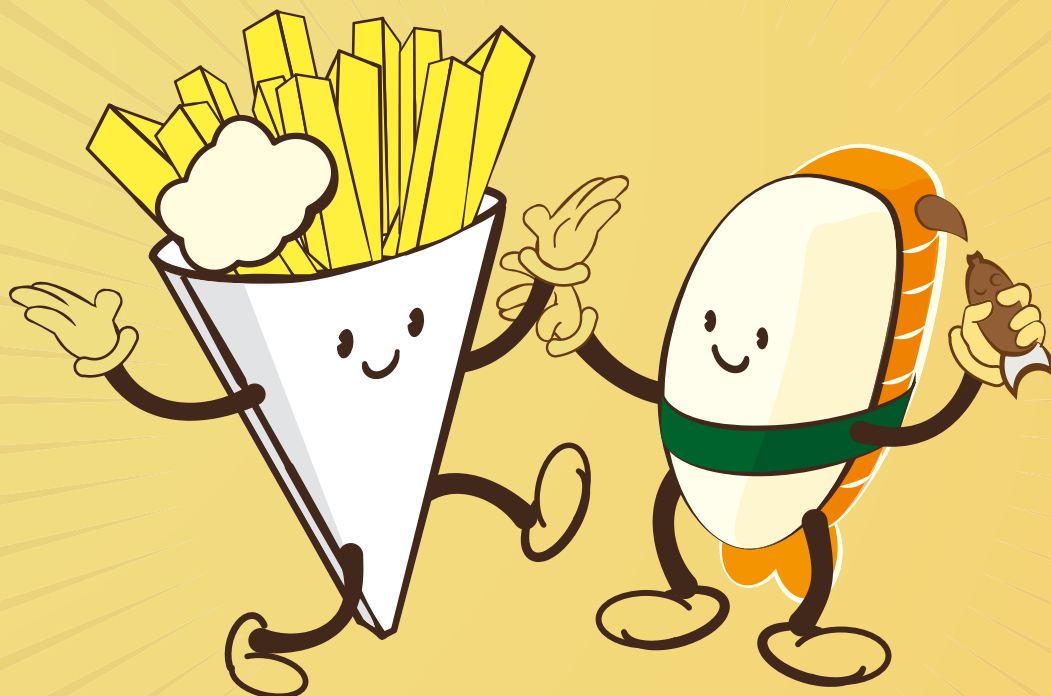
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EASYNET: SOLUTIONS THAT KEEP BRIDGESTONE ON TRACK

From its headquarters in Zaventem, Bridgestone Europe coordinates activities in over 20 European countries. Previously, the IT infrastructure consisted of a mix of local solutions, developed by national telecom partners. Bridgestone's objective was to have a common European infrastructure for telecoms, based on a broadband network associated with UMTS and 3G technologies in order to increase its availability.

Bridgestone therefore decided to find a pan-European partner capable of implementing a telecom infrastructure common to the entire organisation. By outsourcing the Managed Site project for the WAN, Bridgestone wanted to reduce the operational risk represented by managing a broadband network on a European scale, all while improving the performance and availability of services at the same cost or less

Flexibility and responsiveness

Easynet's proactivity and flexibility corresponds well to the spirit of Bridgestone's internal organisation. For Didier Lins, Telecommunications and IT Security Bridgestone Europe, this offers the guarantee of a true collaboration, based on a permanent dialogue between teams.

By working with a single partner, Bridgestone now has a management service adapted to its needs, guaranteeing precise reporting as well as good visibility on performance. This allows the people in charge of the infrastructure to use technology better, to increase bandwidth and to manage capacity better. Bridgestone also appreciates the advantages in terms of security, with back-up solutions and communication rules common to the entire organisation.

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