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TRADE FLOWS & CULTURAL NEWS

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EDITORIAL

By Aldwin Dekkers, Commissioner-general a.i. of BelExpo, and Justine Theunissen, Communication Manager of BelExpo



From 13 April to 13 October 2025, the next world exhibition will take place in Osaka. BelExpo will organise the participation of Belgium in this expo, guaranteeing many opportunities for individuals and businesses in this great project.

BelExpo, or the Belgian Commission General for International Exhibitions, promotes Belgium and its federated states economically, socially, and culturally on a daily basis. Specifically, BelExpo is responsible for Belgium's participation in international and world exhibitions, such as Expo 2020 Dubai, Floriade 2022 Almere, and so on. With Belgium being one of the founding members of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE <https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/>), BelExpo has acquired lots of experience and know-how when it comes to international exhibitions and promoting Belgium as a country with many assets.

In April 2025, the World Exhibition Expo 2025 Osaka will open its doors to millions of visitors, with 28 million expected visits. The target audience of the expos is very easily definable: everyone. The visitors range from locals to tourists to business visits. Each of them looking for something else: emotion, excitement, business ideas, networking, etc. And the participating countries will put in all their efforts to provide all of the visitors with just that.

The main theme of Expo 2025 Osaka is 'Designing Future Society for Our Lives', with Belgium focusing on the sub-theme 'Saving Lives' during the expo. Belgium will showcase its know-how, innovations, scientific achievements, and technical capabilities. Given that Belgium and its entities can provide a massive success story when it comes to innovative and public healthcare, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and so much more, 'Saving Lives' is the obvious choice.

While the original goal of World Expos was to showcase the current state of affairs in regard to industrial and scientific progress, in the current climate it has become so much more. Countries want to show off their brand, and their specialties, as well as impress and entertain visitors.

And what does Belgium have to offer? BelExpo aims to convey that Belgium is the ideal partner on various fronts. Besides that, Belgium possesses the ability to reach exceptional industrial and scientific goals. Life expectancy is high and Belgian projects gain international attention and success. Opportunities in abundance! Expo 2025 Osaka opens doors for Belgian and Japanese and other parties to establish connections and lay foundations for international trade and partnerships.

Belgium will participate in Expo 2025 Osaka after the successful edition of Expo 2020 Dubai and will once again construct a special Belgian pavilion and set up operations to welcome and impress millions of visitors. The public tender for the design, construction, maintenance, and dismantling of the Belgian pavilion was launched in November 2022. The tender includes the construction of the pavilion itself. The content of the exhibition, also known as the scenography, and the look & feel of the public spaces, including the restaurant, shop, and roof terrace, are part of a new public tender to be launched later this year.

BelExpo will also launch, probably in early 2024, a tender for the concession of all F&B activities. The pavilion will also contain a Belgian shop with typical Belgian products.

Any additional support could ensure that the Belgian pavilion is elevated from an average pavilion to an extraordinary and spectacular one.

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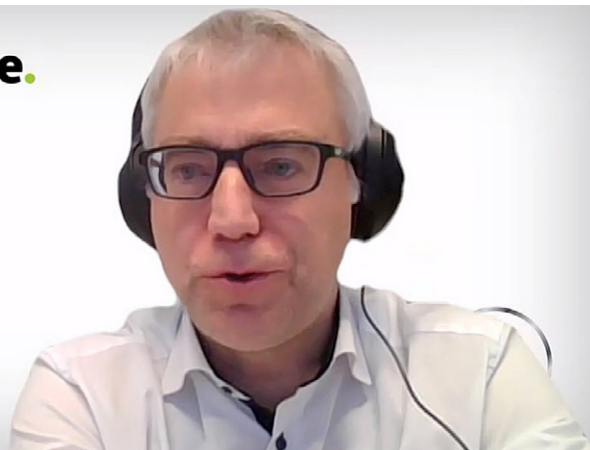
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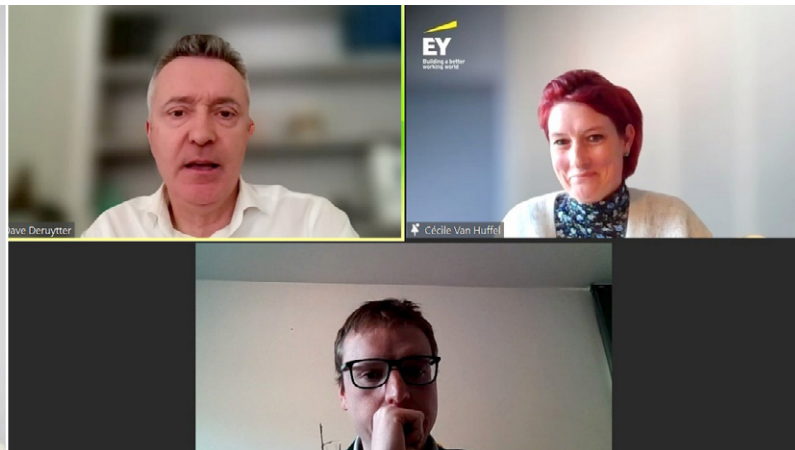
The hidden gem of the Belgian salary package: 2nd pillar pension scheme 知られていないベルギーの給与体系の秘訣 - 年金制度2本目の柱

Thursday, 9 February 2023 – Digital event

Deloitte.



Wim Eynatten, BJA Legal & Tax Committee Chair, Partner at Deloitte is giving the welcome words to the participants.



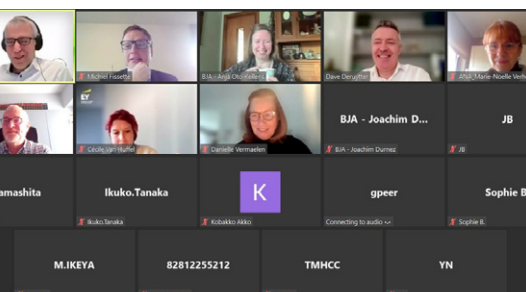
The presentations began with Dave Deruytter (left), Founder of Trust-Int Consulting, followed by Cécile Van Huffel, Employee Benefits Partner, EY Consulting, and Michiel Fissette (bottom), Senior Employee Benefits Consultant, Aon Belgium Health & Wealth Solutions

In today's ageing society, understanding the Belgian pension system and how it works is vital to secure a smooth retirement. For this reason, the BJA organized a webinar joined by 3 experts who kindly shared their insights on the Belgian salary package – 2nd pillar pension scheme.

The webinar was opened by Wim Eynatten, BJA Legal & Tax Committee Chair, Partner at Deloitte. The presentations began with Dave Deruytter, Founder of Trust-Int Consulting, who gave his view on the 'To work is therapy – Lifelong working' aspect, followed by Cécile Van Huffel, Employee Benefits Partner, EY Consulting, on "How does the Belgian 2nd pillar

pension scheme compare with the Japanese system; and with that of other major EU countries?", and Michiel Fissette, Senior Employee Benefits Consultant, Aon Belgium Health & Wealth Solutions, on "Attention to 'underfinancing' of your 2nd pillar pension scheme, what with the 'purchase power protection' for your employees?"

After these insightful presentations, the participants did not miss out the opportunity to ask many questions during the Q&A and appreciated this enriching webinar on how to benefit from the Belgian pension system to secure a healthy retirement.



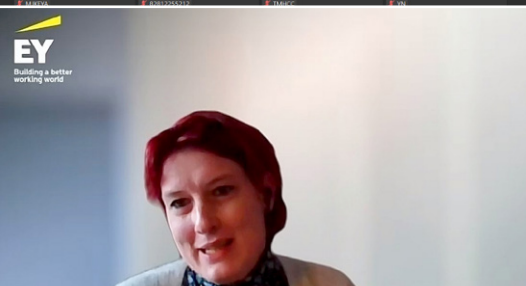
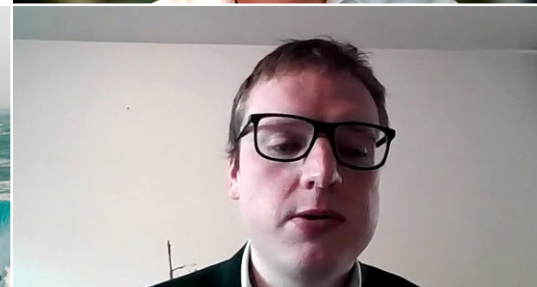
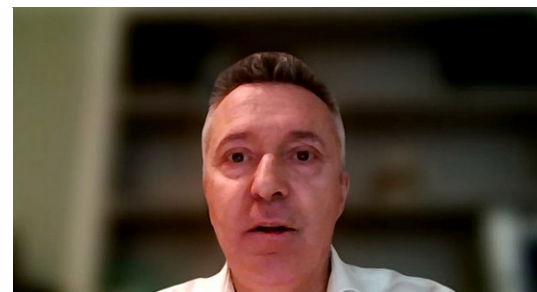
Lifelong working? To work is therapy!

WHY LIFELONG WORKING IS TYPICALLY GOOD FOR YOU, FOR BUSINESS AND FOR SOCIETY

BJA 9-2-2023

DAVE DERUYTTER, dave.deruytter@trust-int.be

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*Relocating
to or from Belgium
with children?*

*Have you considered
that you may be
entitled to receive
family benefits?*

KEY TAKEAWAYS REGARDING THE

BELGIAN FAMILY BENEFITS SCHEME

By Joke Braam, Director at Vialto Partners and BJA Editorial Committee Member,
and Darlien Van Vooren, Senior Associate at Vialto Partners

Nearly all children who 1) are residing in Belgium and 2) who have Belgian nationality or have a valid residence permit for Belgium, are entitled to Belgian family benefits. Thus, e.g. Japanese expats can also - in certain circumstances - claim these benefits.

Family benefits are a social security benefit instituted by the regional authorities in Belgium. They constitute a financial compensation to alleviate the expenses incurred when raising children from birth until they reach the age of 18 (or in some circumstances even beyond that age).

Although expats, e.g. Japanese expats, would qualify to obtain these benefits, in practice, we see that a lot of expats encounter difficulties. In this article, we will guide you through the red tape.

A regional competency

Since 1 January 2019, family benefits are a regional competency, meaning that the Flanders region, the Walloon region and the Brussels region all have a separate family benefit scheme.

The current regional schemes came in place of a federal scheme¹, which was identical for the whole of Belgium. It is important to know that now all three regions have a separate system, with separate authorities to contact and separate benefits to claim.

It is therefore crucial to know which region will be competent to treat your file.

Which region is competent to treat your file?

In the first instance, the region where your child is domiciled in Belgium, will be competent to treat the file.

A family who is relocating to Belgium (e.g. from Japan to Belgium) should thus consider that the place where the children are domiciled, will determine which family benefit entitlements will be opened.

However, in case a family is relocating away from Belgium (e.g. from Belgium to Japan), there can still be an entitlement to Belgian family benefits if certain conditions are met. In that case,

a cascade system is foreseen to determine the competent region:

1. The legal residence of the child (but not available in case the child is also relocating away from Belgium);
2. The child's factual place of residence (but not available in case the child is also relocating away from Belgium);
3. The location of the establishment unit or, if this info is not available, the place of business of the current employer or of the employee's last employer in Belgium;
4. The legal residence or last legal residence of the employee in Belgium;
5. The location of the social insurance fund with which the employee is affiliated as a self-employed person;
6. The location of the office of the last known child benefit institution that granted the family benefits.

Needless to say, it can become a complex exercise to determine the competent region in case of a relocation away from Belgium.

[1] In this article, we will not elaborate on the old system and benefits. Please note however that transitional measures were installed and that currently the 'old' system exists for children who were born prior to 1 January 2020, next to the 'new' system.

Benefits (amounts for March 2023)

Flanders region	Brussels region	Walloon region
EUR 173,20 per child regardless of the age of the child	For families consisting of one single child: EUR 175,76 regardless of the age of the child	EUR 181,61 per child for children of 0 until 17 years old
	For families consisting of multiple children, per child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › EUR 175,76 for children of 0 until 11 years old; › EUR 187,47 for children of 12 until 24 years old; › EUR 199,19 for children of 18 until 24 years old following a higher education. 	EUR 193,33 per child for children of 18 until 24 years old

Which benefits can you claim?

Each region in Belgium foresees a different set of benefits. In general, three categories can be identified:

- › The one off-premium, which is allocated at birth;
- › A recurring, monthly amount that is allocated per child;
- › A recurring annual amount that is allocated per child during the summer time.

As mentioned before, the benefits will differ per region. Here below, you can find an overview of the base monthly recurring amount in order to demonstrate the (slight) regional differences (amounts for March 2023).

When do you qualify to claim these benefits?

All children who 1) reside in Belgium and 2) who have Belgian nationality or have a legal right to reside in Belgium, open an entitlement to Belgian family benefits. In the Flanders region, there is also a de facto requirement to raise the child in the Flanders area in order to claim the benefits, though there are quite some expectations to this rule.

Though this is a Belgian (regional) social security benefit, it is not necessary for the parents of the child to contribute to the Belgian social security scheme to receive these benefits.

For example: an expat is assigned from Japan to Belgium for a period of 2 years while remaining covered by Japanese social security. The spouse and two children will be accompanying the expat on this assignment and will duly

register with the Belgian commune. For the two children, there will be an entitlement to Belgian family benefits purely derived from the residency in Belgium during the assignment.

How do you claim these benefits?

The family benefits will not be allocated automatically. Instead, the employee should contact a regional family benefits fund of his or her choice and should file an application to receive the benefits. Here below, we have listed the different funds that are available per region:

Flanders region	Brussels region	Walloon region
FONS	Famiris	Famiwal
Infino Vlaanderen	Infino Bruxelles	Camille
KidsLife Vlaanderen	KidsLife Bruxelles	Infino Wallonie
MyFamily	Parentia Bruxelles	KidsLife Wallonie
Parentia Vlaanderen	Brussels Family	Parentia Wallonie

Relocation to Belgium

In international employment situations, amongst other documents, the funds will likely request an attestation of the other country involved confirming that there are no family benefits entitlements abroad. They ask for this confirmation in order to guarantee that they will not be paying out a double benefit. However, in practice this can prove to be a pitfall, since a lot of foreign countries, including Japan, are not familiar with the concept of family benefits. It is thus difficult to obtain the correct documentation. In case this cannot be obtained, you can try to submit a declaration of honor confirming that you do

not receive any such benefits abroad. However, it is not guaranteed that the Belgian fund will accept this.

Relocation away from Belgium

Also, in case the employee is relocating away from Belgium, the entitlement to Belgian family benefits can continue to exist provided certain conditions are met.

The fund that is treating the file can provide a list of required documents when explaining the situation in detail. In any

case, the assignment letter or contract confirming the work abroad is required as well as the social security documents that have been obtained (such as an A1 form or Certificate of Coverage confirming which social security scheme will apply during the assignment).

Conclusion

The Belgian regional family benefits system is quite complex. Obtaining the required documents can be a pitfall. However, provided the necessary documentation can be submitted, also expats who have children accompany them to Belgium, can benefit from the family benefits entitlements.

EUROPALIA 1989: JAPAN IN BELGIUM, PART 2*

By W. F. Vande Walle, Professor Emeritus KU Leuven, and BJA Board Member

A Pageant of Art Exhibitions

The Europalia programme included no less than 37 exhibitions. Most of them were accompanied and explained by excellent catalogues. The famous Dutch writer Cees Nooteboom visited seven of them, buying a catalogue at each venue. When he came home, he put his paper burden on a scale, it registered nine kilogrammes. Anyone who would manage to plough his way through all the catalogues could indeed be called an erudite Japanologist, he mused in a review article he devoted to Europalia. Reading the numerous newspaper articles, reviews, introductions and even essays in the catalogues themselves, there are a few dominant discourses that stand out. One certainly is that, despite the dichotomy between modern and pre-modern Japan, few if any question the deeper fundamental continuity of Japanese culture through time. Many authors purport to see beyond stereotypes, but unintentionally often fall into stereotypes themselves, or are only poised to shed long-

held pre-conceptions after exploring Europalia. Particularly in contemporary arts, both Western observers and pundits, as well as most Japanese artists, tend to stress that the Japanese contemporary art they are showing or producing is international, sometimes at the risk of undermining the whole point of an exhibition that is after all devoted to the work of Japanese artists. In an attempt to explain the unknown by reference to the known, many journalists have recourse to rather pedestrian explanations and descriptions that do not give full justice to the Japanese art they are trying to lure their audience into appreciating. This sometimes makes for rather unsophisticated analyses, with the pretended intention of making Japanese art more accessible. From hindsight, Europalia Japan was a gigantic learning process. How steep the learning curve was during the three months of the festival is hard to estimate, but it is fair to assume that it had a lasting effect. In this contribution, I want to focus on the exhibitions. It is understandably not possible to offer even a scant introduction to all exhibitions. I therefore beg the reader to bear with my very limited and idiosyncratic sampling.

The signature exhibition The Human Figure in Japanese Art at the Palace of Fine Arts in Brussels, briefly introduced in the previous issue, could be considered as a hub from which to fan out to a range of narrower thematic exhibitions on one or another genre of the traditional arts, spread over a number of venues across Brussels and other cities in Belgium and even the Netherlands. Indeed, although the central exhibition gave an overview of major periods, trends, and genres in historical perspective, it was in the many other exhibitions that the visitor could deepen his understanding of particular genres or topics that were at once more limited and more coherently placed in an articulated context. A few hundred metres from the Palace of Fine Arts, the Bank

BBL hosted the exhibition Buddhism in Japan: Religious Art from the Hyogo-Prefecture (7th-19th Century), which included no less than sixteen important cultural assets. Apart from a few pieces dating from the Edo era (1600-1868), all other exhibits dated from the seventh to the sixteenth century, and virtually none had ever left Japan before. They were graciously loaned to Europalia by temples and other religious centres, as well as the Hyogo Prefectural Museum. This geographical limitation seemed puzzling to many outsiders. The idea had been suggested by Dr Hubert Durt (1936-2018), a well-known Belgian Buddhologist, who resided in Japan and was director of the Institut du Hōbōgirin, a research institute depending on the École française d'Extrême Orient. The aim was to bring into the limelight a cultural heritage that tended to fall outside the purview of most exhibitions, where the arts of Nara and Kyoto usually take centre stage. Furthermore, another reason, although perhaps not convincing nor weighty, was the fact that Dr Durt lived in the Hyōgo prefecture. Other considerations that played into convincing the prefecture to take on the challenge was the fact that two cities within its boundaries were and still are twinned with Belgian cities: Itami (with Hasselt) and Himeji (with Charleroi). Add to this the fact that the congregation of CICM, better known as the congregation of Scheut, had their Japanese headquarters in Himeji, and you have enough reasons to postulate a special bond between the Hyogo prefecture and Belgium and win over the prefecture to the noble cause.

Belgian and European Collections

A masterstroke of Laurent Busine, director of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi, was the exhibition Japanese Prints. He is primarily known as one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Belgium, and as the man behind the opening of MAC's (Musée des Arts Contempo-



* to discover the first part of this article, check the [March 2023](#) edition of the Trade Flows and Cultural News.

rains) on the old mining site of Le Grand Hornu, but in this case he ventured with success outside his customary purview. Early on in the preparatory stages of the Europalia Japan festival, he proposed to take a major collection of Japanese art from the metropolitan area out into the province. The exhibition on Japanese Prints featured a selection of thousand prints from the collections of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, presenting the selection in four instalments of 250 prints. As is well-known, the prints collection of the Royal Museums of Art and History, in total around 7,500 prints, ranks as, if not one of the biggest, one of the finest of its kind in the world. The exhibition included rare works by Suzuki Harunobu, Kitagawa Utamaro, Tōshūsai Sharaku, Katsushika Hokusai, and Utagawa Kuniyoshi, and it drew, not surprisingly, a huge crowd.

Ukiyo-e prints obviously are one of the best known and most popular genres of Japanese art. Another stock image of traditional Japan is the warrior and its armour. The fine craftsmanship of the weaponsmith was celebrated in an exhibition where, once again, the organisers presented pieces from our own Belgian heritage to the public. Daimyo Martial Nobility, in the Musée de l'Art Wallon, Liège, featured lesser-known aspects of the craft of the weaponsmith: helmets of spectacular shape and suits of armour.

Another major exhibition, where the exhibits were not borrowed from Japan, but came from European collections, mostly Portuguese this time, was devoted to the history of the Portuguese presence in early modern Japan. Namban Art: The Portuguese in Japan at the Royal Museums of Art and History, regaled the public with a fine selection of Namban treasures, lent by many Portuguese institutions and private collectors, including the famous gold and silver Biombo's (decorative folding screens). The Namban style is very distinctive and highly decorative. It is a colourful world that is depicted in the folding screens: Portuguese ships docked in the harbour, Je-

suits in long black robes in churches, as well as officers and soldiers, are depicted on huge decorative screens in the traditional Yamato-e style. The pictures on the folding screens and other supports and formats actually represent the Japanese view of foreigners. It is a reflection of how exotic Westerners were in the eyes of the Japanese. Hence, the Japanese painters mainly depicted those things that were novel to them. The Portugal the Japanese saw on the ships was not European, continental Portugal, but maritime, Asian Portugal. The Portuguese arrived in Japan from Goa, the headquarters of Portuguese Asia. To a large extent, it was an Asian kind of Portugal that hit the eyes of the Japanese. The Catholic church featured on the screens was clearly built of brick or material akin to brick, it must have been a building that was inspired by a model in Goa or at least a type of building that was common in Goa.

In spite of the promising start, the Portuguese were gradually distrusted by the Japanese, prosecuted, and ultimately banned. In their place arrived the Dutch, who had only recently wrested themselves free from the dominance of the Spanish crown. As anything that smacked of Christianity was banned, the testimonies of the Dutch exchange with the Japanese are less exuberant and decorative, and of a more practical and scientific nature, as was demonstrated by the exhibition Oranda (1600 - 1868): the Low Countries in Japan, hosted at the headquarters of the Banque Générale/Generale Bank in Brussels. Once again, the exhibits displayed here were not borrowed from Japan, but from another European collection, in this case the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden. Here too, the public was confronted with Japanese images of the Dutch. For many a Belgian visitor, it was a time-capsule, reminding him/her of the material culture that once existed in the Low Countries.

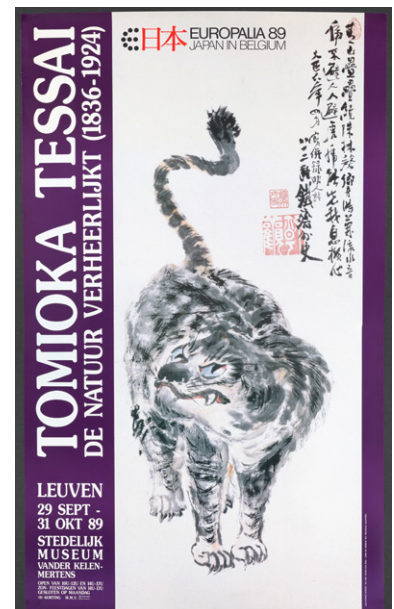
The Ainus: Hunters and Fishermen, hosted at the Bank Gemeentekrediet/Crédit Communal, evoked the way of life, the environment, economy, settlements and re-

ligion of the Ainus. The objects, clothes, utensils, hunting gear, weapons, bags, amulets, jewels, and ornaments, were on loan from European collections in Cologne, Hamburg, Bremen and Vienna. This ethnographical exhibition was well documented and illustrated the evolution in the European perception of this intriguing people and their culture, now a minority on the verge of extinction.

Yet another European collection was presented in Japanese Treasures from the Baur Collection, Geneva, at the KB-Galerij of the KBC Bank in Brussels. It displayed a selection of Japanese objects from the Edo (1600-1868) and Meiji (1868-1912) eras, including samurai swords and accessories, ceramics, lacquer objects, netsuke and accessories relating to tea and tobacco. Alfred Baur (1865-1951), a merchant from Geneva, settled in Ceylon and started collecting Far-Eastern art around 1900. A Japanese expert and merchant helped him to choose 'few but rare pieces rather than large numbers of common objects.'

Centuries Old Imperial Court Dresses

The abovementioned Cees Nooteboom



HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LAST 60 YEARS OF BELGIUM-JAPAN RELATIONS

waxed lyrical about the exhibition entitled Takakura: Japanese Imperial Court Dress, featuring a selection of designs, samples, ceremonial robes, accessories, decorated belts, fans, hats, and dolls transmitted in the Takakura family through the generations. Some manuscripts containing secret traditions of their trade (art) were also included among the exhibits. Highlights included robes and accessories that once belonged to the Meiji Empress. The Takakura collection had never before been shown abroad.

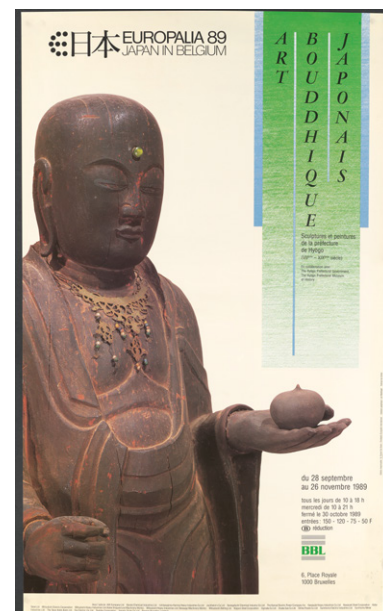
The Takakura family is descended from a member of the powerful Fujiwara clan and its origins date back to the beginning of the Heian period (9th century). During the Meiji era, the family was granted the title of Viscount. This illustrious family enjoyed the prestige normally reserved for the court nobility. From the end of the Kamakura period, it shared, with the Yamashina family, the monopoly of designing and tailoring the imperial family's court dresses, as well as the garments worn by the military aristocracy at

ceremonial occasions. A monopoly held for some 700 years. The secrets of how to make the costumes and of how to wear them as prescribed by etiquette (known as emondō), were passed on from generation to generation. The originality of this art consisted in the attention paid to dress elegance. The Takakura family still preserves many of the state robes and more than ten thousand accessories and objects. The Takakura Centre for Cultural Studies conducts research on court dresses and ensures the preservation of its collection. Today, the style of both abovementioned schools is still employed for very special occasions in the imperial service. The Yamashina style is used in the garments of the Emperor and the Crown Prince, while the garments of other members of the Imperial Family and staff are in the Takakura style. The Takakura style is considered relatively simple and sober but practical, while the Yamashina style is ornate but difficult to wear, easily losing its proper shape. In our time the Imperial Household Agency, the Kasumi kaikan and the Emondō Study Group are committed to preserving and passing on this precious both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This exhibition was a fine illustration of how Europalia worked: finding a partner

with affinity to the subject of the exhibition. Since it was basically about court dress, the choice of Museum Bellevue, then a museum devoted to the Belgian dynasty (now Belvue, a museum about Belgium and its history), was an obvious one. The uniqueness of the collection on display and the fact that it was the first time it was shown outside Japan only increased its prestige. The Bekaert Group was keen to take on the sponsorship of the event. The many years of successful industrial presence of Bekaert in Japan in cooperation with its partner tyre manufacturer Bridgestone had motivated the company to volunteer as one of the main sponsors of Europalia Japan. It supported concerts by the Gagaku ensemble of the Japanese Imperial Court given in Brussels and Seraing. It saw the remarkable exhibition by Takakura, showing the robes of the Imperial Court, as a perfect complement to the Gagaku concerts, and went for exclusive sponsorship. Incidentally, the Group's chairman at the time was J. C. Velge, President of the BJA.

For the exhibition Tomioka Tessai, held at Museum Vanderkelen (now called Museum M) in Leuven, the lenders had selected around eighty paintings by the famous painter Tomioka Tessai (1836-1924), who worked in the traditional manner, but because of his idiosyncratic style is hard to fit into any category. He took the best elements from the traditional Chinese art of the Ming and Qing dynasties and the Japanese Yamato-e and combined them into a forceful and original statement. In the second half of the twentieth century his art would go on to exert a formative influence on modern Chinese art. Tessai was a man who enjoyed a long life and remained creatively productive into old age, indeed, arguably produced his best works at an advanced age. The exhibited paintings were lent by the Tessai Museum, which is located within the precincts of the temple Kiyoshi Kōjin Seichōji in the city of Takarazuka. The museum is built against the flank of a mountain built within the boundaries of the temple grounds. It is surrounded by green hills far from the traffic of the city, the kind





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nology. Its credo was back to nature, but from a philosophical angle, rejecting the distinction between subject and object as an alien, western manner of thinking. The other outdoor section featured work by four very different young sculptors.

Japan '89 at the Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, curated by Jan Hoet, Norbert De Dauw and Yusuke Nakahara, presented to the public the works of thirteen artists, selected for eminently embodying the particular tension between tradition and creativity that prevailed in the few years before 1989. The motto inscribed on the introduction page of the catalogue is vintage Jan Hoet: "No exotism. Computerless. Without sunflowers of Van Gogh. And neither did we use a bowmachine [i.e., a bowing machine, referring to the Japanese practice of continually bowing by way of courtesy]. (No Nihonga). Let us drop the negations. We have been groping for art." These words, a rather quizzical mixture of stereotypes, were allegedly inspired by a journey Hoet made in Japan two years before. The result of this quest for art was, as always

with contemporary art, a mixture of startling and less startling paintings and installations.

New Media New Images showed Japanese artwork using the then new technologies as its medium. In the Japan of those days, perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, artists were making abundant use of the latest developments in the new technologies. Using video and computers, laser, and holography, they created a new visual language and attempted to find answers to the questions posed by contemporary art. The MUHKA (Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp) hosted ten installations reflecting the Japanese trend for the new electronic media.

Alongside the main exhibitions devoted to painting and sculpture, a number of events explored other genres. Architecture and city planning were featured in the dual exhibition Tokyo Plan – Transfiguration. Japan Design, organised at Kortrijk, offered a picture of life in Japan at the end of the Eighties with new developments in the design of living rooms, offices, food, clothes and furniture, toys, means of transport, etc. Kortrijk is the venue of the biennial interior design fair Interieur. The Japanese commissioner

was Kenji Ekuan. Hailed as the pioneer of industrial design in Japan, he had already acted as director of various industrial design committees and design-oriented institutes. His inspiring message was: each object has a unique story to tell. Try to listen attentively to the words each of those objects whispers. If you do, you will undoubtedly feel the radiance of a new era, which is made up of elements of both Eastern and Western culture.

In Ceramics from the Showa Era, hosted at the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Mons, contemporary ceramics were presented in a comprehensive approach. It was the first time that an exhibition of this kind was organized even in Japan. About one hundred pieces of very high quality were selected for the display. The exhibition was sponsored by the Japanese company NGK Insulators, Ltd. Initially invited by 'Europalia 89 Japan' to sponsor an exhibition in the field of modern art, the company had decided to go its own way, and sponsor an event that had a stronger affinity with the line of their own business and tradition. As most of the products of NGK Insulators, Ltd. are made of ceramics, and ceramics have a prominent place in traditional Japanese arts and crafts, it offered to organise an independent exhibition on modern ceramics in Mons. Originally a technique learned in China, Japan has been producing glazed porcelain for many centuries, refining the art to unequalled levels of sophistication. During the long period of decentralised power (13th to 19th centuries), a multitude of styles with strong local characteristics emerged throughout the Japanese archipelago. The Showa era can rightly be called the heir to the full richness of this long tradition, vibrant with a diversity of clays and glazing techniques.

The choice of Mons for the exhibition was a deliberate one. It was in nearby Baudour that NGK Insulators Ltd. started its production of insulation materials in Europe in 1977, subsequently setting up a new factory in 1985. Through the exhibition the Nagoya-based company hoped to impart some of the culture that had



fostered its own know-how and products.

Fabrics of light featured the dazzling fabrics of Itchiku Kubota (b. 1917), who has revived the old Tsujigahana technique to dye kimonos. The themes of Kubota's kimonos are taken from nature and the changing seasons. Forty-five of them were shown in the exhibition, held at the Botanique in Brussels and the Museum voor Volkenkunde in Rotterdam: a few took him over a year to create. As already pointed out, some events were indeed organized outside Belgium, thus enhancing the European character of the festival.

Modern yet Traditional

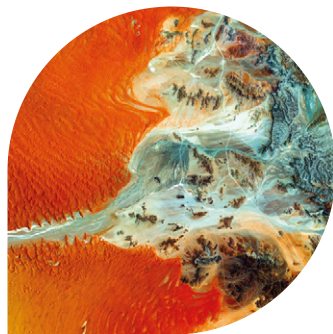
Modern Japanese painting in the traditional form was highlighted in Nihonga Contemporary Painting in Traditional

Style, shown in Bruges' Provincial Court Building, presented work of forty contemporary masters in a comprehensive perspective, probably the first time that such an event was organised outside Japan. Ironically, this most Japanese of Japanese arts, met with some hesitation among prospective Belgian organisers. Contrary to our view of art, Nihonga does not challenge, provoke, question, protest, criticize, or experiment, in other words takes a rather placid attitude vis-à-vis the world, society and its own tradition. It draws on traditional themes, materials, and techniques. That was hard to sell to the self-conscious world of curators, arts pundits, and art critics in Belgium, who tended to put them down as kitschy. In the end the Nihonga were welcomed by Bruges, to some extent on

the pretext that they blended well with Bruges' image as a historic city. In point of fact, it was an exhibition that by the same token challenged Western attitudes, biases, and pre-conceived ideas on art, and that could teach us more than anything else about true cultural difference, to really step outside the framework of our own cultural premises and indeed prejudices. Perhaps this art does not please Western pundits, but, as the art critic Frans Boenders wrote: is the art experience about conforming to the unitary aesthetics and taste guidelines of a few self-appointed "experts" or about broadening and deepening an international multiplicity of tastes and styles?

(In the next issue: the performing arts and other sections of the programme)

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» keep reading from p.2

In return for the support, partners can offer, they can count on several benefits such as visibility, exclusive invitations, private use of certain areas of the pavilion, and so on. More information on the concrete benefits is available on our website at <https://belexpo.be/en/news/opportunities-partners>.

The Belgian pavilion will also offer other opportunities for individuals or businesses to get involved: in a dynamic local team; with products for the restaurant or the shop; with events in a multifunctional space; with performances on the public stage of the pavilion and Belgium will actively take part in many events organized throughout the entire Expo.

If you are interested in supporting BelExpo, want to get involved, or just have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact BelExpo by email at expo2025osaka@economie.fgov.be!

The end result will always be a team effort between BelExpo, its partners, the Belgian regions and federated states, the Expo 2025 Osaka organisation, and many others. L'union fait la force – eendracht maakt macht!

*By Aldwin Dekkers, Commissioner-general a.i. of BelExpo,
and Justine Theunissen, Communication Manager of BelExpo*

DIMITRI PIOT

AN ARTIST AT THE CROSSROAD OF BELGIUM AND JAPAN

Interview by Tanguy Van Overstraeten,
Partner at Linklaters LLP, BJA Vice-President and BJA Executive Committee Chair

All BJA members who participated to our New Year Reception at the Comics Art Museum in Brussels on 16 January 2023 had the opportunity to meet our guest that day, Dimitri Piot. We had the pleasure to listen to his speech and admire his work and bring back home one of his books with his signature and nice drawing made for the occasion.

After this introduction, I wanted to share more about Dimitri and enable you to further discover his work. I therefore had the pleasure to interview him. Here is the summary of our conversation.



Dimitri Piot,
Picture by Stephanie Lecocq

Tanguy: can you first tell us who you are?

Dimitri: first, I am a comic book artist. I started drawing at a very young age and never stopped. Over the years, I discovered that drawing was a vehicle for many types of communication. For instance, I worked in scenography. This included using hundreds of drones to form drawings in the sky! My interest goes for everything related to plastic arts. I have no boundaries. I go for what projects I find interesting, often in a collaborative manner. For example, I worked at the Museum of Fashion Design in Milan back in 2011. I was asked to work on drawings as part of an exhibition dedicated to fashion, luxury and design. Other comic book artists also explore other forms of art, like Philippe Geluck with the sculptures of his famous cat being exhibited in the park of Brussels.

Tanguy: you studied at Saint Luc, which is famous for having formed a number of successful comic book artists. What initially brought you to Saint Luc?

Dimitri: I went to Saint Luc because it was really an obligatory crossroad for learning about comics. I am a child of the nineties, a time without Internet. I used to hang out in bookshops, looking at magazines like Metal Hurlant. It is through my readings that I discovered Claude Renard, one of the famous professors of Saint Luc.

Tanguy: he led the people who published the 9th Dream, right?

Dimitri: indeed, many comic book artists in the Belgian landscape studied at that school, like Andreas, Schuiten, Hislaire or Swolfs. As a young artist, aspiring comics, going there was like a phantasm. I wanted to go where some of the great ones have laid their own foundations.

Tanguy: what is your best memory of those years at Saint Luc?

Dimitri: we were all working together. It was a kind of artistic, visual jam, like for musicians. We were mixing knowledge. It was a confrontation of multiples. In Saint Luc, you learn more to tell stories. In the meantime, I had also studied art in Namur and followed evening classes, including in Chinese painting.

Tanguy: at some point in your career, you worked with Jacques Martin, the creator of Alix and many other characters, one of the pillars of the classic comics art.

Dimitri: indeed. I was actually working at Fred Burton studio, another cartoonist. His studio was located Chaussée de Wavre



'Après les nuits',
Commissions for
the Ukiyo-E exhibition
at Royal Museums
of Art and History



Magnitude 9, Work in homage to the victims of the 11 March 2011 earthquake



Mont des arts, Commission for the 150th Anniversary of Belgium-Japan Diplomatic relations

in Brussels. I was drawing there in addition to my learning at Saint Luc. One day, someone from the publisher Casterman came by and told Fred that Jacques Martin was looking for collaborators. Fred warned me I would have a hard time because it was not my world but that I would learn a lot. I accepted and arrived a bit scared at Martin's studio.

Tanguy: what did you do when you worked with Jacques Martin?

Dimitri: I worked on a book related to the travels of one of Martin's main characters, Guy Lefranc. I also worked on Lois, which was a character at the time of Louis XIV.

I chose that one because it was brand new. That gave me more freedom than working for Alix for whom there was a real artistic vocabulary already well established. During the two years I worked with him, it went very well. He was very professional with loads of experience. But this was not my artistic line. So I moved away from his style. Nowadays, I like more what is dreamlike. For example, I am a real fan of Folon work. He is a real visual poet. In Martin's work, the narration is the driver. There is no room for fantasy.

Tanguy: but this must have been a school of rigour.

Dimitri: absolutely. It depends on what you want to do with it. When you learn from a master, you may have to spend the rest of your life forgetting what you have learned. At some point, you have to "kill the master" to be able to free yourself and go towards your own creation.

Tanguy: how have you gradually come to Japan related work?

Dimitri: Japan has always been in my life because when I was a kid, my best friend was Japanese. I was living not far from the Japanese school in Brussels. It was built the year I was born. There were quite a few Japanese people living in the neighborhood. I was going to my friend's home, for birthday parties and the like. It was a real cultural shock that impressed me from the start. Later, I named after my friend one of the two main characters of my comics book Kuryo d'Edo.

Tanguy: so that's how Japan came about. And how did your interest develop?

Dimitri: one thing leading to another, there were also manga. What impressed me about them was the way they treated the stories. At the beginning, Europeans did not welcome manga because they only saw violence, whereas there is much more in Japanese narration. I was really marked by that. There was also Miyazaki's animation movies. They were so different from Disney production. Much more mature.

Tanguy: so Japan came first as a human encounter and then the discovery of a new culture?

Dimitri: exactly. I took over everything with a lot of curiosity. I did not place a border between manga and European comics. For me, it was just a different way of telling stories. But it is true that I was more impacted by Japanese works. Why? Because they break down some boundaries. They are less manichean than in European creations. After that first encounter with manga, I discovered the Japanese prints. I come from a classical and academic background and the prints helped me to 'kill the master'. I took everything I had learned, turned it around and started from scratch.

Tanguy: why? You wanted a less academic way of drawing, less "art school"?

Dimitri: indeed. The prints are a more popular art. Today, people admire them but they were not done for museums.

Tanguy: when I was living in Japan in the nineties, I remember people buying manga books, reading them on the train on their way to the office and then throwing them away when arriving to their destination. It is quite different from Europe where we collect and cherish comics.

Dimitri: yes, in Europe, it seems unthinkable to buy any book, read it and throw it away. But art can be more popular, I think it is important to keep a certain humility.

Tanguy: and then you released your book "Koryu d'Edo"?

Dimitri: yes, I had left Martin's studio and with a contract from



the publisher Glénat, I started to work on that book. I already knew Japan. I had met Marc Michetz, the author of the comics "Kogaratsu" as we were both living in Ixelles at that time. He was focusing on ancient Japan while Koryu d'Edo combines both modern and ancient Japan. The book focuses on an ancient artist in Japan. We know almost nothing about him. He worked 10 months of his life and then disappeared. Maybe he was a monk or a Kabuki actor? Nobody knows.

Tanguy: did you continue to further explore Japan and the prints in particular?

Dimitri: yes, I did a tribute to the victims of the big earthquake in Japan in 2011. There was an international call for illustrators and cartoonists. My tribute was included in a book called "Magnitude 9" and my drawing was exhibited at the Kyoto Manga Museum and in a Buddhist temple in the Kanagawa prefecture. Later, I published my book "Salaryman".

Tanguy: and now, what are your plans?

Dimitri: I am now working on a tribute to a Japanese artist who was working in the mines, Sakubei Yamamoto. He was then a night watchman and started to draw pictures to explain the reality of the mines. He died in the 1980s. In 2011, his work was recognized as cultural heritage by UNESCO. One day, I saw his drawings and I started researching about this author. There was nothing published in Europe. The information was

exclusively in Japan. I am now making drawings that explore the same subject, using his style but representing the work in European mines, primarily in Belgium. I am at the beginning of the project. There is a lot to be done to contact museums and other stakeholders in Japan and in Belgium.

Tanguy: and your intention is to publish a book or to exhibit?

Dimitri: both. Making an exhibition first and eventually also publishing a book. That exhibition could then travel, starting in a mining place, in Japan or Belgium, for example in Le Bois du Cazier museum which already follows my work. This museum has a lot of contacts with other mine museums in Europe, which is interesting for me. I also receive the support of Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI). I could also consider approaching UNESCO.

Tanguy: what about other projects?

Dimitri: I would like to collaborate with a Japanese artist. Creating synergies with other artists is what interests me most.

Tanguy: have you already some contacts with Japan?

Dimitri: it is quite difficult. I have never been to Japan. I do not want to go there as a tourist. I want to meet local artists and work together. It is the human aspect that comes first to create artistic exchanges. In Belgium, I collaborated with the Folon Museum. I paid tribute to the artist making a series of drawings which are now in the museum. I would love to do this in Japan.

Tanguy: what would be your biggest wish for this Japanese adventure?

Dimitri: it would like to create with other artists, like I did in Milan and other places, sharing a vision and translating it into drawings that will resonate with that vision. At the start, my profession may sound solitary, but I always want to confront with others.

Tanguy: I really wish your plans will soon concretize. Many thanks.

Homage to Yamamoto Sakubei



BJA 2023 Annual General Assembly Meeting BJA 定例総会

Tuesday, 21 March 2023 – EY, Diegem



The participants are listening attentively to the BJA activity reports.



Aldwin Dekkers, Commissioner-general of BelExpo, presenting 'The Belgian pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka'.



(left to right) Prof Declerck, Board member at imec International and BJA President, together with Mr Henderickx, Executive Vice President Meeting & Learning Experience at Barco and newly appointed BJA Board Member, and Mr De Beukelaer, President CEO at H. De Beukelaer & Co. and BJA Vice-President, sharing a pleasant time together.

Thanks to the generous support of EY, the BJA had the pleasure in inviting the members to its Annual General Assembly Meeting at EY in Diegem. After warm welcome words by Eric Van Hoof, Partner - Standard Assurance Service at EY, and Prof Gilbert Declerck, Board member at imec International and BJA President, Tanguy Van Overstraeten, Partner at Linklaters LLP and BJA Vice-President, reported on the financial results of 2022, followed by Anja Oto-Kellens, BJA Executive Director, who presented the 2023 budget.

Philippe Borremans, Regional Director External Relations at Group S and BJA Membership Committee Chair, presented the membership situation of 2022 and thanked wholeheartedly all the members for their support.

Tanguy Van Overstraeten continued to report on the activities of the Executive Committee, representing all business committees, followed by Jam Lambrechts, Director and Specialist Human Capital at Ichiban Consult and BJA Cultural Committee member, who gave a review of all the activities organized by the Cultural and Friendship Committees in 2022.

Before closing the meeting, Prof Gilbert Declerck announced the statutory nominations and opened the voting. Afterwards he gave the floor to Aldwin Dekkers, Commissioner-general of Belexpo, for a presentation on 'The Belgian pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka'. After this insightful presentation, the members shared a pleasant moment together during the networking drink, kindly offered by EY.



ESG governance and reporting: how to effectively manage risks and opportunities

ESG 時代の企業統治と情報公開: “危機管理と商機に向けた効果的な取り組み”

Thursday, 20 April 2023 – Linklaters LLP, Brussels



Mrs Perez Lobo, Vice President, Corporate Affairs & Sustainability, TME, explaining sustainability at Toyota



There was a great interest in the hot topic of ESG



The panel discussion after the testimonials (left to right) with Mr de Graaf of WTW, Mr Debruyne of Nippon Shokubai Europe and Mr Foguene of AGC Glass Europe, was led by Mrs Brems of EY

The growing significance of and scrutiny on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) is now a critical element contributing to business performance. Therefore, the BJA and Linklaters LLP cordially invited all to a seminar focusing on ESG governance and reporting.

The event was opened by Tanguy Van Overstraeten, Partner at Linklaters LLP, and BJA Vice-President, followed by Wim Eynatten, Partner at Deloitte, and BJA Legal & Tax Committee Chair, facilitating the many speakers.

We explored the topic through a regulatory lens by the shared insights of Abrial Gilbert-d'Halluin, EP sherpa on CSRD and Political adviser to MEP Durand, and three law experts on CSRD from Linklaters LLP: David Ballegeer, Partner, Tom Cobbaert and Guillaume Croissant, Managing Associates.

Testimonials from industry followed: Natalia Agüeros-Macario, Director ESG Strategy & Engagement, Umicore; Ingrid D'Haeyer, Department Head Group Legal Banking Products, KBC; and Monical Perez Lobo, Vice President, Corporate Affairs & Sustainability, Toyota Motor Europe.

We ended with a panel composed of matter experts, led by Anke Brems, Senior Manager Climate Change and Sustainability Services, EY Belgium: Ties Debruyne, Plant Manager, Nippon Shokubai Europe; Marc Foguene, VP Sustainability Architectural, AGC Glass Europe; and Maurits de Graaf, Associate Director Work & Rewards, WTW.

Many questions were further explored, and discussions enjoyed during the walking luncheon, kindly hosted by Linklaters LLP.



TERRANOVA, LUMINUS AND NIPPON GASES ESTABLISH TERRANOVA HYDROGEN NV AND COOPERATE FOR INNOVATIVE GREEN HYDROGEN PROJECT IN ZELZATE

Source: Nippon Gases

Terranova Hydrogen NV is the new company founded by Terranova, Luminus and Nippon Gases Belgium. They are working together to build and operate an installation for the production of green hydrogen at Zonneberg in Zelzate.

Production of green hydrogen

The three companies will collaborate at Zonneberg on the construction and operation of a 2.5 MW electrolysis unit for the production of green hydrogen, including storage capacity and a compression and filling station. In addition, there is the possibility of further expanding the plant to 5 MW.

From brownfield to green energy production center

The green hydrogen will be produced at Terranova's sites on the Zonneberg in North Sea Port at Zelzate with locally generated green electricity. DEME, Jan De Nul and Aertssen, Terranova's shareholders, have been joining forces for more than 10 years to transform this former brownfield. At Terranova is now a large solar park on this former brownfield site, and this project will continue the conversion to a production center for green energy. In addition, the site is centrally located along the R4 ring road around the port of Ghent, at a crossroads of freeways Antwerp-Bruges and Lille-Rotterdam and also along the Ghent-Terneuzen canal.

Preparatory works

As part of the rollout of the "Flemish Hydrogen Vision", the Flemish government granted strategic support of €4.33

million to Terranova Hydrogen NV at the end of 2022. Meanwhile, the license was also obtained and Terranova NV started the preparatory works on the site. Production of the first hydrogen molecule is planned for early 2025.

The three partners behind Terranova (DEME, Jan De Nul and Aertssen): *"We are delighted to enter into this cooperation with Luminus and Nippon Gases for the production of green hydrogen on our sites. This is another great step in the intended transformation of a former brownfield into a green energy hub in the middle of the Ghent port area."*

Grégoire Dallemagne, CEO of Luminus: *"Luminus wants to build a carbon-neutral energy future where planetary protection, human well-being and economic growth are reconciled, thanks to electricity and innovative solutions and services. That is our reason of living. This project therefore fits perfectly within our strategy and we are proud to be able to actively contribute to its implementation."*

Frank Rutten, Managing Director van Nippon Gases: *"To achieve a carbon-neutral world, it is important to switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. Nippon Gases is committed to helping its customers make this transition possible in the future. This production of hydrogen based solely on green energy is therefore for us the model example of what a climate-neutral industry can look like. Together with the other partners, we hope to contribute to a*



future that our children and grandchildren can enjoy for a long time to come."

About Nippon Gases

Nippon Gases, one of the leading industrial and medical gases companies in Europe, is part of the Nippon Sanso Holdings Corporation, which has over 100 years of experience and also boasts a major presence in Japan, Southeast Asia, Australia, the United States and Canada, operating in 31 countries with more than 19,000 employees around the world. Our presence in Europe positions us as a leading company with over 3,000 employees of which 27% are women, operating today in 13 countries and serving more than 150,000 customers. Safety, priority number one in our company, is constantly improving due to the search for risk factors and behaviors, and the observance of our safety principles by all our employees. Nippon Gases commitment to our customers, employees and associates and to the communities in which we operate is a reflection of our dedication to the environment and to sustainability. Together, we are "The Gas Professionals" and we all have the same goal: *"Making life better through gas technology"*.

More information is available in Nippon Gases' Sustainability Report 2022 on www.nippongases.com/be-en/nippon-gases/environmental-sustainability

BJA Friendship Committee Karaoke Afternoon

Saturday, 1 April 2023 - Boa Karaoke, Brussels

On a drizzly afternoon in early spring, raucous and melodious voices could be heard on a quaint street tucked



away from the hustle and bustle of central Brussels. It was this day, on 1 April 2023 that the Friendship Committee hosted its first, but hopefully not last, karaoke event at BOA Karaoke Room. The now ubiquitous term, karaoke is borrowed from カラオケ in

Japanese, which is a portmanteau of kara 空 meaning 'empty' and a shortened version of ookesutora オーケストラ meaning 'orchestra'. Although on this day, the private room was anything but empty.

The event drew in music lovers, both BJA members and non-members of all ages from all walks of life around Belgium, reaching max capacity of the largest room in the establishment. Drinks in hand and merrily chatting amongst themselves, the participants flipped through the extensive catalogue of songs. Surprisingly, there was even a list of j-pop songs, though mostly tracks from popular anime and not necessarily the most common karaoke numbers in Japan itself. The participants showed off their impressive singing chops by performing group numbers, solos, and duets in a wide range of genres and languages.

Japanese and non-Japanese mem-

bers alike tried their hands at singing Japanese pop-songs, which were oddly displayed in either romaji or only kana. Our ears were graced by stirring and memorable performances of numbers from musicals and Disney movies in English and Dutch, 80s power ballads, 90s electropop, classics from Frank Sinatra, Flemish classics, folksongs, Italian rap, French comedy songs and today's hits. The wide breath of singing styles was a sight to behold.

By the end of the event, it was clear to see why going to a private karaoke room is such a popular activity in Japan. There's nothing quite like belting out your favourite song, surrounded by good company and discovering what hidden talents other people have. Music certainly brings people together, and I, for one, hope to meet up again for another karaoke event in the near future.

*By Tamara Latham Sprinkle,
BJA Friendship Committee Member*



BJA Exclusive Visit to Takeda Belgium BJA タケダ・ベルギー社特別訪問

Tuesday, 25 April 2023 - Lessines



Kurt Leuridan, CEO Tokai Optecs and BJA Investment Committee Chair, welcoming HE Ambassador Masahiro Mikami and all the members.



Geoffrey Pot, General Manager Operations Takeda Lessines, giving a brief presentation on Takeda's operation in Belgium and worldwide.



Gathering at the entrance of Takeda Belgium

The BJA was honored to invite the company members to an exclusive visit of Takeda Belgium's production facility in Lessines.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, Takeda is a patient-focused, values-based, R&D-driven global biopharmaceutical company and one of the ten largest pharmaceutical companies in Belgium. Takeda's passion and pursuit of potentially life-changing treatments for patients are deeply rooted in its distinguished history in Japan for more than 240 years. Takeda employs around 1,300 people in Belgium. In Lessines, Takeda is producing plasma-derived therapies, which are life-changing for patients with rare and genetic diseases.

It is Takeda's third biggest manufacturing site worldwide.

In the presence of His Excellency Mr Mikami, Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, the group of members were greeted by Kurt Leuridan, CEO Tokai Optecs & BJA Investment Committee Chair, and Geoffrey Pot, General Manager Operations Takeda Lessines, welcoming the audience explaining and guiding the group throughout the state-of-the-art facilities and the wastewater treatment station. The guided tour was accompanied by other experts of Takeda Belgium turning the event into a very diversified and memorable visit. The visit ended with networking drinks and finger foods for all to enjoy.



TOWARDS ENSURING SECURE AND SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS FOR EU'S GREEN AND DIGITAL FUTURE

By Dr Fabrice Stassin, Director Government Affairs Electromobility Projects & Coordinator for Asian Affairs of Umicore, BJA EU Committee Chair and BJA IPT Committee Co-Chair

The EU's Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) in

TEN QUESTIONS

On the 16th of March 2023, the European Commission unveiled a proposal for a Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) aiming at ensuring EU's access to a secure and sustainable supply of the critical raw materials which are crucial to the Green Deal. In this article, we explore the CRMA with ten questions to provide clarity to the reader.

1

Why do we need to act on critical raw materials?

Recent supply disruptions (Covid-19, chips shortage, energy crisis) have demonstrated well the risk to our economic and social welfare and to our security of excessively depending on external suppliers of strategic inputs. Critical Raw Materials (CRMs) are key to enabling the technologies needed for EU strategic sectors such as clean energy & mobility technologies, digital technologies and more. Already today, the demand for these CRMs is high and it is expected to grow manifold (more than 10 times for some CRMs) by 2030. Unfortunately, the EU is very much dependent on a concentrated number of external partners for the supply of several CRMs, with rising geopolitical, environmental, and social challenges.

2

What is the EU Commission proposing to address these challenges on CRMs?

To ensure the competitiveness and re-

silience of its industries and to maintain its open strategic autonomy in a challenging geopolitical landscape, the EU must secure a sustainable, resilient, and diversified supply of CRMs. With its Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA), existing as a proposal for a Regulation (available at https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/publications/european-critical-raw-materials-act_en) and an accompanying Communication (available at <https://circabc.europa.eu/rest/download/7ce37e41-1d9a-4f96-a24b-4f89207700bf>), the EU aims to strengthen all stages of the CRMs value chain, diversify its imports to diminish dependencies & vulnerabilities, and improve circularity and sustainability. The EU also intends to strengthen its global engagement to develop and diversify investment, production, and trade with reliable partners while promoting their own sustainable economic development.

3

What are the four key elements in EU's CRMA?

The first key element in EU's proposal for a Regulation is the definition of priorities and objectives in terms of strengthening EU's critical raw materials supply chains. For a sub-set of the CRMs, called Strategic Raw Materials (SRMs) and used in strategic sectors (where the projected demand growth compared to current levels of supply is likely to create a supply risk in the future), the Regulation sets clear targets for domestic capacities along the raw

material supply chain: at least 10% of the EU's annual consumption for extraction, at least 40% of the EU's annual consumption for processing, at least 15% of the EU's annual consumption for recycling, and not more than 65% of the EU's annual consumption of each strategic raw material at any relevant stage of processing to originate from a single third country.

The second key element is a new framework to select and implement Strategic Projects (which can benefit from streamlined one-stop-shop permitting and enabled access to finance), as well as national requirements to develop exploration programs in Europe. The Regulation also proposes measures to improve the circularity and create value chains for recycled critical raw materials, for instance, by obliging operators and Member States to improve the recovery of critical raw materials from products and waste in the EU market.

The third key element in the proposed Regulation aims at improving the EU's preparedness and its mitigation of supply risks. To ensure resilience of the supply chains, the Act provides for the monitoring of critical raw materials supply chains, and information exchange and future coordination on strategic raw materials' stocks among Member States. Certain large companies will also have to perform an audit of their supply chains.

Finally, the fourth key element concerns the set up of a common governing structure in the form of a Board, composed of Member States and the European Commission, to coordinate the implementation of the measures set out in the Act and discuss the EU's strategic partnerships with third countries.

4

How will the EU Commission facilitate the supply of critical raw materials from outside the EU?

To facilitate trade, investment, and cooperation to open opportunities globally, thereby increasing the security and affordability of critical raw materials, the EU external actions will cover the following:

- › A critical raw materials club will be established with partners to strengthen supply chains and diversify sourcing. It will reach out to all potential partners to set up this alliance.
- › Efforts to sustain and strengthen the World Trade Organization (WTO) will be continued.
- › The EU will use its network of Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreements and Free Trade Agreements to support the ambition of the EU's trading partners to develop processing capacities and create win-win partnerships (e.g., with Chile and Australia).
- › The EU will seek to expand the network of strategic raw materials partnerships with resource-rich countries, to the mutual benefits of Europe and our partners.
- › The EU will follow closely the impact of tariffs on the ability to import critical raw materials and examine requests for duty suspensions.
- › The EU will work in the OECD to improve arrangements and work with EU Member States to set up an EU Export Credit Facility for inter alia supporting CRM supply chains abroad.

5

How can the CRMA increase resilience and prevent disruptions in the critical raw materials supply chains?

First, the Critical Raw Materials Board, composed of Member States and the EU

Commission, will coordinate the publicly available assessment and monitoring of critical raw materials-related supply risks, for instance through the conduction of stress tests across the strategic raw materials supply chains. Second, the EU Commission will collect and process information on Member States' strategic stocks across the EU. To push companies to develop resilience-strengthening supply risk mitigation strategies, the CRMA constrains large companies manufacturing strategic technologies with strategic raw materials to audit their supply chains every two years and present the results to their boards. Finally, the CRMA will also put in place a mechanism facilitating joint purchases of strategic raw materials for interested Member States and European undertakings.

6

What will the selected Strategic Projects benefit from?

Projects contributing to build strategic raw materials capacities (in or outside EU) can apply for the status of "Strategic Project". Projects will be assessed and selected by the EU Commission and the Board based on their contribution to the security of supply of strategic raw materials, their technical feasibility, sustainability, and social standards. Strategic Projects will benefit from streamlined permitting to accelerate administrative procedures. Member States will need to comply with clear deadlines for the entire procedure, coordinate under a single procedure the relevant environmental assessments and, where relevant, apply urgency procedures in case of a judicial procedure. The CRMA will also facilitate off-take agreements, bringing project promoters and downstream users together. For Strategic Projects outside of the EU, high environmental and social conditions as well as local value

added will apply. The EU Commission will support the implementation of the projects and seek synergies with existing international initiatives, such as the Global Gateway.

7

How will the EU Commission facilitate the financing of critical raw materials projects?

In line with competition rules, the CRMA proposes to bring Member States and the EU Commission together with relevant financial institutions to discuss private & public sources of financing and existing financial instruments. The EU Commission will among others work with the European Investment Bank and other InvestEU implementing partners to scale up support to investment in the critical raw materials supply chain. Private investment will be essential but when not sufficient, the roll-out of projects at scale and at speed along the critical raw materials value chain may require public support, including in the form of State aid. The measures proposed in the CRMA unfortunately do not involve new financing rules or resources at EU level but aim at coordinating existing financing mechanisms. As far as national public funds are concerned, the State aid framework provides possibilities to crowd-in private investments and launch critical raw materials-related projects. State aid rules have recently been adapted by the EU Commission to allow further flexibility for the Member States to speed up and simplify the granting of State Aid while limiting distortions to the Single Market.

8

How will the CRMA ensure sustainability of critical raw materials production and increase their circularity?

To reduce import dependency, increas-

ing the circularity and efficient use of CRMs is a key lever. Moreover, there is a need to improve the sustainability of the production, refining, processing, and recycling of CRMs. The CRMA outlines general obligations for Member States to increase the collection, treatment and reuse of waste containing critical raw materials. Member States should also promote, through public procurement, the use of secondary critical raw materials in their manufacturing sectors and develop national research and innovation programs on recycling technologies to substitute critical raw materials. The CRMA also promotes the recovery of critical raw materials from mining waste, still present at numerous old mining sites across Europe. The CRMA obliges industrial operators (for currently running mines) and Member States (for closed and abandoned mines) to assess the possibility for such recovery. On circularity, the CRMA announces targeted actions on the most important waste streams containing critical raw materials: end-of-life vehicles, electronic waste, battery waste, and products not yet covered by EU waste legislation, such as wind turbines. For each of these, the Commission will develop or revise waste rules to maximize the future recovery of critical raw materials. Circularity however starts at the level of product design and the EU Commission will place a focus on the recyclability of critical raw materials and their substitution in its work on product-specific eco-design requirements.

9

How will the CRMA support skills, research, and innovation in the field of CRMs?

To ensure that circularity, sustainability, digitalization, and the latest innovation on the critical raw materials

sectors are part of the core training of the up-skilled or re-skilled European workforce, the EU Commission will launch a Raw Materials Academy and partnership on skills for critical raw materials. To facilitate a more efficient use of raw materials resources, more research and innovation in the critical raw materials value chain must be carried out. In frame of the CRMA, the EU will launch new initiatives to improve our R&I, to improve the deployment and uptake of R&I results. The EU will also present a Coordinated Plan of Action with Member States on advanced materials (the processed materials imparting performance to the strategic technologies) to be later swiftly implemented.

10

What happens next?

The CRMA proposal will be sent to the European Parliament and Council of the EU for approval following the ordinary process under which both institutions must agree on legislation's final wording before adoption. This requires a majority in the European Parliament and a qualified majority of Member States in the Council. The European elections in the spring of 2024 create a timing challenge for the institutions, as they must either swiftly pass the legislation in early 2024 before the legislature ends or carry over the proposal to the new legislature. We should expect changes to the text during this process as some Member States may push back on some of the more ambitious targets. We could also expect concerns to be raised by stakeholders fearing negative impact on the European environmental ecosystems.

BJA AGM & STATUTORY NOMINATIONS

The below proposals of resignation, nominations, and renominations have been unanimously accepted and approved by the Members at the Annual General Assembly on 21 March 2023.

- › Mr Akira Yasuda, former Deputy Director-General of JETRO, is returning to Japan and tendered his resignation. We are very grateful for all he has done during his tenure as Board Member and wish him all the best upon return to Tokyo.
- › Mrs Aiko Yabunaka, Deputy Director-General of JETRO, kindly succeeded

Mr Yasuda as BJA Board Member. We are very honored to have Mrs Yabunaka among our Board Directors.

- › Mr Stijn Henderickx, Executive Vice President Meeting & Learning Experience of Barco, was nominated to the Board as well. We are looking forward to working together with Mr Henderickx.
- › Mr Edward De Beukelaer, President & CEO of E. & H. De Beukelaer & Co., together with Prof Gilbert Declerck, Board Member of imec International, Mr Koh Ichi Masaki, European Representative of JMA, Mr Yoshiyuki Mor-

ishita, President of Mitsui & Co Benelux, Prof Willy Vande Walle and Mrs Danielle Vermaelen are renominated. Their support is highly appreciated.

You can find all our Board Members here: <https://www.bja.be/en/organisation/board-of-directors>

Find out more about our inspiring BJA Committees: <https://www.bja.be/en/organisation>

Contact us if you would like to join one of the committees.



The BJA would like to extend a warm welcome to its newest members:

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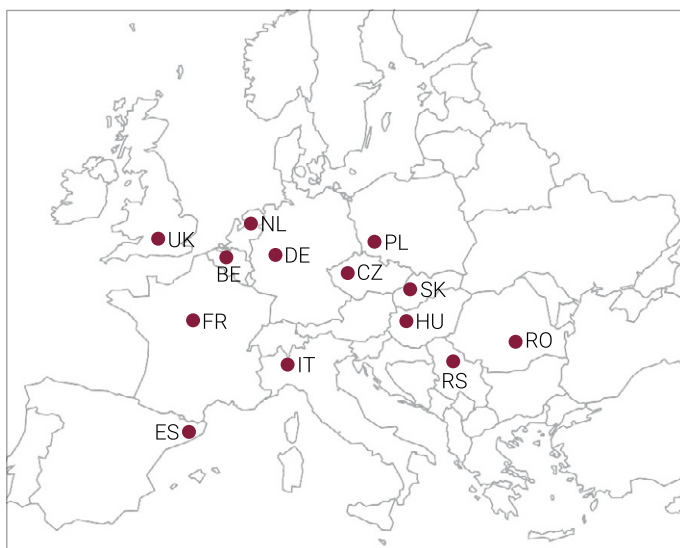
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