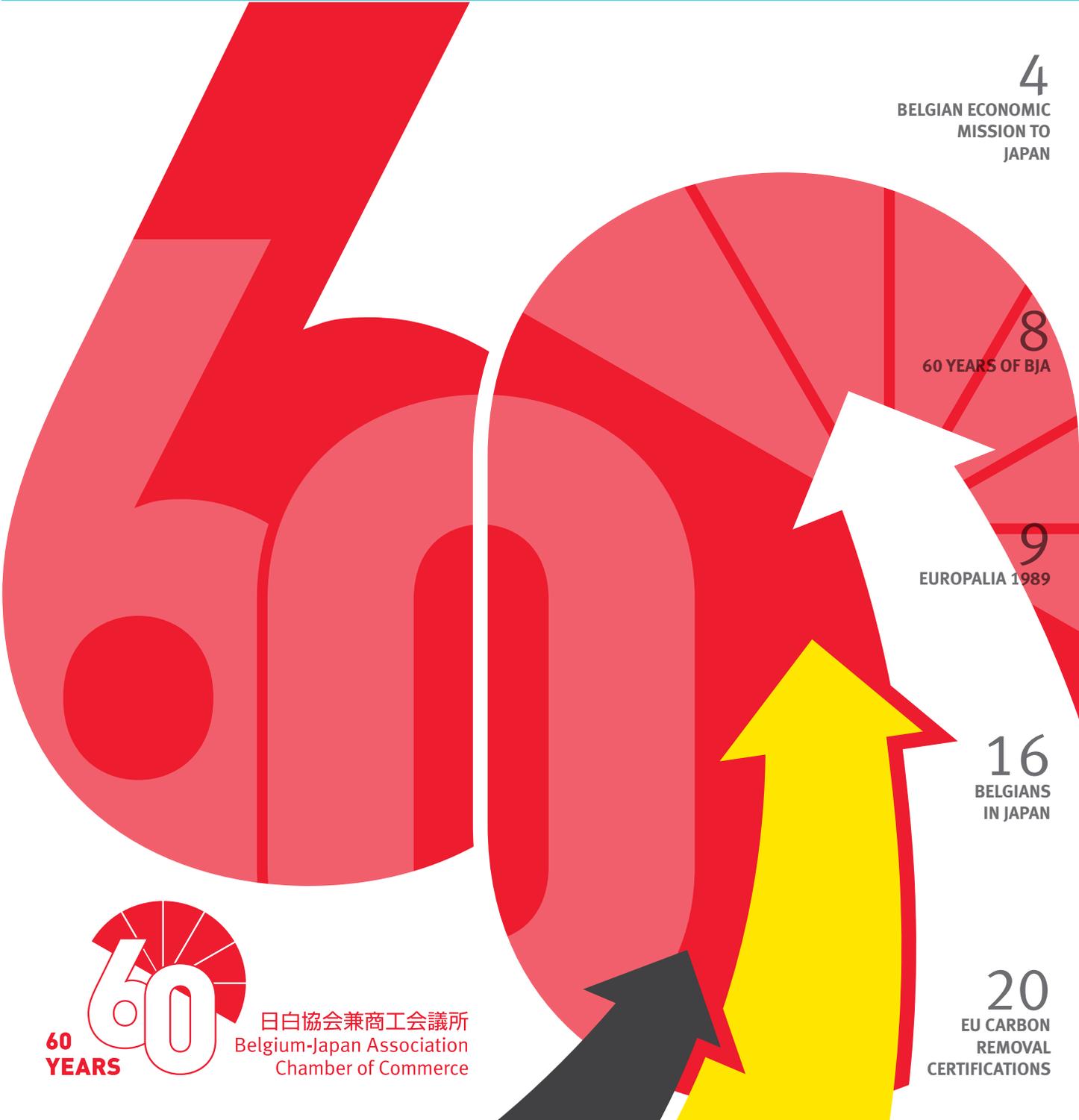




Belgium-Japan Association  
Chamber of Commerce  
日白協会兼商工会議所



**TRADE FLOWS & CULTURAL NEWS** *Number 138 - March 2023*



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# EDITORIAL

By Her Excellency Hadja Lahbib, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade, and the Federal Cultural Institutions



In light of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce I am most pleased to discuss the state of Belgium's bilateral relationship with Japan and express my appreciation to all who contribute to it, not in the least the BJA and the many organisations, institutions and businesses associated to the BJA.

Belgium and Japan enjoy an excellent relationship which is both firmly anchored in the past and primed for a future of ever-increasing cooperation in the face of shared challenges. The recent Belgian Economic Mission to Japan from 5-9 December, led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, has clearly demonstrated the dynamism of the partnership between both nations in a wide range of sectors and fields. I was impressed by the level of enthusiasm and interest this mission generated amongst our business and academic community as well as the many Belgian stakeholders and our Japanese friends. The record number of participants as well as the multitude of agreements that were signed during the mission are a clear testimony of the enduring strength and relevance of our excellent ties with Japan, including in many sectors of the future.

The reasons for having chosen Japan as the destination of this Economic Mission were manifold. There is a sound economic and trade imperative to broaden and deepen our cooperation with Japan.

Japan is one of our largest trading partners outside of Europe and – as the world's third largest economy – plays a vital role in the global economy. For many decades now, Japan has been a welcome source of investment in Belgium with over 230 Japanese companies that are active on the Belgian market. Inversely, around 80 Belgian companies have a permanent presence in Japan. We had the opportunity to meet with many of them during the economic mission.

Furthermore, the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement that entered into effect in February of 2019 has opened new avenues and opportunities for companies to explore or further business in and with Japan. The global challenges brought forth by the covid pandemic, supply chain issues, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis have made us increasingly aware of the importance to diversify our economic dependencies and to reinforce partnerships with like-minded and trustworthy countries such as Japan. This is particularly the case in the fields of green energy, in the digital sector and in life sciences.

Belgium enjoys a long history of friendship with Japan dating back to 1866 when we were the ninth country in the world to initiate formal diplomatic relations with Tokyo. In 2016 we celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Japan with a State Visit by their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians to Japan. The 2022 Economic Mission followed ten years after the previous Economic Mission to Japan in 2012 led by then-Crown Prince Philippe. These high-level visits to Japan are not only proof of the outstanding economic and trade relations between Belgium and Japan but also underline the excellent ties between the Royal and Imperial Families as well as the broader people-to-people connections. Additionally, the large presence of our academic institutions during the mission provided a further impetus to those people-to-people interactions which provide the backbone for our relationship with Japan.

Before concluding, I would like to wish the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce a wonderful 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and lots of energy to carry out your projects.

*keep reading on p.13 >>*

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# BJA New Year Cocktail Celebration BJA 新年カクテルパーティー

Monday, 16 January 2023 – Comics Art Museum, Brussels



(left to right) Mr Takahashi, Managing Director of Globis Europe, Mr Piot, Author and Illustrator, HE Mr Mikami, Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, Prof Declerck, Member of the Board imec International and BJA President, HE Mr Masaki, Japanese Ambassador to the EU, Mrs Mohd Yahaya, Country Manager Belux of JTI, and Mr Ueda, Vice President of ANA, ringing in the auspicious new year with the 'Kagamiwari' ceremony.



HE Mr and Mrs Mikami, Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, greeted by Mr and Mrs Steel, Honorary Consul General of Japan for Flanders.



Prof Declerck, Member of the Board imec International and BJA President, greeting the members and guests to the celebratory 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary New Year reception of the BJA.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship by ANA, Globis Europe, and JTI, the BJA cordially invited the members to join the New Year Cocktail Reception to celebrate together the auspicious 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the BJA.

On this occasion, over 120 guests gathered together with His Excellency Mr and Mrs Masahiro Mikami, Japanese Ambassador to Belgium and His Excellency Yasushi Masaki, Japanese Ambassador to the EU as honorable guests, and Mr Dimitri Piot, a comic book Author and Illustrator as a special guest at the impressive art nouveau building of the Comics Art Museum of Brussels.

After welcome words by Professor Gilbert Declerck, Member of the Board imec International and BJA President, His Excellency Ambassador Mikami delivered his New Year greetings and Mr

Piot gave a short presentation. Following their speeches, they were joined by Mr Keiichi Ueda, Vice President of All Nippon Airways, Mr Toru Takahashi, Managing Director of Globis Europe, and Mrs Juliana Mohd Yahaya, Country Manager Belux of JTI for the “Kagamiwari”, the traditional sake barrel breaking.

While enjoying this precious moment together savoring delicious sushi, canapés, and sake, the guests could also appreciate getting acquainted with Mr Piot who was involved with the Ukiyo-e exhibition at the Art & History Museum in Brussels in the framework of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Belgium-Japan diplomatic relations in 2016. He is currently working on a new project focused on the Japanese artist Sakubei.

The evening certainly was an enchanting way to start celebrating the anniversary year together!



BELGIAN ECONOMIC

# MISSION TO JAPAN

**FROM 5 TO 9 DECEMBER, HER ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS ASTRID OF BELGIUM, REPRESENTING HIS MAJESTY THE KING, LED AN ECONOMIC MISSION TO JAPAN. WITH 575 PARTICIPANTS, THIS WAS THE LARGEST BELGIAN TRADE MISSION TO JAPAN AND THE SECOND LARGEST EVER.**

**Official delegation and participants**

Princess Astrid was accompanied by a ministerial delegation including Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, Foreign Trade and Federal Cultural Institutions, Hadja Lahbib, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders, Jan Jambon and Brussels State Secretary responsible for Urbanism and Heritage, European and International Relations and Foreign Trade, Pascal Smet. Federal Secretary of State, Mathieu Michel, also participated in activities of the economic mission in the field of digitisation.

economic interaction between Belgium and Japan.

**Organisation**

The princely economic missions are jointly organised by the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Foreign Trade Agency and the three regional agencies responsible for promoting trade relations and investments.

**Economic sectors where partnerships can be further strengthened**

The mission put an important focus on Belgium's leading sectors that will shape the future, such as life sciences, semiconductors & ICT, automotive, fintech, ecological construction, market access, clean tech & renewable energy. Like Belgium within the EU, Japan has resolutely opted for the twin green and digital transition with carbon neutrality as a goal by 2050. This provides an excellent basis for renewed and strengthened cooperation with a clear focus on new and clean technology.

In addition to the official delegation, the mission hosted representatives of 210 leading Belgian companies, as well as universities and organisations active in Belgium's key economic sectors, including renewable energy, life sciences, sustainable eco-construction, logistics, automotive, game art and food industry. Through a range of events, meetings, B2B meetings and networking events, opportunities were found for new local partners to renew and perpetuate the



*The much beloved Belgian Beer Event*



*Visit by Mr Hoorelbeke and Rudy Janssens of Agoria at Tak-enaka HQ Tokyo*



*Mayor Tommelein of Oostende, Chairman Mr Inoue and Mr Hoorelbeke of Daikin at the R&D Center Osaka*



*BelExpo signed the participation agreement with Expo 2025 Osaka and officially confirmed Belgium's participation in Expo 2025 Osaka*



*BelExpo organised an info session on Expo 2025 Osaka - taking place in the chapel of the Hilton Osaka hotel symbolizing the highest blessings for this project*



Prof. Vanoverbeke of KU Leuven, Wim Eynatten of Deloitte, HRH Princess Astrid, Prof. Yamamoto of Tokyo University, Tanguy Van Overstraeten of Linklaters LLP  
HRH Princess Astrid together with Mayuko Oh and Sofie Pattijn of ImmunXperts

### TOKYO - Sustainable business and investment opportunities in technological innovation and decarbonation

The scope was to renew and enhance the already strong economic interactions between both countries with a clear focus on clean and innovative technologies that will address the challenges of the twin green and digital transformation.

Japan and Belgium are already important economic partners today. Belgian trade with Japan rebounded in 2021, with imports totalling 9.3 billion EUR. Exports grew by almost 140% to 7.6 billion EUR - in part due to vaccine exports – making Belgium the second largest goods exporter to Japan within the EU.

The programme in Tokyo brought a rich variety of activities with a focus on highlighting sustainable business partnerships and opportunities, new and innovative technologies, clean energy, Fintech, Life Sciences, investment opportunities in Belgium, company visits, high-level bilateral discussions, and business-to-business meetings, academic exchanges, and attention for Belgian beer culture.

On 5 December, Princess Astrid celebrated several sustainable partnerships between Japanese and Belgian companies, such as Barco and TOHO cinemas, Zetes and the Panasonic Center in Tokyo (legal and digital identity sector), as well as Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) and the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, both major players in the ro-ro car shipping and LNG sectors with the clear ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.



Unique Nippon Express temperature controlled trucks and mission delegates

bon neutrality by 2050.

The same day, Princess Astrid and the official delegation also had a bilateral meeting with HE Fumio Kishida, Prime Minister of Japan. Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadja Lahbib held consultations with HE Yoshimasa Hayashi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

On 6 December, the programme drew attention to several events highlighting the Belgian know-how in the field of clean tech and energy solutions. In the morning, Princess Astrid unveiled a maquette of the Sea Challenger - a vessel DEME will operate in Japanese waters to install offshore wind turbines – and attended the opening of the Decarbonation Conference: tech development in Hydrogen & Offshore wind energy.

Princess Astrid and the official delegation also attended the Business Lun-



Geoffrey Pot of Takeda Belgium in the panel discussion

The BLCCJ Breakfast Meeting

cheon hosted by Keidanren and the Belgian Enterprises Federation as well as the Conference on Decarbonation and Artificial Intelligence to optimize processes and reduce burdens.

The programme in Tokyo concluded with the opening of the Belgian Beer Weekend 2022 in Shinjuku, with opportunities to meet Belgian beer brewers and importers while tasting some of the finest Belgian craft beers and cuisine. Belgian jazz artists Jef Neve and Teus Nobel commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Toots Thielemans with a live performance.

### NAGOYA - Spearheading the Maritime Energy Transition

On 7 December, several visits to businesses and with public officials were scheduled in Nagoya to explore investment and economic opportunities and to strengthen the partnerships in the field of the clean energy transition in the automotive and maritime sector.

Princess Astrid and the official delegation started with a visit over lunch to Suzuka International Racing Course, famous for Formula 1. Having a longstanding friendship agreement with Spa Francorchamps in Belgium, this visit put emphasis on the role of race circuits in innovating the ecosystem of the automotive industry, crucial to realising the climate ambitions towards carbon neutrality in 2050.

In the afternoon, Princess Astrid and the official delegation visited the Port of Na-

goya to celebrate the sustainable partnership between the Port of Nagoya, the largest car exporting port in the world, and the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, the largest car importing port in the world. The delegation was welcomed by Yuji Kamata, Executive Vice President of the Nagoya Port Authority, in the presence of the CEO of the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, Jacques Vandermeiren and witnessed the signing ceremony of the renewal of the MOU between the Port of Nagoya and the Port of Antwerp-Bruges on the occasion of the merger of the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge.



BJA Members Imec, Kaneka Eurogentec, Takeda Belgium highlighting opportunities



Panel Discussion Belgian Life Science Seminar Osaka



Members sharing insights

Princess Astrid and the delegation also participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony of the Hydrobingo, the world's first hydrogen powered ferry. The Hydrobingo was realised through a joint venture of Tsuneishi from Japan and CMB from Belgium.

Princess Astrid and the delegation later met with H.E. Hideaki Omura, the Governor of Aichi Prefecture, to highlight the importance of the cooperation agreement that the three Regions of Belgium have with Aichi Prefecture.

**OSAKA – sustainable chemical & life sciences**

On 8 December, the delegation visited Osaka to explore investment opportunities in the sustainable chemical and life-sciences sectors and emphasised the importance of technological innovation.

Princess Astrid and the official delegation attended an event promoting investments in the chemical industry for a sustainable future. Belgium hosts Europe's largest integrated petrochemical centre in the port of Antwerp-Bruges and state-

of-the art infrastructure that are appealing for international investors. Next, the delegation celebrated a new partnership between Air Water Inc. and the Belgian company Xylergy in order to develop an innovative project in renewable energy that will be implemented in Matsumoto.

In the afternoon, the programme highlighted the Belgian excellence and know-how in the field of life sciences. A thematic lunch showcased the entire end-to-end value chain of biopharma in Belgium and a Lifescience Conference presented the innovative Belgian ecosystem to Japanese decision makers in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical sector.

Princess Astrid and the official delegation also emphasised the importance of technological innovation during their visit of the Daikin Technical Innovation Center in Osaka. Daikin TIC conducts basic research and application development of products for HVAC-R, chemicals and oil hydraulics. The visit celebrated the close cooperation of TIC in Osaka with the Daikin Europe Development Center in Ostend and Ghent.

**KYOTO – Business & human rights, culture and video game jam**

On 9 December, the delegation started

their programme at Doshisha University with a seminar on Business and Human Rights, with a focus on equality. The seminar in Kyoto focused on the youth's perspective and expectations on gender equality in business, followed by a panel-discussion with high-level participants from Japan and Belgium.

Princess Astrid and the delegation also commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1920s Japanese book donation to the University of Leuven (KUL-UCL) and honored the involvement of the Imperial Palace and of the University of Kyoto in this donation.

After attending the opening of the exhibition of photographs by Thierry Renaud and sculptures by Folon at the Hakuso Sonso Hashimoto Kansetsu Garden & Museum, Princess Astrid hosted the award ceremony of Game Jam, which is a challenge race in which teams of young graduates from Belgium and Japan have competed online to produce a video game in only two days.

The program in Kyoto concluded the Belgian economic mission to Japan.

*Source: Press Releases of the Belgian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs*



Mission Delegates at the Nippon Express Osaka Pharma Facility



Visit of HRH Princess Astrid, accompanied by several ministers, businessmen and association representatives to Daikin R&D Center in Osaka



Anja Oto-Kellens of the BJA at Daikin in Osaka



# PHOTOGRAPHY FIRST — X-T5



60  
YEARS



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## CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF BJA IN 2023

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.

In the early nineties, the Belgian-Japan Trade Federation (BEJAT) 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.

On 15 July, 2008 in Tokyo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan had awarded the BJA a commendation for the outstanding role the association 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 in Brussels.

Then in 2013 His Majesty King Albert II of Belgium bestowed upon the BJA the Royal title. This was highly appreciated as well.

Another highlight was 2016, the year in which we celebrated 150 years of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Japan. This year proved to be an important milestone and symbol of growth towards a common goal: fostering the economic and cultural ties between our two countries and the friendship between our people. At the BJA, we are very proud to have taken part in the preparations of the Celebra-

tions of 2016, together with the Japanese Embassy, Nihonjinkai and Friends of Japan. It is too numerous to list them all but the Brussels Flower Carpet, Ghent Floralties, and the Winter Wonders were just a few of highlights from the many beautiful events we could organize through this 2016 Celebrations Committee.

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 BJA has published both printed and digital publications, such as the books on Japanese investments in Belgium and Belgian export to Japan, brochures promoting Belgium as an excellent investment destination, newsletters, leaflets, and newflashes. The BJA has also been active in lobbying for the Social Security Treaty, the Visa and Immigration Procedure improvements, the Single and ICT Permits, among others. We supported the celebrations around 150 years of Belgian-Japanese relations, ministerial, princely or economic missions, and other high-level visits to Japan. We also conducted various surveys aimed at improving bilateral trade, co-organized with BLCCJ the YES Program under the auspices of HRH Crown Prince Philippe – now HM King Philippe of Belgium, and supported the King Baudouin Foundation's Marilo Fund for journalists.

2013 Was truly a milestone year for the BJA, as we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with many special events, including a magnificent Gala, in the presence of HRH Prince Laurent and Princess Claire, with fashion shows, musical performances, and a Michelin-star Chefs' course menu. The BJA also published a commemorative newsletter on that occasion, which is still available [here](#).

So many events the BJA has been able to organize –seminars, debates, business luncheons, digital meetings, company visits, workshops, cultural videos and cultural visits– succeeded because of all the dedicated members and friends sharing their expertise, time and zeal.

We bow in deep gratitude for you all.

## EUROPALIA 1989: JAPAN IN BELGIUM

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

### The World's Fair of 1958

During the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels the Palais des Beaux-Arts/Paleis voor Schone Kunsten (now known as Bozar) and the Belgian Centre for International Cultural Exchanges joined forces to organize a major arts festival during the Fair. For six months, from April to September, concerts and performances by leading artists from all over the world attracted over half a million people. This was an initiative taken by Paul Willems (1912-1997), a writer, working at the Palais des Beaux-Arts/Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, and Maurice Huisman (1912-1993), director of the Théâtre de la Monnaie/Muntschouwburg. Encouraged by the resounding success, the organizers wished to continue the experiment. It was their feeling that far from competing with one other, the various theatre and ballet performances, concerts and exhibitions actually reinforced each other's attractiveness. Thus, Europalia was founded in Brussels in 1969 with the aim to invite every other year a different guest country to showcase its cultural heritage and its contemporary creations in as wide a variety as possible. As a growing political and economic centre and as the avowed capital of Europe, Brussels seemed the ideal venue to stimulate curiosity in and understanding of the different cultural heritages in Europe. Other founding fathers were Franz de Voghel, Pierre Janlet, and Herman Liebaers. The word "Europalia," was coined by Robert De Smet (1937-1993), one of the first generation of directors of the Europalia foundation, by combining the prefix Euro and the Latin word Opalia. The latter term refers to an ancient Roman festival held at harvest time in honour of Ops, goddess of the earth and fertility. In its etymology the word thus evokes a rich harvest of cultures.

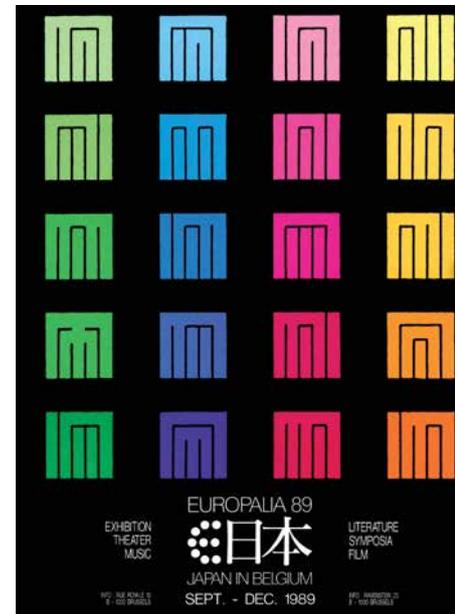
The first countries who were invited were member states of what was then still called the European Community,

but in the 1980s, after nine festivals, the organisers directed their gaze to more distant horizons. In an ostensible effort to shed any overly Eurocentric orientation, the foundation decided to invite a non-European country. Its choice fell on Japan. This was not a haphazard choice. In the eighties Japan had come to play an increasingly prominent role in the world economy. The country's extraordinary economic and financial development both fascinated and worried the Europeans. The organizers motivated their choice on the ground of these geo-political and economic considerations. Japan was recognized as a key player in the Pacific and an essential partner for Europe in a multi-polar world. Hence it was vital for Europeans to become acquainted with Japan, in order to understand its culture, heritage and creativity as factors that could explain the country's recent impressive success. In the vision of the organizers, Europalia Japan 1989 was also intended as the expression of a new awareness on the part of the Europeans: Europe is no longer the centre of the world, the world has become multipolar, and Europe wants to position itself in that newly evolving world order as a meeting place of exchange and a crossroads of influences. The Japanese had also an interest in putting up a comprehensive show of their culture: they were aware of the process of integration that was taking place in Europe and the prospect of the unification of the market in 1992 presented an excellent incentive for the initiative. Moreover, trade frictions between Japan and Europe were the talk of the day, and Japan came in for a lot of harsh criticism, especially in the automobile sector, where the French were especially vociferous in a discourse clad in military terms. This is hard to imagine for us now, in an age when the commercial relations between the two partners have entered calmer waters and are perceived to be sound and fair. The good relationship has indeed been cemented

in an Economic Partnership Agreement, which entered into force on 1 February 2019.

### Laying the Groundwork

The first contacts with possible partners in Japan were made around 1985. Herman Liebaers (1919-2010), who had been commissioner-general of the successful Europalia España (1985) and Jos Chabert (1933-2014), commissioner-general of the Belgian pavilion at the Tsukuba International Science Exposition in Japan (1985), established the initial contacts with the Japan Foundation to sound out Japanese willingness to participate. In that period Marcel Depasse was Ambassador of Belgium in Tokyo (19 September 1985 to 11 October 1988) and it fell upon him to draw up a concrete action plan, make the preliminary preparations and identify the persons and organizations who would have to play a key role on the Japanese side. He quite wisely decided to solicit the help of influential persons with a strong link to Belgium. The first



The general poster for Europalia 1989: Japan in Belgium, featuring 20 out of the 52 genji-mon, linear patterns used to identify different scents in the refined game of comparing and identifying varieties of incense. Design after an idea of Robert De Smet.

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LAST 60 YEARS OF BELGIUM-JAPAN RELATIONS

person whom he contacted was Ueda Taiz (1930-), formerly the Executive Secretary of the Honda Foundation in Tokyo. He had resided in Belgium during the sixties and knew the country well. Both men agreed that Honda Sōichirō (1906-1991), founder of the company that bears his name, and at the time chairman (1980-1990) of the Japan Belgium Society, would be the perfect choice for chairman of the Japanese Europalia committee that was to be set up. The charismatic founder of Honda Motor was not only one of the greatest Japanese businessmen of the twentieth century, but his company also happened to be the first major Japanese company to set up a production facility in Belgium in 1962 in the city of Aalst. The Japanese committee counted five Vice-Chairmen, including Shimoda Takezō, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Honda Foundation, and a former Ambassador to Belgium, as well as Yamamoto Shizuhiko, equally a former Ambassador to Belgium.

Ambassador Depasse also introduced some other key members, among others Nakamura Yoshisuke, a former staff member of the major Japanese newspaper Mainichi shinbun. He became Director of the Japanese executive committee, along with Ueda Taizō, Director of the Japan Belgium Society, and Nakai Michihiro, Secretary-General of the Honda Foundation. Mr Yamamoto was appointed Commissioner-General of the Japanese executive committee. During

the festival as well as in the period leading up to it, the Ambassador of Japan in Belgium, Katō Yoshiya (-1993), and the Ambassador of Belgium in Japan Patrick Nothomb (1936-2020), played a vital role in the communication between the different parties concerned.

Both government and private companies made a major effort to ensure the success of this great world 'premiere,' probably the most comprehensive overview of its culture and history Japan has ever given abroad. Initially, there had been much hesitation and reluctance, but once the new Emperor Akihito had announced that he had accepted to be the Honorary President of the event, keeping a promise he had made before his accession to the throne, the money started flooding in. The Agency of Cultural Affairs and the Japan Foundation presented the exhibition on The Human Figure in Japanese Art (l'Homme et son image/ De mens: beeld en evenbeeld), which was the centrepiece of the festival, and were involved in a number of other events as well.

On the Belgian side, the Europalia International Foundation, chaired by Baron Jean Godeaux (1922-2009), equally set up an executive committee, and appointed Jacques Groothaert (1922-2009), a former Ambassador of Belgium to China, as Belgian Commissioner-General. The executive committee was assisted by a scientific committee, chaired by the author of this article, which was

involved in the negotiations with the various Japanese partners, in the preparation of many exhibitions, as well as in the writing and/or editing of various catalogues.

### Announcement of the programme

On 19 April 1989, the programme was officially presented to the press in the Egmont Palace in Brussels. In an introductory speech, Minister for External Relations Leo Tindemans pointed out that Europe had thus far been mainly focusing on the economic aspects of Japan and too little on its culture. He stressed that the '89 edition of Europalia could be considered as "a leap into the unknown." *"Whereas in previous editions, the focus was on what the various European cultures had to offer, there is now much more room for the wonder of unexpected discoveries,"* he said.

*"The exclusive concentration on Japan as an economic miracle causes us to view this country with a mixture of awe and fear and so it is high time to break this one-sided view. By focusing on a culture that is at once the most modern and most traditionalist in the Far East, Europalia aims to give audiences a better understanding of the Asian world,"* Tindemans argued.

Europalia chairman Jean Godeaux argued that the great appeal of Japan sprang from the constant interplay between modernism and tradition. The country, which is one of the three hubs of today's industrial world, already has one foot in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but it never compromises on its traditional values in the process, he contended. *"Extending our field of vision beyond Europe gives us a chance to demonstrate that the future, even if it derails and sometimes causes disquiet, does not relinquish the past,"* Godeaux argued.

*"Japan knows our culture, but we ourselves are lagging behind in this respect,"* said Commissioner-General Jacques Groothaert. According to him, however, one cannot understand the

Main entrance of the Palais des Beaux-Arts/Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, at the time of the inaugural ceremony



View of a section of the exhibition The Human Figure in Japanese Art





Former Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru, addressing the audience at the inaugural ceremony

Prime Minister Wilfried Martens, addressing the audience at the inaugural ceremony

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LAST 60 YEARS OF BELGIUM-JAPAN RELATIONS

rise of Japanese technology without understanding the cultural and historical background from which it emerged. It is pointless to cling to a bygone form of Eurocentrism. *“Japan is an indispensable partner in building a shared vision of society, and so it is more necessary than ever to prove our openness to other forms of art and thought.”* Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, Kat Yoshiya announced that the Japanese Emperor Akihito and King Baudouin had accepted to be Honorary Presidents. Never before had a Japanese Emperor been Honorary President over a foreign organisation.

Minister Louis Tobback explained that Europolia Japan brought two revelations: art flown in from Japan on the one hand, and Japanese art from collections in Belgium on the other, *“perhaps a revelation for our Japanese guests too,”* the minister suggested.

### An Unprecedented Scale

From 26 September to 17 December, the Europolia visitor will be able to enjoy some 70 exhibitions, concerts, theatre and film performances. Debates and other forms of entertainment, visitors will be able to get to know the land of the rising sun in detail. These events, spread across 15 Belgian cities, will for the first time transcend national borders so that our neighbouring countries can also enjoy art treasures that have never left Japan before.

That the list of ministries, agencies, institutions, societies, associations, committees, and persons who contributed to the realization of this project covers several pages is a testimony to the fact that the enterprise succeeded in mobilizing a great many people in both countries. The statistics confirm the unprecedented scale of the endeavour.

The budget that the Japanese and Belgian committees were able to garner in the event broke all historical records. No less than 260 Japanese companies contributed funds towards the budget of the Japanese committee. More than 1,700,000 people visited an exhibition or attended one or more of the events, another record.

From 26 September to 17 December 1989, Europolia Japan offered the Belgian and European public the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of a vast range of traditional and modern expressions of Japanese culture. The official programme alone included 144 exhibits, shows or events, and 42 unofficial related events are recorded to have taken place. The festival also offered Belgium the opportunity to assert its European vocation. Europolia Japan 1989 crossed indeed the Belgian borders. Some of the artistic or musical events were organized or staged in the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Northern France. High level Japanese-European colloquia were held in five Western European cities, where subjects dealing with the challenges of science, technology and intellectual research were debated. The Commission of the European Community equally offered its support.

The programme of Europolia Japan 1989 was spread over fifteen Belgian cities and towns, and was supported by the national, regional, provincial and municipal authorities. Public institutions and numerous private companies provided financial or logistical support. An unprecedented number of national treasures and works of high value left Japan for the first time in the country’s history. On the Belgian side, no effort was spared to prepare the public, in schools and through the media, for the less

familiar aspects of Japanese culture. The written press, radio and television played an important role in conveying the information to the widest possible audience. An exchange programme of young Belgians and Japanese to foster mutual understanding was launched. Directors of museums, concerts and festivals, societies, theatres, and cultural centres were eager to host one or more of the events.

### The Inauguration

In the weeks leading up to the official opening, the Brussels cityscape was coloured by announcements of and references to the impending cultural event. Grey Toyotas covered with stickers like “Official Car” and “Europolia 89, Japan in Belgium” weaved their way through the traffic. Posters were visible everywhere, banks and insurance offices even used the festival emblem to enliven their letters and leaflets. Newspapers and weeklies were crammed with information about the festival programme and reports from the land “of the rising sun”. In bookshops publications on Japan were put in the front of shop windows and nearby cash registers.

Two weeks before the inauguration, the polychrome wooden sculpture of the shogunal councillor Uesugi Shigefusa (thirteenth century) from the temple Meigetsu-in, that served as the signature image of the central exhibition, had been unpacked in the presence of the press, in a highly choreographed manner. The newspapers did not fail to remark that only Japanese museum staff were allowed to touch the sculpture. The unveiling ceremony even conjured images of the unwrapping of an Egyptian mummy. The Belgian Post in conjunction with the Japanese Post issued a 13 francs commemorative stamp featuring this very image.

The festival was officially opened on 26 September in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in the presence of King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola, and the Japanese Crown

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LAST 60 YEARS OF BELGIUM-JAPAN RELATIONS

Prince Naruhito, the present Emperor. Few precedents of equal significance could be brought to mind, except perhaps The Ausstellung Altjapanischer Kunst in Berlin in 1939, and l'Art japonais à travers les siècles, which toured Paris, London, The Hague and Rome in the years 1958-59. No fewer than 35 television stations were present at the opening. The opening ceremony was introduced and concluded by a performance by the Gagaku Orchestra of the Japanese Imperial Court. On behalf of the Belgian government, Prime Minister Wilfried Martens gave a speech in which he emphasised that for the first time the Japanese art heritage was showing itself to the European public in such a grand manner. The Japanese government was represented by former Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru, who spoke of a magnificent celebration of culture, art, and a spiritual experience.

In the weekend before the official opening, all hotels in the inner city were fully booked with Japanese VIP's, officials, and journalists. They were in town to attend the grand opening. That Japanese journalists descended in such great numbers had probably less to do with their love for their national arts, than with their eagerness to follow every movement of the Crown Prince. The latter had been an eligible bachelor for quite some time, and the media were burning with curiosity to find out about any possible marriage candidates. The organisers were somewhat baffled by this attention from the Japanese media but discovered with relief that they were capable of exerting considerable self-restraint. They walked the tight rope between their respect for the person of the Prince and their hunger for 'fodder.' This led to a sometimes rather comical situation, such as when happened after the Crown Prince had signed the visitors' book of the central exhibition. He had hardly turned to leave the room, when a phalanx of cameramen and photographers, as if taken with a sudden frenzy, rushed into the room, straight past the bodyguards to converge on the table



*Honda Sōichirō, chairman of the Japanese Europalia committee*



*Jacques Groothaert, Belgian commissioner-general*

where the visitors' book lay. Amidst jostling and pushing, they zoomed in on the open page to get microphotographic close-ups of the august signature.

### Funding

The organisers had been able to raise a fund of just over one billion Belgian francs, three quarters of it contributed by the Japanese business community. Belgian companies' participation was on a more modest scale, and the Belgian government's support was largely moral. Japan on the other hand was living the heyday of what has come to be known as the bubble economy. The Plaza Accord of September 1985 led to the strong appreciation of the Japanese yen. Between 1986 and 1991 real estate and stock market prices went through the ceiling. Speculation in asset and stock prices was closely associated with an excessive monetary easing policy. In late 1988 the Japanese yen hovered about the rate of 123 yen to the US dollar. In the same year 1988 Nikkei 225 broke the 30,000-level mark and recorded a new high of 30,159 on 28 December 1988. Nikkei 225 continued to be bullish, as it touched a historical all-time high of 38,957.44 on 29 December 1989, by coincidence a few days after Europalia Japan had closed its doors.

### A Watershed

On 7 January 1989, Emperor Hirohito had passed away. He was almost 88 when he died, and he had been on the throne for 62 years. He thus became the oldest and longest-reigning Emperor in Japanese history. His reign, the Shōwa period was marked by unprecedented upheavals and sweeping changes: the pre-war period, the war, defeat, occupation, recovery, resurrection, and economic miracle, all this in the span of a single reign. The year 1989 thus became the year when this eventful reign was

closed, and a new one dawned, known as Heisei. That Europalia Japan fell right in this pivotal year was obviously neither foreseen nor intended, but it nevertheless lent extra meaning to the festival. From that point of view, it could be interpreted as a moment of retrospection and of anticipation, a milestone in the history of Belgian-Japanese relations.

In order to present the overwhelmingly wide range of Japanese cultural expressions, Europalia Japan 1989 adopted simple themes which were familiar to the public in the West. Although some of the exhibitions highlighted some particular historical period, exploring e.g. the history of Japanese contacts with the outside world, as featured in Namban: the Portuguese in Japan (sixteenth century) or Oranda: the Dutch in Japan (17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), the signature exhibition The Human Figure in Japanese Art took a more conceptual approach. This unique exhibition included 130 works of Japanese art from the middle of the Jōmon period (3.000-2.000 B.C.) to the early nineteenth century. The representation of the human figure in the arts was the underlying theme, offering a unique survey of Japanese art through time. It included no less than seven national treasures and 58 important cultural assets, as well as two items from the imperial collections. It was divided in eight sections. One section featured religious art, including early anthropomorphic artefacts, as well as Buddhist and Shinto iconography. Another section highlighted the relationship between man and his environment, contrasting the differences between Japanese tradition and Chinese influence. Other sections still illustrated various self-images of the Japanese: portraits, archetypes, masks, and caricatures.

(to be continued in the next issue)

## Partnered up with Japan

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» keep reading from p.2

I thank you and your many members for the excellent work you have done – and will do - in bringing Belgium and Japan closer together.

We share the same objective of strengthening the relations between our two countries. I believe that our 157 year old partnership based on cooperation and shared values has the potential to grow even further. The intensity of our friendly relationships is a source of promising projects for the future. Together, let's take these promises and turn them into concrete commitments for the benefit of both our countries!

*By Her Excellency Hadja Lahbib, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade, and the Federal Cultural Institutions*

### REBIRTH AT SIXTY YEARS KANREKI - TO CELEBRATE BJA'S 60 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

*By Hidetoshi Ogawa, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Japan, and BJA Executive Committee Member*

This year BJA celebrates 60 years commemorating its foundation. I would like to express my highest appreciation and gratitude for the invaluable contribution of the BJA to the promotion of Belgian-Japanese friendship and ties for so many decades, which has been made possible by many devoted predecessors and incumbent members.

In Japan, the age of 60 is considered to be somewhat special, called "Kanreki" which means "returning to the first traditional calendar year", representing rebirth. This is linked to an extremely ancient traditional oriental zodiac system based on sexagenary (60) cycle, origin of which can be traceable up to Chinese dynasty Yin or Shang in the second millennium B.C. The sexagenary system is made by a combination of 12 animal symbols coupled with 10 natural elements (wood, fire, earth, metal,

and water, each has elder (active/positive) and cadet (passive/negative), and the half of all possible combinations (120) has been used for the calendar.

In today's Japanese society, its ordinary use is limited to two cases, except for scholars and fortune-tellers. The first uses only 12 animal symbols for describing what a given year represents, especially for new year's greeting cards. This year (2023) is a year of rabbit. You may wish your friends like "your business would advance as quickly as a rabbit runs this year". This use is still quite common and most of Japanese are conscious in which year they were born and at least what animal this year is. It is sometimes trickily used to know somebody's age, by asking their birth year's animal. The other surviving use is to celebrate the 60 years anniversary for longevity and wish the 60-year-old per-

son to be reborn with health and vitality as the traditional calendar year returns to the same one when they were born. Now many of ordinary Japanese are not mindful about the 10 natural elements' part, but the notion of returning to the same year every sixty years is still alive. This leads to a traditional custom to offer baby clothes in red (colour considered to protect baby against evil) to a 60-year-old person. It becomes less common as 60 is not considered to be so old these days, but there are many Japanese who celebrate their 60-year-old relatives in offering some gifts and organising a familial party.

I wish therefore the BJA to be reborn with further vigour in its 60 years anniversary in this year of rabbit and continue to run fast at the head to lead Belgian-Japanese relations even closer!

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# Technologies for the Decarbonization of Energy & Mobility Collaboration Opportunities for Belgium & Japan

## モビリティとエネルギーにおける脱炭素社会へのテクノロジー - 日本とベルギーとのコラボレーション -

Thursday, 26 January 2023 - Digital event



Dr Fabrice Stassin, Director Government Affairs Electromobility at Umicore and Co-chair of the BJA IPT Committee, giving the opening words

A highly insightful panel discussion entertained the audience

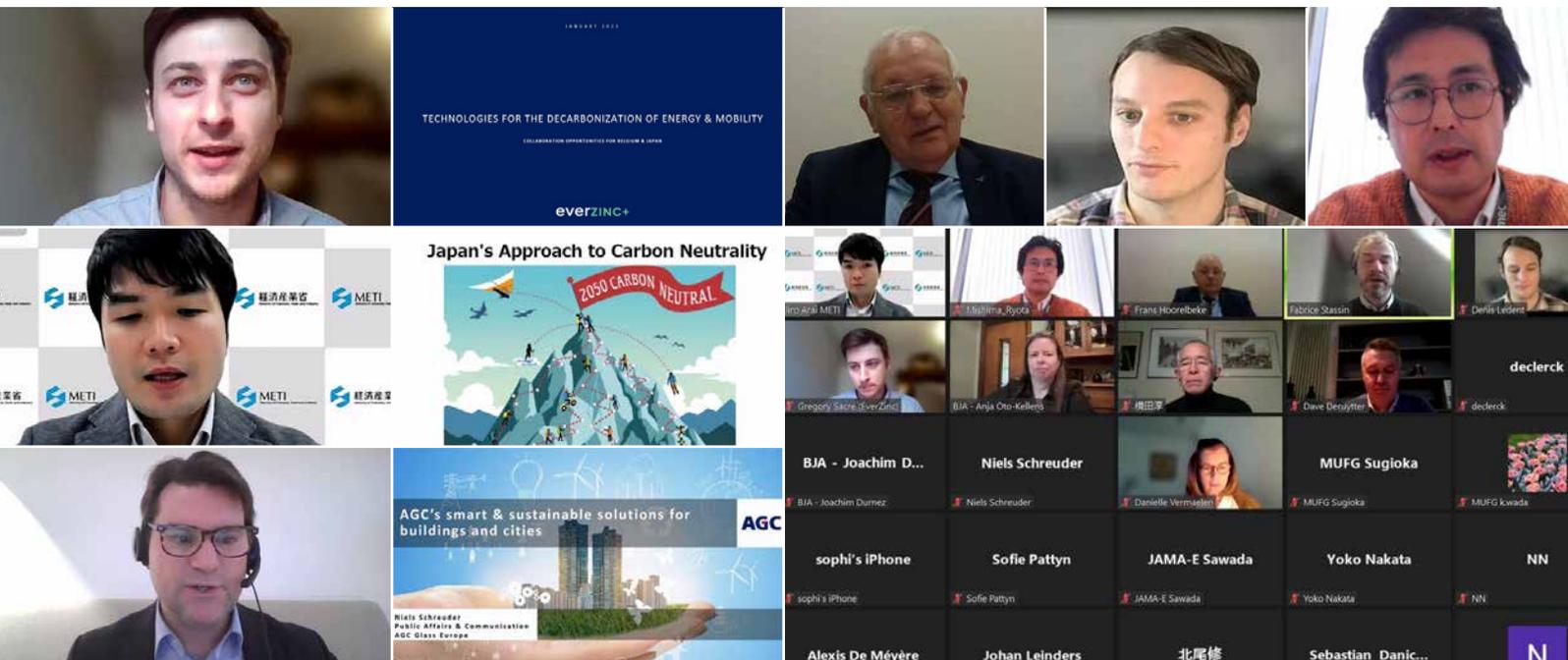
The recent successful Belgian Economic Mission to Japan has clearly shown the strong collaboration between Belgium and Japan in the field of technologies for decarbonization. As a follow-up, the BJA Innovation, Partnerships & Trade (IPT) Committee had the pleasure to invite a policymaker and various experts from leading Belgian and Japanese companies to share how their companies develop the solar, building and battery technologies of tomorrow.

Dr Fabrice Stassin, Director Government Affairs Electromobility at Umicore and Co-chair of the BJA IPT Committee opened this digital event. The presentation session began with Mr Jiro Arai, Deputy Director of Environmental Economy Office Industrial Science and Technology Policy and Environmental bureau of METI. He was followed by Mr Ryota Mishima, Assistant Manager of Kaneka, Mr Niels Schreuder, Public Affairs & Communi-

cation of AGC Glass Europe, Mr Frans Hoorelbeke, Honorable Senior Advisor of Daikin Europe, Mr Grégory Sacré, Sales Manager of EverZinc, and Dr Fabrice Stassin, Director Government Affairs Electromobility of Umicore. Mr Denis Ledent, Business Support Coordinator of EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation, concluded the session, which was followed by a highly insightful Q&A, where the participants had the opportunity to ask many interesting questions to the experts.

While both the EU and Japan are looking to decarbonize society and achieve climate neutrality by 2050, it is very clear that a strong collaboration between the two sides is needed, and the participants could fully appreciate this valuable webinar that illustrated the huge benefits such collaboration can bring.

You can access most of the speakers' presentations [here](#).



NELE DUPRIX

# BELGIANS IN JAPAN

By Geert Benoit, Managing Director, Yamagata Europe, and BJA Editorial Committee Member

The Royal economic mission in December last year was special for many reasons. One of them was the large participation of the academic world. Almost 20% of the participants to the mission came from an academic background.

Therefore it seemed logical to speak to someone with a special role in this academic exchange. Nele Duprix, a Japanologist who has been living in Japan for over 20 years, combines two quite distinct jobs related to the academic exchange. On the one hand, Nele is a liaison officer for the KU Leuven in Japan. On the other hand, she is the assistant programme director for the JMEC programme, which is a short-term MBA programme with a focus on the Japanese market.

We agreed to meet in Kamakura on a Sunday. Kamakura is just an hour away from Tokyo and a very popular day-trip from the over-busy cities for tourists and Japanese alike. It was a sunny autumn afternoon when I arrived at Kamakura station, where Nele was waiting for me at the gate. The main street out of the station was packed with tourists, it was only the second weekend after the government eased the Covid restrictions and the Japanese tourists were happy to enjoy the hotspots without the usual inundation of foreigners that will be enforced by the cheap Yen. In order to give the in-country tourism an extra push in the back, the government set up a

voucher system to spend on local travel and restaurants.

Nele guided me to a bar with an outside area where we could talk quietly, occasionally interrupted by the typical passing sound of the local train that connects Kamakura with Enoshima. I often visited Kamakura during my stays in Tokyo, I love the mountain hikes, the temples, the sea, the relaxed and green environment. It is a place that attracts surfers and has a relaxed Californian touch and still breathes pure history.

**So, my first question is obvious: “Are you a surfer? What brings you here?”**

*Nele: I love sports and have been an active sports lover all my life, but I am not a surfer. Now I do windsurfing; here in Kamakura, the sea is a magnet. It was actually my sister-in-law who convinced me to come and live here. We were here together on a day-trip. I still lived and worked in Tokyo but was suffering from the overcrowded life-stress and the cold impersonality. From up the mountains in Kita-Kamakura we were looking at the sea, and I said: “I would like to live here”. A few weeks later, I just did it. I moved here and accepted the longer commuting times. I’ve been living here for ten years already, but today I work as a freelancer. Since Covid has changed the way of working drastically in Japan as well, I am extremely happy with my choice to settle down here. It is a truly friendly and open place, it kept a village*





mentality and offers breathing space.

**You studied Japanology, did the exchange programme at Kansai University, but unlike many others, you stayed.**

*Nele:* Indeed, after the exchange year I was not ready to go back, and some coincidental occurrences opened job opportunities within the sister city exchange programmes that exist between some Belgian and Japanese cities. So, I first started in Yuki (Ibaraki prefecture and sister city of Mechelen), supporting the city for a special event and could later start in Kanazawa (sister city of Ghent) for a marvellous stay of two years. Those were my first steps in the event organisation, representation, and PR business. Life in Kanazawa convinced me to stay here: great food, a nice atmosphere and interesting projects to work on. So, when I had to move on after a few years, the feeling of life in a city with a constant view on the wide-open sea was locked in my heart. And I do still have a link with Kanazawa; I recently accompanied the artist Anton Kusters for his visit to Kanazawa and Japan.

**But it took you many years before you actually could make that happen and move to the sea-town of Kamakura.**

*Nele:* Indeed, after Kanazawa I worked for FIFA for one year to aid in the organisation of the World Cup Football in Japan in 2002. A great experience, as I love sports. But when the football dust settled on the pitches, I moved to a company that organised business matching, market research and event organising for the market specific programs within the EU Gateway to Japan programme. It is a programme that supports European SMEs to focus on the Japanese market. Not always an easy task, because in some sectors, the SMEs are small and probably not strong and patient enough for a market entry in the not-so-easy

Japanese market. Directing their focus on Japan strongly enough and for long enough was a challenge from time to time. But it was fun, and we opened the doors to Japan for many European companies.

*I did that for ten years, but it became hard to continue. I like new things, endless-wide challenges – that is why I originally studied Japanese – so I decided to move on and took a sabbatical to focus on Yoga. I went to Bali for a year to become a Yoga teacher and mainly focussed on the spiritual side of Yoga. Since then, I aim to have what they call an “asobi-jinsei”, a playful life. When it rains, I schedule my meetings in Tokyo, when the sun shines, we do it here in Kamakura. You get me?*

**I get you, but it hurts a business man’s ears to hear, so let’s move on... What does it mean to be a liaison officer for the KUL?**

*Nele:* Basically, the job entails three focus areas. First of all, I support the local alumni charter with the organisation of their events here in Japan. Alumni are Belgians who live and work here or Japanese who studied at KUL. Secondly, and most prominently, I support the university in attracting and motivating Japanese students to look at Belgium and the KUL if they are looking for opportunities to study or do research outside of Japan. Thirdly, I support the KUL in signing partnerships with Japan-based universities. KUL already has partnerships with Kansai University, Waseda and Kyoto University. During the mission, a contract was signed between the Law Department of KU Leuven and Tokyo University (Todai). In this bilateral student exchange agreement between KU Leuven’s Faculty of Law and Criminology and the University of Tokyo’s Graduate School for Law and Politics, both part-

ners agree to exchange up to 4 students each semester, for the duration of five years. This student exchange agreement is the embodiment of a memorandum of understanding which is also concluded between both parties for a period of five years. As for Waseda University, within the framework of its Global Exchange Programme, KU Leuven seeks to offer a select number of partners, now including Waseda University, a balanced, reciprocal and sustainable mobility of students.

**It seems the Japanese universities are interested in this kind of cooperation.**

*Nele:* Indeed, the timing is right now for more academic exchange between Belgium and Japan, in the direction of Japan. Universities are open to correcting the imbalance that was created by the long closure of the country due to Covid, and Japan is in real need of new talent, because of the aging population.

**What are the challenges in the other direction: to convince Japanese students to come to Leuven?**

*Nele:* It is not easy. First of all there is the language barrier. Studying outside of Japan means studying in English for most Japanese, but even though the KUL has an English curriculum for foreign students, in their day-to-day life they will live in a non-English environment. That needs some extra explanation and encouragement. Before anything else, we have to introduce what Belgium is about, its unique position in Europe, and the next step is to focus on the university. That is not always clear from the material that the university supplies.

**Which tools do you use to attract the students?**

*Nele:* Organising events works best, providing physical presence and physical contact. The embassy annually organises a very interesting “Study in Belgium Event” that each year attracts a lot of attention. On the EU level, the EU annually organises the “European Higher Education Fair Japan”, a very interesting event that attracts motivated stu-

dents and their parents. Unfortunately, in 2022, Flemish universities were not represented.

In some cases, I use alternative ways to promote the university, like having a KUL booth at events about Belgium. Physical presence is important in Japan. One also has to understand that the social media landscape in Japan is totally different from the one in Europe. Facebook is non-existent and LinkedIn is not so popular, not even in the professional and academic world. I would like to start something like an Instagram. A generic website – even translated – is often not the right tool. Japanese really need truly localised information, from a different perspective than the generic info channels that are available.

**I was indeed informed that the Flemish official representation in Japan does not have a person in charge anymore for academic exchange, meaning that the Universities have to take their own initiatives.**

Nele: Indeed, this is true. For some aspects, a liaison person is needed who coordinates and channels all academic and higher education related questions, just like the one the French speaking community has.

**Let's switch to your other job: JMEC. A totally different story?**

Nele: Indeed, JMEC is an international MBA programme that matches up stu-

dents with companies that have a specific need for market research in Japan, in order to set up a short-term, intensive MBA. The students are mid-professionals who live and work in Japan, Japanese and non-Japanese alike. The companies supply the funding for the programme and apply with a specific question and students apply to work on these market challenges for a programme that is spread over 7 weekends. JMEC was originally an initiative from Australia and New Zealand, but it later became broader. Many European National Trade organisations have also joined, including Belgium via the BLCCJ and FIT.

**It seems interesting as a kick-off market research assignment. Have some Belgian companies already applied? How much does it cost for the company?**

Nele: Maybe due to its background, it is not yet that well known in Belgium and that is my new task. Only one company has joined so far. It was Ardo, a frozen food producer from Ardoois, Flanders. The cost is 1.5 million yen for the companies, 150,000 yen for the students. But let it be clear, my responsibility is not specific to Belgium. During 7 weekends, the students who come from different backgrounds get lectures from academics from Temple University, combined with lectures from entrepreneurs, and then work for a few months on a business plan for a certain market challenge. The groups are composed by JMEC based on interviews to secure the mul-

tidisciplinary approach. I am involved in the general PR and organisation, but I am not in this function because of my Belgian network and nationality. At the end, there is a pitch and a competition. Last year, the three winners were Advitos, a German company that has produced the world's first single-device, multi-organ treatment method, Coca Cola Bottlers Japan, and CooperSurgical Japan, a company that makes products that are designed to improve the health of women and babies.

**Combining two different jobs must not be easy.**

Nele: It does require some flexibility. The JMEC project is especially busy in certain periods, that makes it easier to plan on the annual calendar. If I wanted a full-time 9 to 5 job I would do something else, and not have the uncertainty of freelancing, but I would also not be able to enjoy the freedom of living in Kamakura. Freelancing gives me time for other things like Yoga and enjoying the nature and friendliness of this fantastic city where you can smell the sea. And life is so comfortable and easy in Japan, all is well organised, it is so safe. It is nearly impossible to leave this country, it is such a nice home for me.

**After all this promotion for Japanese life and Kamakura, I would like to end with a personal question. Recently I have been getting so many questions from friends and relatives to organise a tailor-made Japan trip for them. Is that something you do or have done?**

Nele: Indeed, I have in the past teamed up with travel agencies in Belgium to organise group trips to Japan. But, I am not doing it anymore, so your readers should not contact me for this.

Thank you so much for this open talk in the open air.

PS: A final unimportant note from the interviewer, please do not contact me for organizing your travels either ... I am truly sorry!





## IMEC AND RAPIDUS SIGN MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION TO COLLABORATE ON ADVANCED SEMICONDUCTOR TECHNOLOGIES

On 6 December 2022 in Tokyo, imec, a world-leading research and innovation hub in nanoelectronics and digital technologies, and Rapidus, a newly founded semiconductor company in Japan, have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC). Under the agreement, imec and Rapidus intend to set up a long-term and sustainable collaboration on advanced semiconductor technologies. The MOC is endorsed by the Government of Flanders and the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) who thereby confirm their commitment to strengthen the collaboration of the semiconductor industry in Japan and Flanders.

The MOC was signed by Mr Yasutoshi Nishimura, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan; Mr Jan Jambon, Minister-President of The Government of Flanders and Flemish Minister for Foreign Policy, Culture, Digitalisation and Facilities; Dr Atsuyoshi Koike, President and CEO of Rapidus; and Mr Luc Van den hove, President and CEO of imec – as part of the Belgian economic mission to Japan.

Rapidus plans to mass-produce chips with state-of-the-art 2-nanometer technology in Japan in the latter half of this decade. Such advanced chips can be used for 5G communications, quantum computing, data centers, self-driving vehicles, and digital smart cities. Imec intends to support Rapidus in the research and development of leading-edge technology. For this, Rapidus and imec express their intention to set up a strategic partnership, with Rapidus becoming a core partner in imec's leading advanced nanoelectronics program. The MOC also contemplates collaboration with the nearly established Leading-edge Semiconductor Technology Center (LSTC), which will serve as a research and development hub for

beyond 2-nanometer technologies in Japan. With the MOC, all parties subscribe to the importance of worldwide collaboration and regional strengthening of semiconductor ecosystems, in particular the ecosystem in Japan.

*"Flanders boasts expert know-how in the nanotech field, centered around its five universities as well as its nanotech research center imec. Our region has all the building blocks for micro- and nanotechnology innovations and applications."*

*says, Jan Jambon.*

*"The Government of Flanders fully endorses the ambitious collaboration signed off today between imec and semiconductor company Rapidus. International partnerships are – more than ever – key to boost our respective competitiveness when it comes to micro- and nanochips."*

*Minister Nishimura says,*

*"We welcome the MOC between imec, which has formed one of the EU's top semiconductor R&D ecosystems, and Rapidus, the future production base for next-generation semiconductors in Japan. We expect that this MOC, in collaboration with the nearly-established Leading-edge Semiconductor Technology Center (LSTC), will contribute to establish designs and a manufacturing production base for next-generation semiconductors in the late 2020s, and strengthen semiconductor supply chain resiliency in like-minded countries and regions."*

*"With this MOC, imec is pleased to be able to further intensify its collaboration with the Japan-based R&D ecosystem, the foundation of which was laid years ago,"*

*says Luc Van den hove.*

*"We are excited that Rapidus intends to join our core program and engage in bilateral projects on semiconductor device integration, on key enabling process technologies (such as advanced lithography) as well as system application-oriented projects. Building on our years of expertise in advanced chip technologies and on our global ecosystem of partners including the entire value chain of the semiconductor industry, we will support Rapidus in their intention to mass-produce chips with state-of-the-art 2-nanometer technology in Japan."*

*"I am very pleased that Rapidus is signing an MOC with imec, which is renowned for its advanced technologies, system solutions and state-of-the-art 300mm pilot line."*

*says Dr. Atsuyoshi Koike.*

*"International collaboration is crucial for Rapidus to achieve our planned goal for mass-production of 2-nanometer technology, and imec is an essential partner for such collaboration. I am very excited to think that the day is approaching when Japan can once again play an active role in the semiconductor arena and contribute to the well-being of humanity by taking advantage of this long-desired opportunity."*

Source: <https://www.imec-int.com/en/press/imec-and-rapidus-sign-memorandum-cooperation-collaborate-advanced-semiconductor-technologies>

## EU Committee News

## EU EXECUTIVE KICKS OFF LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES FOR CARBON REMOVALS CERTIFICATIONS

By Ilaria Capitanio, Senior EU Policy Analyst – Sumitomo Benelux S.A./N.V.

### Executive summary

- › To become carbon neutral by 2050, the EU will focus on emission reductions as a priority and will offset remaining emissions through carbon removals. However, to ensure that carbon removals are high quality and prevent greenwashing, the EU Commission released a legislative proposal to certificate carbon removals on November 30, 2022. The certification would work as a tool to monitor, qualify and verify carbon removals so that new business models could be operated by industrial operators and farmers;
- › Targeted practices which would be eligible for certification include industrial technologies which capture carbon and store it permanently (such as BECCS and DACCS), carbon farming and carbon storage in long-lasting products and materials;
- › Carbon removals would be assessed and compared through a set of QU.A.L.I.TY criteria including quantification, additionality, long-term storage and sustainability;
- › The Commission further identifies few business models and financing opportunities which could reward carbon removals, including public financing, private financing, labelling, impact financing and voluntary carbon markets;
- › The legislative proposal will now be assessed by the EU Parliament and Council, with targeted approval before next EU elections in May 2024. Yet, the Commission will already start works on methodologies and criteria. Once the legislation will be passed, the certification system will be streamlined and implemented;
- › Several criticism and remaining issues will need to be clarified throughout the negotiations and implementation phases, but developments are worth monitoring to grasp potential business opportunities.

### Introduction

To deliver on its ambitious commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050, the EU should exploit all possible tools. So while reducing GHG emissions via mitigating actions will still be the primary action, the EU also acknowledges that such reductions will need to be complemented by the removals of several hundred million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, to offset remaining emissions. Hence, willing to guarantee that removals will preserve the EU's environmental goals and will not become an instrument for greenwashing, the EU Commission adopted a legislative proposal for a first EU-wide voluntary framework to reliably certify high-quality carbon removals on November 30. The main goals of the proposals include:

1. Accelerating the deployment of verifiable and high-quality carbon removals so that industries, farmers and foresters will be incentivised to pursue innovative carbon removal technologies and sustainable carbon farming solutions;
2. Ensure that the EU can quantify, monitor, and verify carbon removals through higher transparency requirements which would prevent greenwashing and enhance trust, with the goal to generate several financing options by private or public sources.

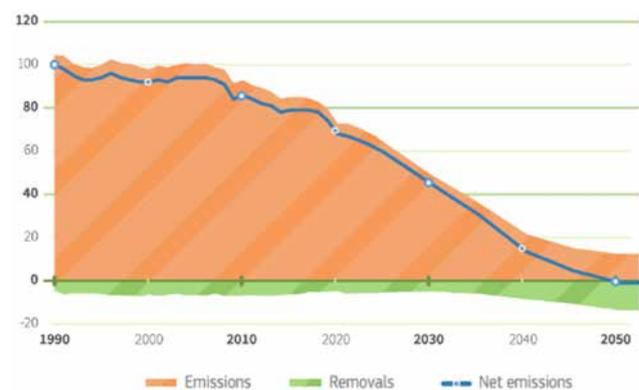


Figure 1. EU path towards 2050 carbon neutrality. Source: EU Commission factsheet

The below report aims to present a first overview of the contents of this proposal, as well as its wider context and reception.

### Targeted technologies under the scope of the proposal

According to EU Commission, technologies and practices eligible for carbon certification would include:

1. Industrial technologies which capture carbon and store it permanently, such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) or direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCS);

## Certification of carbon removals (regulation): Removal definition

Carbon removal as defined in main 3 means (1) Carbon farming (2) Permanent storage (CCS), (3) Storage in products (CCU), It can be classified as follows. Of the means enclosed in red frames are defined in this bill. On the one hand, fossil origin CO<sub>2</sub> of CCS is outside the scope of this bill. (already, EU-ETSetc. is operated)

CO <sub>2</sub> origin	CO <sub>2</sub> collect	CO <sub>2</sub> storage	Definition of terms
Air CO <sub>2</sub>	 <b>Collected and collected through soil and forest management, etc. storage</b>		(1) Carbon farming
	 <b>Collected as biomass</b>	 <b>Permanent storage (CCS)</b>	(2)-1 BECCS (Bio-Energy Carbon Capture and Storage)
		 <b>Storage in products (CCS)</b>	(3)-1 CCU (from biomass)
	<b>Collected as directly from the atmosphere (DAC)</b>	 <b>Permanent storage (CCS)</b>	(2)-2 DACCS (Direct Air Carbon Capture and Storage)
		 <b>Storage in products (CCS)</b>	(3)-2 CCU (from DAC)
Fossil origin CO <sub>2</sub>	<b>Permanent storage (CCS)</b>		Permanent storage (CCS) <i>This CCS definition is out of scope. On the other hand, this CCS is defined in EU-ETS, carbon removal can be counted by meeting requirements of CCS Directive (2009/31/EC)</i>
			

Figure 2. Carbon removal technologies eligible for certification. Source: Japan Business Council in Europe.

- In agriculture and forestry, carbon farming practices which can sustainably enhance the storage of carbon in soils and forests or reduce the release of carbon from soils, such as restoring forests and soils or managing wetlands and peatlands. The scope is to create new business models for farmers and foresters;
- Carbon storage in long-lasting products and materials, such as wood-based construction products.

### QU.A.L.ITY criteria ensuring the quality and comparability of removals

For the above-mentioned technologies, the Commission will aim to established rules for: a. The independent verification of carbon removals; b. the recognition of certification schemes that can be used to demonstrate compliance with the EU framework. To ensure the quality and comparability of carbon removals, the proposed regulation establishes four QU.A.L.ITY criteria:

<b>Quantification</b>	Carbon removal activities need to be measured accurately and deliver unambiguous benefits for the climate;
<b>Additionality</b>	Carbon removal activities need to go beyond existing standard practices and what is required by law;
<b>Long-term storage</b>	Certificates clearly account for the duration of carbon storage to distinguish permanent storage from temporary storage;
<b>Sustainability</b>	Carbon removal activities must preserve or contribute to sustainability objectives such as climate change adaptation, circular economy, water and marine resources, and biodiversity.

Figure 3. EU Commission QU.A.L.ITY criteria. Source: author's elaboration.

The EU institutions pointed out that only carbon removals meeting the above-mentioned QU.A.L.ITY criteria will be eligible to obtain the EU certification. It is unclear, at this stage, how removals located and operated outside the EU will be considered (more on that below).

### Business models and financing opportunities rewarding carbon removals

The legislative text sets forth the below options as new business models and financing opportunities rewarding removals. Yet, at a public event on carbon removals hosted by Politico Europe and Shell on December 7th, Mr Christian Holzleitner (Head of the Unit for Land, Economy and Carbon Removals at the EU Commission which was in charge of the proposal) considers that start-ups will predominantly operate the business models surrounding carbon removals. He also mentioned that to kick-off such new business models, there will be need for patient capitals from both the private and public sector, and trust.

<b>Public funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Innovative forms of private and public financing, including impact finance or result-based public support under State aid or the Common Agricultural Policy;</li> <li>› Carbon removal action on the ground may be funded through the Innovation Fund (which can finance BECCS and DACCS projects), the Common Agricultural Policy, the Regional Development Fund, the LIFE programme and the Horizon Europe programme (Mission: 'A Soil Deal for Europe').</li> </ul>
<b>Private funding</b>	E.g., food companies rewarding farmers for additional carbon removals;
<b>Labels for sustainable building materials</b>	E.g., construction companies or property owners investing in sustainable building materials and/or labelling programmes;
<b>Impact finance</b>	E.g., new income opportunities for industries deploying carbon removal technologies or developing long-lasting carbon storage product;
<b>Voluntary Carbon Markets</b>	VCMs to raise financing for high-quality carbon removals (Mr Holzleitner mentioned that these are expected to be more expensive than the EU ETS).

Figure 4. Financing opportunities rewarding carbon removals. Source: author's elaboration.

### Next steps and implementation

- › As for all EU Legislative proposals under ordinary legislative procedure, the proposal will now be debated, amended

## EU Committee News

and voted by the EU Parliament and the Council of the EU, with a final agreement expected in 1.5 to 2 years on average. The Commission would like to see the co-legislators reaching a consensus before the next EU elections in May 2024. A representative for the incoming Swedish Presidency of the Council mentioned that technical works will already kick off in February and the first discussion at the ministerial level will take place during the Environment Council in March;

- › In the meantime, the Commission will set up an Expert Group which will start the technical works on the methodology to certify all carbon removals techniques and get ready for the following discussions on financing. The first gathering is planned during Q1 2023.

Once the EU has developed the necessary methodologies, how will the system work? The Commission anticipates that industrial operators, farmers and foresters will join the certification scheme. The removal will be subject to third-party verification in order to get certified and be subsequently recorded in the ad-hoc registries. EU authorities specified that all relevant information on the removals should be publicly accessible to prevent the risk of double-counting and fraud and facilitate operators' access to several types of financing opportunities.

### Reception, criticisms, and remaining issues

While many stakeholders welcomed the Commission's action to start regulating carbon removals, two main sets of criticisms emerged:

- › NGOs and part of the scientific community pointed out that there are no clear and proven methods to monitor and verify carbon removals, and that permanent removals should be treated differently than temporary ones;
- › Small farmers have expressed fears of being crowded out by big agri-business conglomerates, which would try to buy big swathes of land to access financing made available for carbon removal technologies, and which would have the possibility to bear liability in case the removal got lost. To this criticism, the Commission replied that it envisions to empower small farmers to set up carbon removals business models, provided that they receive the appropriate advisory services and the good technologies (e.g. LIDAR, remote sensing, etc.).

Other than this, several issues remain and will need to be clarified:

- › What will be included in the carbon certifications?
- › How will the liability be attributed in case of a lost removal (e.g. fire burning soil where carbon was stored?)

- › How the EU will consider removal certificates emitted outside the EU for removal activities;
- › Whether overseas companies will be able to use carbon removals against the requirement for CBAM certificates (during December trilogues, a preliminary agreement on the CBAM certificate was reached, and it looks like carbon removals cannot be claimed to deduce carbon certificates);
- › How will EU carbon removal certificates interact with Voluntary Carbon Markets?
- › How will carbon removals certification, as a policy tool, interact with other EU policies?
- › Whether this legislation will foster the arising of new business models on CCUS in the EU market.

### Conclusion

While we are only at the beginning of the legislative procedure in defining carbon removals certification as a policy tool, it will be interesting to follow this trend to understand how carbon removals framework will be set up in the EU market.

This would help in:

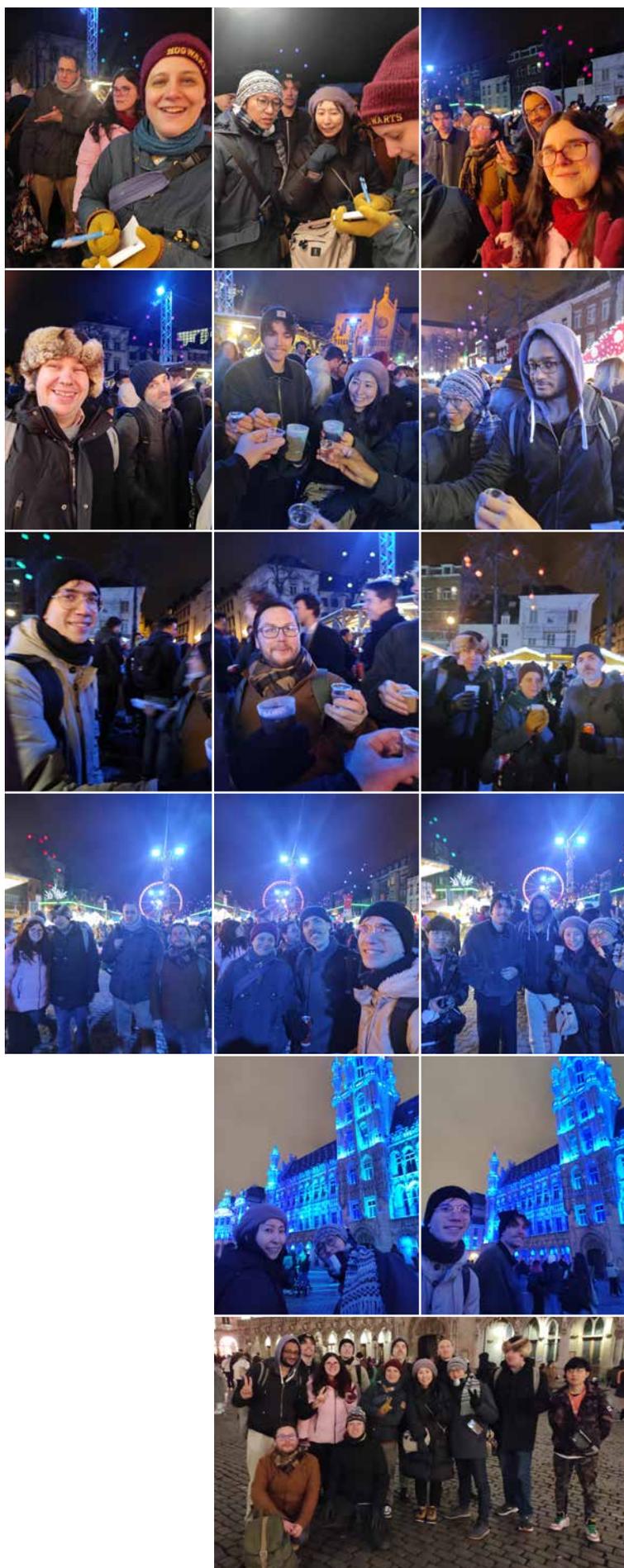
- › anticipating new business models surrounding carbon capture and storage from biomass or from direct air, carbon farming and carbon storage in products possibly being launched in the EU, and which could be replicated elsewhere in the world;
- › observing the interaction between the EU framework and voluntary carbon markets (VCMs), and whether this could generate business opportunities;
- › understanding whether carbon removals located or certified in another country could be eligible for recognition under the EU framework (e.g. via an adequacy agreement, or similar), and whether this could either generate business opportunities.

### Information sources

- › EU Commission Press Corner, European Green Deal: Commission proposes certification of carbon removals to help reach net zero emissions, November 30, 2022 (and included documents);
- › Japan Business Council in Europe internal presentations;
- › Politico Panel Discussion, Carbon Removals Certification Framework: how to set the standards for success, Sofitel Brussels Europe, December 7, 2022, Presented by Shell;
- › Euractiv, EU Commission wants farmers, landowners to lead carbon removal push, November 30, 2022;
- › Euractiv, The EU's Carbon Removal Certification Framework: political leadership or voluntary hurdle?, December 8, 2022;
- › Politico PRO articles.

## Christmas Market Visit

Friday, 9 December 2022 - Brussels



In the ancient books, the Kojiki or Nihon Shoki offered by the Japanese ancestral past, Kuraokami (閻龍) or Okami (龍) is a legendary dragon, a Shinto deity of ice, rain, snow, and winter. In this mythology, it was the sibling progenitors Izanagi and Izanami who gave birth to the islands and gods of Japan. Still, according to the legend, Kuraokami would be born from the blood of Kagutsuchi, the god of fire who would have been killed by his father when he burned his mother, Izanami, during his birth. Cold by fire! These two elements sum up well the state of mind and the atmosphere that governed the last gathering of the members of the BJA Friendship Committee.

We met at the Place Sainte-Catherine in the center of Brussels to discover together the joys of the Christmas market. Wrapped up in our thickest furs to face the cold, we knew that the warmth of our meeting would be enough to undo the torments of Kuraokami.

And we were right because at the bend of the festive chalets proposed on the market, we found ourselves nose to nose with Ame-no-Uzume, goddess of the cheerfulness and the party, which put us in the hands of the “peket”, grain alcohol distilled in the Mosan region from Maastricht to Namur in Belgium. In short, the “spicy” or “-peket”, the “Belgian Kagutsuchi” always allows you to warm up comfortably.

It is with this revival of heat quite salvific that we left for the meeting of Saint-Michel, the slayer of dragon located at the top of the town hall of Brussels Grand Place. Flooded with breathtaking light, we discovered under his aegis the heart-warming power of dragon slayers and we dared to invent our own story - that of friends happy with a simple moment spent together.

*By Dr Pierre Bonneels, BJA Friendship Committee Chair*

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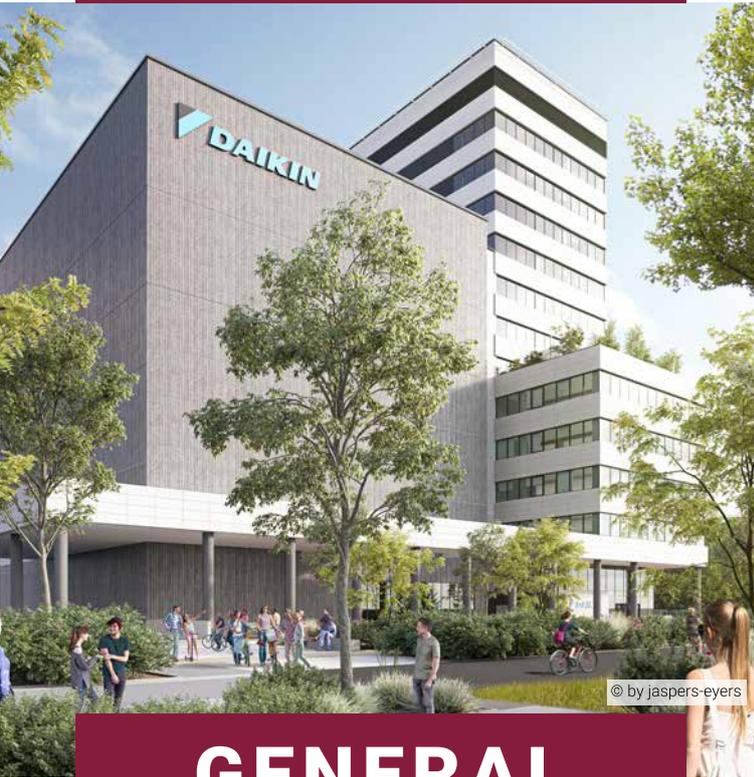
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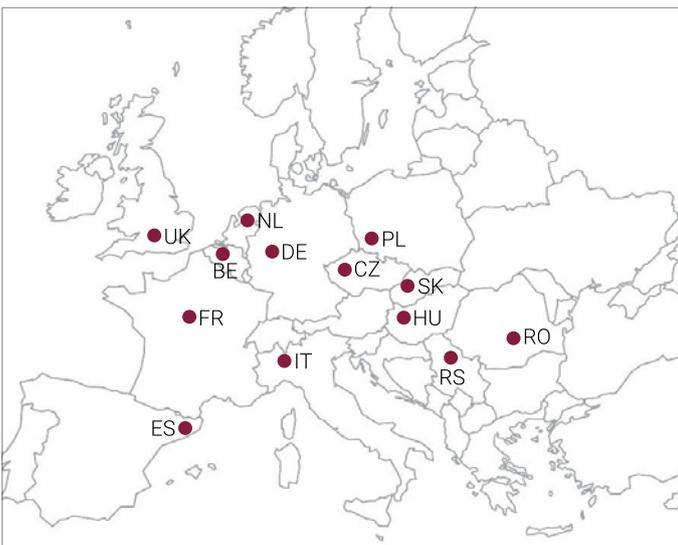


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