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Chamber of Commerce
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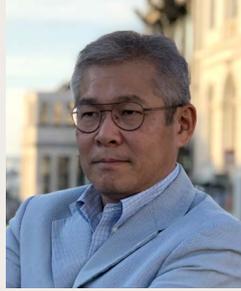
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EDITORIAL

By Mr Yoshiyuki Morishita, President of Mitsui & Co. Benelux, BJA Vice-President & Nihonjinkai President



It is a great honor and pleasure to accept the nomination of Vice-President of the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce. I will do my best to fulfil the expectations of the BJA and contribute to the development of the relations between our two countries.

As you all may know, since Belgium and Japan established formal diplomatic relations with the signing of the Treaty on Amity, Commerce and Navigation in 1866, both countries have enjoyed a multi-faceted and friendly bilateral relationship of advanced industrialized democracies, based on shared values and mutual confidence. Both of our countries share already a long common heritage and collaboration takes an ever-increasing range of form and content. I believe that BJA's activities play an important role in passing on this long-lasting and wonderful relationship to the next generation.

The very close ties between the Japanese Imperial family and the Belgian Royal Family add a very special accent to the relationship between Belgium and Japan. This close relationship is said to have started when the then King of Belgium sent a considerable number of expensive works of art to the Japanese Imperial Family for reconstruction after the big earthquake that hit Tokyo in 1923. Since then, close exchanges have continued, and the present Emperor Naruhito often visited Belgium as a young Crown Prince, where he and King Philippe (then Prince), who were the same age of birth, are said to have ridden on white horses in the vast grounds of the Royal Palace of Laeken. Prince Naruhito married one year before Prince Philippe and he was accompanied by Princess Masako at his wedding ceremony.

In October 2001, Princess Elisabeth of Belgium was born as the first child of Prince Philippe of Belgium, and in December 2001, Princess Aiko of Japan was born as the first child of Crown Prince Naruhito of Japan. Two princesses born in the same year! Last year, in 2021, each of these princesses turned 20 years old, and each of them are expected to be a shining symbol of their respective nationalities.

For two years since March 2020, we have been going through a difficult period in which we could not freely travel to and from Japan and Belgium due to the global outbreak of COVID-19. This year, the virus has finally weakened and travels between our two countries have been gradually increasing. However, with the start of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, travel between the two distant countries has become increasingly time-consuming and inconvenient.

Despite this difficult environment, a visit to Japan by the Belgian Royal Family is scheduled for December this year. I find this visit very significant. The timing of this visit, after a difficult period, is a sign of moving forward into a new era, and of the strong and unshakeable trust between our two countries. I, as BJA Vice-President, would like to cooperate as much as possible to make this visit a success.

In the meantime, the BJA is also in a position to play a strong role in business relations. The EU is leading the world in formulating measures to address climate change, the greatest challenge facing the planet, and Brussels' presence in the world will only grow stronger. Japanese companies have much to learn from Brussels. On the other hand, Japanese companies also have an ability to cooperate with European companies in a variety of areas, such as technology, logistics, and human resources. Therefore, it is inevitable that complex communication will be formed around Brussels, and BJA must contribute to this process as a node between the two countries.

I will do my best to contribute to the activities of BJA.

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BJA VIP Luncheon with His Excellency Yasushi Masaki, Ambassador of the Japanese Mission to the EU

BJA VIPイベント: 欧州連合日本政府代表の正木靖特命全権大使を交えた昼食会

Thursday 9 June 2022 - Steigenberger Wiltcher's, Brussels



BJA members and guests joined this exclusive luncheon in the beautiful venue of Steigenberger Wiltcher's



From left to right: Dr Stassin, Director Government Affairs at Umicore and BJA EU Committee Chair, His Excellency Yasushi Masaki, Ambassador of the Japanese Mission to the EU, and Professor Declerck, Board Member of imec International and BJA President



Networking cocktails – sharing views and thoughts

It was an honor for the BJA to welcome His Excellency Yasushi Masaki, Ambassador of the Japanese Mission to the EU, among the members to share his views on the current and future impact of the EPA three years after its entry into force, as well as bring insights from the recent EU-Japan Summit. Many BJA members and guests joined this exclusive luncheon in the beautiful venue of Steigenberger Wiltcher's, kindly supported by JTI.

His Excellency Ambassador Masaki expressed his thoughts on expanding and deepening the EU-Japan cooperation by referring to the recent events and current geopolitical challenges the world faces. He also discussed the way ahead for EU-Japan business and trade relations.

Dr Fabrice Stassin, Director Government Affairs at Umicore and BJA EU Committee Chair, led this event and moderated the interactive Q&A, after which he gave the closing remarks.



EU-Japan news



EU-JAPAN SUMMIT

The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, representing the EU, met Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the 28th EU-Japan summit in Tokyo on 12 May 2022.

Main results

The leaders of the EU and Japan reaffirmed their close and comprehensive partnership.

The EU and Japan have a deep and dynamic relationship. Japan is our closest strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific region. Russia's war against Ukraine has shown that deeper cooperation is not a luxury, it's a vital necessity.

The EU and Japan discussed important global and regional challenges as well as bilateral relations. They also adopted a joint statement and launched the Digital Partnership.

Russia's war against Ukraine

The leaders of the EU and Japan strongly condemned Russia's aggression and demanded that Russia immediately cease its military aggression on the territory of Ukraine.

This summit takes place as Russia continues to savagely attack the people of Ukraine. We have responded in close coordination, to condemn Russia and to impose punishing sanctions.

The EU and Japan will continue to provide coordinated political, financial, material and humanitarian support to Ukraine.

The EU and Japan also discussed how to cooperate in order to keep global energy markets stable and help ensure each other's security of supply, in particular for the supply of LNG. They will cooperate to reduce Europe's dependency on energy supplies from Russia and to ensure diversification of energy supply sources.

Security and defence

The EU and Japan will further enhance their close consultations on security and defence, including on non-proliferation

and disarmament and on countering hybrid threats. They will also expand practical cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, countering disinformation, maritime security and crisis management. We remain committed to the ultimate goal of realising a world without nuclear weapons, regardless of the current severe international situation.

Digital Partnership

EU and Japan leaders launched the EU-Japan Digital Partnership to advance cooperation on a wide range of digital issues and to help ensure a successful digital transformation that delivers solidarity, prosperity and sustainability.

The launch of our digital partnership today is a milestone. In fact, it's our first digital partnership with any country.

The Digital Partnership will help EU and Japan achieve their shared goals in key areas such as:

- > a secure 5G, "beyond 5G" and 6G technologies
- > safe and ethical artificial intelligence applications
- > the resilience of global supply chains in the semiconductor industry
- > green data infrastructures
- > the development of digital skills for workers

A free and open Indo-Pacific region

The EU and Japan will enhance cooperation to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region and fully support ASEAN's unity and centrality.

The EU and Japan also strongly condemned the continued unlawful testing of ballistic missiles by North Korea. The leaders called on North Korea to cease destabilising actions and to abandon its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles of all ranges, together with any other weapons of mass destruction, as well as related programmes.

The leaders of the EU and Japan also remain seriously concerned about the situation in the East China Sea, including in the

waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands and in the South China Sea, and strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo and increase tensions that could undermine regional stability and the international rules-based order.

Furthermore, the EU and Japan will deepen their exchanges on China, notably with regard to political, economic and security dynamics, including on the situation in Hong Kong as well as on human rights, including in Xinjiang.

China must stand up to defend the multilateral system that it has benefited from in developing its country.

Other bilateral issues

Climate change mitigation and adaptation are topics of utmost importance in the EU Japan relationship. The EU and Japan will continue to implement the EU-Japan Green Alliance, launched at last year's summit. They reaffirmed the importance of cooperation in areas such as cleaner hydrogen, nuclear safety, renewable energy and carbon recycling.

The leaders of the EU and Japan also welcomed the progress that had been achieved in terms of promoting trusted, secure, sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity through their Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure, and will further strengthen cooperation in view of the EU's Global Gateway initiative.

The EU and Japan also launched exploratory talks on Japan's possible association with the Horizon Europe Research & Innovation Framework Programme.

Visit to Hiroshima

Following the EU-Japan summit, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, went to Hiroshima on Friday 13 May to visit the National Peace Memorial Museum and the Peace Memorial Park and to meet with Keiko Ogura, atomic bomb survivor.

Source: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/05/12/>

Opportunities for EU & Japan Industrial and Innovation Cooperation in the Circular Economy for Strategic Metals

日欧産業・イノベーション協力機会創出におけるサキュラーエコノミーと希少金属の有効利用ウエビナー

Thursday 23 June 2022 - digital event



The BJA IPT Committee Co-Chair, Dr Stassin of Umicore, informing the audience

The BJA IPT Committee Co-Chair, Koh Ichi Masaki of JMA, moderated the webinar

Mr De Taxis du Poët of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation shared his insights

With both the EU and Japan looking to decarbonize society and achieve climate neutrality by 2050, demand for ‘strategic metals’ used in cleantech is increasing and securing these critical raw materials’ availability will be key to ensuring strategic autonomy and the resilience of post-covid industrial strategies. ‘Circularity’ is part of the solution and underpins the 2021 EU-Japan Green Alliance under which the EU and Japan will deepen their policy dialogue and cooperation. The BJA’s Innovation, Partnerships & Trade Committee and the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation joined forces to organize a comprehensive webinar bringing together policymakers, researchers, and industry figures to identify the EU and Japanese policy instruments and industrial innovation methods that will nurture the circular economies for strategic metals and help the EU and Japan ensure a green transition. The webinar was opened by representatives of both BJA and

the EU-Japan Centre. The first session, entitled “The View of the European Commission and Government of Japan”, allowed speakers from the European Commission, Japan’s METI, the Delegation of the EU to Japan and Japan’s Ministry of the Environment to share their views. It was followed by a second session, “The Role of Innovation and Circular Economy Ecosystems”, where speakers from Processes4Planet, Flanders Metal Valley, Reverse Metallurgy Initiative and Japan Partnership for Circular Economy gave the industry’s perspective. The event, which was also supported by JTI and the Marilo Fund, was concluded by an interactive Q&A, where the more than 300 attendees had the opportunity to ask their questions to the experts. *You can access most of the speakers’ presentations and the recording of the session on <https://eu-japan.eu/events/opportunities-eu-japan-industrial-and-innovation-cooperation-circular-economy-strategic>*



Policymakers, researchers, and industry figures teamed up to for this webinar



news for the members

EXHIBITION SHIN HANGA: THE NEW PRINTS OF JAPAN – 1900-1960: 14 OCTOBER 2022 TO 15 JANUARY 2023

By Nathalie Vandepierre, Curator East Asian Collections: China-Japan-Korea

An exhibition of 'new prints' in the Art & History Museum in Brussels

In organizing the exhibition Shin hanga, the Art & History Museum builds on the successful exhibitions of Japanese prints from its own world-famous collection: Utamaro (2012), Hokusai (2013) (both at the Museums of the Far East) and on the exhibition Ukiyo-e - The most beautiful Japanese prints (2016-2017). With top items from its own collection, the most recent exhibition gave a chronological overview of printmaking - in Japanese ukiyo-e - from its early beginnings around 1650 until the start of the twentieth century. The public particularly appreciated this latter set of prints. With the upcoming exhibition Shin hanga, the museum will pick up where the previous exhibition left off, that is with the important movement in Japanese printmaking at the start of the twentieth century.

This time, the public will see a selection of masterpieces from three leading shin hanga collections, that is two Dutch private collections and the Japanese collection of Watanabe Shōzaburō, the publisher who was the key figure of the shin hanga movement. For this exhibition, his grandson is lending prints that have never been seen outside Japan. These loans are supplemented with shin hanga prints from the Art & History Museum's own rich collection.

For the exhibition, the museum is collaborating with guest curator Chris Uhlenbeck. The exhibition is supported by the Embassy of Japan in Belgium, the Brussels-Capital Region, and the Belgian Science Policy.

Japanese printmaking

A Japanese print is a woodcut print. In other words, it is produced from a woodcut (or xylograph) done from an artist's drawing. The technique of printing made it possible to realize large editions of a design. A traditional Japanese print is the result of intense collaboration between a publisher, and the artist, copyist, block cutter and printer whom he coordinates. Traditional printmaking in Japan flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When prints, along with other Japanese artefacts, came on sale in Europe and America in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they were enthusiastically acquired by artists and collectors.

The twentieth century

Around 1900, the production of traditional woodcuts in Japan began to wane, under the influence of newly imported reproduction technologies like lithography and photography. On top of this, Japanese society was already rapidly modernizing, leading to the disappearance of the old social and commercial context of ukiyo-e printmaking. Japanese prints remained, however, in great demand in the West. This set young publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō thinking. On the one hand, he noted the interest in the West in traditional printmaking and the great names of the past. On the other hand, he realized that in his own country the traditional technique, based on cooperation between different actors, was gradually disappearing. In 1907 Watanabe Shōzaburō settled in Tokyo where he started making reproduc-

tions of the highest quality. In this way he ensured that the traditional technique of woodcutting was not lost and that the Japanese themselves become aware of the importance and beauty of the ukiyo-e. He then went looking for a new formal language. After a period of arduous exploration, production of the 'new prints' shin hanga started in 1916. Success was immediate: at home the new aesthetics caught on at once, and abroad the prices of works by these new artists often exceeded those of the great eighteenth and nineteenth-century names.

Watanabe gathered around him a group of artists able to put across his vision of printmaking. His success encouraged other publishers to follow suit. The ultimate result was a movement that produced some 3,000 designs, characterized both by their exceptionally high technical quality and their novelty. It led from 1916 to the Second World War to the creation of prints that, owing to the way they were produced, acquired another status than the classic ukiyo-e. Prints had become top quality luxury products.

The structure of the exhibition in brief

The exhibition is arranged chronologically. The story begins with the earliest experiments and runs until 1916. Then there is an introduction to the two most important genres: landscapes and female portraits. These genres are further subdivided into the periods before and after the Kantō earthquake of 1 September 1923. This natural disaster can be viewed as a fault line because large stocks of prints, designs and printing blocks were then lost. This is followed by sections devoted to the three other genres: the kabuki theatre, nature, and modernity.

In addition, a space is dedicated to the technical side of print production, with an emphasis on the specificity of the shin hanga tradition.

www.artandhistory.museum



ARTONOV FESTIVAL FROM 8 TO 16 OCTOBER 2022 IN BRUSSELS

The Artonov Festival is inspired by the international Art Nouveau movement, both for its philosophy and its implementation, but also by the Japanese sensorial and multidisciplinary art. Its objective is to generate a convergence between the performing arts, such as music, dance, theatre, fashion and visual arts, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and creation in Art Nouveau and Art Deco houses and other venues of remarkable architecture in Brussels. There will be many performances with Japanese artists.

A selection

- › **8 October:** Inspired by the Japanese art of folding paper, Origami is a breathtaking spectacle that uses sections of a shipping container to create different shapes that form the stage for the daredevil acrobatics of Justine Bernachon. Origami was born of a collaboration between choreographer Satchie Noro and set designer and scenographer Silvain Ohl. Together, they transform a 12-metre container into an airborne and mobile stage and imbue with poetry and humanity this imposing object that has become a symbol of globalisation.
- › **9 October:** Nuage is an installation in choreography for a dancer and a musician and an imaginary cloud. A study in sound linked to the breath and the wind.

A study in dance dedicated to the transformation of form and suspension, in a setting imagined by Silvain Ohl. This

performance, created in 2013 and first performed by Satchie Noro, has been recreated for her daughter, Yumi Rigout. Accompanied by musician, Fred Costa, the aerial acrobat invites us on an aerial journey that assumes chameleon-like dimensions: a refuge, a net, a nest, a pedestal, a sieve, a diving board, a trap, a lifeboat...

- › **15 October:** In *Nine Bells*, Aya Suzuki moves among an array of nine metal bells like a Japanese Butoh dancer. American composer Tom Johnson not only set down the notes of this piece, but also the path the performer has to follow through the instruments. The result is a repetitive, hypnotic ritual for the eyes and ears. Aya uses Johnson's original bells from 1979. This performance will take place on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *Shin hanga - The new prints of Japan (1900-1960)* at the Art and History Museum.
- › **15 & 16 October:** Stéphane Ferrandez presents *Rakugo*, a Japanese theatrical art born 400 years ago that skilfully combines gesture and spoken word. It takes no more than a minimalistic set, a few props and the artful mimics of the storyteller, invariably seated on the floor, to transport you into an imaginary universe. Come experience the thrill of these chilling traditional tales from Japanese folklore and perhaps even come head-to-head with your first yōkai. Following each performance will be a guided tour given by Masimo Minneci, the owner of the Maison Tenaerts.

For more information: www.festival-artonov.eu

Aya Suzuki *Nine Bells* © Takuya Isomura



Interview with Dirk De Ruyver, Flanders Economic Representative to Japan

BELGIANS IN JAPAN

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

I really like your LinkedIn intro: "Japan is my passion. Connecting companies from Flanders-Belgium with Japanese businesses is my job." This summer, you celebrated 25 years at Flanders Investment and Trade. I wonder, how do you keep your passion for Japan alive after 30 years?

Dirk: My passion remains because Japan is always evolving. As my former sensei (Prof. Jan Swyngedouw at Nanzan Daigaku) once said: "I have been in Japan for 40 years and I still don't understand it." There is always a lot to learn and more to discover, that sort of business is never finished. I am still as passionate about Japan as the first day I arrived there. I went there for the first time as a tourist, and I had to fly across Alaska. And nowadays, once again, we fly over Alaska to go to Japan. Very interesting to see that.

You studied economy and Japanology. Which one came first?

Dirk: I was studying economic sciences in Leuven from 1982. I think it was around 1984 that we had to do a macroeconomic study of a certain country. Some of the students choose Japan and I remember that there was a huge discussion after their presentations about the trade imbalance: Europe had difficulties in exporting to Japan, while Japan was very successful in exporting to Europe. The normal response to such a question was: "if the Japanese Yen gains in value, the balance will change". But apparently this was not true for Japan, because the exports were booming, and the Yen was already growing stronger for more than a decade. This went against the economic theory. So, then I said: "well, maybe it has to do with culture". This motivated me to start studying Japanese.

That was a bold plan.

Dirk: Indeed. Fortunately, in 1986, Professor Willy Vande Walle started a completely new curriculum for Japanese studies in Leuven. After my graduation I got a Monbusho scholarship for further study in Japan, so I went there in October of 1990, one week after East and West Germany became one. I still remember when the head of the dormitory started reading the names. He pronounced our name and then added the country, like: "De Ruyver-san, Belgium". The next in line was a man from East Germany and the head pronounced his name and then said: "East Germany oh, sumimasen, this should be Germany now".





We – Europeans - were all standing there, looking at each other and it was like “wow, something happened, it’s a new era”. But after one year and a half of study, when I came back to Belgium, everybody was focusing on Eastern Europe, and nobody was interested in Japan. So, I was in the running for a job in Poland when I got a phone call from Professor Vande Walle who told me: “there’s a Flemish company that would like to have somebody in Osaka.” It was the Domo Group, active in carpets, yarn and chemicals. Five very interesting years followed; I was a student when I stepped into that company, and I was a businessman when I left. In August of 1997, I switched to my current job in Tokyo at Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT).

There is a lot of focus on biotechnology and alternative energy in your LinkedIn posts, but the strongest Belgian image is still of simple things like beer, chocolate, and waffles. How do you manage those things you are associated with? What is your opinion about that?

Dirk: I would say it’s better to have a good image, than to have no image or a bad image. So having the image of a country of chocolate, beer, and waffles, well... it’s not that bad. We don’t want to kill the chocolate and beer image, it’s such a good and pleasant image, we are making use of that image in a good way.

For example, when we have a booth at a trade fair in Japan, we will do a reception with Belgian beer. And you can see how many people come over because they know Belgian beer. It’s a handy tool to connect with new people, new businesspeople, and new sectors in Japan.

Speaking of image, you talk about Belgian beers and chocolates, which connects to the image of Belgium as a whole. I know this is potentially a tricky subject, but of course, you work for a Flemish organization in particular.

Dirk: Whatever we do, we start from what is of interest to the Flemish companies and creates added value for Flanders. So, it means that for some sectors we work together with Wallonia and Brussels if appropriate, while for other sectors, we’ll work on Flemish level. It depends on the sector and expertise. In Japan, FIT will for example put more emphasis on the automotive technology and automotive logistics sector.

I noticed that, as part of the Princely Mission in December, there is a special day in Nagoya with a focus on the automotive industry.

Dirk: The preparation of this part of the visit is done in cooperation with the Agoria Automotive Technology Club. We can work very closely with Agoria because we have a strong network in the automotive world in Japan. In Flanders, we have a lot of small and medium enterprises who possess really specialized & focused automotive expertise, and for them, Japan is quite far away and tricky to approach.

How can we motivate these smaller companies to consider the possibilities Japan has to offer?

Dirk: For start-ups and SMEs, the question is: How financially strong are you? By that I mean: are you financially strong enough to come to Japan and go through the whole process before you get an order from Japan? To an SME that is initially only selling in Belgium and then decides, “now we’ll go to Japan,” I would say wait, what about the Netherlands, what about Germany and France? You’re immediately going to one of the most difficult markets: Japan, which has a very peculiar way of getting to an order, and it takes time, and time is money. And do you have that money? Sure, sometimes it happens in automotive engineering and in biotech that there are start-ups with exceptional technology that large Japanese companies are jumping on and want to incorporate. But let it be clear: I wouldn’t blame any company for going to the States first, before coming here to Japan.

And I must repeat, we cannot emphasize enough how business is done in Japan, and unfortunately, it is rather different from how business is done in Europe. It takes time, but once you’re in, a deal has the potential to last for a very long time.

Speaking of Japanese uniqueness. When I talked to Professor Vanoverbeke earlier this year, he was saying that he feared Japan would start to like the current isolation. The Economist recently coined it as “neo-sakoku” in a recent article on the new Japanese isolationism. What are your feelings about that?

Dirk: No, no, of course, at a certain time, we were closed off, but not only Japan was. But no, we’re not going back to the old days of the Edo Period. The Japanese companies are much too intertwined for that, internationally speaking, on different levels.

First of all, we see that Japan is now very active in the field of trade agreements. This is a recent development. I must say that 20 years ago, Japan didn’t feel the need to have trade agreements, because they felt strong enough as an economy - particularly in Asia - to put their own agenda forward. But the economic position of China and Korea have changed this. Now, there is a need for Japan to anchor its good business relations with several countries or regions like the EU. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe accelerated this process, and I don’t see the practice reverting under the



current Prime Minister. Secondly, there will be pressure from the Japanese industry to open up: Japan needs people. The Japanese industry is pressuring the Japanese Government to open up because they need foreign workers.

Also, the Japanese government itself has set a target for tourists coming in and fueling the tourist sector: 40 million a year. This focus has not changed, it is still there.

But indeed, I must admit that, as somebody living in Japan, it was quite enjoyable at a certain time that you could travel to an excellent hotel at a very decent price and have a very tranquil stay... when during normal times, I would not have been able to have the same experience.

We also see a lot of M&A activity at Japanese companies outside Japan. Does this have to do with the demographic situation, or rather with the fact that large companies sit on a pile of cash?

Dirk: That is indeed rather new. 20 years ago, Japanese companies were involved in M&A projects, but on a lower level and in a less structured way than nowadays. It is important to explain why quite some large Japanese companies are sitting on a pile of cash: it is a way of making sure that the Japanese company will survive, no matter what happens. I always explain this with a hypothetical scenario: suppose tomorrow there's a major earthquake, and your factory has come down and been destroyed. Well, you want to rebuild that factory immediately and for that, you need to have that money available, rather than spending it on dividends for the shareholders. The company comes first, and all those who are part of the company must reduce their own needs and their own bonds for the sake of the company, you could even call this 'Japanese capitalism'. That cash also allows Japanese companies to do long-term research, or to acquire other companies with interesting technology or market access.

But you also see that there is a change in mindset, it used to be: "if it's not made by us, it's not good". Now that mindset is opening up. It probably also has to do with the fact that Japanese companies are in real competition with the Chinese and Korean companies now. So, they need new technology rather quickly, and the larger companies are scouting around worldwide to look for technology that can make them stronger. It is in that framework that FIT has appointed Els Verhulst as Science & Technology Director in Tokyo. Els has a wealth of experience with business development in Japan.

How is the energy crisis being processed or tackled in Japan? Japan of course holds a very specific position because they came from a high dependence on nuclear energy, then the Fukushima

disaster hit, and Japan also has a different relationship with Russia than we had.

Dirk: Indeed. Let's say in 2010, about 25% of Japanese electricity was produced by nuclear energy. And the idea was to grow that share to 33%. Because of Fukushima, this was not realized, but the Japanese government is still much in favour of nuclear energy. Apart from that, Japan has committed to become carbon free completely by 2050.

It means that they are looking at nuclear energy, but they're also looking towards offshore windmills. The coastline is endless, though it must be shared with the fishing industry, which is concerned that its activities might suffer because of these new offshore windmill projects. And Japan has a lot of earthquakes, a lot of typhoons and even tsunamis, so there are quite a number of technical challenges.

The government is pushing forward, and also actively looking at hydrogen. Just like Belgium, they won't be able to produce all the hydrogen that the industry needs. In Belgium, there is a hydrogen import coalition that was started by our ports. You can see that same idea developing in Japan, and they are looking at Australia in particular. There is an agreement between Australia and Japan for production of hydrogen in Australia and importing the hydrogen into Japan through the port of Kobe, for example. It's interesting to see how the industry will change, due to hydrogen being used as source of energy.

Who are the Japanese players involved in that? Are these new names that we don't know or the big consortia like Mitsubishi?

Dirk: On the one hand, you indeed have the big industrial groups and the sogo shosha like Sumitomo, Mitsubishi, but also start-ups with innovative technologies, and the shipping owners. Remember the huge container ship that got stuck in the Suez Canal? It was owned by Shoen Kisen, a Japanese company. Yes, I think Japan will be a major player when it comes to the ownership of vessels transporting hydrogen.

It's nice to talk not only about chocolate and waffles, but also about things I know less about. That said, I would like to end with some personal questions if that's okay. What was your most memorable professional moment in Japan?

Dirk: I must say that I am extremely fortunate to have a great team of colleagues at FIT Tokyo. There are so many things that we have done already together, but I'm always happy when we do something completely new. During Covid, we organized what we call "a hybrid food fair". Normally, Japanese purchasing managers go to trade fairs in Europe, gather samples and information and they bring it to Japan. They discuss the samples and informa-



tion with colleagues, sometimes with their customers, and in the end, they come to an order. Now, because of covid-restrictions, international trade fairs were cancelled, and we asked the Flemish companies normally participating to these fairs to send the samples to Japan, and we invited all interested Japanese companies individually to the Belgian Embassy in Tokyo. We took a full week for that, and during that whole week we created time slots for each Japanese company that we invited. The buyers got a special and individual treat at the Embassy; it worked really nicely, they felt like VIPs.

The follow up was done by mail; in general, Japanese companies prefer mail communication to an immediate online meeting with somebody they don't know. It led to quite some communication between Japanese and Flemish companies, and in the end, also to orders that would not have been realized otherwise

I cannot say it was the highlight of my career, but it was one of these things that worked out nicely and which we will continue to offer also next year.

Interesting. The mailing aspect is also interesting, and I sometimes wonder about the use of LinkedIn in Japan. Does it work in Japan?

Dirk: We have been looking into that for several years already. There doesn't seem to be any major online platform for connecting with Japanese businesspeople. My personal actions on LinkedIn are mostly towards Flemish businesspeople, not towards Japanese companies. Similarly, businesspeople in Japan still seem to prefer meetings in person, rather than online, enabling them to continue the good old-fashioned custom of exchanging business cards.

Finally: During the weekends, when you're not at the Belgian beer events, what are your favourite spots to spend your free time?

Dirk: You might be surprised. I'm a very social guy from Monday to Friday, but in the weekends when there is some spare time, you can find me in the archives. Not to check for my ancestors, they are not in the archives here, but to study the first treaty between Japan and Belgium in 1866 and the Bakumatsu period in Japan (1853-1868).

In 2016 – at the 150 years celebration of the official relationship between Japan and Belgium – a book was published by Professor Vande Walle. The first article in that book is about the first treaty between Japan and Belgium, and that was from my hand. I started the research in 2009 because I wanted to know how that treaty came into existence. It happened in Yokohama, where I am

living now, so I walk along the same spots where these things happened. I often try to imagine what Yokohama looked like 150 years ago.

I wanted to know everything about the Belgian diplomat who came to negotiate that treaty. Was this an exceptional treaty? Did he come with a whole army, or did he come just by himself? Did he come straight to Japan, or did he travel through China? So basically, I want to know that story and everything around it. It is so fascinating to see how things were done, and then see where we are today.

Don't tell me that's the reason you live in Yokohama.

Dirk: No, no I was already living in Yokohama before I discovered the importance of the city as a diplomatic center in the 19th century.

But that's not a tip for the tourists, I guess. Would you recommend Yokohama as a destination for tourists, since it's not always on their radar?

Dirk: That's right, it depends on what you're looking for. I would recommend it for tourists who are interested in the internationalisation in Asia and Japan in the 19th century. If that is what you are looking for, then Yokohama is your place to be, just like Shanghai, Hong Kong, or Kobe.

Thank you for putting Yokohama on the map again. Do you have anything to add for our readers?

Dirk: I just want to add that Japan is an amazing country. I have never regretted my decision in 1984 to start studying Japanese. I'm very happy with this opportunity to promote Japan and I would encourage everybody to get to know Japan better and understand it as deeply as possible. I think it's important to get how Japanese business works because Japanese purchase managers do a very thorough job, and we can all learn from them. I would say "if you're successful in Japan, you can add this to your track record, because it is a real achievement."

So, could we summarize your perspective as: "if you make it in Tokyo, you can make it anywhere?"

Dirk: Not really, Japan is not only Tokyo. You know the people from Osaka and Fukuoka and other places, they wouldn't want to be forgotten.



Geert: Indeed, and it is nice that you still keep the people from Osaka close to your heart! Thank you for your time!

MAIN TRENDS

FROM THE BELGIAN ATTRACTIVENESS SURVEY 2022

By Tristan Dhondt, EY WEM Strategy and Transactions Partner; Strategy and Transactions Leader for EU institutions, and Marie-Laure Moreau, EY Belgium Assurance Partner and Regional Managing Partner Wallonia

EY Attractiveness Survey

This article is a summary of EY Attractiveness Survey for Belgium, an annual study conducted by EY that reports on the FDI for Belgium and gauges the attractiveness of Belgium as a location for foreign investment.

It is difficult to assess the precise impact the military conflict in Ukraine-Russia will have on foreign direct investment (FDI) in Belgium and Europe. While in Europe many of the responses were collected after hostilities started, it was at that time still unclear how the war would evolve. In Belgium, moreover, most of the answers from respondents were collected before the invasion began.

Foreign investment in Belgium increased 8% in 2021, but remains below pre-COVID-19 levels.

Belgium saw the number of foreign investment (FDI) rise faster than the European average in 2021, with a total of 245(+8%) investment projects. The growth in FDI projects reflects a strong rise in activity by foreign investors in Belgium after the downturn that hit the Belgian economy in 2020, even though the number of projects stayed below the pre-pandemic level of 2019.

1. With an increase of 8% in FDI projects Belgium outperforms European average

After the tumultuous COVID year of 2020, Belgium saw the number of investment projects rise faster than the European average in 2021. Belgium recorded 245 projects, which generated 6,970 jobs in 2021. Like in previous years, Belgium's FDI performance was mainly driven by new projects. Out of 245 projects, 80% of them were new.

Because a few countries recorded an even faster uptick in FDI,

Belgium loses one spot on the European ranking. However, this is behind a top five that consists of far larger economies. On top of that, the 8% increase in FDI masks a much more robust growth in job creation of 37%.

2. Belgium reaffirms its position as an important logistics hub

Five key sectors were the drivers of FDI activity in Belgium throughout 2021, accounting for 60% of projects and 58% of

Project by sector

	2020	2021
Transportation & Logistics	33	46
Business services	44	41
Software & IT	19	24
Pharmaceuticals	22	19
Transportation Manufacturing & Suppliers	6	17

Project by activity

	2020	2021
Logistics	38	65
Manufacturing	44	50
Sales & Marketing	53	45
Business Services	43	36
R & D	22	33

Source: EY European Investment Monitor (EIM), 2022

Top countries in terms of FDI projects in 2020 and 2021

Tank	Country	2020	2021	Change
1	France	985	1,222	24%
2	UK	975	993	2%
3	Germany	930	841	-10%
4	Spain	354	361	2%
5	Turkey	208	264	27%
6	Belgium	227	245	8%
7	Italy	113	207	83%

Job Creation

	Belgium	5,098	6,968	28%
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Source: EY European Investment Monitor(EIM), 2022

jobs. The “big four” remain the same, though we do see some variations in the ranking. Transportation & Logistics reclaims the number one spot from Business Services, while the Pharmaceuticals sector slowed down a bit after a very busy year, allowing Software & IT Services to overtake it to claim the third spot.

When it comes to types of investment projects, it is worth noting the marked jump in logistics investments, claiming the top position with 65 projects. In 2020, this class of investments didn’t even make it into the top three. The former “champion”, Sales & Marketing, drops to the third position. Manufacturing held on to its second place.

3. Japan is 4th rank of the number of FDI in Belgium

The United States reaffirms its position as the main source of FDI projects in Belgium with a year-on-year growth in projects of 70%, after ceding the top spot to the UK in the COVID year 2020 and ranking even below the Netherlands and last year’s surprise China. China, however, did not follow through in 2021. While remaining the largest emerging markets investor, the number of Chinese FDI projects almost halved.

Investor countries

	2021	
	Project	Job creation
United States	46	1,696
United Kingdom	37	844
France	35	871
Netherlands	25	833
China	15	496
Germany	13	548
Japan	7	283

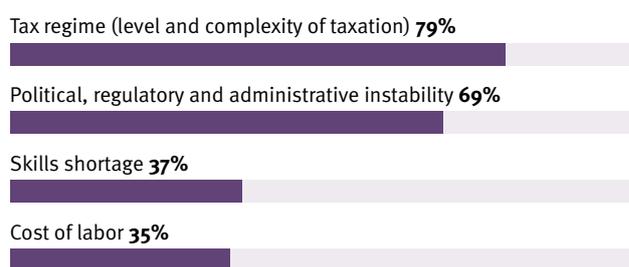
Source: EY European Investment Monitor (EIM), 2022

Japan is 4th position (excluding EU member states) in the number of FDI in Belgium, which created 283 jobs in 2021. The number of job creation per project is big even including EU member states, which saw the size of FDI from Japan would relatively be big.

4. Tax regime and political & administrative instability are the main risks

Despite shifts in their mutual ranking, Belgium can’t seem to shake the main risks to its attractiveness. Investors remain preoccupied by the tax regime, the instability of the political, regulatory and administrative climate, skills shortage and labor cost.

Main risks affecting Belgium’s attractiveness in the next three years

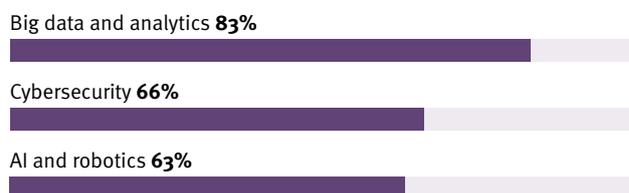


Source: EY European Investment Monitor (EIM), 2022

5. Quality and skills of the workforce are applauded, but no room for complacency

The quality of the Belgian workforce has always been a strong point of the economy. This is reflected in a new set of questions in the survey in which investors are asked about Belgium’s performance compared to the rest of Europe in a number of areas, like talent. Belgium clearly does well in the field of investment in digital skills. It remains clear, however, that continued efforts are needed to boost the presence of a number of specific high-tech skills to hold on to this strong position.

Main risks affecting Belgium’s attractiveness in the next three years



Source: EY European Investment Monitor (EIM), 2022

日本語要約 (Summary in Japanese – by Shota Baba, EY Belgium Japan Business Services, shota.baba1@be.ey.com)

EYの調査によれば、ベルギーへの海外直接投資は245(+8%)となり、コロナ前の水準を下回っているものの確かな景気回復の傾向にあります。投資家は税制度の複雑性・政治状況・人材難などを主要なリスクとして考えていますが、ベルギーの高い労働者の質は好意的に捉えられており、また、ロジスティックへの投資が多いことから欧州の地理的な中心地としての重要な役割をベルギーが担っていることが調査結果からは読み取れます。なお、日本からの海外直接投資はEU加盟国を除けば4番目とベルギーにおける重要な投資元となっています。

news from the members

LAST CALL REGISTRATIONS FOR THE BELGIAN ECONOMIC MISSION TO JAPAN

The Belgian Economic Mission to Japan will take place **from 5 to 9 December 2022**.

KEY SECTORS

- › Renewable energy
- › Life Sciences
- › Automotive Industry
- › Semiconductors/ICT
- › Fintech
- › Eco construction
- › Market access

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is responsible for the general coordination of the Belgian Economic Missions presided over by HRH Princess Astrid, Representative of His Majesty the King. The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, in cooperation with the three regional agencies for the promotion of foreign trade Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT), the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX) and hub.brussels and the FPS Foreign Affairs, organises the Belgian Economic Mission to Japan.

Depending on the region in which your company is based, you can register via the regional export & investment agencies: Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT), Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX) or hub.brussels. The deadlines are approaching.

Please find below the contact persons of the regional export & investment agencies:

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Brussels – hub.brussels

In 2021, the Brussels-Capital Region exported for more than 74 million euros of goods to Japan and imported for over 140 million euros. Those numbers show the importance of Japan in the foreign trade balance of the Brussels-Capital region.

At the Princely Mission, hub.brussels will gather companies from various sectors who want to explore or develop their business in Japan. Although many sectors are involved, hub.brussels will promote 3 important sectors for Brussels as high quality craftsmanship, services to help Japanese business to expand in Europe and passive buildings. This promotion will materialize through seminars or exhibitions mainly in Tokyo and Nagoya. Besides those activities, the traditional business meetings will take place in the 3 cities.

Flanders - FIT

Organizing Economic missions is 1 of the best ways to bring our companies in direct contact with potential business partners abroad: FIT actively supports the boundless ambitions of Flanders-based companies and organizations and assists them to expand beyond our borders.

Japan is Flanders' 3rd export market outside the EU: in 2021 our companies exported more than 7 billion euros worth of goods to Japan, a number that has even increased in the first 4 months of 2022 with 125%, compared to the same period a year earlier.

Needless to say, that Japan is an interesting destination for exporting companies, offering a lot of business opportunities due to several reasons: Japan is a rich and large economy with a mature, innovative and sophisticated market. Japanese companies are open to strategic partnerships with innovative and tech driven foreign partners. Japanese consumers on aver-

age have substantial purchase power and fancy foreign goods and products that meet the highest quality standards. The EU-Japan Economic Partnership is gradually phasing out Japanese import tariffs on numerous products from the EU, which creates additional opportunities for Flemish companies on the Japanese market.

All Flemish exporters are invited to participate in the mission and will receive an individual, custom-made b2b-program. In addition, as a participant you will be able to take part in high-level events and company visits, and meet with Japanese and Belgian businessmen, academics, journalists, and Belgian officials.

A particular focus will be put on green tech (hydrogen, offshore wind energy,...), health tech, pharma, biotech & life sciences, chemicals, automotive and food & beverages.

Flemish Startups will be serviced with a separate startup track.

Registrations are open, more info can be found on FIT's website.

Wallonia - AWEX

In its support for the internationalization of Walloon companies, AWEX is doing its utmost to ensure that SMEs benefit from all possible opportunities during the Belgian economic mission to Japan.

First of all, Japan remains a major partner and represents the 7th largest export market of the European Union and the 2nd largest trading partner in Asia. It has a mature and sophisticated market in many sectors. It is also a country spearheading innovation and new services, where companies with know-how and technologies in industry, transport, health and digital, can develop business relationships and strategic partnerships.

It is in the context of the entry into force in February 2019 of the EU-Japan Economic

Partnership Agreement and the gradual reopening of borders following the health crisis that this Belgian economic mission will allow Walloon companies to come and directly prospect this market full of opportunities.

A particular focus on energy transition and decarbonization will be put forward for this mission. A one-day conference, with thematic sessions on renewable energies, green hydrogen, optimization of industrial processes is planned in Tokyo on Tuesday, 6 December. Life sciences and green chemistry will also be highlighted during several events: business matching, networking lunches, and company visits. Signing ceremonies will allow companies to highlight their business relationships with their Japanese partners and customers. Finally, many networking events and in particular the official Belgian reception in Tokyo will allow to reinforce the privileged relations between businessmen of both countries. Belgian know-how and expertise will be demonstrated throughout the week. A “game jam”, a video game creation contest, will also be organized for Belgian companies and studios, organized in collaboration with Walga, the Walloon gaming association. Belgian and Japanese students will form teams to create the most innovative game in a few days. Cultural activities, including the opening of a Folon exhibition, will close this very intense week.

This Belgian economic mission will gather several hundred Belgian officials, businessmen, academics, and journalists. It will offer an important visibility for the participants and will give them an extra credibility with the Japanese companies and authorities. If you are interested in participating, do not delay registering, we expect a large number of participants. Registrations will be closed on 15 September. More information on this page of our website: Mission princière Japon - Wallonia.be - Export Investment (awex-export.be)

UMICORE AND IDEMITSU TO JOINTLY DEVELOP HIGH-PERFORMANCE SOLID-STATE BATTERY MATERIALS

Umicore and Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd have agreed to jointly develop high-performance catholyte materials for solid-state batteries, combining their respective expertise in cathode active materials and solid electrolytes, and aiming to provide the technological breakthrough to extend the driving range and thereby propel e-mobility.

Umicore brings its world-leading expertise in a variety of cathode active materials (CAM) for lithium-ion batteries, while Idemitsu Kosan brings its know-how in solid electrolytes as a key material for all-solid-state lithium-ion batteries (ASSB). Umicore has been working on solid-state CAM chemistries since 2017 and holds multiple key patents in this technology field. Idemitsu Kosan has an established method for manufacturing high-purity lithium sulfide, which it developed in its petrochemical business, and holds many patents for sulfide solid electrolytes that use lithium sulfide as their raw material.

Umicore laid its foundations in battery materials almost 30 years ago and thanks to our own research and strong global open innovation footprint, we are at the forefront of various lithium-ion battery technologies that help decarbonize transport. Our partnership with Idemitsu enhances our innovation and technology leadership to support our customers in their clean mobility transformation through solid-state battery power.

Mathias Miedreich, CEO of Umicore

Based on more than 20 years of experience, Idemitsu has developed the technology of sulfide solid electrolytes and holds many patents related to sulfide solid electrolytes. Solid electrolytes will contribute as a key material for the “electrified society”, through ASSB. The joint development between Umicore and Idemitsu will play an important role in the acceleration of activities in this field.

Hajime Nakamoto, Managing Executive officer of Idemitsu

Catholytes combine cathode active materials and solid electrolytes. The more intimate contact between these two components would enable the solid-state battery to achieve better performance. Solid-state batteries are the next-generation batteries with performance improvements on several fronts. In cars, for example, their higher energy density will increase the driving range and allow for faster charging. The replacement of today’s liquid electrolyte with a solid one will enhance the safety and lifespan of batteries, reduce their size, weight and ultimately, cost.

Source: <https://www.umicore.com/en/newsroom/news/umicore-and-idemitsu-to-jointly-develop-high-performance-solid-state-battery-materials/>

news from the members

**FREE PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR JAPANESE EXPATRIATES BY JCO
(JAPAN CONSULTING OFFICE)**

JCO has developed a series of video and pdf documents in Japanese to help Japanese expatriates settle in Belgium. The information is free of charge.

These documents will help Japanese better maintain their apartment (to avoid penalty fee when leaving), teach them how to use a washing machine, fill-in an accident report, and many other valuable tips. Additional information will be uploaded regularly. If you are interested, please send a mail to: elarning@JapanConsultingOffice.com

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皆様のために、ヨーロッパでマンションや家に住む上で役に立つアドバイスをたくさん盛り込んだ動画、「駐在国でお住まいのマンションや家を良好な状態に維持し、修繕費の支払いを回避する方法」を作成いたしました。日系企業にはこの動画へのアクセスを無料でご提供いたします。ヨーロッパ内の他の駐在員の方々ともお気軽にご共有ください。ご興味ある方は是非ご連絡下さい。

About JCO/JCO について

JCO, specializes in improving work and communication among Japanese and non-Japanese colleagues. We run in-

house and public training courses regularly (see schedule below).

Working and communicating with non-Japanese colleagues (in Japanese)

13 Sept (13:00- 16:30 CET); 6 Oct (9:00- 12:30 CET); 15 Nov (9:00- 12:30 CET); 6 Dec (13:00- 16:30 CET)

Working and communicating with Japanese colleagues and clients (in English)

6 Sept (9:00- 12:30 CET); 29 Sept (13:00- 16:30 CET); 18 Oct (9:00- 12:30 CET); 14 Nov (9:00- 12:30 CET); 29 Nov (13:00- 16:30 CET); 12 Dec (9:00- 12:30 CET)

For more information:

www.JapanConsultingOffice.com or elarning@JapanConsultingOffice.com

お問い合わせ: 詳細についてはこちらまでお気軽にお問い合わせください。

NIPPON EXPRESS (BELGIUM) OPENS GENK LOGISTICS CENTRE

Nippon Express (Belgium) N.V./S.A. (hereinafter, "NX Belgium"), a Group company of Nippon Express Holdings, Inc. has established its fourth business location in Belgium - the Genk Logistics Centre - in Genk Green Logistics Park situated in the east of the country, and the Centre opened for business on 25 April.

With Europe's e-commerce market growing alongside the spread of COVID-19 in-

fections, momentum is building behind moves to relocate, consolidate, and expand distribution centers, especially for apparel industry customers.

Adjacent to the terminal port for barge transport from the port of Antwerp, the new Centre is in a location connecting railway terminals serving other European destinations with Liege Airport, securing a geographical advantage at

the heart of a European logistics network encompassed by the mass-consumption area comprising Germany, the Netherlands and France. A variety of energy-saving equipment (solar and wind power generators, water circulating systems, etc.) have been introduced to help achieve carbon neutrality, and the Centre intends to acquire BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) certification in future.

The NX Group will be stepping up its efforts on behalf of the apparel industry, positioned as a priority industry in its Business Plan, and will continue expanding its logistics functions in Europe to assist customers in developing their business activities.



Centre exterior



Automatic sorting machine

Source: <https://www.nipponexpress-holdings.com/en/press/2022/31-May-22-1.html>

JAPAN'S BOOK DONATION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN

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

On the night of 25 August 1914, the library of Louvain University was destroyed by German firebombs and completely burnt down. Allegedly, 250,000 volumes including 950 manuscripts and 800 incunabula all went up in flames. Virtually no book was left intact. The wanton destruction of this temple of learning was condemned throughout the academic and scientific world as an act of barbarism and a blow to civilisation itself. As early as 1915 an appeal towards rebuilding the library building and restoring its holdings was launched among the Allied Countries as well as among some neutral nations, an appeal towards which Japan responded very quickly. Thus, in the margin of the Versailles Conference (1919) a Comité d'initiative was set up, comprising leading personalities from the political and scientific world. The Japanese Minister Plenipotentiary to Belgium Adachi Min-eichirō played an active role in mediating Japan's participation in the committee.

Adachi, promoted to the rank of ambassador in 1921, had a clear vision of what the Japanese contribution to l'Oeuvre internationale de Louvain would ideally have to be: he wanted a spacious room exclusively reserved for books and documents "concerning the civilisation of Japan and the Far East." He argued that a small amount of money would not do, given the important donations that the other major nations intended to make. To avoid unfavourable comparisons with these countries, he not unwisely proposed to contribute in kind. Japan was to donate books and models that would explain various aspects of Japan's unique culture: philosophy, Shintō, Buddhism, literature, fine arts, history, geography, economy, law, physics, arts and crafts,

industry, games etc...The selection would also include old manuscripts and rare printed books. The models would be put in a small museum in annex to the library. The donation reflected Japan's ambition to cement its newly acquired position as major regional power at the Conference table in Versailles.

The donation was shipped in six shipments between August 1924 and August 1926. It totalled 3,202 titles, in 13,682 volumes. In addition, it also included scrolls, maps, rubbings and ten printing blocks from classic works. In the last shipment was included a wooden cabinet containing about 13,000 bibliographical cards. The donation also included gifts from the Imperial Household, several government agencies, and several private individuals. The Prince Regent Hirohito contributed 19 titles in 301 volumes and "an album" out of the Library of the Imperial Household, as well as a porcelain flower vase by Seifū Yohei III (1851-1914), a potter from Kyoto, and a gift of 10,000 yen.

With more than 3,000 titles in almost 14,000 volumes, the 1920s Japanese book donation to the University of Leuven/Louvain constitutes an invaluable time capsule of Japan's pre-modern culture in all its diversity and richness. A century on, the time is right to take a new look at its contents, as well as its history and the political, social, and cultural context surrounding the donation. To commemorate its centenary, the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven) and the Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) have joined forces to set up a special exhibition under the title "Japan's Book Donation to the University of Louvain. Japanese Cultural Identity and

Modernity in the 1920s" (October 2022–January 2023), at the University Library of KU Leuven.

A book has been compiled as a companion to the exhibition, to serve as a durable guide to the collection and its historical background, and as a reference for further research in the future. In five essays by historians of politics, media, culture, and arts of Japan, the authors offer a richly illustrated overview of the history of the donation and its wider historical context, providing illuminating insights into the vibrant 1920s in Japan, its politics, society, and popular culture. The visitor/reader is further invited to explore a sample of 65 remarkable and rare items from the donation, which were carefully selected for inclusion in the exhibition and are provided with a detailed description. Moreover, the visitor/reader is introduced to 41 representative items, including visually captivating commercial and political posters related to Japan's modernity in the 1920s, which represent mass culture, progress and tensions and highlight both imperial ambitions and a willingness to contribute to international cooperation.

The book has been edited by Jan Schmidt, historian of modern and contemporary Japan at KU Leuven, focusing on political and media history, and Head of the Japanese Studies Research Group, Willy Vande Walle, professor emeritus of Japanese Studies at KU Leuven, and Eline Mennens, MA in Japanese Studies (modern history of Japan).

For more information, you can also visit the website about the Japan Mirai Fund: <https://www.kuleuven.be/fundraising/funds/japan-mirai-fund>



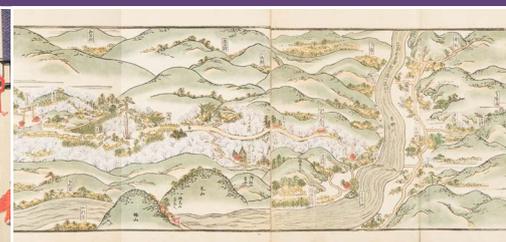
View of Some Shelves of the Japanese Collection at UCLouvain



A few fascicles from *Kōgōroku narabini furoku* 孝義録並附録 ('A Record about Filial Piety and Righteousness, with Supplement') (1801)



Fragment from *Kinjō Tennō go-sokui-rei emaki* 今上天皇御即位礼繪巻 ('Illustrated Handscroll of the Enthronement Ceremony of the Present Emperor') (1915)



Fragment from *Washū Yoshinoyama shōkei-zu* 和州芳野山勝景図 ('Panoramas of Mount Yoshino in the Province Yamato'), by Kaibara Ekiken (1713)

BELGIAN-JAPANESE INNOVATIONS

with JETRO

JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) is a government-related organization that has been promoting trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world for more than 60 years. Since 1955, JETRO Brussels has been helping Belgian companies maximize their business opportunities in the Japanese market and vice versa.

The JETRO mission and values remain the same, even under unprecedented pandemic conditions. Additionally, our economic contributions are more diverse than ever before, and

we are becoming more involved in promoting innovation, such as attracting foreign direct investment and supporting startups to expand overseas.

J-Bridge: Co-create Next Value

J-Bridge, JETRO's business platform designed to facilitate collaboration between Japanese and foreign companies, was launched in 2021. With this newly launched program, JETRO supports cross-border open innovation for accelerating digital and green transformation. J-Bridge primarily targets two types of alliances: a business alliance such as technical cooperation, joint R&D and M&A, and a capital alliance such as investments or joint ventures.

Currently, 600 Japanese companies are enrolled in this program, and the same number of companies are eager to collaborate with overseas companies, startups, research institutes, etc. Of these 600 companies, about 60% are large companies and around 30% are SMEs from various industries, including ICT, trading, chemicals, finance, and manufacturing. JETRO collaborates with numerous partners, such as local governments, financial institutions, and business associations, to consolidate the program's results.

The J-Bridge program provides several services for Belgian companies looking to do business with Japanese firms.

- › **Introduction of companies:** JETRO prepares business summaries of foreign startups/companies and distributes them to registered J-Bridge members (Japanese companies).
- › **JETRO online events:** Foreign startups/companies can find information about JETRO online events promoting innovation and digital transformation, including opportunities to attend seminars.
- › **One-on-one business meetings:** JETRO will arrange one-on-one business meetings with J-Bridge members for startups with unique technologies/solutions.
- › **Individualized support for your business development stage:** business alliance formation and/or introduction to other Invest Japan programs.



Some J-Bridge success cases

Sector	Japanese companies	Foreign companies
Carbon neutrality	Asian Gateway Corporation	Urgentem (UK)
Mobility, Fintech	Global Mobility Service	Yummy Corp (Indonesia)
Edtech	Gakken Holdings	Kiddihub (Vietnam)
Edtech	Toy Eight Holdings	Sunway University (Malaysia)

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Overseas expansion of Japanese startups: Connecting with business ecosystems worldwide

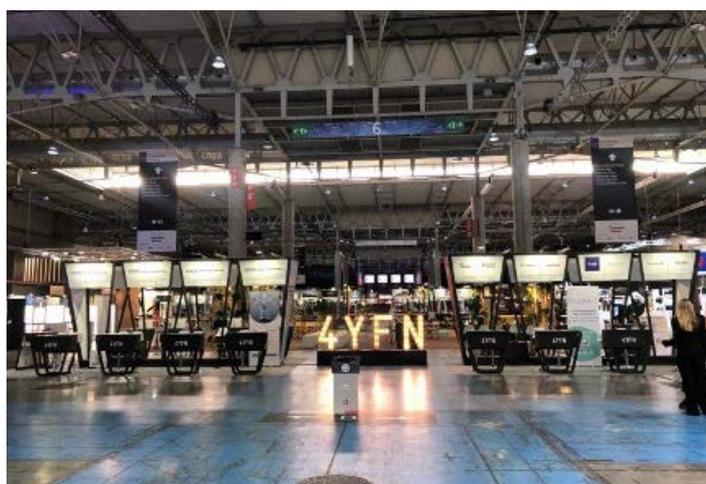
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For more information

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The International Haiku Ambassador for the

JAPAN-EU FRIENDSHIP

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

We all know Mr Herman Van Rompuy as the first President of the European Council. What is less well known is his avocation as a haiku poet, and his activities as Haiku Ambassador. As he admits himself, not that many politicians are practitioners of haiku, and indeed, haiku looks like a fragile flower in the iron-fisted world of politics. Yet, he is not the only one. Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961), second Secretary-General of the United Nations was a haiku enthusiast, and several European ambassadors are known to be practitioners of haiku. It is perhaps an art that flourishes better in the circumspect world of diplomacy than the rough-and-tumble of partisan politics.

Herman Van Rompuy, President Emeritus of the European Council and Minister of State, has recently been reconfirmed as International Haiku Ambassador for the Japan-EU friendship, in a simple ceremony held by HE Yasushi Masaki, ambassador of Japan to the European Union. The reconfirmation took place during a dinner held in his honour at the ambassador's residence on 24 May 2022. It is a two-year appointment signed by the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is the fourth time that Mr Van Rompuy will serve in this capacity. His first appointment dates back to 2015, when he was nominated by Mr Fumio Kishida, Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time and currently Prime minister and also a haiku enthusiast.

Since his first appointment as Haiku Ambassador Mr Van Rompuy has travelled to Japan in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2022, each time giving several lectures on his vision and practice of haiku. During each tour of

Japan, he enjoyed the organisational and logistical support of the Haiku International Association, in particular its board member Hana Fujimoto. In 2018, Mr Van Rompuy attended an international haiku conference in Sweden, organised by the same Haiku International Association. The local organization was in the hands of HE Lars Vargö, formerly Swedish ambassador to Japan, and a scholar of Japanese literature, among others the author of a translation of Bashô's haiku in Swedish. During their stay in Sweden, the participants of the conference paid a visit to the tomb of Dag Hammarskjöld in Uppsala, whom Mr Van Rompuy holds in high esteem, both as a diplomat and a haiku poet.

Mr Van Rompuy has also travelled to Dakar, Senegal, to present awards to children there and give a talk on haiku at the Japanese Embassy. In Belgium, he is regularly called upon to act as judge in haiku contests or to be present at award ceremonies that are attended by Japanese Ambassadors.

He was awarded the title of Honorary Doctor from the University of Kobe (2011) and Kansai University (2015). In 2017, he received the Cultural Prize in the 3rd Asia Cosmopolitan Awards, in recognition of his contribution to haiku, at a ceremony organized by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) in cooperation with Nara Prefecture, held at Nara Kasugano International Forum Iraka.

Mr Van Rompuy has been a staunch supporter of Japan's efforts to have haiku registered on the UNESCO World Intan-

gible Cultural Heritage List. The campaign for registration has been going on for six years now, since Professor Akito Arima set up the Haiku UNESCO Promotion Council on 22 July 2016. It enjoys the full support of the four major haiku associations in Japan: the Haiku International Association (HIA, President: Akito Arima), the Association of Haiku Poets (President: Shugyô Takaha), the Modern Haiku Association (President: Shizuo Miyasaka) and the Association of Japanese Classical Haiku (President: Teiko Inahata). The launch of the promotion campaign was also endorsed by 47 local authorities, while members of Parliament set up a supporting group in the Diet in the same year. The group now includes 64 members. Its President is Fumio Kishida.

In March 2020, Professor Akito Arima formally handed in the letter of request to designate haiku as UNESCO heritage to the Cultural Agency. In April 2021, the Government drafted a new law on "Registered Intangible Cultural Properties," which implied that haiku now had to be registered first by this law, in advance of formally declaring its candidacy for registration as UNESCO world heritage. In December 2021, the Haiku UNESCO Promotion Council decided to apply for this registration.

Unfortunately, Akito Arima passed away in December 2020. As I am writing these lines in July 2022, all those involved in this campaign are presently renewing the effort to pass Akito Arima's last wish, his wish of a lifetime, his wish for "world peace through haiku" on to the government level.



Mr Van Rompuy and Mr Arima laying flowers on Dag Hammarskjöld's grave in the municipal cemetery of Uppsala (June 2018)

As Mr Van Rompuy stresses, haiku is no longer the monopoly of Japan, it has become an international genre, which should be recognized as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. "To me, it is a de facto UNESCO heritage because you can write haiku in any language of the world," he has been quoted as saying in a conference delivered at Nara University on 16 January 2017 in a lecture titled "Haiku in Today's Globalized and Tense World," attended by 260 students and members of the media. Van Rompuy praised haiku for its ability to explain complicated matters in the world through its simplicity. Haiku's spread to Europe from Japan is relatively recent, but is already increasingly incorporated into the system of thought of Europe. "Haiku can express the preciousness of peace and everybody can easily recite this short poem format," he said.

Coming from Europe and given the current global situation, Van Rompuy said that when people interact from their hearts, beyond the pursuit of mere economic profit, it creates a foundation for accepting the movement and engagement of people. "It is important to bring harmony through beauty," he said, adding that haiku has the capacity to accept different cultures and natures while respecting diversity. Van Rompuy, who has published two books of haiku, said that the world today needs "truth, goodness and beauty. Haiku is about authentic experiences. Not about fake feelings." Van Rompuy ended his lecture citing his haiku "Peace", which he read when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the European Union in 2012:

*After war came peace,
Fulfilling the oldest wish,
Nobel's dream come true.*

Haiku was introduced in the West more than one hundred years ago, but it was known even earlier by a few Westerners. In 2015, in his welcoming speech for Mr Herman Van Rompuy, whom HIA invited as the guest speaker to its annual convention, Ambassador Viorel Isticioaia-Budura of the EU Delegation to Japan reminded us that Hendrik Doeff (1777-1835), opperhoofd (head) of the Dutch trading post on Dejima in Nagasaki during the Napoleonic Wars, was the first westerner known to have written a haiku, in Japanese moreover.

The dinner in honour of Mr Van Rompuy took its inspiration from Basho's famous trip to the far north of Japan. In late spring of 1689 Matsuo Bashô and his traveling companion Kawai Sora left Tokyo (then Edo) for a 'poetic' journey on foot, which led them to the northern parts of Honshû, to a region known as the Deep North (Jap.: Oku). The travelogue Bashô wrote about this journey - Oku no Hosomichi (The Narrow Road to the Deep North) - is considered a classic of Japanese literature of the Edo period. The text is composed in highly polished rhythmic prose, full of literary allusions, and interspersed with verses (hokku or as we would call them haiku). There exist several variants of the text.

Ambassador Masaki had contrived to serve typical ingredients or products from areas where Bashô had passed through or made a stopover on his journey: the menu included products or delicacies from Tokyo, Tochigi, Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate, Yamagata, Niigata, Nagano and Gifu. Venturing even beyond the itinerary of Basho's journey, he had the delicacies sprinkled with sakes from Shizuoka, Yamanashi and, rather far beyond Bashô's scope, Okinawa.

Mr Van Rompuy's favourite haiku poet is indeed Bashô, but he almost equally relishes the poetry of Buson and Issa,

although he first learned his trade as a haiku poet from Bart Mesotten, founder of the Dutch-language haiku journal *Vuursteen*. This quarterly, founded in 1981 and edited jointly by the Netherlands Haiku Association and the Dutch language haiku association of Belgium, is the longest existing haiku journal in Europe. Its name *Vuursteen* translates into Japanese as *hiuchi-ishi*, in English as *flintstone*, in Latin and French as *silex*. This is truly a happy coincidence, for the residence of the Japanese embassy is located along a narrow path whose name means as much as narrow road of flintstones (*hiuchi ishi no hosomichi*).

Walking that narrow path, I wrote, parodying a well-known haiku of Bashô:

*yamaji kite
naniyara yukashi
sumiregusa
On the mountain path
somehow so graceful
a wild violet*

When I arrived at my destination, I greeted our host, again parodying another haiku by Bashô, with the following haiku:

*Hosomichi o
tadoreba yukashi
Nire no kage
At the end of the narrow path,
somehow so graceful
the shade of an elm*

Incidentally, the elm tree referred to here has been immortalized in a novella by Ôe Kenzaburô.

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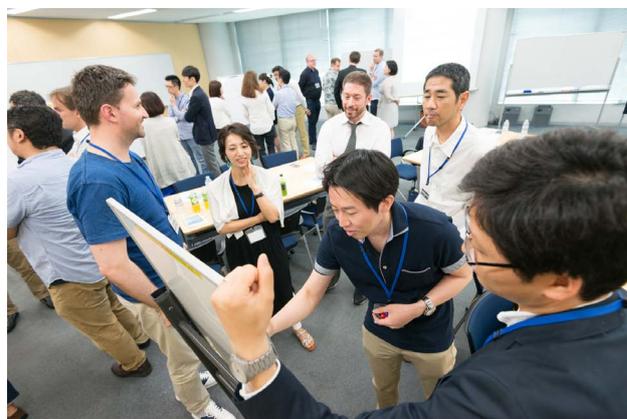
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