



PB-PP|B-00043  
BELGIE(N)-BELGIQUE

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**TRADE FLOWS & CULTURAL NEWS** Number 122 - March 2019

**EDITORIAL**

**The European Union and Japan: more than ever a momentum for success**

By Mr Tanguy Van Overstraeten, Partner Linklaters LLP and Vice Chairman of the BJA and Chairman of its Executive Committee

I am very glad to contribute to the first editorial of the year 2019. I hope you all have started a great year and are looking forward to the spring. Looking back at 2018, the least we can say is that we are living in a time of great uncertainty, both at international and national levels. In Belgium, we have a resigning federal government dealing with current

continue this way also benefiting from the positive effects of the upcoming 2020 Olympics.

At the same time, the recently adopted Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union (EU) and Japan should further boost the economy of these two significant markets. The negotiations of the EPA took about four years with an agreement in principle reached in July 2017. On 17 July 2018, the EU and Japan signed it at the EU-Japan summit in Tokyo. On 12 December 2018, the European Parliament approved the agreement with a large majority while Japan's National Diet completed its ratification on 8 December 2018. At the time of writing this editorial, the EPA is due to enter into effect on 1 February 2019, subject to ratification by all EU member states.

The EPA is the largest bilateral deal of this kind ever negotiated by the EU. It will create an open trading area covering over 600 million people and almost one third of the world's GDP. At a time of serious protectionist challenges, it represents a clear support for free and fair trade. It will largely remove trade barriers and help shape global rules in line with high standards and shared values between the EU and Japan. As I have worked almost all my professional life to assist Japanese businesses in their inbound investments into Europe, I am thrilled about this major milestone.

Beside the EPA's adoption, it is also worth noting the EU adequacy recognition of Japan (and vice versa, given that the procedure is reciprocal). In a nutshell, the EU has a long tradition of legislative protection of personal data and privacy, which has culminated with the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (the famous GDPR) which applies since 25 May of last year.

*keep reading on p.2 >>*



Mr Tanguy Van Overstraeten

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Professor Masao Horibe, Chairman of the Personal Information Protection Commission in Japan and Mr Tanguy Van Overstraeten in front of the PCC in Tokyo.

affairs while elections are approaching. On the international scene, our neighbouring countries are also facing political difficulties. Tensions in France exacerbate the gap between the government and the citizens. Italy must address budgetary issues with a fragmented government of coalition. Of course, the United Kingdom is also in turmoil with the Brexit and its unknown consequences. In the rest of the world, insecurity and populism continue to grow.

In this difficult context, the relationship between the European Union and Japan has nevertheless reached a great momentum, with a lot of potential for all members of our Association.

2018 was another good year for Japan, which has had its longest expansion in years and will hopefully



**KAMO**  
Cuisine japonaise



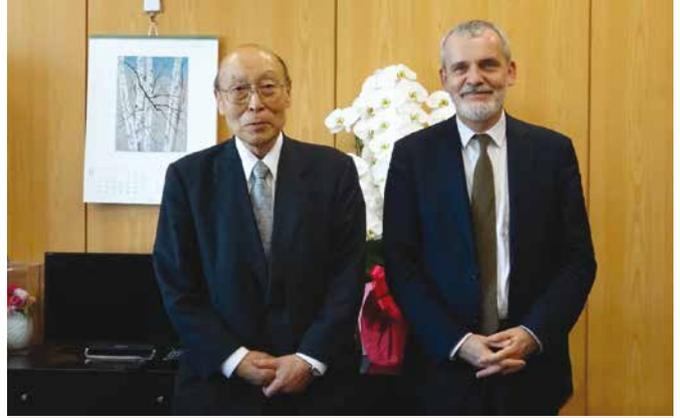
## WELCOME TO KAMO THEATRE

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Professor Horibe and Mr Van Overstraeten in the office of Professor Horibe.

» keep reading from p.1

According to data protection rules, transfers of data originating from the EU to third countries is strictly regulated. The legislation of a few countries has been recognised as offering an equivalent protection to that of the EU rules. Such recognition means that these countries are deemed like an EU member state in relation to personal data flow from the EU to them, with no further formalities being required.

Japan already implemented a law that protects personal data back in 2005. In recent years, these rules have been enhanced. They have then been supplemented further to the negotiations with the European Commission to find them adequate. In January 2019, this process was completed with the official recognition of adequacy of the Japanese law further to the approval by the member states of the decision of the Commission.

This is again an important milestone that complements the EPA. EU based stakeholders will benefit from uninhibited flow of personal data with a key commercial partner as well as from privileged access to 127 million Japanese consumers, as was underlined by the Commission in a recent press release.

For me, this is a real culminating point as personal data protection is one of my key professional areas and I have supported the recognition of the Japanese law for years. I did so alongside my long-standing contact and friend, Professor Masao Horibe, who dedicated his professional life to the protection of privacy and personal data, both through his outstanding academic career and by supporting the Japanese government efforts. Professor Horibe recently retired as Chairman of the Japanese Personal Information Protection Commission and must be very proud of the final outcome of all his hard work.

At the local level, another significant step has been recently taken that will help strengthening the relations between our two countries. On 20 December 2018, the mutual notifications necessary for the entry into force of the double tax treaty between Japan and Belgium (signed on 12 October 2016) have been completed. Accordingly, the treaty entered into force on 19 January 2019.

These giant moves should and will contribute to fostering the already strong ties between Belgium and Japan. The role of our Association will be even more important in that context. I will be glad to continue dedicating my time to supporting these positive developments. I also thank all our members, especially those active in our committees, for their contributions. We have a real momentum with positive prospects ahead of us.

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

Monday, 21 January - Steigenberger Wiltcher's



HE Ambassador Hayashi, Mr Van Overstraeten, Professor Declerck and HE Ambassador Kodama breaking the sake barrel.



HE Ambassador Kodama having a pleasant conversation with Mr Edward De Beukelaer, President and CEO of H. De Beukelaer & CO. and BJA Vice-President.



HE Ambassador Hayashi delivering his New Year greetings.

The Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce was thrilled to invite the members to celebrate the New Year at the beautiful venue of Steigenberger Wiltcher's hotel in Brussels on 21 January 2019.

After welcome words by Professor Gilbert Declerck, Member of the Board imec International and BJA President, His Excellency Ambassador Hajime Hayashi, Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, delivered his New Year greetings to over 100 guests.

His speech was followed by the “Kagamiwari”, traditional sake barrel breaking, joined by HE Ambassador Hayashi, HE Ambassador Kodama of the Mission of Japan to the EU, Professor Declerck, and Mr Van Overstraeten, Partner at Linklaters LLP and BJA Vice-President.

The evening was enchanting with our most amiable guests enjoying their conversations and ample delicious sushi and drinks. A joyous way to start 2019!



BJA REPORT

## The Young Executive Stay Program YES XI in Japan

7-14 October 2018



After going through a strict selection procedure, being instructed by experts and business people about dealing with business in Japan during two briefing sessions, being introduced to all facets of what to expect in Japan, all the hard work in Belgium ended. The YES candidates were ready to do business.

Tokyo welcomed the YES participants in a warm atmosphere of 20 degrees Celsius on the 8th of October for one busy week. The Young Executives, the BJA and the BLCCJ directors met up with the respective business coaches, Sophia University students, sponsors and other parties involved in the program dur-

ing the Welcome Dinner. One of many interesting evenings that will all be long remembered! The week then filled with a BLCCJ panel discussion, meetings with the Belgian Ambassador and other staff of the Luxembourg and Belgian Embassy and Regions, and of course YES business-to-business contacts and potential business partners!

Two of our dynamic YES participants would like to share their experience of doing business in Japan in the following articles.

*The YES Program is a commercial export program, co-organized by BJA and BLCCJ, under the auspices of His Majesty King Philippe of Belgium and supported by AWEX, BIE and FIT.*

GICOPA

Nadia Grégoire, Sales & Marketing Manager



Gicopa has been producing great quality hard candy since 1895 but they had never been enjoyed outside of Belgium until recently.

In 2015, M. Dries De Muynck bought the company after having spent 7 years in Japan in a totally different career path. His love for Japan and trust that Gicopa could sell there, made us prioritize the country. I believe we must be one of few companies who decide to try for Japan as a first export market ... and what a market!

After two rounds at FOODEX, a yearly Food Exhibition in Tokyo Japan, we had made a lot of contacts but with minimal success. We knew Japan would be a difficult country to get into, partly because we were still beginners when it came to exporting, and partly because they require a tremendously high level of both quality and service.

When the opportunity to do the YES program presented itself, we were thrilled to get another opportunity to conquer the country with a completely different angle than a fair. The whole experience has been truly exceptional, from my student (Hongwoo Woo) who organized meetings with potential customers and helped me navigate Tokyo (especially the insanely big Shinjuku station) without getting lost, to my coach (François Stroobant) who kept on supporting us even after the program had ended.

I also cannot forget the very useful meetings & panel organized during the program as well as the “extra curricular” activities (Kamakura, visits of various retail stores, trying all the food, Robot Restaurant...). All helped me understand much better how to do business in Japan and made me appreciate the culture and the people even more.

Though we haven't had immediate successes yet, I believe the YES program has been a great help to develop our network in Japan and to keep on building the relationships we had created in the past. We are currently having regular contacts with several potential partners and working on being able to offer them the perfect candy range for their customers.

We will be going back for FOODEX in 2019, more confident than ever, equipped with all the tools needed to build a structural, long term relationship with an importer there. Hopefully, you will be able to enjoy the traditional Gicopa Violette & Sour cherry in Japan very soon.

I would like to thank the BJA and BLCCJ for the great organization of the program both in Belgium and in Japan.



## NICOLAI FRUIT & VEGETABLES

Johan De Gendt, CEO

As an international distributor of Belgium's finest fresh produce for 25 years, Nicolai Fruit & Vegetables is very much aware that eating fresh and healthy is in everyone's interest and that quality assurance and branding are vital, all over the world.

Hence, when we received information about the YES program and its practical approach to starting business, it immediately spiked our interest and we swiftly applied for a spot. Looking back now upon the whole experience, the YES-approach truly is very hands-on, something that is in my opinion crucial to get things moving, especially in our fresh industry which is all about taste and appearance!

Nicolai Fruit has been doing business with some Asian countries since 2012 and the Japanese market was already on our wishlist for a few years but due to a lack of market knowledge and both cultural and language barriers, the company had refrained from starting up business development. The lack of local knowledge was already partly overcome by the seminars about business with Japan at the start of YES in Brussels and especially the extensive visit to our company, packhouse and growers by three of the Japanese business students at the beginning of September.

This visit is for me still key to the YES success and really gave us a chance to dilate upon our mission and business values and show the students the products and services we deal with on a daily basis. I remember the students asking very good questions about how we tackle issues on our side and how we had achieved our strong growth figures the last decade. They also showed a great interest in the focus our company has been giving for many years to Sustainability!

Consequently, upon my arrival in Japan, I received a very well-prepared, targeted and detailed schedule and a lot of help and advice from our business coach Bernard and student Tiger. During 4 days we had seminars, store visits and most importantly, many meetings with potential customers, all this while at the same time getting to know Tokyo better, from its more historical Nihonbashi to its very high-level business district Shinagawa! A truly enriching and insightful experience too!

All business meetings went very well and after all the friendly advice we received from the Japanese companies, we have already started to develop some additional branding and improved packaging which will hopefully entice the Japanese consumers in the course of 2019. We will meet up with two of the companies in February when they visit Europe as we plan to start up our business to Japan by then.

During my time in Tokyo, I also got to know the other participating companies much better and exchanging stories and experiences was really fascinating and sometimes even rather funny!

The final day in Tokyo, the Belgian Ambassador, HE Mr Sleeuwagen, organised a closing reception with many stakeholders and well-respected business people present. I was really impressed by this and it showed once more the professional and executive level of this YES programme!

I insist on thanking Mrs Sophie Bocklandt and Mrs Anja Kellens for giving us this opportunity and the meticulous organization, Mr Bernard de le Court for his business insights and lastly, Tiger Toranosuke, an excellent business student with a great future ahead of him!



## EU-Japan news

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION ADOPTS ADEQUACY DECISION ON JAPAN, CREATING THE WORLD'S LARGEST AREA OF SAFE DATA FLOWS**

The European Commission has adopted on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January its adequacy decision on Japan, allowing personal data to flow freely between the two economies on the basis of strong protection guarantees.

This is the last step in the procedure launched in September 2018, which included the opinion of the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) and the agreement from a committee composed of representatives of the EU Member States. Together with its equivalent decision adopted today by Japan, it will start applying as of 23 January 2019.

Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: “This adequacy decision creates the world's largest area of safe data flows. Europeans' data will benefit from high privacy standards when their data is transferred to Japan. Our companies will also benefit from a privileged access to a 127 million consumers' market. Investing in privacy pays off; this arrangement will serve as an example for future partnerships in this key area and help setting global standards.”

**The key elements of the adequacy decision**

Before the Commission adopted its adequacy decision, Japan put in place additional safeguards to guarantee that data transferred from the EU enjoy protection guarantees in line with European standards. This includes:

- › A set of rules (Supplementary Rules) that will bridge several differences between the two data protection systems. These additional safeguards will strengthen, for example, the protection of sensitive data, the exercise of individual rights and the conditions under which EU data can be further transferred from Japan to another third country. These Supple-

mentary Rules will be binding on Japanese companies importing data from the EU and enforceable by the Japanese independent data protection authority (PPC) and courts.

- › The Japanese government also gave assurances to the Commission regarding safeguards concerning the access of Japanese public authorities for criminal law enforcement and national security purposes, ensuring that any such use of personal data would be limited to what is necessary and proportionate and subject to independent oversight and effective redress mechanisms.
- › A complaint-handling mechanism to investigate and resolve complaints from Europeans regarding access to their data by Japanese public authorities. This new mechanism will be administered and supervised by the Japanese independent data protection authority.

The adequacy decisions also complement the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement- which will enter into force in February 2019. European companies will benefit from free data flows with a key commercial partner, as well as from privileged access to the 127 million Japanese consumers. The EU and Japan affirm that, in the digital era, promoting high privacy and personal data protection standards and facilitating international trade must and can go hand in hand.

**Next steps**

The adequacy decision – as well as the equivalent decision on the Japanese side – will start applying as of 23 January 2019.

After two years, a first joint review will be carried out to assess the functioning of the framework. This will cover all aspects of the adequacy finding, including

the application of the Supplementary Rules and the assurances for government access to data. The Representatives of European Data Protection Board will participate in the review regarding access to data for law enforcement and national security purposes. Subsequently a review will take place at least every four years.

**Background**

The mutual adequacy arrangement with Japan is a part of the EU strategy in the field of international data flows and protection, as announced in January 2017 in the Commission's Communication on Exchanging and Protecting Personal Data in a Globalised World.

The EU and Japan successfully concluded their talks on reciprocal adequacy on 17 July 2018. They agreed to recognise each other's data protection systems as adequate, allowing personal data to be transferred safely between the EU and Japan.

In July 2017, President Juncker and Prime Minister Abe committed to adopting the adequacy decision, as part of the EU and Japan's shared commitment to promote high data protection standards on the international scene.

The processing of personal data in the EU is based on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which provides for different tools to transfer personal data to third countries, including adequacy decisions. The European Commission has the power to determine whether a country outside the EU offers an adequate level of data protection. The European Parliament and the Council can request the European Commission to maintain, amend or withdraw these decisions.

Source:  
[europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-19-421\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-421_en.htm)

## EU-JAPAN TRADE AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO FORCE ON 1 FEBRUARY 2019

1 February 2019 was a milestone in the EU-Japan relationship.

On that date, the economic partnership agreement (EPA) became effective, creating an open trading area covering over 600 million people and almost one third of the world's total GDP.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, the EU and Japan notified each other of the completion of their respective ratification procedures. As a final step on the EU side, the Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the EPA.

Japan also notified the EU of the completion of its ratification process for the strategic partnership agreement (SPA). On the basis of this notification, a large part of the SPA will be applied on a provisional basis, also as of 1 February 2019. The agreement will formally enter into force once it has been ratified by all EU member states.

Both agreements were signed at the EU-Japan summit on 17 July 2018.

### Economic partnership agreement

The EPA is the biggest trade agreement concluded to date by the EU. 99% of the tariffs applied on EU exports to Japan, which currently amount to about € billion, will be removed.

The agreement will create new opportunities for EU agricultural exports, removing the existing Japanese tariffs on products such as cheeses or wines, while protecting EU intellectual property rights on Japanese markets. It will also open up services markets and significantly increase EU companies' access to Japan's procurement bids.

The EPA is based on the highest standards of labour, safety, environment and consumer protection. It is also the first trade agreement to include a specific commitment to the Paris climate agreement.

### Strategic partnership agreement

The SPA is the first-ever framework agreement between the EU and Japan. It will strengthen cooperation and dialogue across a wide range of bilateral, regional and multilateral issues. It highlights the shared values and common principles that constitute the basis for close and lasting cooperation between the EU and Japan as strategic partners. These include democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The agreement will strengthen cooperation in fields such as international peace and security, cyber crime, energy security, climate change mitigation, innovation and judicial and law enforcement cooperation.

Source: [www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/21/eu-japan-trade-agreement-will-enter-into-force-on-1-february-2019](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/21/eu-japan-trade-agreement-will-enter-into-force-on-1-february-2019)

## MARILO FUND CALL FOR PROJECTS

### What is it about?

The Marilo Fund is a unique initiative that promotes commercial, cultural, and social relations between Japan and Belgium. Wishing to sustain this connection, the Marilo Fund was founded by Mr and Mrs Blondé-Eelen. By partnering with the King Baudouin Foundation and the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce the Marilo fund has been supporting individuals and projects that contribute positively to the mission of the fund by means of a yearly award.

### Who is it for?

Journalists who work in Belgium and who, thanks to their passion for Japan, will contribute to strengthen the good relationships between the two countries.

## 150 YEARS FUND CALL FOR PROJECTS

### What is it about?

The 150 Years Fund is a special initiative of the Celebration Committee of the 150 Years of Friendship between Japan and Belgium. The 150 Years Fund is allocated to the activities of the Marilo Fund, managed by the King Baudouin Foundation.

The 150 Years Fund will be specifically allocated to scholarships for Belgian journalists who will contribute to articles and broadcasts on the 2020 TOKYO OLYMPICS and PARALYMPICS GAMES from 2017 to 2020.

### Who is it for?

Any journalist working in Belgium who has a passion for Japan.

Marilo  FUND  
sharing the passion for Japan

### Timing

Start 25/01/2019  
Submit until 16/04/2019  
Announcement of selection  
30/05/2019

### Financial support

up to € 5000

### Contact

For general information:  
Contact Center  
02-500 45 55

### For specific details

Veronica Billen  
02-549 02 49

Source: [www.kbs-frb.be/en/Search/CallSearchOverview?title=Marilo&type=calls](http://www.kbs-frb.be/en/Search/CallSearchOverview?title=Marilo&type=calls)

## Japanese investors are making it big in Flanders

They might be on opposite sides of the globe, but Japan and Flanders share strong economic ties. In the past few years, the Land of the Rising Sun has claimed a spot among Flanders’ top foreign investors. In 2018, Japanese businesses funneled a total of EUR 568 million into various business activities in the region, spread across 15 projects — making Japan the #5 foreign investor in Flanders. This dedication comes with a clear set of advantages.

International firms reap diverse rewards when deciding to invest in Flanders. As a major logistics crossroads in the heart of Europe’s most affluent megalopolis, Flanders is the place to be for companies with pan-European ambitions. The region is also known for the close collaboration between its private, public and academic sectors — making it fertile ground for innovative R&D activities in some of the most technologically advanced niches. Add to that a highly educated talent pool and a variety of financial and fiscal incentives, and it’s easy to see why companies from Japan and the rest of the world choose Flan-

ders as a corporate base from which to conquer the European market.

### Breaking records

Thanks to these and other assets, Flanders attracts an increasing number of foreign direct investment (FDI) projects. 2018 was yet another record year. Spread across 234 newly announced projects, foreign companies from around the world channeled a whopping EUR 4.24 billion into their Flanders-based activities and facilities. Not only is this twice as much as the year before, it’s also the largest FDI amount ever to have been funneled into the region.

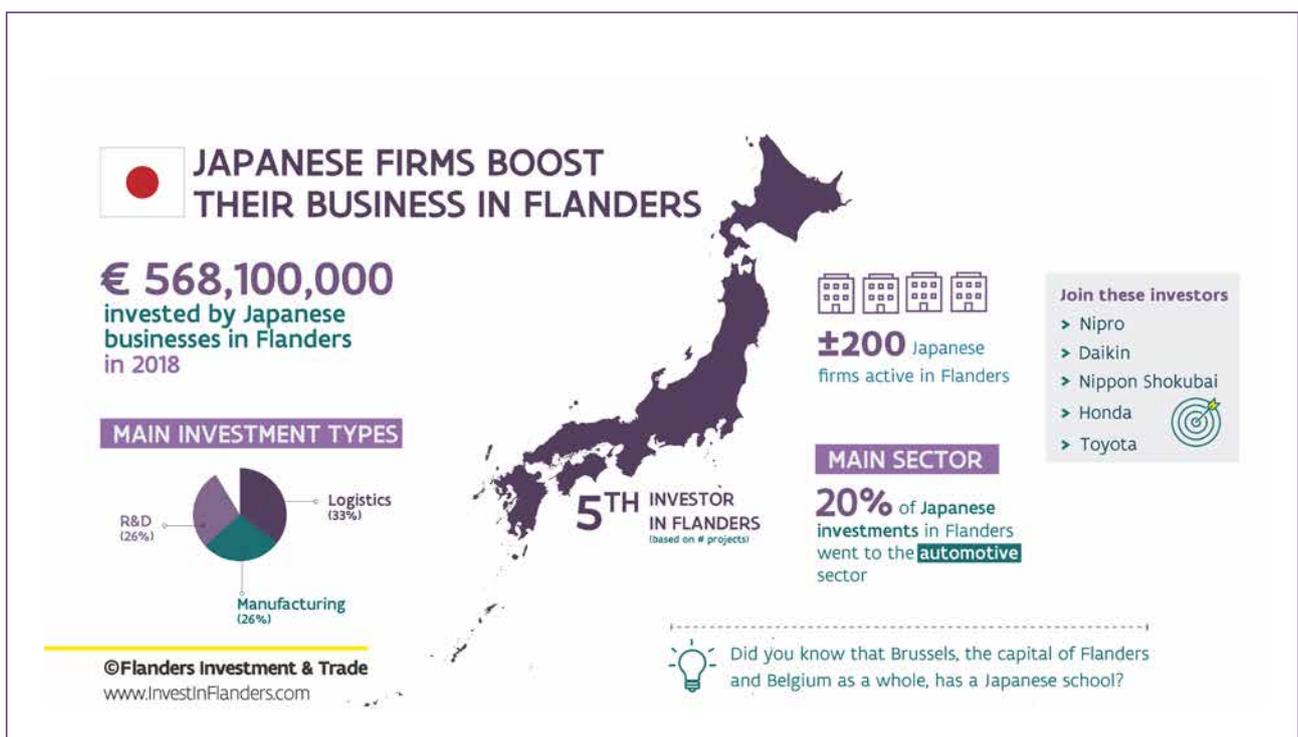
Flanders’ chemical sector has been one of the main drivers of this FDI success for years, and continued to fulfil this role in 2018. Chemicals, after all, are big in the relatively small region. Not

only is its leading seaport — the Port of Antwerp — home to Europe’s largest integrated petrochemicals cluster; Flanders is also one of the global leaders when it comes to sales of chemicals and plastics per capita. To top it all off, the region serves as the main location of most of the world’s top 20 chemical companies as well as various Japanese chemical players, including the likes of Nippon Shokubai and Kaneka.

### Japanese firms lead by example

Companies such as these join a select group of large-scale, dedicated and loyal international investors in Flanders. In fact, more than 9 out of 10 foreign investments in Flanders originate from just 12 countries. Just like in previous years, the US and Flanders’ neighbors (France, the Netherlands and Germany) claimed front-running positions in this

- > EUR 4.24 billion invested in Flanders by foreign companies in 2018.
- > #5 – Japan ranks as Flanders’ 5<sup>th</sup>-largest foreign investor based on number of projects.



list in 2018. Recently, however, Japan has been making its way up this ranking to reach the top 5.

Particularly in the chemical, pharmaceutical and automotive industries, the number of new expansion and green-field projects initiated or announced by Japanese firms in Flanders is on the rise. One of the most prominent recent examples of this trend was Nipro, a Japanese specialist in pharmaceuticals and medical technology. In 2018, this innovative company took a new direction by choosing Mechelen (Flanders) as the location for its first-ever 'institute for MEdical Practice', or iMEP center, on foreign soil. The aim? To attract over 1,000 employees, medical professionals and students from around the world and introduce them to the latest medical equipment, technologies, practices and therapies.

So, why did Nipro choose Flanders? "The region's infrastructure and central location helped seal the deal," says Serge Kemps, CEO of Nipro Medical Europe. "But Flanders' highly educated workforce and the possibility of working with leading local universities were the main contributing factors. Nipro wants to help improve lives everywhere. To pull this off, we need the brightest minds, which is something our recent investment in Flanders helps us achieve."

**"NIPRO NEEDS THE  
BRIGHTEST MINDS, WHICH  
IS SOMETHING OUR RECENT  
INVESTMENT IN FLANDERS  
HELPS US ACHIEVE."**

Serge Kemps,  
CEO of Nipro Medical Europe

#### **Dedication rewarded**

Coupled with an investment in a new EMEA HQ, Nipro's decision to locate its medical center in Flanders earned the Japanese company a nomination for Flanders Investment & Trade's 2019

Foreign Investment of the Year Trophy. Whether Nipro emerges victorious will be revealed at the Foreign Investment Trophy event on March 18, 2019.

At the same event, another corporate gem from Japan will be making its appearance on the main stage as well: air-conditioning specialist Daikin. As one of the first Japanese companies ever to invest in Flanders, Daikin will receive Flanders Investment & Trade's prestigious 2019 Lifetime Achievement Trophy, celebrating decades of dedication to investing and expanding in the region. The air-conditioning king first set up business in the town of Ostend in 1973. Over the years, the site became the group's headquarters for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA). Furthermore, it has been expanded continuously over the years and now also includes Daikin's global knowledge and research center on heating devices.

**"OUR JAPANESE HQ  
IN OSAKA SEES OUR  
FLANDERS-BASED SITE AS  
ONE OF DAIKIN'S MOST  
IMPORTANT PRODUCTION  
FOOTHOLDS."**

Frans Hoorelbeke,  
chairman at Daikin Europe

"The decision to set up and expand Daikin in Flanders was influenced by several key benefits," says Frans Hoorelbeke, chairman at Daikin Europe. "Flanders is just a hop away from the UK, one of the largest European markets. The region's infrastructure also makes it well-connected to the rest of Europe. Add to that a workforce that is loyal, hardworking and highly skilled, and you'll understand why Flanders is the ideal home for Daikin's EMEA headquarters. Today, our Japanese HQ in Osaka also sees our Flanders-based site as one of the group's most important production footholds, as it excels in manufacturing products with high added value."

#### **Successes galore**

But Daikin and Nipro aren't the only Japanese star companies to grace the Foreign Investment Trophy stage. In previous editions, the exclusive event also had the privilege of welcoming chemical company Nippon Shokubai and technology firm Kaneka as nominees for the Foreign Investment of the Year Trophy. Even more, both businesses were selected as winners by the public, the jury and the audience (in 2015 and 2018, respectively).

All in all, few countries share such close economic bonds and investment ties with Flanders as Japan does. And looking at the recent Japanese successes — both within Flanders' business environment and on stage at Flanders Investment & Trade's annual Foreign Investment Trophy —, it's fair to say that the future is looking bright.

#### **See it to believe it**

Want to find out whether Flanders is a great fit for your company's ambitions as well? Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) is the go-to organization for practical support and expert advice on how to set up or expand your business in the heart of Europe.

FIT can bring your company into contact with a variety of services providers and government services in Belgium and Flanders as a region. Its expertise covers numerous domains — including tax, cash grants and subsidies, permits, industry federations and business clusters, strategic research centers, local authorities, and more.

#### **Reach out to FIT's offices in Tokyo**

T: +81 3 52 10 58 84  
E: [tokyo@fitagency.com](mailto:tokyo@fitagency.com)

For the full scoop on Flanders' business environment, visit [www.investinlanders.com](http://www.investinlanders.com).

To learn more about the Foreign Investment Trophy, go to [www.foreigninvestmenttrophy.be](http://www.foreigninvestmenttrophy.be).

## New policies on the employment of foreign nationals

By Mrs Rimma Abadjan, Associate - Attorney at Law, Fragoman Global LLP

### Abstract

Flanders introduced new policies on the economic migration of foreign workers to address the growing needs of the Flemish labour market. The introduction of new policies was linked to the implementation of the Single Permit, a combined work and residence permit issued through a single application procedure. As of January 2019, the Single Permit has been implemented in Belgium and new Flemish policies on the employment of foreign nationals have entered into force. These new policies facilitate access to the Flemish labour market for foreign talent.

### Introduction

Following the shift of competence on employment policies from the federal level to the regional level in 2014, Flanders is the first region to introduce new policies on the employment of foreign nationals. The change is aimed at addressing the growing needs and structural shortages of the Flemish labour market as well as simplifying procedures overall. The introduction of new policies was linked to the implementation of the Single Permit, a combined work and residence permit issued through a single procedure. As of January 2019, the Single Permit has been implemented in Belgium and new Flemish policies on the employment of foreign nationals has entered into force. This article aims at setting out the new legal framework in Flanders and at clarifying procedural changes linked to the concurrent implementation of the Single Permit. We also highlight new opportunities in Flanders and possible challenges.

### New policies in Flanders

Flanders aims at attracting foreign talent in support of its knowledge-based economy and addressing the shortages in the Flemish labour market. The concept of fair competition remains important as Flanders wants to invest in its exist-

ing human resources and looks first for talent in other regions of Belgium and Europe before addressing shortages by attracting foreign workers. On the other hand, these policies also play a role in competing to attract foreign talent as one of the essential building stones of a growing and innovative economy.

The new policies have extended the validity of work authorizations up to three years for highly-skilled workers, diverged from other regions' salary scales for existing categories of highly-skilled workers, and introduced a new salary threshold for highly-skilled workers under age of 30. Moreover, Flanders introduced a dynamic list of shortage occupations for mid-skilled foreign nationals. Obtaining a work authorization for a particular position that does not fall under the above-mentioned categories, remains possible and now falls under easier procedural rules.

### Highly-skilled foreign workers

Before January 1, 2019 all regions in Belgium were applying the legislation that allowed the employment of foreign nationals under general conditions of labour market testing and nationality linked to international labour agreements with the country of origin of the foreign worker. However, some categories, such as highly-skilled workers, benefited from the exemption from the labour market testing in Belgium. The reference to highly-skilled workers in this article also encompasses executives and researchers for the sake of clarity.

### Diverging salary thresholds

While the exemption from labour market testing remains applicable across all regions in Belgium, Flanders has introduced salary criteria for this category that diverges from the other regions. Current yearly salary thresholds applicable in Flanders are as follows:

- › Highly-skilled workers: EUR 41,868 – this is slightly higher than the threshold applicable for Brussels and Wallonia: EUR 41,739;
- › Executives: EUR 66,989 – this is lower than EUR 69,637 for Brussels and Wallonia;
- › EU Blue Card applicants: EUR 50,242 – this is lower than EUR 53,971 for Brussels and Wallonia; and
- › Young highly-skilled workers on local contracts: EUR 33,494 – there is no separate threshold for this category in Brussels and Wallonia.

### Highly-skilled workers under age of 30

Flanders introduced a lower salary threshold for highly-skilled workers under age of 30, hired under a local contract, with a salary closer to the average on the market.

The retention of young talent was a point of concern as Belgium is attracting a lot of students and researchers, but struggling to retain that talent after their studies because of restrictive legal framework to employ foreign workers. The implementation of the European Directive on Researchers, Students and Trainees will allow young graduates – students and researchers – to reside up to one year in Belgium to find a job or to start up their own business. This legislation must be adopted on the federal level and can be expected in May 2019. In the meantime, the Flemish policies open new opportunities in the employment of young workers which may be interesting to companies having young graduates schemes, as well as a general impact on recruitment policies.

### Validity of work authorizations

In Flanders, validity of work authorizations for highly-skilled workers can reach up to 3 years while it can be maximum 1 year in other regions of Belgium. The validity is always aligned with the duration of the employment contract and

the work authorization remains as a rule linked to a specific employer.

### **Work authorization of unlimited duration**

After 4 years of employment in Flanders, foreign nationals are eligible for a work authorization of unlimited duration. In other regions, this option is only available for certain categories of foreign nationals, excluding highly-skilled workers.

Flemish legislation does not allow the counting of periods of employment while a seconded worker towards the threshold of 4 years. Moreover, only periods of employment under the status of economic migrant will qualify for the 4 year pathway.

### **Shortage occupations**

There is a structural shortage of labour resources on the Flemish labour market for specific positions. Typically, those positions do not fall under highly-skilled categories by nature: the level of required competences are usually technical or could be described as “mid-skilled”.

For these positions Flanders has introduced a “dynamic list” of shortage occupations. The list creates new exemptions from labour market testing for these occupations and consequently simplifies access to the Flemish labour market.

At this moment, the list contains occupations such as: technicians for electronic installations, installers of data communication networks, mechanics for maintenance of company cars and truck drivers. The list will be reviewed biennially in function of the needs of the Flemish labour market. Other regions do not foresee specific exemptions for these occupations and there the labour market testing will continue to be mandatory.

### **Specific labour needs**

In specific cases which do not fit into any of the categories discussed above, Flanders still allows work authorization applications based on specific needs of the employer and the difficulty to find a suitable candidate. While labour market testing is mandatory, a nationality condition does not apply in Flanders (as opposed to other regions).

### **New Flemish policies and the single permit implementation**

The implementation of the single permit and the single application procedure in Belgium resulted in nationwide procedural changes. Those changes do not imply amendments of policies in regions other than Flanders. Walloon region, Brussels and the German-speaking community have not amended the criteria for foreign workers to be admitted to their labour market.

The single permit is a combined document issued through a single application procedure, allowing third-country nationals to work and reside in Belgium. Visually, the single permit will look like a residence permit card with an additional indication of the holder’s right to access the labour market. The card’s electronic chip will also contain basic information on employment. Family members of foreign workers will receive a similar residence permit card and will have access to the labour market based on their residence status. This is a welcome development as additional work authorizations will no longer be required.

A point of concern, however, is the availability of all required documents for the submission of a single permit application. To be considered admissible, an application must contain all documents related to both employment and residency, such as a police clearance certificate and proof of health insurance. This can delay the process as obtaining these

documents can be time-consuming.

The processing times of single permit applications are concerning as well. The legal processing time is set at a maximum of 4 months. Belgium has experienced particular issues related to the implementation of the single permit due to the division of competences between the federal and regional governmental levels sharing responsibility for granting work and residence authorizations.

The competence to decide on the work permit lies with the regional employment authorities. The Immigration Office – a federal institution, decides on the right to reside. In the single application procedure, the institutions of both levels will coordinate their decisions and communicate a single approval decision to the foreign worker. This is expected to delay the process compared to processing times that were experienced in the past.

The new procedure is applicable to all foreign workers who aim to reside in Belgium for longer than 90 days for work purposes. This implies that the old style of work permits – a separate physical document – will still be applicable to employment of foreign nationals for periods shorter than 90 days.

The interplay between the new single application procedure and new policies in Flanders leads to a more complex legal environment in which companies find themselves when they envisage hiring a foreign national. However, it also creates new opportunities. Policies on the Flemish level introduce new categories and new criteria for employment of foreign workers, granting easier access to the labour market which is tailored to specific needs of companies in the Flemish labour market. This development is also positive for Flanders in the global competition to attract foreign talent and investment.

**BJA REPORT**

**BJA Exclusive Luncheon with HE Ambassador Hajime Hayashi,  
Japanese Ambassador to Belgium and NATO**

**林肇駐ベルギー王国日本国大使兼  
北大西洋条約機構日本政府代表部大使による昼食講演会**

Thursday, 6 December 2018 - Steigenberger Wiltcher's



The BJA members were impressed by the detailed knowledge on Belgium of HE Ambassador Hayashi



HE Ambassador Hayashi discussing Belgo-Japanese relations with Mrs Julia Gough, General Manager of JTI, and Mr Wim Eynatten, Partner at Deloitte and BJA Legal & Tax Committee Chair



Mr John Verzeel, Director Inward Investment at FIT, takes the opportunity to ask a question to HE Ambassador Hayashi

The Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce was honoured to welcome His Excellency Ambassador Hajime Hayashi, Japanese Ambassador to Belgium and NATO for an exclusive luncheon at the prestigious Steigenberger Wiltcher's hotel in Brussels. His Excellency gave an insightful speech on "Reflections on the 100th Anniversary of the End of the First World War - Implications for Today and for the Future".

During his presentation, Ambassador Hayashi focused on the many commemorative events taking place in Belgium, including the ones linked to Japan. He further elaborated on the exchanges between Japanese and Belgian people during and after the war, including the restoration of the library of the Catholic

University of Leuven for which Japan contributed by donating many precious and historic books.

Following the speech, the Ambassador graciously accepted questions from the audience, and spoke of the upcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, which will mark the 100th anniversary of the Antwerp Olympic Games in 1920 that symbolized the recovery of Belgium from the First World War, as well as the World Expo 2025 in Osaka, which will be occasions for developing even closer relations between the two countries.

The members thoroughly enjoyed the event, which was kindly supported by JTI.



## EXHIBITION “VOICE AND SOUND WAVES: THE JAPANESE SCENE”

## LE 26 BY - BRUSSELS

“Le 26BY”, an independent cultural gallery established in a beautiful Brussels house in 2016 by art collector Félix Frachon, is engaged in introducing mostly non-European artists developing multidisciplinary practices.

Felix Frachon Gallery gives “carte blanche” in “LE 26 BY” to Anne-Laure Chamboisier, an art historian and a curator who has been conducting research on artists working with sound and music in Japan for the past 4 years.

This exhibition ‘Voice and sound waves: the Japanese scene’ invites the public to live a sensory experience through the interactive manipulation of sculptural objects and the listening to a variety of sounds. The diversity of the mediums of this exhibition - sculpture, installation, drawings, videos, witnesses the great quality and plurality of Japanese contemporary creation, through the eyes of three generations of artists. This exhibition offers to eight of the most important artists in Japan today, a significant visibility in Europe. Among them, Yukio Fujimoto is one of the pioneer figures of contemporary creation in Japan. In the 1970s, he focused mainly on composition and electronic performance and, in the mid-1980s, he began to produce sound objects. Having close artistic relationships with Atsushi Nishijima, the Softpad collective and Yagi Lyota, the scenography of the central space of the exhibition is the result of a col-

laboration, creating a subtle dialogue between their works. These artists have been exhibited in prestigious museums, such as The National Museum in Osaka, the Museum of Modern Art in Shiga or National Center of Art in Tokyo, among others.

Mamoru, a very talented emerging artist, occupies another space with an extremely poetic video installation where text, image and sound invite the viewer to open up to an unexpected space, where our common perception of things is disrupted.

With respect to its importance, this exhibition received the precious support of the Japan Foundation.

HE Mr Hajime Hayashi, Ambassador of Japan to the Kingdom of Belgium was the Guest of Honor, in presence of the artists, of the Preview of the exhibition « VOICE AND SOUND WAVE - THE JAPANESE SCENE » on 12 February 2019.

We will be most happy to welcome all the members of the BJA at “Le 26BY” and to guide them through this exceptional exhibition.

## Information:

- › Félix Frachon “LE 26 BY”
- › 26, Rue Saint Georges, 1050 Brussels
- › Email: felix@felixfrachon.com
- › Phone: +32 486 14 13 30
- › Open: Thursday to Saturday from 12:00 to 18:00 and by appointment
- › Access: tram 93, 94, Abbaye station

## With:

- › YUKIO FUJIMOTO
- › ATSUSHI NISHIJIMA,
- › Collective SOFTPAD (TAKUYA MINAMI, ICHIRO AWAZU, HAJIME TAKEUCHI, HIROSHI TOYAMA)
- › MAMORU AND LYOTA YAGI.

## Curator:

Anne-Laure Chamboisier

## Date:

From 15 FEBRUARY TO 11 MAY 11 2019

## 展覧会：声と音波 - 日本の風景

アーティスト：藤本 由紀夫、MAMORU、八木 良太、ニシジマ アツシと SOFTPAD (アーティスト 3 人によるグループ)

キュレーター：アンヌ・ロール・シャンポイシェー (Anne-Laure Chamboisier)

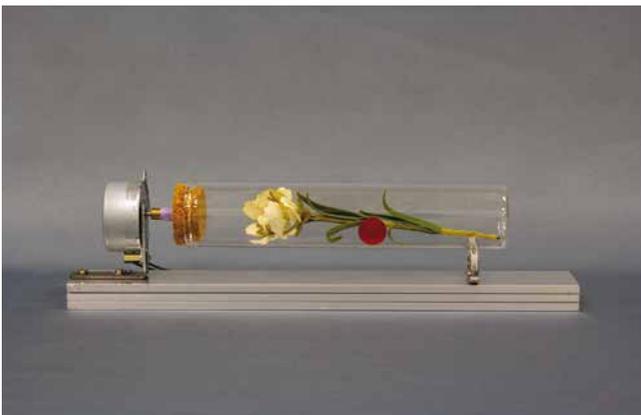
期間：2019 年 2 月 14 日 - 5 月 11 日

(開館時間：木曜日～土曜日、午後 12 時から 18 時まで、要予約)

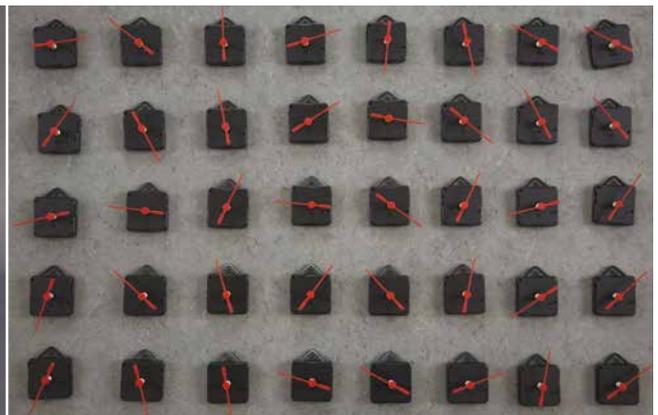
住所：« Le 26 BY »

26, Rue Saint Georges, 1050 Brussels

お問い合わせ：フェリックス フラシオン  
Eメール felix@felixfrachon.com  
電話 + 32 486 14 13 30



Yukio Fujimoto, REVOLUTION & GRAVITY (A Flower & A Glass ball) 2017, mixed media, motor, glass, cloth, cork, aluminum, 30 x 5 x 8 cm



Yukio Fujimoto, CLOCKS (Square) 2002, mixed media, electric clock size is variable, installation view at Perrott's Folly / Birmingham, England

## news for the members

## ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE NEW TAX CONVENTION BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

On December 20, Japan received from Belgium the notification confirming that its internal procedures necessary for the entry into force of the Convention between Japan and the Kingdom of Belgium for the Elimination of Double Taxation with respect to Taxes on Income and the Prevention of Tax Evasion and Avoidance (signed on 12 October 2016) were completed. Thus, all the necessary procedures for the entry into force of the Convention have been completed.

The Convention, therefore, will enter into force on 19 January 2019, on the thirtieth day after the date of receipt of the latter notification and will have effect:

### in case of Japan:

- › with respect to taxes levied on the basis of a taxable period, for taxes of any taxable period beginning on or after 1 January 2020; and
- › with respect to taxes levied not on the basis of a taxable period, for taxes levied on or after 1 January 2020.

### in case of Belgium:

- › with respect to taxes due at source, on income credited or payable on or after 1 January 2020;
- › with respect to other taxes on income, on income of taxable periods beginning on or after 1 January 2020; and
- › with respect to other taxes, on taxes

due in respect of taxable events taking place on or after 1 January 2020.

The new Convention will replace the Convention between Japan and the Kingdom of Belgium for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with respect to Taxes on Income, which entered into force in 1970. It expands the extent of reduction of taxation on investment income by the source country and introduces arbitration proceedings to the mutual agreement procedure, with a view to further promoting investment and economic exchanges between the two countries.

Source:  
[www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_002283.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002283.html)

## THE TWELFTH JAPAN INTERNATIONAL MANGA AWARD

This year, a Dutch artist (Aimée de Jongh) and a Belgian Story writer (Zidrou) who applied from Belgium got a Silver award.

The Japan International MANGA Award was established in May 2007 upon the initiative of then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Taro Aso, with the aim of rewarding MANGA creators who contribute to the spread of MANGA culture overseas and international cultural exchanges through MANGA. The Award has been hosted every year since then.

Among entries, the gold Award will be given to the best work and the Silver Awards to the three other excellent works. The awardees will be invited to Japan by the Japan Foundation to attend the award ceremony. During their stay in Japan, they will also have the opportunity to exchange ideas with Japanese MANGA creators, visit publishing companies and make an excursion to local sites.

The full award results can be viewed on [www.manga-award.mofa.go.jp](http://www.manga-award.mofa.go.jp)

Source: [www.mofa.go.jp/mof.../press/release/press4\\_006897.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mof.../press/release/press4_006897.html)  
and [www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/pop/manga/index.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/pop/manga/index.html)



## MEET OUR GOLF STARS & PARTICIPATE TO THE GOLF TO TOKYO

When: Tuesday 04/06/2019

Where: Golf Château de la Tournette (Nivelles)

What: Team of 4 players (scramble)

For: Support Team Belgium athletes on the road to Tokyo

### Further information contact:

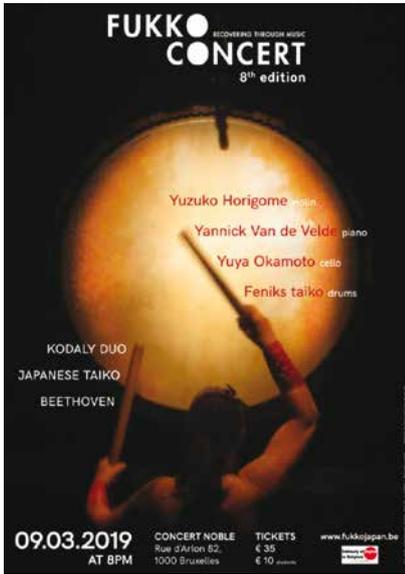
Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee  
Loubna Benlahssen

E-mail: [l.benlahssen@olympic.be](mailto:l.benlahssen@olympic.be)

Phone: 02 474 51 57

ONLY 13 TEAMS LEFT





**9 MARCH 2019  
FUKKO CONCERT 2019**

A charity classic music concert for the victims of Earthquake and Tsunami in Tohoku region of Japan in 2011.

**Artists:**

- › Yuzuko Horigome, violin
- › Yannick Van de Velde, piano
- › Yuya Okamoto, cello
- › Feniks Taiko, Japanese drums

**Program:**

- › Kodaly duo
- › Japanese taiko
- › Beethoven Archduke trio

**Address:**

CONCERT NOBLE  
EDIFICIO  
Rue d'Arlon 82  
1000 Bruxelles

**For more information:**

[www.fukkojapan.be](http://www.fukkojapan.be)  
[www.be.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/culture\\_event\\_jicc.html#mar2019](http://www.be.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/culture_event_jicc.html#mar2019)

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perspective the  
one you don't have?**

In this Transformative Age, the opportunities that emerge from disruption are ready to be seized.  
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BJA REPORT

# BJA Exclusive Night - STVV vs Standard de Liège Football Match STVV 対 Standard de Liege の試合観戦

Saturday, 8 December 2018 - Sint Truiden



The team members of STVV gathered in the field after the 1<sup>st</sup> goal of the evening.



Mr Wataru Endo, Midfielder of STVV, is giving his autograph to young participants.



Mr Takehiro Tomiyasu, Defender of STVV (2nd from the left) joined by Mrs Hitomi, Mr Oji Hitomi, President of Sumitomo Benelux and BJA Board Member, and Mr Kazuya Oimatsu, Managing Director of MUFG Bank and BJA Vice-President of BJA, for a photo.

With the generous support of the Jupiler Pro League Club STVV (Sint-Truiden), the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce (BJA) was thrilled to have over 70 BJA members, their families and friends coming to the special evening to watch STVV vs Standard de Liège, one of the hot matches of the season, at the VIP seats of the STVV home stadium.

The game ended with all square, but the STVV fans and the BJA guests were extremely excited as Mr Daichi Kamada, the Japanese midfielder of the STVV made the first goal of the match.

After the game, the BJA guests moved to an exclusive area

where they were greeted by Mr David Meekers, Chairman of STVV and Mr Takayuki Tateishi, CEO of STVV, who both addressed the audience. While enjoying the light dinner and drinks, the guests were joined by all five Japanese players of STVV, Mr Takehiro Tomiyasu, Mr Wataru Endo, Mr Takahiro Sekine, Mr Yuta Koike, and Mr Daichi Kamada, and they all treasured the exclusive opportunity to receive autographs and pictures from the players.

It was truly an exclusive and memorable evening, especially for the many children cherishing the moment to meet their idols.



## BELGIAN-JAPANESE COUPLES IN BELGIUM AND BEYOND: A CONVERSATION WITH DR ASUNCION FRESNOZA-FLOT

*By Mr Pierre Bonneels, BJA Cultural Committee member*

Life in Brussels seems like it is becoming more and more cosmopolitan every year. If you take a bus 71 from Gare Central to Delta, it is not unusual for us to hear many different languages spoken among fellow passengers. What is remarkable about this everyday phenomenon, however, is that these languages are not always spoken by tourists visiting our wonderland of world-famous beer and chocolate, but by those who make their living in the capital of Europe. In this dynamic community of multilingual Bruxellois, we recognize many Asian residents (including Japanese) walking side by side with their European partners (including Belgians). What does this tell us about our experience of living in Brussels? How does this interaction between East Asian (and especially Japanese) and Belgian cultures bring a positive influence to our network at BJA? With these questions in mind, I visited the specialist of Asian migrations at the Université libre de Bruxelles, Dr. Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot.

Dr. Fresnoza-Flot has been working as a permanent research associate of the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research (F.R.S.-FNRS) and a senior lecturer at the ULB since 1 October 2017. She describes her field of research as the following: “I am based at the Laboratory of Anthropology of Contemporary Worlds (LAMC) at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, where I am teaching the module entitled ‘Intermarriages, “mixed” families and migration’ (in the discipline of Anthropology) and the class called ‘Migration and Gender’. My research activities are mainly in the fields of ‘Migration Studies,’ ‘Family Studies,’ and ‘Gender Studies.’”

I wondered how her research was related to the topic of Japan and asked her to tell me more about the nature of her research project. Her answer was quite

astonishing. Her research program, launched in October 2017, examines the contextual mobility of Belgian-Asian couples residing in Belgium and/or in the country of origin of the Asian partner. It aims to investigate the causes, consequences, and underlying processes that play a part in the formation of these couples in different national contexts. More specifically, it intends to find out how individual partners position themselves in various overlapping contexts (social, economic, political, etc.) characterized by different power hierarchies. This study comprises several case studies focusing on couples, including Belgian-Japanese ones. Mixed research methods have been and will be used: survey of Belgian/Asian couples; observations in places frequented by these couples; expert interviews; semi-structured couple interviews; and documentary research. At present, her project receives the support of the F.R.S.-FNRS, the start-up grant of the Maison des Sciences Humaines (MSH) of the ULB, which is allocated to Mr. Aaron Ponce who is conducting the case study on Belgian-Chinese couples, and the ‘Concerted Research Action (ARC)’ grant that will finance two doctoral studies—one on Belgian-Vietnamese couples and the other on Belgian-Laotian couples—from this year onwards.

Concerning the case study on Belgian-Japanese couples, Asuncion is starting a collaboration with Prof. Gracia Liu-Farrer, a sociologist and migration scholar at Waseda University (Japan). This collaboration, made possible by the support of the Waseda Brussels Office at the ULB, includes the international workshop “Intimacy, sexuality and family in the process of migration” held at the end of last year. The next step of the collaboration will be the search for and recruitment of a doctoral researcher who will be working on the case study

of Belgian-Japanese couples. Right now, Asuncion is conducting a survey of Belgian-Japanese couples in Belgium to find out their general social situation in the country.

I was quite impressed with the scope of the research that pays closer attention to the changing face of our society. So, I asked Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot why she thought this kind of research would be important for our connection with Japan and Japanese people (both in work and in life). Her answer was this: “The case study focusing on Belgian-Japanese couples is important for Japan, a country where more and more international marriages have been taking place for the last few decades. Most studies on these marriages have focused so far on Japanese citizens and their partners from economically developing countries in Asia (such as Thailand and the Philippines). Belgian-Japanese couples may be socially ‘invisible’ but merit scholarly attention as much as more numerically visible binational couples. Studying their case may yield interesting perspectives about the way they contribute in, experience, and confront the increasing heterogeneity of the world we live in. Insights from their case may also improve state policies directed to binational couples in Belgium and/or in Japan.” I have no doubt that this study will shed some light not only on our experience of living in Belgium with Japanese colleagues, friends, and families but also on our working connection with Japanese society where fellow Belgians are experiencing a similar development as ours in Belgium.

If you find this story interesting and would like to help with this great research project as BJA members, please feel free to contact Asuncion for additional information about her study via email at [afresnoz@ulb.ac.be](mailto:afresnoz@ulb.ac.be).

## news from the members

**KURT LEURIDAN (CEO TOKAI OPTecs) BUYS IN AT TOKAI OPTICAL JAPAN**

SHARES OF A JAPANESE FAMILY BUSINESS IN THE HAND OF A BELGIAN ENTREPRENEUR

Tuesday, 4 December 2018 – Kurt Leuridan, CEO of a company manufacturing spectacle lenses in Tienen, bought in at Tokai Optical Japan, which has an annual turnover of 100 million euros. “A foreigner that invests in a Japanese family business is not usual”, states the Belgian entrepreneur. “Especially not when it regards a company that has been owned by the same family for over 80 years.” Tokai Optical wants to focus on the internationalization of their company.

**First non-Japanese investor**

“Ever since 1995 both companies, Tokai Optecs and Tokai Optical, have had an established relationship where they have been working together closely”, according to Kurt Leuridan, CEO of Tokai Optecs, Tienen. “The devoted partnership stimulates the continuous development of new materials, designs, treatments and high-tech manufacturing processes.” The personal relation between Kurt Leuridan and the Furuzawa family of Tokai Optical Japan is being reinforced by Leuridan’s new investment: he recently bought in to the company.

“It is quite unconventional for a foreigner to invest in a Japanese company. Especially when it concerns a family business”, states Leuridan. Consequently to this arrangement, he is the first non-Japanese and the first person that is not a member of the Furuzawa family, to become shareholder of Tokai Optical Japan, which has more than 500 employees and an annual turnover of 100 million euros.

**Aspiration for further internationalization**

“The personal proposal to become shareholder is fully motivated by the urge and aspiration for further internationalization”, according to Leuridan. “Due to strong aging of the population, Japan has a leading role regarding spectacle lenses technology. However, Japan is known for a rather introvert and collected culture. In order to be able to spread this technology to Europe and other parts of the world, the Furuzawa family wants to internationalize. They do so by gathering more foreign establishments and alliances. Hence, the fact that the family consid-

ers a Belgian entrepreneur, poses a great honor. Several Belgian and Flemish entrepreneurs have preceded me and participated in the internationalization of a foreign organization.”

**Finger on the pulse**

Hirokazu Furuzawa, CEO of Tokai Optical Japan, is definite: “We never doubted the skills of the management team of Tokai Optecs, led by Kurt Leuridan. We are delighted with a partner who keeps his finger on the pulse regarding strategies and management, even in this fast changing business.”

**Innovation first**

Tokai Optics prioritizes innovation. They produce for example the thinnest spectacle lenses in the world and they are the first company to use neurosciences in developing progressive spectacle lenses. In order to help curing macular degeneration, which is caused by exposure to sunlight, the company designed ophthalmic spectacle lenses, called Lutina, that control the uv impact on the eyes.

Innovation is not only key in Japan. Leuridan’s Tokai Optecs also instituted a collaboration with IMEC, Europe largest independent research center when it comes to micro-electronics, nanotechnologies, design methods and technologies for ICT systems. The result of this collaboration is the joint venture EYEco-eyeCO where electronic spectacle lenses are designed, the prototype is ready and patents were already submitted.

The Tokai Group has establishments in Japan, Belgium, China, Italy and the United Kingdom. The sum of the transaction was not announced publicly, as Japanese culture prescribes.



Source: [www.tokai.be](http://www.tokai.be) & Primetime Communication

## Friendship Committee Visit Christmas Market

Sunday, 2 December 2018 – Brussels

On 2 December 2018, we gathered in front of the St.-Catherine Church in order to make our traditional visit of the Brussels Christmas market. This visit has become a tradition for the BJA Friendship Committee and it was a real pleasure to continue it this year as well. As the weather was really cold this day,

we bought some Takoyaki and some roasted chestnuts to warm us up. As it started raining, we stopped by the Lefe corner and tried some hot wine and beer. As always, this event was good fun! We got the chance to meet up and chat with some really interesting people from various backgrounds. We enjoyed

each other's company so much that we even forgot to take pictures...

We are looking forward to meeting you there next year too!

*A participant to the Christmas Market*



## NEWSLETTER

### news from the members

#### FOREIGN MINISTER'S COMMENDATION FOR MS FABIENNE L'HOOST, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE BELGIAN FOREIGN TRADE AGENCY



On 12 November, Ambassador Hayashi organised an awarding ceremony of the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation for Ms Fabienne L'Hoost, Director General of the Belgian For-

eign Trade Agency and former Executive Director of the Belgium-Japan Association and Chamber of Commerce.

In his congratulatory speech, Ambassador Hayashi expressed his deep gratitude to Ms L'Hoost for having prepared the ground for the excellent economic relations between Belgium and Japan, by promoting better mutual understanding between Belgian and Japanese companies, during her tenure as the Executive Director of BJA.

In her speech, Ms L'Hoost thanked her family members and colleagues for their support, explained her interest and experiences in Japan, and stressed her continuous efforts for further promoting economic exchange between the two countries.

Source: [www.be.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/news\\_181112.html](http://www.be.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/news_181112.html)



## news from the members

**DAIKIN: ACQUISITION OF AUSTRIAN REFRIGERATING AND FREEZING SHOWCASES MANUFACTURER AHT**

Daikin Industries, Ltd. (Headquarters: Osaka, Japan; President and CEO: Masanori Togawa) has reached an agreement for the acquisition of AHT Group (Headquarters: Austria), a leading company in the commercial refrigeration market in Europe.

The transaction value is 881 million euros (114.5 billion yen at an exchange rate of 1 euro = 130 yen). Through its subsidiary Daikin Europe N.V., (Headquarters: Belgium, President: Masatsugu Minaka), Daikin will obtain all company shares from Bridgepoint (Headquarters: United Kingdom), the Private Equity shareholder of AHT Group. Completion of the acquisition is planned for January 2019 after conclusion of all necessary procedures. In the strategic management plan "Fusion 20", Daikin has established priority measures to expand its commercial refrigeration business, and capitalize on environmental regulations relating to energy savings and refrigerants. In Europe, the company has begun sales of highly-efficient refrigeration and freezing systems for supermarkets and convenience stores since 2000. Moreover, in 2016, Daikin has acquired Italian commercial refrigeration manufacturer, Zanotti, extending its business to industrial refrigeration equipment for food processing and warehouse storage in addition to refrigeration equipment used in shipping such as marine containers and overland trucks and vans. On the other hand, Daikin saw the opportunity for a strategic reinforcement by extending its position at the consumer-facing end of the cold chain, namely the refrigeration showcases segment.

AHT develops, manufactures and sells refrigerating and freezing showcases specifically suited for food retailers. Leading the "plug-in" type showcases segment, AHT leads the market by the active launch of new products corresponding to evolving store layouts. Furthermore, utilizing its technological capabilities and business resources, AHT serves large accounts which include major food retail chains worldwide.

With this acquisition, Daikin is adding AHT showcases to its own wide range of products, services, and solutions based on its air conditioning and refrigeration equipment. This will

enable the company to become a one-stop provider offering complete coordination of air conditioning and refrigeration products. This acquisition is also expected to solidify Daikin's business foundation in Europe and promote full-scale expansion of its refrigeration business in the United States as well as Asia, a region of remarkable growth in both population and economic prosperity.

The refrigerator and freezer business is a highly social issue as it contributes to one of the crucial world challenges of food preservation and food waste reduction, especially faced in developing countries. The refrigeration business presents great opportunities for Daikin to utilize the advanced technologies it has cultivated including energy saving, inverters, and refrigerant control. Because the refrigeration business shares a close affinity with the company's main business of air conditioning, expectations run high for Daikin to achieve synergies with current operations. Daikin intends to offer new value with service solutions focused on energy and the environment as it works to make its own unique contribution to resolving global issues.

**1. Refrigeration Equipment Market**

The refrigeration equipment market is said to have a global scale of 4 trillion yen, and commercial refrigeration, which includes supermarkets and discount stores, is estimated to be 1.7 trillion yen. With a market of 500 billion yen, Europe trails only the United States in scale. Store-use equipment occupies roughly half of that with an estimated 5% annual growth. Refrigerated showcases exceed freezer showcases in terms of replacement frequency, and 6% annual growth is anticipated for this market segment.

As a major trend in developed countries including Europe, the number of food purchases at food retail stores has increased over those made at specialty stores, and expansion of small- to medium-sized stores and convenience stores in urban communities are expected to surpass that of large retail stores in the suburbs. Additionally, internet operators, especially in China and

the United States, are advancing into the food retail business, and worldwide growth is expected for the food retail market.

**2. Significance and Background of Acquisition**

In addition to providing air conditioners and freezers to supermarket and convenience stores in Europe, Daikin has been selling products such as equipment used in shipping marine containers and air conditioners for food storage warehouses. In response to recent market changes, the company acquired Zanotti, an Italian manufacturer in 2016. Leveraging this acquisition, Daikin has worked to build a business foundation providing solutions in all phases of the cold chain with a wide lineup of refrigeration equipment ranging from industrial use to overland transport and commercial use.

In addition to conventional products, Daikin aims to incorporate AHT's showcases in its offering and approach retail customers as it strives to expand its own customer base. Moreover, the services extending from equipment installation, commissioning to maintenance will be further strengthened. In addition to the overall design of stores including showcases, low temperature storage, and air conditioning, Daikin aims to expand its solutions business which includes remote control and monitoring, failure prediction, and proposals for optimum control for multiple stores management.

Furthermore, in addition to air conditioning, heating, and applied systems, Daikin will be able to propose total systems that cover the entire cold chain ranging from food product management to climate comfort of stores as it works to further strengthen its business as a comprehensive air conditioning and refrigeration manufacturer.

**3. Approach after Acquisition**

Daikin intends to build on AHT's strong business foundation and operations. In the future, Daikin plans to further reinforce its sales and after sales service structure to become a one-stop provider of refrigerators, freezers, and air conditioning equipment to major food retailers.

# VIP Visit to NGK Ceramics Europe S.A. VIP訪問: NGKセラミックスヨーロッパ

Thursday, 22 November 2018 – Baudour



The famous HONEYCERAM catalyst carrier is manufactured in the Baudour factory.



The Japanese and Belgian flags welcomed the BJA guests at the entrance of the factory.



BJA guests listening to the presentation before the visit.

Thanks to the generous invitation from NGK Ceramics Europe, the BJA has the great pleasure to welcome members for an exclusive visit to NGK Ceramics Europe factory in Baudour, where a ceramic catalyst carrier, HONEYCERAM, an essential component for exhaust gas purification, is manufactured.

Employing a honeycomb structure that makes it possible to create large surface areas within confined spaces, HONEYCERAM neutralizes the harmful substances found in vehicle exhaust and is the registered trademark of NGK Insulators, Ltd. Today NGK Group has its production and sales sites in nearly

20 countries worldwide. Applying safety, environment, quality, and CSR as the core elements of all its business operations, NGK offers state-of-art technologies and top-quality products, and contributes to society and the preservation of our environment.

The members enjoyed the welcome drinks and detailed explanations by Mr Minoru Shibata, President Director of NGK Ceramics and Mr Simon Vlajcic, General Manager, followed by a fascinating visit through the factory. Another eye-opening event to remember!



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

Sponsor Member

**TOKAI OPTICS**



Tokai Optical Co., Ltd. was founded in 1939 and is one of the leading Japanese lens manufacturers, active in the ophthalmic lens business. Their increasing experience and technological capabilities make them specialists in the production of organic lenses.

Tokai Optics is a Belgian / Japanese joint venture since 1992. In 2004, Mr K. Leuridan became Partner and CEO Tokai Optics and last year Mr Leuridan became the first non-Japanese partner of Tokai Optical Japan. With the launch of the 1.76 index lens in 2006, Tokai introduced the thinnest lens in the world! Since 2007, the production plant in Belgium is under continuous upgrade of machinery and has been fully automated. Tokai Optics is now one of the most modern lens manufacturers in Europe.

The close partnership between Tokai Optics and Tokai Optical Japan promotes continuous innovation of materials, lens designs, treatments and high tech manufacturing processes. This

alliance offers an extensive and unique range of lenses answering every customers' needs worldwide.



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Corporate Member

**CALYSTA NV**



We are an IP Boutique specialized in Patents, Trademarks, Designs, and Domain names. For Patents our expertise lies in the fields of Chemistry and Life Sciences.

What are our differentiators with respect to traditional IP firms: Traditional IP firms base their services on filing trademark, design and patent applications. They are referenced in international rankings where the number of filings is a key criteria and accordingly, traditional IP firms typically push IP filings.

At Calysta we are convinced that IP must leverage your activities, i.e. to go beyond the "right to exclude" and to define where IP for you is used as instruments for developing business relationships so as to cooperate and partner with others, and to have a strategic use of IP assets to lead to e.g. access to new ventures and markets. Accordingly, we want to deliver you the best advice, also if this means to not file an application for obtaining a registered IP right (because e.g. protection is not possible or only via other means).

For advising you properly on how IP can sustain your activities, we need to invest in getting the perfect knowledge of what your organization is doing and where IP can help.

We want IP to be seen as a value creation center and not as a cost center and for this reason, we firmly believe that adminis-

trative services should be provided at the right costs. We invite you to have a discussion regarding the real value of the investment in IP towards your activities.

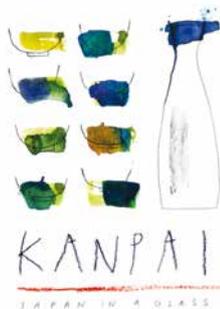
Our decision to join the Belgium-Japan Association and Chamber of Commerce is based on our wish to develop our cooperation with Japanese IP firms and Japanese corporations in the years to come. Joining this esteemed Association will forge a bridge between us in view of helping Japanese Applicants or companies to better defend their rights in Europe.

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> Ms Claire Godefroid, IP attorney

**Associate Member**

**KANPAI**

Kanpai! ‘cheers’ in Japanese is often the start of a fantastic evening among friends, family or colleagues, accompanied by a great bottle of sake. Kanpai aims to recreate this sense of conviviality with an offer of quality sake and other Japanese drinks. It is Kanpai’s ambition to introduce sake and other Japanese drinks on the Belgian market. In becoming a member of the Belgium-Japan Association, it is our hope that fellow members will have the opportunity to discover the fascinating world of sake, shochu and fruit liqueurs. Kanpai operates mainly through its on-line shop <https://kanpai.eu>, but is also available for workshops, presentations, company events or team buildings. For BJA members only, we offer a 5% discount on all first orders placed in the online shop, using the code BJA2019 !



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We would also like to express our appreciation to our **BJA Sponsor Members** >





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