

PRESS RELEASE

Landmark trade agreement enables closer digital cooperation between the EU and Japan

Paris, 3 April 2018 – At the industrial trade show Global Industrie 2018 in Paris, representatives of the Japanese and French government, the European Commission and industry pledged support for stronger EU-Japan cooperation on digital issues. The event organised by the Japan Business Council in Europe (JBCE) and the Japan Machinery Center for Trade and Investment (JMCTI) with support of the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) culminated in the signing of a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between France’s Alliance Industrie du Futur and Japan’s Robot Revolution Initiative (RRI).

Speakers called the finalisation of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in December 2017 an opportunity for the EU and Japan to collaborate further on the digital economy. Hiroo Inoue, Executive Director of the JMCTI, saw room to realise cooperation on the Internet of Things and other digital topics. “Creating these ‘connected industries’ will be mutually beneficial, not only in bringing economic prosperity but also in solving the common social agendas of the digital era,” he said. H.E Ambassador of Japan to France Masato Kitera agreed that the EU-Japan EPA will deepen cooperation not only by reducing or eliminating tariffs, but by setting norms for digital issues at the highest level.

Representatives from the European Commission Marco Chirullo, Deputy Chief Negotiator on EU-Japan EPA from the European Commission’s Directorate General for Trade (DG Trade) and Tonnie de Koster, Advisor for Digital Single Market and International Outreach from the Directorate General for Communications, Networks, Content and Technology (DG Connect) outlined the benefits of the EPA. Chirullo said it opened the door for the EU and Japan to work together to design future standards and created room for innovation. De Koster said that the EU’s cooperation with Japan was the most developed with any third country and commented that as the EU and Japan face the same policy issues they are well-placed to share best practices and establish effective regulatory cooperation.

The Japanese and French government used the session to reaffirm their commitment to work together. Hiroshi Oikawa, Director General of the Manufacturing Industries Bureau at METI commented that “METI is focused on connected industries and on expanding international cooperation, including with the EU.” Xavier Merlin, Director General at the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, reflected on the 30-year history of French-Japanese cooperation at an institutional level and the importance of involving both policymakers and industry in these efforts. He outlined the progress made on France’s Digital Agenda, through initiatives like “Industrie du Futur” and welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding between the initiative and Japan’s RRI as a way to foster more collaboration in this domain.

Industry panellists from Fives, NFI, Hitachi, and JBCE reacted positively to the intentions of the EU, French and Japanese government representatives to collaborate on digital topics. Panellist saw great potential for alignment on automated manufacturing, smart factories and autonomous driving and agreed regular EU-Japan exchanges, co-creation and learning from each other are very important. “JBCE calls on legislators to build a coherent legislative and regulatory environment that is conducive to innovation and fosters a high level of trust in digital services and solutions,” said Antoine Larpin, Vice-Chair of the JBCE Digital Innovation Committee. “The business community calls for a rapid agreement on data flows to complement the EU-Japan EPA. This offers a unique opportunity for the EU and Japan to show leadership to the rest of the world and promote digital trade”, continued Larpin.

The session demonstrated that the EU-Japan EPA constitutes an important framework to accelerate technological innovation. It now falls on both sides to capitalise on the EPA to the fullest extent, working build a harmonised digital world economy. In doing so, the EU and Japan will set new international standards in the digital domain.

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About JBCE

The Japan Business Council in Europe was established in 1999 and is a leading European organisation representing the interests of almost 80 multinational companies of Japanese parentage operating in the European Union.

Our members operate across a wide range of sectors, including electronics, wholesale trade, precision instruments, pharmaceutical, railway, textiles, glass, automotive, and chemical manufacturing. In 2014, our member companies had global sales of 1.4 trillion euros.

Building a new era of cooperation between the EU and Japan is the core of our activities. The key goal of JBCE is to contribute to EU public policy in a positive and constructive way by drawing on the expertise and experience of our member companies.

Website: <http://www.jbce.org>

E-mail: info@jbce.org

Press contact: Kumiko Uegaki (+32 2 286 5330)

About Global Industrie

The seminar "EU-Japan EPA: How to revolutionise our industries by a strong cooperation" organized by the Japan Business Council for Europe (JBCE) took place on the second day of [GLOBAL INDUSTRIE 2018](#) exhibition (27 – 30 March 2018, Paris). GLOBAL INDUSTRIE is a trade fair coordinated by the French Ministry of Industry in collaboration with other national and local authorities, social and professional organisations, designed to show-case the best practice of France's manufacturing sector. The event is expected to gather 50,000 visitors, of which 80% are decision-makers, and 2,700 exhibitors covering 1,000m² of demonstration space.

About Industrie du Futur

Created in July 2016, the [Alliance Industrie du Futur](#) gathers 35 members representing 4,100 enterprises engaged in making the industrial future happen. Members include digital industry associations as well as academic, technological and finance partners. The mission of the Alliance Industrie du Futur is to develop future technologies while reinforcing international standardisation efforts and to accompany and support business and society in the transition to future industry.

About the Robot Revolution Initiative

The [Robot Revolution Initiative](#), established in May 2015, aims to contribute to the efficient promotion and enhancement of the effectiveness of the "Robotic New Strategy" of Japanese government, first proposed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the OECD in 2014. It is a council dedicated to developing the robotics market. In addition to the cooperation planned with Alliance Industrie du Futur, the Robot Revolution Initiative also signed a joint agreement on future cooperation with Germany's Plattform Industrie 4.0 in 2016.