

EU and Japan stakeholders look to the future at JBCE Flagship Event

Brussels, 22 March 2019



The Japan Business Council in Europe (JBCE), in cooperation with the Japan Machinery Centre (JMC), hosted its first annual Flagship Event in the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels on 20 March. Under the title “Japan and the EU: Global Partners”, a wide range of voices discussed the outlook for EU-Japan joint activities across a number of sectors, with a focus on twin themes of digitalisation and sustainability.

The recent entry into force of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) on 1 February 2019 was a constant point of reference, with most speakers characterising it as the foundation stone for a strengthened EU-Japan partnership.

Speaking on the theme of building the bilateral economic and political partnership, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the European Union, His Excellency Kazuo Kodama stated his belief that the EU-Japan EPA provides a robust legal framework for the EU and Japan to achieve their future common goals.

European Commission Director for Climate Action, Mauro Petriccione, placed this need for joint action in the context of climate change, pointing out the importance of triggering economy-wide transformation without delay. In this regard, the EU-Japan relationship provides great potential for cooperation, for both public and private actors.

Speaking on behalf of European Commission Vice-President Jyrki Katainen, Head of Cabinet Risto Artjoki underlined the capacity for Japan and the EU to work together towards global competitiveness, drawing particular attention to both partners’ work on the circular economy transition. Regulatory cooperation can be the basis for recognition of best practices between the partners. Whether it be the labour market, financial sector, or environmental standards, a broad engagement of stakeholders is the key to success.

A panel discussion on digitalisation for sustainable brought together Pearse O'Donohue (Director – Future Networks, European Commission), Hiroo Inoue (Special Advisor to the Ministry for Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), Japan), Yves de Beauregard (Head of Digital Business Solutions EMEA, Fujitsu) and Bertrand Deprez (Vice President, EU Government Affairs, Schneider Electric). The conversation underlined the potential for mutual work on questions such as data flows and cybersecurity, while also highlighting the Japanese Society 5.0 concept.

As the event drew to a close, Yasuyuki Fujitani (COO of EMEA Business Unit, Mitsui & Co., Ltd) spoke on behalf of the JMC, drawing attention to the decades of work that have gone into building today's strong EU-Japan relationship.

Following the conference, participants enjoyed a unique reception, including the traditional Japanese toasting ceremony “Kagami-biraki”, sushi and sake demonstrations, and a remarkable performance of Japanese drumming.

Speaking at the event, JBCE President Toru Morita said “The JBCE was delighted to welcome so many of our European and Japanese colleagues to our Flagship Event today, and we look forward to meeting on an annual basis in the years to come. Looking at the range of topics discussed, and the enthusiasm of all speakers, it is clear that the EU-Japan partnership will continue to flourish and evolve as we look beyond the EPA”.



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About JBCE

Created in 1999, the Japan Business Council in Europe (JBCE) is a leading European organisation representing the interests of 85 multinational companies of Japanese parentage active in Europe. Our members operate across a wide range of sectors, including information and communication technology, electronics, chemicals, automotive, machinery, wholesale trade, precision instruments, pharmaceutical, railway, textiles and glass products. Building a new era of cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Japan is the core of our activities, which we perform under several committees focusing on: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Digital Innovation, Environment & Energy, Standards and Conformity, and Trade.

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