



**EU-Japan Centre** for Industrial Cooperation

一般財団法人 日欧産業協力センター



Annual Report

FY **2024**

April 2024 > March 2025

**Key activities  
and results**

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# Introduction

## **A challenging market for EU SMEs...**

Opening and growing a business as an entrepreneur is a challenging task. Doing so in a foreign country like Japan is even more challenging. As a European SME, you are confronted with a different business culture, different customer preferences, specific norms and standards, administrative paperwork, language barriers, and difficulties in accessing the right business contacts.

## **But an attractive one**

Despite the weak yen relative to the euro, Japan's declining population and workforce, and its limited natural resources, Japan remains an attractive destination for European companies for various reasons. These include a high GDP per capita, a secure investment environment, a qualified labour force, and well-developed infrastructure, to name just a few. Japan and the EU have also signed various framework agreements, including a free trade agreement that allows almost tariff-free trade between the EU and Japan.

## **Your partner to start or expand your business in Japan...**

Over its 38 years of existence, the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation has developed strong expertise in the Japanese market. It has built an extensive network with local partners to offer European SMEs, in particular, the services and tools needed to facilitate the start-up or expansion of their activities in the Japanese market.

## **Supported by the European Commission and METI**

The uniqueness of the EU-Japan Centre stems from its structure: it is a joint venture between the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), with both institutions co-funding the EU-Japan Centre's activities. For the European side, this cooperation facilitates contact with Japanese authorities and business stakeholders.

## **A snapshot of the EU-Japan Centre main activities**

The report you are reading summarises the main achievements of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation over the last Japanese fiscal year (April 2024 to March 2025). It provides a snapshot of each of the Centre's key activities. These activities assist not only SMEs but also European and Japanese businesses in general, managers, specialists, students, research institutes, universities, EU Member States' business organisations, and EU-level institutions. Together, they contribute to achieving the EU-Japan Centre's mission of supporting all forms of industrial, trade, investment, research, and innovation cooperation between the European Union and Japan.

## **Contact us!**

Through this report you will discover some of our services that could be relevant to you. If you haven't already done so, please connect with us through our social media platforms, visit our website, or reach out to us directly to learn more about our upcoming activities and how you can participate in them. Don't fear the Japanese market, embrace it! We are here to help you thrive in your business and career.

With best regards



MANAGING DIRECTOR  
*EU-SIDE*  
**MANUEL HUBERT**

This 2-week training programme, initially branded as the Human Resources Training Programme (H RTP), was revitalised in 2018 and became the "Get Ready for Japan" (GRFJ) programme.

This flagship training programme offers EU managers a rare opportunity to experience and understand both the cultural and economic elements that have propelled Japan to the forefront of business and technological innovation.

GRFJ brought **19 enthusiastic EU SMEs to Japan in Fiscal Year 2024.**



The adventure began with a week of engaging online lectures that provided deep insights into the nuances of Japanese business practices. This foundation was followed by an **immersive week in Japan**, filled with interactive **onsite sessions** and Individual Company Meetings (ICMs). Participants also engaged directly with local experts, forging meaningful connections that could reshape their business trajectories.

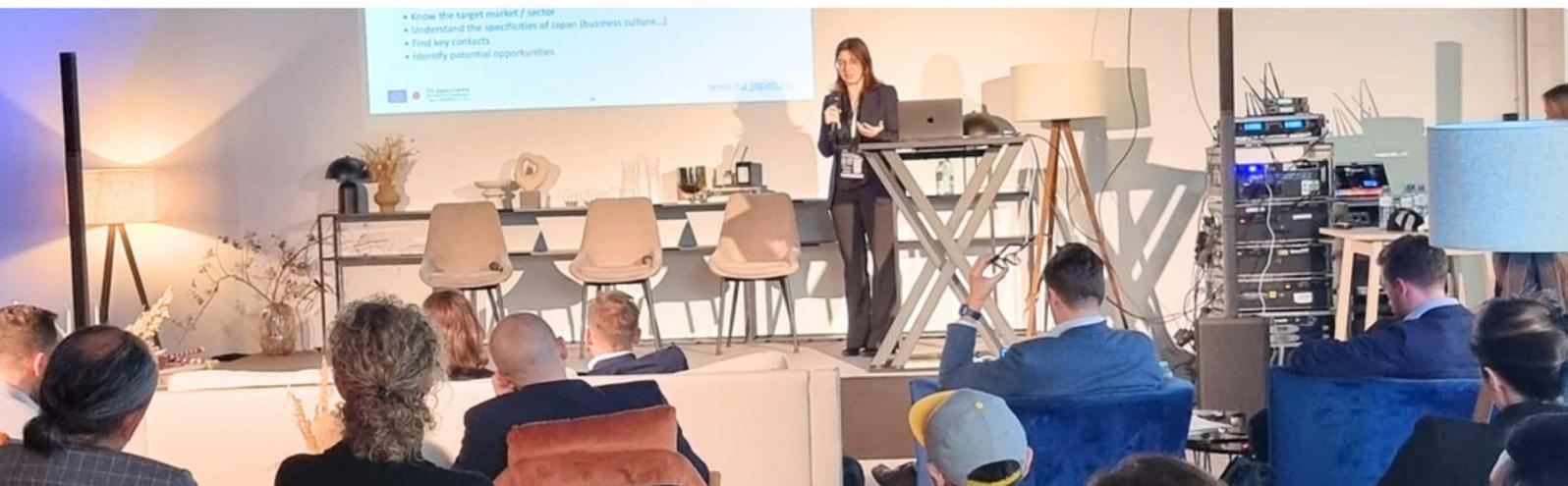
Since its inception in 1987, the programme has **opened doors for an impressive total of 771 companies.**

# Market Access Workshops

9

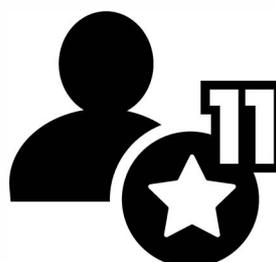
WORKSHOPS  
ORGANISED

In its ongoing efforts to help EU SMEs access the Japanese market, the EU-Japan Centre co-organises Market Access workshops in cooperation with local EU support organisations, members of Enterprise Europe Network or other EU non-profit entities such as clusters, chambers of commerce, regional development agencies, etc.



These workshops cover information on how to access the Japanese market **for EU companies interested in a particular sector** and/or **provide insights into the Japanese business culture.**

There were 9 workshops in FY2024 with **11 partners covering 9 different countries, with 266 participants.** Sectors/subjects covered: ICT, Food, Renewables, and Japanese business culture.



Partners from  
9 countries

# MINERVA Policy Reports

Under the label “Minerva”, the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation publishes annual reports, offering in-depth policy intelligence on key developments and emerging trends within various sectors of the Japanese market. These reports are designed to support EU industry stakeholders and policymakers in better understanding the evolving business and regulatory landscape in Japan.

To date, more than 50 reports have been published, each addressing a distinct topic of strategic relevance. New research themes are selected on a yearly basis to ensure the content remains timely and aligned with current policy and industry priorities.



## Market Opportunities in Japan

Launched in 2013, the EU Business in Japan (EUBIJ) content provides practical information for EU businesses in need of clear guidelines to trade with or invest in Japan or cooperate with Japanese partners. **Over 500 reports and webinars** released, spanning from cultural aspects to industrial sectors and regulations.



# World Class Manufacturing

Since its establishment in 1992, the World Class Manufacturing (WCM) training programme has supported over a thousand participants from all EU member states. A majority of participants are production managers, implementing or who would like to implement lean techniques in their company's production processes.

This intensive five-day course includes lectures, workshops, and visits to some of the world's most advanced Japanese factories, allowing participants to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of "Gemba" (the production site).

The primary objective of the course is to provide practical insights into the Japanese approach to developing and implementing WCM methodologies. During the training, participants learn how to identify the root causes of their current challenges and how to independently implement improvements.

In February 2025, this successful programme was **held in Nagoya, Japan, attracting 25 participants**. Participants had the opportunity to attend workshops and visit various factories, including **NTN Mie Corporation, Avex Inc., Honda Motor Co., Ltd. Suzuka Factory, and Mifune Corporation**.



# Vulcanus in Japan

Vulcanus in Japan is a programme offering an 8-month stay in Japan to university students of STEM faculties. It is open to EU nationals and to citizens of countries associated with the Single Market Programme, SME Pillar.

The programme runs from August to March, and consists of a two-month intensive Japanese language course, followed by a six-month traineeship in a company.

**373**  
APPLICATIONS

**20**  
participants

## TOKYO

- Advanet
- Asial Corporation
- VILLAGE island
- Vena Energy Engineering
- SQUARE ENIX

## HIGASHIMATSUYAMA, SAITAMA

- Westlake Akishima
- Bosch Corporation

## YOKOHAMA

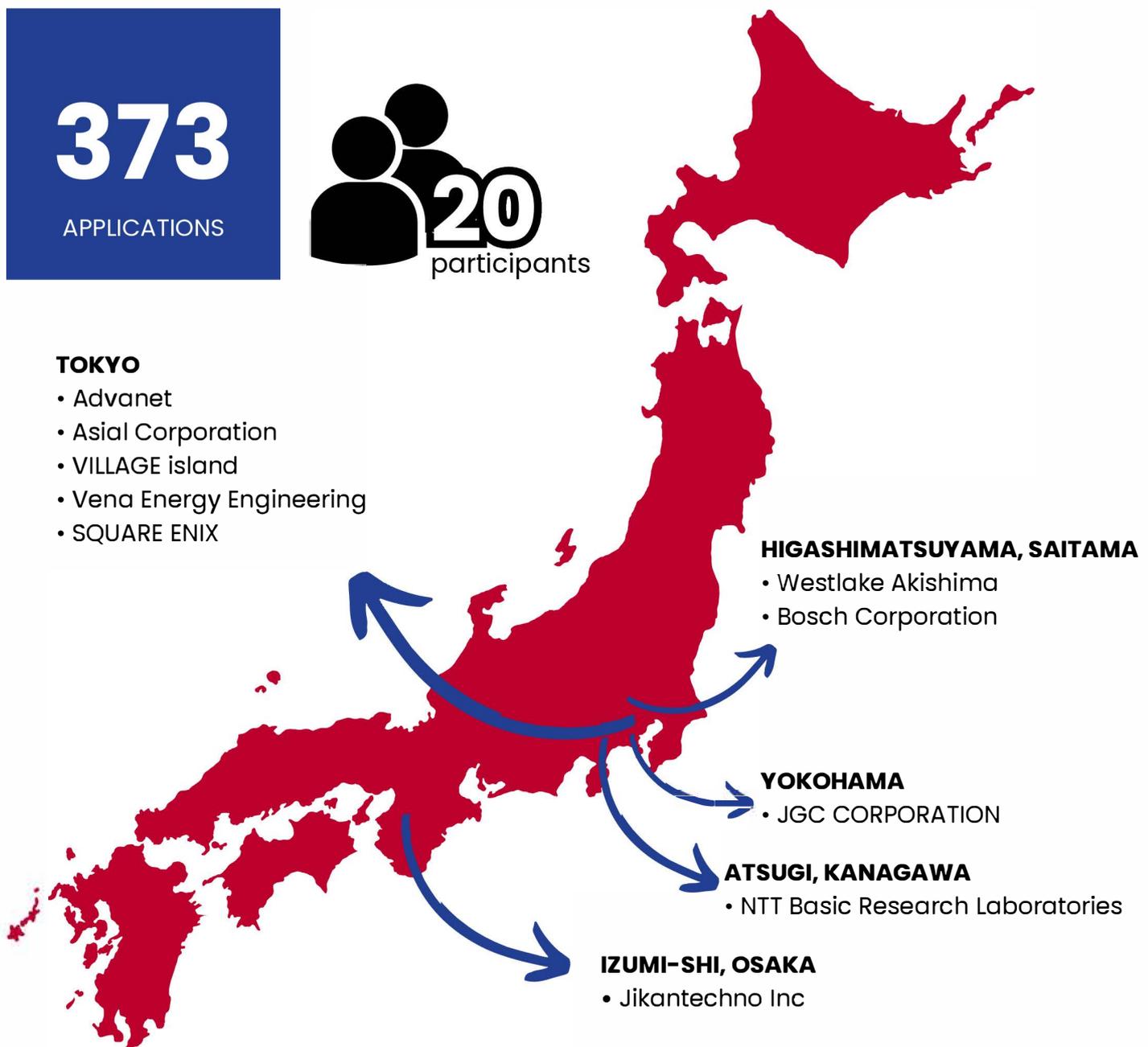
- JGC CORPORATION

## ATSUGI, KANAGAWA

- NTT Basic Research Laboratories

## IZUMI-SHI, OSAKA

- Jikantechno Inc



# Business Infodesk

The infodesk answers queries from EU companies and **provides support in navigating the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)**. In case the answer is not available in-house, the EU-Japan Centre will direct the inquirer to relevant existing online information.

119

INQUIRIES  
INCLUDING 16 ON EPA

# Innovation & Technology Cooperation Helpdesk



The EU-Japan Innovation and Technology Helpdesk collected and managed **40 inquiries from EU and Japanese entities**, facilitating the registration of 1 Partnership Agreement. In total, the project **attracted around 350 people who participated in 6 events** organised by the Helpdesk, with an additional **250 people attending 3 online events**.

# Logistical Support

Free logistical support and business assistance in the Centre's office in Tokyo, for up to 1 month.

As part of the "Step in Japan" initiative, **A desk is offered so that SMEs can rapidly kick-start their activities in Japan** without needing a full office

12

SMEs WELCOMED

# JTPP Helpdesk

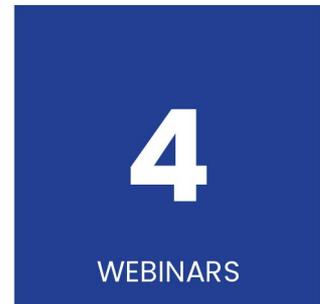
The **Japanese Public Procurement Helpdesk** offers a comprehensive suite of **free support services** to help EU SMEs successfully engage with Japan's public procurement market and navigate the fiscal complexities of doing business in and with Japan.

**In FY2024, the Helpdesk's Ask-the-Expert service responded to 35 inquiries** on public procurement and tax-related matters, reflecting strong demand for tailored guidance.

The Weekly Tender Digest Newsletter, which highlights current business opportunities in Japan's procurement landscape, saw its **subscriber base grow from 123 to 160**, underscoring its value to EU businesses.

A series of webinars and training sessions were delivered on key topics including consumption tax, defence procurement practices, and how to identify business opportunities.

In collaboration with the EEN section, the Helpdesk also **co-organised the Centre's first-ever Defence Business Mission**, marking a milestone in EU-Japan industrial cooperation.



# Policy Seminars

12

SEMINARS

**A total of 12 webinars or hybrid seminars were held** on topics related to economic security, green and digital policies in both Japan and the EU.

These events attracted **4,965 participants in total**—an 11.2% increase compared to the previous fiscal year.

5K

PARTICIPANTS

The average satisfaction rate across 11 of the events was 95.1%, underscoring the high praise received from attendees as in the previous year.

95%

SATISFICATION

In FY2024, the Centre co-hosted events with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), the European Commission, the Delegation of the European Union to Japan, the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (RIETI), the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan (IEEJ), and the Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association (JEITA).

## EU2JP

EU2JP Food, Green and Digital are three online platforms promoting EU SMEs and their activities entirely in Japanese language.

EU2JP Green and EU2JP Digital were launched in 2024 following the success of EU2JP Food.

18K+

PAGE VIEWS

46

NEW COMPANIES

21

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

60+

BUYERS IN ACTIVE COMMUNICATION

# Enterprise Europe Network in Japan

The EEN helps EU businesses innovate and grow on an international scale. It is **the world's largest support network for small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) with international ambitions. The Centre serves as the contact point for EEN in Japan.



14

PARTNERSHIP  
AGREEMENTS

27

ADVISORY  
AGREEMENTS

9

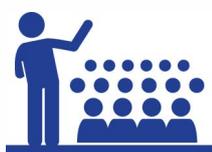
WORKSHOPS

32

B2B EVENTS  
ORGANISED



**513** JAPANESE COMPANIES  
ATTENDING EVENTS



**11** INFORMATION EVENTS



**2,067** MEETINGS  
FACILITATED



**26** JAPANESE COMPANIES  
PROMOTED IN THE EU  
+ **56** EU COMPANIES  
PROMOTED IN JAPAN

Implementation of activities for awareness building in Japan, such as **sending monthly e-alerts to 3,000 recipients in Japan** and co-organising 11 information events with local partners.

Similar approach in Europe with the co-organisation of 9 sectorial and cross-cultural **online or onsite workshops**.

This multi-front approach resulted in 14 partnership agreements signed, with a further 27 advisory achievements registered (measurable outcomes achieved by SMEs following in-depth advisory services provided by EEN )

# Business Missions

To support EU SMEs internationalisation towards Japan, the EU-Japan Centre organises **yearly sponsored Business Missions to Japan** in six sectors: Biotech, Digital, Innovation, Space, Smart Factory & Robotics, and Green Tech.

Selected companies and clusters join the EU-Japan Centre's booth at major trade fairs, and attend B2B activities tailored to their needs.



**6**  
MISSIONS IN  
6 SECTORS

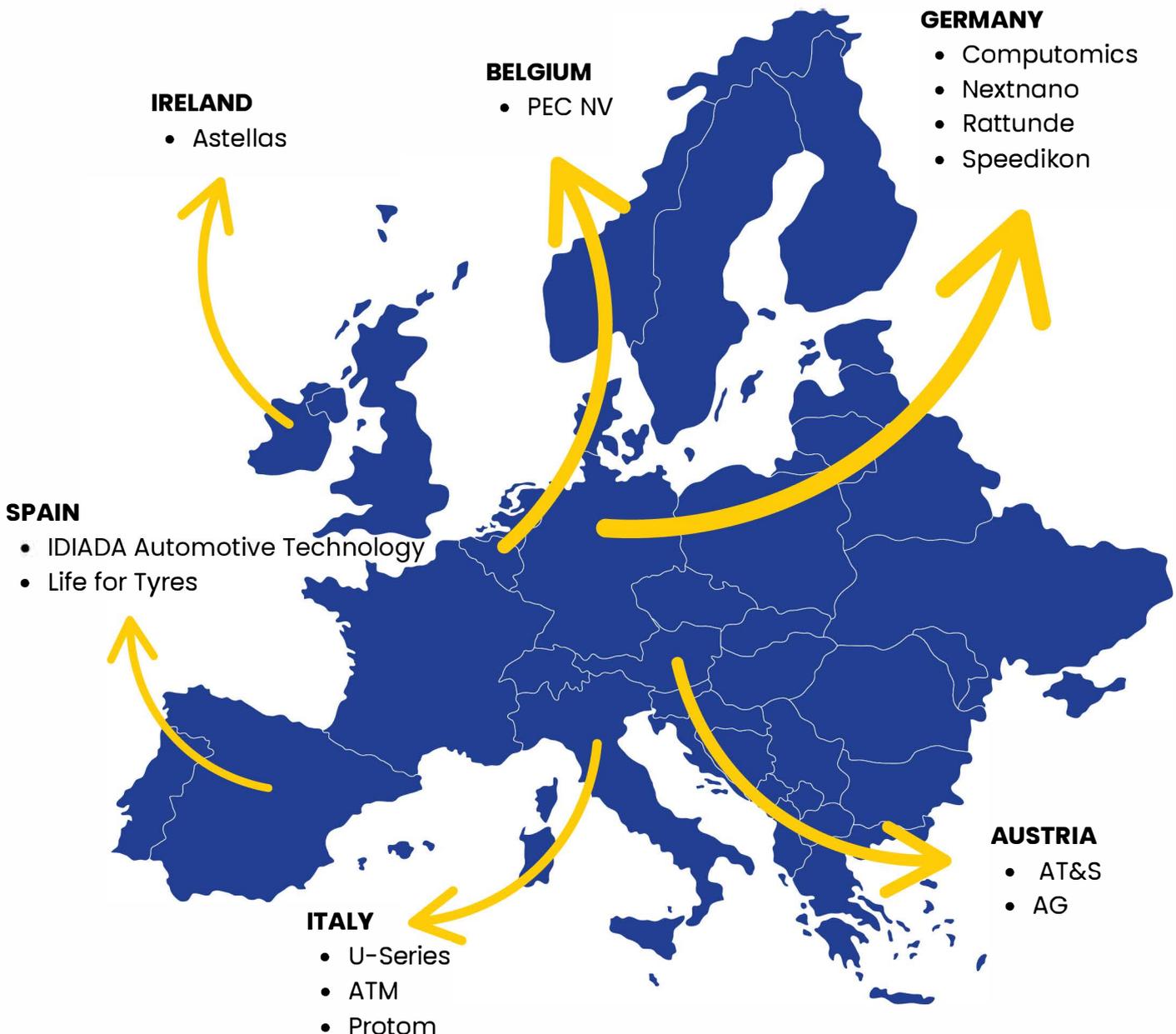
**56**  
COMPANIES AND  
CLUSTERS WELCOMED



# Vulcanus in Europe

The "Vulcanus in Europe" programme **enables EU companies to host Japanese science and technology students as interns** for six months, focusing on R&D.

The program has two phases: a three-month language course to learn the language spoken at the host company, followed by a six-month internship from mid-September to mid-March.



# International Joint Projects

This service aims at facilitating EU-Japan business cooperation in foreign markets such as Southeast Asia, Africa or North America. The objective is to provide more opportunities for EU-Japan business partnerships.



3

MATCHMAKINGS  
ORGANISED

59

MEETINGS  
ORGANISED

22

INQUIRIES  
RECEIVED

# EU–Japan Business Round Table (BRT)

Fosters communication between Japanese and EU industries; submits **recommendations** to the EU and Japanese Authorities.

The BRT's 26th annual meeting took place at the Tokyo Prince Hotel and online on 12 February 2025 (in FY2024). It was co-chaired by Nobuhiro Endo (Executive Advisor, NEC Corporation) and Belén Garijo (Chair of the Executive Board and CEO, Merck).

Entitled, “**Japan & the EU – Global Partnership in a Changing World**”, it featured panel discussions on **Economic Security** and **Industrial Competitiveness**, adopted the BRT's 2025 recommendations and addressed other topics. Senior representatives of the Japanese and EU Authorities (including Diet Member Kobayashi, METI Minister Muto, MOFA State Minister Fujii and EC DG Jorna) took part. 41 of the 79 recommendations were **joint recommendations** from both sides of the BRT to both the Japanese and EU Authorities.

The BRT's 2025 recommendations were hand-delivered to **EVP Séjourné** on 03 March 2025 and to **PM Ishiba** on 23 July 2025 having also been delivered to METI, MOFA and MIC.



# Horizon Europe National Contact Point

The NCP Promotes research cooperation and supports participation by Japanese organisations. This activity is financed by METI.

144

INQUIRIES  
PROCESSED

3

WEBINARS  
ORGANISED

12

SEMINARS  
JOINED

## Invest in EU hub

A new service, launched in 2024, promoting EU investment opportunities to Japanese investors, companies and VCs. In its first year, the service:

- **Created a bilingual website** to provide information on EU policy instruments that could lead to investment opportunities and contact details for investment promotion agencies (IPAs) across the EU27. From October 2024 to March 2025, the webpages received steady interest and engagement with over 640 views.
- Organised the **first meeting of EU IPAs in Tokyo**, with 27 attendees from 17 IPAs
- Organised a **webinar on investment opportunities** linked to the EU Net-Zero Industry Act and Clean Industrial Deal (184 attendees)
- Strengthened EU–Japan business relations by linking inquiries from Japanese companies interested in investing in the EU with EU officials.



# Regional & Cluster Cooperation Helpdesk

Regional cooperation platform mobilising European regions and clusters, Japanese Prefectures and clusters.

The EJR2C Helpdesk **promotes cooperation** in terms of industry, trade, investment, innovation, tourism, and the mobility of people.



## Team Europe



Coordination with Member States Trade Promotion Organisations (TPOs) to facilitate discussion and promote collaboration. Activities include **collaboration on planned Business Missions and Matchmaking Events**, presentations on the EUJCIC's services to visiting TPO delegations(3 presentations made), and information sharing. The EU-Japan Centre **shared its booth with one TPO** and its companies during a mission.

# Newsletters

## **EU-JAPAN NEWS**

Flagship newsletter of the EU-Japan Centre launched in 2003 and containing information about our support and activities, as well as EU-Japan-related news and features on topics of interest to EU and Japan businesses and public bodies.

## **JAPANESE POLICY AND REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS NEWSLETTER**

Monthly review of key developments in Japanese industry and government policy.

## **ABOUT JAPAN E-NEWS**

Monthly newsletter on business-related information about Japan for the benefit of EU companies.

## **JAPAN TAX AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT WEEKLY TENDER DIGEST**

Weekly summary aimed at EU SMEs, of selected Japanese public tender notices.

## **JAPANESE TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION MONITORING WATCH**

Quarterly overview of key developments taking place in Japan in the last three to four months surrounding various technological sectors, including digital technology, robotics, green technologies, and aerospace.

## **JAPANESE ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS WEEKLY NEWSLETTER**

Weekly review of economic and business news from Japan based on various Japanese newspapers, public authorities and businesses' websites. This newsletter aims to provide information in the context of EU-Japan industrial cooperation.



Join over 15,000 subscribers and stay updated on the Centre's latest activities!



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