

Terms of Reference

Call for Applications: Industry Expert (Day 2)

Business Training Modules

Issued by	EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation
Launch date	17 April 2026
Application deadlines	Vary by sector mission (see Section 2)
Remuneration	EUR 6,000 (Year 1) / EUR 4,000 (Year 2)
Engagement	Two-year, performance-based
Language	All deliverables and the webinar must be in English
Contact	topical@eu-japan.or.jp

1. Background

The EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation (the “Centre”), established in 1987 as a joint initiative of the European Commission and Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), promotes industrial, trade, and investment cooperation between the EU and Japan.

Each year the Centre organises a portfolio of **sector-specific business missions** to Japan, bringing groups of European companies to Tokyo and other locations for a structured programme of market briefings, institutional visits, B2B meetings, and site visits. All missions are **aligned with major Japanese sector trade fairs**, giving participating companies direct access to Japan’s industrial ecosystem through a curated combination of exhibition, networking, and targeted meetings.

From 2026, the Centre’s long-standing “Get Ready for Japan” (GRFJ) programme is being restructured and integrated into these missions as Business Training Modules: a two-day online preparation programme delivered in the weeks before each mission departs.

- **Day 1:** General introduction to Japanese business culture and communication, delivered by a Japanese Business Expert
- **Day 2:** Sector-specific, market-driven expertise, delivered by an Industry Expert (subject of this call)

Participation in the training modules is compulsory for selected mission participants and free of charge for eligible applicants who were not selected for the mission.

2. Scope of the Call

The Centre is recruiting Industry Experts (“Day 2 Experts”) to design and deliver the second day of the Business Training Modules for its business missions in Fiscal Year 2026 (April 2026–March 2027) and Fiscal Year 2027 (April 2027–March 2028).

Day 2 focuses exclusively on **vertical industry expertise**. In contrast to Day 1, which provides a general introduction applicable across all participants, Day 2 is tailored to the specific sector and concrete business objectives of each mission’s participant. The expert is expected to deliver market intelligence and practical guidance that directly prepares companies for their engagements in Japan — including, where applicable, at the sector’s representative trade fair.

Missions covered by this call are listed below. All missions are aligned with a major Japanese sector trade fair and participation in that fair is a central element of each mission programme.

Mission / Sector	Scheduled	Expert Application Deadline	Representative Trade Fair
Biotech	2026: 5–9 October 2027: to be confirmed	1 June 2026	BioJapan
Digital Solutions	2026: 13–16 October 2027: to be confirmed	1 June 2026	CEATEC
Nanotech	2026: December 2027: to be confirmed	1 June 2026	nano tech
Smart Factory & Robotics	2027: 16–19 February 2028: to be confirmed	1 September 2026	Factory Innovation Week
Space	2027: 17–19 March 2028: to be confirmed	1 September 2026	ISIEX
Green	2027: March 2028: to be confirmed	1 September 2026	World Smart Energy Week
Defence	2027: April	1 September 2026	DSEI Japan

Mission dates and trade fair names are indicative and subject to confirmation. For full details of each mission, please visit the relevant mission pages on the Centre’s website.

Early submission is strongly encouraged. Identified specialists may also be directly invited to apply based on their relevance to a specific mission.

3. Core Assignment

Applicants are not responding to a fixed curriculum. Instead, they are invited to develop an original proposal addressing the following challenge:

“If you had one day with European companies in your sector before they walk into meetings with Japanese potential partners or customers, what would you tell them that they cannot find elsewhere?”

For Day 2 of our Training Modules we are not looking for an introduction to Japanese business culture, but for specialists who understand their sector in Japan at the level of market structure, key players, regulatory environment, competitive dynamics, and the specific barriers and opportunities facing European companies today.

In addition to sector expertise, applicants must demonstrate a strong ability to **translate specialist knowledge into clear, structured, and engaging training content** suitable for a

mixed audience of European business participants. The ability to present, explain, and contextualise complex market insights in a practical manner is a core requirement of this service.

4. Target Audience

Mission participants are European companies — primarily SMEs, alongside some larger corporates — preparing for structured business engagement in Japan. Groups typically number between 10 and 20 companies per mission.

Participants will have diverse functional backgrounds (business development, R&D, operations, management) and varying levels of Japan experience, ranging from first-time entrants to companies with existing contacts in the market. Within each mission, companies will represent different sub-sectors and business models, but share a common objective: concrete business outcomes in Japan, whether through partnerships, market entry, or expansion.

Participants will be exhibiting at a major Japanese sector trade fair. Their immediate goal is not just general market knowledge but specific preparation for conversations with Japanese visitors — potential partners, system integrators, corporate scouts, and industrial end-users — at the event and during arranged meetings.

Proposals must reflect this diversity and provide value across different company profiles and levels of Japan exposure. The expert is expected to understand which sub-sectors are typically represented in their mission and tailor content accordingly.

5. Deliverables

The Day 2 assignment requires a structured and sustained contribution across the following components:

5.1 Pre-Mission Integration

Prior to content development, the expert will receive a pre-mission questionnaire completed by mission participants, coordinated by the Centre. This questionnaire covers participant profiles, company backgrounds, sub-sector focus, and specific Japan-related objectives. Content must be tailored to reflect this input.

5.2 Industry Market Report

The expert will prepare a comprehensive written report (up to 30 pages) tailored to the mission sector and the needs of participating companies. The report serves as a core reference document for participants in the lead-up to and during the mission.

The report should address, as a minimum:

- Overview of the Japanese market in the relevant sector: size, structure, dynamics, and recent trends
- Key players: major Japanese companies, associations, and research institutions relevant to the sector
- Market entry pathways and common barriers for European companies (regulatory, commercial, and structural)
- The role of any representative sector trade fair as a market entry and relationship-building platform, where applicable

- Sub-sector demand patterns and positioning logic for the profiles represented in the participant group
- Competitive landscape and where European companies can realistically win
- Japan-EU dynamics specific to the sector, including relevant trade flows, partnerships, or policy frameworks
- Practical intelligence: what European companies need to know before engaging with Japanese counterparts
- Recommendations tailored to the participant mix and the mission's specific objectives

In Year 2, the expert is expected to update and refine the report based on market developments and feedback from Year 1 participants.

5.3 Webinar Delivery

The expert will deliver a live online training session covering the content described in Section 6. The session takes place approximately one month before the mission starts and is coordinated by the Centre's Head Office Japan team. Duration is to be proposed by the expert as part of the application. The webinar is delivered in English.

The webinar should complement the market report and provide an interactive forum for participants to deepen their understanding, sharpen their positioning, and ask sector-specific questions.

The webinar will be recorded and made available exclusively to selected participants who are unable to attend the live session. It will remain accessible until the final day of the Business Mission, after which it will be deleted.

5.4 Training Materials

A slide deck in PDF format must be provided to participants prior to the webinar. All materials are in English.

5.5 Follow-Up Support

Following the webinar and up to the start of the mission, the expert is expected to remain available to respond to participant questions. A Q&A platform is currently being developed by the Centre. Experts are invited to propose additional methods that could benefit the entire participant group.

6. What the Expert Must Cover

The following elements set out the minimum and indicative content requirements for both the market report and the webinar. They are intended as guidance applicable across all missions and should not be interpreted as exhaustive or limiting. The selected expert is expected to use their professional judgement to determine and deliver any additional content necessary to ensure participants are fully prepared for the specific mission context.

6.1 How Japanese Buyers Evaluate Foreign Companies

This is the single most critical requirement for European companies preparing for Japan. The expert must address:

- The shift from innovation-led to reliability-led value propositions: Japanese buyers are not primarily buying technology, they are buying certainty
- The expectation of long-term presence and local support capability

- The preference for solutions that integrate into existing systems and workflows rather than displace them
- Why complete, stable, and well-documented products outperform cutting-edge but immature ones in this market

6.2 Structure of the Japanese Market in the Sector

Participants must understand the ecosystem they are entering. The expert must explain:

- The role of key intermediaries in the sector — system integrators, trading companies, distributors, industry associations — and how they function as gatekeepers or entry points
- Why direct sales strategies that work in Europe often fail in Japan, and what the realistic alternatives are
- The layered partnership structures that govern most market entry in Japan, and where European SMEs typically fit
- The role of industrial end-users, corporate innovation units, and other relevant buyer types specific to the sector

6.3 Sector-Specific Demand and Positioning

The expert must cover where genuine demand exists in Japan for solutions like those offered by mission participants, and how European companies should position themselves within that demand landscape:

- Which specific applications, problems, or use cases Japanese buyers are actively looking to address
- Where European technology has a genuine competitive edge, and where it does not
- Why broad or generic positioning fails, and how to identify and defend a narrow, credible niche
- The sub-sector profiles most relevant to the mission, and the positioning logic for each

6.4 Competitive Landscape

Companies need to understand what they are competing against:

- Strong domestic competitors with established customer relationships and deep institutional trust
- What makes a European company attractive to a Japanese partner versus a domestic alternative
- How to present complementarity rather than competition with existing Japanese solutions

6.5 Partner Strategy

Most European SMEs arrive expecting distribution deals or direct customer acquisition. The expert must address the reality:

- Most market entry in Japan happens through multi-layered partnership structures, not direct sales
- How to identify the right partner type for the company's profile: system integrator, distributor, trading house, or co-development partner

- Practical tips on how to formulate and present a value proposition that resonates with Japanese partners, including the commercial, technical, and strategic benefits for each partner type
- What Japanese partners will expect: clear margins, stable pricing, no channel conflict, and commitment to localisation or joint development where required

6.6 Realistic Market Entry Timeline

Participants must have clear and honest expectations about what their mission and any associated trade fair can and cannot deliver:

- Most initial engagements in Japan are exploratory, not transactional: conversations are strategic rather than operational
- What “success” from a first Japan engagement realistically looks like for an SME

6.7 Mission and Trade Fair Readiness

The expert must address practical preparation for that context. More broadly, the expert should ensure participants arrive at their meetings in Japan ready to engage effectively:

- How to reframe a pitch around a single, clear use case with evidence-based, quantified outcomes rather than technology features
- What materials Japanese counterparts expect: concise, structured, outcome-focused, fact-based
- What not to do: overpromising, criticising existing solutions, pushing for quick decisions
- The “Japan-ready package” concept: a sector-adapted pitch focused on use cases and proof; quantified case studies; a basic local support and deployment concept; a clear statement of objectives for the mission

7. Engagement and Remuneration

7.1 Engagement Period

Selected experts are appointed for a two-year period:

- **Year 1:** Full delivery — development of the industry market report, webinar, training materials, and follow-up support
- **Year 2:** Updated delivery — refinement of the report where required, continued webinar and support

Experts will typically be assigned to one mission in FY2026 and one mission in FY2027. The defence mission is an exception, assigned to FY2027 only. Continuation into Year 2 is not automatic and is subject to satisfactory performance in Year 1.

7.2 Remuneration

Year 1 (full delivery)	EUR 6,000
Year 2 (updated delivery)	EUR 4,000

The above remuneration is stated exclusive of applicable withholding tax and consumption tax, where relevant, and covers the full scope of the assignment as described in Section 5. Payment terms will be specified in the contract.

7.3 Performance and Continuity

This is a performance-based engagement. Experts will be evaluated after each mission on the basis of the quality and relevance of the market report, webinar delivery and participant engagement, and feedback from participants and Centre staff. Only experts whose Year 1 performance meets the Centre’s standards will be invited to proceed to Year 2.

8. Indicative Timeline

The following timeline applies to each mission assignment. Exact dates will be confirmed with the selected expert.

Milestone	Timing
Open call published	17 April 2026
Application deadline	Varies by sector (see Section 2)
Selection completed	At least 2 months before webinar date
Pre-mission questionnaire received by expert	Approx. 4 weeks before webinar
Market report draft submitted to Centre	Approx. 3 weeks before webinar
Market report final version submitted to Centre	Approx. 1 week before webinar
Slide deck submitted to Centre	Approx. 1 week before webinar
Day 2 webinar delivered	Approx. 1 month before mission
Follow-up support period	From webinar until mission start
Post-mission evaluation	Within 3 weeks after mission end

9. Profile Sought

The Centre seeks specialists who can demonstrate all of the following:

Sector expertise

- Deep, demonstrable knowledge of the relevant industry sector and the Japanese market within it
- Direct professional experience working with or on the Japanese market in the sector: knowledge of key players, demand patterns, entry dynamics, and current trends
- Familiarity with the relevant trade fair and its role as a market entry and networking platform
- Understanding of how Japanese industrial buyers, system integrators, or corporate partners evaluate and adopt foreign technology or solutions in the sector

Analytical and communication skills

- Proven capacity to produce high-quality written market analysis (reports, briefings, or equivalent)
- Experience in executive training, consulting, or high-level knowledge transfer with business audiences
- Excellent English communication skills; Japanese language ability is an asset.

Practical orientation

- A business-oriented approach focused on actionable intelligence, not academic overviews
- Ability to tailor content to a mixed participant group with varying sub-sector profiles and levels of Japan experience
- Availability to commit to the full scope of deliverables within the timeline described in Section 8

10. Submission Requirements

Applicants must submit a structured proposal that addresses the core assignment (Section 3) and demonstrates their suitability for the specific mission they are applying for. The proposal must include:

1. **Webinar concept:** A clear description of what the Day 2 session would cover, why this approach serves the target audience, and how it would be structured
2. **Session outline:** A concise but comprehensive outline of the proposed webinar content
3. **Market report structure:** A proposed table of contents or outline for the industry market report, demonstrating the intended scope and depth, including coverage of the relevant sub-sector profiles and the role of the sector trade fair
4. **Methodology and learning objectives:** How the content will be developed, tailored to the participant mix, and delivered
5. **Evidence of expertise:** Specific, relevant experience, publications, past assignments, or other evidence demonstrating direct knowledge of the Japanese market in the sector. Generic CVs are not sufficient; applicants must highlight concrete, mission-relevant experience
6. **Proposed webinar duration:** And rationale
7. **Follow-up support proposal** (optional): How the expert proposes to handle participant questions between the webinar and the start of the mission

Format

Proposals may be submitted as a PDF or a hybrid format including a short video presentation. Applicants are encouraged to use their judgement in presenting their proposal effectively. Creativity and clarity are both valued.

11. Selection

This is a competitive, proposal-based selection. Selection criteria include:

- **Expert profile and professional background:** demonstrated sector-specific expertise, including direct knowledge of and experience related to the Japanese market, as well as a proven track record in delivering services to business audiences
- **Quality of the technical proposal:** relevance, originality, methodological soundness, and practical applicability of the proposed approach, including its alignment with the mission objectives and the profile of participating companies
- **Appropriateness of the proposed scope of services:** the extent to which the proposed approach, outputs, and level of effort are justified in relation to the fixed fee and expected assignment outcomes

12. How to Apply

Interested experts should submit their proposal by email to:

topical@eu-japan.or.jp

Please indicate the sector mission you are applying for in the subject line of your email. Experts may apply for more than one sector mission; please submit a separate proposal for each.

Application deadlines vary by sector. Please refer to the table in Section 2.

Early submission is strongly encouraged.

For enquiries, contact the Centre Training Programmes Team at the address above.