



EU-JAPAN CENTRE FOR INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION

日欧産業協力センター

Seminar Report

“Cooperation between European and Japanese Regions”

November 20, 2018 Tokyo

The EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation organized a seminar on regional cooperation between Europe and Japan on November 20, 2018 in Tokyo. The seminar attracted approximately 100 audiences.

As a starter, Mr. Olivier Becht, President of the European Center for Japanese Studies in Alsace spoke about Alsace’s experience of international cooperation. Mr. Becht is a member of the French National Assembly. The cooperation between Alsace and Japan has a long history. It started in 1863 through textile trade. The key word for the Alsace-Japan relationship in more recent days is “global cooperation” because of a wide range of activities of the European Center for Japanese Studies/Alsace Japan Agency (CEEJA). The CEEJA works not only in economic development but also for academic cooperation with the most important universities in Japan. As for cooperation with Japanese regions, Mr. Becht referred to the ones with Iwate, Gifu and Aichi Prefectures.

Mr. Georg K. Löer, Representative Director & President of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) Japan K.K. spoke about challenges, opportunities and rewards in building relationships between regions in Japan and Germany. After clarifying the basic idea for promoting regional cooperation as “strengthen the strong”, Mr. Löer introduced past and ongoing projects between NRW and Japan, centering around Fukushima and Osaka prefectures. Focus of cooperation with Fukushima is in renewable energy sector, which includes support for reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011.

Dr. Ben Kloeck of Flanders Investment & Trade explained cooperation between Belgian Flanders and Japanese regions in life science. He introduced Flanders as a leading life science cluster in “the heart of Europe” and cited various factors leading to a successful (life science) cluster, including high-level academic educational institutes, world-class research institutes and successful biotech ventures with ‘easy’ access to venture capital.

From the Japanese side, representatives of three Prefectures explained their cooperation projects with Europe.

Mr. Takuya Tasso, Governor of Iwate Prefecture presented the economic and cultural characteristics of his Prefecture and current cases of international cooperation. More specifically, he introduced cooperation projects with France and Italy. As for a cooperation in advanced technology, Mr. Tasso expressed his hope to see collaboration between the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the International Linear Collider (ILC) project that Iwate Prefecture is particularly interested in.

Mr. Yoshinori Sakiura, Executive Director, Tourism & International Affairs Bureau of Gifu Prefectural Government spoke about strategic partnership with EU regions. The partnership is not limited to large European countries. It also includes Belgium, Hungary and Lithuania. As for cooperation with France, the current partnership program covers wide range of activities from tourism to various exchange programs involving municipalities, industries and universities/research and educational facilities. As a result of strategic partnership, foreign tourists coming to Gifu is increasing and the ratio of Europeans in total tourists is as high as 11% while the national average in Japan is 5%.

Mr. Yasumi Kitao, Executive Director, Growth Industry Promotion Office, Department of Commerce, Industry and Labor of Osaka Prefectural Government introduced Osaka's cooperation with European regions, featuring the life science and the new energy fields. In the life science field Osaka collaborates with four European clusters in Germany, Spain, Italy and France covering 3,000 companies. In the new energy field, Osaka signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) in October 2018. It concerns the cooperation in the field of hydrogen/fuel cell and battery. The cooperation is expected to involve governments, supporting institutions and private companies.

As an example of cooperation between Japanese region which is smaller than a Prefecture, Mr Riki Aoki, Commerce and Industrial Promotion Division, Hitachi City who is temporary dispatched to JETRO Ibaraki office explained industrial exchange projects between Hitachi city and German state of Baden-Württemberg (BW). According to Mr. Aoki, the beginning of the project dates back to 2010 when a trade mission was dispatched to three European countries including Germany. During 2011-2013, a group of companies of Hitachi City participated in exhibition

in Dusseldorf. They found business potential but felt a limit that each company could afford to exploit. From 2015, industrial exchange projects started between the Hitachi Regional Technical Support Center and Automotive-bw, a cluster in BW state with an assistance of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). Example of bilateral cooperation includes annual dispatch of business mission to Germany and bi-annual invitation of German companies and/or visiting Japanese companies by German counterparts. Also, joint participation to an European exhibition was made by BW and Hitachi companies. As a result of these exchanges, a BW company decided to establish a branch in Hitachi city recently for exploiting business possibility.

Mr. Tatsuya Ishida who is responsible for promoting regional cooperation at the JETRO headquarters explained that his organization started regional promotional activities about 30 years ago. Mr. Ishida indicated following three elements that he found commonly in many of successful cases of regional cooperation.

- a) Existence of key persons in both side of Europe and Japan.
- b) Harmonizing efforts to overcome historical/cultural differences.
- c) Establishing common goal in mutual cooperation.

Dr. Philippe de Taxis du Poët, EU-side General Manager of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation highlighted that region-to-region cooperation (involving clusters, Prefectures) is an effective means for bringing dynamism to regional economy. he mentioned the idea of establishing a “platform” for further promoting EU-Japan regional cooperation with focus on industry, trade, investment, innovation, tourism and people mobility. He also stressed that cooperation between Japanese and European regions could also target regions / clusters in third countries, such as in South East Asia, Latin America or African countries, hence reflecting an important business trend among European and Japanese companies to operate together in third countries .

During the panel discussion, Dr. Daniel Kremers of the German Institute for Japanese Studies underlined that forests and mountains were valuable resources for sustainable economic and social development and Japan’s rural regions. They could benefit from international regional cooperation in the field of multi-level forest utilization, for example.

Mr. Tatsushi Amano, Deputy Director General, New Energy and Power Finance Department of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) explained the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that the JBIC concluded with the European Investment Bank (EIB). Mr. Amano said the aim of the MOU was to create business opportunities for Japan and the EU both within and outside the

EU. In addition, Mr. Amano introduced annual JBIC survey on how Japanese manufacturers see other countries as FDI destination. Although evaluation of Germany shows an upward trend recently, Japanese interest in European countries is generally lower than Asian countries and the United States.

Ms. Marta Sanna, Managing Director of Smartimport from Sardinia, Italy pointed that the difference of “brand powers” exist in the same country i.e. one region is evaluated higher than other regions. She indicated however, a possibility of cooperation among less known regions to improve their image and level of cooperation.

Dr. Haruyuki Hiratani, General Manager of Takasago Electric introduced his own experience of working in Alsace, France. He indicated that a cooperation of local authority is indispensable for a smooth operation of foreign investors.

Dr. Virginie Fermaud, Director of the European Center for Japanese Studies in Alsace and the Alsace Japan Agency (AJA/CEEJA) indicated the importance of strong political support for the international region-to-region cooperation. In the success of Alsace in regional cooperation she stressed two pivotal elements. One was the existence of key persons both in Europe and Japan and the other was constructing a “chain” of Japanese SMEs which worked as a mechanism for disseminating basic information on Europe.

Ms. Patricia Flor, EU Ambassador to Japan said in her closing remarks that it would be a right moment to intensifying bilateral cooperation between Japan and the EU because new phase of bilateral relationship would start soon with the implementation of EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) which would lead to a win-win situation.

Ms. Catherine Trautmann, former Member of the European Parliament pointed that there already is a basis for closer cooperation such as clusters. She believes that one successful case of regional cooperation can be a source of many more successful cases. From JETRO’s homepage she said, she found many topics of mutual interest as renewable energy, medical technology, ageing society and climate change. As sources of successful regional cooperation, Ms. Trautmann picked the connectivity and the continuity as keys words. She also stressed the need for a successful EU-Japan regional cooperation platform to include cultural aspect for sharing knowledge and experience.

Prepared by Toshiro Fukura, Manager, Policy Seminars and Analysis

Scenes from the seminar



Mr. Olivier Becht speaking as a starter



Mr. Tatsuya Tasso introducing his prefecture of Iwate



Dr. Philippe de Taxis du Poët moderating panel discussion



Ambassador Patricia Flor commenting on EU-Japan cooperation



Ms. Catherine Trautmann making closing remarks