

PRESS RELEASE**Japanese environmental market expected to double by 2020:
Excellent opportunities for European SMEs**

The first World Exposition of the 21st century starting on 25 March in Aichi, Japan, will focus on "Nature's Wisdom". The choice of this theme reflects the importance of the environmental technologies market in Japan, which offers excellent business opportunities to European SMEs.

Dirk Vantuyghem, Director of International Affairs at EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"Environmental issues are currently high on the political agenda. In Japan, the 3Rs principle (reduce, reuse, recycle) is widely promoted and furthermore stimulated by the Japanese government's pro-environment legislation. Japan tries to shift away from the eco-business model that requires waste-disposal to a new model based on recycling."*

Japan has the largest environmental market in the Asia-Pacific region and the second largest worldwide behind the United States. It is expected to nearly double its size from 29.39 trillion yen (21.4 billion euro) in 2000 to 58.4 trillion yen in 2020 (42.0 billion euro). According to the Japanese External Trade Organisation JETRO the main promising growth areas in the Japanese environmental market are waste disposal and air pollution control, soil and water purification, effluent treatment, energy saving and alternative energies such as recycling technologies.

European SMEs to seize a bigger slice of the environmental cake

As Mr. Vantuyghem outlined, *"European SMEs enjoy an excellent reputation for the quality of their products. They can easily get a bigger slice of the environmental cake in Japan. Trade missions organized in the framework of EU Gateway to Japan have resulted in 92% of participating companies expecting orders and 93% having good prospects from the contracts."*

EU Gateway to Japan is funded and managed by the European Commission. The programme helps European SMEs to profit from business opportunities in Japan through trade fairs and trade missions in 8 specific sectors. The next recruitment for an environmental trade fair in Japan will be launched in May 2005 (more information/subscription: www.gatewaytojapan.org).

EUROCHAMBRES, co-ordinates the promotion of this unique export support programme in Europe, as well as the recruitment and education of European SMEs through its European Chamber network.

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EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 43 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member companies.