

EU-Japan summit: business organisations from both regions highlight issues to be tackled

On the eve of the EU-Japan summit in Tokyo, EUROCHAMBRES and the EBC (European Business Council) published a joint declaration urging political leaders to address those issues that still prevent European companies from fully benefiting from EU-Japan trade.

The main areas of concern are:

- **Market access.** The mutual recognition of product certification or, where feasible, the harmonisation of product standards should be enhanced. This is particularly important for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which suffer greatly from the current heavy administrative burden.
- **Investment environment.** The EU's Foreign Direct Investment in Japan still represents less than 3% of its GDP. As Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson recently said "in 2006, for every dollar Japan invested in Europe, European companies only invested three cents in Japan". Legal uncertainty for subsidiaries of EU companies in Japan, and tax rules in merger schemes therefore need to be addressed urgently.
- **Procurement.** EUROCHAMBRES and EBC urge the authorities to address the lack of openness and transparency in government procurement in Japan as a way to foster more EU-Japan trade.

Indeed, despite progress reached through the EU-Japan Action plan of 2001, European companies, and in particular small and medium-sized ones, still suffer from considerable non-tariff barriers with respect to the Japanese market. It is important to work on concrete solutions to pull down these barriers, so as to bring the two economies closer together and allow them to address common challenges such as environmental issues and intellectual property protection.

The "Executive Training Programme": a concrete way of bringing EU and Japan closer together

The "Executive Training Programme" (ETP) for Japan and Korea – promoted in Europe by EUROCHAMBRES and a dedicated network of Chambers of Commerce and in Japan by the EBC – is an intensive professional development programme for EU executives eager to succeed in the Japanese (or Korean) markets. The programme offers EU managers the opportunity to receive a 3-month training in leading EU universities and to spend 9 months in Japan or Korea, including an internship in a local company. Since 1979 around 1000 EU executives have joined ETP, being able to understand the Japanese business culture, speaking Japanese language and to effectively develop business in Japan.

The full EUROCHAMBRES-EBC declaration to the EU-Japan summit can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/Content/Default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=960

Note to the editor:

EUROCHAMBRES is the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Based in Brussels since 1958, it represents over 19 million enterprises in Europe through members in 45 countries and a European network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers.

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The European Business Council (EBC) is the trade policy arm of the 18 European national chambers of commerce and business associations in Japan. Established in 1972, the EBC works to improve the trade and investment environment for European companies in Japan. The EBC currently represents more than 3,000 local European companies and individuals who are members of their national chambers of commerce. Some 350 of these companies participate directly in the EBC's 29 sector-based committees.

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