

PRESS RELEASE

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10 years “EU Gateway to Japan” **More than €500 million business for European SMEs**

For 10 years now, the Commission programme “EU Gateway to Japan” has been helping European SMEs to enter the Japanese market. The results of this unique export support programme were presented yesterday during a high-level dinner in the presence of Mr. Kazuo Asakai, Ambassador of the Mission of Japan to the EU.

Since its launch, 68 trade missions and trade fairs have been organised in the framework of the programme with a total of nearly 1750 participants.

- 99% of the participating companies have developed contacts and generated business leads, on average 10 per company;
- companies have planned to create more than 900 new jobs;
- 93% are optimistic on prospects for new contracts;
- companies estimate € 503 million of increased business;
- companies estimate an impact on investment of more than € 94 million.

Commenting on the results of the programme, Seamus Gillespie, the Head of the Unit for external relations with Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand at the European Commission, said: *“The intention of the Commission was to open a door for SMEs which certainly would have remained closed without an initiative at European level. The mix of financial support and practical assistance has proven to be successful – as the feedback by the companies clearly shows. The Commission is very satisfied with the results.”*

In Europe, “Gateway to Japan” is implemented by EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini said: *“Gateway to Japan proves that “Europe” has its value added and increases the chances for SMEs to compete on global markets. We have to work hard in a public-private partnership to develop a positive and strong European brand around the world.”*

This year 4 trade missions for the Interior Lifestyle, Construction Materials, Food and European Fashion Design sectors will still take place in Japan. In the first semester of next year 6 more missions to Japan are due. The programme will end in September 2006.

For more information on the campaign: www.eugatewaytojapan.org

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