

PRESS RELEASE

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European SMEs get a grip on Japan **“Gateway to Japan” programme presents final results**

A trade mission to Tokyo in the Healthcare sector concluded last week the third and last phase of the programme “EU Gateway to Japan” (GTJ). The 35 participating companies from 16 EU member states met 268 potential Japanese business partners during this event, +25% compared to the number of visitors for the same trade mission in 2003. This shows an increased interest for European products from the Japanese side and reflects the positive image that the programme and the EU participants created during the course of the campaign.

Overall, the results of this campaign are impressive: since 2003, 38 events for 8 different economic sectors¹ were organised, allowing 1070 companies from 24 member states to meet potential business partners in Japan.

According to Eric Hamelinck, Gateway to Japan Programme Manager at DG Relex, European Commission, the success of the programme lies in its unique formula, which corresponds to the needs of European SMEs. *“Many European companies are aware of the huge potential of the Japanese market but do not have the expertise to go on their own. The ‘unique selling point’ of GTJ is a comprehensive coaching package in addition to the matchmaking events in Japan,”* he said.

By facilitating trade and investment, GTJ supported sustainable growth in Europe. Spot checks with 240 former participants revealed that, only 9 months after their participation in the programme, those companies had developed a turnover of € 83 million with Japan. 18 months after their participation they expected this turnover to reach the mark of € 123 million.

Long-term business results are confirmed by personal experiences: *“Feedback received from former participants through our network of National Chambers of Commerce confirms that there is no standardised way of entering the Japanese market,”* said Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES. *“While a Portuguese tile producing company signed the first contract at its first mission to Tokyo, a Belgian ICT company said that only after two years and a second participation in the programme they were able to set up business cooperation with Japan. A Dutch fashion designer who participated three times also stressed that for a high quality and selective market like Japan a door-opener like the Gateway programme combined with a lot of patience would be necessary to succeed. But for all of them, initial investments paid off and gave way to regular sales in Japan.”*

EU Gateway to Japan: a decade-long success story

The three phases of EU Gateway to Japan have been successfully implemented for more than 10 years. The programme was so popular among European companies that, after the third campaign from 2002 to 2006, it was extended for another year, under the name “EU Gateway to Japan 3+”.

EU Gateway to Japan is funded and managed by the European Commission. EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, co-ordinates the promotion of this programme in Europe.

For more information: www.gatewaytojapan.org

¹ Interior Lifestyle, Outdoor Lifestyle, Information and Communication Technologies, European Fashion Design, Construction Materials, Environmental Technologies, Healthcare, Food & Drink.

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