

PRESS RELEASE

EU-Japan Summit: Chambers urge strong commitment of European Union to increase exports

In view of the EU-Japan summit in Tokyo on 22 June, EUROCHAMBRES highlighted the importance of export promotion at the European level and called for the continuation of the export support programme EU Gateway to Japan after 2006.

Dirk Vantuyghem, Director of International Affairs at EUROCHAMBRES, said: *“SMEs, which are the backbone of the European economy, often tend to feel inhibited by the language and cultural barriers and therefore hesitate to initiate enormous potential trade relations in the Asian/Pacific region. A strong commitment from the European side towards export promotion is needed and can contribute to increasing European exports and boosting economic growth.”*

Export support programmes such as EU Gateway to Japan can significantly facilitate entries into new markets for European businesses. In the framework of the Gateway programme, 62 trade missions and trade fair participations for about 1900 EU companies have already been organised.

The feedback of the companies is promising: At the recent trade mission to Tokyo for the Outdoor Lifestyle sector in May 2004, 90% of the participants stated to have prospects of new contracts and an increased understanding of the Japanese market.

EUROCHAMBRES has been the subcontractor of the European Commission responsible for the implementation and the coordination of the activities on the European level since the start of the programme in 1994.

Mr Vantuyghem said: *“European SMEs would strongly benefit from the enormous trade opportunities of the Japanese market, if the Gateway programme continued after 2006. The programme can also serve as a successful role model for other countries in the Asian/Pacific region.”*

From 1980 to 2002, EU exports to Japan grew by around 10% on average per year. Japan is the EU's third largest export market after the US and Switzerland (2001)*

*Data: European Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/japan/index_en.htm

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