

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 21 September 2005

EU Trade Mission to Japan hits visitors' record

The last EU Gateway to Japan trade mission in the Construction Materials sector hit a record number of visitors with nearly 300 Japanese companies meeting the European trade mission participants.

Wolfgang Penzias, the EU Gateway National Coordinator for Austria who accompanied the mission said: *"During this last Construction Materials event under the current financing scheme of the European Union, the European participants expressed their hope that the opportunities and momentum created by the programme will not be lost in the future. The majority of the participants would be very keen to join such a trade mission again."*

29 European Companies from 16 EU Member States* participated in the trade mission in Tokyo from 12-17 September 2005. The products they offered were of a wide range: from building materials to engineering goods for the construction industry.

Japan's construction industry is one of the largest in the world; the sector represents 10% of Japan's GDP, roughly EUR 300 billion. Despite the 'slump years' 2003 and 2004 this sector has shown steady growth. According to latest figures, the pace is even accelerating, as housing starts in July 05 are up 8,3 % (year on year). Opportunities for European SMEs are ample, as this sector is regarded as one where Japan still depends on imports. European quality products are making steady progress even against competition from North America and Asia. This is furthermore positively influenced by the effect of the softer Euro versus the US Dollar.

EU Gateway to Japan and EUROCHAMBRES

The EU Gateway to Japan is a programme funded and managed by the European Commission. EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 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 of National Coordinators.

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

(* from Austria (2), Belgium (1), Czech Republic (1), Denmark (1), Estonia (1), Finland (2), France (4), Hungary (1), Italy (6), Latvia (2), Lithuania (1), Portugal (1), Spain (2), Slovenia (1), Sweden (1) and the United Kingdom (2)

Your contacts at EUROCHAMBRES:

Project Director: Mr. Dirk Vantghem, vantghem@eurochambres.be, tel +32 2 282 08 78, fax +32 2 280 01 91

Press Contact: Mrs. Tosca Purr, purr@eurochambres.be, tel +32 2 282 08 53, fax +32 2 280 01 91



EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents 44 national associations of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, a European network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member enterprises in Europe.