

PRESS RELEASE

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION SUPPORTS EU EXPORTS OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TO JAPAN 26 EU SMEs attended the 2nd Construction Materials event

On the 30th of January 2004, 26 companies from 12 different EU Member States* completed their four day Trade Mission in Tokyo. This trade mission included a Mini Trade Fair which more than 340 visitors attended, representing specially targeted Japanese companies from the construction materials sector. Companies presented their products, from earthquake protection devices to stainless steel sinks and doors, to the Japanese visitors. The Japanese interest for EU products has led to an average of nearly 10 serious business leads per company.

The Japanese market provides real prospects for companies of the EU construction materials sector wanting to export to Japan. In 2003, the growing sector of house remodelling alone was estimated to present a market volume of approx. 63 billion US\$. Japan focuses more and more on the quality, comfort and safety of houses. This has led to a general increase in the need for construction materials which European companies can offer at more competitive prices than domestic providers. During this trade mission, one Danish company, Modum, found out that the product of one of their competitors on the Japanese market is 7.5 times more expensive than their own product. Modum is now in contact with the third biggest importer and is expecting orders for 2004 and 2005 of a total value of Euro 4 million.

Many of the attending EU companies are planning to return to Japan in order to follow up the contacts made during this successful trade mission.

"I think that approaching the Japanese market through the EU Gateway to Japan programme is the best course of action" says the participant from the French company, Savary, "the geographic distance between the EU and Japan and the cultural differences can be narrowed rapidly thanks to this programme. It would have been impossible for us to achieve such a high quality of meetings with selected prospects by ourselves."

The next EU Gateway to Japan trade mission will bring small and medium-sized companies of the healthcare sector to Tokyo from 16 to 20 February 2004.

More information on the upcoming events and the EU Gateway to Japan programme is available on: www.gatewaytojapan.org

* 26 EU companies from: Austria (1), Denmark (2), Finland (2), France (5), Germany (1), Greece (1), Ireland (1), Italy (6), Portugal (1), Spain (2), the Netherlands (2), UK (2)

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