



Belgium-Japan Association
Chamber of Commerce
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TRADE FLOWS & CULTURAL NEWS

Number 144 - September 2024



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NO ADVANCED MATERIALS,
NO GREEN DEAL?

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Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce | Royal Association | Founded in 1963
Registration n° 408.948.139 | RPR Court of Commerce Brussels

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EDITORIAL

By Haruhisa Okamoto, Head of Brussels Branch, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, Vice-President BJA and President Nihonjinkai

It is a great honor and pleasure to assume the role of Vice-President of the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce. I look forward to working with the fellow board members and other members of BJA to further strengthen the business and cultural relationship between Belgium and Japan.

After having worked in the United Kingdom and Germany for a total of nearly 10 years, I moved to Belgium in February 2024. It has been 6 months since I started living in Brussels, and I am enjoying working in this lively cosmopolitan city. I find many people here working with enthusiasm and pride, being in the center of the EU. What I also find very helpful in Brussels is that many things are written in English, along with French and Flemish. Onboarding a new life outside your country and settling in can be quite a burden; however, the language barrier is minimal in Brussels. On the other hand, because of this kindness to foreigners, what I worry about is that I may not be able to increase my vocabulary in either French or Flemish. Perhaps I should not make excuses to myself but start learning.

I am currently working in the Brussels Branch of a Japanese bank. We established the branch back in 1972 and started the business to initially support Japanese corporate customers

who were investing in Belgium. We also have strong business ties with Belgian companies operating globally. In my workplace, I am pleased to see the strong interest towards Japan, especially the younger generations, and I feel responsible for representing Japan in Belgium.

Next year in 2025, Osaka is hosting the EXPO2025 from 13 April to 13 October. I hear that the preparation for the Belgian Pavilion is on track to attract the visitors from all over the world. I hope more and more people will visit Japan from Belgium, as well as during the EXPO2025. This will be a great opportunity to show the broader picture of many of the strengths that Belgium has. At the same time, I believe it would also present to the world how much cooperation and collaboration between Belgium and Japan have varying from trade, business, science to culture.

Following year in 2026, this year will be also an exciting year in which we celebrate the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations and friendship between Belgium and Japan. We established diplomatic relations with each other in 1866 with the signature of our first Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation. The Embassy of Japan in Belgium will soon start to set up a preparation committee together with BJA and Nihonjinkai to celebrate the year. I am sure that BJA plays



Haruhisa Okamoto

an important role in these coming events. I am very excited to see that these events will be another great opportunity for both Belgium and Japan to further understand each other and to broaden our relationship.

Lastly, I would like to briefly touch upon Nihonjinkai for which I hold the President role. Nihonjinkai has been established more than 50 years ago, aiming to provide communication and networking among the Japanese community. We currently have 150 corporate members and about 950 members in total. Nihonjinkai organizes events for the Japanese community in Belgium, and another objective is to foster relationships and friendship between the people of Belgium and Japan. I am sure that both BJA and Nihonjinkai can further enhance cooperation towards these objectives.

I would like to contribute myself to develop the bonds or “Kizuna” between Belgium and Japan by working closely with all the relevant members of BJA. I appreciate your strong support to BJA.

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The EU AI Act: Are you Ready for the New World? The EU AI Act: 新世界への準備はできていますか?

Thursday, 30 May 2024 – Linklaters LLP, Brussels



The panel, moderated by Mr Van Overstraeten, Linklaters LLP, included notable voices from the corporate world: Mr Deweerdt, Barco; Mr Canton, Fujitsu; Mr Raj, Fujitsu; Mrs Demey, imec; Mr van der Eijk, NTT Data; and Mr Angel Gómez, NTT Data.



Kristof Boodts, Senior Director at Deloitte Consulting & Advisory, highlighted how AI can enhance existing products and services to foster business innovation.



Dan Nechita, Head of Cabinet for MEP Tudorache, played a significant role in the negotiations of the AI Act and he shared his insights.

The Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce had the honor of organizing a seminar on the EU AI Act and its implications, in collaboration with Linklaters LLP. The event attracted over 80 participants. We began by welcoming Dan Nechita as the keynote speaker. As Head of Cabinet for MEP Dragos Tudorache, he played a significant role in the negotiations of the AI Act and he shared his insights on the path ahead. The seminar also featured in-depth discussions and a panel exploring various AI-related aspects. Speakers included Tanguy Van Overstraeten, Partner at Linklaters LLP and BJA Vice-President, and Guillaume Couneson, Partner at Linklaters LLP, who both focused their presentation on the regulatory landscape. They were followed by Kristof Boodts, Senior Director at Deloitte Consulting & Advisory, who highlighted how AI can enhance existing products and services to foster business innovation. The panel, moderated by Tanguy Van Overstraeten, included notable voices from the corporate world: Erik Deweerdt, Senior Legal Counsel at Barco; Marco Canton, Senior Executive at Fujitsu; Aditya Raj, AI Subject Matter Expert (SME) in Technology Strategy Unit at Fujitsu; Sabine Demey, Director Flanders AI Research Program at imec; Robert van der Eijk, Managing Director for Digital Strategy & Advisory in Belgium at NTT Data; and Miguel Angel Gómez, Head of European In-

stitutions at NTT Data. The panel discussions were dynamic, covering key topics such as the energy consumption of large language models, sustainable AI practices, and the evolving regulatory landscape. The diverse perspectives and innovative ideas shared were particularly enlightening. In-depth dialogues during Q&A sessions emphasized the need for a balanced approach to AI governance and compliance, highlighting a commitment to responsible and ethical AI use. A significant focus was on the roles within the AI ecosystem as defined by the EU AI Act—providers, deployers, and users—and their impact on strategic decisions and operations. Sustainability, including environmental, economic, and social aspects, was also a major theme, discussing AI’s potential to boost productivity, prosperity, health, education, and overall wellbeing. Wim Eynatten, Partner at Deloitte and BJA Legal & Tax Committee Chair, summarized the sessions and invited all to enjoy the following networking part. The discussions continued over a delicious walking luncheon, generously provided by Linklaters LLP.



Guillaume Couneson, Partner at Linklaters LLP, explained the regulatory landscape.



Update on EU PUBLIC COUNTRY- BY-COUNTRY REPORTING

By Wim Eynatten, International Tax Partner, Deloitte & BJA Legal & Tax Committee Chair

On 6 June 2024, the Belgian Government published the Royal Decree of 18 April 2024 amending the Royal Decree of 29 April 2019 concerning the implementation of the Belgian Code for Companies and Associations (“BCCA”). The latter decree aims to partially transpose Directive (EU) 2021/2101 of the European Parliament and of the Council (“the EU directive”) relating to the public disclosure of income tax information by certain undertakings and branches - commonly referred to as public country-by-country (CbC) reporting - and specifically relates to the content and form of the information that companies must prepare and disclose for public CbC reporting purposes.

The EU directive amends Directive 2013/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements, and related reports for certain types of undertakings to include provisions for public disclosure of income tax information. Belgian legislation implementing the directive was published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 26 January 2024. The new rules were implemented through incorporation in the BCCA and apply to financial years starting on or after 22 June 2024.

EU directive on public CbC reporting

The EU directive sets out obligatory public CbC reporting requirements for EU-based companies as well as non-EU-based companies that do business within the EU through a subsidiary or a branch, and that have a total consolidated revenue that exceeds the threshold of EUR 750 million in each of the previous two consecutive financial years.

The EU directive also requires information relating to economic activities in every EU Member State and every jurisdiction that is either on annex I of the EU’s list of non-cooperative jurisdictions or annex II (the “state-of-play” document) to be disclosed separately by jurisdiction. However, the information to be disclosed for other jurisdictions may be provided in an aggregated form.

Implementation of public CbC reporting law

Although the public CbC reporting requirement was originally added into the Belgian Tax Code, the royal decree instead transposes the amendment to the EU directive into the BCCA. This is because the amendment provides for articles laying down accounting rules rather than tax rules. However, it still affects the Belgian tax legislation.

Belgian legislation is generally aligned with the EU directive. In Belgium, the following companies are required to submit a public CbC report:

- › The ultimate parent entity (“UPE”) of a multinational group resident in Belgium when the group consolidated revenue exceeds EUR 750 million in each of the previous two consecutive years;
- › A Belgian resident standalone company with cross-border taxable presence when its net revenue exceeds EUR 750 million in each of the previous two consecutive years;
- › A Belgian resident medium-sized or large subsidiary of a non-EU multinational group when the group consolidated revenue exceeds EUR 750 million in each of the previous two consecutive years and provided that an EU resident parent entity has not already published the CbC report; and,
- › A Belgian branch of a non-EU resident headquarter company where the net revenue of the headquarter company (or consolidated revenue of the group to which the headquarter company belongs) exceeds EUR 750 million in each of the previous two consecutive years and the turnover of the branch exceeds EUR 9 million in each of the previous two consecutive years. A Belgian resident subsidiary or branch of a non-EU multinational group is further exempted from the public CbC reporting requirements in Belgium where its non-EU UPE complies with the public CbC reporting rules as described in the EU directive.

The group’s CbC report must be made available on the group’s website for free and should be filed with the National Bank of Belgium.

Similar to the EU directive, these disclosure and filing requirements must be met within 12 months after the closing date of the reporting year.

Unlike the directive, the Belgian law does not include a safeguarding clause concerning the delay of any disclosure of commercially sensitive information for five years.

In addition, the content and format of the CbC report is determined by royal decree (see below). Nevertheless, the explanatory notes attached to the law provide that information related to jurisdictions on the Belgian list of jurisdictions with no or low taxation must also be published separately by jurisdiction.

If a company or branch office obliged to prepare and/or publish a report on income tax information fails to do so, an administrative fine of between EUR 50 and EUR 10,000 may be imposed. In addition, in cases of fraudulent intent, a custodial sentence of between one month and one year may also be imposed on members of a management body as well as persons entrusted with the governance of an establishment in Belgium, in combination with an administrative fine.

Key provisions of the royal decree

The key provisions of the April 2024 Royal Decree amending the Royal Decree of 29 April 2019 concerning the implementation of the BCCA can be summarized as follows:

- › Addition of definitions for “non-cooperative tax jurisdiction” and “Belgian lists of tax jurisdictions” (the latter being listed in article 179 of the Royal Decree implementing the Income Tax Code (RD/ITC) and Article 734quater RD/ITC)
- › Content of the report:
 - The name of the Belgian resident UPE, Belgian resident standalone company, or UPE of a non-EU country;
 - Financial year;
 - Currency;
 - A list of all entities and/or branches situated outside Belgium that are established in: (i) an EU Member State; (ii) a tax jurisdiction that is non-cooperative for tax purposes; (iii) a tax jurisdiction included in the Belgian lists of tax jurisdictions; or, (iv) a tax jurisdiction identified by the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes as a state that does not effectively or substantially apply the international standard of exchange of information on request;
 - A short description of the nature of the activities;
 - Number of full-time equivalent employees;
 - Revenue;
 - Profit or loss before income tax;
 - Income tax accrued and income tax paid. If relevant, the report may contain a general commentary explaining any material discrepancies with the corresponding amounts in previous financial years; and,
 - Accumulated earnings.
- › Reporting basis:
 - If a Member State includes several tax jurisdictions, the information is aggregated at Member State level; and,
 - The information regarding non-EU Member States may be aggregated, except when it concerns entities and/or branches situated in tax jurisdictions within categories (ii), (iii), or (iv) above, which must be reported separately.
- › Language: The report should be prepared in the same language as the annual accounts.
- › Filing and technical requirements:
 - The report must be filed electronically with the National Bank of Belgium within 12 months after the fiscal year end. The report may not be included in the annual accounts or annual report;

- The model and format for electronic reporting are established by the European Commission;
 - Filing fees are EUR 81.70, adjusted annually (on 1 January) based on the consumer price index; and,
 - The National Bank of Belgium will define and publicize the technical requirements and procedures for filing the report on its website.
- › Accessibility of the report: The National Bank of Belgium must provide a copy of the report on its website in both structured data and PDF format, for at least the current and five previous calendar years.

Timing and key challenges

The new public CbC reporting rules apply for financial years starting on or after 22 June 2024. This means that for calendar year companies, the first reporting year will be the 2025 financial year. For Japanese groups with a 31 March financial year-end the first reporting period will be the financial year starting on 1 April 2025 and closing on 31 March 2026.

Businesses will need to prepare for the operational and compliance complexities resulting from implementation of mandatory public CbC reporting. Accurate and efficient processes should be put in place to ensure that the CbC report is available on a timely basis to avoid fines for late submission, or incomplete or incorrect information.

In addition, companies need to consider how the information reported may be received and interpreted by the public. In this regard, companies may wish to consider including some explanatory notes with their public CbC reporting to prevent misinterpretation.

Final considerations for Japanese MNEs

Japanese MNEs with consolidated revenue exceeding EUR 750 million in each of the previous two consecutive years and with medium-sized or large subsidiary(ies) in Belgium and/or other EU Member States will have to comply timely with this new EU public CbC reporting obligation.

In this respect it should furthermore be noted that some EU Member States have implemented the EU directive in a more strict way, e.g. Romania implemented the EU directive as of 1 January 2023 implying that for Japanese MNEs with a 31 March financial year-end with a subsidiary in Romania the first reporting period will be the financial year starting on 1 April 2023 and closing on 31 March 2024 and e.g. Spain requires the publication of the EU public CbC reporting already within 6 months from the date of the balance sheet of the financial year in question which is earlier than the maximum 12-month deadline included in the EU directive. Japanese MNEs with subsidiaries and/or branches in various EU Member States will thus have to closely monitor the applicable local EU public CbC reporting obligations in view of avoiding fines and potential reputational damage for late filing of the EU public CbC reporting.



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A SEASON FULL OF SCINTILLATING ORCHESTRAL GEMS

Music Director
Kazushi Ono presents
the Brussels Philharmonic
Fall/Winter '24 Season

Q: *This Fall, the Brussels Philharmonic is presenting a rich and diverse programme. Can you tell us about some of the highlights?*

A: *This season is full of orchestral gems, from Classics to the composers of our time, and there's a huge variety of music. We open with Mahler's Third Symphony, continuing our journey which began with his Fifth and First. The Third is one of his 'Wunderhorn' symphonies, based on his wonderful song settings of German folk poems from Des Knaben Wunderhorn. It's one of his longest symphonies, set in six movements, each of which originally had a title relating to nature, humanity and love. Mahler felt very deeply about nature, and nature is talking to us through this music. It is romantic and ambitious and marks a huge jump by Mahler as a symphonic composer.*

Q: *You have two concerts dedicated to Schönberg in October. Why did you choose to focus on his work?*

A: *Schönberg was the next generation on from Mahler and it's very interesting to hear the development of the musical language. He is known as a composer whose work is difficult to understand, but the pieces we're playing sit on the border between romanticism and modernity. For example, *Pierrot lunaire* is for a small orchestra and a singer who sings and half-speaks. Based on 21 selected poems from the Belgian Symbolist poet Albert Giraud, Schönberg's music invites you to a one-of-a-kind experience: sometimes beautiful, sometimes grotesque, and sometimes both at the same time – you might be surprised!*

Q: Can you tell us more about Schönberg's Chamber Symphony No.1 and its historical context?

A: This symphony was part of the programme of the famous 'Skandalkonzert' in 1913, which Schönberg himself conducted. Shocked by the radicalness of the music, the audience began to riot during the concert. The music is played by a small orchestra, so you will hear all the details and feel very close to it. When you hear atonal music played like this, it sounds very beautiful to our ears, especially now that a century has passed, and our perceptions have changed.

Q: In December, you've chosen an interesting mix of composers: Milhaud, Strauss, and Matalon. What can the audience expect from this combination?

A: This concert describes three very different visions of the creation of life. Milhaud wrote *La Création du monde* as a response to hearing authentic jazz for the first time in Harlem in 1922 and it was a whole new exciting world for him. It is also based on African folk mythology about the creation of the world. Lasting around 15 minutes, it is full of jazz elements and percussion – entertaining from beginning to end. Martin Matalon's *Relatos* is a creation of our time – with waves of dissonance that sound very beautiful.

Q: How does Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* fit into the programme?

A: With *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Richard Strauss offers another idea of how the world and humanity began. Strauss starts it with the trumpets, describing the beginning of hu-

man life, through the tough times and dream-like moments, through to the final dream – death. It's a very satisfying piece.

Q: The final concert of the season features Russian composers. What can the audience expect?

A: In our final concert of 2024, we perform a programme including Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Prokofiev. Rachmaninov was inspired to write *The Isle of the Dead* after seeing Arnold Böcklin's eponymous painting. He was living in the 20th century, but his music looks backwards. In contrast, Prokofiev, who also lived in the 20th century, looks forwards. He was a master of the music of our time but in a very smart and gentle way. Even when his music uses modern harmonies, it always sounds moving and elegant.

Q: How did Scriabin and Rachmaninov's paths differ after studying together?

A: Scriabin and Rachmaninov studied at the Moscow Conservatoire at the same time, and shared the same piano teacher, but Scriabin went in a very different direction from Rachmaninov. As the title *Le Poème de l'extase*, suggests, he was the poet of ecstasy – not just sexual ecstasy but intellectual.

Q: As you begin the new season with the Brussels Philharmonic, what would you like to say to your audience?

A: This will be my third season with Brussels Philharmonic and with these scintillating gems of music in our hands, we are truly looking forward to welcoming you at Flagey!

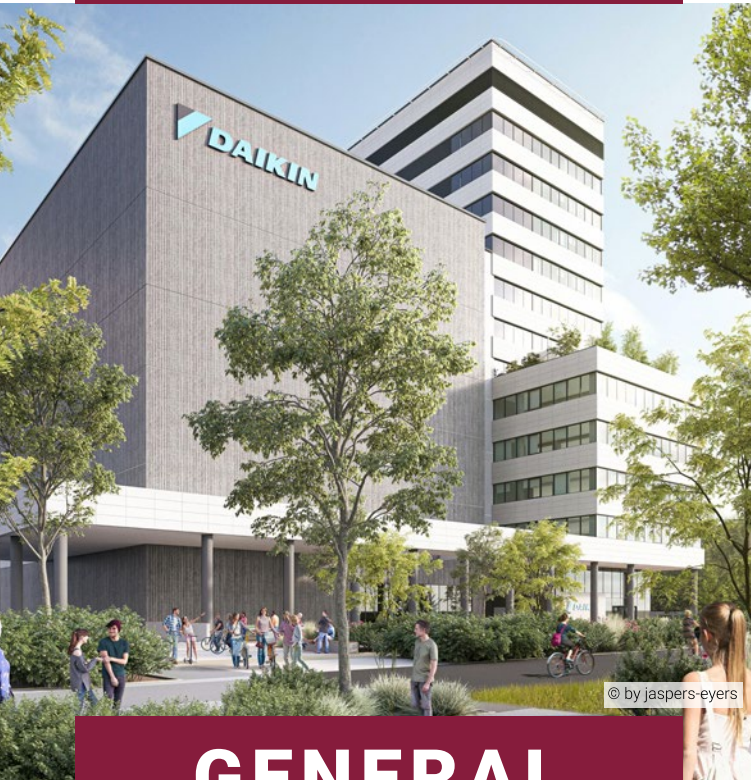


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Concerts Kazushi Ono & Brussels Philharmonic

- › **Mahler 3:**
27.09 De Singel, 29.09 Flagey,
05.10 Concertgebouw Brugge
- › **Shades of Schönberg:**
10.10 Flagey
- › **Schönberg *Pierrot lunaire*:**
12.10 Flagey
- › **Milhaud, Matalon & Strauss:**
14.12, 15.12 Flagey
- › **Rachmaninov, Prokofiev & Scriabin:**
19.12 De Bijloke, 20.12 Flagey

Info & tickets: www.brusselsphilharmonic.be

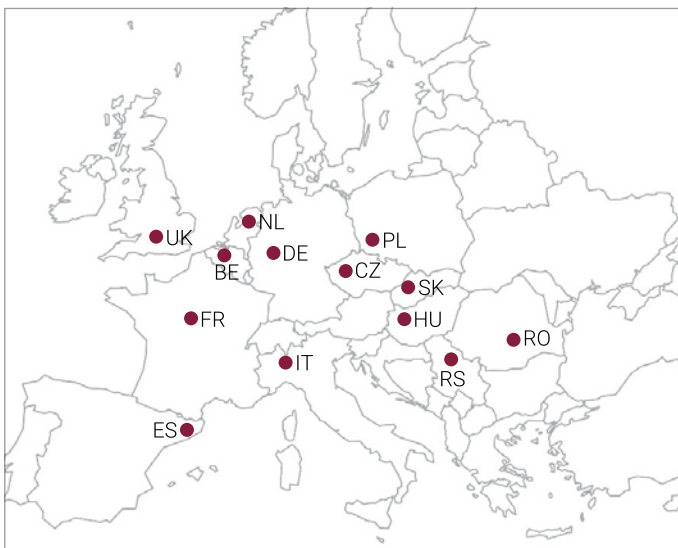


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THE IMPACT

OF THE EUROPEAN AND BELGIAN ELECTION RESULTS & FLEMISH LEGISLATIVE CHANGES ON ECONOMIC MIGRATION

By Joke Braam, Director, Vialto Partners & BJA Editorial Committee Member, Fabian Gielis, Associate, Vialto Partners, and Kris Haveneers, Principal Adviser, Vialto Partners

The year 2024 is an important year in the EU a.o because of all the different elections. In the last years, the EU has taken many initiatives to harmonise migration policies across Europe. However, the results of local elections may have an important, and possible negative impact. Keeping up with all the changes in immigration policies in Europe can be rather challenging. This is why this article will provide you with a brief overview of the recent elections that were held in the EU and Belgium and the changes in the Flemish region with regards to their economic migration policies, which may impact employers who are employing Japanese nationals in Belgium.

Short insight in recent elections

EUROPE

From 6-9 June 2024, EU citizens headed to the polls to vote in the European Parliament elections. In these elections, EU citizens directly elected 720 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). While the centre-right and centre-left have been able to maintain their majority, parties on the right of the political spectrum also made significant gains.

The European Commission has previously made efforts to harmonise migration policies. This being in response to challenges such as skills shortages, an ageing population, and the global war for talent. Recent initiatives include:

- › The (revised) Single Permit directive: a combined application procedure for both the right to work and the right to stay in an EU member state.
- › The (revisited) Blue Card directive: Designed for highly skilled workers from outside the EU, it gives them the right to live and work in an EU country.

However, it now remains to be seen whether this trend of harmonisation is continued or discontinued in light of the above-mentioned EU election results.

BELGIUM

Simultaneously, on June 9th Belgian voters cast their ballots in federal and regional elections. The centrist and right parties were the main winners of these elections, with differences in results between the different regions in Belgium. At the moment of writing this article (Begin July 2024) federal and regional coalitions are yet to be formed.

UK AND FRANCE

Lastly, we wish to inform the reader of the important snap elections that were held in the United Kingdom on the 4th of July, as well as the elections in France, with a final round on July 7th. The former resulted in a landslide victory for the UK Labour party, who recorded a total of 412 seats out of the total 650 seats available in the parliament. This result is to be seen as a

clear message for change, as the 14-year rule of the conservative Tories comes to an end. The Labour party already acted on their intent to better UK-EU relations.

In France, contrary to the results in the first week of the elections on June 30th, surprisingly, the Left Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP) grabbed hold of the most seats in parliament, namely 188 seats, followed by the block of French President Emmanuel Macron Ensemble (ENS), with 161 seats. In third position, the extreme right Rassemblement National (RN) were visibly disappointed of the 142 seats they grabbed hold of, given the projections of 1 week earlier of the latter being the biggest party with over 250 seats. Nevertheless, compared to the 2022 elections, the RN rose from 89 seats to now 142. This confirms the rise of extreme right in France, as well in the EU elections (see above), during which the latter arose as the biggest party. It was indeed this result that eventually led to President Macron calling for said French parliamentary elections.

These will also possibly impact the immigration landscape, but will not be further discussed, as they are not in scope of this article.

The question now arises what impact the election results will have on the EU's and local countries' policies concerning economic migration. Third country nationals employed in Europe (incl. Japanese nationals) will most likely be impacted by these elections and the changing policies on migration. However, it remains to be seen what changes are proposed on both levels.

Changes applicable in the Flemish Region

The Flemish regional authorities have adopted new legislation on economic migration, which entered into force on 1 May 2024. This new decision has an impact on both Japanese nationals working in Belgium, as well as employers employing Japanese nationals in the Flemish region. Below, we will set forth the most impactful changes mentioned in this legislation.

JAPANESE SINGLE PERMIT HOLDERS CAN PERFORM FLEXI-JOBS WITHOUT ADDITIONAL WORK AUTHORIZATION

Normally, a fixed-duration work permit is issued exclusively for one employer. However, the new Flemish decision introduces the concept that Japanese (and other) holders of a single permit issued in the Flemish region for a fixed period may (under certain conditions) carry out 'flexi-work' besides their usual activities. This means that they can work for an employer other than their main employer without the need of an additional work permit.

CHANGED WORK AUTHORIZATION EXEMPTIONS FOR JAPANESE BUSINESS TRAVELLERS

› Introduction

The general rule is that a work permit is required for each

third country national who will be performing activities in Belgium. However, in case specific conditions are fulfilled Japanese employees can fit into one of the work permit exemption categories. We will set forth below the most prominent changes to these exemptions.

These exemptions avoid employers and employees having to go through cumbersome processes and are therefore attractive for third-country nationals. In addition, Japanese nationals are exempt from the visa requirement, which makes this exemption all the more interesting, as this takes away another threshold for Japanese employees to come to Belgium for certain work activities.

Nonetheless, we wish to remind the reader of the upcoming ETIAS and EES systems (see September 2023 BJA Trade Flows), which Japanese nationals will have to consider when travelling to the Schengen Area.

› Revised exemption for 'temporary trading activities'

Under this (recently amended) exemption, a third country national, who is not residing in Belgium (no main residence), is exempted from the work permit obligation in the Flemish region in Belgium if the employee performs temporary trading activities in Belgium, linked to the business interests of the employer, without delivering services or goods in Belgium.

Only in case the following conditions are met, this exemption can be relied on:

- The employee's activities in Belgium are limited to any of the following activities:
 - attending conferences, seminars, internal and external business meetings, fairs and exhibitions
 - participating in business contract negotiations, sales or marketing activities
 - performing of internal audits or client audits
 - exploring of business opportunities
 - giving or attending training courses.
 The employee will not perform any other employment activities.
- The employee's presence and activities in Belgium will not exceed 90 days in any 180 days time frame;
- The activities in Belgium are in the interest of the home country employer;
- There is no deliverance of services or goods involved in the employee's activities in Belgium and no service agreement is concluded between the home country employer and receiving entity in Belgium (direct or indirect).

This exemption applies for a maximum of 90 days in any 180-day period, which coincides perfectly with the visa exemption for Japanese nationals. We also wish to note that a Limosa declaration will still have to be made for individuals falling under this exemption.

Remark: it is important to note that these exemptions must be interpreted strictly, meaning that any activity that does not meet the conditions of these exemptions will still require a work permit.

In case one doesn't meet the requirements mentioned above, they can still resort to the below mentioned exemption. See this as a cascade system to be followed, with the exemption for 'temporary' trading activities' being the most interesting, if all conditions are fulfilled.

› Infamous business trip exemption

One of the most applicable work permit exemptions in Belgium is the one for business trips i.e. "meetings in closed circle". In case of a business trip, we need to take into account the allowed activities and the duration:

- Allowed activities for 'meetings in closed circle': actual/productive work activities are not allowed. What is allowed in the Flemish region is e.g. attending a meeting, contract negotiations, following a training, having discussions in a meeting room, strategic negotiations, performance reviews etc. preferably in a meeting room (not having your own personalised desk) and a visitor badge for entering the building (not a regular employee badge). We must emphasise that these activities cannot be generalised and need to be assessed against the situation at hand for each case.
- Allowed duration: 20 consecutive days (incl. weekend days) per meeting with a maximum of 60 activity days (not incl. weekend days) per calendar year.

In case these conditions are fulfilled a Limosa declaration is also not required.

EUROPEAN BLUE CARD HOLDERS IN THE FLEMISH REGION

So far, the European Blue Card (hereafter: EBC) initiative has been very little in demand in Belgium compared to the Single Permit highly skilled category. For example, the EBC can only be used for locally recruited employees and there is a higher salary threshold, making this category less favourable. However, new changes have been announced that could make the EBC more attractive to Japanese workers and their employers in the Flemish region:

› Short-term mobility

A Japanese national who holds an EBC in another EU Member State can work in the Flemish Region in Belgium for 90 days within any 180-day period without the need to apply for an additional Belgian work permit, provided that the work in Belgium is based on an employment contract in the EU country and benefits that employer. This makes it easier for Japanese nationals with business interests in different EU countries to travel and work in different countries, without having to obtain work authorisations in each country. Of course, the exact rules and regulations in each country

need to be verified before relying on this exemption.

› Less dependence on employers

- If an EBC holder concludes a new employment agreement with a different employer within the first 12 months, the regional authorities must be notified within 15 days of the 'change of employer', namely providing them with a copy of the contract.
- After 12 months of holding an EBC, the card becomes valid for all employers, provided the EBC requirements continue to be met. This allows Japanese EBC holders to change employers without the new employer having to initiate an official change of employer procedure.
- We can conclude that this is a big advantage, as employers don't have to go through the long process of a change of employer procedure anymore for EBC holders.

The EBC might become more attractive for positions within companies where employees need to work in several EU countries. It will also be easier to recruit people who already have an EBC sponsored by another Belgian company, as the procedures will be simplified.

Brussels and Walloon region

The Brussels region has also announced and published changes to the economic migration landscape which will come into force on 1 October 2024. We have already noticed that there will be some distinct differences between the policies of Brussels - and the Flemish region.

Furthermore, the Walloon region is also planning to change their immigration policies and legislation. However, at the moment of writing, there is no further information available on what the proposed changes would entail.

Conclusion

The election results at European and Belgian level will most likely have a long-term impact on immigration legislation, where we expect to see more stringent measures announced in the future, as well as more fragmentation between the different EU member states and even the different regions in Belgium. The landscape for hiring employees as a business will become more complex.

We therefore advise Japanese employers to review their current strategies to take these (forthcoming) changes into account.

ARTICLE

BJA Exclusive Visit to Barco BJA バルコ社特別訪問

Tuesday, 18 June 2024 - Kortrijk



Before the tour of the facility, all gathered for a group picture inside of Barco's Theatre



An Steegen, CEO of Barco, giving a warm welcome address



The participants indulging themselves in Barco's advancing digital technologies

Thanks to the generous support of Barco, the BJA was thrilled to welcome over 35 guests to an exclusive visit to Barco's headquarters in Kortrijk. Originally named the Belgium American Radio Corporation, Barco began by assembling radios from American parts in 1934. Today, the company has transformed into a global leader in visualization, networking, and collaboration technologies.

The event commenced with an opening remark by Kurt Leuridan, CEO of Tokai Optecs and Chair of the BJA Investment Committee, who highlighted the significance of Barco's impact across various industries. An Steegen, CEO of Barco, followed with a welcome address, expressing pride in Barco's 90-year journey and its ongoing commitment to innovation. Wouter Bonte, VP Sales Immersive Experience at Barco and BJA Board Director, presented an overview of Barco's busi-

ness operations and its strong relationship with Japan.

This session ended with a Q&A opportunity and short clips of movies as a teaser for the highlight of the visit—a comprehensive tour of the Barco facility. Guests explored the cutting-edge technologies developed by Barco, learning about their applications in real-world scenarios. The tour included demonstrations of how Barco's visualization solutions enhance entertainment experiences, improve data handling in complex fields, assist in life-saving medical procedures, and much more.

Following the tour, guests enjoyed networking drinks kindly provided by Barco, leaving with a lasting impression of the company's innovative spirit and its critical role in advancing digital technologies globally.



BARCO

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF INNOVATION

Since 1934, Barco has been driving technological change. From its roots as a Belgian radio manufacturer, the company has grown into a global technology leader through an unwavering focus on innovation. Did you know that Barco is an acronym for Belgian American Radio Corporation?

In its early days, Barco brought entertainment into people's homes through radios and TVs, referred to as 'Your family's indispensable friend.' Evolving from there, it has become the trusted partner for professionals across diverse markets such as healthcare, enterprise, and entertainment.

Masterstrokes of engineering

Barco's 90-year journey is marked by masterstrokes of engineering, from the exquisite wooden cabinets housing its radios, jukeboxes, and TVs, to the meticulously engineered medical displays, video walls, projectors, and meeting room solutions of today. Barco's products are designed and developed with the greatest care to ensure the premium quality guarantee they have upheld for decades. Barco's commitment to excellence is reflected in accolades such as various Red Dot and Henry van de Velde design awards, recognizing the ingenuity of its technology.

Throughout Barco's history, the accomplishments of its visioneers have been honored with prestigious awards, including two Emmy Awards

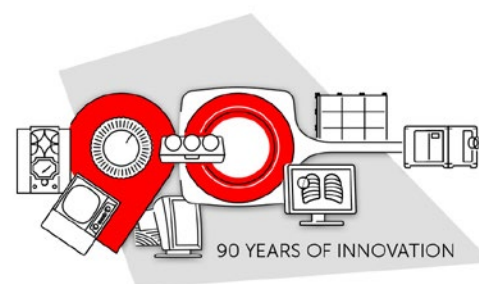
for best technical performance in TV and its contribution to the Video Services Forum and a Scientific and Engineering Academy Award® for the company's contributions to laser cinema projection. Barco achieved a Guinness World Record for the brightest cinema projector and earned numerous other technology recognitions.

Technology pioneers

Barco's legacy is one of technology pioneers, where the technical know-how, craftsmanship, and inventiveness of their visioneers have shaped their identity. Barco has continually broken ground with industry firsts, introducing innovations such as the multi-standard television, leading with color TV in Europe, creating the first universal TV sets with a wireless ultrasonic remote control, and pioneering CRT projectors for airplanes. Barco led the digital revolution in cinema technology and medical imaging, leaving a lasting mark on the industry.

As Barco celebrates 90 years of innovation in 2024, the company is committed to keep on pushing the boundaries of technology to transform the quality of life: from improving health outcomes to changing the way people work and creating compelling experiences. Barco believes truly great engineering starts with a clear vision. A vision of a better, smarter, healthier world.

Barco. Visioneering since 1934.



NO ADVANCED MATERIALS, NO GREEN (INDUSTRIAL) DEAL IN EUROPE?

By Dr Fabrice Stassin, Director Government Affairs Electromobility Projects and Coordinator for Asian Affairs, Umicore & BJA EU Committee Chair

It is now implementation time for the EU Commission's strategy on "Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership"

Advanced materials are intentionally designed and engineered materials that display superior performance or special functions. Advanced materials are key to enable clean energy, clean mobility technologies as well as electronics. They are the cathode active materials going into lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles, the catalysts based on precious metals going into electrolyzers for the production of hydrogen, the alloys for magnets enabling windmills ...

Without constantly innovating in field of advanced materials, EU's green and digital transitions will be difficult, and this will also be at the expense of its open strategic autonomy in a more and more complex geopolitical & geo-economical environment.

On 27 February 2024, the EU Commission has therefore proposed an encompassing strategy to move towards European industrial leadership in advanced materials. The Communication on Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership (Communication available at ofcfo6ea-c242-44a6-b2cb-daed39584996_en (europa.eu) – Fact-sheet available at [Communication on advanced materials for industrial leadership](https://publications.ec.europa.eu/publication-detail/-/publication/11111111-1111-1111-1111-111111111111) - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)) puts forward concrete

steps enabling alignment of research and innovation priorities and investments in the EU, hoping to ensure European leadership in this key technology.

This initiative, eagerly anticipated by the Member States and industry, is the first step towards a common European approach for advanced materials, laying the groundwork for further action. The strategy aims to enhance the EU's long-term competitiveness by ensuring the Union remains at the forefront of new material technologies, supporting development, testing and deployment capacities. The actions will also strengthen the EU's open strategic autonomy and economic security by reducing dependencies on critical materials by partially replacing them or supporting their recycling and reuse.

The Communication proposes actions along five main pillars (see Figure 1) to be implemented together with EU, Member states, industry players and other key stakeholders:

1. Strengthening the European research & innovation ecosystem on advanced materials
2. Fast-tracking innovative materials to the market. This includes developing a "materials commons", a European digital infrastructure for



advanced materials research and innovation. It will significantly accelerate the design, development and testing of new advanced materials in a controlled environment, also using AI

3. Increasing capital investment and access to financing. As part of this package of actions, the EU will set up a new partnership with the industry under Horizon Europe, aiming at €500 million of investments for 2025-2027, with at least €250 million coming from private sources
4. Fostering the production and use of advanced materials. This includes procurement for innovation, standard setting and the launch of an Advanced Materials Academy with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology to make sure European workforce has the necessary skills
5. Creating a Technology Council for

advanced materials to advise on the steering of this initiative with Member States, countries associated to Horizon Europe and industry

Following the announcement (on 27 February 2024) by the EU Commission of its Communication on Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership, the EU and Japan announced (on 2 April 2024) that they will work together on developing new materials used in critical sectors of the economy.

The move towards closer collaboration between the EU and Japan was announced by EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth (Ms Iliana IVANOVA) and Japan's Vice-Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (Mr Hiroki MATSUO).

EU and Japan will formally start an

Enhanced Dialogue on Advanced Materials used in key sectors and applications such as clean energy, clean mobility, zero-emission buildings and semiconductors. The Enhance Dialogue will create a platform for sharing information on policy developments and exploring the opportunities to pursue collaborative research in the areas of mutual interest.

A strategy being only as good as its implementation, it will be key for EU, Member States, industry, research organizations to work together to move the needle and make sure that we continue to innovate in field of advanced materials in Europe – We look forward to Japan becoming more involved in the field, ideally at some point as an associate country to Horizon Europe ... There is a lot more we can do together and advanced materials do offer the best case for collaboration.

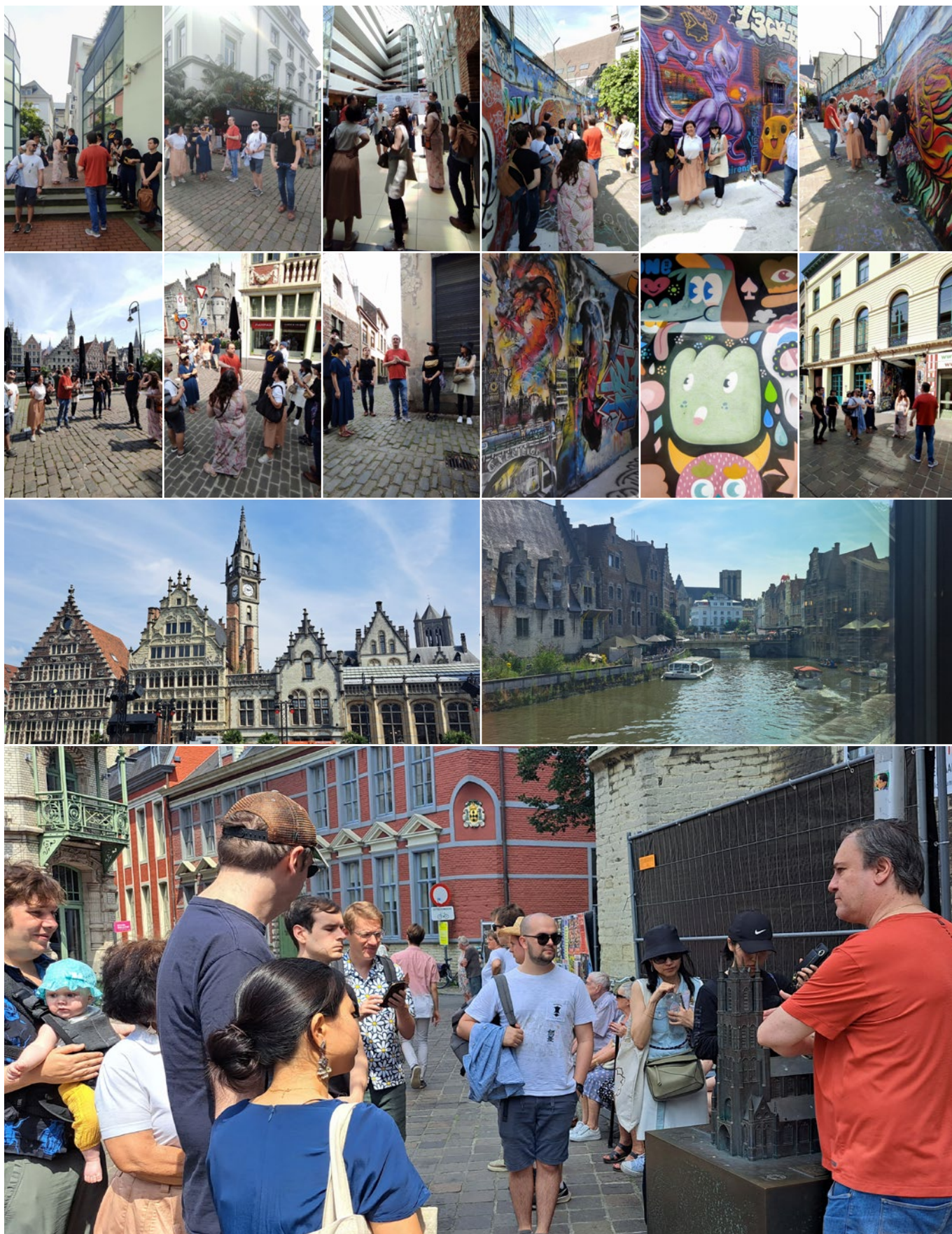
“Ghent with a twist” - discovering Belgium ベルギーの古都「アントワープ」訪問

Saturday, 20 July 2024 - Ghent

The BJA Friendship Committee enjoyed a delightful afternoon in Ghent on Saturday, 20 July. The members explored the city with expert guide Lieven De Smet, bringing Ghent's rich history to life with engaging stories and fascinating anecdotes. During the event, the members also could get a taste of the ten days of the Ghent Festivities or Gentse Feesten – a city alive with music and cultural events, making it the perfect time to visit and discover iconic landmarks and hidden gems.

The members celebrated the friendship between Japan and Belgium by enjoying a vibrant day in Ghent with family and friends.





JTI AT 25

A TALE OF GLOBAL GROWTH AND BELGIAN PARTNERSHIP

By Jeroen Dhanens, Corporate Affairs Director for Belgium and Luxembourg, JT International Company Netherlands B.V. (Belgian Branch), and BJA Legal & Tax Committee & BJA IPT Committee Member

This year, JTI celebrates its 25th anniversary. Established in 1999 when Japan Tobacco (JT) acquired the operations of RJRI, the international tobacco arm of the US-based RJR Nabisco conglomerate, this acquisition remains the largest-ever foreign acquisition by a Japanese company.

Fast forward to today, and JTI has evolved into a global powerhouse. From humble beginnings with around 700 employees outside Japan, we've grown into a vibrant company of over 46,000 individuals in 130 countries. Our exceptional teams have been central to our success, and it is no surprise that JTI Benelux is a highly regarded employer, recognized as a Top Employer for 14 consecutive years.

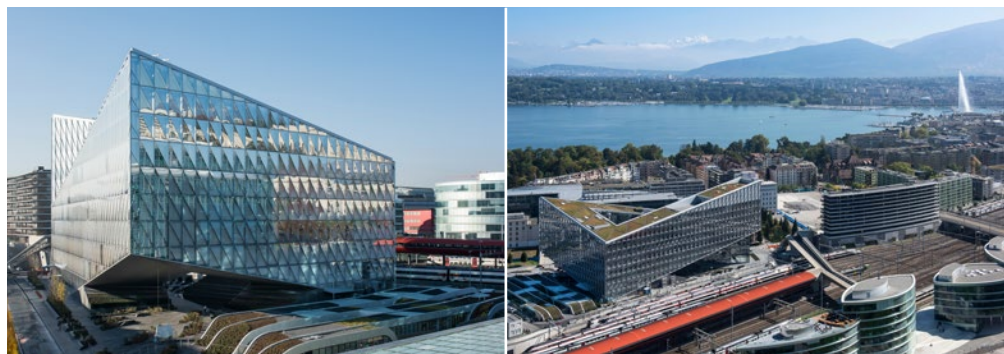
Our growth has been driven by our ability to adapt to ever-changing customer demands and our unwavering focus on innovation. Our portfolio sets us apart from the competition. It is with great pride that Winston, the world's second-largest tobacco brand, celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, while Camel, one of the most iconic brands, celebrates its 111th anniversary. To further fuel our growth, the company's investment of approximately 450 billion yen between 2024 and 2026 in its Reduced-

Risk Products portfolio will see the expansion of its heated tobacco product, Ploom X, from 19 to over 40 markets by the end of 2026.

Optimistic Outlook

Over the past quarter-century, we have witnessed remarkable transformations in our industry and the global landscape. Through it all, our commitment to our consumers remains unchanged: we are dedicated to creating fulfilling moments for our adult consumers, blending tradition with innovation to anticipate their needs and wants.

"I am proud of how we have collectively built a successful consumer-centric business by adapting to the market and adult consumers and upholding our values, which are driven by the Japanese philosophy of Kaizen – or continuous improvement. So much incredible work has been done already, resulting in transformational and positive





change internally and within the communities where we operate,” said Eddy Pirard, President and Chief Executive Officer of JTI. “Creating Fulfilling Moments. Creating a Better Future. This is how we will continue to delight our consumers as we look forward to a bright future.”

Celebrating a Milestone

In May, JTI celebrated its 25th anniversary at The Merode, a private members club in Brussels. The event brought together 150 of JTI’s business partners,

social and cultural partners, representatives of European institutions, think tanks, and distinguished guests, including the Japanese Ambassador to the EU, HE Mr Kazutoshi Aikawa, and the Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, HE Mr Masahiro Mikami. The celebration began with the powerful beats of traditional Japanese drums, setting the tone for an evening dedicated to JTI’s impressive growth. Benelux General Manager Panayiotis Exindaris highlighted our extraordinary relationships with our regional partners

over the past 25 years. The Japanese Ambassador to Belgium emphasized our strong business leadership and the enduring ties between Japan and Belgium. The evening culminated with a traditional sake barrel opening ceremony featuring Ambassadors Aikawa and Mikami alongside Benelux General Manager Exindaris and BeLux Country Manager Natalia Skorobogata. It was a fitting way to kick off a night celebrating our shared successes and future endeavors.

Where Logistics and Legacy Converge

Benelux plays a crucial role in JTI’s story. The acquisition of Gryson in 2012 and our enduring collaboration with Tabaknatie since 1999 showcase our strong presence and dedication to excellence in the region. Our retail partners have been instrumental in growing our presence, and we look forward to continuing these successful partnerships in the future.

Success is about more than just financial performance. We are committed to creating a better future. Our focus on social responsibility is not just a value but a testament to our dedication to the communities where we operate. Our long-standing partnerships with social and cultural organizations in Benelux, which have brought about positive change, are a source of pride for all of us at JTI.

Consumers and Science at the Forefront
In an era where innovation is the cur-



rency of success, JTI is well-positioned to meet consumer needs and preferences worldwide. Our consumers are at the heart of what we do; we actively listen and adapt, ensuring our products evolve to meet their ever-changing wants and needs. This attentive approach enables us to concentrate our efforts and ingenuity in the most impactful areas, allowing us to redefine excellence and create truly fulfilling moments that resonate with the modern adult consumer.

JTI's extensive patent filings, which placed us 23rd in the European Patent Office's 2023 index, are a testament to our relentless pursuit of progress. These filings represent our dedication to pushing boundaries, exploring new horizons, particularly in the Reduced-Risk Products category, and constantly evolving to meet our consumers' ever-changing needs and preferences. They also underscore our commitment to innovation, a key driver of our success and ability to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving market.

As we celebrate 25 years of success, we look forward to the future and to continuing to grow our fruitful partnerships in Benelux and beyond.



For more information and contact:
<https://www.jti.com/europe/belgium-luxembourg>



The BJA would like to extend a warm welcome to its newest members:

Corporate Member

ASHURST LLP

Ashurst's team is experienced in competition and international trade law, including advising on merger control, cartels/anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominance, market investigations, competition litigation, consumer law, state aid, public procurement, foreign direct investment, trade remedies (anti-dumping, anti-subsidies, safeguards), export controls, sanctions and customs law as well as WTO law and trade policy, together with sector-specific regulation across a range of regulated industries.

The Brussels office notably serves as the European point of contact for incoming deals from Japan, or for issues faced by Japanese businesses on the EU market.

By becoming a member, Ashurst looks forward to engaging in the top-tier events organized by BJA, discussing cutting-edge subjects faced in the Belgium-Japan framework, forging connections with the community, and participating in the fostering of relations between Belgium and Japan.

アシャースト法律事務所ブリュッセルオフィスは、競争法および国際通商法を専門としており、とりわけ多岐にわたる規制産業において、企業結合規制、カルテル／反競争的協定、優越的地位の濫用行為、当局による市場調査、訴訟、消費者保護法、国家補助金、公共調達、海外直接投資、貿易救済措置（アンチダンピング、補助金相殺関税、セーフガード）、輸出管理、経済制裁／関税法、WTO 法および輸出入規制に関する豊富な実績を有しています。

特に、当オフィスは日本からの案件に対する欧州の連絡窓口であり、日系企業の欧州市場における様々な事案に対応しています。

この度、BJA に新たに加わり、BJA が主催するイベントに参加し、ベルギーと日本間における最先端のテーマについて議論できることを心待ちにしています。また、コミュニティとのつながりを築き、二国間の関係強化に貢献できることを願っています。



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We are EGG.

Egg, your brand experience agency.

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Founded in 2000 in Paris, with just 3 people, now a diverse team of over 200 individuals across 9 global offices.

Fiercely independent from day one. Giving us the freedom to focus on the needs of our clients, and work with people who share our values.

Agents of Change.

We craft experiences that change mindsets & redefine brand

& interpersonal connections. Our sole focus: uniting people & brands through shared emotional experiences.

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When we do something, we go all in. We commit all our experience, creativity, energy & hustle to produce the very best results for our clients.

Your All-In-One Solution.

Our diverse teams collaborate seamlessly across functions & geographies as one team, worldwide. ESG is crucial in everything we do.

Creative.

Our clients diverse needs & objectives fuel our creativity, inspiring us to craft bespoke experiences as distinctive as they are compelling.



Proactive.

Joining the BJA, we plan to extend our worldwide playground & to propose our strong event expertise to other business opportunities with the BJA ecosystems.

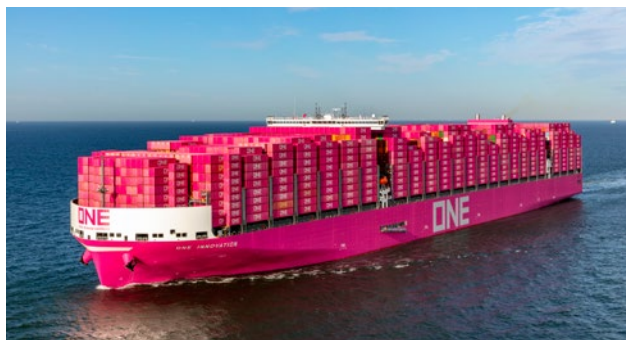
We are also convinced that we can support the BJA members by offering them original learning expeditions inside & outside World Expo 2025, in Osaka, Kansai.

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OCEAN NETWORK EXPRESS (EUROPE) LTD. - BELGIUM BRANCH

Ocean Network Express was established on July 7, 2017, by the integration of the container shipping business units of the Japanese parent companies 'K' Line, MOL and NYK. Today, we have a fleet size of more than 1.8 million TEUs, a fleet of over 200 vessels, deployed to a comprehensive service

network spanning across 120 countries around the world. The dedicated teams of Ocean Network Express Belgium, specializing in various customer and cargo segments, are committed to meeting your unique shipping needs. Whether it's dry, temperature-controlled and out of gauge shipments or even for breakbulk cargo, ONE Belgium is ready to provide bespoke solutions. As ONE we can!



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> Frank Patteet, Head of Customer services

Associate Member

PORT OOSTENDE

Port Oostende is an industrial port whose mission is: creating economic growth that generates sustainable employment. The associated vision is to excel in niche growth markets with waterbound activities. Port Oostende is committed to continuity, growth, and em-



ployment within five pillars: Blue Economy, Lift-on Lift-off & Bulk & Project Cargo, Cruises & Roll-on Roll-off, Circular Industry and the Fisheries Sector. These sectors will continue to be built on two foundations: prioritising safety, health, and the environment and, secondly, supporting innovation

and development.

According to figures from the National Bank of Belgium, Port Oostende has an added value of 1 232 million euros, it directly employs 5 278 people and indirectly 4 372 people. Port Oostende strives to make maximum efforts towards sustainable employment.



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