



SME Contact points

Joint Activity Report to the 3rd Meeting of the EU-Japan EPA Joint Committee

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are referred to in Chapter 20, Articles 20.1 to 20.4 of the EU-Japan EPA (the EPA). In the EPA, the European Union and Japan recognise the importance of the provisions of the SME Chapter as well as other provisions in the EPA that seek to enhance cooperation on matters of relevance to SMEs. In this context in Article 20.3 of the EPA, each side designated an "SME Contact Point" for the implementation of the SME Chapter so that the benefit of the EPA will be maximised for SMEs.

The Contact points met via videoconference on 22nd February 2021. Among other agenda, both sides reported about their initiatives to implement the information sharing provisions (Article 20.2) of the SME Chapter. They are detailed below:

EU Side activities

The portal Access2markets

The European Commission launched the Access2Markets portal¹ with its integrated Rules of Origin Self-Assessment Tool ('ROSA') in October 2020 marking an important milestone in its communication and outreach efforts to companies willing to internationalise.

The Access2Markets portal provides a wealth of free, easily searchable, user friendly and up-to date information for both European and Japanese companies interested to import/export² on each other's markets, such as: -an explanatory summary of the EPA;- tariffs, taxes, quotas, import formalities and customs clearance procedures both for the EU and Japan;-the main rules of origin and origin procedures applicable to qualify for the preferential rates under the EPA³; - non-technical and easily understandable information on product requirements (e.g. technical rules and requirement for labelling, packaging, health and safety requirements, applicable environmental legislations, etc.); - information on the applicable intellectual property rights and geographical indications in the EU and Japan; - information on public procurement rules so that European and Japanese companies can learn about how to participate in tenders for contracts on each others' markets;- a dedicated page for online tools and services for SMEs, which includes links towards the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial cooperation, trade fairs and other relevant networking platforms; etc.

¹ <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/home>

² 3rd country tariffs, taxes and procedures and formalities are only visible for EU Member States and accession countries, see <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/sources-and-copyright>

³ Furthermore, ROSA guides users through a set of questions to assess whether or not their products fulfil the rules to qualify for preferential treatment under an EU trade agreement. To make life easier for companies, ROSA contains also clear instructions on the documentation required as proof of origin to obtain tariff preferences and includes a function to compare the rules across various agreements.

Since its launch the Access2Markets has been well received and it is being increasingly used, with the average number of daily users increasing significantly to reach around 10,000 daily visits, 70% of them being from the EU. In the first five months of 2021 almost 2500 visits were registered from Japan and 1.8% of all search results in this time span concerned data on Japan.

A significant outreach effort was undertaken by the Commission through a series of trainings and events focused on training key multipliers on how to navigate the Access2Markets portal (including ROSA) as to ensure that the Access2Markets portal becomes the source of information for businesses in every Member State. The Access2Markets portal was also promoted through a broad spectrum of partners, such as EC Representations, Enterprise Europe Network, EU Delegations, Press Offices in Member States, local stakeholders, Chambers of Commerce, Trade Promotion Organisations, Business Organisations in the Member States and in the Market Access Advisory Committee.

Japan Side activities

In order to facilitate utilisation of the EPA by SMEs, MOFA website offers information on relevant portal sites and useful support services to the SMEs collectively.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/ie/page23e_000546.html

The MOFA website includes:

JETRO website on EU business information and related support services

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/world/europe/eu/epa/>

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/services/list.html>

JETRO, or the Japan External Trade Organization, is a government-related organisation that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping Japanese SMEs maximise their global export potential.

JETRO provides several support frameworks, a large number of which are without any charge, aiming at development of sales channels and establishment of bases in overseas markets for Japanese companies including SMEs.

Examples of programmes specialised for SMEs are as follows.

“Consortium for a New Export Nation”

The framework of the “Consortium for a New Export Nation” is composed of 1,125 agencies (as of 22nd February 2021) including the national and local governments and Japanese regional enterprise support organisations, such as regional chambers of commerce and industrial and financial institutions. This framework was established for the purpose of supporting Japanese SMEs to develop new sales channels and expand them in overseas markets, taking maximum advantage of the EPAs.

By utilising this framework, JETRO provides assistances by business experts for each stage of overseas business; such as establishing overseas expansion plans, conducting market research, setting business meetings in overseas countries, selecting buyers, and setting up overseas offices and starting operations as well as securing sales channels; in cooperation with related agencies to encourage SMEs to capture demand in overseas markets.

9,068 SMEs are under support of this framework and 1,132 enterprises have succeeded in establishing business overseas (of which 1,075 were SMEs and 272 of which were in the EU market) by the JETRO hands-on support programme (as of 22nd of February 2021).

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/news/releases/2022/0f885ee3faef4a45.html>

"Local Support Platform for Overseas Business Development for SMEs"

JETRO helps Japanese SMEs aiming at market access and business expansion overseas by means of a "local-support platform for the overseas development of SMEs." Under this platform service, Japanese SMEs are provided with advice and guidance on their market entry strategies, legal affairs, labour management, taxation and accounting matters, etc. by a coordinator who is well informed and connected with the local governments and companies in that area. The number of cases handled on platforms (PF) established in the EU area in FY2021: 172 at Paris PF and 318 at Dusseldorf PF (as of 31st of December 2021); in FY2020: 211 at Paris PF and 219 at Dusseldorf PF. (About 85% of the cases were consultations related to exports.) This service has also started a platform in Praha in January 2022.

https://www.jetro.go.jp/jetro/overseas/fr_paris/platform.html

https://www.jetro.go.jp/jetro/overseas/de_dusseldorf/platform.html

https://www.jetro.go.jp/jetro/overseas/cz_praha/platform.html

"SME Overseas Business Human Resource Development Program"

JETRO provides an online training program for SMEs to support development of human resources that are expected to become the core of their overseas business expansion. The program includes, among others, fundamental training on how to plan out and execute overseas development strategies and independent consultation by local experts. Over the three years from FY2019 to FY2021, 495 people from 427 SMEs participated in this training program. Of these, local experts from seven countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, France, Poland, and Romania) provided advice to 83 people from 79 companies.

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/services/ikusei.html>

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/tv/internet/2021/05/3ec3a98e223f7a06.html>

In the context of the business with the EU, JETRO provided assistances in food analysis and food labelling focusing on the EU market (This service ended on March 31st, 2021).

JETRO also offers "World Tariff" service provided by FedEx Trade Networks with no charge for the residents in Japan.

Portal on Rules of Origin

Another good example is Japan Customs' portal site on rules of origin. On this web portal, product-specific rules of all the Japan's EPAs are searchable. Two or more EPAs can be selected in the same HS version group (i.e. HS2002, HS2007, HS2012, HS2017) at once, so that the rules of Japan-EU EPA can be compared with that of the Japan-UK CEPA and of the Japan-USA Trade Agreement.

Activities of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation contributing to help SMEs benefiting from the EPA

The Centre provides a coherent 'package' integrating various tools, support and services to help SMEs. The following table lists the activities implemented by the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation contributing to help SMEs benefiting from the EPA and to internationalise.

Activity	Objective	What was achieved in 2020
EPA Helpdesk	<p>To provide practical information to SMEs on what means the EPA and how best to benefit for it, the Centre has put in place an EPA Helpdesk. The EPA Helpdesk raises awareness of the opportunities of the EU-Japan EPA and helps EU SMEs take advantage of them. It also supports and guides EU SMEs in their search for relevant information. It prepares concise fact sheets, publishes a handbook that focus on the importation of Japanese products, and organises webinars for different industrial sectors (e.g. agro-food, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, etc.) and/or on legal/technical topics (e.g. rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, geographical indications, etc.) of the EPA</p> <p>https://www.eu-japan.eu/epa-helpdesk</p> <p>This EPA Helpdesk works in synergies with the other helpdesks that the Centre has put in place on (i) public procurement, (ii) technology transfer - including IP, and (iii) cluster and regional cooperation. See below next points.</p>	<p>925 participants in</p> <p>16 EPA-related webinars</p> <p>18 Factsheets</p> <p>88 inquiries</p>
Japan Tax and Public Procurement (JTPP) Helpdesk	<p>Also included in the EU-Japan EPA, the public procurement dimension already benefits from a helpdesk put in place by the Centre. This focused Helpdesk aims to support European SMEs in their commercial endeavours in Japan and provides a range of services such as an online inquiry service, an "Ask the Expert" service, a Public Procurement Market Quick Scan Service, assistance with obtaining supplier qualification, and information services such as a Weekly tender digest and a Twitter service with selected tender notices and related news, as well as frequent webinars by experts in the field. Also, this year, the Helpdesk organised its annual masterclass/workshop on public procurement in Japan. The masterclass/workshop is aimed at relays of information such as commercial counsellors from Embassies, trade promotion organisations and Chambers of Commerce representing EU member states. It provides practical information and tools to obtain a better insight into Japan's government procurement market and provides support to SMEs in securing more effectively tendered contracts in Japan.</p> <p>https://www.eu-japan.eu/japan-tax-public-procurement-helpdesk</p>	<p>83 enquiries (72 ask-the-expert + 4 quick scans + 7 tender monitoring requests)</p> <p>157 registrations to the newsletter</p>
Technology Transfer Helpdesk	<p>The Technology Transfer Helpdesk aims at supporting EU and Japanese companies, universities, research centres and individuals in their steps to search for technologies and understand the mechanics of technology transfer</p>	<p>6,602 website users</p> <p>37 helpdesk inquiries/clients</p>

	<p>transactions, as well as bridging the knowledge gap about current available technologies from both Japan and the EU.</p> <p>http://www.eu-jp-tthelpdesk.eu/</p>	500+ seminar/webinar participants
Regional Cooperation Helpdesk	<p>EU-Japan Regional Cooperation Helpdesk is a new (launched at the end of 2020) regional cooperation platform mobilising European regions and clusters, Japanese Prefectures and clusters to fully exploit the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the EU-Japan Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity. The EJRC Helpdesk promotes cooperation in terms of industry, trade, investment, innovation, tourism and people's mobility. The helpdesk provides opportunities to highlight and share best practices with Europe and Japan and to connect local ecosystems with the EU and Japan initiatives, which facilitate regional and business cooperation such as European Cluster Collaboration Platform, JETRO Regional Industry Tie-up (This service ended on March 31st, 2021), Enterprise Europe Network, Horizon 2020, and European Regional Networks.</p> <p>The helpdesk is managed by an EU-Japan 'tandem' represented by CEEJA in Europe and CLAIR in Japan.</p> <p>https://www.ejrc-helpdesk.eu/</p>	<p>In 2021:</p> <p>4 webinars on best practice existing cooperation</p> <p>1 Conference</p> <p>1 Matchmaking between EU and Japan clusters, regions, prefectures, cities</p>
Get Ready to Japan	<p>The 2-week 'Get Ready for Japan' scheme offers EU business managers the unique opportunity to experience and understand both the cultural and economic elements which define and explain Japan's business and technological achievements. Continuously improved to meet the latest expectations about business in Japan, the Get Ready for Japan provides EU businessmen with a professional Japan-related expertise.</p> <p>https://www.eu-japan.eu/events/get-ready-for-japan-training-programme</p>	9 participants
EU Business in Japan	<p>The "EU Business in Japan" programme offers information, reports and webinars on a wide range of Japan-specific industry topics. Access to information is reserved to registered members.</p> <p>http://www.eubusinessinjapan.eu/</p>	<p>2,233 registered members</p> <p>7 reports</p> <p>21 webinars</p> <p>810 participants</p>
EEN (Enterprise Europe Network)	<p>The Centre is the member in Japan of the 'Enterprise Europe Network' (EEN).</p> <p>EEN activities jointly organised between EEN Japan and other EU EEN partners include 27 brokerage events and missions with a total of 680 arranged meetings.</p>	<p>1,138 users</p> <p>299 participants in EEN support workshops</p>

	<p>14 events and seminars and had 148 meeting partners /attendees/listeners for EEN promotion</p> <p>To further expand the number of requests, EEN Japan co-organised with Enterprise Europe Network partners a series of “Export Support” and “Cross-cultural” online workshops. Aimed at better preparing EU SMEs to Japanese business negotiations and market entry process, these workshops were also the occasion to further promote the advantage of the EU-Japan EPA. https://www.een-japan.eu/</p>	<p>143 info helpdesk users</p> <p>10 Partnerships agreements</p> <p>15 indirect supports to partnership agreements</p> <p>158 queries from EU EEN partners</p>
<p>Raising awareness and reaching out to SMEs:</p>	<p>The Centre is fully exploiting the EU networks and tools such as EEN, TPO, EBO, ECCP for reaching out to SMEs. For example, the Centre organised a specific session on EPA implementation at the EEN annual conference in Helsinki (Nov. 2019) to share its experience and best practices with other EEN members in or outside Europe.</p> <p>The Centre is also the National contact point for the research & innovation programme Horizon 2020. In addition, the Centre has developed a strong communication strategy via newsletters, publications and social networks, including interviews in the Euronews Business Planet programme.</p> <p>https://www.eu-japan.eu/summary-activities</p>	<p>Centre’s newsletter and presence on social networks</p> <p>www.eu-japan.eu/newsletter & www.eu-japan.eu/news</p>

Information sharing efforts including studies and webinars organised under the EPA facility instrument

- 1. Guide for EU Suppliers on Government Procurement in Japan** (published in September 2020) - https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/november/tradoc_159028.pdf

The objective of the Guide is to provide explanations on the EPA GP provisions as well as offer practical advice to EU companies (including SMEs) on how to search and apply for GP tenders in Japan.
- 2. Study on the impact of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) on the Leather Products Market in Japan** (published in October 2020) - https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/november/tradoc_159027.pdf

The EPA eliminated a complex TRQ system for certain EU leather products and introduced import tariffs which will be reduced or eliminated over time. The Study describes the Japanese leather goods market (in particular footwear and bags) to help EU companies assessing how to best use the market access opportunities created by the EPA.
- 3. EPA Progress Report and EPA Business Survey** (EPA Progress Report was published in August 2020) - https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/november/tradoc_159026.pdf

Those studies were conducted in order to assess the progress of EPA implementation as well as identify – in cooperation with business operators - areas in which further activities are necessary to ensure smooth implementation of the agreement.

Dedicated webinars were organised in November 2020 to present and discuss the abovementioned studies with business operators.

4. RoO guidelines:

1. **EU-Japan EPA Guidance: Statement on Origin for multiple shipments of identical products;**
2. **EU-Japan EPA Guidance: Importer's knowledge;**
3. **EU-Japan EPA Guidance: Confidentiality of information;**
4. **EU-Japan EPA Guidance, Claim, Verification and Denial;**
5. **EU-Japan Guidance, Statement on Origin**

Available here:

https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/international-affairs/international-customs-cooperation-mutual-administrative-assistance-agreements/japan_en

Two joint EPA RoO Seminars were organised in Tokyo and Osaka in February 2020, predominantly to explain the practical aspects of EPA RoO.

5. **Japan-EU EPA guidebook**

https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/world/europe/eu/epa/pdf/euepa202003.pdf

JETRO has published the "Japan-EU EPA guidebook" at the time of entry into force of the EPA, to provide information on how to search the preferential tariff rate, how to interpret the rules of origin, and how to claim for preferential tariff treatment under the EPA. This manual was revised in August 2019 to add more information about the statement of origin and in March 2020 to add more detailed description about the statement of origin based on the guidance document revised by the European Commission in December 2019.

6. **Good Practices in the use of the EPA**

https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/theme/wto-fta/pdf/EPAjirei.pdf

A handbook published by JETRO under the supervision of METI introduces 16 cases of good use of the EPA. This also describes the outline of the EPA including its benefits and procedures to use it.

7. **Trade and Investment Helpdesk**

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/services/advice/>

EPA Helpdesk

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/services/advice/epa.html>

Helpdesks for Japanese companies at the JETRO headquarters, regional and overseas offices offer precise advice and information for any queries on import/export or starting/developing operations overseas, including the use of the EPAs.

8. **EPA Seminars**

In order to increase the understanding of the EPAs by business entities, especially to raise awareness on and to promote the use of them by SMEs, several seminars (174 in April 2019-August 2020) were organised by MOFA, METI, MOF and MAFF besides JETRO, not only in every region in Japan but also in the Japanese embassies in EU member countries.