



SME Contact points

Joint Activity Report to the 4th 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 10 June 2022. On that occasion, both sides reported about their initiatives to implement the information sharing provisions (Article 20.2) of the SME Chapter. They are detailed below:

1. EU Side activities

The Commission continued its efforts to provide SMEs with useful and user-friendly information on how to benefit from the opportunities generated by the EU-Japan EPA. As already detailed in the previous Report, the European Commission launched the Access2Markets¹ in October 2020 marking an important milestone in its communication and outreach efforts to companies willing to internationalise. Access2Markets contains information and access links to export market information, market access assistance, advice on regulatory issues and guidance on intellectual property rights, such as to the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation. SMEs may also use the portal to better understand how the EU-Japan EPA may be of benefit to them.

Building on its success, the Commission developed further the Access2Markets portal by launching new features or upgrading the existing ones, such as:

- Launch of the Access2Procurement tool in October 2021., which helps European companies, notably SMEs, to find out whether they are entitled to participate in public procurement tenders in Japan, and can also help Japanese contracting authorities to assess whether their tenders are subject to EPA commitments;
- Upgrade of the Rules of Origin Self-Assessment ('ROSA') in January 2022: a more user-friendly version of ROSA started which makes the assessment of a good's origin easier than ever. This update is more streamlined and much more bespoke to the user's needs, only showing information that is most relevant to the good of which the user is concerned. It displays practical information on how to document that products are originating.

In addition to the above extensions of the Access2Markets portal, the Commission continued to engage in outreach events involving SMEs and key multipliers to raise awareness of the information

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

tools and opportunities generated by the trade agreements. In the last two years since the launch of Access2Markets the Commission has trained more than 8000 SMEs and multipliers. The Commission also promoted the benefits of the EU-Japan EPA to stakeholders, with the organisation of an Access2Markets training seminar with the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation on 28 April 2022, and by participating in different events, such as a webinar on EU-Japan EPA organised by the Danish Export Associations (May 2022) or at the Enterprise Europe Network conference in Spain (September 2022). Overall, the Access2Markets portal has had over three million users since its launch. This is a clear indication of its success and of the fact that our outreach campaign is effective.

2. Japan Side activities

Recognising the importance of sharing information in English, as it was acknowledged by the co-chairs at the third meeting of the Joint Committee of the Agreement, a significant progress has been made in the translation of Japanese into English in Japan's web pages on SMEs' related measures.

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

Furthermore, the following initiatives² were presented as examples of Japan's efforts, that would enable Japanese SMEs to make full use of EPAs.

EPA Info Desk (commissioned by METI)

<https://epa-info.go.jp/>

In addition to providing general information and consultation service regarding EPAs, explanatory videos and E-learning contents about EPAs are also available on the website.

JETRO EPA/FTA Portal Site

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/themetop/wto-fta/>

This website provides an access to a set of information on EPA utilization, such as "guidebooks" on the various EPAs that Japan has concluded so far, EPA utilization procedures, EPA Consultation Desk, the "Certificate of Origin Navigation", Casebook of EPA utilization, and the Global FTA Database, as well as information on EPA-related seminars.

JETRO "Certificate of Origin Navigation"

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/theme/wto-fta/navi/>

In August 2021, JETRO released an Excel tool on its website so that users save the time and extra burden required when preparing necessary documents to use EPAs. It will lead to the easy and efficient preparation of documentation used as basis for change in tariff classification (CTC)/value added (VA) calculation and Certificate of Origin, as well as general documents required for trade such as invoice and packing list. The tool is also compatible with the Japan-EU EPA Certificate of Origin, which can be prepared by just following the instructions and filling the Excel cells with required information.

MAFF "Quick reference to utilize EPA"

https://www.maff.go.jp/j/kokusai/renkei/fta_kanren/epa_n.html

This is a MAFF's website which provides easy-to-understand information on the use of EPAs, specializing in the export of agricultural, forestry, fisheries and food products. This website includes a "Quick Guide to EPA Tariff Rates", which shows briefly the EPA tariff rates of destination countries.

² The websites below are available in Japanese only, as they are primarily intended for Japanese companies.

The site also provides a consultation service on the use of EPAs, including the export of agricultural, forestry, fisheries, and food products.

In addition to the initiatives listed above, some updates were provided on initiatives presented at the last meeting (February 2021).

EPA Seminars

Several seminars/workshops/briefings on EPA were organised by relevant ministries/agencies (52 seminars during September 2020-May 2022, attended by a total of 7,905 people) besides a number of seminars organised by JETRO, Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other Institutions.

JETRO "Consortium for a New Export Nation"

<https://www.jetro.go.jp/consortium/>

872 enterprises are under support of the JETRO hands-on support programme in the FY2021. 'Casebook of the Use of Overseas Development Support' was published in January 2022. It presents case studies of 58 Japanese companies that have been expanding their overseas operations despite the difficult situation caused by COVID-19.

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

JETRO Japan-EU EPA manual

Besides a "manual" (guidebook) on the Japan-EU EPA, JETRO has published Japanese translations of guidance prepared independently by some EU Member States' customs offices (published so far: [German](#), [Dutch](#) and [Belgian](#) customs guidance).

3. Activities of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation ('the Centre') to help SMEs uptake the EPA

The Centre provides a wide range of services to European businesses who want to do business with or invest in Japan. The Centre provides guidance through its helpdesks on EPA, tax, public procurement, technology transfer, regional cooperation and business cooperation with Africa, ASEAN & Latin America. The EPA Helpdesk answers EPA-related queries from EU companies. In case the answer is not be available in-house, the EU-Japan Centre will signpost it to the relevant existing online information.

EU-Japan Centre EPA Helpdesk released 2 handbooks to help EU companies understand the EPA.

- EPA Handbook – a guide to help EU SMEs import Japanese products (May 2021)
- EPA Handbook – a guide to help EU SMEs export to Japan (March 2022)

In addition, between 2020 and 2022, the EPA Helpdesk published a series of factsheets covering factual information about the changes brought by the EPA and organised related webinars. The Centre also organised webinars and seminars about market opportunities in Japan, sector reports, policy seminars, training programs for European managers to learn about the Japanese Business culture, lean management with company visits. For the year 2022, a total of 62 managers of European companies (mostly SMEs) directly took part in trainings organized by the Centre (physical or virtual). In addition, over the same period, the Centre organized 38 webinars or podcasts about doing business in Japan, attracting over 900 participants.

The Centre is the Enterprise Europe Network's (EEN) unique national contact point for Japan. As part of these activities, in 2022, the Centre organized or co-organized 28 B2B events and facilitated over 830 meetings between European and Japanese companies. This includes the organization of 4 business missions bringing about 40 European SMEs over the period to major trade fairs in Japan. As a result of these activities, the Centre recorded for 2022 a total of 15 partnership agreements signed between European and Japanese companies.

In 2022, The EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation organised 9 market access workshops (online or on-site) covering different topics including food sector, medical devices or Japanese business culture. Furthermore, in 2022, the Centre produced 20 market intelligence reports accessible free of charge of European businesses. The Centre offers as well individual support to European SMEs via its dedicated [EPA helpdesk](#) and through its [Public Procurement and tax helpdesk](#) to which European SMEs can submit their queries (the Public procurement helpdesk webpage had almost 9.000 hits for the year 2022, close to 14.000 for the tax helpdesk webpage and the combined procurement and tax helpdesk had about 32.000 impressions). Regarding attendance of webinars organized by the helpdesks:

- The technology transfer helpdesk organized in 2022 events/webinars and facilitated 160 business meetings.
- The Space helpdesk organized 4 webinars from European space companies interested in the Japanese Market, with a total of 215 participants.

Other services include the [EUfood2Japan](#) portal that promotes European food products to Japanese importers and the [Get Ready for Japan](#) program that offers a 2 week-program for SMEs on how to do business in Japan.