



Fourth meeting of the Joint Committee of the EU-Japan Agreement for an Economic Partnership

Joint Minutes

Brussels, 4 April 2023

On 4 April 2023, the Joint Committee established by the Agreement between the EU and Japan for an Economic Partnership (EPA) held its fourth meeting in Brussels. The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, HAYASHI Yoshimasa and the Executive Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis DOMBROVSKIS.

The Joint Committee commended the fact that trade in goods between Japan and the EU had significantly increased after having returned to pre-pandemic levels and renewed their commitment to further promote bilateral trade.

The Joint Committee assessed the implementation of the Agreement particularly in the areas of digital trade, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures for the trade of agricultural products, government procurement, regulatory cooperation, geographical indications (GIs), and trade and sustainable development (TSD).

Both sides underlined the importance of supplementing the EPA with provisions ensuring the free flow of data. Both sides shared the view to have text-based discussions with a view to accelerating the ongoing negotiations.

As regards SPS measures, the Japanese co-chair requested reviewing the EU's import restriction measures on Japanese food products taken in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake by June 2023, based on scientific evidence on the risk to human health by the Japanese food products. The EU co-chair confirmed that any decision would be based on scientific evidence, recalled that almost all requirements had been lifted and that the evaluation would take its normal course.

The EU co-chair reiterated the urgent need and political importance for a more expeditious and simplified approval procedure for their market access requests and of showing progress and recalled several EU proposals made to this end. The EU co-chair also pointed out the importance of accelerating progress on the project for mutual recognition of zoning in the area of animal health. The Japanese co-chair pointed out the difficulty to set a timeframe because of due process of a panel for risk assessment and committed to do what is possible based on scientific evidence.

In the discussion on regulatory cooperation, the EU co-chair expressed their appreciation for the good cooperation in the field of offshore wind power. The EU welcomed Japanese

efforts to improve their tendering and certification systems and requested to find solutions for EU businesses affected by the Japanese cabotage system.

As for government procurement, the EU co-chair called for further technical work to achieve a single point of access to tenders. The Japanese co-chair explained its position, stating Japan's efforts and expressed the need to continue the expert-level discussions.

Regarding the third amendment to the list of GIs annexed to the EPA, the Joint Committee confirmed that both sides would accelerate remaining work.

The Joint Committee welcomed the establishment of the list of experts and the adoption of the rules of procedure for expert panels by the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development. The Joint Committee also welcomed the Japanese ratification of the ILO Convention concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour (No.105). The EU co-chair enquired about work in Japan towards the ratification of the ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (No.111).
