



21st Annual Meeting of the EU-Japan Business Round Table

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU & Japan – Acting together in a global world

15 May 2019, Brussels (Final)

The 21st annual meeting of the EU-Japan Business Round Table (BRT) took place in Brussels on 15 May 2019. It celebrated the entry into force of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and addressed EU-Japan overall economic cooperation in a challenging global environment. In addition to the detailed recommendations prepared by its four working parties (see the appendix), the BRT makes the following recommendations and declarations:

Economic Partnership Agreement and global trade issues – The entry into force of the EPA is a monumental achievement¹ and should be of great benefit to the EU and Japan. However, for the EPA to form a strong foundation for the new EU-Japan relationship, the BRT would welcome the EU and Japan to:

- Apply the EPA through the active work of the EPA's joint and specialised committees, in order to ensure that its provisions are applied fully and in accordance with the staging foreseen.
- Together with public and private stakeholders in Japan and across the EU, ensure a raising of awareness of the EPA, its benefits and the opportunities it creates. Specific actions to encourage and facilitate SMEs' use of the EPA are strongly recommended.
- Pursue regulatory cooperation by working with industry, other stakeholders and likeminded countries to develop standards for new technologies and thereby encourage their dissemination and take-up.
- Continue to work with other trading partners to pursue WTO reform as the means for strengthening and updating the multilateral rules-based trading system, especially under Japan's presidency of the G20.

Strategic Partnership Agreement – The BRT believes that the several of the issues identified in the SPA² could create new benefits for society and new opportunities for industry and are topics that the BRT would be willing to address. These include: industrial cooperation; science, technology and innovation; transport; space; and urban policy (incl. exchanges on best practices for demographic and climate issues).

Digital Economy – The BRT cannot overstate the critical role of an information society that underpins our industries, our economies and our society. AI, IoT, Big Data, robotics and initiatives such as Society 5.0 and Factories of the Future will provide solutions for economic, industrial, environmental and societal challenges, provided that fundamental rights of citizens and consumers are safeguarded. The BRT, therefore:

- Welcomes the adoption of the Adequacy Decision³ allowing for the transfer of personal data between the EU and Japan.
- Supports ideas contained in the SPA⁴, to enhance EU-Japan cooperation on key aspects of the information society and to promote and protect human rights and the free flow of data to the

¹ See the BRT statement of 01/02/2019 entitled [A New Era for the EU and Japan Starts Today](#)

² See https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ep/page22e_000707.html

³ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-421_en.htm

⁴ Refer to Articles 21 and 36 of the SPA

maximum extent possible in cyberspace, including establishing and developing international norms and promoting confidence building measures.

- Recognises the importance of international cooperation to promote the free flow of data while ensuring privacy and security, i.e., Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT), and
- Strongly supports the EU and Japan in their efforts to participate in the commencement of WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce in order to further enhance the benefits of electronic commerce for businesses, consumers and the global economy.⁵

Bilateral investment / investment cooperation in third countries – The BRT is encouraged, and recognises the strong synergy represented by the MOUs signed last year by the EIB, JBIC, and NEXI that “aim to promote cooperation between the parties to support sustainable economic and social development and to create business opportunities for Japan and the EU both within and outside Europe.”⁶

- The BRT urges the EIB, JBIC, and NEXI to realise the MOUs to their fullest extent possible with the active participation and engagement of industry and businesses in the EU and Japan.

Circular economy and SDGs – The BRT welcomes the EU and Japan’s decision⁷ to enhance their exchange of views and policy coordination on sustainable development including action at a global level and through international and regional fora.

- The EU and Japan must show leadership to address current and future world challenges in the field of sustainability and CSR, including through collaborative action and tangible projects on sustainable business practices in third countries, while the EU and Japanese Authorities are urged to provide platforms, infrastructure and incentives to promote practical collaboration.
- Sustainable finance represents a mechanism that can positively impact, and represents the realities in, industries across numerous sectors. Therefore, the BRT calls on the respective EU and Japanese authorities to support the mechanisms of sustainable finance.

Brexit – The BRT notes with concern the progress of the process for the UK to exit the European Union, and, recognises the importance of a smooth exit from the EU to minimise and mitigate the potentially adverse impact economically, commercially, and politically vis-a-vis Europe and Japan, while, stressing the utmost need for the continuity of UK-EU relationships to be maintained to the greatest extent possible through any transitional period and beyond.

Future policy priorities & engagement in challenging global environments – This month’s European Parliament elections and the subsequent appointment of a new European Commission later in the year, together with the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), will create new policy priorities for the EU and potentially new opportunities for EU-Japan cooperation (in the field of security and defence for instance):

- Within a like-minded and close partnership, the EU and Japan should strive to work together at the G7 and G20 in support of a rules-based international economic order by promoting shared values, delivering on past commitments, and addressing emerging challenges.
- The BRT also recognises the importance of the WTO negotiations as the stepping stone to develop global trade rules, while giving political impetus to that end under Japan’s presidency of the G20.
- The BRT fully supports the letter, and spirit, of the Joint Statement released on the occasion of the 26th EU-Japan Summit held in Brussels on April 25, an event that exemplifies the strengthening of the relationship between the EU and Japan through the EPA and SPA.
- Finally, the BRT recommends that its future Annual Meetings represent the preferred venue for the active engagement of the respective governments and private industry as the new era for the EU and Japan unfolds.

⁵ See [WTO Joint Statement On Electronic Commerce, 25 January 2019](#) (WT/L/1056)

⁶ See [EIB Press Release, 23 October 2018](#)

⁷ See Article 11 of the [Strategic Partnership Agreement](#)