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Belgo-Luxembourg Market Council

Newsletter No.11

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Dear BLMC Members,

As the year draws to a close, we hope you are all keeping well and enjoying the autumn season.

In this issue of our newsletter, we had the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Mattias Debroyer, the General Representative of the Brussels-capital Region at hub.brussels.

― Mr.Mattias Debroyer, General Representativen at hub.brussels―



-Thank you very much for taking your time today. First, could you briefly introduce your current work?

Of course! I am the General Representative of the Brussels-Capital Region for Japan at hub.brussels. My main mission is to promote trade and investment between Brussels and Japan. hub.brussels is the Brussels Agency for Entrepreneurship and we help Brussels companies to export abroad, and we help overseas investors, like Japanese companies, to settle down in Brussels. hub.brussels has got an international network of offices worldwide including our office here at the Embassy of Belgium in Tokyo.

-I heard that you transferred from Shanghai to Tokyo this summer.

Yes, I was previously posted in Shanghai and arrived in Tokyo less than two months ago (*at the time of the day of the interview*). Mid-August I took over from my predecessor, Mr. William Delsemme and all went very smoothly. It was not the first time that I arrived in Japan. Actually, my first visit to Japan was last year in 2025 when I participated in Tokyo Marathon. But this time is my first time living and working in Japan.

-I see! How was the Tokyo Marathon?

Fantastic! Tokyo Marathon is one of the 8 Marathon Majors and thus on the bucket list of many marathon runners. It is pretty hard to get into, but luckily, I made it on my first try! It was a sunny day with a lot of positive vibes. A not so usual but at the same time great way to discover the city for the first time. I remember the heartwarming cheers from the crowds and volunteers.

-You were so lucky! Have you liked marathons for a long time?

Yes, I have participated in four marathons so far. Sport has played an important part in my younger years. I practiced *judo* for a total of 11 years in my youth. Through *judo*, I learned not only physical skills but also discipline and respect for others. I think those lessons still help me in my work and everyday life.

-So, you have 11 years of experience in *Judo*! The discipline and respect for others are very important in Japan and must be useful in your work. On another note, this year is special for Belgium and Japan.



That's right. This year marks the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Japan, marking a memorable milestone. In my first week after taking the office, I participated in the summer festival at Sakae Machi Shopping Mall in Nagoya. This is because of a sister partnership with Avenue Louise, Brussels' famous shopping district. I was glad to have met the governor of Aichi Prefecture and the mayor of Nagoya. It was a quite remarkable start of my mission in Japan.

-You've been actively working since your arrival.

Absolutely, our mission is to provide reliable information about the market, to explore and raise awareness about business opportunities, to facilitate exchanges by building a network of trusted partners, and to accompany companies on their way to success in Japan or in Brussels. With the deepening of the EU-Japan cooperation and the excellent trade and investment relations between Belgium and Japan, we have indeed seen a lot of activities in sectors ranging from design to tourism, industrial equipment, R&D, and health. We also see an increased interest from Japanese companies in setting up an office in Brussels.

-I see. You play an important role both in information and practical aspects for companies entering the EU market. Belgium also offers direct flights from Japan, making it a key base for entering the EU market.

That's right. Having a base in Brussels offers significant advantages. It is indeed very well connected not only with Japan, thanks to the direct flights, but also with all major European

cities. Brussels Airport has direct connections to more than 170 destinations. And Brussels is the number one railway hub of Europe from where you can reach major European cities like Amsterdam, Paris and London in less than two hours. Brussels is also strategically located in the heart of Europe and hence an ideal gateway to access the European markets. The EU single market is enormous, with approximately 450 million consumers, one of the world's largest consumer markets. For Japanese companies seeking access to the European market, the role of Brussels as Capital of Europe is important. Brussels hosts the decision-making bodies of the European Union, including the European Commission, playing a central role by proposing legislation. Since EU policies and regulations apply across the entire market, Brussels is an attractive base for gaining direct access to the EU and keeping track of regulatory changes. Companies operating in the EU must not only understand its regulations but also follow the policy-making process and anticipate new regulations. Brussels also hosts hundreds of international organizations and thousands of industry associations. No wonder that Brussels has one of the world's highest concentrations of diplomatic missions.

-I understand that you previously worked as a lawyer. I imagine that experience has given you valuable insight into these matters.

I studied law at the KU Leuven and worked as a lawyer for five years after graduation. I have mainly been active in two areas of legal practice: corporate law, which deals with matters such as contracts, mergers and acquisitions, and litigation, which involves representing clients in court. I gained experiences in both areas. Looking back, I am very glad that studying law gave me a deeper understanding of how society works and the rules that forms its foundation.

- You have expanded your career from law into international relations. Your interest in learning foreign languages and living abroad must be a real asset in your current role. How many languages do you speak?

I have always had a deep interest in learning languages. Besides Dutch, which is my mother tongue, I speak French German, English, and a little Chinese, too. And now, I am studying Japanese every day with the help of NHK.

I find the Japanese language fascinating because, in addition to kanji, it has two other writing systems: hiragana and katakana. One expression I have learned recently is “～てもいいですか？” or “Is it okay if I ...?” which is useful when asking for permission.

- That's wonderful! You clearly enjoy learning different languages. I also checked out some of your social media posts, which included a little Japanese. Through one of your posts, I learned that Belgium was featured in ANA's in-flight magazine in September.

Yes, the feature was titled *Hello Belgium*. Just last week, a Belgian tourism-related delegation, led by Brussels Airport, visited Japan, and seminars and business meetings was part of their program here in Tokyo.

Speaking of tourism, have you heard of the Flower Carpet at the Grand-Place in Brussels?

-Yes! It's famous!

This year, to commemorate the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Japan, the Brussels Flower Carpet featured a design inspired by Katsushika Hokusai. Ten years ago, for the 150th anniversary, a special edition with a Japanese theme was also created. And in 2016 a Brussels Flower Carpet was held in Roppongi, Tokyo.

By the way, Nagoya also has a statue of Manneken Pis, the little boy who is one of Brussels' most iconic symbols. These cultural connections reflect the close friendship between our two countries.

In addition, Brussels sent a delegation to this year's SusHiTech Tokyo, organized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, as a city partner.

- In June this year, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress also visited Belgium as state guests, showing the close relationship between the two countries. Mr. Debroyer, do you like Japanese food?

Yes! I had shabu-shabu in Nagoya, and I love sashimi and ramen, too.

I find Japanese cuisine remarkably refined. It is not only nutritious but also seems to place great emphasis on the combination of ingredients and the balance of portion sizes, making it a very healthy way of eating.

The other day, I listened to a podcast on Japanese culture, and the podcast talked about the concept of *hara hachi bu* – eating until you are about 80% full. I found it very interesting.

September was quite rainy, so I am looking forward to exploring Tokyo during the upcoming long weekend and enjoying more delicious Japanese food.

- It's fascinating that you are interested in the concept of *hara hachi bu* and are exploring Tokyo. It sounds like you are making the most of your time in Japan. Finally, could you share your personal motto with us?

My personal motto is to embrace the mindset of an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurs overcome numerous challenges and create new value from a simple idea. They then bring that value to the market in the form of products and services, inspiring people by telling their stories.

They also value human connections and build networks that lead to further growth and success. They see difficult times as opportunities to grow and continue to take on new challenges. I have always found courage and inspiration in this entrepreneurial spirit.

- Thank you very much for sharing your insights with us today. We were particularly impressed by your positive attitude and your willingness to keep taking on new challenges. We wish you every success in strengthening the ties between Japan and Belgium.

<Member Information>

・The Sumitomo Chemical Group has acquired a subsidiary of COPYR S.p.A. that handles its natural pyrethrin business in the agricultural sector.
Through this acquisition, the Group is expected to expand its portfolio of naturally derived crop protection products and enhance the value it offers to customers and partners in the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) region. Under its sustainable agriculture strategy, the Group aims to strengthen its business foundation in the region and drive future growth.


< Pyrethrum Field >

We wish you all continued success in the future.

<From Partner Organizations and Institutions>

～Events and News from October to January 2027～

Embassy of Belgium

10/1 In collaboration with Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT), Wallonie-Bruxelles International (WBI), the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX), and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Japan, a workshop was held on the future of gravitational wave observatories, bringing together leading researchers and policymakers from Japan, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The participants exchanged views on prospects for scientific cooperation between Europe and Japan. We will continue to strengthen international partnerships and promote cutting-edge research.

10/3 A policy conference on gravitational wave observatories and the Einstein Telescope was held in Kyoto, jointly organized with the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion (EMR), the Embassy of the Netherlands in Japan, Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT), Wallonie-Bruxelles International (WBI), and the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX).The conference featured lively discussions on science, technological innovation, and international cooperation.



10/15 #BelgiumDay, celebrating the 160th anniversary of friendship between Japan and Belgium, was held at Kansai University. Ambassador Evrard met with the university president and faculty members in charge of international exchange, and delivered a lecture on gender policies in Belgium and the EU. The event also featured a screening of the Belgian film *The Model Employee*, followed by a reception with Belgian students studying at Kansai University.

10/19 As part of Belgium Day, Ambassador Evrard paid a courtesy visit to the Mayor of Kanazawa in the morning. This year marks the 55th anniversary of the sister-city partnership between Kanazawa and Ghent. On October 5, the two cities signed a new

cooperation agreement in Ghent. In the afternoon, Ambassador Evrard delivered a lecture at Kanazawa University, followed by a screening of the Belgian film *The Model Employee*. The events were attended by many students and also provided an opportunity for the Ambassador to meet and interact with Belgian students studying in Kanazawa.

10/21～10/27

To celebrate the 160th anniversary of friendship between Japan and Belgium, a "Belgian Fair" was held at Abeno Harukas Kintetsu Department Store. Many visitors enjoyed Belgian cuisine, music, and art.







11/4 To celebrate the 160th anniversary of friendship between Japan and Belgium, the Belgian National Orchestra embarked on its first tour of Japan in 23 years. The tour kicked off in Nagoya on October 28 and concluded on November 4 with a magnificent concert at Suntory Hall in Tokyo, attended by Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado.





＊Luxembourg Trade and Investment Office, Tokyo

10/5-7 Exhibiting at Global Startup Expo and hosting official side events



We participated in GLOBAL STARTUP EXPO (GSE), an international deep-tech event held in Osaka. Luxembourg-based satellite communications company OQ Technology, which visited Japan for the event, exhibited at the expo. On the final day, our Deputy Director, Mr. Nakamura joined a session titled "Luxembourg: A Hub for Space Business." On October 6, we also

co-hosted an official GSE side event, a networking lunch titled “Luxembourg Comes to GSE!” with Osaka Prefecture, welcoming more than 50 participants.

10/10-12 The Luxembourg Pavilion of Expo 2025 Osaka,Kansai,exhibited at Sekai Ennichi



As part of COMMONs 2026, an event celebrating the first anniversary of the closing of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, the Luxembourg Pavilion set up a booth at the outdoor event “Sekai Ennichi” in Nakanoshima. The booth sold “Luxembourg Rolls,” originally served at the Luxembourg Pavilion, as well as Luxembourg wines, and attracted many visitors.

10/13-16 Stage Appearance at CEATEC 2026



We took the stage at CEATEC 2026, an exhibition held at Makuhari Messe, together with UFOFLEET, a Luxembourg-based mobility and fleet management software company. As part of the UFODRIVE Group, the company shared its experience of starting a business in Luxembourg and expanding into global markets.

10/28 Mr. Baba Masahiro Receives the Commander of the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg



A ceremony was held in Tokyo to present Mr. Masahiro Baba, former President of CERATIZIT Japan, with the Commander of the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Baba began building ties with Luxembourg-based cemented carbide manufacturer CERAMETAL in 1984 and became President of CERAMETAL Japan (later CERATIZIT Japan) in 1988. He received this honor in recognition of his contributions to strengthening economic relations between Luxembourg and Japan over more than 40 years.

At the ceremony, Luxembourg’s Ambassador to Japan, H.E. Mr. Réch, expressed his deep appreciation and respect for Mr. Baba’s longstanding dedication and achievements.

11/4 G-SFIA 2026 Space × Finance Conference Held – Our Office Participates as a Bronze Sponsor



Organized by FINOLABO Inc., this event explores new opportunities in the space industry through the fusion of space business and finance, featuring keynote speeches, panel discussions, and startup pitches. Luxembourg wines provided by our office will be served at the Rooftop Night in the evening. We look forward to your participation!

Event Website: https://finolab.tokyo/jp/events/g-sfia2026/

Registration (Peatix): https://g-sfia2026.peatix.com/

2027 marks the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Luxembourg! Throughout this special year, we are planning a series of commemorative events, as well as a presence at the 2027 International Horticultural Expo in Yokohama. We would be delighted if you could join us and visit our exhibition.

＊hub.brussels invest & export

Reception to Welcome the New Representative



A reception was held at the Embassy of Belgium to introduce Matthias Debrouwer, the newly appointed Representative of the Brussels-Capital Region's Trade and Investment Office in Japan. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with various partners of the Brussels-Capital Region.

← <Mr.Debroyer, Belgium Ambassador, Ms.Oikawa>

Event hosted by EPPA

EPPA, a Brussels-based consulting firm, hosted a seminar at the Embassy titled "A Strategic Dialogue: Japan-EU Strategic Cooperation - Opportunities for Japanese Companies."
Mr. Matthias Debrouwer from our office participated in the panel discussion. The event featured insightful presentations, followed by lively discussions, open exchanges of views, and an engaging Q&A session.



＊Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX)

Beal International Wins the Japan Export Award 2026-2027

Beal International, a Wallonia-based Belgian manufacturer of plastering materials, has won the "Japan Export Award 2026-2027," presented by BLCCJ.

The company's decorative coating material, MORTEX®, is known for its strength, waterproof properties, and flexibility, and can be used for a wide range of applications, including floors, walls, and furniture.

The award recognizes the company's efforts to preserve traditional Japanese plastering craftsmanship and promote these skills among women.

Congratulations to Beal International!

4th Belgian Francophone Literature Translation Workshop

The 4th Belgian Francophone Literature Translation Workshop was held as part of ongoing efforts to promote Belgian literature. The event took place at two venues: online in the Kanto region due to an approaching typhoon, and on October 11 at the Institution français du Kansai in Kyoto.

At the Kansai session, children's book author and illustrator Julia Vetri also joined the event and exchanged ideas with literary professionals.

Participants explored the translation possibilities of 10 selected works from a wide range of genres, including contemporary literature, comics, and picture books.

5th Kyoto Writers Residency (October 3 - November 2)

The 5th Kyoto Writers Residency began on October 3 and runs until November 2.

Representing Belgium's French-speaking community is Julia Vetri, a Brussels-based children's book author and novelist.

A total of eight writers, poets, and translators from Japan and abroad are taking part in the residency, with various events offering opportunities to engage with the local community.

At the opening forum, titled "All Roads Lead to Rome?", the invited authors exchanged ideas on the purpose of writing and their creative processes.

＊BLCCJ (Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Japan)

OCOBER:

10/6　Joint Chamber of Commerce Speed Networking Event for Young Professionals

10/9　Japan Export Award - Jury Presentation

10/13　Beer Gathering - "Let's Speak Japanese!" @ Belgian Brasserie Court Antwerp Port

10/19　Joint Chamber of Commerce EU Cocktail 2026



10/22 Webinar - “Bridging BeLux and Asia-Pacific: Insights from Regional Trade Agencies”



10/24 2nd BLCCJ 5K Fun Run & Networking Event

10/27 Japanese-language Webinar - “The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the ICC Japan Committee: How to Utilize Them in International Business”

NOVEMBER:

11/9 Beer Gathering @ L’Abreuvoir Torafu

11/24 Webinar - “Behind the Scenes of Building Across Asia” (Featuring Shotex Japan Co., Ltd.)

11/27 BLCCJ Gala Party 2026 @ Conrad Tokyo



DECEMBER:

12/2 Year-End Beer Gathering @ BBW Shinjuku

12/2-6 Belgian Marche @ BBW Shinjuku

12/10 Japan Export Award - Award Ceremony

12/15 BLCCJ Annual General Meeting (AGM) & Networking Reception

JANUARY 2027:

1/30 11th Joint Chamber of Commerce Ski & Snowboard Weekend

Best regards,
Saori IMIYA
Office Manager, BLMC