

The Japan Times

EU Special

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

Union advocates peace, strives to maintain solidarity

Jun Nagata
Brussels
SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

The year 2015 kicked off with Lithuania adopting the euro, an auspicious event for the European Union (EU). Now, all three Baltic States have adopted the single European currency, enlarging the eurozone to 19 members and demonstrating that the euro, which faced difficulty surviving the debt crisis, has not yet lost its centripetal force. Launched last year, the new EU regime led by European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, is expected to reduce the sense of distrust of the EU that is spreading among Europeans and bring a new vigor to united Europe. However, the 28 EU member states continue to face the challenge of how to maintain the "unity" required for a "union."

Greek financial crisis

The first factor behind the struggle for maintaining unity is the issue of Greece, which was supposed to have put out the flames of its financial crisis.

In 2010, the members of the eurozone and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) decided to provide financial assistance to Greece, which was at the center of the European sovereign debt crisis, and has provided a total of €240 billion to the country. The bailout loans were conditional on the implementation of drastic austerity measures by the Greek government, with the European Commission, IMF and European Central Bank (ECB), later nicknamed the Troika, serving as supervisors for the Greek government on its financial administration. As a result, in 2013, Greece achieved a primary surplus, which indicates fiscal soundness. Due to an improved outlook with a return to real GDP growth in 2014 after negative growth since 2008, eurozone officials regarded the Greek economy as being on a recovery track.

Meanwhile, the economic pain associated with the austerity measures spread among the Greek public, further frustrating them, with the unemployment rate at 25.9 percent in December 2014. Frustrated Greeks swung their support behind the Syriza party (a coalition of the radical left), which criticized the austerity measures. In elections for the European Parliament in May 2014, Syriza won in Greece, beating the then ruling New Democracy party. Furthermore, Syriza went on to become the largest party in the Greek parliament in a snap election held in

January this year, thus coming to power for the first time with its young leader Alexis Tsipras assuming the post of prime minister.

While rejecting the continuation of the current financial support, which was linked to the implementation of the austerity measures, the new government requested the eurozone to provide a new framework of support to avoid its financial collapse. The eurozone steadfastly refused the request. Tsipras' call for anti-austerity solidarity with Italy and France, which are also encountering difficulties in improving their finances, was rejected. One member state diplomat said, "Solidarity within the eurozone is extremely strong, except for one nation," ironically summarizing the situation, which is quite different from the usual conflict of opinions seen in the EU.

The Greek government was forced to accept the eurozone's conditions, and eurozone finance ministers agreed at their meeting in February to extend the

The 28 EU member states continue to face the challenge of how to maintain the "unity" required for a "union."

current framework for Greece's financial rescue to the end of June. Greece's implementation of financial reform was reaffirmed as a condition for receiving the remaining €7.2 billion within the current framework and a goal was set to agree on the reform program by the end of April.

However, the eurozone finance ministers failed to reach an agreement at their meeting on April 24 in Riga, Latvia. The Troika, now renamed the Brussels Group, regarded Greece's reform plan as being incomplete. Over the next few months, the Greek government is scheduled to face repayment deadlines of its large debt, which could lead to default or, in the worst case, the country leaving the eurozone. On one hand, on the back of the Greek public's expectations for "change," the Tsipras administration maintains the stance that it cannot accept the reforms to its labor market and pension system that the eurozone side requires. On the other hand, however, the Greek public is showing distaste for the protracted

negotiations. Under increasing pressure both at home and abroad, Tsipras must make a decision.

Division over sanctions

The second factor in the struggle to maintain European unity is the response to the Ukrainian crisis that has been ongoing since last year.

The conflict between separatists in eastern Ukraine — backed by Russia — and the Ukrainian government led to the tragedy of the Malaysia Airlines crash in Ukraine last July. European and U.S. authorities believe the airplane that departed from the Netherlands was brought down in error by a surface-to-air missile Russia had provided to the separatists, resulting in the EU imposing economic sanctions on Russia for the first time since the Cold War.

Although the sanctions, coupled with the low price of crude oil, are inflicting heavy damage on the Russian economy, there is currently no sign of Russia softening its stance in eastern Ukraine. As a previous ceasefire agreement between Kiev and pro-Russian separatists proved ineffective, fighting escalated from the beginning of this year. As the possibility of the U.S. supplying weapons to Ukraine emerged, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande, worried that the situation could deteriorate further, launched a mediation effort hoping to break the deadlock. The two leaders, in all-night negotiations with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Belarusian capital of Minsk in February, brokered a new ceasefire agreement.

Although the EU member states have agreed on decisions regarding sanctions against Russia, there are differing opinions among them. While the Baltic States, formerly ruled by the Soviet Union, take a hardline stance along with the U.K. and Poland, there are countries such as Greece and Cyprus, which have deep historical and economic relations with Russia and are not aggressively seeking sanctions.

Opinions were divided even when EU member states discussed anew the issue of the sanctions on Russia after the ceasefire agreement in February. Emphasizing that the EU should tighten its sanctions on Russia, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius, said, "Unity to do nothing is not for me." The focus was whether they should decide on extending the economic sanctions that are due to expire at the end of July. At the March meeting of the European Council, which brings together the leaders of the EU member states, it was



European Council President Donald Tusk (right) and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker have been at the helm of the European Union since late 2014. EUROPEAN UNION

announced that EU sanctions against Russia would remain in force until the Minsk agreements are fully implemented, but the decision on extension was postponed. France advocated that it would not be too late to decide on extending the sanctions after assessing the implementation of the agreement.

In fact, it is not expected that the Minsk agreements should be fully implemented before the European Council meeting in June, which is the next opportunity to make a decision. According to their conclusions in March, the leaders will be expected to make an official decision to extend the sanctions, but it might be a contentious session. Greek Prime Minister Tsipras, who visited Russia in April, said: "We openly disapproved the sanctions. It is not an efficient solution."

Furthering European unity

There is nothing new about the EU struggling to maintain unity. Its common external policies, including sanctions, are subjects that are supposed to be decided by consensus of the member states. Clearly there is not consensus on every issue. This difficulty is not only seen in foreign policy issues; there have often been tough negotiations at the meetings of the European Council to harmonize various conflicting interests among them.

Juncker took the helm of the European Commission last November, after being involved in the development of European integration for around 30 years as a cabinet member and prime minister of Luxembourg. He has shown his intentions to rebalance power among the EU's three major institutions, namely the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament, and to make the European Commission a strong driving force again toward the further deepening of European integration. Juncker said, "We will never have a United States of Europe," and clearly denies a future vision for Europe in which it becomes an existence like the U.S., with each member state's sovereignty handed over to the EU one after another. What he envisages is revitalizing the power of European Commission, which is supposed to promote EU policies while staying neutral, amid the increasing presence of the European Council within the EU governance in the recent years as seen in its initiatives in dealing with the debt crisis.

To counter the powerful European Council, Juncker sees the European Parliament, which represents the European public, as the partner of the European Commission. Each of the major political groups fielded a candidate for European Commission president for the first time in the run-up to last May's European Parliament elections, and Juncker was elected as the candidate of the European People's Party, which won the most seats in the parliament. His intentions are likely to also include resolving

Peace dreams become reality

Federica Mogherini
HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY,
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

On May 9, 1950, Robert Schuman called on the nations of Europe to unite and make war on our continent impossible. Sixty-five years later, his message of peace and unity is as relevant as ever.

Schuman's appeal to overcome age-old divisions just five years after World War II laid the foundations of what has become the European Union. Over the years our union has grown from six to 28 to become the world's largest peace project.

The dreams of our founding fathers have become a reality.

But peace and prosperity — based on a deep commitment to fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law — cannot be taken for granted. It is a constant work in progress, something that must be nurtured and protected.

As the spectre of war has returned to our continent, our unity continues to be our greatest strength. When international law is broken and human dignity is treated with contempt, we have a responsibility to stand up to protect the fundamental values and interests that we share with people around the world.

This is the first Europe Day we celebrate with new leadership at the helm of our union. From our very first day in office we have been dedicated to working as a team and to spreading the message of unity in Europe and around the world.

The European Union is an everyday peace project. Every member, big and small, old and new has a seat at the table and an equal voice. Building unity from diversity can be cumbersome, but constant cooperation and patient negotiations lead us to a consensus that is rock solid. Today this is what we need to achieve globally. We created the European External Action Service to work with partners around the world — in Africa and the Arab world, in the Americas and in Asia — toward that aim.

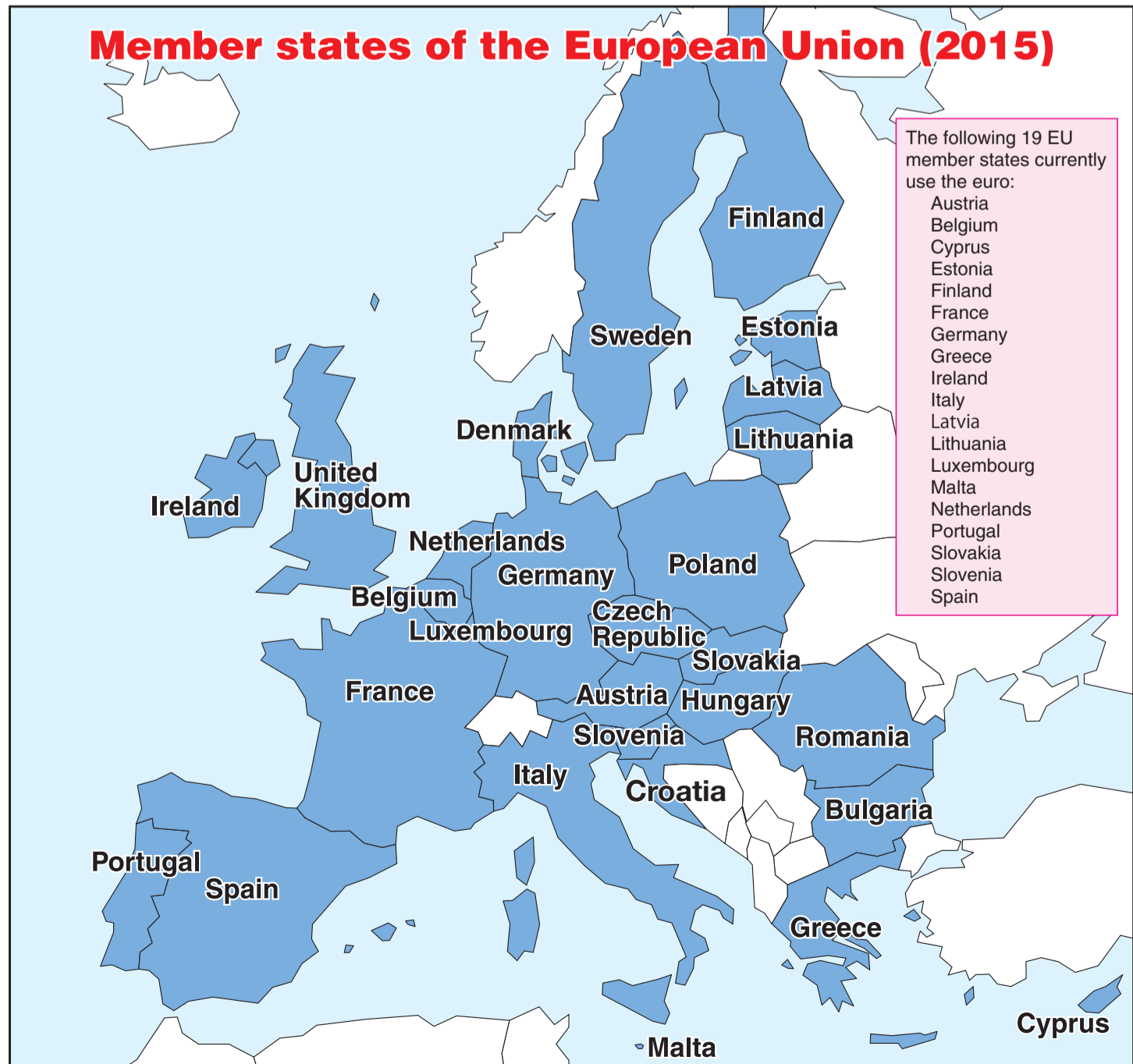
Ending war is about overcoming divisions and uniting former enemies. It is also about giving young generations a stake in their future. This is why we are united in fighting extremism and organized crime; tackling the negative impact of climate change and securing our energy future.

We work to raise global standards so that everybody can drink clear water and breathe clean air; enjoying the high standard of life and quality products we have in Europe. We also work with partners around the globe to invest in education and innovation to open a world of opportunities even to those who are born into poverty and conflict.

The European Union is a project for the future. So today we celebrate Europe Day to remember, but also to look ahead. I hope you will join us around the globe to work with us for a world where people, no matter who they are or where they live, are free to shape their existence and strive for their dreams.



EUROPEAN UNION



JAPANTIMES GRAPHIC

the "democratic deficit" regarding the European Commission's policy-making, which is often cited as being out of touch with public opinion.

Observing the economic stagnation caused by the financial and euro crises, there is a widespread sense of skepticism among the European public and anti-EU parties are gaining momentum. Whether people can again find hope in European integration depends on the leadership of the new regime comprised of Juncker, European Council President Tusk and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The three should

play important roles in how to lead the member states that are hesitant about dealing with contentious issues like migration, which has been a point of focus recently.

Also, it is worth watching how the leaders present the new regime's vision of EU-Japan relations when they attend for the first time the annual EU-Japan Summit, which this year will be held in Tokyo on May 29.

Jun Nagata has been a Kyodo News correspondent in Brussels, Belgium, since 2013.

EU special

Unity in policy making, peacekeeping



Viorel Isticioaia-Budura
AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO JAPAN

It gives me great pleasure to address the readers of The Japan Times as the European Union (EU) marks Europe Day. On May 9, 1950, then French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman put forth his vision for a more peaceful, stable and prosperous Europe after the death and destruction of decades, if not centuries, of war.

His groundbreaking proposal, to become known as the Schuman Declaration, laid the foundations for the EU we know today; a unique mechanism under which member states hand over part of their sovereignty and jointly decide on key policies that not only impact their citizens, but, with the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, now also allows the EU to speak and act as one on the global stage.

What began as a plan to jointly manage coal and steel among six countries so as to make war impossible has since evolved into a truly European project, bringing together 28 nations large and small to create a union with a total population of more than 500 million. Nineteen of these countries currently use the same currency, the euro, one of the most tangible symbols of European unity.

This year, we mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. All around the world, there will be remembrance and reflection on how far we have come, and I also hope this will help us in considering how we work toward building the future. During these seven

decades, the European continent has largely been at peace, with no major wars occurring within its borders.

In his declaration, Schuman stated, "The contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations." I genuinely believe that his words have withstood the test of time, and 65 years on, they still hold true.

While many in Japan may still see the EU as being mainly an economic player, thanks to its massive single market and active pursuit of free trade, we should not forget that it is playing an increasingly crucial role in foreign affairs and security.

The EU's external policies, strategies, instruments and missions support stability, promote human rights and democracy, seek to spread prosperity and support the enforcement of the rule of law and good governance. The EU institutions and member states are together the world's largest donor of both humanitarian assistance as well as development aid.

The EU's Common Security and Defense Policy enables us to take a leading role in peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention and in the strengthening of international security. It is an integral part of the EU's comprehensive approach toward crisis management, drawing on civilian and military assets. Since 2003, the EU has launched some 30 peace missions and operations contributing to stabilization and security in

"The time is now ripe to challenge our established pattern of bilateral relations, to push the envelope and bring our cooperation and collaboration to our respective regions, and also to the wider, international community!"

VIOREL ISTICIOAIA-BUDURA

Europe and beyond. One that will be particularly familiar to our Japanese friends is the counter-piracy operation we are undertaking in the Gulf of Aden, in which we are cooperating closely with Japan's Self-Defense Forces.

For a few years now, EU and Japanese leaders have been working to bring the EU-Japan relationship to a higher level, to deliver benefits not only to our citizens, but to the international community. I believe this is increasingly



Federica Mogherini, European Union high representative for foreign affairs and security policy and vice-president of the European Commission (right) and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida shake hands on Jan. 19 in Luebeck, Germany, during a meeting of G7 foreign affairs ministers. EUROPEAN UNION

becoming a reality, and am keenly aware that, having become EU ambassador to Japan late last year, I have taken up this post at a very exciting time.

Europe and Japan not only share and uphold values and principles such as democracy, human rights and a rules-based and peaceful world order, we are also stepping up tangible cooperation in areas ranging from trade and investment, to defense and security to innovation and people-to-people exchanges.

The EU Delegation to Japan has so far

held in Tokyo on May 29, and it will be the first time that the new EU leaders, Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, and Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, visit Japan in their current capacities. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and European Commission Vice-President Federica Mogherini; and European Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström are also to take part. I am certain that leaders on both sides will be very keen to confirm their continued

been successful in fostering a solid working relationship between the EU and Japan. This good work should be continued, in cooperation with our Japanese partners, but I also believe the time is now ripe to challenge our established pattern of bilateral relations, to push the envelope and bring our cooperation and collaboration to our respective regions, and also to the wider, international community.

This year's EU-Japan Summit will be

commitment to take the bilateral relationship to a new level.

The relationship between Europe and Japan has come a long way since the 1970s, when the focus was very much on trade and the two sides had to grapple with the thorny issue of trade friction. In fact, the forerunner of the present-day EU delegation here was set up in 1974, and try to sort out such problems and pave the way toward a more constructive and future-oriented relationship.



Kristalina Georgieva, vice-president of the European Commission in charge of budget and human resources (third from right) and Christos Stylianides, European commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis management (fourth from right) visit Sendai Mediatheque during their stay in Japan to attend the U.N. World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in March in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture. EUROPEAN UNION

My predecessors, as well as their counterparts and interlocutors on the Japanese side, have been successful in this effort. Four decades on, I can confidently say that EU-Japan relations have blossomed, and that the extent of our cooperation would have been very hard to imagine for those who toiled during those years.

My role is to enforce the ambitious programs and road maps agreed to during last year's bilateral summit. First and foremost of these is the successful conclusion of the two sets of negotiations that are currently ongoing in parallel: toward a political Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and a comprehensive and ambitious free trade agreement (economic partnership agreement).

The SPA is envisioned to be a political framework agreement that would help expand and strengthen our wider partnership and better enable us to face evolving global challenges together, providing a sound structure for deeper political, global and sectoral cooperation. The EU and Japan are already strategic partners — Japan is one of the four strategic partners the EU has in Asia, the others being China, South Korea and India — but we need to go beyond our existing bilateral relations, and we must cooperate more in regional and international fora, where our joint efforts can make a huge difference.

We cooperate with Japan on the politi-

cal front in the fields of foreign and security policy, exchanging experiences and information on crises in our respective neighborhoods. We practice joint solidarity and support, from the aforementioned counter-piracy activities to sanctions cooperation, election monitoring, and the exchanges on cyber issues and space policy that were launched last autumn. We also share views on the changing strategic environment in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe, as well as the global energy situation.

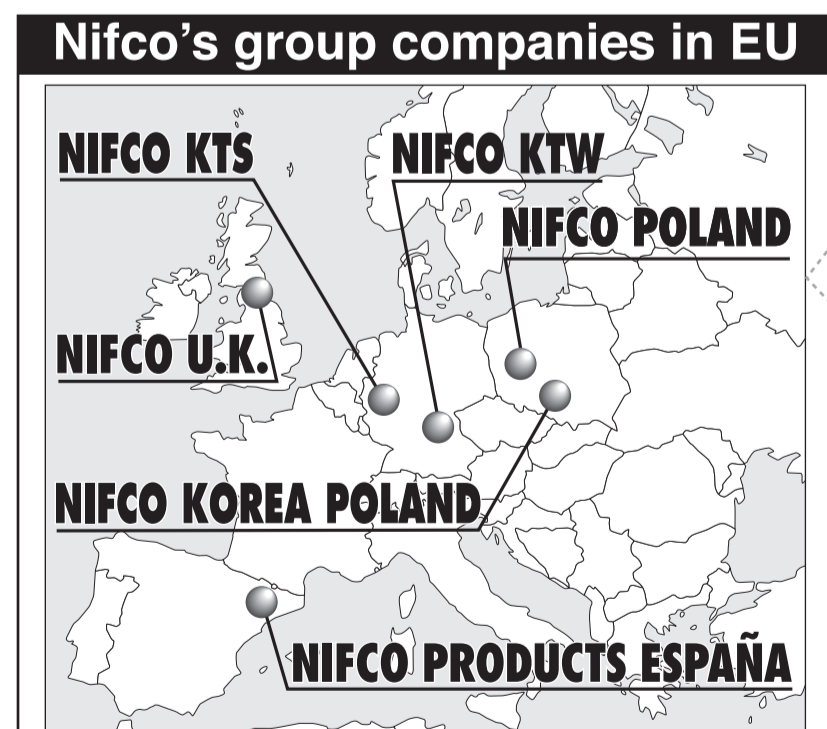
On the trade front, negotiators on both sides have been covering all topics on the table, including non-tariff barriers, procurement and tariff issues, during the last round of FTA talks held in Tokyo last month. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has expressed his desire to see the negotiations concluded by the end of this year. The EU is indeed aware of this and is willing to work toward that goal, provided that the conditions and the level of ambition are right. There are areas where much work still needs to be done, and the clock is ticking if we are to be looking to conclude the talks this year.

We have seen great strides made in our bilateral relationship in the area of science, technology and innovation, which I would also like to see continue. We both have top-class facilities and world-leading researchers, and our

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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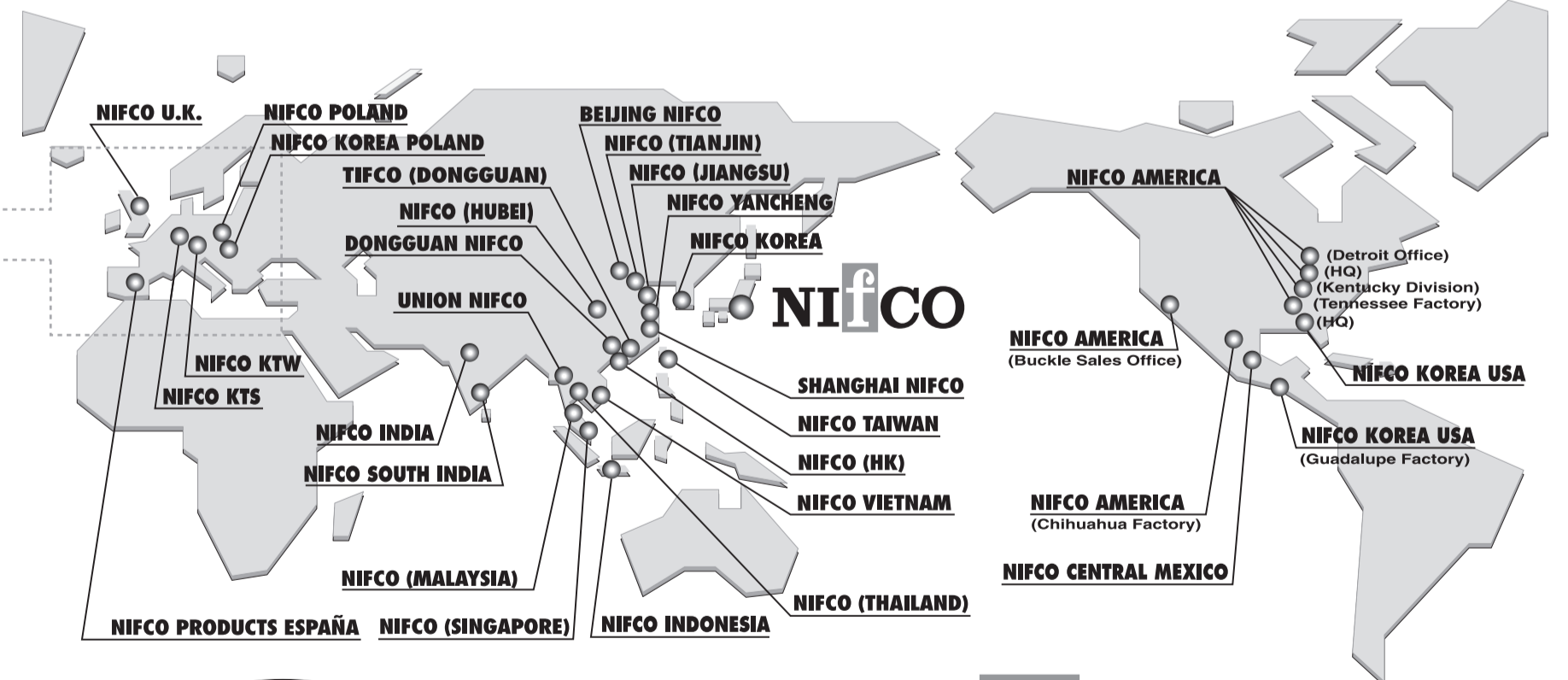
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EU special

Government, business leaders address climate change

Minoru Matsutani
STAFF WRITER

The Delegation of the European Union to Japan held a symposium in which ambassadors of European countries and executives of major corporations discussed environmental measures in the EU.

The April 21 symposium, titled "Climate Change Policy in Europe: Opportunity or Threat for Business?" brought together ambassadors of the European Union, Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany and Britain, as well as executives of Nissan Motor Co., Ricoh Co., Unilever Japan and Shell Netherlands.

EU countries are trying to lead the world in preventing global warming. The union has set ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and each country is working to meet them.

EU leaders agreed in October to a greenhouse gas reduction target of at least 40 percent compared to 1990 levels by the year 2030. This 2030 policy framework aims to make the EU economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable and also sets a target of

having at least 27 percent of energy renewable by 2030.

Ambassador of the European Union to Japan Viorel Isticioaia-Budura kicked off the symposium by welcoming the audience at the delegation's headquarters in Tokyo's Minato Ward.

"The high level of ambition of our new 2030 (energy and climate) package is in our own economic interests," Isticioaia-Budura said in the keynote speech.

Countries and companies should take renewable energy and energy saving as business opportunities, he said. Many new businesses will be launched and flourish, in turn creating many jobs, he said, adding that Europe as well as Japan should enjoy great business opportunities in these fields.

He called on Japan to set an example for other countries in negotiations toward a new international climate agreement, noting its political weight as the only Asian nation in the Group of Seven, and the third-largest economy in the world. While recognizing the difficult energy challenges Japan faces, he also observed how Japanese industry has the potential to be a world leader in

developing green technologies, and called for a renewed sense of ambition on Japan's part.

"Like the EU, Japan needs to play a strong leadership role in international climate change negotiations," he said. "It should not miss the economic opportunities that climate and energy policies offer for the creation of new jobs, and innovation; it could become the fourth arrow of 'Abenomics,'" he added.

Isticioaia-Budura also said he is looking forward to Japan submitting a new target on greenhouse gas emissions well ahead of the COP 21 in Paris in December, formally known as the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Japan in 2013 revised down its 2020 target to 3.8 percent below 2005 levels, or 3.1 percent above 1990 levels, compared with its previous target of a 25 percent reduction by 2020 from 1990 levels. The revision came after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011 idled all of Japan's about 50 nuclear reactors, resulting in a massive increase of fossil fuel power generation.

Following Isticioaia-Budura's speech, a panel discussion, "Climate Policy and Implementation in the EU Member States," was held with French Ambassador Thierry Dana, Danish Ambassador Carsten Damsgaard, Swedish Ambassador Magnus Robach, German Ambassador Hans Carl von Werthern and British Ambassador Tim Hitchens.

The ambassadors each showcased their countries' environmental efforts. Dana said low carbon electricity accounts for 90 percent of France's power production with nuclear power making up 73 percent, while renewable energy is 17.5 percent.

France reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 12 percent in 2012 from 1990 levels. The country is currently drafting the Energy Transition Bill stipulating reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030, in line with the EU's target.

Damsgaard said Denmark has a more ambitious plan. It will use only renewable energy for power generation by 2050, and reduce emissions by 40 percent by 2020.

"It's possible to achieve with existing technology," he said. "People ask why we are so ambitious. The short answer is



From right, British Ambassador Tom Hitchens; German Ambassador Hans Carl von Werthern; Swedish Ambassador Magnus Robach; Danish Ambassador Anders Carsten Damsgaard; and French Ambassador Thierry Dana deliver presentations and answer questions, under the moderation of Uli Wienrich, first secretary of the EU Delegation to Japan (left) at a climate symposium held in Tokyo on April 21. YOSHIAKI MIURA

that it's good business."

He showed a graph of GDP steadily growing from 1990 to 2012 and energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions steadily falling in the same timeframe.

Sweden's Robach also showed a graph showing a similar trend of GDP and greenhouse gas emissions.

He mentioned in his presentation that forests are a major energy source in Sweden for heating, transportation, among other things and the country boasts clean filtering technology.

Japan is also rich in forests and thus has a "hidden treasure," he said.

Germany's Werthern echoed his Danish counterpart's idea that green energy is good business. It's also good for the national economy, he added, indicating an uptrend in German macroeconomic statistics.

Germany's target is particularly ambitious because "we've decided to do away with nuclear power," he said. Nuclear power generation does not emit greenhouse gases.

"Nuclear energy and clean energy can be decoupled," he said.

Britain, on the other hand, has a different view on the role of nuclear power in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

"Nuclear power is central to achieving the target for us," Hitchens said.

Nuclear power is a cheaper alternative in low-emission power generation than renewable energies such as solar, wind and hydroelectric power generation.

"The key is to create market certainty," he said, hinting that nuclear power may still be a realistic alternative that power companies and consumers prefer.

The panel discussion was followed by a Q&A session.

Asked why Denmark is so successful in green energy, Damsgaard said, "Industries are very supportive." He mentioned Danish shipping company, Maersk, which uses latest fuel technology to maximize fuel efficiency.

Robach said consumer support is also very important. For example, Swedish clothing retailer H&M has launched a recycling campaign in Japan and other countries and is collecting many clothes for recycling, he said.

Asked what they expect from Japan at

COP 21, all five ambassadors said they want Japan to take a leadership role in climate change policy.

"One of the solutions is a smart city (with the ability to optimize energy use and generation). In that context, Japan, being a highly sophisticated society, has enormous opportunity," Hitchens said.

The discussion with ambassadors were followed by the second panel discussion with business executives, titled "Tackling Climate Change: New Business Opportunities for Industry." Nissan Motor Co. Vice Chairman Toshiyuki Shiga; Yuji Noritake, corporate advisor of Sustainability Management Division of Ricoh Co.; Unilever Japan CEO and President Fulvio Guarneri; and Shell Netherlands President Director Dick Benschop participated in the discussion.

They each explained their companies' measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental initiatives.

The business executives echoed the ambassadors that Japan has cutting-edge environmental technology and should take a leadership role in the world.



Ambassador of the European Union to Japan Viorel Isticioaia-Budura addresses the audience at the beginning of the symposium "Climate Change Policy in Europe: Opportunity or Threat for Business?" in Tokyo on April 21. YOSHIAKI MIURA

Longstanding commitment to business



Danny Risberg
CHAIRMAN, EUROPEAN BUSINESS COUNCIL IN JAPAN (EBC)

On behalf of the European Business Council in Japan (EBC), I would like to express my gratitude to The Japan Times for this opportunity to address its readers on Europe Day.

The EBC has long been committed to Japan. This commitment has not wavered despite the numerous challenges that many of our member companies face doing business in the Japanese market. In many sectors, the European commitment to the Japanese economy has even strengthened, as firms pursue opportunities that have appeared as a result of deep-seated changes occurring throughout the Japanese economy.

The EBC is the trade policy arm of the European national chambers of commerce and business organizations in Japan, which combined, represent over 2,500 European firms doing business in Japan. While the EBC's mandate is to promote the interests of European firms by working to improve the Japanese business environment, we have increasingly found that the issues European firms face are little different from those of their Japanese counterparts — how to cope with low economic growth, how to improve operating efficiency in an increasingly competitive market environment and how to take advantage of the new opportunities that have surfaced as a result of changes to the structure of the Japanese economy.

The Japanese business environment has changed remarkably over the past decade. While much of this can be attributed to changing circumstances in the Japanese economy, the government of Japan should also be commended for its efforts, especially for the aggressive measures of "Abenomics"

in the areas of monetary policy and fiscal stimulus over the past three years. A committed focus going forward on reform efforts designed to strengthen market mechanisms and shore up underlying structural weaknesses should lead to further improvements in trade and investment opportunities in Japan.

Having said this, the EBC has believed for many years that the potential for reform in many areas remained to a large extent unfulfilled. For example, it may be somewhat easier now for a foreign company to have its products approved for sale in Japan, but on average it still takes longer and costs more than it does in Europe. A persistent lack of regulatory transparency also makes it difficult for firms to accurately predict the consequences of business decisions.

For these reasons, the EBC threw its support behind the start of negotiations toward an EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement/Economic Partnership Agreement (FTA/EPA). Now, after two years and ten rounds of discussions, we are hopeful that the agreement will translate the underlying prospects of increased prosperity, employment and consumer choice into reality in both the EU and Japan and set an entirely new global benchmark for FTAs. We believe this goal can be achieved provided the negotiators of both sides do not settle for easy wins over long-term gains in a bid for an early conclusion at the expense of meaningful content.

The EBC is positive about the Japanese economy. If anything, there has been a very definite shift in attitude toward the role of foreign trade and investment in Japan. Japanese customers are seeking out innovative European products, Japan's regions are actively promoting European investment, and Japanese companies are adopting new attitudes toward doing business. The EBC very much welcomes these developments and will continue to promote further European involvement in the Japanese economy. For their part, European firms are continuously working to build trust in the Japanese market and pursue business opportunities that have appeared as a result of the many changes that have taken place in Japan over the past few years, to which the EBC lends its wholehearted support.

The EBC believes the current economic recovery represents a historic opportunity for Japan to "go all the way" by taking further necessary but difficult decisions, promoting policy cohesion, and ensuring that the process of implementing crucial policies does not diminish their impact on the market. This would improve the trade and investment environment and ensure that European companies now considering entering Japan like what they see and decide to engage in this rewarding market.

People-to-people exchanges important to better understanding

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

societies face common challenges such as an aging society, climate change and energy security that research and innovation can help address. There remains a lot of unfulfilled potential here that I hope can be tapped into further.

On a lighter note, I strongly believe that people-to-people exchanges are very important in helping our like-minded societies get to know and understand each other better. Citizens are, after all, the building blocks of our societies and our bilateral relationship. I am very keen on developing such grass-roots ties fur-

ther during my tenure. I think we can encourage more direct links with, for example, civic organizations, local governments, universities and more. People-to-people exchanges can help break the "glass curtain" that separates Europe and Japan so that everyone can understand each other better.

The delegation actively undertakes a wide range of events to reach out to the general public in Japan, through regional networks such as the 14 EU Associations set up across the country. This month, we will again be organizing highly successful annual undertakings such as the Euro-

pean Higher Education Fair, where we showcase the wide range of education opportunities that Europe has to offer, and the EU Film Days, which gives audiences a chance to see the diversity and depth of European cinema. This year, both events will also be organized in the city of Kyoto in addition to Tokyo.

All in all, there is much more that we can expect from our bilateral partnership. I am certain that the upcoming EU-Japan Summit will add further impetus to ongoing efforts, at all levels, to build the current relationship into a deeper and comprehensive one.

OJI

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OJI HOLDINGS

EU special

Encouraging studying abroad

Mami Maruko STAFF WRITER

With heightened interest among Japanese students and researchers aiming to study in Europe in recent years, the Delegation of the European Union to Japan will hold its fourth European Higher Education Fair 2015 from May 15 to 17.

The fair will take place at Meiji University's Surugadai Campus in Tokyo on May 15 and 16, and on May 17 at Doshisha University's Imadegawa Campus in Kyoto. Thirty-two higher education institutions, as well as 16 embassies and education promotion agencies will provide the latest information on their many study programs and courses.

The event is co-organized by Campus France, the German Academic Exchange Service, Meiji University and Doshisha University.

Building on the continued success of the event, which started in 2012, this year's fair will feature a record 66 booths in Tokyo and 44 booths in Kyoto, up from 45 booths and between 35 and 40 booths respectively, in 2012.

A total of 16 European countries will participate in the fair, including 15 EU member states — with Denmark and Greece joining for the first time — and Switzerland, a non-member state.

Richard Knelner, academic cooperation officer at the delegation, explained it's a win-win event for both the academic institutions from Europe and the Japanese students.

"It's a great opportunity for the EU member states, but also an opportunity for other countries to come to the event under the EU umbrella," he said, adding that it's "quite a rarity for the students to have the chance to talk to representatives from so many European countries at one event."



Above: Prospective students visit booths to gather information on attending university in the EU at the 2014 European Higher Education Fair. Right: Booths at the 2014 fair EU DELEGATION TO JAPAN

Regarding participants, the 2014 fair saw 2,100 visitors attending over the three days, compared to 1,300 for the first fair in 2012, and 1,900 in 2013. The first event was held in Tokyo and Kobe, but since 2013, the fair has been held in Tokyo and Kyoto.

"This year, we hope to get 2,000 or more (visitors)," said Knelner.

In an endeavor to make more of a concerted effort to link studying abroad with good careers, Knelner explained that some of the booths and seminars will feature alumni who have studied in Europe and went on to successful careers, be it in Japan or another country.

The event will offer individual presentations by the institutions, a keynote lecture by Seiichi Adachi, an auditor of Toyota Tsusho Corp., who will encourage students to go abroad based on his experience of studying and working in Europe.

There will also be a seminar for high school students, a European languages workshop (all in Tokyo only), and panel discussions with Japanese who have studied in Europe (Tokyo and Kyoto).

Of special note, Knelner says, is the seminar for high school students that will be held for the first time (only in Tokyo on May 16), in which staff from the EU Delegation to Japan and alumni who have studied in Europe, will talk about their experiences.

Knelner also recommends the language workshop, in which the students can study three of six languages from embassy staff or instructors from cultural institutes of the respective countries during the hour-long session (Students can try out languages for 15 minutes each). French,



German, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian and Dutch are the languages the students can choose from.

EU programs open to students and researchers, such as Erasmus+ and those under the Horizon 2020 framework, which is geared more toward research students, will also be promoted at the fair.

Now that more and more universities in the EU member states are offering programs and courses in English, Knelner points out that while it's important to promote the diversity of programs and courses that are available, he says it's also important to promote the diversity of Europe, including cultures, traditions and languages unique to each country.

Knelner noted that the education ministry's "Tobitate! Ryugaku Japan" (Go abroad! Study overseas, Japan) campaign

will also have a booth at the fair for the first time, underscoring the need for Japan to nurture more internationally minded talent.

"Many students think that 'studying in Europe doesn't sound realistic,' or they think to themselves, 'I can't do that,'" Knelner said. This is because of the stereotype students may have of Europe having high living costs and academic fees.

"Even if they are interested, a lot of them say, 'We have to job hunt, so it's impossible to study abroad and look for work at the same time.'" They are also worried, especially if they enter a post-grad program, they won't be able to find a good job.

Knelner says, however, this is not the case, with many good scholarships available and graduates finding rewarding jobs.

"This is why we ask alumni to come. One thing they all say is how valuable their experience studying in Europe was," he said, adding that they hope listening to actual testimonials from people who have gone through the whole process of studying in Europe "will be of interest to students visiting the fair."

European Higher Education Fair 2015 Tokyo fairs takes place on May 15 (noon-7 p.m.) and May 16 (11 a.m.-5 p.m.) at Meiji University Surugadai Campus; Kyoto fair takes place on May 17 (noon-6 p.m.) at Doshisha University Imadegawa Campus. For more information, call the EU Delegation to Japan at 03-5422-6001 or visit www.ehef-japan.org, or Facebook: www.facebook.com/EUyugaku

EU Film Days offers new insights into Europe

Chiho Iuchi STAFF WRITER

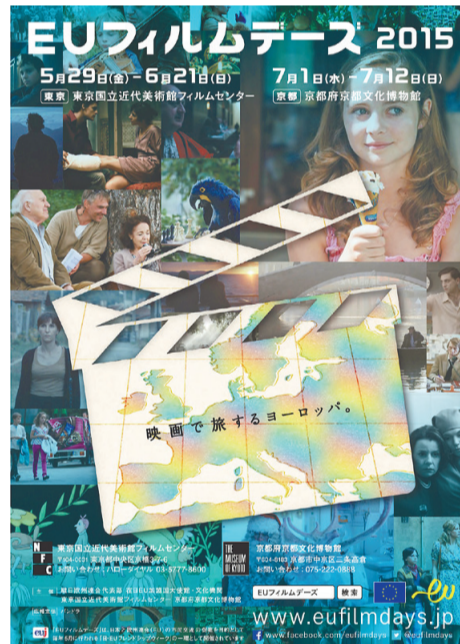
What is Europe? It is not easy to give a single description for Europe with its wide and deep diversity, but a film may capture one aspect of such diversity, serving as a mirror that reflects people's hopes and fears.

As part of the annual EU-Japan Friendship Week, which aims to introduce Europe's diverse cultures, languages and history to the people in Japan, the EU Film Days festival, which will be held from May 29 to June 21 in Tokyo, brings together selected films from EU member states and introduces various aspects of Europe to Japanese and foreign audiences alike.

The films screened at the festival are provided through the embassies and cultural institutes of EU member states.

"Until now, we haven't set a specific theme, so it's been up to each embassy to decide on what kind of film to propose," explained Hiroko Takebe, cultural affairs officer at the EU Delegation to Japan who has been responsible for overall coordination of the event since 2010. "As a result, we are able to line up a wide variety of works every year," she said.

Embassies are asked to propose relatively new films that reflect the current state of Europe or a cultural aspect of



EU Film Days 2015 official poster EU DELEGATION TO JAPAN

their country. Although the concept is not that of a festival for old films, "we do also sometimes screen more 'classic' films, which can further add to the diversity of our program," said Takebe, adding, "While it's always nice to see the beautiful scenery and famous sites of Europe, there are also many works that

project a more realistic image of today's Europe, which I find impressive."

For example, among the films featured this year, Austria's "Macondo" tells the story of a Chechen refugee family set in the industrial suburbs of Vienna showing very little of the traditional sightseeing spots associated with the former imperial capital.

According to Takebe, despite the lack of a predetermined theme, several films proposed in a given year often have common elements. This year, there are many films that include children as important characters, such as the above-mentioned "Macondo," as well as "Finn" from the Netherlands, "Banditenkinder — Stolen Slovene Children" from Slovenia and "To See the Sea" from the Czech Republic.

Besides award-winning films such as Poland's "Ida," which won the 2015 Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award; and Ireland's animated "Songs of the Sea," winner of the grand prize at the 2015 Tokyo Anime Awards, the festival has introduced many films that had rarely been screened in Japan. This year, 12 films will be shown for the first time in Japan at EU Film Days.

Among them is Signe Baumann's animated film "Rocks in My Pockets" from Latvia, which has the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU during the first half of 2015.

"It is a story of a woman with humor

and courage discovering secrets within her family, seeking answers to find the roots of depression," explained Dana Rudaka from the Embassy of Latvia. "As female empowerment issues are a hot topic worldwide, the Latvian National Film Center offered it this year."

To overcome language barriers, the films are subtitled in Japanese or English (some are in both). For those who speak English, there are works with English subtitles only, and some works, including the two animated films with Japanese subtitles will be shown in English.

Another draw of the festival is the special guests who attend the event. Hungarian actor Tamás Szabó Kimmel, who starred in "The Ambassador to Bern," is scheduled to make an appearance before the film's June 3 screening, which will be followed by a revival showing of "Made in Hungary," another film featuring the actor that was screened at the EU Film Days 2012.

Also, there will be a lecture on Polish documentary films on June 6 by the country's film critic Michal Oleszczyk, who serves as the artistic director of Gdynia Film Festival, as well as a programmer for Polish Filmmakers NYC.

"Poland has a rich tradition in film making as seen in the prestigious National Film School in Łódź, and documentary films are an important step for every filmmaker," said Koichi Kuyama from the Polish Institute in Tokyo.

"Oleszczyk will introduce different types of documentaries; from works based on patient observation to more dramatized creative works," he said. Prior to the lecture, Oleszczyk will also give a short commentary on the film "Ida" the same day.

When the festival launched in 2003, the idea was to organize joint screenings, resulting in 11 EU member states showing films at three different cultural institutes in Tokyo.

Annually held since then, the film festival has increased in size along with the recent EU enlargements such as the accession of 10 countries in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013. Since 2007, the screenings take place at the National Film Center, The Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

This year, the 13th edition of the EU Film Days brings together a record 26 films (including one short film).

In an effort to spread the festival beyond Tokyo, smaller-scale regional screenings have been organized around Japan in past years. This year, Kyoto will host screenings after Tokyo from July 1 to 12, showing a record 19 films at the Museum of Kyoto.

As of now, it remains a future challenge to involve all 28 member states. "While it's true that liaising with all the participating partners on a joint program like this is a lot of work, EU Film Days is truly a rare opportunity for people to learn about and further develop their understanding of Europe without leaving Japan," Takebe said.

The films from EU member states should inspire audiences with various aspects and deeper insights into Europe.

For more information, visit the official website at www.eufilmdays.jp



The animated film "Rocks in My Pockets" created by Latvian-born Signe Baumann tells five stories of art, romance, marriage, nature, business and Eastern European upheaval based on the courageous women in her family and their battles with a genetic illness. EU DELEGATION TO JAPAN

EU FILM DAYS 2015

Screening Schedule Tokyo table with columns for Date, Time, Title, and Country flag.

EU FILM DAYS 2015

Screening Schedule Kyoto table with columns for Date, Time, Title, and Country flag.

Screenings in Tokyo take place at the National Film Center, The Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo in the Kyobashi area, one minute from Kyobashi Station on the Tokyo Metro Ginza Line. Tickets are ¥520 per film for adults. For more information, call 03-5777-8600.

Screenings in Kyoto take place at the Museum of Kyoto in Nakagyo Ward, three minutes from Karasuma-Oike Station on the Kyoto Municipal Subway Karasuma Line. Admission to the museum (¥500 for adults) is required. For more information, call 075-222-0888.

* Schedule is subject to change without notice.

* For more information and the latest schedule, visit www.eufilmdays.jp.



Among the highlights from the 26 films featured in the EU Film Days 2015: (clockwise from above) "Tangerines," a story about an Estonian man who has stayed behind in the middle of a bloody conflict in Georgia's Apkhazeti region in the early 1990s, was nominated for the 2015 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film; "The Ambassador to Bern" is a political thriller dramatizing the events behind the attack against the Hungarian embassy in Switzerland following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956; "Song of the Sea" is a cartoon that takes inspiration from the mythological Selkies of Irish folklore; "Ida" tells the story of a young novice nun in 1960s Poland, who discovers a dark family secret dating back to the years of the Nazi occupation; "Macondo" depicts the life of a Chechen refugee family in Vienna; the story of Czech film "To See the Sea" is told through the eyes of the 11-year-old Tomas, a boy who gets a digital Nikon camera for his birthday and begins to record the world around him.