



World Eye Reports

Belgium

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## Momentous year for Japan-Belgium relations

The year 2016 has been marked by a yearlong series of events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Japan. The year included a visit by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Belgium, an “Invest Japan” seminar in May and culminated in the six-day state visit to Japan by King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium in October.

The close ties between the Belgian royal family and the Japanese Imperial family have added a special boost to the relationship between their two countries.

“The relationship between our two countries is better than ever, and characterized by friendship, trust and solidarity,” said Masafumi Ishii, both Japan’s ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and its representative in NATO. “Our relations with Belgium have always been about mutual respect, and the royal state visit to Japan was certainly the highlight of this momentous year.”

Belgium was the ninth country to establish diplomatic relations with Japan when it did so in 1866. Economic ties between the two countries have since grown continuously.

By the 1960s, Japanese companies were gaining increased access to European markets and Belgium steadily became a favorite for their European headquarters.

“Belgium is a country of choice for Japanese investment in Europe, and there are now over 240 Japanese companies present here, many for over 40 years,” said Ishii.

Japan is currently the second-largest non-European source of foreign direct investment in Belgium, where Japanese companies employ almost 30,000 people. About 20 percent of Japanese companies in Belgium are active in the auto and auto-parts industries,

including Toyota Motors, Aisin Europe and AW Europe.

The advantages of setting

main regions of Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders. Brussels accounts for 20 percent of Belgium’s GDP,

ects, including Kaneka and Eval Europe.

“Japan and Flanders continue to be a very successful winning combination,” explained Claire Tillekaerts, CEO of Flanders Investment & Trade. “This was proven earlier this year when our ‘Investment of the Year’ trophy was awarded to Nippon Shokubai for its commitment to Flanders. Recently, the company announced plans to build a new facility in Zwijndrecht that will be its largest plant outside Japan.”

Major exports from Belgium to Japan include pharmaceutical products, chemicals, transport equipment and optical instruments, while the top imports are transport equipment, machinery and chemicals. Japan is currently Belgium’s 17th-largest export market and its 10th-largest import market.

“Japanese companies are looking for stable environments with sound business conduct,” said Anja Otokellens, executive director of the Belgium-Japan Association and Chamber of Commerce. “2015 was the best year yet for Japanese investments, and it was also a positive year for developing new Japanese investments.”

In the opposite direction, there are currently more than 70 Belgian companies present in Japan, working in a range of sectors that include chemicals, pharmaceuticals, biotech, information communications technology and automobiles.

“Belgium is a great country and a close friend of Japan,” concluded Ishii. “It is the best door for investors to knock on in Europe as the country provides a balanced view of the European Union. It is the hub of Europe, with great history, tradition, gastronomy and craftsmanship. We hope Japanese people and businesses will continue to visit and invest in Belgium, the gateway to Europe.” ◆

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— MASAFUMI ISHII  
Japanese Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium

up in Belgium decades ago — before there was even a European Union — continue to hold true today.


Japan is currently the second-largest non-European source of foreign direct investment in Belgium, where Japanese companies employ almost 30,000 people

Belgium is strategically located in the heart of Europe, has highly developed infrastructure and a skilled, multilingual labor force.

Japanese investment is active in the country’s three



port and the world’s second-largest chemical cluster.

In the chemical sector, Japanese companies and investors are currently involved in 34 related proj-



Almost 60 years of continuous growth and success

Suzuki Motor Corporation and Alcoa have established a partnership that prides 58 years of success. Having reached a continuous growth of market share due to our total quality policy, customer satisfaction and enthusiasm of the team, we continue our efforts for the future. The new products will certainly help us to continue the success story of Suzuki in Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Switzerland, and create a stronger Suzuki brand and product image.



Breaking new ground for the automobile. Aisin AW’s hybrid.



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[WWW.OSG-EUROPE.COM](http://WWW.OSG-EUROPE.COM)

FAST FACTS		BELGIUM
Area:	30,528 sq. km	
Population:	11,409,077 (July 2016 est.)	
Capital:	Brussels	
Currency:	Euro (€) (EUR)	
Avg. exchange rate:	\$1 = € 0.885 (2015 est.)	
GDP (PPP):	\$494.1 billion (2015 est.)	
GDP (Official exchange rate):	\$454.7 billion (2015 est.)	
GDP real growth:	1.4 percent (2015 est.)	
GDP per capita:	\$43,600 (2015 est.)	
Inflation:	0.6 percent (2015 est.)	
Unemployment:	8.5 percent (2015 est.)	
<b>Main industries</b>		
Total exports:	\$259.9 billion (2015 est.)	
Total imports:	\$259.6 billion (2015 est.)	
<b>Major exports</b>		
Chemicals, machinery and equipment, finished diamonds, metals and metal products, foodstuffs		
<b>Major imports</b>		
Raw materials, machinery and equipment, chemicals, raw diamonds, pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs, transportation equipment, oil products		
<b>Main export markets</b>		
Germany 16.9 percent, France 15.5 percent, Netherlands 11.4 percent, U.K. 8.8 percent, U.S. 6 percent, Italy 5 percent (2015)		
<b>Main import markets</b>		
Netherlands 16.7 percent, Germany 12.7 percent, France 9.6 percent, U.S. 8.7 percent, U.K. 5.1 percent, Ireland 4.7 percent, China 4.3 percent (2015)		

## Continuing growth through M&A, precision tool specialist is bullish on Europe

Aichi Prefecture-based OSG Corp. is one of the world’s largest manufacturers of round shank cutting tools for the manufacturing industry — producing a comprehensive range of products used in the machine tool sector. It is also a global market leader in taps, which it has produced since being founded in 1938.

The company has 14 consolidated subsidiaries in Japan and 38 overseas — including 10 in Europe. “Our strategy here was to focus on mergers and acquisitions to grow the business,” explained Hideaki Osawa, managing director of Belgium-based OSG Europe, and a third-generation owner of the company. “Our current location in Belgium resulted from an acquisition we made in 1997 of a trading company active in Belgium, France and the Netherlands.”

In 1999, OSG chose Belgium as its official regional headquarters. “Our roots are here in Belgium, and the fact that the country is located in the heart of continental Europe enables us to better serve our main markets across the region,” he explained. “Our business is directed from here, and it is our duty here to ensure the success of all our companies across the continent.”

In Europe, OSG mostly serves the European automotive industry. At the same time, it provides its core products (taps, drills and end mills) to the aerospace and

“Our business is directed from here, and it is our duty here to ensure the success of all our companies across the continent. We need to select the areas where we can be effective, and one of our main advantages is that we have a comprehensive range of products to offer our customers.”

— HIDEAKI OSAWA  
Managing Director of OSG Europe



engineering industries. The company’s specialized micro-tools are also seeing growing attention from the Swiss watch-making and medical sectors.

“We need to select the areas where we can be effective, and one of our main advantages is that we have a comprehensive range of products to offer our customers,” said Osawa.

Having achieved record sales and oper-

ating income growth for two consecutive years, OSG is now primed for continued growth by remaining true to its European strategy. “We made two acquisitions in 2015, and our goal is to continue to produce more in Europe through the companies we acquire — and to continue to respond effectively to the needs of our customers,” he concluded. ◆ [www.osgeurope.com](http://www.osgeurope.com)

## 25 years of driving innovation

A subsidiary of Aisin AW, AW Europe has become a global leader in the development and manufacture of automatic transmissions, vehicle information systems and future drive systems in hybrid and electric vehicles. In 2015, it celebrated the 25th anniversary of its European headquarters in Belgium.

The world’s largest producer of automatic transmissions and a market leader in car navigation, AW Europe is a supplier to major European original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

“Our sales volumes for the European OEM market continue to grow and it is a highly successful business,” said Tatsuya Iwatsuki, president of AW Europe and AWTC Europe.

“In recent years, we built a test track at our facility in Baudour, Belgium, where we can evaluate vehicles and engage with customers,” he related. “We have also expanded our logistics and manufacturing capabilities to better serve them.”

This expansion also inspired AW Europe to consider an alternative source of energy to heat its facility.

“Our facility in Baudour taps into a geothermal source which heats our building and saves on electricity costs while reducing our carbon footprint,” said Iwatsuki. “This is a first in Belgium, and we are proud to be the only manufacturer currently utilizing such an energy source.”

“We will continue developing new technologies that work in harmony with the environment, and we will focus on improving our relations with our employees and customers.”

— TATSUYA IWATSUKI  
President of AW Europe and AWTC Europe



In 1998, Aisin AW started production of NAVI-MATIC, the world’s first automatic transmission solution assisted by a dedicated navigation system. In 2006, production of the world’s first navigation system-coordinated suspension control system began.

“Our goal is to develop and produce innovative products that bring satisfaction to our customers and contribute to society,” explained Iwatsuki. “Our automatic transmissions and car infotainment systems ensure a more enjoyable and a safer driving experience for our customers.”

Potential for growth remains high, as

only 35 percent of all European automobiles use automatic transmissions today. “Our automatic transmission business is integral to our growth and we will continue to sell the merits of automatic transmissions to our customers in Europe,” he said.

“With increasing demand, we intend to expand our production capabilities and our warehousing capacity in Belgium,” Iwatsuki concluded. “We will continue developing new technologies that work in harmony with the environment, and we will focus on improving our relations with our employees and customers.” ◆ [www.aweurope.eu](http://www.aweurope.eu)

## ‘Big Bang’ looms for two-wheeler specialist in Europe

Moteo, a subsidiary of family-owned Alcoa Group, is a European leader in the distribution of two-wheel vehicles and the aftermarket for parts and accessories.

While the company represents a number of major brands from their industry, the company is anchored by their long-standing partnership with Suzuki Motors.

“Our founders, Albert and Gerard Moorkens, established relations with Suzuki in 1958, at a time when travel to Japan was still quite challenging,” recalled Peter Rask, CEO of Moteo.

“Today, our relationship with Suzuki is as strong as ever in Belgium and also in the other countries where we represent the brand,” he said. “Whether it is in four-wheel, two-wheel or marine products, we are proud and honored to be further enhancing this relationship.”

Moteo also distributes Suzuki two-wheelers in Switzerland and Portugal. In the aftermarket business, it is active in 11 markets across Europe as a result of strategic acquisitions of companies in Sweden, France, Switzerland and Spain.

The company’s ties with Japan are not limited to Suzuki, as it also sources products there for its aftermarket business.

“With approximately 60 percent of our turnover generated outside Belgium, we are a true European group with a strong in-

“Our ‘Suzuki Big Bang’ marketing campaign will present our brand to existing and potential customers. As we approach the 60th anniversary of our relations with Suzuki in 2018, we will continue on our path to success and growing our business together.”

— PETER RASK  
CEO of Moteo



ternational competence,” said Rask.

He points out that next year is particularly exciting for both Moteo and motorcycle enthusiasts. “Nine new models of scooters and motorcycles will be launched in 2017,” says Rask. “Our ‘Suzuki Big Bang’ marketing campaign will present our brand to existing and potential customers.”

The anticipated banner year for the company will enable it to grow its market share in what has become a highly competitive business. “As we approach the 60th anniversary of our relations with Suzuki in 2018, we will continue on our path to success and growing our business together,” he concluded. ◆ [www.moteogroup.com](http://www.moteogroup.com)



# Belgium Business Report

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## Trucking through Europe, Russia and Africa from Belgium

In the 1960’s and ‘70’s, when many Japanese companies started expanding globally, one key decision was to determine where European operations would be based. The truck manufacturer, Hino Motors, chose Belgium.

“Our company was deciding on a number of locations, one of which would become our hub for Africa and Europe,” recalled Tetsuji Hitokata, managing director of Hino Motors (Europe). “In 1974, the company chose Belgium, due to the country’s efficiency, business environment, attractive tax laws, advanced infrastructure, multilingual staff and proximity to the European and other markets.”

Today, Hino’s parts depot and logis-



Tetsuji Hitokata, Managing Director of Hino Motors (Europe)



Hino headquarters in Belgium

tics hub for Europe and Africa is located in Mechelen, 20 kilometers from the Port of Antwerp.

“We were given good incentives to set up here in Mechelen’s Industrial Zone,” said Hitokata. “We were the first foreign company to build our facility here, so we benefitted from being right next to the highway.”

Inaugurated in 1978, the facility was one of the earliest Japanese investments in Belgium. And while Hino Motors also serves markets across Europe, including Russia from Belgium, Africa accounts for 70 percent of the company’s business today.

“Our European business has huge potential although we only sell one right-

handed model to the U.K., Ireland, Cyprus and Malta,” said Hitokata. “While the current differences in emission-control restrictions between Japan and the EU create product range limitations within key European markets, we are growing our business in Africa.”

Hino is committed to continuing to serve its European, Russian and African clients from its Belgium base. “It was the correct decision to establish the company here,” concluded Hitokata. “It’s a good place to grow a successful business. And, with our multilingual workforce, we are able to better serve our customers across the African continent.” ♦ <https://portal.hino.be/hme>

## Cultivating a reputation for excellence across Europe

A major contributor to the modernization of Japan’s farming sector and a leading agricultural machinery company, Iseki & Co. is celebrating two significant milestones this year — one globally, as well as a special one in Belgium.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of Iseki since the company’s founding in Japan, and it is also the 45th anniversary of its Brussels-based European headquarters. Iseki Europe is now recognized as one of the earliest Japanese investors in this country at the heart of the European Union.

Europe has played an important role in the growth and development of Iseki practically from the start, initially focusing on bringing to the continent smaller tractors developed for the compact rice paddies of Japan.

“As we began selling our products in Europe in the late 1960s, we listened to the market and foresaw the growing demand in the gardening and landscaping sectors,” recalled Kazuya Tani, chairman of N.V. Iseki Europe S.A. and president of Iseki France S.A.S. “As a result, we started developing machinery geared specifically for European markets.”

Today, the company’s European sales are almost equally divided between the compact tractor segment and machinery used for gardening and landscaping. Through the years, it has developed a European network now composed of 15 countries, including its large markets of Germany and France.

“Two years ago, we acquired a distribution network of 240 professional dealers in France that has enabled us to grow our business there through our dealers’ existing clients,” said Tani.



Our machines speak for themselves, so we encourage potential customers to try them out and see the quality of our products and services for themselves.”

— KAZUYA TANI

Chairman of N.V. Iseki Europe S.A. and President of ISEKI France S.A.S.

Belgium, on the other hand, remains one of the company’s most significant markets, with local municipalities accounting for a significant amount of the company’s business. “The stable Belgian market, from a sales standpoint, offers us strong growth opportunities,” he continued.

With decades spent beautifying and maintaining cities across Europe and

developing farm equipment that meets the demands of its clients, Iseki Europe continues to work on strengthening its core business here. “Our machines speak for themselves, so we encourage potential customers to try them out and see the quality of our products and services for themselves,” Tani concluded. ♦ [www.iseki.co.jp/english](http://www.iseki.co.jp/english)

## The expert in cardiovascular solutions for Belgium’s health sector

Living and working in one of Europe’s wealthiest countries, Belgians have long enjoyed a high standard of living. Today, the country’s healthcare system is also one of the most advanced in the world. In this market, the Japanese pharmaceutical giant — Daiichi Sankyo — offers a full range of products to patients, especially those suffering from cardiovascular disease.

“We have an excellent healthcare system in Belgium,” explained Curd Lejaegere, managing director for the Benelux region of Daiichi Sankyo Belgium. “It is liberal with free healthcare access for all, in addition to insurance being covered by the state.”

“While many companies have a much broader portfolio of products, we concentrate on cardiovascular diseases,” he continued. “We have developed an in-depth knowledge of this field and enjoy a long-standing relationship with the cardiology community in Belgium.”

Today, Daiichi Sankyo is one of the largest Japanese pharma companies in Europe, and is one of the only com-

panies active in all four key areas of cardiology: anti-hypertension, anti-aggregation, dyslipidemia and anti-coagulation.



“Anti-hypertension is our main focus today and we have also invested heavily in anti-coagulation,” said Lejaegere. Last year, Daiichi Sankyo’s once-daily LIXIANA (edoxaban) was approved

by the EU to be made available in all member states for the prevention of stroke and systemic embolism in adult patients.

“Our work in these fields will drive our future growth in addition to our planned entry into the oncology area by 2018.”

The company sells its products directly to hospitals and physicians. “There are about 150 public and private general hospitals in Belgium, and we have partnerships with approximately 80 percent of them,” he noted. “We also have close relations with a high percentage of the 1,500 cardiologists across Belgium.”

Within Benelux, Belgium represents roughly two-thirds of Daiichi Sankyo’s total business in the area. It is expected to be a major growth driver.

“It is important for us to highlight the high standard of medical care in Belgium and the high quality of education of our physicians,” Lejaegere added. “We are the best partner to our customers to deliver a better healthcare outcome for their patients.” ♦ [www.daiichi-sankyo.be](http://www.daiichi-sankyo.be)