

NORTH RHINE WESTPHALIA

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Ties that bind: North Rhine-Westphalia and Japan forge into the future, built on a solid past

Diplomatic ties between Japan and North Rhine-Westphalia date to the 1800s, with 2021 marking the 160th year of friendship between the two countries. On Jan. 24, 1861, what was then known as the Kingdom of Prussia and the Tokugawa shogunate signed the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, an occasion largely regarded as the start of bilateral relations between the two countries. Over a century and a half later, ties between both global leaders are stronger than ever, with a marked Japanese presence specifically in Duesseldorf, the state capital of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

A state of diversity
As of 2019, NRW registered almost 18 million people, making it the largest federal state in Germany by population. It is known as the Diversity State for its multicultural richness, as well as the fact that its rural and industrial regions are in such proximity to each other. While it is renowned for its natural pastoral beauty, it is also a bustling metropolis, teeming with economic activity and innovation.

The Japanese community comprises a chunk of that cultural diversity, with a population of nearly 15,000 nationals residing in NRW. "Because of the long-established Japanese community in this region, NRW offers convenient social infrastructures, such as Japanese schools, restaurants and grocery stores for Japanese expats," shared Kiminori Iwama, Consul General of Japan in Duesseldorf.



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Consul General of Japan
Duesseldorf



Dai Ueda, Director-General of the Japan External Trade Organization, Duesseldorf

Tax, consulting and auditing solutions for Japanese clients

Duesseldorf is often referred to as "Little Tokyo." With the largest Japanese community in Germany, the city by the Rhine River is home to hundreds of Japanese companies and continues to attract investors from Japan. Whether large or small, companies often find it daunting to do business in a foreign country and in a foreign language. Navigating complex taxation laws in new markets requires expert assistance.

Since the early '80s, Kieffer Stubben & Partner mbB has helped Japanese companies establish operations in North Rhine-Westphalia and other German states by offering a full range of tax, consulting and auditing services.

"As a mid-sized firm, we share the same philosophy as medium-sized companies," said Head of Japan Services Rika Diana Senft, who is an administrative lawyer in

ing importance placed on people-to-people relations and offer a different approach to larger firms as we ensure clients have one singular contact person taking care of the entire process," Senft said. "Having been located in Duesseldorf for a long time, we have established very close relationships with the tax authorities and benefit from clear lines of communication."

As head of the firm's Japan Services, Senft speaks fluent Japanese and English and has assisted Japanese companies in Germany, as well as German companies entering the Japanese market for almost a decade.

This wealth of experience includes supporting Japanese investors as they enter the market from consultations on tax structure and planning to individual tax matters.


Consistently regarded as one of the leading tax consult-

tancies in Germany, the firm is a member of Geneva Group International, one of 10 leading international alliances of independent audit and accounting, tax consultancy and law firms.

"Understanding the needs of our clients is paramount to our firm's professionals ensuring we provide clients with the highest standards of services," said Senft. "As a mid-sized firm, the personal touch is critical to how we do business and we have established long-term relationships with our Japanese clients. They appreciate the extra effort we put into finding individual solutions and we will continue to take action on behalf of our clients and look after their interests." ♦

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erland, it's no wonder that NRW continues to attract Japanese investors, particularly in the chemicals sector, which makes up a third of the industry's total sales revenues each Germany. "Companies started their activities in Hamburg, Germany, after World War II. Soon enough, they found that the market is stronger in the western part of Germany. The banks and the trading houses moved to Duesseldorf. It also became a very well-known industrial area — the Ruhr district steel industries, which will chemical industries and pharmaceutical industries are concentrated here. Japanese companies have also established their businesses here, focusing on research and development, utilization of 5G technology, development of new AI (artificial intelligence) technology, energy storage systems, medical technology, and so on," said Dai Ueda, director-general of the Japan External Trade Organization, Duesseldorf.

A spirit of dynamism
Beyond its status as a melting pot of nationalities and its unique character as a suburban metropolis, NRW is a dynamic economic powerhouse, with the largest economy of all the German states in terms of gross domestic product. In 2020, it accounted for 20.9% of the GDP of Germany, despite a slight decline from 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With an economy that has consistently been compared with that of Swit-

UBE Europe GmbH: Expanding into new markets sustainably

UBE Europe GmbH (UEG) markets nylon, fine chemicals and other advanced technology products to Europe, Africa, Latin America, North America and the Middle East. Bridges spoke with Jeronimo Porras, President of UEG (Europe, Middle East and Africa) and vice president of UBE Corp. Europe, on the Japanese company's recent expansion, sustainability efforts and the historical significance of Duesseldorf to the group.



Jeronimo Porras, President of UEG (Europe, Middle East and Africa) and Vice President of UBE Corp. Europe

Bridges: What achievements were met in the last two years despite the pandemic?

Porras: First of all, our main priority was to ensure the health and safety of our staff at all times. "We were satisfied and pleased with our results last year as we provided very good communication, service and support to all our UBE customers despite the challenging conditions created by the pandemic. The good economic results obtained were the natural consequence of our capacity to reshape and adapt our business activities together with our partners."

Innovating into the future
With its vibrant, present built firmly on the solid foundations of the past, NRW is headed into a stronger-than-ever future. Characterized by a spirit of innovation, the region will undoubtedly remain an economic driving force well into the future, with a robust Japanese presence for years to come. ♦

Establishing a liaison office in Istanbul, Turkey, was one of our achievements. It will enable us to engage with customers in developing markets and expand our main products of nylon resins, fine chemicals and other added-value materials.

We are also strengthening our activities in Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent States in Eurasia, Russia and South America to reinforce our position as a global company. Contributing to sustainability through our business is also an essential focus of our activities. For example, we held a virtual conference

to discuss the environmental benefits, especially in terms of sustainability and recyclability, of nylon used in food applications and packaging with more than 1,000 attendees from leading chemicals and competitors worldwide.

What are the advantages of using nylon in food packaging?

Food waste and current packaging options are both causing environmental problems. As e-commerce continues to thrive, flexible packaging solutions are needed. As a

leader in nylon technology, we work closely with our customers to develop solutions that result in environmentally oriented solutions. Our nylon products incorporate high mechanical strength and puncture resistance as well as other valuable barriers, thermal and optical properties. In addition, the weight and volume reduction achieved with higher-performing nylon-based packaging contribute to reductions in our customers' carbon dioxide footprint.

How important is Duesseldorf to the group's global operations?

The operation of UBE Corp. started in 1964, here in Germany, even before establishing a presence in Spain and South America. Japan and Germany share many cultural and social similarities and Duesseldorf plays a significant role in the UBE story. We are proud of our history here as the industrial founders and initiators for UBE Corp. in Europe. The company's global expansion is founded on our business development here and our commitment to Germany. ♦ **www.ube.com**

Contributing to the automotive and environmental revolutions

Located in Duesseldorf's harbor, Asahi Kasei Europe GmbH (AKEU), the European headquarters of the Tokyo-based chemicals and materials science company Asahi Kasei, celebrated its fifth anniversary this year.

AKEU supplies high-performance plastics and foams, synthetic rubber for eco-tires and market-leading lithium-ion battery separators to the automotive industry. Bridges spoke with AKEU Managing Director Hideki Tsutsumi about the company's commitment to the European automotive sector.

Bridges: Why was Duesseldorf chosen as the company's European headquarters in 2016 and how has AKEU strengthened its approach to the European market?

As head of the firm, the personal touch is critical to how we do business and we have established long-term relationships with our Japanese clients. They appreciate the extra effort we put into finding individual solutions and we will continue to take action on behalf of our clients and look after their interests." ♦



Hideki Tsutsumi, Managing Director of Asahi Kasei Europe



Asahi Kasei Europe recently moved its fully consolidated headquarters to Duesseldorf's harbor.

What opportunities did this create?

This consolidation marks an important step in our company's European expansion.

In addition to driving industry-related environmental changes, Europe is at the forefront of an automotive revolution — something which is said to happen once every century.

By bringing together all the different functions, we can address changing customer demands and create joint projects with local partners more quickly and more effectively.

With environmental sustainability and vehicle elec-

trification taking place in Europe, what can customers expect from AKEU?

The shift to electric vehicles with more sustainable materials will dramatically accelerate in Europe, driven by legislation, but also by changing customer needs.

We are offering a broad range of solutions and look forward to working closely with our partners and customers across Europe to jointly contribute to this evolution. As a supplier of alkaline water electrolyzers for the production of hydrogen we are also eyeing the European market as the leading region in regard to environmental technologies. ♦ **www.asahi-kasei.eu**

Japan Steel Works: Serving customers across Europe

Over the last 114 years, Japan Steel Works Ltd. has developed into a steel products and plastics industrial machinery manufacturer.

Attracted by opportunities within the coal industry of the Ruhr valley in North Rhine-Westphalia, JSW established a local business in Duesseldorf in 1969. "Our presence here in North Rhine-Westphalia is critical to our business as Germany offers the highest level of technical expertise in Europe. We will grow our business and serve our European customers," Kurita said. ♦ **www.jsw.de**



Japan Steel Works Europe in Duesseldorf

of Japan Steel Works Europe GmbH. "The center has been a huge advantage for

us here in order to expand the machinery business in Europe."

Although a decrease in output from nuclear and large thermal power stations has affected demand for JSW's steel products, JSW Europe remains committed to European customers as a forging and casting supplier for turbine and reactor application materials.

JSW
Extrusion Technical Center
Japan Steel Works Europe GmbH

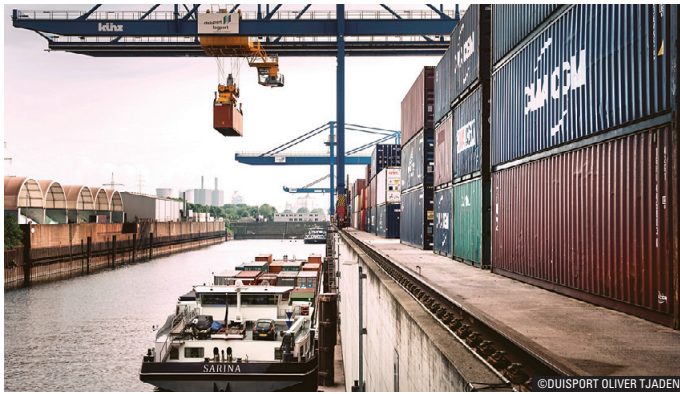
Port of Duisburg: More than a port

As a state-owned "tri-modal" logistics hub, the Port of Duisburg is the largest hinterland hub in Europe. The port connects producers and customers across international markets through its full range of logistics services.

Bridges spoke with Chief Executive Officer Markus Bangen of Duisburger Hafen AG about the company's record year, the importance of the logistics sector in North Rhine-Westphalia and partnerships with Japan.

Bridges: How was 2021 for the Port of Duisburg?

Bangen: Despite the pandemic, we saw an all-time high in container-handling volume last year of approximately 4.2 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU). In a recent study of port-dependent jobs, we generated an all-time high of more



A harbor crane loads containers onto a vessel at the Duisport Logistics Container Terminal in Duisburg port, the world's largest inland port.

A stronger Mitsubishi Chemical brand in Europe

Mitsubishi's famous three-diamond logo is synonymous with the Mitsubishi Group's leadership position in the global market.

Consisting of 295 group companies worldwide, the Mitsubishi Chemical Group employs over 40,000 people globally.

While 2017 saw the company officially establish its European headquarters, the port of chemistry established a liaison office in Duesseldorf 60 years ago this year.

Over the past decade, the company has grown through mergers and acquisitions and today Mitsubishi Chemical Europe (MCE) is integrating its group companies to create a stronger European presence.

"A year ago, we had 15 different group companies," said MCE President Ansgar Pohl. "Today we are consolidat-



Ansgar Pohl, President of Mitsubishi Chemical Europe

ing our businesses to create synergies, strengthen our brand and promote our products, services and solutions to customers across Europe. Incorporating our group companies in Germany will enable us to strengthen our position in the marketplace

and meet customer requirements and expectations."

MCE offers an extensive portfolio of innovative and sustainable solutions for key industries, including automotive and medical devices. Its products include carbon fibers and composites, polyester films, aluminum and metal composite sheets, aluminum fibers, surface technology for semiconductors, and specialty polymers and biopolymers.

While MCE recently relocated its official headquarters to Frankfurt and now has a new showroom for products called the Marketing Technical Center, Duesseldorf remains a key location.

"Duesseldorf is an important base for us and continues to serve as our regional office," said Pohl. "As the center of our trading business, we have over 200 employees in Duesseldorf."

With a robust company structure and recognized brand name, MCE is in a strong position to implement its Kaiteki philosophy.

"We aim to promote our Kaiteki philosophy, which is based on our desire to contribute to the well-being of people, society and our planet. And our mission statement describes how we plan to do this. We will utilize the power of chemistry to save our planet and create a prosperous and sustainable future together," Pohl said.

"Germany and Japan both have very strong technology bases and the synergies we have created within our company in Europe will enable us to contribute to society and lead sustainability initiatives across the continent." ♦ **www.mitsubishi-chemical.com**



RWE: The partner of choice for the energy transition in Japan

RWE Renewables is No. 2 in offshore wind worldwide.

RWE Renewables' parent company RWE AG was established in 1898, when it began operations by supplying electricity to the city of Essen. Today, the company's success is founded on its ability to balance its distinguished heritage with innovative, clean energy developments and industry-leading solutions.

"Our company has been through a massive transition," said Sven Utermoehlen, CEO, Wind Offshore of RWE Renewables. "From our heritage of power production based on conventional energy resources to our focus now on delivering cost-effective renewable solutions, we continue to accelerate our pace and drive the global energy transition. In terms of emissions, as one of the world's leading renewable players, we aim



Sven Utermoehlen, CEO, Wind Offshore of RWE Renewables

to achieve net-zero by 2040 and are a key partner in delivering Germany's energy transition through clean, renewable energy and green hydrogen."

"These are being utilized in one of the world's largest offshore wind farm projects — the 1.4-GW Sofia

around the world. Our experience is second to none and we currently operate 17 offshore wind farms in five countries with RWE's share of the total installed capacity being around 2.5 gigawatts."

With a wealth of experience in integrated power distribution solutions and infrastructure planning, RWE Renewables is already a step ahead of the competition, and pushing forward with a number of innovative firsts across the industry. Not only is it using innovative foundation installation solutions and recyclable turbine blades at its German offshore wind farm Kaskasi, RWE also plans to install the Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy 14-megawatt wind turbines, the first of their kind to be installed.

"These are being utilized in one of the world's largest offshore wind farm projects — the 1.4-GW Sofia



RWE Renewables operates 17 offshore wind farms in five countries.

project off the British east coast. Around the world, RWE Renewables is forging ahead with the expansion of renewable energy in over 20 countries on five continents. "In terms of the Asia-Pacific region, Japan has been our focus since 2018," Utermoehlen said.

Strengthening connections between Duesseldorf and Japan

With over 8,000 Japanese people residing in the capital of North Rhine-Westphalia, Duesseldorf is often referred to as "Little Tokyo."

In addition to attracting some of the largest Japanese companies, a flourishing exchange between Duesseldorf's startup ecosystem and different Japanese startup ecosystems gained momentum during the past five years.

"Duesseldorf is part of JETRO's (Japan External Trade Organization) Global Acceleration Hub program and together with our partner digihub, Duesseldorf/Rheinland we have established a very successful matchmaking program for Japanese startups and German companies," said Theresa Winkels, director of Duesseldorf's Office of Economic Development.

"As well as the large corporations, we are attracting Japanese companies from industrial IoT (Internet of Things), digital health care, medical robotics and other emerging sectors."

"Our Japan Desk also supports the cooperation between digihub and X-Hub Tokyo, an accelerator platform for Tokyo-based startups which connects Tokyo's global innovation ecosystem with the world," said Benjamin Leonhardt, senior project manager at the Japan Desk of the office's International Business Service.

With Japan-centric infrastructure, a convenient location and access to Europe, Japanese companies started establishing their operations in Duesseldorf over seven decades ago.

"Japanese companies find that Duesseldorf offers a very Japan-like and open-minded environment," said Annette Klerks, head of department for International Business Service. "Our administration



The Japan Desk Team (left to right): Sabine Heber, Denise Schieberl, Benjamin Leonhardt and Annette Klerks, Head of Duesseldorf's department of International Business Service, Office of Economic Development.

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Contributing to European society through science and technology

An interview with Shimadzu Europe's new Managing Director Juergen Semmler.

Bridges: Since its establishment in 1968, how has the company grown in Europe?

Semmler: Shimadzu started off with five employees and developed over 50 years into a large European network with subsidiaries and distributors in 48 countries, employing more than 850 people. The first 25 years were dedicated to progressing the business and expanding the network. Since the 1990s, political and societal changes in Eastern Europe opened up new market opportunities and in the last two years we opened branches in Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

Most of our latest milestones are closely connected to automation, miniaturization of systems, digitization and coupling technologies. Digitization in particular holds both technological and creative potential. In analytical instrumentation and medical technology, it facilitates new applications (and) seamless workflows, as well as simpler, more accurate and faster measurements and tests.

What are Shimadzu's contributions to Europe in science and technology?



Juergen Semmler, Managing Director of Shimadzu Europe

active potential. In analytical instrumentation and medical technology, it facilitates new applications (and) seamless workflows, as well as simpler, more accurate and faster measurements and tests.

"Japan is dedicated to offshore wind farms and long-term sustainable renewables. Likewise, we are committed to nurturing our business relationships and helping Japan further develop this important industry." ♦ **www.rwe.com/en**

We have contributed through leading-edge technologies and dedicated staff. Shimadzu's medical and laboratory solutions serve health care and almost every manufacturing industry. Our portfolio provides consumer and environmental protection (and) patient and product safety.

A second aspect in this regard is the combination of analytical instrumentation and medical technology. This future-oriented approach enables solutions fighting today's most challenging diseases, such as diagnosing and treating cancer, dementia and endocrine disorders.

Tell us about the Shimadzu Laboratory World at your European headquarters in Duisburg, North Rhine-Westphalia.

This cutting-edge 1,500-square-meter area is a vibrant link: It hosts demonstration, testing, education and training — both for customers and staff

members. It covers Shimadzu's entire product range from chromatographs, spectrophotometers, TOC analyzers, mass spectrometers and balances up to material testing machines. And it creates an inspiring atmosphere for our team to develop new methods and technologies for future-oriented products.

What synergies exist between Germany and Japan specifically from your sector?

Both Japan and Germany are technology-oriented countries with high capabilities for innovation; they are leaders in patents and research budgets. In their business behavior, both cultures are reserved, precise and solution-oriented. Reliability and loyalty are highly valued. Regarding synergies, this is a good fit: They have the same understanding of doing business, and our high-tech portfolio created in Japan meets the engineering skills of our German team in order to customize technologies for German clients' needs. ♦ **www.shimadzu.eu**

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