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## Frankfurt Rhine-Main and Japan: Growing together, from strength to strength

Germany and Japan have enjoyed over a century and a half of robust bilateral relations since 1861. The highlights of this long-standing friendship include strong political discourse and international cooperation, as well as close-knit economic, cultural and societal ties.

### An intertwining of cultures

Roughly 75% of the population in Hesse, Frankfurt Rhine-Main (FRM), is of immigrant origin, comprising about 180 nationalities. Consul General Shinichi Asazuma of the Consul General of Japan in Frankfurt bears witness to the vibrant Japanese community amid a lively, multicultural population.

“We facilitate activity with Japanese companies here and support the daily lives of our nationals. For example, we have around 6,500 Japanese students in the region, Japanese football players in the Bundesliga (pro soccer league), and the like. It’s important to deepen the understanding of Japan within German society,” Asazuma shared.

Moreover, Frankfurt enjoys a spirited relationship with Yokohama, its sister



The European Central Bank's headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany

city. This year is the 10th anniversary of the partnership between Frankfurt and Yokohama. It’s interesting to see how the cultures have melded. “To commemorate this occasion, the city of Frankfurt launched a Yokohama-Frankfurt friendship train with pictures of the landscape of Frankfurt and Yokohama,” he said.

### A dynamic, central metropolitan region

Aside from its cultural diversity, Japanese investors are attracted to the FRM metropolitan region for its strength within the German and European economies, and for its prime location. As the second-largest metropolitan region in Germany, spanning three states (Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate and Bavaria) in the country’s central-western area, FRM headquarters a number of large corporations. “We have the European Central Bank headquarters and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, one of the world’s largest trading platforms for securities, too,” Asazuma noted. “With this environment, and its strength, geographically, FRM is a conducive, comfortable place for the

Japanese business community. There are around 300 Japanese companies here, mainly in the service and financial sectors, and also in research operations. FRM’s central location gives us convenient access to areas of Europe, as well,” he said.

In the wake of Brexit (the British exit from the EU), a number of Japanese financial institutions have chosen to move to FRM, given its ideal location and efficient, inclusive culture. “As an effect of Brexit, many Japanese financial institutions have moved the operations of their headquarters to continental Europe, especially to Frankfurt Rhine-Main,” Asazuma pointed out.

“Indeed, we have a long history of major inter-governmental, economic, and cultural exchanges, celebrating 160 years this year. And these relations can grow even deeper and stronger.” ♦



Shinichi Asazuma, Consul General of Japan in Frankfurt

## Hessen and Frankfurt: Open for business

An invitation from Rainer Waldschmidt, CEO of Hessen Trade & Invest, David Eckensberger and Carsten Ott.

Hessen’s convenient location at the very heart of Europe has played a vital role in establishing the state as one of the most internationally revered business and technology centers in the European Union.

long recognized the benefits of setting up a presence here. As the economic powerhouse of Germany, Hessen offers excellent business networks, future-oriented technology partners and a high quality of life. Within Germany,

### Feels like Hessen, feels like home

The Japanese community in the state of Hessen counts more than 5,000 people, with a majority in the city of Frankfurt. Whether through film, sports or culinary festivities, Japanese culture is celebrated in Frankfurt and its members are highly active and involved. Frankfurt is the proud host of the Nippon Connection Film Festival, the largest platform for Japanese cinema worldwide. Frankfurt Fashion Week has become an annual highlight for the fashion and lifestyle community as well as technology aficionados worldwide.

### Hessen: A place where future technologies meet lifestyle

Join us for an interesting exchange between Japan and the Rhine-Main region at the third KAI KO — German-Japanese Business Dialogue. The topic will be “Smart digital cities in Japan and Frankfurt Rhein-Main.”

Date and time: Nov. 26, from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. JST (9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. CET). ♦

[https://events.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/kaiko2021\\_2](https://events.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/kaiko2021_2)



Looking forward to getting in touch. From left to right: Rainer Waldschmidt, CEO of Hessen Trade & Invest, David Eckensberger and Carsten Ott

And while location is certainly a major decision-making factor for expanding businesses, it’s only one of many reasons why over 13,000 global players have selected to locate their subsidiaries in Hessen. As a global hub for forward-thinking industries such as information and communication technologies, electrical engineering technologies, life sciences, health care, automotive, electromobility and Industry 4.0, Hessen truly is the ideal “Gateway to Europe.”

international companies can rely on a robust economy, a high degree of legal certainty, competitive corporate tax rates and a stable yet flexible labor market.

### Are you interested in gaining a foothold in the German and European markets?

We, Hessen Trade & Invest, are your local experts for the state of Hessen and look forward to advising you and supporting your plans and investment projects.

[www.invest-in-hessen.com](http://www.invest-in-hessen.com)

## Early advocate of German-Japanese ties, Metzler continues to work closely with Japan

Metzler is the oldest private bank in Germany with an unbroken tradition of family ownership since 1674 and is the fifth-oldest financial institution worldwide.

Headquartered in Frankfurt-Main, Metzler offers know-how-driven advisory services and focuses specifically on providing individual capital market services for institutional clients and discerning private individuals in its core areas of business: asset management, capital markets, corporate finance and private banking.

“While rooted in history, we are a forward-thinking bank and continue to look for opportunities that enable us to stay ahead of the curve,” said Gerhard Wiesheu, a mem-



Gerhard Wiesheu, Executive Board Member of B. Metzler seel. Sohn & Co. AG

ber of the executive board of B. Metzler seel. Sohn & Co. AG who is also president of

the financial center initiative Frankfurt Main Finance.

“We do not engage in on-balance-sheet or lending transactions that could put us at risk. If a transaction does not fit our risk profile or contribute to our client’s long-term success, we simply do not get involved.”

In 2001, Metzler Bank opened an office in Tokyo. However, ties between the bank and the Metzler family and Japan go back much further. About 130 years ago, Moritz von Metzler (1869 to 1935) became the first member of the Metzler family to set foot on Japanese soil. In 1893, he even attended the summer festival of Emperor Meiji.

This year, Metzler celebrates the 20th anniversary of Metzler Asset Management (Ja-

pan), its subsidiary based in Tokyo.

“We have developed strong relationships in Japan and my personal friendships there go back 40 years or more,” said Wiesheu, who is also chairman of the Japanese-German Business Association.

“The Japanese market is very important to us and we are continually expanding our reputation as a competent partner in Japan.”

Both Germany and Japan have well-established industries and stable economies. As Japanese companies continue to invest in Germany, Japanese institutional investors are partnering with Metzler more and more. “I am confident that, as a well-suited partner for cross-border investment

solutions and due to many years of experience in this field, we can serve as a professional partner for Japanese investors in the German equity market,” Wiesheu said.

Economics and culture are often intrinsically linked. For the last 16 years, Metzler has been a main sponsor of the Nippon Connection, a Japanese film festival held in Frankfurt, which underlines that Metzler’s business commitment in Japan is long-term.

“We are deeply invested in strengthening our connections with Japan, our most important partner in Asia,” Wiesheu said.

“Japan is an ideal partner for Germany. The two countries share common values and business interests. They both have liberal societies based on the rule of law and they trust each other. We at Metzler will continue to work closely with our Japanese friends.” ♦ [www.metzler.com](http://www.metzler.com)

## Technology and trust lead to European success for Kuraray

Frankfurt Rhine-Main is home to the European headquarters of Kuraray Corp., a global specialty chemicals company and one of the world’s largest suppliers of industrial polymers and synthetic microfibers for many sectors of industry.

Kuraray Europe GmbH is Europe’s leading producer of polyvinyl alcohol and polyvinyl butyral. The company’s roots can be traced back to the establishment of a trading company in Duesseldorf in 1991. A decade later the company advanced its expansion in Europe by acquiring Swiss multinational chemical company Clariant AG’s polyvinyl alcohol and polyvinyl butyral operations in Frankfurt.

“The acquisition of this important Clariant business was a major milestone for Kuraray,” recalled Matthias Gutweiler, managing director of Kuraray Europe GmbH. “While this was the first time the company had acquired another business with a totally different company cul-



Matthias Gutweiler, Managing Director of Kuraray Europe

ture, it proved to be a perfect match. Kuraray has invested in Europe over the last 20 years and we have grown significantly. We have made a number of large European acquisitions, expanded capacity and grown organically. Within our organization, our businesses have developed and we have a strong and diverse mix of people and culture within the company.”

In two decades, the company’s sales turnover increased from €130 million (2001) to €730 million (2020) and today it employs about 1,000 people across Europe. Kuraray’s patented and global market-leading products, such as Trosifol and SentryGlas ionoplast interlayers are used for laminated safety glass applications in the architectural and automotive industries.

“Our solutions serve the needs of many different industries and can be used for various applications,” said Gutweiler. “We are the European leader in architectural glazing, are an important supplier to the automotive industry as well as to the packaging market. And all these markets have high potential: For example in the packaging market, an increase in public awareness about environmental concerns has resulted in higher demand for sustainable packaging. And we offer solutions such as biodegradable packaging solutions that completely dissolve



Kuraray Europe GmbH is Europe’s leading producer of polyvinyl alcohol and polyvinyl butyral.

in water or sustainable barrier coatings for paper packaging.”

Kuraray’s portfolio also includes chemical specialties, activated carbon products, thermoplastic elastomers, high-performance fibers, dental products and man-made leather.

“I have been with the com-

pany for 20 years and I am still impressed how we have developed,” said Gutweiler. “Strategic acquisitions are one pillar of success, but above all trust in our employees has improved our organizational alignment and contributed to our success in Europe.” ♦ [www.kuraray.eu](http://www.kuraray.eu)

## Introducing sustainable technology solutions for Japanese manufacturers

With a history dating back to 1779, Kurtz Ersä GmbH is a proud seven-generation technology company. Today, the company owns numerous patents and awards and employs 1,300 people in 135 countries.

Kurtz Ersä’s three business units are focused on electronics production equipment, automation and molding machines, and its innovative products and solutions are serving global manufacturing industries.

Innovation is key. Last year, Kurtz Ersä added 3D printing equipment to its portfolio with the Alpha 140. Combining innovative additive-manufacturing (3D printing) technology, ease of use and low system costs, the Alpha 140 is an optimal solution for the tool-free production of metal parts.

The company has also established a partnership with Laser Melting Innovations GmbH & Co. to develop metallic 3D laser printing solutions



Uwe Rothaug, Managing Director of Kurtz Ersä GmbH

to midsize companies looking for a fast and cost-effective entry into additive-manufacturing printing.

Kurtz Ersä’s Wave Foamer incorporates radio frequency (RF) technology and won the Bavarian Energy Prize for outstanding achievement in the field of energy.

The revolutionary Kurtz RF technology saves up to 90% on energy costs and allows for the production of molded parts with high recycling ratios.

As Japan encourages companies to incorporate carbon dioxide reduction, recycling, and water and energy conservation, Kurtz Ersä is strengthening its position in Japan.

“We have a strong partner in Japan for our electronics production equipment and we are looking for an agent for our molding machine business to introduce our equipment to the Japanese market,” said Uwe Rothaug, managing director of Kurtz Ersä.

“With RF technology and 3D printing continuing to revolutionize the Japanese industrial market, it is the right time to enter Japan and reach out to new customers. Our new technologies are capable of taking on projects previously done by foundries. By delivering solutions which save on materials and energy consumption, we can offer a sustainable approach to companies who want to do better business.”

“From machine adaptations to targeted integration of sensor technologies, our solutions are tailor-made to meet the needs of our customers and we are excited to introduce our solutions to Japan. With the right partner and distribution channel, we will contribute to Japanese industry and be successful in Japan.” ♦ [www.kurtz-ersa.com](http://www.kurtz-ersa.com)



Kurtz Ersä’s Wave Foamer incorporates radio frequency (RF) technology and won the Bavarian Energy Prize for outstanding achievement in the field of energy.

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