

GERMANY

A G7 spotlight on the EU's largest economy and the organizations strengthening Japan-Germany relations

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FINANCE • FRANKFURT RHINE-MAIN

Metzler Bank: Building on a wealth of time-honored ties with Japan

If “money makes the world go round,” as the adage goes, then those who make the money go round have a great responsibility on their shoulders. As the fifth-oldest financial institution globally and the oldest private bank in Germany with an unbroken tradition of family ownership since 1674, Metzler is well-acquainted with the weight of its role in the world of wealth.

“We are an institution rooted in history, but we're also a progressive, forward-thinking bank, always on the lookout for opportunities to stay ahead of the curve,” said Gerhard Wiesheu, a member of the executive board of B. Metzler seel. Sohn & Co., and president of the financial center initiative Frankfurt Main Finance.

Moreover, the group continues to provide its long heritage of trusted expertise to its Japanese clients, with strong relations that officially date to 2001, when Metzler Bank opened its Tokyo office. In reality however, ties between Metzler and Japan go back to 1893, when a member of the family, Moritz von Metzler, visited the country and participated in the cherry blossom festival of Emperor Meiji. To date, the relationship remains robust as ever — a bond that Wiesheu, who holds an advisory role in German-Japanese relations, looks to as “renewed.”

The Metzler top executive was part of the delegation for Chancellor Olaf Scholz's inaugural visit to Japan in April 2022, having also accompanied former Chancellor Angela Merkel on previous trips. This speaks not only to Wiesheu's value as an adviser, but also to Metzler's reputation as an iconic institution that is indispensable to the industry.



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

Wiesheu points out that the first governmental consultations between Japan and Germany supported by Scholz and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in March were a strong signal of the renewed rapport between Japan and Germany. “The relationship with Japan is very much important, economically, but also politically. It is now even more important, as Japan has long been an ally of Germany, since 1861 with the signing of a treaty on friendship, trade and shipping. And it has always been a solid, reliable relationship, built on trust. The difference now is that there is a huge, new dynamic coming into this renewed relationship,” he said.

“Our business with Japan remains solid, but not just for us. There is also a revitalized vigor in other sectors of business. If I look to the future, the next three to five years, I think the momentum of our relationship will go up even more tremendously, across many aspects,” Wiesheu concluded. ♦
www.metzler.com

MANUFACTURING • BAVARIA

Igus: Innovating engineering solutions for the motion plastics biz since 1964

In Germany's manufacturing industry, wherever anything moves, Igus is there.

For decades, the company has been in the business of developing and manufacturing motion plastics, which are high-performance polymers used for movement. These revolutionary, lubrication-free products — which include energy supply systems, highly flexible cables, plain and linear bearings, lead screw technology, 3D printing, Low Cost Automation, and smart polymers — are employed across a wide range of vital applications, in various sectors.

With 190 newly developed physical and digital products — like a low-cost robot operated through a virtual reality headset, and a smartphone artificial intelligence application that identifies and orders spare parts for various industries — Igus drives engineering forward.

Entering its 60th year in

‘We want to develop new solutions that even small companies with limited budgets can easily use.’

the business, Igus is taking a more creative and greener approach: “Enjoyneering — unleash your engineering power with play.” This direction showcases the latest



Frank Blase, CEO of Igus

motion plastics technologies in more innovative and sustainable ways, utilizing VR applications and low-cost automation, among others.

“The possibilities of virtual reality for mechanical engineering design are absolutely fascinating,” Igus CEO Frank Blase pointed out. “We want to develop new solutions that even small companies with limited budgets can easily use.”

With a thrust toward a carbon-neutral factory by 2025, the family-run company based in Cologne is in the thick of developing systems and improving the

environmental balance of plastics through progressive recycling programs. Alongside its technological expansion, Igus continues to broaden its global reach.

Presently, Igus has over 188,000 customers and around 5,000 employees at 31 locations, worldwide. Japan is an important market for this growth.

“Japan is one of the big countries for us, in terms of sales, and we've been doing business with the Japanese for more than 30 years. With our unique products, we are currently serving a roster of Japanese businesses, including machine tool builders, semiconductor manufacturing equipment builders, crane builders, automotive-related companies and more. There is an especially large opportunity in the Japanese automotive market. Currently, we're increasing resources in Tochigi, to increase production capacity. Igus is globally putting more and more focus on low-cost automation, too. We believe we can expand this business in the Japanese market, as well,” Blase shared. ♦
www.igus.eu



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT • NORTH-RHINE WESTPHALIA

Leveraging the power of potential for Japanese companies in Duesseldorf

Duesseldorf's Office of Economic Development is committed to supporting Japanese companies and startups in the dynamic capital of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Theresa Winkels, who heads the office, Annette Klerks, head of its International Business Service, and Benjamin Leonhardt from its Japan Desk, speak about the latest developments in the city.

Access the full interview: <https://bit.ly/DEJP23-DUS>

What is the current state of Japanese investment in Duesseldorf?

Winkels: With an average of 20 new companies per year between 2010 and 2020, Duesseldorf has consolidated its role as the leading business location for Japanese companies in continental Europe. After a pandemic-related decline in 2021 and 2022, we (are) once again experiencing a large number of inquiries from Japanese companies and will also see some branch openings of large companies — such as Epson Deutschland GmbH — here, over the course of the year.

Can you tell us about any upcoming investment projects or collaborations between German and Japanese companies in Duesseldorf?

Klerks: The biggest — and most exciting — collaboration



The 2022 Duesseldorf Evening event in Tokyo is the largest international promotional event for the city.

between a German and a Japanese company initiated in Duesseldorf is Rakuten Symphony's rollout of 1&1 5G network, the first fully virtualized 5G network based on Open RAN (Radio Access Network) technology outside of Japan.

What are the long-term goals of Duesseldorf's Economic Board regarding Japanese investment in the city?

Leonhardt: The main goal in terms of new investments is still to make Duesseldorf known as an interesting business location among Japanese startups. To this end, the cooperation between JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization), Digihub, and our Japan Desk within the framework of the Global Acceleration Hub program, in particular, forms an ideal basis, which is exemplified by JETRO's first-time participation with a Japan booth at this year's Digital Demo Day,

Digihub's flagship event with more than 250 exhibiting startups and more than 4,500 expected attendees.

In your opinion, what are the benefits of a strong relationship between Germany and Japan, and how does Duesseldorf fit into this?

Winkels: From our viewpoint, you can summarize the benefits, especially for the German side, with three words: trust, loyalty and innovation. As a business location that has profited for more than seven decades from the close cooperation with Japan, Duesseldorf will continue to serve as the main link for German-Japanese relations. ♦

www.duesseldorf.de/international/office-of-economic-development

