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# JAPAN COUNTRY REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although mechanisms for cultural exchange, notably the Japan Foundation, were introduced in Japan in the 1970s, it has been during the past decade that policy interest in cultural diplomacy (within the broader context of public diplomacy) has been most evident. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a Public Diplomacy Strategy Division and provides much of the funding for the quasi-independent Japan Foundation to support cultural and intellectual exchange. Programmes for international cultural exchange are also provided by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which is the main instrument of government support for Japan's domestic cultural sector.

Cultural 'exchange' in the Japanese reality focuses on providing opportunities for Japanese arts and artists to go overseas more than it does on reciprocity. Nevertheless, support for visits to Japan by foreign artists, intellectuals and cultural organisations is available, whether through government or a number of private foundations.

Currently, much of the government's interest, and certainly its financial resources, is being directed to a major branding initiative, 'Cool Japan', which is designed to promote interest in selected creative industries, culture and lifestyles. This campaign is part of a broader set of efforts to increase international opportunities for the export of Japanese cultural goods, enhance awareness of the 'uniqueness' of Japan, increase tourism and stimulate the domestic economy in the process. Initially managed within the Creative Industries Division of the Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry, responsibility for the initiative is being transferred to a newly created public –private entity and the focus will be on emerging cities in Asia. Key drivers for the investment in 'Cool Japan' are the loss to China of Japan's status as the second biggest economy in the world and, though not publicly acknowledged, the loss to South Korea of Japan's former pre-eminence in creative industry products and services, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

A number of possible avenues for greater EU-Japan engagement can be envisaged, especially if the focus is on the young generation. At the same time, there are inhibiting factors, including the difficulty of obtaining visas for EU States, the lack of confidence, language skills and the somewhat introverted mindset of Japanese creators, and the notion of engaging with the EU as an entity as opposed to individual Member States.

# INTRODUCTION

After Japan re-opened itself to foreign trade and especially following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, continental Europe quickly became infatuated with things Japanese. Ukiyo-e' prints and Japanese ceramics found a ready market with collectors in Europe, especially in France, and in the USA. For their part, affluent Japanese became fascinated with Western culture.

The Japanese economy rapidly expanded in post-World War II recovery years and, until recently, it was the world's second largest economy – a position it has now ceded to China. However, the economy slowed down in the late 1990s and has still not recovered, though Prime Minister Abe is in the process of introducing a range of measures to stimulate it.

Within Japan there is sometimes a perception that because Japanese cultural policy has a relatively short history, it was still 'learning', including in the area of cultural relations. Nevertheless, mechanisms were introduced for cultural exchange in the 1970s and in later years the government has sought to develop public and cultural diplomacy policies that emphasized its peaceful intentions in the region and beyond. Two examples by way of illustration are its support of cultural co-operation between the countries that constitute the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) and the Round Table organised in 2005 by the Prime Minister's Office on 'Better Implementation of Cultural Diplomacy – Final Report on Peace-Loving Japan through Cultural Exchange'. The latter sought to elaborate the ideal basis for Japan's cultural co-operation activities, in the conviction that the development of positive views towards Japan, and enhanced public communications by the country's intellectuals through their interactions with counterparts in other countries, can contribute to strengthening diplomacy both in depth and scope.[1]

The terms 'cultural exchange' and 'cultural diplomacy' are in common usage by government, as is 'public diplomacy'. The notion of 'country branding' has also become common in recent years as part of a campaign focused (and strengthened in 2013) on the nation's image, creative industry exports, lifestyle and cultural specificity – an approach which is based on Japan's portrayal of itself as ethnically and linguistically homogenous and culturally unique.

[1] This report was the final outcome of a series of round table discussions as well as hearings with international exchange related organisations. Online. Available (in Japanese) at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/bunka/kettei/050711houkoku.pdf.

# EXTERNAL CULTURAL RELATIONS IN THE POLICY CONTEXT

## Responsibility at government level

As a key player in Japan's public diplomacy policies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) considers that culture makes an important contribution to the development of Japan's external relations policies, enabling the promotion of the nation's distinctiveness in the global arena. How this was addressed strategically has been the focus of a number of reports and led, among other things, to the establishment of a Public Diplomacy Strategy Division in the Ministry. In 2008, a report was published on 'Measures and Structures to Strengthen Japan's Voice – Policies and Organisational Structures for Achieving Strengthened Public Diplomacy in Japan' on the basis of contributions from 17 representatives of academia, business and other key sectors.[2] The report considers issues such as how to conduct effective governmental outreach, what is lacking in Japan's existing system, and which policies are needed for the future. There is a recognition that the most effective use needs to be made of available resources and that there needs to be collaboration between a wide range of actors for the effective delivery of their different international activities. In pursuit of this line of argument, the report makes policy recommendations in the areas of international broadcasting of television, Japanese language education and Japanese pop culture.

The 2005 Roundtable report on the 'Better Implementation of Cultural Diplomacy' referred to earlier emphasized the need for strategic partnership through co-ordination between various stakeholders, the importance of planning policies strategically and implementing them effectively, while encompassing the relevant government ministries and agencies, experts involved in cultural exchange and the private sector. In this context, an Advisory Committee on Cultural Exchanges in Asia involving a range of stakeholders was set up in the Prime Minister's Office in April 2013.[3]

Partnerships and strategic co-ordination were also at the heart of 'Public Diplomacy in the Aftermath of 3.11 – A Report on The Future of Public Diplomacy in Japan', issued in July 2012 in the context of the Earthquake/Tsunami disaster of March 2011.[4] Compiled by six prominent opinion leaders from outside government, this examines the growing role of public diplomacy as part of Japan's diplomatic policies, strategies and activities by clarifying areas that need to be strengthened, as well as how public diplomacy should be designed institutionally. The report identifies future directions for MOFA's strategic public diplomacy and recommends, among other things:

- the need for appropriate strategic co-ordination of activities between the Ministry and the Japan Foundation, particularly at the planning stage;

[2] Online. Available (in Japanese) at: http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/shingikai/koryu/pdfs/toshin_ts.pdf.

[3] See at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/actions/201304/19asia.bunka_e_html.

[4] 'Public Diplomacy in the Aftermath of 3.11 – A Report on The Future of Public Diplomacy in Japan', July 2012. Online. Available (in Japanese) at: http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/culture/kondankai1201/pdfs/saisyu_hokokusho2.pdf.

- to further strengthen partnerships with the business community, academia, NGOs on issues such as human resources management, finance and institutional co-operation in public diplomacy;
- to follow up people-to-people exchange by continuing to engage with previous participants in such programmes.

It was to be expected that supporting foreign policy objectives, improving diplomatic relations, promoting dialogue and building trust with foreign publics and promoting a favourable image of the country would be considered as 'very important' to MOFA, as were increasing cultural exchanges, fostering people-to-people contacts and promoting the intellectual exchange of ideas. Other objectives considered 'important' are branding, supporting the cultural sector to expand their activities internationally, improving investments, exports and business relations in general and particularly in the creative industries, promoting translations, promoting higher education, and aid to developing countries. Less important to MOFA are supporting cultural diversity, strengthening civil society, supporting diaspora communities and, interestingly, using culture in external relations to contribute to conflict prevention and cultural security.

With regard to the level of importance MOFA attaches to sectors for cultural intervention, intellectual exchange in humanities, museums/touring exhibitions, heritage, performing arts, visual arts, literature, music, film and audio-visual, TV and radio, design, fashion, architecture and sport are all deemed to be 'very important' or 'important'. Less important to MOFA are libraries/archives, games, publishing and advertising.

MOFA's geographical priorities are said to be (in no specific order): USA, China, South Korea, ASEAN States, Europe, India and South Asia, and Australasia. However, it is increasingly evident that particular attention is being given to the Asia/Pacific region, as is demonstrated by Prime Minister Abe's visit to Indonesia in May 2013 when he observed that culture was one of the five priorities for Japanese-Indonesian co-operation.

Japan has not ratified the 2005 UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and, apparently, is most unlikely to (the government has signed a separate cultural trade agreement with the USA). However, having been one of the principal sponsors of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage it has readily ratified this international treaty and contributes significantly to its implementation.

A significant part of MOFA's public diplomacy budget is allocated to the quasi-independent **Japan Foundation**. The Foundation was created as an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1972 but, since 2003, has become an independent organisation, charged with a mission:

*'to contribute to the improvement of a good international environment, and to the maintenance and development of the harmonious foreign relationships with Japan, by the efficient and comprehensive implementation of activities for international cultural exchange'*.[5]

It has 22 offices in 21 countries, including six cities in EU Member States (Budapest, Cologne, London, Madrid, Paris and Rome).

The focus of the Foundation's work is arts and cultural exchange, Japanese-language education overseas, and Japanese studies and intellectual exchange. The Foundation's arts and culture programmes are designed to encourage understanding of Japanese culture and values through promoting links internationally in four principal sectors: visual arts, performing arts, films and publications, and culture and society. In the visual arts, the Foundation collaborates with domestic and international museums to produce major exhibitions, as well as small scale touring exhibits. It also supports the participation of Japanese artists in international exhibitions and organises exchange programmes for artists/practitioners. In the performing arts, the Foundation seeks to introduce both traditional and contemporary Japanese work in dance, theatre and music, including popular music, to overseas audiences. Grants and networking opportunities are provided. Assistance is given to foreign-made films on Japan, the screening of Japanese films in international festivals, Japanese film festivals and the overseas broadcasting of Japanese TV programmes. Japanese literature is promoted through translations, publishing and participation in international book fairs. Lectures and demonstrations are organised overseas on aspects of Japanese culture and society. Japanese expertise in heritage, music and sport is also funded via programmes to assist cultural development in other countries.

All but five of the 21 objectives listed in the interview protocol used for the consultation process were described as 'very important' or 'important'. Only improving investments, exports and business in general and specifically in the cultural and creative industries, attracting tourism, supporting diaspora communities, and promoting higher education (though not the aspect of academic exchange) were considered to be 'less important' or 'irrelevant'. When it came to the level of importance attached to types of intervention, 12 of the 17 sectors were described as 'very important' and a further two as 'important'. Only libraries/archives, interactive videogames and advertising were categorised as 'less important' or 'irrelevant' to the Foundation.

The annual budget of the Foundation in fiscal year 2013/14 is JPY 15.1 billion (113.3 million euros), of which more than 82 per cent comes from government subsidies from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Arts & cultural exchange represent 14.5 per cent of the operational budget of JPY 13.2 billion (99.7 million euros).

Although the Foundation indicates that it does not have geographical priorities, the overall allocation of its grants suggests that China, South Korea, South East Asia and the USA are a particular focus. Europe has not been a priority in terms of grant allocation in the last few years, though projects with Europe account for higher levels of expenditure in relative terms (the number of

[5] Article 3 of the Independent Administrative Institution Japan Foundation Law.

projects supported by the Japan Foundation in Europe in 2011 are referred to later in this paper and listed by country in Annex IV).

The **Agency for Cultural Affairs** is the principal government instrument providing financial support for the cultural sector in Japan. At the same time, it operates a number of programmes for international exchange and co-operation through its Office for International Cultural Exchange. Superficially its international work may seem to cover rather similar territory to the Japan Foundation and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the Agency insists its work is focused on the needs of the cultural sector and excludes foreign policy considerations. Certainly the Agency considers supporting the Japanese cultural sector to expand activities at international level, increasing cultural exchanges and co-operation, and fostering people-to-people contacts and intercultural dialogue and, a little less obviously perhaps, promoting dialogue and building trust with foreign publics, are all 'very important'. Supporting foreign policy objectives, improving diplomatic relations, supporting diaspora communities and contributing to conflict prevention and cultural security are considered irrelevant or beyond its competence. At the same time, the Agency considers the promotion of a favourable image of Japan and branding of Japan abroad as 'important'.

The Agency has sought to strengthen measures designed 'to make Japan a nation founded on culture, through artistic creativity' it can present confidently to the world. Its international cultural exchange and co-operation work falls into several categories:

- Participation in international forums, including the Japan-China-Republic of Korea Forum for Ministers of Culture, the ASEAN + 3 Meeting of Ministers of Culture (comprising the 10 Association of South East Asian Nations plus China, the Republic of Korea and Japan) and the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) of Culture Ministers.

- International exchange of artists and cultural specialists, through initiatives such as: the Japan Cultural Envoy programme that supports the visits of leading Japanese cultural practitioners abroad (almost half go to Europe) and invitations to celebrated foreign artists to come to Japan and engage with counterparts there; an Artists-in-Residence programme which invites young foreign artists to Japan; and study abroad opportunities for emerging young Japanese artists in different disciplines to study in other countries.

- The promotion of international cultural exchange and co-operation by supporting foreign performances by Japanese arts organisations in overseas festivals and events, as well as co-productions with, and performances by, foreign companies in festivals in Japan. Support can also be provided for the organisation of Japanese exhibitions and film festivals abroad. Projects that facilitate the transition of contemporary Japanese literature into other languages, especially English are also initiated by the Agency.

- The promotion of cultural heritage conservation and international co-operation in this field are also encouraged through support for research, preservation and restoration programmes and the exchange of expertise on Japan's and the world's heritage.

The **Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry** (METI) has an important role in external relations through its support for the export of Japan's cultural and creative industries (which today are worth more to the country's GDP than the Japanese car industry!) and its involvement in the 'Cool Japan' branding initiative. METI appears to adopt a fairly broad view of its mission (or at least the Creative Industries Division does). Nearly all of the objectives set out in the consultation questionnaire were deemed to be 'very important' or 'important'. Thus, not just branding or improving investment, exports and business in general and specifically in the creative and cultural industries were considered 'important' in METI's policy, but perhaps surprisingly so too were increasing cultural exchanges, fostering people-to-people contacts and intercultural dialogue and aid to 'developing' countries (METI has been advising the Indian Government on design and design policy, as well as building relations with Indonesia's cultural and creative industries). Only strengthening civil society, promoting higher education and conflict prevention were considered to be 'less important'.

A major concern of METI and the 'Cool Japan' campaign has been to develop and support 'talent'. For example, there may be celebrated Japanese fashion designers, but expertise is surprisingly low in the sector and METI considers it necessary to instil an international mind-set. The Creative Industries Division considers that Japan is less good at supporting individuals than companies. Young entrepreneurs and SMEs in Japan's creative industries need more support in development and export.

Nearly all the cultural sectors identified in the interview protocol were considered to be 'very important' or 'important' areas of intervention. Only libraries/archives were labelled 'less important'.

### The 'Cool Japan' branding focus

Following the destruction caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011, consideration was given to how confidence in the country could be restored among the population and how the international image of Japan could be rebuilt, especially in the context of the crisis at the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power station. Proposals by the Cool Japan Advisory Council in *Creating a New Japan* recommended that the government reinforce the marketing of Japanese products and content internationally, alongside urgent efforts directed to recovery and reconstruction. As a measure of public diplomacy, it suggested that the government establish a process of 'rediscovery and re-communication' and an export drive for products of the creative industries, such as traditional crafts, fashion, art, design and pop culture, as well as agriculture and regional lifestyles and establish linkages to tourism.[6] The overall targets identified in the document were to convert domestic demand-oriented industries into external demand-oriented industries through sustainable initiatives to create new fans of things Japanese (*Creating a New Japan*, p.18). An expansion in creativity was integral to the proposals and, among other things, it recommended:

- The relaxation of visa requirements to enable talented overseas creators to work in Japan;

[6] Cool Japan Advisory Council, *Creating a New Japan – tying together 'culture and industry' and 'Japan and the World'*, Tokyo, 12 May 2011, p.16.

- Developing information on Japanese artistic/creative talent for both domestic and international consumption;
- Fostering producers with 'uniquely Japanese sensitivities' to enable them to produce goods for overseas markets (*Creating a New Japan*, pp.15-16).

*Creating a New Japan* was only one of the strategic papers issued on stimulating the image and economy of Japan through branding as Daliot-Bul has noted.[7] The origins of the 'Cool Japan' concept appear to lie in both the so called 'Cool Britannia' attempts in the late 1990s to rebrand the UK through its popular culture and creativity, and an article in *Foreign Policy* by Douglas McGray.[8] The Japanese Government began to apply the 'Cool Japan' slogan to its nation-branding a few years later.[9] From 2011, the Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry began implementing 'Cool Japan' Overseas Strategy Projects (in India and Singapore) and domestically as a partner in the Creative Tokyo project designed to revitalise the capital's consumption and tourism. However, an external review in June 2012 concluded that major improvements were needed if the 'Cool Japan' campaign was to be advanced.

Shinzo Abe had sought to develop the branding of Japan during his first spell as Prime Minister, but did not survive long enough in the post to follow this through. This time as part of his strategy to revive Japan's stagnant economy, and bolstered by a healthy government majority, Prime Minister Abe has given the 'Cool Japan' initiative a huge boost with a pledge that JPY 50 billion (377.9 million euros) in capital will be pumped into the creation of a new public-private entity to take forward the branding exercise. One of the drivers for the importance attached to the initiative may also be the perception that in recent years Japan has begun to lose the former pre-eminence of its creative industries and products in East and South East Asia and beyond to South Korea.

Although the 'Cool Japan' initiative has been led by METI, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan Foundation, the Japan Tourism Agency, the Ministry responsible for broadcasting (Ministry of Communications), the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) and the Agency for Cultural Affairs are among the other government departments and agencies that also have some interests. The Agency for Cultural Affairs, for example, sees the 'Cool Japan' initiative as an opportunity for Japanese artists to sell their products through international trade fairs, etc.

Key steps to be taken in the initiative are:

- the creation of a Japan 'boom' in domestic and international markets;
- the creation of opportunities for creative industries and other businesses to go abroad, build alliances and spread information and awareness of Japanese products;

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[7] M. Daliot-Bul, 'Japan brand strategy: the taming of "Cool Japan" and the challenges of cultural planning in a postmodern age', *Social Science Japan Journal, 12, 2*, 2009, pp.247-266.

[8] McGray, D, 2002, 'Japan's gross national cool', *Foreign Policy, 130*, pp.44-54.

[9] Katja Valaskavi, 'A brand new future? Cool Japan and the social imaginary of the branded nation', *Japan Forum, Volume 25, Issue 4, 2013*, London: Routledge, 31 January 2013, p.1. Online. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2012.756538.

- the enhancement of the appeal of Japan through its goods with a view to generate inward tourism from both domestic and international markets and, in the process, stimulating the Japanese economy.

In April 2013, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry established a METI Creative Industries Internationalisation Committee to support and implement measures needed to strengthen the promotion of Japanese culture and contents globally. The Committee comprises senior entrepreneurs and company leaders in such areas as anime, games and manga publishers, fashion and culture. The following month, on 28 May, the Diet (Parliament) approved the creation of a public-private entity to manage and deliver the 'Cool Japan' initiative and dispense financial assistance from a Japan Brand Fund. This will support business activities that cultivate a demand for Japanese products and services that make full use of the 'unique' characteristics of Japanese culture and lifestyles. The *Creating a New Japan* document had recommended that Europe, especially cities such as London, Barcelona, Milan and Paris, and the USA should be targeted, as should Brazil, Russia and the Middle East. However, the focus in the initiative is most definitely cities in emerging parts of Asia. The intention has been to establish the new entity in November 2013.

### Some other players

The **Saison Foundation** is an independent body whose core work is to provide long-term support to artists and their activities, primarily in Japanese theatre and dance and to enable them to gain international recognition. Programmes include direct support to Japanese playwrights, theatre directors and choreographers appointed 'Senior Fellows' (aged 45 and under) and 'Junior Fellows' (35 and under) for creative work domestically or for overseas travel, research and collaboration. The second major plank of its support is for Partnership Programmes designed to enhance the 'infrastructure' of the contemporary performing arts in Japan, or to conduct international exchange projects that heighten the visibility of Japanese performing arts worldwide. In addition, Sponsorship/Co-sponsorship Programmes provide a small number of awards to arts practitioners from overseas to learn more about the Japanese performing arts scene through residencies in Japan (in 2013 these included an award to Jyoti Dogra, a director and performer from India and two European practitioners (see section 'Cultural relations with the EU and its Member States'). Altogether the Foundation has made 48 awards in the fiscal year 2013/14 totalling JPY 61,400,000 (464,100 euros).

They are a range of other Japanese or country specific foundations whose work includes support for cultural and/or intellectual and scholarly exchange, such as the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, the Fondation Franco-Japonaise Sasakawa, the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and the Nomura Foundation, which supports upcoming artists from around the world as well as arts exchange.

Cities are also empowered to play a role in cultural co-operation. The legal basis of their actions is Article 4 of the Basic Law for Promoting Arts and Culture and the Contents Promotion Law. There is particular interest in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Culture ministers from Japan, South Korea and China have agreed to initiate an East Asia City of Culture celebration, with Yokohama nominated by Japan to receive the accolade in 2014. China has chosen Quanzhan and

South Korea picked Gwangju. Each of the cities will feature a host of cultural events and exchange initiatives to further mutual understanding. This is significant in the context of recent territorial disputes and the difficult history between the countries.

### The cultural sector and civil society

One of the key facilitators of international engagement is **Pacific Basin Arts Communication** (PARC), which is a vehicle for promoting performing arts interests and co-operation in the Asia-Pacific region. It promotes the Tokyo Performing Arts Market (TPAM), recently renamed Tokyo Performing Arts Meeting, as a showcase for Japanese and other Asian performing arts companies. The change of name reflects the intention to provide a platform for wider debate between presenters, festival directors, companies and other performing arts practitioners in the region. TPAM has launched the online Open Network for Performing Arts Management (ON-PAM) as a means of building a national and international platform of presenters, producers, programmers, managers and festival directors, etc. to raise the profile of the social role of contemporary performing arts, act as an advocate for the sector and be a means of forecasting the future.[10] This development is expected to contribute to debates on a range of issues, including the government's approach to external cultural relations and TPAM's concern for more transparency in this area. TPAM collects information and data on cultural exchange flows to/from Japan in the performing arts.[11] This indicates that visits by Japanese performing arts companies and artists (e.g. performers, directors, choreographers, etc.) to countries outside the EU in 2010 were most often to South Korea, China (including Hong Kong and Macao) and the USA. This was very much the pattern the following year. The same three plus Russia were also the most prominent 'sending' countries of performing arts companies/artists to Japan in 2010, and were joined in 2011 by Canada.

Another organisation actively engaged internationally is the **Computer Graphics Society**, which seeks to create an environment for the creation, development, capacity building, appreciation, internationalisation and sales of media arts. It seeks to promote the work of young creative people and develop talents, especially through the Japan Media Arts Festival, which is 100% funded by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The Festival is a major event that celebrates outstanding works from animation and manga (comics), media art and games. It gives awards in media art, entertainment, animation and manga and attracts entries from all over the world (2,714 from 54 countries in 2011, while the 2012 festival attracted entries from 72 nations). Award winning works are exhibited in Japan (the 11 day exhibition in February 2013 was attended by some 60,000 people) and abroad, e.g. Vienna (2009), Istanbul (2010), Dortmund (2011) and Hong Kong (2012). It has also showcased works at other events, e.g. the Festival of Everything, Manchester.

Evident trends in Japan include the merging of new technology and manga and the evolution of anime as a 'legitimate' culture. Therefore, it is surprising that there remains relatively low public

[10] TPAM as newly constructed and ON-PAM resembles the Informal European Theatre Meeting international network for contemporary performing arts.

[11] Rod Fisher has extrapolated and interpreted some of this information in the section 'Cultural relations with the EU and its Member States'.

awareness in the country of new media arts and to address this, the Society has initiated DEPARTURES a website to introduce new media arts and showcase the work of artists from around the world (http://www.departures.com/).

An issue raised amongst those interviewed was that cultural operators and NGOs had no formal mechanism to contribute to Japan's cultural relations policy. To be fair, when developing policies MOFA says it frequently assembles conferences of experts and invites them to make proposals to the government. Similarly, when planning and conducting individual cultural exchange projects, MOFA works together with cultural figures and the private sector and, based on their participation and suggestions, projects are planned and carried out by the Japan Foundation and government. However, this tends to be on a rather ad hoc basis.

Another observation was that support from the Japan Foundation is rather one-way; it cannot easily fund overseas companies and performers to come to Japan, though it can support Japanese work in their own countries.

# CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES: REALITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Japan conducted bilateral cultural agreements with many countries from the 1950s to the 1980s. Today it has bilateral agreements or their equivalent with the following EU States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK. However, cultural engagement with other countries can be conducted without specific government-to-government agreements. The facilitation of cultural and people-to-people exchanges is also frequently mentioned in the statements and action plans agreed at periodic Japan-EU Summit meetings.

Turning to concrete action, the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Japan Foundation supported Japanese participation in cultural events such as celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of friendship with Germany in 2011 and the 20th anniversary of new diplomatic relations with the Baltic States the same year.

As part of the celebrations with Germany, the Japan Foundation organised a major Hokusai Retrospective exhibition in Berlin in association with Sumida City and Nikkei Inc., which attracted over 90,000 visitors. A solo exhibition of Japanese artist Atsuka Tanaka was presented in Birmingham in the UK and Castellón, Spain, in 2011, before its presentation in Tokyo. The same year Casa Asia in Spain and the Japan Foundation co-organised a number of events including an exhibition 'Japan: Kingdom of Characters' and 'Asia-Geek' an Asian digital content festival. In the UK a series of plays, readings, lectures and an exhibition were staged on the problems of modern Japanese society, while the Salon du Livre international book fair in Paris hosted 20 Japanese authors in 2012 as part of its spotlight on Japan. An international symposium in Tokyo on 'International Cities in Asia and Europe' held by the Japan Foundation in conjunction with the Council of Europe, in 2011, brought together mayors and practitioners from Japan, South Korea and Europe to explore the potential of cultural diversity to stimulate creativity and innovation.

Altogether, the Japan Foundation supported 707 projects related to EU Member States in fiscal year 2011/12, in the areas of arts and cultural exchange, Japanese language education, and Japanese studies and intellectual exchange. 114 of these were with Germany, 88 with France, 71 the UK, 53 Italy and 41 Spain. Specifically in the area of arts and cultural exchange 392 projects were supported in EU States by the Foundation and the same five countries were involved in the highest number of these (a numerical list by country is provided in Annex IV).

Examples of work in EU States supported by the Saison Foundation include: the site specific work of Japanese artist Akira Takayama at the Vienna Festival; a residency exchange programme between the Japanese Contemporary Dance Network and Finnish dance organisation Zodiac; and a collaborative project, 'Post Human Theatre', between Gakidan Kaitaisha and Polish theatre company Teatr Cinema. Since 1994 the Foundation has given annual support for Japanese participation in the Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels. The Foundation is also endeavouring to identify countries that Japanese artists rarely think of engaging with and for that reason it has supported the organisation Arts More Africa based in Brussels.

An analysis of information and data produced by PARC for the years 2010 and 2011 suggests the highest number of performances by Japanese performing arts companies/artists in theatre, dance, ballet, opera, entertainment (e.g. musicals) and inter-disciplinary work in EU Member States, took place in France, Germany and Italy. Those EU States whose companies and artists from the same disciplines visited Japan most often in 2010 were the UK, France and Germany. Belgian artists/companies were also very evident. French, German and UK companies/artists were also prominent in Japan in 2011.

The EU Delegation in Tokyo comprises more than 50 staff and has a staff member with a dedicated cultural role. Up to 20 per cent of the EU Delegation budget can be allocated to cultural activities, which are used as an instrument to showcase the EU (unlike the Japanese business sector there is little awareness of the nature of the EU amongst the Japanese populace at large). It has organised events such as European film festivals, and has collaborated occasionally with EUNIC, e.g. on a baroque concert in 2012.[12] There has also been co-operation between the EU and the Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, but attempts to collaborate with the Japan Foundation have not proved successful.[13]

EUNIC is, at best, only partly active. It meets periodically but, according to more than one member, little seems to happen between meetings and there has been no common project in 2013. Cultural institutes are generally too busy with their own work to engage with each other on projects. Moreover, according to one informant, the activities of some members are already 'complicated' by having cultural attachés at their nation's embassies and engaging with the EU and EUNIC simply adds another layer of 'bureaucracy'.

### Practical suggestions and possible obstacles to the development of a strategic cultural role for the EU in Japan

Some interviewees found difficulty in envisaging cultural co-operation with the EU as an entity. Unlike the tangible nature of engaging with individual Member States and their institutes, they found the concept of the EU to be too abstract. Nevertheless, a number of areas were suggested as possible avenues for engagement by the EU with Japan, as follows:

- Co-production in the audio-visual sector and the performing arts and co-curation in the visual arts and design were cited on several occasions, as were artists' residencies and intellectual exchange generally.
- Schemes that increased opportunities for the mobility of artists/performers and support for young creative entrepreneurs to develop their skills and network between Japan and the EU found favour – the British Council scheme to support Young Creative Entrepreneurs, but extended to developed economies such as Japan, was a model that could be adapted.

[12] According to at least one cultural institute the latter event was not the most productive means of engaging with the Japanese public and did not fit with the institute's local and corporate strategy of 'new work for new audiences'.

[13] A list of EU activities can be found in Annex II.

- Another possibility could be to capitalise on the EU's linguistic richness and diversity (the foreign language skills of Japanese creators is generally regarded as inadequate).
- Opportunities to engage in policy dialogue in the cultural sector on the basis of different models in Europe, or to share Europe's experience in the area of intercultural dialogue might also be worth considering.
- A number of European countries have expertise in digital arts that might be shared (despite its technical advances, Japan has been slow to digitize its cultural operations).

Although all of these suggestions have their merits, a number already form part of the programmes of some individual Member States or their cultural institutes (or could do so if sufficient resources were provided). This raises the question of where the European added value lies (except by, for example, ensuring such initiatives involve all or most EU Member States).

- However, one new area suggested was the development of a network of European/Asian new media festivals, as this would bring scale to such activities (the Japan Media Arts Festival attracts thousands of entries from many different countries for its awards).
- Another possibility might be the encouragement of cultural collaboration between creative cities in the EU and Japan.
- How the cultural sector internationalises itself is a big issue in Japan and perhaps consideration could be given to how the collective experience of EU Member States might be shared and whether this is something the EU might be able to facilitate?

Overall, what was evident from the consultation in Japan was the need for 'a big idea' to raise the EU 'game'.

Potential obstacles were also identified:

- Chief among these was the issue of visa admissions to EU countries in general and the UK and Germany in particular.
- Another problem identified on several occasions was the mindset of Japanese people, which has its roots in the education system. Young Japanese talent is often insufficiently international in outlook and lacks ambition. One of the contributory factors to this disposition is the inadequate language skills referred to previously (some artists need to study English or another European language before they have the confidence to engage with counterparts in Europe). There is a broader issue here in as much as Japanese creators of all ages often consider themselves to be poor at presenting themselves internationally. At the same time, it was also suggested that the Eurocentric mindset of some European 'actors' discourage greater collaboration.
- The provision of government funding on an annual basis in Japan was also seen as a disincentive to international engagement, as it made planning ahead more difficult and did not encourage a longer term perspective.
- Another problem in Japan is that civil servants in all levels of government operate on a three year rotating system. They tend to be generalists, rather than specialists. One of the complaints of Japanese cultural organisations for many years has been the fact that they

develop relationships with specific individuals in government only for the staff to move and they have to start again. Locally recruited arts officers in cultural institutes of EU Member States encounter similar problems.

- Finally trade tariffs applied by the EU and local regulations applied in EU States were also mentioned by METI as a hindrance to the export of Japanese creative sector goods to the EU.

# CONCLUSIONS

In recent years Japan has lost its global economic position to China and its cultural influence – especially in East and South East Asia – to another neighbour: South Korea. Consequently, it is not entirely surprising that its policy focus and new resources are being concentrated on the image of the nation through its 'Cool Japan' branding initiative. This is designed to strengthen its international profile and stimulate its domestic economy through the export and increased consumption of its creative industry products and services. However, the geographical focus is on the Asian region in general and emerging cities in particular, rather than on Europe.

Japan continues to have a number of government departments, public institutions and private foundations prepared to support cultural engagement with many parts of the world. The emphasis is on cultural 'exchange', though the deployment of that term can be misleading because the priority is rather one-way: the promotion of Japanese creators and culture and their work internationally.

However, international engagement is not necessarily on the radar of many Japanese cultural practitioners. There may be some substance in perceptions that Japanese creative people are naturally curious, yet, at the same time, many seem not to be internationally minded and lack confidence and language skills. They may regard international co-operation as complex and challenging and such perceptions are not helped by tighter visa restrictions to gain entry to EU States.

This study was limited by the number of individuals in the cultural sector it was possible to consult. Nevertheless, and at the risk of generalising, it is evident that Japanese cultural practitioners would have some difficulty with the notion of co-operation with the EU as an entity, unless there is a European funding stream on the lines of the Culture Programme 2007-2013 to which they and/or their European partners could apply. Nevertheless, a number of positive avenues for closer engagement that might be actively considered by the EU have been set out in this report.

The fact that the EU Delegation in Japan has given one of its personnel a dedicated cultural role indicates its commitment to support cultural activities on the ground. Currently though, EU actions in Japan appear to be primarily about promoting greater awareness of the Union, rather than for their relevance to the artistic/cultural work and interests of Japanese practitioners and the wider public. Moreover, initiatives such as the Baroque concert seem not to be synchronized with the priorities of a number of cultural institutes from EU States operating in Japan, whose strategies are focused increasingly on engaging with young people. More thought needs to be given to measures that connect with a younger generation. This suggests the need for a more strategic approach, to which the cultural institutes could usefully contribute if they could be sufficiently animated so to do.

# ANNEXES

## Annex I: Methodology and list of people consulted

The initial preparation of this report involved a mapping process conducted between March and mid May 2013. The process consisted of desk based research, in particular via official websites, research and academic papers and a mapping questionnaire sent, via the British Council in Tokyo, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan Foundation, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry. Questionnaire responses (sometimes translated from the Japanese with the help of the British Council) provided variable levels of information. Moreover, some websites provided only limited information or text in Japanese script.

The next phase of the study, a consultation visit to Tokyo, was intended not only to consolidate facts gathered and plug information gaps from the mapping process, but also to obtain opinions of the reality on the ground. Meetings were arranged through the good offices of the British Council in Tokyo and it is important to acknowledge the assistance of Manami Yuasa, Natsumi Sakuma and Director Jeff Streeter. Although the visit was short of duration (three working days), it was possible to meet senior officials from the key government departments, as well as representatives from the Japan Foundation, the Saison Foundation, the EUNIC hub and the EU Delegation office. However it was only possible to meet two individuals from the cultural sector (albeit extremely well informed and experienced ones). Unfortunately, there were no discussions with officials from the Tokyo Metropolitan Authority (the largest local authority in the world) nor any other city government. A broader range of encounters with civil society might have enriched the information obtained and thrown up a more diverse range of issues about international cultural relations from the perspective of the cultural 'actors'.

**Individuals interviewed (in alphabetical order)**

The following individuals were generous with their time and contributed information, opinions and ideas that have helped shape this report.

- **Yoshihisa Abe**, Director, Cultural Division, Computer Graphic Arts Society (Japan Media Arts Festival)
- **Atsuko Hisano**, Programme Director, The Saison Foundation
- **Naoyuki Kawagoishi**, Deputy Director, 'Cool Japan' Promotion Office, Creative Industries Division, Commerce & Information Policy Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry
- **Satoko Kojima**, Director of Planning & Evaluation Division, General Affairs Department, Japan Foundation
- **Hiromi Maruoka**, Chief Director, Japan Centre, Pacific Basin Arts Communication (PARC); Director, Tokyo Performing Arts Market
- **Junya Nakano**, Director, Office for International Cultural Exchange, International Affairs Division, Agency for Cultural Affairs
- **Tomoyuki Saito**, Public Diplomacy Strategy Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Hiroko Tsuka**, Managing Director, General Affairs Department, Japan Foundation

- **Koji Yotetani**, Director, Public Diplomacy Strategy Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Tomoaki Yotsuya**, Director, Overseas Programme Co-ordination Division, Overseas Policy Planning Department, Japan Foundation

The following individuals attended a focus group of members of the EUNIC hub and representatives of the EU Delegation:

- **Rudie Filon**, Head of Press, Public & Cultural Affairs Section, EU Delegation, Japan
- **Teresa Iniesta**, Cultural Manager, Instituto Cervantes, Japan
- **Ineke van der Pol**, Press & Cultural Affairs Counsellor, Embassy of the Netherlands, Japan
- **Jeff Streeter**, Director, British Council, Japan[14]
- **Eva Takamine**, Head of Czech Centre, Tokyo
- **Hiroko Takebe**, Cultural Affairs Officer, EU Delegation, Japan
- **Raimund Wordemann**, Director, Goethe-Institut, Japan

[14] A separate meeting with Jeff Streeter also took place.

## Annex II: EU-Japanese joint programmes and initiatives

**EU-Japanese cultural cooperation activities run by the EU Delegation**

Main projects/events organised or co-organised by the EU Delegation to Japan:

- **EU Film Days**: 3-4 weeks of films from 20+ Member States shown at a professional venue in Tokyo and (depending on the year) a shorter version in the regions (co-organised with 20+ embassies of Member States).
- **EU Open Day**: one day at the EU Delegation showcasing music/dance, crafts, food, etc. from multiple Member States.
- **Several film screening sessions/lectures at the EU Delegation**: e.g. an 'EU animation evening' – a selection of short animation films selected by the Ars Electronica Festival (co-organised with the Austrian Embassy).

The **EU Film Days** and the **EU Open Day** are generally held each year under the umbrella of 'EU-Japan Friendship Week', which contains a wide range of public diplomacy activities, not only in the field of culture.

Projects/events supported by the EU Delegation:

- **Osaka European Film Festival**: run by an independent organiser. Until 2013 the EU Delegation has provided a certain amount of support (contribution in kind). Continued support for this is under review.
- **Baroque concert organised by EUNIC Japan** (in 2012), with in-kind contribution provided by the EU Delegation.

In addition, the EU provides nominal support ('koen') for a variety of cultural events, and the EU Delegation's regional networks (EU Associations, EU Information Centres, EU Institutes) also organise various events, some of them cultural, which the EU Delegation in Tokyo supports.

## Annex III: Bibliography and references

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## Annex IV: Projects supported by the Japan Foundation for EU countries in fiscal year 2011

Information kindly provided by Tomoaki Yotsuya, Japan Foundation, 6 June 2013.

| | Arts & Cultural Exchange | Japanese-Language Education | Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 8 | 4 | 5 | 17 |
| Bulgaria | 6 | 9 | 7 | 22 |
| Czech Republic | 9 | 5 | 4 | 18 |
| Denmark | 5 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Germany | 72 | 16 | 26 | 114 |
| Estonia | 11 | 3 | 0 | 14 |
| Greece | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Spain | 25 | 8 | 8 | 41 |
| France | 61 | 11 | 16 | 88 |
| Ireland | 2 | 5 | 3 | 10 |
| Italy | 28 | 10 | 15 | 53 |
| Cyprus | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Latvia | 7 | 4 | 2 | 13 |
| Lithuania | 10 | 3 | 4 | 17 |
| Luxembourg | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Malta | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hungary | 12 | 16 | 5 | 33 |
| Netherlands | 14 | 3 | 3 | 20 |
| Austria | 13 | 1 | 4 | 18 |
| Poland | 19 | 8 | 8 | 35 |
| Portugal | 14 | 1 | 2 | 17 |
| Romania | 15 | 11 | 5 | 31 |
| Slovak Republic | 5 | 3 | 4 | 14 |
| Slovenia | 7 | 7 | 5 | 19 |
| Finland | 7 | 3 | 4 | 14 |
| Sweden | 7 | 1 | 5 | 13 |
| United Kingdom | 30 | 9 | 32 | 71 |