

Background to the EU-Japan Industrialists' Round Table and the EU-Japan Business Forum merger

The [January 1998 EU-Japan Summit](#) called for a reinforcement of the dialogue between the European and the Japanese business communities. At the time, the existing structures enabling an EU-Japan business dialogue were the **EU-Japan Industrialists Round Table** and the **EU-Japan Business Forum**.

The Commission expressed the wish that more input into the political agenda of EU-Japan relations (e.g. Mutual Recognition Agreements) should be drawn from the discussions held in these forums.

The EJIRT co-Chairs indicated that they would welcome a gradual evolution towards a more comprehensive dialogue on the model of the Transatlantic Business Dialogue (between the EU and the U.S.). A first step in this direction was the **co-ordination developed between the Round Table and the Business Forum**, which held meetings in [Tokyo on 8-10 October 1998](#), including a joint working session and a joint social event.

Following the merger, the EU-Japan Business Dialogue Round Table (or "BDRT") held its inaugural meeting in [Brussels on 7 & 8 October 1999](#).

EU-JAPAN INDUSTRIALISTS ROUND TABLE

The **EU-Japan Industrialists' Round Table** (or "EJIRT") was created in February 1995. Chief Executives of 27 leading EU and Japanese enterprises met for a "roundtable" discussion once a year in Tokyo and Brussels alternately to review the factors affecting trade and industry, to exchange opinions freely and to deepen mutual understanding. The meetings were co-chaired by Viscount Etienne Davignon and Dr. Tadahiro Sekimoto, Chairman of NEC Corporation and Chairman of the Board of Councillors of KEIDANREN.

The purpose of the EJIRT was to develop a permanent dialogue on industrial policy issues of common interest between some of the most prominent industry leaders of Japan and the European Union, in order to:

- **discuss jointly on how to address competitiveness challenges** faced by both sides' industry;
- **make relevant policy recommendations** to the European Commission and the Japanese government on (de)regulation measures and industrial policy;
- identify domains where **EU-Japan industrial co-operation** should be developed.

The characteristics of the EJIRT were:

- **flexibility**: this forum is informal enough to enable frank, open and free discussions between the members;
- **continuity**: meaningful discussions and results can be achieved thanks to the permanent membership of European and Japanese industrialists; participants develop between them a deep and friendly relationship, which lead to a mutual trust and enable relevant follow-up actions;
- **high political visibility**: members are distinguished and respected business leaders and the EJIRT was strongly supported by the Commission and Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

The EJIRT had working parties on **electronic commerce; competitiveness and deregulation; and on Telecommunications Standards**.

EU-JAPAN BUSINESS FORUM

The **EU-Japan Business Forum** comprised senior executives and academics from both Europe and Japan and met on average every 9 months to discuss various issues of mutual interest in an open and frank manner. Although such meetings are private, full reports of the proceedings were published after each event.

Dr. Tom Hardiman was the Forum's Rapporteur and final EU-side Chair. Mr. Yotaro Kobayashi, Chairman and CEO of Fuji Xerox and one of Keizai Doyukai's 12 Vice-Chairmen chaired both Keizai Doyukai's Committee on Europe-Japan Relations and the EU-Japan Business Forum.

The meetings of the EU-Japan Business Forum mainly deal with the economic situation in Europe (introduction of the Euro and enlargement) and in Japan (financial crisis, deregulation), and with EU-Japan co-operation in Third Countries, a theme formerly dealt with by the Round Table.