

Finland and Japan Defining the Future Together



Tanja JÄÄSKELÄINEN
Ambassador of Finland to Japan

Ms. Tanja Jääskeläinen is the Finnish Ambassador to Japan since 2022. Before Tokyo she has worked as Deputy Director General at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. She has also served as Ambassador to Tunisia (2013–2017). Jääskeläinen has worked at the Embassies of Finland in London (2009–2013), Damascus (2001–2003) and Budapest (1996–2000). She entered the MFA in 1995 and held different positions there including Senior Diplomatic advisor to two Foreign Ministers (2007–2009). Jääskeläinen holds degrees of Master of Social Sciences and Master of Art.

The friendly and close relationship between Finland and Japan is developing strongly and there is much interest towards Finland in Japan, and vice versa. Due to the global geopolitical situation, including Finland's accession to NATO, visibility of Finland in Japan has risen to a completely new level. In 2022 we were happy to welcome to Japan Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister as well as the Parliament's Constitutional Law Committee, to name but a few. The high-level visits have given a strong boost for collaboration in many sectors including business and innovation.

Finland is known for its strong ecosystem of open innovation, where start-ups, large companies, universities, research institutions, and other players not only originally from Finland but from around the world work together. Investments into Finnish start-ups have been growing steadily, reaching a new record again in 2022 with €1,8 billion, more than half of which is from abroad. Today, Finland is home for many promising start-up ecosystems and Slush, the world's leading

yearly start-up event started as a student-led activity in 2008. Innovations and creativity flourish when people meet, talk, bond and challenge each other.

I am proud to say that Finland offers innovation and opportunities in one of the world's most stable, smart, and sustainable economies. According to UN Sustainable Development Report, Finland is the leader and the number one country in achieving the UN SDGs. We rise to ambitious climate targets with groundbreaking ecosystems and cutting-edge research.

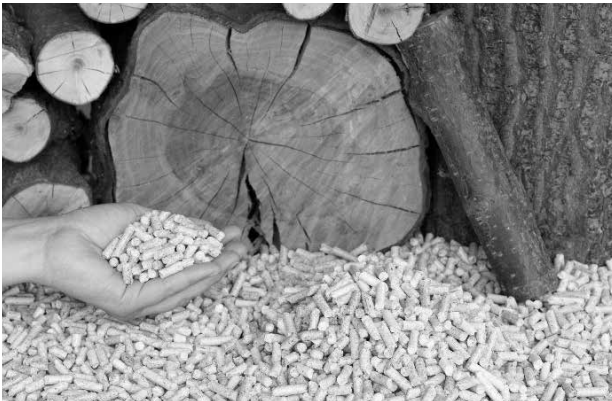
Finland is among the global forerunners in climate change mitigation and in turning knowledge into action. Some of the green start-up innovations coming out of Finland are rather astonishing. Just imagine soft and chemical-free fibre for clothes, made out of wood; or biodegradable bio-plastic containers made out of wood-industry by-products. Finland already has the solution to resolve the single-use plastics waste issue.

The partnership between Finland and Japan will be more important than ever in the field of green transition. I am happy that Finnish-Japanese collaboration already exist in Cleantech and in renewable energy. KANSAI Electric's onshore wind farm projects in Piiparinmaki and Alajarvi are among the largest ones in Finland target to operate in 2023 giving invaluable experience for KANSAI Electric to run large-scale wind farm business. Share of renewable energy, especially wind power, is in steep increase in Finland, offering attractive possibilities for investors looking for an ample supply of emission-free electricity.





Furthermore, some noteworthy projects are already ongoing between Finland and Japan in bio and circular economy. Joint Venturing pilot plant of ITOCHU and Metsä Group has been established for production of cellulose fibre and Lyocell made of wood, which is an enabler for sustainable and circular apparel. This project takes advantage of the long-term relationship between ITOCHU and Metsä Group. Today's collaboration extends beyond traditional paper and pulp business with the aim to jointly invest in developing wood-based textile fibre.



Being home to many prosperous ICT companies and technology experts, Finland is one of the most digitalised countries in the world. Japanese companies having presence in Finland are benefitting the Finnish business environment in the ICT and digital areas. For example, Mitsubishi Logisnext is utilizing Finnish knowhow in mobile machinery industries and collaborating with other leading companies residing in Finland. Indeed, there is a lot of open source and software development capability in Finland for other companies to benefit from.

Moreover, our ecosystem and business environment offers high levels of continuity, trust, and transparency,

which I believe important for foreign investors and businesses. Transparent government and effective state institutions are one of the pillars for our well-functioning society that also reduces risks for international business. Finland consistently ranks among the best in the world for transparency and the perceived lack of corruption.

Trust, equality and low hierarchies are also staples of Finnish work culture. Public digital services are developed with a strong accessibility and customer focussed approach. Equality, education and wellbeing improve business performance. Happiness does not just happen; it is built into the fabric of our society.

Finland has long since recognised that our greatest national asset is after all not forests or even sauna. It is the people. We have invested for long in high-level education and life-long learning and we are an agile nation of designers, engineers and problem-solvers at the forefront of innovations. Young people are encouraged to study abroad and I am happy to note the existing strong links between universities in Finland and in Japan, fostering mutual learning, science, research and development.

People-to-people connections form an important glue between any countries and create collaboration for future generations. Gaining new experiences will soon become easier with the new working holiday agreement between Finland and Japan. The reciprocal agreement will give Finnish and Japanese nationals aged 18 to 30 the right to stay in the partner country and work to a limited extent in order to fund their travels. This is an opportunity for young people to discover our country and get inspired by our strengths.



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