

## Inside this issue

- Fischer Connectors and the Japanese market 1 + 2
- New VAT rates in Switzerland 3
- 2017 ends with several good surprise for the Japanese economy 3
- Self-healing glass discovered at Tokyo University 4



INTERVIEW

## Fischer Connectors and the Japanese market

Interview with Ricardo Rodriguez, International Sales Manager, Fischer Connectors

### *Could you please briefly introduce Fischer Connectors?*

Fischer Connectors was founded by Walter Werner Fischer in 1954. Since then, the multinational company has been designing, manufacturing and distributing worldwide high-performance connectors and cable assembly solutions that are known for their reliability, quality and resistance to extreme environments. Fischer Connectors has always been on the edge of the connectivity market in bringing tailor-made solutions that fulfill its customers' highest requirements.

Since 2016, our young and dynamic new CEO, Mr Jonathan Brossard, has been leading us towards the next innovative challenges able to address the connectivity trends in miniaturization, high data transmission, ultra-ruggedness and wearability.

### *What can you tell us about the connector business in our time of digitalization?*

Our world is digitalizing in many ways, but connectors still remain an important and growing market. Wireless transmissions are spreading, but in many cases, especially for some very sensitive activities such as the medical field or military forces, a



The Fischer Connectors Group is headquartered in Switzerland, Saint-Prex (canton of Vaud)

cable connection is the only way to guarantee a perfect transmission of the signal. Digitalization increases the number of machines and the connection between them, so our market is not shrinking. On the contrary. The demand may vary but there is still room to develop new solutions for those new requirements. Digitalization is also all-important in terms of engineering and manufacturing. Fischer Connectors' recent investments in its industry 4.0 smart factory located in the Group's worldwide headquarters of Saint-Prex (canton of Vaud) have made the company's R&D department, production chain and logistics even more agile and responsive to our customers globally.

*Fischer Connectors is operating all around the world. How*

### *many overseas offices do you have?*

Currently we have eight subsidiaries in our main markets: USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, India, Hong Kong and, since recently, Japan.

We also rely on a large network of more than 45 agents and distributors throughout the world.

### *Could you tell us more about this office you recently opened in Japan?*

Fischer Connectors has been already present in Japan for many years through our dedicated distributors. In opening our new subsidiary in Tokyo this year, we are now even closer to our Japanese customers so that we can seize and perfectly understand their requirements, and thus better meet their needs and help them develop innovative

## Fischer Connectors and the Japanese market

会見

INTERVIEW

solutions even faster. Providing our customers with a direct engineering and technical support is a necessity for such a global company as Fischer Connectors, which wants to play a major role in the connectivity industry of the third world economy and a very innovative country like Japan.

### *What were the reasons behind this decision?*

I have noticed during my latest visits to Japan that some of our key customers had a need for a closer relationship. Basically, they were asking for more regular visits and meetings to discuss their challenges and ask questions. Key customers looking for tailor-made solutions require a direct contact with their manufacturer. Moreover, Japanese customers value our expertise, precision Swiss-made products and breakthrough innovations, and especially the way we always strive to meet and exceed their expectations when it comes to product performance, on-time deliveries and responsive customer support.

### *In your experience, is there any difference between the Japanese market and other markets?*

The Japanese market and Japanese customers are very demanding. It is important to build up a trustful relationship between both partners. It takes time and dedication to win this trust and be fully integrated into the Japanese market, and it's worth taking the time because the potential is huge. Our Japanese General Manager based in Tokyo has also all the experience,



Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez, International Sales Manager

expertise and the professional and cultural background we need to facilitate the implementation of our marketing & sales strategy in Japan.

### *What challenges have you faced or are you still facing?*

At the moment, our first priority is to increase our visibility. We have already planned to participate in tradeshows to showcase our expertise and solutions in fields that require faultless quality such as defense & security, medical, robotics, unmanned systems vehicles (drones, UAVs), industrial, instru-

mentation, audiovisual, transportation and energy. For examples, we will be present at Medtec Japan in April 2018 and at Japan International Aerospace in November.

### *How has JETRO been able to help you during the process in opening your subsidiary in Japan?*

JETRO has been an important partner in all the phases of the project, from the definition of the requirements to the implementation of our Japanese office. What I highly appreciated in JETRO was the availability of its experts, who helped me to better understand Japan's regulatory system and business culture, as well as to expand our professional network.

### *What are your feelings about this experience so far?*

It has been a great experience for me to kick-start this important business development, to be on the right track from the beginning and get the ball rolling. I would recommend any company willing to establish a subsidiary or a business in Japan to contact JETRO and benefit from their expertise.



Fischer Connectors: high-performance connectors

## New VAT rates in Switzerland

Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, the tax on added value (VAT) has decreased in Switzerland. Until last year, the country used to have three rates: the normal 8% rate, a 3.8% special rate for accommodations and a 2.5% reduced rate. Those rates were chosen by the people through a vote in 2011. They were fixed on a temporary basis, in order to refund disability insurance. Since 2011, two federal projects asked for an increase of the VAT starting in January 2018. The two projects were a refund of the infrastructure fund and a re-

fund of the state pension (1st pillar). With those two projects, the temporary rates we had until the end of the year should have become permanent. Because Swiss people refused the pension reform in September 2017, the VAT rates are partially going to decrease. The normal rate and accommodation rate are going to decrease to 7.7% and 3.7%. The reduced rate remains unchanged.

The impact of this change remains difficult to predict. On one hand, companies and customers could

benefit from this decrease, even if for small purchases the difference will be very little. On the other hand, this change comes with an administrative cost for companies, because they will have to adapt all of their accounting system and invoices.

Finally, this decrease will not last. There is a general agreement in the Parliament to refund the pension fund with an increase of the VAT, as planned before.

動向

SITUATION

Evolution of the VAT rates in Switzerland	Normal	Accom. services	Reduced
As of 1 January 2018 (VAT rate increase FERI)	7.7%	3.7%	2.5%
1 January 2011 VAT rate increase in favor of the Disability Insurance [DI] limited until 31.12.2017	8.0%	3.8%	2.5%
1 January 2001 Implementation of the VAT Act; VAT rate increase for the financing of the Large-Scale Railway Projects [FinöV]	7.6%	3.6%	2.4%
1 January 1999 VAT rate increase in favor for the Old Age and Survivors' Insurance [OASI] and the Disability Insurance [DI]	7.5%	3.5%	2.3%
1 October 1996 Introduction of the special rate for accommodation services	6.5%	3.0%	2.0%
1 January 1995 VAT Ordinance	6.5%		2.0%

Source: Federal Administration

## 2017 ends with several good surprises for the Japanese economy

Having decreased to 2.7% in November, the unemployment rate has surprisingly reached a level that it has not reached during the last 25 years.

The Bank of Japan confirms that being stably under 3% for months, the Japanese economy is virtually in full employment. Other figures have also surprised the market as better than expected. Household

consumption also improved, with a 1.7% increase in November. Representing around 60% of GDP, domestic consumption is a key point for the recovery of the Japanese economy. The government is stimulating the demand through Abenomics, but households should eventually take over. In order to stimulate the demand, Prime Minister Abe asked companies to

end with the deflationist spirit and offer at least 3% salary increases.

Last but not least, the Japanese inflation rate increased to 0.9% instead of 0.8% before. Even if most of this increase is due to the energy price increase, it was still a good surprise for the market that expected it to remain stable.

動向

SITUATION

## 革新

INNOVATION

## Self-healing glass discovered at Tokyo University

Your smartphone fell on the floor and its glass is broken? Don't worry! Because we are in 2025 and it will heal itself if you simply press the broken parts together.

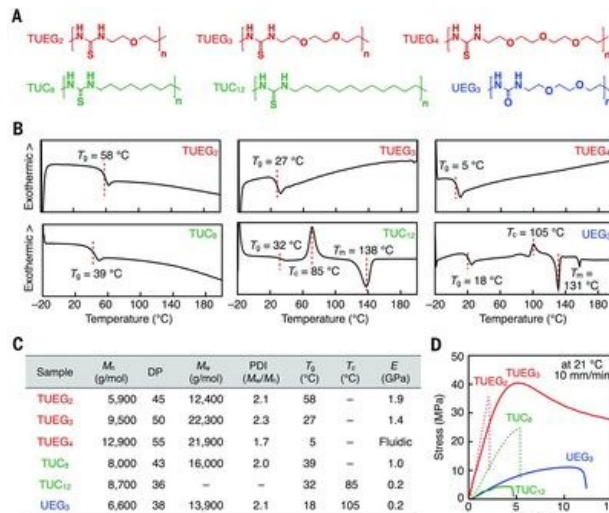
It will probably not be that simple, but a Japanese researcher at the University of Tokyo discovered this new type of glass by accident. Until now, glass could be repaired by heating it at a high temperature. With this breakthrough, there will be no need to heat it, a simple and quick press with your fingers is enough.

If self-repairing materials already exist, it is the first time that it has been possible with glass.

However, asked by the [Japan Times](#), Yanagisawa explained that

this breakthrough is more about making stronger and more durable materials than really expecting to repair what is already broken. "When a material breaks, it has already had many tiny scars that

have accumulated to result in major destruction," Yanagisawa said. If a material can self-heal those tiny scars it accumulates over time, its durability could be significantly increased



Source: [University of Tokyo](#)

The detailed article is available in [Science Magazine](#)

## Agenda

## 日程

AGENDA

- ✓ Save the data for the Impulse Event: Japan  
Event co-organized by JETRO, S-GE and the Swiss Japanese Chamber of Commerce (SJCC)  
Zurich February 27, 2018

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:  
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

JETRO

Japan External Trade Organization

JETRO Geneva  
80, Rue de Lausanne  
1202 Geneva  
Phone: 022 732 13 04  
Fax: 022 732 07 72  
E-mail: SWG@jetro.go.jp