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*VS Technology* opened its European office in Winterthur

*VS Technology* is an engineering and manufacturing company that develops lenses and lightings for the machine vision market. "VS" stands for "Vision System", but also "Valuable" and "Speedy, Small and Specialized". "Machine vision systems are used for the inspection of any products, for example in the electronic, food or printing industries. They also serve for the guidance of manufacturing equipments", explained Tatsushi Oda, CEO of VST Europe AG and application engineer.

Mr. Oda has been working at VST for more than 10 years. In charge of the German market at the Japanese headquarters, he was travelling frequently in Europe. He opened the Winterthur-based European office in 2010.

*Growing markets in Europe*

Headquartered in Tokyo, *VS Technology Corp.* has six sales offices in Japan and four overseas offices in Asia and in Europe (Winterthur). It also has manufacturing factories in Japan, Philippines and China.

Its Zao facility in Japan is located only 30 kilometers from Sendai, in the earthquake-



Tatsushi Oda, CEO of VST Europe AG and application engineer

stricken area. When the earthquake occurred, its production stopped. "It resumed operation only five days after the earthquake and returned to full production within two weeks, because it is located on a hill with a strong ground structure. We were just lucky. No equipment or product was damaged at all", said Mr. Oda.

*VS Technology Corp.*'s turnover increased approximately 15% in 2011, showing a rapid growth at the beginning of the year and a slowdown by the end of the year due to the euro crisis. "Machine vision systems began in the United States, followed quickly by Japan. It is now expanding in Europe, with Germany as a mar-

ket leading country".

*European sales office in Switzerland*

*VS Technology* opened its European sales office in 2010 in Winterthur's Technopark. It has three staff members.

The company decided to locate its office in Switzerland and Winterthur for many reasons. "We are in the centre of Europe, close to European industrial areas and to Zurich's airport. This city is also opened to international companies and individuals", argued Mr. Oda.

He enjoys very much his life in Switzerland and found that "it is a very comfortable place for both business and family life". But, as his family has never lived outside Japan, he experienced some language and paperwork difficulties to obtain the working permits, to find his home and the office.

*VST Europe AG* is now looking forward to its business expansion to new markets such as Russia, Turkey, Israel and North Africa. "Switzerland has also some advantages to do business outside the European Union", Mr. Oda underlined.

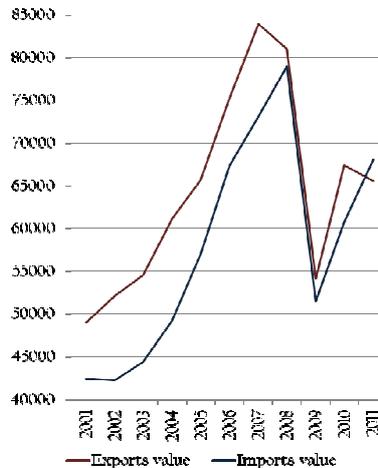
## 動向

SITUATION

# Japan's current economic situation

According to the Bank of Japan (BoJ), "Japan's economic activity has been more or less flat, mainly due to the effects of a slowdown in overseas economies and the appreciation of the yen". BoJ further stated that "the economy is expected to return to a moderate recovery path as the pace of recovery in overseas economies picks up, led by emerging and commodity-exporting economies, and reconstruction-related demand after the earthquake disaster gradually materializes" (January report).

The current economic flat situation is reflected by several economic indices. The indices of industrial production declined 2.7% in November 2011 from previous month to 90.0 (2005=100). On the



Evolution of Japan's exports and imports in the past decade (in billions of Yen)  
Japan's Minister of Finance

same period, the leading index of business conditions was up 1.3% from 92.0 in October to 93.2 in November 2011 (2005=100).

As mentioned by the BoJ, this

situation results mainly from the slowdown in overseas economies and from the high value of the Yen. As a consequence, exports decreased 8.0% in December and also declined 2.7% in 2011 (calendar year) over the year. As Japan's demand for energy increased sharply after Fukushima accident, imports rose 12.0% in 2011 and Japan logged a trade deficit of ¥ 2,496 billion, marking the first trade deficit in 31 years.

The domestic economic situation slightly improved. The consumer confidence index was up 2.1% from 38.1 in November to 38.9 in December. Furthermore, the unemployment rate was 4.5% in November, showing a decrease by 11.9% over the year.

## 政策

POLICY

# Creation of new special economic zones

Since 2002, the Government of Japan has approved a large number of "comprehensive special zones" (*sogo tokku*). These zones benefit from regulations, tax and budget privileges. Each of them is designated with a specific economic objective, such as the promotion of environmental-friendly technologies or of medical industries.

In December, the Government selected seven new economic zones to attract foreign companies and enhance Japan's international competitiveness.

The objective of Tokyo's economic area is to attract regional head-

quarters and R&D departments of multinational firms.

The Northern Island of Japan Hokkaido will serve as a hub for food exports, R&D on value-added food items and food safety.

The Tsukuba economic zone (North of Tokyo) will promote the commercialization of cutting-edge technologies in cancer treatment and life-support robots.

Kanagawa's zone (Southern Kanto region) is designated to develop pharmaceutical products, medical equipments and the nurture healthcare industry.

Aichi's zone (around Nagoya) will aim at becoming the Asian hub for

aerospace industry.

The Kansai zone will focus on innovations in six fields, including pharmaceuticals, medical equipments and technologies.

Fukuoka's zone (North of Kyushu island) will seek to develop green technologies, such as fuel-cells and recycling industries.

Companies operating in these special zones will benefit from tax exemptions up to 20% on taxable incomes. The Government expects this project to create about 360,000 jobs and to have an economic impact worth about ¥9 trillion.

## Lights of Japan in Davos

Japan Night 2012 was held in Davos on the evening of January 26. The ceremony was entitled this year “Lights of Japan”.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said he “will surely realize major reforms to forge a sustainable social security system and maintain fiscal discipline in Japan” in his the broadcasted video opening address.

Film actor Ken Watanabe also made a speech about Japan’s recovery from the disaster. Ken Watanabe played in a number of Hollywood films, including *The Last Samurai* (2003, with Tom Cruise) and *Inception* (2010, with Leonardo di Caprio). The new film *Hayabusa*



Film actor Ken Watanabe made a speech at Japan Night in Davos

- *The Long Voyage Home* (starring Ken Watanabe) was also on the screen the same evening in a Davos

cinema, followed by a documentary with a visit of the actor in the Japanese disaster-stricken area.

Participants enjoyed Japanese foods and drinks, such as sushi, maki and sake, but also local dishes from the Northeastern region of Japan.

Dishes and foods were prepared by chefs of *Bimi* restaurant in Zurich, *Umu* restaurant in London, *Sadaharu Aoki* patisserie in Paris, *Al-ccciano* and *Laurole* restaurants in Japan’s Northeastern region. Sake was served by Yoshiko Ueno-Müller (Ueno Gourmet AG).

Participants could also ask Ms. Shisyu to write their names in Japanese calligraphy.

活動

ACTIVITY



Yoshiko Ueno-Müller (Ueno Gourmet AG) served sake to participants



Team of organizers and chefs



Participants enjoying Japanese meals

## Japanese tradition to cast out demons

Every year on February 3, Japanese people celebrate the *Setsubun* (節分). It aims at casting out of the house demons and other misfortunes.

February 3 is the day before the Spring in the old Japanese calendar.

*Setsubun* tradition consists in throwing roasted soybeans either inside the house or against a person wearing a demon mask. People are used to saying “Demons out! Luck in!” (鬼は外! 福は内!).

Each person of the family then eats a number of beans equal to his or

her age.

Originating from China, this tradition was introduced in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century in Japan. It has now spread throughout Japan and is done by most of Japanese.

文化

CULTURE

## 革新

INNOVATION

## “Green First Hybrid” houses exhibited at Tokyo Motor Show

Established in 1960, *Sekisui House Ltd.* is a Japanese builder of houses. It built more than two million homes so far.

It exhibited its “Green First Hybrid” model at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Tokyo Motor Show 2011, which was held from December 2 to 11 and gathered a total of 842,600 visitors. Its exhibition shows that cars and houses are becoming increasingly interdependent.

The “Green First Hybrid” is the *Sekisui House*'s environmentally-friendly smart house model. It is equipped with an excellent thermal insulation and an air purification system.

In addition to the supply of electricity from the conventional grid, power is generated from fuel cells and solar panels. It is stored in



© Sekisui House

storage battery with a capacity of 8.96 kilowatt per hour, allowing the use of the refrigerator, TV and lights for about 17 hours in case of power shortage. *Sekisui House* is also planning to connect the house to the electric car's battery.

The “Home Energy Management System” enables the inhabitant to

manage the electric system and to display information about indoor energy use.

*Sekisui House*'s net sales increased ¥ 10.0% to 1,488 billion in 2011 from a year earlier. Its net income was of ¥ 30 billion in 2011.

## Agenda

## 日程

AGENDA

- ✓ 24<sup>th</sup> February: Japanese Food Culture Seminar  
4 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. Credit Suisse Forum St. Peter, St.Peterstrasse 19, Zurich (registration requested)
- ✓ 7<sup>th</sup> March: Swiss-Japanese Corporate Strategy Seminar - Towards Asia and Japan  
4 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. Hotel Beau-Rivage, Quai du Mont-Blanc 13, Geneva (registration requested)
- ✓ 16<sup>th</sup> March: Swiss-Japanese Corporate Strategy Seminar - Towards Asia and Japan  
4 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. Credit Suisse Forum St. Peter, St.Peterstrasse 19, Zurich (registration requested)

*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>

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