

EU–Japan Agreement on participation of Japan in Union programmes

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PURPOSE: to approve, on behalf of the European Union, an Agreement with Japan on its participation in Union programmes.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: Horizon Europe Regulation governing the association of third countries to the Horizon Europe programme provides for the possibility of association of third countries and territories that fulfil all of the criteria set out therein. Such countries or territories are to participate in the programme based on an agreement covering the participation of the third country or territory to any Union programme.

On 1 April 2022, Japan formally expressed its interest to associate to Horizon Europe. On 15 May 2023, the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations with Japan for an Agreement on the general principles for the participation of Japan in Union programmes and on the association of Japan to Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027). Formal negotiations opened on 29 November 2024 and were concluded on 22 December 2025.

In line with the negotiating directives of the Council, the Agreement attached to this proposal is composed of two main parts. First, the ‘umbrella agreement’ on the general principles for the participation of Japan in Union Programmes and, a Protocol on the association of Japan to Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027).

Association of Japan to Pillar II of Horizon Europe is expected to unlock a plethora of possibilities for a broader and more systematic EU-Japan collaboration in many strategic fields covered by Horizon Europe’s Pillar II, such as health, climate, ocean and environmental research, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), High Performance Computing, clean hydrogen and renewable energy, circular economy, semi-conductors, connected and automated mobility, space, aviation, photonics, and critical raw materials.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council decide to approve, on behalf of the Union, the Agreement between the European Union and Japan concerning its participation in Union programmes.

The Protocol on Horizon Europe introduces the Horizon Europe-specific terms and conditions for participation in its Pillar II and contains detailed rules on:

- the general principles governing Japan’s participation in EU programmes, including respect for programme rules and relevant EU legislation;
- reciprocity – the non-exhaustive list of the equivalent Japanese programmes, activities, actions, projects or, in exceptional cases, parts thereof, reciprocally open to the participation of Union legal entities;
- Open Science - commitment to promote and encourage open science practices in their programmes;

- the financial contribution and automatic correction mechanism;

- exceptionally, the Protocol to this Agreement introduces a bespoke suspension mechanism enabling Parties to suspend ('pause') by mutual consent Japan's participation in Horizon Europe. The reason behind this bespoke suspension mechanism is due to the fact that this is the first time Japan is associating to the EU Research and Innovation framework Programme. This mechanism is necessary for Japan's budgetary authorities as a buffer/safety net in the event of overwhelming success of Japan's association during the first year. The clause is, however, not very likely to be triggered based on that provision of the Horizon Europe Protocol;

- possibility to designate National Contact Points (NCPs).

The Agreement also establishes institutional structures, namely a joint committee to, *inter alia*, monitor the implementation of the agreement and examine how to improve and develop cooperation under the agreement.

The Agreement provides for its provisional application as of 1 January 2026, in order to enable legal entities from Japan to reap benefits from Pillar II calls under the Horizon Europe Work Programme for 2026.