

Exploring EU-Japan GNSS Cooperation



May 2013 saw the opening of the first GNSS.Asia Japan workshop held in Tokyo, Japan. Attracting over 70 participants, the event offered the opportunity for delegates from Japanese industry and academia to discuss industrial cooperation in downstream GNSS markets with European counterparts.

Following a welcome address made by Silviu Jora, general manager of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation, the workshop invited Gian-Gherardo Calini, head of market development from the European GNSS Agency (GSA) to make a keynote speech on the latest market opportunities in the EU with EGNOS and GALILEO. Also attending from Europe were the two coordinators for the GNSS.Asia project, Rainer Horn, partner at SpaceTec Capital and Daniel Ludwig, from DLC Consultants.

According to Calini, while the GNSS worldwide market is expected to grow annually at around 10-20% for the next 5 years, now is the best time to invest in development in order to leverage future market growth. Calini also offered to share the lessons learned in Europe from the EGNOS market preparation experience to the Japanese industry involved in developing the QZSS (for Quasi Zenith Satellite system) augmentation system, indicating that "EU-Japan cooperation opportunities should be pursued for mutual benefits". Since the EU has successfully stretched the application scope of EGNOS in other markets than aircraft (for example in agriculture and road-related tolling) and with GALILEO services scheduled to be opened by 2014, Calini closed his speech by inviting the Japanese industry to actively launch concrete industrial cooperation with the EU.

The purpose of the GNSS.Asia Japan workshop was to present the latest market-oriented developments of GALILEO / EGNOS to the Japanese GNSS industry; to open a discussion forum in order to engage Japanese GNSS stakeholders on cooperation opportunities with the EU; to showcase presentations of existing EU-Japan partnership examples; and to introduce GNSS.Asia tools and future events which can contribute to industrial partnering with Japan.

Speakers

Invited speakers from the private sector were respectively Yoshihisa Kawaguchi, president of IMES corporation, Minoru Okuda, marketing manager of U-blox Japan and Masaaki Hayashi, senior staff at Seiko Epson's strategic R&D units.

Kawaguchi presented the current development of the IMES system (abbreviation for Indoor Messaging System), a positioning and messaging platform developed in Japan for the time being, aimed at indoor navigation applications.

After introducing u-blox's market position in Japan, Okuda offered hints and advice for prospective European companies. He explained that the Japanese market requires long-term commitment and expects incoming products with uncompromising quality, cost, delivery and service level, adding that product localisation was a must in order to successfully compete in Japan.

Having presented his company's GNSS product development lines in the B-to-C and B-to-B segments, Hayashi from Seiko Epson stressed the need for Japan to develop more technology platforms in order to create a level playing field for product and solutions providers, which would allow markets to grow.

The workshop ended with a panel discussion where Daniel Ludwig invited speakers to reflect on possible ways forward to create the appropriate conditions for market readiness; by developing the necessary technology, laying out an adequate partnership strategy and ensuring that industry can work on a platform with common standards.

Side events

Three other side events of the workshop week included a meeting with SPAC (for Satellite Positioning Research and Application Center) focused on engaging the Japanese industry in future cooperation; a visit to NISSAN Motor's Global Headquarters in Yokohama, with a presentation of NISSAN's ITS/GNSS projects; and GSA's participation to the annual SPAC forum, held on 15 May in Keidanren Kaikan, Tokyo, with a keynote address by Gian-Gherardo Calini, in front of an audience of close to 400 Japanese participants.

The GNSS.Asia project has the objective to develop and implement GNSS industrial cooperation activities between the European Union and China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and Taiwan focusing on the downstream sector (applications and receivers, see <http://www.gnss.asia>).

In conclusion, while Japan's industry is currently focused on developing QZSS as its top GNSS priority, the GNSS.Asia workshop indicated that better EU-Japan cooperation could only serve to produce mutual benefits for both industries, particularly through the creation of new markets and the establishment of joint projects in areas of complementary expertise. The GNSS.Asia project will endeavour to play a key role in launching concrete cooperation.

