

SESSION IV : Prospects for International Philanthropic Cooperation

Role of Private Foundations in Internationalization: Lessons from Europe

LAURENS JAN BRINKHORST

*Head, Delegation of the Commission
of the European communities in Japan*

Today, I would like to speak about the role of philanthropy and private foundations in the broader area of international cooperation, and lessons from the European experience which may be of use to Japan in its much talked about internationalization process.

The European Community is perhaps the biggest internationalization process Europe has ever gone through, adapting a community of 12 countries and 10 different languages to live together in a different way than before. My first point is that if we had not been able to muster massive private support from churches and political institutions, and also from business foundations and trade unions, this important transformation would have floundered long ago. I recall with great pleasure and sympathy the role which a number of foundations played in the Action Committee for the United States of Europe in the 1950s. They were for many years the pillar of support, even in a time of adverse developments.

While this support waned during the 1960s, as expanded government involvement and booming economic growth allowed Europe to thrive, national solutions failed to solve the economic crisis of the past decade and we began to see a new willingness to cooperate.

It was again business and foundations which researched the question of why national solutions are inadequate, demonstrated

the enormous economic and social costs of the lack of a single unified common market, and are now leading an initiative towards such a new integrated market.

Not only are national governments over-extended and often unable to undertake such new initiatives, but governments are by necessity limited to considering problems from a national perspective. Both foundations and business, on the other hand, can develop a broader perspective, a sense of the world as a whole.

What lessons can we draw from this experience in Europe? I think the first is that internationalization cannot be a question of governments alone but must be a question of private initiative and private concerns. Second, and very importantly, internationalization by its very nature cannot be a unilateral process. In Japan as well, internationalization must be based on joint action -- between Japanese companies and overseas companies, Japanese foundations and overseas foundations, the Japanese government and overseas governments, not in terms of increasing market shares, but in order to work together to keep the system in which we live alive and to improve it.

This process based on joint action may be particularly difficult in light of Japan's harmony and consensus oriented society. Joint action necessitates overcoming the traditional Japanese distinction between inside and outside, and cooperating with the outside in order to find a greater harmony, not within Japan, but with other countries. The worldwide nature of our problems demands this approach.

I would like to suggest, for instance, that some Japanese foundations get together with European foundations -- for example, Nissan, Suntory, or Sanwa Bank Foundation with Volkswagen, Fiat Foundation, or others -- and see whether they can jointly develop a project. Not only would something useful be done, as such, with the money, but they would participate in the process of doing things jointly, which I think gives a new dimension to the way people live together. That is basically what European cooperation and integration has been about, and why it is still a major element of interest and fascination to those who are involved in that process.