

# Strengthening Japan's Cultural Presence in Europe: The Japan Foundation and Public-Private Partnerships

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## Doctoral Research Summary and Purpose

My research examines the role of the Japan Foundation in Japan's public diplomacy for increasing Japan's cultural presence in Europe. My aim is to provide a framework of suggestions with regard to the future initiatives of the Japan Foundation both autonomously and in collaboration with other public and private institutions through Public-Private Partnerships.

### First research trip

**Purpose of the trip:** to carry out a research on Japan's public diplomacy initiatives in Bulgaria during crucial events introducing Japanese culture in the country as well as to conduct interviews with particular visitors, in order to observe the image of Japan and the expectations from Japan from a Bulgarian perspective.



**Details:** 1) I collected the necessary information regarding the cultural promotion initiatives implemented as part of the "Japan-Bulgaria Triple Anniversary" year from January, 1 until July, 14, the "Days of Japanese Culture", and the



biggest event for promoting Japanese contemporary culture in Bulgaria - "Aniventure Comic Con". I attended some of the events' initiatives and conducted interviews with particular visitors. Such included the Bulgarian scholars Mr. Albert Ivanov Krastanov, Professor and Head of Department of Biotechnology at the University of Food Technologies in Plovdiv, Mr. Yordan Georgiev, Chief Assistant Professor at the Institute of Organic Chemistry with Centre of Phytochemistry, affiliated to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, as well as representatives of the young generation interested in Japan like Mr. Emil Conrad, the most popular Bulgarian YouTuber.



2) I met with Mrs. Vera Vutova-Stefanova, former Bulgarian diplomat in Japan, who provided me with the most recent book on Bulgarian-Japanese relations - *Bulgaria i Yaponia. Politika, diplomatsiya, lichnosti i subitiya* [Bulgaria and Japan. Politics, diplomacy, personalities and events] (2019), written by her and Mr. Evgeni Kandilarov.

### Second research trip

**Purpose of the trip:** to collect information regarding the Japanese cultural promotion initiatives conducted as part of the "Japan-Bulgaria Triple Anniversary" year in Bulgaria from October, 1 until December, 31 and to meet with Mrs. Vera Vutova-Stefanova, former Bulgarian diplomat in Japan, to discuss my research progress.

**Details:** 1) The collected data demonstrated a variety of activities such as an international conference entitled "Japan and the European Southeast - over a Hundred Years of Political, Economic, Cultural and Academic Interactions" and a *koto* musical instrument performance and *ikebana* flower arrangement exhibition at the National Assembly of Bulgaria, emphasizing the significance of cultural exchange in the Bulgarian-Japanese bilateral relations.

2) I met with Mrs. Vera Vutova-Stefanova, who provided me with valuable advices and perspectives for my doctoral thesis.