



“Western Balkans meet Japan: A Bridge into the Future”

MIRAI Program 2023/2024: Western Balkans Youth Exchange

(Mutual-understanding, Intellectual Relations, and Academic Exchange Initiative)

1. Background

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) organizes Japan's Friendship Ties Program “MIRAI” (*Mutual understanding, Intellectual Relations and Academic Exchange Initiative*), dedicated to promising young leaders from Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The program “MIRAI”, which means “Future” in Japanese, aims to deepen participants’ understanding of Japan and its policy, to promote mutual understanding, and thus build a basis for future friendship and cooperation between Japan and other regions, through exchange programs. It has seven components and one of them is “Western Balkans meet Japan: A Bridge into the Future”.

2. Program Overview

In order to further achieve a bigger impact and effectiveness in the Western Balkans, MOFA is implementing “Western Balkans meet Japan: A Bridge into the Future” with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), as one of the key actors working on youth issues in the region.

The RYCO is the intergovernmental organization dealing with peacebuilding, reconciliation, and cooperation in the Western Balkans through youth exchange programs. It was established by the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, in July 2016 within the Berlin Process.

This year, **the youth exchange will take place from Feb 13 – Feb 20, 2024 in Japan, and will gather 14 participants coming from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.** The selected participants will have the opportunity to discuss current topics, share experiences with youth from Japan, develop intercultural skills, and visit and explore the Japanese culture.

3. MIRAI Exchanges in previous years

MIRAI Program is organizing this youth exchange for the fourth time. Twenty-three young people from the region visited Tokyo and Hiroshima last year. In Tokyo, the group visited Sophia University, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Senso-ji Temple. In Hiroshima, participants explored the Peacebuilders Center and learned more about the Japanese devastating experience of the atomic bombing. In Miyajima, youth from Western Balkans enjoyed the unique nature and architectural beauty of the island nation of Japan and experienced the history and traditional culture rooted in the region.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



To know more about the past activities organized in the previous editions, please visit the following links:

- [MIRAI Program 2018](#)
- [MIRAI Program 2019](#)
- [MIRAI Program 2022](#)

4. Applicant Qualifications

Applicants should meet the entire criteria as follows:

- The applicant must understand the aims of “MIRAI” and are expected to disseminate information on Japan’s attractions through various communication tools including social media and/or their publications after the online pre-exchange program, during their stay in Japan and after returning to home places. Publication results should be shared with Japan’s Foreign Missions.

| Group | Theme | Coming from | Target Group |
|-------|---------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Peacebuilding | Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia | Graduate and Undergraduate students |

- The applicant must have one of the following nationalities and do not have a Japanese nationality: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia.
- The applicant must attend a university/organization located in one of the places of his nationality.
- Those who have experience residing in Japan for more than 6 months are not eligible.
- Those who have participated in the “MIRAI” Visiting Japan Program and/or similar programs funded by the Japanese government are not eligible.

*** Those who were selected for MIRAI 2020 & 2021 and were unable to participate in the in-person inbound program (in-person program) and who meet the application requirements for this Fiscal Year 2023 are eligible to reapply.**

- The applicant of the in-person inbound program must be in good health conditions.
 - a) The applicant is healthy physically and mentally.
 - b) If the applicant’s body temperature is 38C (100.4F) or higher on the day of departure, they cannot depart for Japan and is not eligible to participate in the program in Japan.
 - c) The Applicant should be physically capable of keeping up with a busy program schedule requiring extensive walking each day.
- The applicant must be 20 years old or older.
- The applicant must have a satisfactory command of English to discuss relevant topics with fellow participants.
- The applicant must have good academic achievement such as top 20%.
- The applicant must be able to effectively share the charms of Japan based on the experiences in Japan from the pre-exchange program, during the stay in Japan and after returning home. Methods of dissemination include the use of various social media, contributions to public relations publications and presentations at one’s institutions.
- The applicant with ties to Japan-related fields will be preferred in the selection process.



Mandatory Assignments for All Participants

Each participant must implement all the requirements from (1) to (3).

(1) Presentation and implementation of your action plan

Participants are required to make action plans about what they learned in this program and how they might stay connected to Japan after returning to their home place and report their implementation to JICE. Participants will wrap up their findings in Japan and each group will present action plans in the reporting session. The contents of the presentation will be collected from consultation with all participants during the workshop. Each member will implement the action plan within 3 months after returning to their place, and send an After-Action Report (AAR) on their implementation to JICE through an online submission link. If it is difficult to implement the action plan in 3 months, (e.g. Writing graduate/research thesis including this program experience, work/study in Japan, and in other comparatively medium- or long-term situations), please report the reason and expected implementation schedule to the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE), an implementing agency of the MIRAI Program within 3 months.

(2) Share Experiences through social media

Each participant will actively share their one's experience during both the online pre-exchange program and the stay in Japan as well as convey information about Japan including one regarding Japanese society, history, culture, politics, economics, and diplomatic relations through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and so on, during both the program and within 3 months after the program.

(3) Responding to questionnaires

Participants will submit answers to online questionnaires (after the online pre-exchange program, during the program in Japan, and after 3 months) to JICE on time. The survey link will be sent to their email address.

* MIRAI is one of the people-to-people exchange programs promoted and 100% backed by the Japanese government. Please contribute to the program with your input through your action plans and reporting so we can assure the effectiveness of the program in the future.

Required application documents and Deadline

[Application Form]

The applicants must fill out the entry form with their correct information in English and upload the following documents from (1) to (5) at

<https://jice.form.kintoneapp.com/public/mirai-v-2023>



1. Valid passport copy

The applicant must upload a copy of the photo page of their passport (color or black and white). The copy should be clear, complete and large enough to find everything on the page legible. If the applicant does not have a passport that is valid during the period of the program, the applicant must immediately extend the validity period of the passport and submit its copy by no later than one month prior to the program date.

2. “Letter of Understanding” (Please see Annex 1)

The applicant must read carefully the conditions described in the “Letter of Understanding” before applying for the program. The applicant must sign it and upload the documents.

3. “Handling of Personal Information and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Privacy Policy” (Please see Annex 2)

The applicant must read “Handling of Personal Information and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Privacy Policy” before applying for the program. The applicant must sign it and upload the documents.

Personal information obtained in “MIRAI” shall be treated in compliance with the Personal Information Protection Law and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). JICE ensures the appropriate handling of personal information. JICE may provide personal information to travel agencies, publishers, cooperative organizations, schools, host families, and so on in order to operate and report the program by means of post, fax, or email. Personal information will not be used for any purposes other than operating and reporting on the program.

4. “Academic Transcript” or “Certificate of Enrolment”

The applicant must upload either an “Academic transcript” or “Certificate of enrolment” from their university/graduate school. Young professionals are not required to submit the above-mentioned document.

5. A Headshot

The applicant must upload a photo taken within three months.

The deadline for applications is **10 September, 2023, 23h59 CET Time**. Only selected participants will be notified.



5. Terms and Conditions

(1) The following arrangements and expenses are covered by the program

a) Round trip economy class international air tickets to/from Europe, to/from Japan. JICE will arrange economy class tickets but upgrading to business class at the expense of the participant payment will be accepted. Excess baggage fees shall be paid by the participant. Travel between the participant's home and the designated airport and any excess baggage fees incurred during the program shall be paid by the participant. It is not allowed to change the designated flight even if the participant pays the cost. The designated airport may NOT be the nearest airport to each participant.

b) Accommodation in transit places

c) Accommodation, transportation, and meals during the program in Japan

d) Admission fees for scheduled activities in Japan

e) Overseas travel accident insurance Chronic diseases, dental diseases, pregnancy or those already ill or injured prior to the program are NOT covered. In such cases and in some other cases when the insurance company disapproves the payment request, the participant shall be responsible for medical expenses in Japan. Any loss or damage to personal belongings is NOT covered.

| Insurance | Coverage | Amount (10,000 JPY) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Accident | Death Benefit | 1,000 |
| | Physical Impediment Benefit | 1,000 |
| | Medical Expense | 1,000 |
| Sickness | Medical Expense | 1,000 |
| Rescuer's Expense | | 300 |
| Personal Liability | | 5,000 |

Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Co., Ltd.

* No cash allowance is provided to participants.

* Participants shall pay their personal expenses, including passport, transit visa acquisition, vaccination, excess baggage charge, travel between their home and the designated airport, accommodation and meals in their home place, transport and meals in transit places, and purchase of souvenirs/personal goods before or during the program.

*Any costs for vaccinations, PCR tests and/or other medical documents are not covered by the program.

(2) Cancellation Policy

If a participant chooses to cancel the participation in the program due to any reason other than a medical emergency or other unavoidable circumstances, the participant shall be fully responsible for any costs associated with this cancellation. The cancellation fees will be charged to the participant if their application have already been accepted and the flight and/or other bookings are completed. In the event of cancellation due to a medical emergency or other unavoidable circumstances, cancellation fees may be waived upon presentation of a relevant certificate or evidence requested by JICE.



3) The following are NOT permitted.

- To come early to Japan before the program or remain in Japan after the program
- To take a different flight designated one by the program
- To change accommodation (hotel or room assignment) designated by the program
- To skip any elements of the official program, including scheduled meals or visits, for personal or business reasons such as meetings with relatives, friends, business partners in Japan, etc.
- To be accompanied by someone else
- To travel to a third place on the way to Japan or back to home

(4) Conditions in Japan

- All participants, including supervisors, must attend all scheduled programs and follow the rules/guidelines/directions given by JICE.
- Participants who are disruptive to the program may be dismissed and are responsible for leaving Japan at their own expense.
- 2-3 participants each will stay in a twin or triple room at the hotel., except for the chaperon. It depends on various conditions.
- Each participant will stay in a single room.
- When requested, JICE will try to arrange the following* for religious reasons. However, JICE cannot guarantee their availability in all locations.
 - *time and place for prayers
 - *meals suitable for food restriction for religious reasons

(5) Photos/videos taken during the program

The participant agrees to grant permission to JICE and organizations participating in the program to use their voice and likeness in any writings, photographs, films, and recordings collected during the program. The participant authorizes the publication of, for all purposes, their name, pictures in film or electronic (video) form, sound and video recordings of their voice, and printed and electronic copy of the above in any and all media including, without limitation, cable and broadcast television, the internet, and the brochures and other print media for promotion, advertising, meetings, or educational conferences. This permission extends to all languages, media, or formats now or hereafter devised and shall continue forever unless the participant revokes the permission in writing to JICE.

(6) Japanese Laws and Regulations

The participant must observe the laws and regulations of Japan. Offenders are subject to penalties under Japanese law. Any dispute arising out of the application for, or participation in, or anything relating to, the program between a participant and the Japanese government or JICE should be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Japan, without regard to the principles of conflict of laws, and should be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the applicable courts in Japan.

(7) Attribution of responsibility during the program

The participant agrees to release JICE (including its employees and agents) of and from any and all claims, demands, damages, losses, liabilities and expenses including, without limitation, reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses (collectively, "Claims") arising from or relating to the participant's participation in the



program, provided, however, that the release shall not apply to any claims related to or arising from JICE's gross negligence, bad faith or willful misconduct. The participant agrees to indemnify JICE (including its employees and agents), and hold it harmless, from any and all claims arising from or relating to the participant's violation of Japanese laws or regulations or breach of the terms and conditions of this Application Guidelines.

(8) Post-Program Activities and Questionnaires

The participant is required to share their experiences and discoveries about Japan and its attractiveness as a destination for travel, study, or work with their family, relatives, friends, and peers at school or in their communities by delivering presentations, publishing their writings, or posting their photos and text on social or other media. The participant will be asked to complete a questionnaire and submit the report of their post-program activities to JICE via an online submission form link sent to their email address three months after the program. They will be also requested to stay connected with Japan and Japanese people through the online community sites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA)* and JICE**.

Please follow the following Facebook pages:

- [Facebook of Youth Exchange Program of MOFA](#)
- [JICE Youth Exchange Program \(MIRAI/ KAKEHASHI Project / JENESYS2023 / Juntos!!\)](#)

6. Important Notice for the Prevention of infectious disease

In response to the spread of infectious diseases such as the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), JICE has been taking the following effective measures to prevent infection and protect the health and safety of participants and JICE staff members.

- (1) Please wear face masks (provided by JICE), when requested and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or a sleeve of your clothing if you have to cough or sneeze
- (2) If you have symptoms of fever, fatigue or cold during the program, please avoid going out and consult with JICE staff immediately
- (3) Please avoid the "Three Cs" a) Closed spaces with poor ventilation b) Crowded places with many people nearby c) Close-contact settings such as close-range conversations
- (4) Please keep physical distance
- (5) Please wash your hands frequently with hand sanitizer (available at JICE) and gargle
- (6) Please drink a bottle of water (500 ml per day) provided by JICE
- (7) Please check your health condition and measure body temperature before breakfast, in the daytime and evening
- (8) Please eat well and sleep well

***Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)** JICE is the official agent for MIRAI, which has undertaken all the necessary arrangements for this program, such as travel procedures and the whole schedule of events in Japan under the guidance of the Japanese Government. <https://www.jice.org/en/about/>



7. Contact points

Regional Youth Cooperation Office

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

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Annex

- 1- [Letter of Understanding for Visiting Japan Program \(in-person program\)](#)
- 2- [Handling of Personal Information](#)
- 3- [Overview and Model Itinerary](#)