

Mr. Kenji Shinohara, Lead Researcher of INPEX Solutions, LTD., Delivers Presentation at KEIDANREN (Japan Business Federation)

On June 29, 2023, the Japan Business Federation's (hereinafter referred to as "KEIDANREN") Planning & Coordinating Sub-Committee of the Committee on Europe (Chair: Mr. Akira Shimizu) held an online meeting on the political and economic situation in the three Baltic states and the Central and Eastern European region. At the meeting, Mr. Kenji Shinohara, Lead Researcher of INPEX Solutions, LTD., delivered a presentation titled "Three Baltic States - including perspectives on energy and the Three Seas Initiative."

KEIDANREN is a comprehensive economic organization with a membership comprised of 1,512 Japanese companies, 107 nationwide industrial associations and the regional economic organizations for all 47 prefectures (as of April 1, 2023).

The three Baltic states, located in the northeastern part of the EU, border Russia and Belarus. The three states are EU and NATO member states and adopt the euro as their currency. After regaining their independence from the former Soviet Union, they have attracted the world's attention for their rapidly growing digital (DX) industry. They are also developing an international logistics industry using ports and transportation networks. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Baltic states have also moved to the geopolitical forefront due to their confrontational stance against Russia and active support for Ukraine.



The Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which was established in 2015 and now consists of 12 Central and Eastern European countries including the Baltic states, is "a coalition of likeminded countries" seeking to develop infrastructure for energy, transportation and digital sectors around the Baltic,

Black and Adriatic seas (three seas). Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, 3SI has attracted attention for its assistance to Ukraine, neighboring Moldova, and Georgia on the other side of the Black Sea, and infrastructure development in the 3SI region is expected to accelerate. A summit of 12 member states and a business forum are scheduled to be held in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, in September this year.

At the meeting, Tetsu Ozaki, Ambassador of Japan to Lithuania and Akio Miyajima, Ambassador of Japan to Poland, who both participated online, explained the importance of 3SI and the role of Poland in supporting Ukraine. Mr. Shinohara explained the economic characteristics of the three Baltic states, including energy, their relationship with 3SI, and potential business opportunities for Japanese companies in these countries.



From center: Mr. Hara, Managing Director of KEIDANREN, Mr. Shimizu, Chairman of the Sub-Committee, and Mr. Shinohara



Clockwise from top left: Mr. Shinohara and Mr. Shimizu, Ambassador Ozaki, Mr. Nakamura (Deputy Assistant Minister (Ambassador), European Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Ambassador Miyajima

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Japan and the EU signed "the Strategic Partnership Agreement" in 2018 and "the Partnership on Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure" in 2019. Based on these two important accords, Japan and the EU aim to realize EU-Japan Connectivity projects that can be jointly implemented in four sectors including transportation, digital and energy in the regions including the Western Balkans, some former Soviet Union countries, the Indo-Pacific region and other areas.

In 2020-2021, INPEX Solutions, LTD. was commissioned by the EU to conduct the EU-Japan Joint Study on Connectivity Cooperation. Mr. Shinohara, who has expertise in the former Soviet countries, joined the study team and implemented the Study.

Mr. Shinohara's presentation showed the potential and importance of Japan's cooperation in the field of infrastructure in the eastern part of the EU, including the three Baltic states, through frameworks such as "EU-Japan Connectivity" and 3SI.