

National Day and a partnership from the ground up

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Imagine a bridge being steadily reinforced — one that connects two nations separated by geography, yet drawn together by values, trust and a shared commitment to building a more resilient future. This is the course that Romania and Japan are charting today. The Romania-Japan Strategic Partnership, signed in 2023, is the seedbed from which our projects, connections and ideas continue to grow — encouraging both our nations to explore new fields of cooperation.

To fulfil the ambition of this Partnership, we believe that one strength lies in the regional and local fabric connecting our countries — a fabric woven by communities, innovators, universities and entrepreneurs whose ideas and initiatives shape the future from the ground up.

Dec. 1, our National Day, is a reminder that unity, cooperation and the courage to build together have always been at the heart of our story. As we mark this day in Japan, we do so with gratitude for the bridges already built — and with confidence in the many still to come. It is in fact the day when Romania's historical regions chose to contribute to a common purpose and unite — a moment when communities chose to shape their future collectively.

The 1918 unification showed that national strength grows when local voices, communities and institutions

align. This legacy of regional agency and cooperation is part of the way we approach our partnership with Japan.

Our partnership with Japan also grows strong when rooted in local initiative and regional vitality. Regions and cities bring our nations closer.

Romania's vision is simple: If we want our cooperation with Japan to advance meaningfully, we must empower the places where people live, create and innovate. Government-to-government dialogue provides the structure.

The long-term strength of the Strategic Partnership relies on local administrations, academic networks, business clusters and engaged citizens alike. Cities, universities, business ecosystems and communities are no longer peripheral elements — they are engines of innovation and resilience.

This resonates with Japan's mod-

el, where dynamic regions succeed by pairing cutting-edge innovation with the promotion of culture, craftsmanship and enduring local traditions.

Among Romania's regions, Cluj County, situated in the heart of Transylvania, has taken a central role in our cooperation with Japan this year. Its capital, Cluj-Napoca, the "Silicon Valley of Romania," hosts major tech companies, leading universities and a forward-looking entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Cluj is also home to the Romania-Japan Cooperation Center, which has fostered academic and business ties for many years. And in March 2026, the city will inaugurate a new AI Research Institute, reinforcing its role as a natural partner for Japan in digital transformation, artificial intelligence and secure technologies.

This regional momentum was reinforced this October by the city of Iasi, which hosted the Japan-Romania Innovation Forum — a gathering that showcased Eastern Romania's rising innovation ecosystem and its appetite for deeper technological cooperation with Japan.

Across the country, Romanian cities are developing meaningful partnerships with their Japanese counterparts: Sibiu and Takayama, two cities known for their cultural heritage, continue to deepen cooperation through their relationship as twin cities. Brasov and Musashino are exploring exchanges in education, sustainability and urban innovation. These partnerships may begin locally, but their impact resonates nationally. Even with Shimizu, our discussions began around something as humble as a garlic stem — a reminder that innovation often starts in unexpected places. From agriculture to food technology,

local industries can open pathways to wider regional cooperation.

Romania's regions are increasingly influential in European value chains, including those related to information technology, cybersecurity, green technologies, automotive components, digital services, agri-tech, energy and advanced manufacturing.

Today, more than 45,467 Romanian companies are registered in the information technology and communications sector alone. For Japanese companies aiming to diversify supply chains and secure reliable partners within the European Union, Romania has stability, talent,

connectivity and expanding innovation ecosystems. As our regions connect, our economic cooperation naturally deepens.

And finally, last year, I wrote that the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo would be another opportunity for Japan to discover Romania — and vice versa.

Now that the Expo has come to an end, I can say with pride that the Romanian Pavilion fulfilled that promise. Romania responded to Japan's concept, "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," with a narrative rooted in tradition and innovation, cultural identity and green technology — a narrative enriched

by the voices, talents and ideas coming from our regions, cities and local creative communities.

As Romania celebrates its National Day in Japan, the lesson of 1918 remains clear: Progress endures when regions, communities and people work together toward a shared purpose. Today, from Cluj-Napoca to Takayama, from Brasov to Musashino, from Shimizu to the Black Sea region, these links chart a promising horizon.

One hundred and seven years after the unification, Romania continues to build bridges — and we hope that many of the most meaningful ones will lead to Japan.



Ovidiu Alexandru Raețchi



Pixabay

Street in Bucharest's city center

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