

Priority question for written answer P-001343/2023
to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy
Rule 138
Dominique Riquet (Renew)

Subject: Agreement between the European Union and Japan on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters

‘*Jōhatsu*’, or ‘evaporation’, is a common phenomenon in Japan. It is estimated that around 100 000 people ‘evaporate’ each year. These disappearances are taboo and are met with an air of inaction by the Japanese police, who, in particular, refuse to cooperate with European justice systems when foreign citizens disappear.

However, since 2 January 2011, Japan has been linked to the European Union by an agreement on mutual assistance in criminal matters. This agreement provides for the possibility of taking testimonies and statements, obtaining and seizing items, identifying and examining persons, or examining and inspecting places.

1. Does the Commission consider that the agreement of 2 January 2011 is being complied with as regards judicial cooperation?
2. What is the scale of the problem posed by the ‘evaporation’ of European citizens in Japan, and what measures is the EU taking to support their relatives who are confronted with the inertia of Japan’s police and justice system?

Submitted: 25.4.2023