

# JET Programme CIR Report

July 2025 – March 2026

As soon as I came back from Belgium, I was told that a film crew was coming to film an episode of a TV programme about the CIR's job in Niseko. It was my first time hearing about the celebrity who was going to interview us, but he is a well-known figure in Japanese entertainment. And just like that, we ended up on Japanese national television next to Mr Himura, aka Bananaman. He came to Niseko Town Hall to interview us, and we also organised a World Café event together. Quite the unusual experience!

Next to that, we also went on a business trip to Asahikawa and Higashikawa to meet other Hokkaido CIRs, see what they are doing to foster international exchange in their respective cities, and try to implement some of that in Niseko too.

After going to the east of Hokkaido for work, I wanted to explore more of the region, so in September I drove across the eastern region. Starting from the blue pond, to the prison in Abashiri and the Shiretoko National Park, going back to the Kushiro Wetlands and the green hills of Tokachi.

For work, the second half of 2025 was full of presentations. We did a presentation about multicultural coexistence for university students. We discussed what Niseko, and more specifically us as CIRs, are doing to foster multicultural coexistence in the region. One example is the “Welcome Kit”, which we launched in November 2025. Niseko’s foreign resident



population doubles during the winter because many foreigners come to work in the ski resorts. This is a very busy period for us as we need to do interpretation at the town hall for many of the workers who only stay for a limited time and are not familiar with Japanese society and language. So, to help them get accustomed to life in Japan, this guide is a summary of everything you need to know to get around: emergency contacts, garbage disposal rules and community manners, explanations of basic procedures such as tax payments and moving in

and out, and tips for local restaurants and cafés. We also started a Japanese salon for residents with a foreign background who want to learn Japanese. We aim for this salon to become a place where foreigners can learn basic and daily-use Japanese as well as interact with Japanese locals. Hoping to mix up the communities in Niseko.

In collaboration with Word Village, the international facility within Niseko High School, we also organised a series of Culture Workshops. Open to everyone, these workshops/lectures were an opportunity to compare various themes across borders. We would choose a theme, for example, food, school, or work, and look at how these are experienced across our respective countries.

This year, too, I participated in several town events. Such as the O-Bon festival, the Halloween festivities, and the Christmas event. On Culture Day on November 3rd, I also performed Japanese dance in front of an audience for the first time.

On October 18th, the Annual Footpath National meeting was held in Niseko. As a member, I got to help with the organisation. And in November, we visited another Footpath group in Yamanashi prefecture, enjoying nature with a delicious glass of wine.

In November, I got to explore yet another part of Japan, Hakone, with my fellow Belgian CIRs before going to the JET Mid-year conference in Tokyo.

I spent New Year's in Hakodate, going to a shrine at midnight to ring a temple bell, eat mochi, and enjoy amazake.

As the Galette des Rois was very successful last year, I redid it in 2026. However, this time I made the pie with the participants and went deeper into explaining the festival's background history. I also held the event in collaboration with my German colleague, so we discussed the differences and similarities between how Belgians and Germans celebrate this festival.



In February, we held our Picture Book World event again, but with a twist! We added a “World Festival” part to it. Meaning, aside from picture books, all CIRs also had a booth about their country and a workshop or activity introducing the country’s culture. For example, I prepared a drawing workshop inspired by surrealism, and the Chinese booth offered a calligraphy workshop on the theme of the Lunar New Year. At the end, we all danced a Belgian folk dance together.



After the event, I went on a driving trip once again, but this time on the island of Shikoku. I was deeply moved by the view of the Seto Inland Sea, ate a lot of good food and tried out Awa-Odori.



From December until March, I would go to the ski resort once a week to perform taiko drums in front of the foreign tourists. Together with my team, we would perform several pieces and then let the audience interact with the drums. It was nice to see how we could bond over music, crossing the language barrier.

In March, I also finally got to do a presentation introducing Magritte and Surrealism.

Explaining the surrealist art movement in Japanese was not easy, but I was happy to share my love for the arts with Niseko residents.



I think I am all caught up for now. I had to shorten it a little, as so many things happened in the last year and a half. Here is to one more year of discoveries and deepening relations across boundaries.