



The >>venture>> foundation
Annual Report 2023



V >>

2023

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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

The year 2023 was a difficult time for startups, whether in Silicon Valley, Zurich, or Bengaluru. Inflation rose, interest rates edged up—and funding collapsed. In Switzerland, only two-thirds of the amount of venture capital awarded in 2022 was allocated in 2023 (source: Swiss Venture Capital Report). And from what we've heard from investors and startups, the situation this year has yet to recover.

For >>venture>>, this means that the competition we run is more important than ever. Especially in tense economic times, it is important that we seek out innovative business models that can create new jobs. This is why this year's annual report is entirely dedicated to the startup.

We speak with Simon Ittig (see p. 12), whose T3 Pharma won our 2016 competition with a completely new cancer therapy based on bacteria. The German pharma giant Boehringer Ingelheim acquired T3 last year for up to CHF 450 million—depending on how the business performs. What is noteworthy about this Allschwil-based startup is its ability to question the existing consensus in an almost Musk-like manner. As Ittig says, "If someone tells me, 'That won't work,' that's when I really go for it." But unlike Tesla or SpaceX, T3 maintains a distinct culture of trust. What also impresses me about T3 is how consistent it is in integrating startup competitions into its strategy.



For the fintech startup Frigg, last year's win at >>venture>> represented a milestone in the company's history. One of the things that comes up in the interview with company founder Philip Berntsen (see p. 46) is a feature that, as he puts it, "no other startup competition in the world can offer": the consulting package from McKinsey & Co that winners from all verticals receive. Marco Ziegler, senior partner at McKinsey, who represents the consulting firm at the >>venture>> foundation and Leonie Flückiger, who led Frigg's consulting package, also took part in the conversation with Berntsen.

Huge financing rounds, interesting acquisitions, and new strategic clients: you can find all the news about the >>venture>> startups on the next pages. And read about the winners of our newly established not-for-profit track, initiated by our honorary chairman, Thomas Knecht, on p. 40.

Last but not least, we have an encouraging figure from last year's competition: the proportion of women participating in the competition has finally risen to over 30 percent. You might say that the number is still too low—and you'd be right. But we're very happy that this figure is moving upwards after stagnating at around 20 percent for years. And we're delighted to report that women have been at the helm of three of the last four grand prize winners: Oxyle, Enerdrape, Biosimo.

Ueli Looser
Chairman of the
>>venture>> foundation

>> VENTURE >> NEWS



TECH SAGL IN TIO

“>>venture>>, Switzerland’s leading start-up competition, awarded a prize to the Morbio Inferiore-based company Lighthouse Tech in its 2023 edition. It has been a long time since a company from Ticino managed to rank among the competition’s winners.”

Publication: Tio, June 17, 2023



T3 IS NOW GERMAN

T3 Pharma from Allschwil (Basel-land) was acquired by the German pharma giant Boehringer Ingelheim for up to CHF 450 million in 2023. “We want to do the best for humanity,” says Simon Ittig, co-founder and CEO (see p. 12). “That’s why we founded T3. And that’s also why we sold it. If we hadn’t, we’d be a lot slower going forward than is possible working together with Boehringer.” T3 won the grand prize at >>venture>> 2016.



LUNAPHORE IS NOW AMERICAN

In 2023, the >>venture>> winner from 2014 (Health & Nutrition) was acquired by Bio-Techne Corporation, a global life sciences company from Minneapolis. Lunaphore is headquartered in Tolochenaz near Lausanne and is a leading developer of fully automated spatial biology solutions. “We are excited to be joining Bio-Techne and combining capabilities to lead the Spatial Biology market,” says Ata Tuna Ciftlik, CEO of Lunaphore. Although the financial terms of the acquisition were not disclosed, in 2023 Lunaphore completed a USD 45 million financing round.



BIOSIMO IN 24 HEURES

“The CHF 150,000 prize goes to Biosimo, a Zurich-based startup specializing in biochemistry. The competition is now open to NGOs, ‘another driver of innovation.’”

Publication: 24 heures, June 26, 2023

THE NONPROFIT TRACK MAKES A BRILLIANT START.

In 2023, >>venture>> introduced a Nonprofit Track for the very first time—and it was a resounding success. A total of forty-six teams registered for the competition (you'll find the winners on p. 40), Peter Maurer, long-serving former president of the ICRC, held the keynote speech, and a number of renowned sponsors supported the prize: elea, Family Larsson Rosenquist Foundation, Sportegration, swisscontact, and WWF, as well as the individual sponsors Peter Maurer and Christoph von Toggenburg.



THE >>VENTURE>> ADVISORY BOARD CONTINUES TO GROW

>>venture>> is delighted that more sponsors than ever before are supporting the competition. We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members in 2023: BCGE, Belimo, dormakaba, Georg Fischer, Landis + Gyr, maxon, Sulzer, and ublox.

BOOST FOR BOOST

In less than three years, Boostbar, which was renamed Boost Inc. this spring, won awards at >>venture>> (2021—Retail & Consumer Services category) and at the Swiss Economic Forum (2023). And the Zurich-based startup has already acquired two companies: the vending software firm Aeguana (2022) and the digital payment platform Smartpay (2023). Boost Inc. is generating over CHF 15 million in revenue and employs over 130 staff. It comes as no surprise that Bilanz last year named Pascal Uffer, CEO and co-founder, one of Switzerland's most important "digital shapers."



Der Landbote

ADAIRE IN DER LANDBOTE

"One out of every three IT developer positions in Switzerland will be unfilled by 2028. And in Germany alone, there will be a shortage of a million skilled workers in the technology sector by 2030. These were the factors that motivated Kudah Mushambi from Winterthur to co-found a startup that trains African workers from the technology sector and finds work for them as remote employees in European companies. His company Adaire recently won third place in the nonprofit category at >>venture>>, Switzerland's largest startup competition. And the company was able to bring in a million Swiss francs during a financing round in May."

Publication: Der Landbote, August 8, 2023



ENERDRAPE IS "ON A ROLL"

In their article about the >>venture>> grand prize winner from 2022, startupticker.ch, the major Swiss online platform for startups, writes that "Enerdrape is on a roll." And boy are they! The EPFL startup developing panels for capturing heat produced by underground infrastructures was celebrated in the *New York Times*, completed a CHF 1.3 million financing round, and signed a contract with Coop Immobilien to construct a large-scale array. "We've already installed 600 heat panels," co-founder and CEO Margaux Peltier explains.



Simon Ittig, co-founder and CEO of T3, at the headquarters in Allschwil (Baselland).

INTERVIEW

“Our approach is actually quite low-tech.”

T3, the winner of >>venture>> 2016, has developed a bacterial platform for cancer treatment that can potentially be used to target 80 percent of all tumors. In their small lab in Allschwil, Simon Ittig and his twenty-person team discovered something that pharmaceutical companies the world over had been looking for. How could that have happened?

Simon Ittig, your company has developed an innovative method of cancer treatment that can be used to target almost all tumors. How come you were able to manage this—as opposed to one of the big pharmaceutical companies with infinitely more resources?

SIMON ITTIG Because we took a completely new approach: our background was in academic research, and fortunately we already had an inkling of the potential the technology had for application in this context. For most

listed companies, a path that starts with basic research takes far too long, poses too many uncertainties, and demands a different kind of expertise to that which they typically have in-house. And, of course, we had a certain amount of luck too.

T3 didn't develop an antibody treatment but instead used genetically modified bacteria, which multiply in the body.

Exactly. These modified bacteria make a beeline for solid tumors and inject proteins into the cells that activate the

immune system and induce it to attack the cancer cells.

That sounds relatively simple. Had no one come up with this idea before?

We've known for some time that bacteria have a kind of syringe needle with which they can inject substances into other cells. But the consensus among scientists was that this needle was too narrow to allow specific proteins to pass through.

But you didn't accept that?

If someone tells me, "That won't work," that's when I really go for it—especially if I can't understand why it "wouldn't." In this case, I soon realized that the scientific consensus was actually based on just a few experiments. So I started experimenting myself. And lo and behold: of twenty proteins, I was able to get sixteen to pass through the needle right away. Even today, we still don't entirely understand the molecular selection mechanism—what passes through and what doesn't—but we see that it works well, reliably, and in quite a variety of ways. And the best thing about it is that all you have to do to find out whether a particular protein

will pass through is to test it.

You concentrate on tumor cells, but your type of bacterial Trojan Horse could be used to treat other diseases as well.

Yes, with a bit of imagination you can think of all kinds of applications. But we decided early on to concentrate on the potential for cancer treatment, simply because the disease affects so many people, and we are able to "steer" the bacteria toward tumors effectively.

Could T3 technology potentially be used for vaccination as well?

Yes, you can really conceive of a pretty broad spectrum of applications for this technology. This might sound surprising, but our approach is actually quite low-tech. We can model the entire innovation value creation chain here in our 200-square-meter lab, and we can do it at a very fast tempo. Not because we're better or smarter than other researchers, but because our technology is simple and inexpensive.

If it's so simple, how can you patent it?

The mechanism by which the bacteria express the proteins is relatively complex: you have to trick them into

believing that they want to express the material—the proteins to be transported—of their own choosing. To do this requires a special signal, which we have copied from nature. The new protein sequences generated in this way can be patented.

When you secured the patent, did you realize you were sitting on a gold mine?

Through my work in the lab, I was aware right from the start that our technology could be relatively easily reproduced, and that it would have a big impact. I was also aware of the plethora of potential applications. So yes, we did realize that the possibilities were almost infinite. Nevertheless, the road from university laboratory to clinical studies, not to mention on to the market, is an unbelievably long and rocky one. But being aware of the potential is incredibly motivating and helps when it comes to tackling obstacles.

What were the biggest hurdles you had to overcome?

We're using genetically modified bacteria that started life as pathogens [*Y. enterocolitica*]. So it's quite under-

standable that academic researchers, the major pharmaceuticals companies, and to some extent the health authorities as well... How should I put it? They took some convincing.

What role did >>venture>> play in the T3 success story?

A very big one. T3 began as a concrete academic research project in 2012. Then, three years later, we founded the company—we needed to do that in order to obtain another Innosuisse grant. In 2016, we were preparing to go through a first funding round and

>>VENTURE>> WINNER 2016

SIMON ITTIG (42)

is co-founder and CEO of T3 Pharma. A spin-off of Basel University, the company has developed an innovative treatment for cancer based on genetically modified bacteria. In 2016, T3 won the main >>venture>> prize; in 2023, the German pharmaceuticals giant Boehringer Ingelheim acquired it for up to 450 million francs. Ittig studied biochemistry (ESBS Strasbourg and BOKU Vienna) before completing a PhD at Basel University's Biozentrum Center for Molecular Life Sciences. He lives with his family in Baselland.

participated in >>venture>>. Our goal was simply to become better known, but then we promptly won the competition. So that was our entry into Switzerland's startup community, so to speak.

Which aspects of the competition were most important for T3?

The label ">>venture>>-winner" gave us a lot of legitimacy. Before that, we were probably known only in the Basel area. The interaction with the jury was another highlight—doing our promotional pitch in front of Switzerland's leading CEOs together with the productive conversations we had with them was mind-blowing. The media attention was likewise very valuable. *[The SRF television program] 10vor10* did a feature on us—which generated a big response.

And the prize money?

At that time, it was 60,000 francs *[today, it stands at 100,000 francs]*. This allowed us to fund one full-time position for a year. Some people assume that biotech startups receive millions in venture capital just like that, right from day one, so that five- or six-figure sums don't make much difference.

But in the initial phase that's simply not true. With each month that it's able to generate more data, the company's value increases, and if things go well, it has a bit more scope for choosing investors and more options for negotiating the funding details. So the prize money gave us a few months' more breathing space, which was really helpful.

A photo of the prize-giving ceremony shows Severin Schwan and you with big smiles on both your faces. Was that the beginning of a great friendship with the then CEO of Roche?

Severin Schwan gave me his calling card, and we've remained in occasional contact. In his laudation, he had some very positive things to say about us. He didn't have to do that, so it was all the more gratifying on a personal level. The number of top people in the industry we've met through >>venture>> is amazing. But, equally, we had some valuable conversations with former prize-winners, such as Molecular Partners or Covagen *[>>venture>> winners in 2004 and 2006 respectively]*. These companies were always an inspiration for us, because they demonstrated

“
The role
I play
isn't even
of secondary
importance.
”

SIMON ITTIG
Co-founder and CEO T3 Pharma



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“With a bit of imagination you can think of all kinds of applications,” says Simon Ittig about T3’s technology.



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“To be honest, it’s fantastic,” says Ittig about the Swiss biotech ecosystem. T3 is located in the “Switzerland Innovation Park Base,” a new life science cluster built by Herzog & de Meuron.



T3 is using genetically modified bacteria that started life as pathogens. People “took some convincing,” says Simon Ittig.



“Our technology is simple and inexpensive,” says CEO Ittig.

“
If someone
tells me, ‘That
won’t work,’
that’s when I
really go for it.
”

SIMON ITTIG
Co-founder and CEO T3 Pharma

that a modern young biotech startup can be successful in Switzerland. And like us, they came out of the world of academic research.

Since >>venture>> T3 has won many other prizes. Was your motto “It went well the first time, so let’s enter all the competitions we can”?

No, not at all: every competition was preceded by a major discussion about whether we had enough manpower for a decent entry—because we figured that if we were going to participate at all, then we ought to be among the top competitors. Another aspect was the timing.

The timing?

Yes. Whenever you enter a competition, it needs to fit with where the startup is at that moment. When we entered the >>venture>> competition, we were in the process of preparing for a funding round. So we knew that the more visibility and the more momentum we could achieve, the better. In the case of Falling Walls, an important prize in Berlin, we entered the competition just as we were putting some feelers

out in Germany. As a result of our win, Boehringer Ingelheim Venture Funds invested in us.

T3 is based on your pioneering research. You could have made an academic career with it. Was that never an option?

In terms of my personal satisfaction and happiness, an entrepreneurial career is a perfect match. My grandfather was an entrepreneur, and when I was young, I had a friend who went into business too, so I developed a liking for it early on.

Nevertheless, you studied biology and spent weeks and months in the lab?

Yes, and I chose to do fundamental research of all things [laughs]. But to come back to your original question: for the academic researcher, the ultimate kick is getting an article published in *Nature*, where perhaps a couple of hundred people might read and understand it. As an entrepreneur I can—potentially at least—treat cancer patients one day. That’s in a different league, I reckon.

Your team consists mainly of people you’ve known and worked with for a long time. How did that come about?

One key to our success is the culture of trust that we foster—for me, that’s one of the most important cornerstones of T3. And naturally, if you already know one another and have shared a common path, it’s easier to establish that kind of trust. We have never advertised a position. That’s an advantage here in Basel. Even when we need someone with a really specialized profile, we can still hope that we’ll find the right person in our extended network—for example, someone who has worked for a major pharmaceutical company for twenty years and has precisely the expertise we’re looking for.

But mightn’t there be someone even better outside your Basel microcosm? Maybe—and then we do try to find that person. We’re a really close-knit group and have total trust in each other. This culture of trust is extremely important for me because I have to be able to rely on the results from the laboratory when I represent the company to the outside world, and we need to agree on a strategy. But it’s also really important that everyone can openly admit it when an experiment or a concept goes awry.

Currently the T3 drug is undergoing the first phase of clinical trials.

Do cancer patients sometimes get in touch asking for help?

Yes, that does happen. I then try to explain to them that the law requires our contact with patients to be very indirect. During our study we have no interaction with patients. That happens via the respective hospitals and doctors—so that’s who patients need to speak to. These kinds of phone calls or emails aren’t easy, but I appreciate them, because they remind me in very real terms what we are working to achieve every day.

In November 2023, you sold T3 to Boehringer Ingelheim for up to CHF 450 million—depending on how the business goes.

Why did you do that?

We realized early on how versatile our technology is, so we wanted to get the best out of it for humanity. That’s why we founded T3. And that’s also why we sold it: if we hadn’t, we would have been slower in the future than we would be cooperating with Boehringer. Just building up our own global manufacturing chain and a global

distribution would have cost us a huge amount of time and resources. Boehringer, on the other hand, has more than 50,000 employees and many years of experience in cancer research. That’s a different order of magnitude, with different machinery in place to build on if we turn out to be successful. And in the early stages of research there are also synergies that we want to utilize. So we did the deal because we want to do more, not less.

T3 was sold for hundreds of millions. What effect does that kind of sum have on you?

For me personally, it’s an incredibly large sum, completely divorced from my everyday life, almost surreal. But seen from a professional point of view, given the commercial potential of our technology, I think it’s fair enough. The global oncology market is estimated to be worth more than USD 300 billion a year and it is growing enormously. We would’ve been wrong not to negotiate a sum of that size.

What has changed since you sold the company?

Not much—that’s defined as one of our goals: anything that works well

here in Allschwil should stay here. And anything that can be accelerated, professionalized, or can’t be done here in the first place will happen somewhere else.

And are you planning to stay at T3 until the drug is on the market?

Yes, that’s my plan. Some founders leave a company after they sell it, but that wasn’t an option for me. I very much enjoy working with the T3 team and am looking forward to a shared future with Boehringer.

But Boehringer could replace you with a more experienced manager at any time.

Sure, that might happen—but it could also have happened with the old board of directors. To be honest, those are not things I spend much time worrying about. My goal has always been to show that we are a well-functioning unit that delivers sound work. The role I play in that isn’t even of secondary importance.

You’re acquainted with Severin Schwan, and Basel is your location—nevertheless you sold T3 to a German company. That hurts the Swiss sense of pride.

I can understand that, but there's a lot about Boehringer Ingelheim that fits the bill in our case. They are not listed on the stock exchange, the company belongs to the family that founded it, so they are pursuing a long-term strategy. If we want to bring our technology onto the market, this is precisely the kind of partner we need. Boehringer is incredibly data driven. And that takes us back to where we started: for a novel technology of this kind, you need a certain openness, which we found with the people in Ingeheim we interacted with. And we soon realized that we shared the same goals, values, and ambitions. It was simply a good fit.

In more general terms how do you rate Switzerland as a location for a biotech startup?

To be honest, it's fantastic. Right from the start we found everything here that we needed. Access to capital, legal security, open ears among politicians—even as a small startup, we were invited to the life-sciences roundtables with the local government that are a regular event in Basel—and, above all, a wealth of highly specialized know-how.

Alongside T3, you have three teenage children. How do you reconcile your job with family life?

Over the past ten years, my life has consisted solely of my work, my wife, and our children. The only other thing I manage to squeeze in is sport. We are a very structured family. We shop once a week online and have a weekly cooking schedule. Going shopping on the way home because the children suddenly have an appetite for fishfingers is out of the question. My wife is a psychotherapist. Because of her nature and her educational background, I've been forced to reflect on a lot of things—that's been a big help for me. The fact is, if I didn't have a family, people would worry about me far more. I'd never take a break at 7 pm to eat dinner in peace—I'd simply keep on slaving away. I'd probably have burned out long ago. But as things are, I'm in a very good place. I'm happy and grateful for the path that I'm able to follow.

——— INTERVIEW SIMON BRUNNER



"If I didn't have a family, I'd probably have burned out long ago," says Simon Ittig, father of three.



WINNERS

2023

TOP 3 FINANCE & INSURANCE



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1. FRIGG is an award-winning Swiss-based SaaS company with strong ties to Norway. Frigg has developed a blockchain platform to connect institutional investors with sustainable infrastructure developers. The platform streamlines the documentation, rating, underwriting, securitization, and post-investment (real-time) monitoring of private market deals. With Frigg’s technology, a hydropower project in Argentina can effortlessly link up with an investor in Hong Kong, providing both parties with maximum security achieved with a minimum of effort. Frigg’s wedge is to help small-to-medium-size blue-chip renewable developers access (re-)financing via blockchain rails by tokenizing the equity and/or debt of their project. Frigg thus makes renewable debt a class of asset that is more accessible, composable, and efficient for a wide spectrum of investors. The signifi-

cance of Frigg’s work lies in addressing the growing demand for E(SG) investments with tangible and measurable impact. As Philip Berntsen, CEO of Frigg, is keen to point out, “Currently, there is a significant regulatory push for E(SG) investments with measurable impact, and there is an increasing demand for transparency in reporting associated with these investments, both from regulators and investors. Enter Frigg.” See p. 46 for an in-depth interview with Philip Berntsen.

LOCATION Zug **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** contact@frigg.eco **WEB** frigg.eco

2. GRAPE is Switzerland’s first fully digital staff insurance coverage, investing in employees’ physical and mental health by using new data points and machine-learning techniques. Gregory Inauen, Grape’s CEO, explains: “We are the first insurer to actively invest in mental health initiatives and support companies to roll out prevention campaigns in their company through our health benefits.”

LOCATION Zurich **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@ascentys-esg.com **WEB** grapehealth.ch

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3. ASCENTYS ESG’s operates a platform that helps companies measure, manage, report, and improve their ESG performance in a way that is simple, accurate, defensible, and cost-effective. The measurement of the 360 Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Indicators is done in a fully automated way.

LOCATION Courroux **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@ascentys-esg.com **WEB** ascentys-esg.com

FINALISTS

Digital Investment Product Showroom	**Everon AG**	
Iaccess Partners AG	**Mavuno Technologies GmbH**	
Sway Finance SA	**The Ingage Institute**	**Yainvest AG**

TOP 3 HEALTH & NUTRITION



1. DIATHERIS is developing a therapeutic solution aimed at revolutionizing the management of type 1 diabetes, promising to enhance both treatment efficacy and the overall quality of life for affected individuals. Type 1 diabetes is a disease in which the immune system destroys the beta cells of the pancreas, which are responsible for producing insulin. Currently, the only treatment available consists of daily injections of artificial insulin, a treatment that has numerous side effects. Diatheris's approach centers on leveraging the newly discovered capacity of S100A9, a circulating protein, to offer a safer and more efficient avenue for regulating blood sugar levels. This method not only reduces the therapeutic requirement for insulin but also mitigates the risks associated with hypoglycemia and diabetic

ketoacidosis, persistent challenges in current treatments for type 1 diabetes.

LOCATION Geneva **AFFILIATION** University of Geneva **MAIL** info@diatheris.com
WEB diatheris.com

2. METALEAD pioneers the development of next-generation medications to effectively treat metal-related diseases. The goal is to revolutionize the way medicine treats these conditions, currently focusing on lead poisoning and Wilson's disease.

LOCATION Zurich **AFFILIATION** University of Zurich **MAIL** contact@metalead.ch
WEB metalead.ch

3. LIGHTHOUSE TECH SA produces smart, fashion eyewear for blind and vision-impaired people. Their first frame, LTH01, senses obstacles in the user's path and alerts them to potential hazards using directional haptic vibrations. Stylish looks and an intuitive user experience inspire confidence and enable safe mobility.

LOCATION Morbio Inferiore (TI) **AFFILIATION** USI Startup Center **MAIL** info@lighthouse.tech
WEB lighthouse.tech

FINALISTS

| Arcoris Bio Ag | Arcoscreen SA | Breathe |
| Cultivated Biosciences | Curiva | Nexmr GmbH |
| Therappi Bioscience SAS |

TOP 3 ICT



1. BEARMIND is dedicated to advancing brain injury management, aiming to decrease the enduring effects of concussions. This initiative seeks to extend athletes' careers, curtail health-care expenses for sporting bodies, and enhance overall quality of life. The Lausanne-based startup contends that the consequences of repeated sub-concussive blows deserve as much attention as the aftermath of concussions. Leveraging technology, Bearmind provides dependable insights to mitigate the risks associated with these impacts. The startup has developed a tailored solution primarily for ice hockey players, focusing on continual and precise on-field impact measurements, quantifiable injury estimations, symptom monitoring, and recommendations. Anchored in scientific principles and prioritizing clinical relevance,

Bearmind's technology is at the forefront of advances in brain injury management.

LOCATION Lausanne **AFFILIATION** EPFL **MAIL** info@bearmind.tech **WEB** bearmind.tech

2. CSKY.AI (formerly ClearSky) is a next-generation AI assistant that guarantees maximum privacy by design. How is this done? csky.ai uses Edge AI technology to ensure a high level of data protection by collecting and processing data on the device itself, thus eliminating reliance on external cloud servers.

LOCATION Lausanne **AFFILIATION** EPFL **MAIL** info@csky.ai **WEB** csky.ai

3. EMPATH aims to redefine wireless testing with an advanced over-the-air (OTA) solution for 5G and IoT (Internet of Things) devices. Its cost-effective approach eliminates the need for pricey test chambers, cutting testing expenses by over 50 percent and accelerating the process more than 100 times. The compact, automated solution ensures efficient radio frequency performance assessment for cell phones, tablets, and IoT devices across various protocols.

LOCATION Yverdon-les-Bains **AFFILIATION** HEIG-VD **MAIL** mohammad.azadifar@heig-vd.ch

FINALISTS

Egonym	**Hid Solutions GmbH**	
Refluenced Ag	**Stacksync SA**	**Stream Ocean Ag**
Veintree SA	**Virtual Lab**	

TOP 3 INDUSTRIALS & ENGINEERING

GRAND
PRIZE
WINNER!



1. BIOSIMO develops low-cost, plant-based, green chemicals, leading the transition to a fossil-free chemical industry and reducing the carbon footprint of everyday products. For its flagship product, bio-based acetic acid, the Zurich-based startup utilizes plant-based ethanol derived from non-food biomass and biowaste. The global acetic acid market size is estimated at USD 13 billion (2022) and has a footprint of 60 megatons of CO₂. At the heart of this breakthrough is Biosimo's proprietary heterogeneous catalyst and chemical process, which allows for scalable, high-throughput production that remains very cost-effective.

LOCATION Zurich AFFILIATION ETH Zurich MAIL info@biosimo-chemicals.com
WEB biosimo-chemicals.com

2. PEROVSKIA SOLAR is a cleantech startup that provides digitally printed solar cells which seamlessly integrate into electronic devices and sensors at disruptive costs. The EMPA spin-off is headquartered in Aubonne and is setting up a factory to print one million solar cells annually. They provide perovskite-based solar cells with high efficiency even in low-light indoor conditions.

LOCATION Aubonne AFFILIATION EMPA MAIL info@perovskia.solar WEB perovskia.solar

3. VOLTIRIS SA provides innovative solar modules that generate electricity in greenhouses without affecting crop growth: a system of dichroic mirrors lets through the light components needed by the plants for photosynthesis. The "unused" part of the spectrum is filtered out and captured by solar panels. As a result, renewable energy is produced that can be used to cover the greenhouse's needs or sold to the grid.

LOCATION Lausanne AFFILIATION EPFL MAIL nicolas.weber@voltiris.com WEB voltiris.com

FINALISTS

4qt Holding Ag	Apheros Ag	
Ascento Ag	Qaptis Sàrl	Rematter Ag
Solaxer Sàr	Tethys Robotics	

TOP 3 RETAIL & CONSUMER SERVICES



Bárbara Büchel,
co-founder and Chief
Impact Officer of
Viatu

1. VIATU is an experiential travel company that uses digitization to unlock beautiful, seemingly out-of-reach destinations: its vision is to make sustainable travel more accessible. Leveraging technology, Viatu offers travelers the ability to effortlessly tailor and secure a complete itinerary in mere minutes, all through a singular, intuitive platform. Recently certified as a B Corp, Viatu aims to create a net positive impact in the destinations and communities that its travelers visit. To that end, Viatu has mindfully curated its partners, encouraging travelers toward conscious choices, and proactively compensating for their journeys' (unavoidable) carbon emissions. Bárbara Büchel, co-founder of Viatu and the company's Chief Impact Officer, says: "By removing the guesswork from sustainable travel,

we aim to foster a mindset of reciprocity and inspire travelers to enrich the communities and natural habitats they encounter, making each travel experience not just memorable but also meaningful." In April 2023, Viatu secured USD 1 million in funding.

LOCATION Zug **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** enquiries@viatu.com **WEB** viatu.com

2. CLEVER FOREVER EDUCATION developed CatnClever, an ad-free math and literacy app for preschoolers that uses AI to create easy-to-use interactive and adaptive learning. Clever Forever Education is convinced that gamified learning will become increasingly relevant for educational tools in the development of early childhood curricula, giving students a head start at school and for life.

LOCATION St. Gallen **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** hello@catnclever.com **WEB** catnclever.com

3. NUOLE NATURALS (formerly NOW Care) has created a natural powder that users mix with water to create foamy, creamy personal care products. Nuole's products are crafted with Swiss plants and nourishing prebiotics. By reducing CO₂ emissions from transportation and promoting sustainable practices, Nuole aims to set new standards in the personal care industry. Swiss retailer Coop has listed Nuole's products.

LOCATION Aubonne **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** larina@nuole-naturals.ch **WEB** nuole-naturals.ch

FINALISTS

1,2,3 Kid SA	Cirkel Supply Co. SA	
Morethandigital GmbH	Swijin Ag	Vyn GmbH
Yzer	ZiZANIA SA	

TOP 3 NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS*



Laura Stocco,
co-founder and CMO
of Openversum

1. OPENVERSUM provides access to safe drinking water, while at the same time creating employment. Openversum's proprietary drinking water filter boasts exceptional removal rates of pathogens (99.99999%), pesticides, heavy metals, and micropollutants. The cost-effective manufacturing process, coupled with a micro-franchising ecosystem, establishes a sustainable network of local entrepreneurs. With over 2 billion people relying on contaminated water sources and 4.5 billion people lacking access to affordable water solutions, resulting in the tragic loss of 297,000 children under the age of five every year, the challenges are significant. Common treatment technologies often falter due to their price, lack of adequate maintenance, and lack of ownership by local communities.

*2024 renamed Social & Environmental Impact Vertical

Openversum tackles these issues by training local entrepreneurs to assemble and distribute household-level drinking water filters, effectively creating employment opportunities for thousands. In doing so, Openversum contributes to a tangible solution for communities facing water quality issues.

LOCATION Schlieren **AFFILIATION** ETH Zurich **MAIL** info@openversum.com
WEB openversum.com

2. HEMLATA empowers young women from India's lower socioeconomic strata, through quality education, to step out of their cycles of poverty and achieve gender equality. Hemlata has developed a holistic five-pillar program to support and empower young women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three post their last year of school.

LOCATION Zurich **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** hemlata@hemlata.org **WEB** hemlata.org

3. ADAIRE ACADEMY, in partnership with EPFL Extension School, enables qualified African adults, who are unemployed or under-employed, to pursue remote tech careers with Swiss companies. Adaire is a software development and technology outsourcing firm with a presence in Zurich and Berlin and with technology and operations centers in Windhoek, Namibia, and Accra, Ghana.

LOCATION Winterthur **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@adaire.org **WEB** adaire.org

FINALISTS

- | **Bitmark Association** |
- | **Development Workshop Switzerland** |
- | **Eurotube Foundation** |
- | **Expedition Future** | **Girlscode200** | **Levo** |
- | **Living Museum Foundation** | **Project Canopy** |

2023 >>VENTURE>> AUDIENCE AWARD

The Audience Award is presented with >>venture>>'s media partner RTS (Swiss Radio and Television). Viewers were invited to vote for their favorite team, and the winner is awarded CHF 10,000 (business track) or CHF 2,000 (not-for-profit track).

BUSINESS TRACK



ZIZANIA aims to revolutionize the world of cosmetics by using upcycled organic ingredients and reducing the amount of waste in production and product creation.

LOCATION Les Evouettes AFFILIATION none MAIL hello@zizania.bio WEB zizania.bio

FINALISTS

| Biosimo Ag | Diatheris |
| Mavuno Technologies GmbH | Stream Ocean Ag |

NOT-FOR-PROFIT TRACK



GIRLSCODETOO is dedicated to fostering an inclusive space for young women to explore coding and pursue careers in technology. GirlsCodeToo intends to create a nurturing and safe environment where women can investigate various opportunities within the digital realm. The approach involves direct engagement with female university students and industry professionals, offering valuable insights and guidance to encourage their journey in the tech industry.

LOCATION Zurich AFFILIATION none MAIL info@girlscodetoo.ch WEB girlscodetoo.ch

FINALISTS

| Openversum |
| Project Canopy |

>> VENTURE >> 2023 IN NUMBERS

SUBMISSIONS PER INDUSTRY VERTICAL

336

ACCEPTED
SUBMISSIONS

17

EVENTS



30
Finance &
Insurance



63
ICT



83
Health &
Nutrition



55
Consumer
Services



59
Industrials &
Engineering



46
Not-For-
Profit

774

PARTICIPANTS
AT OUR EVENTS

79

MENTORS

206

JURORS

+500,000

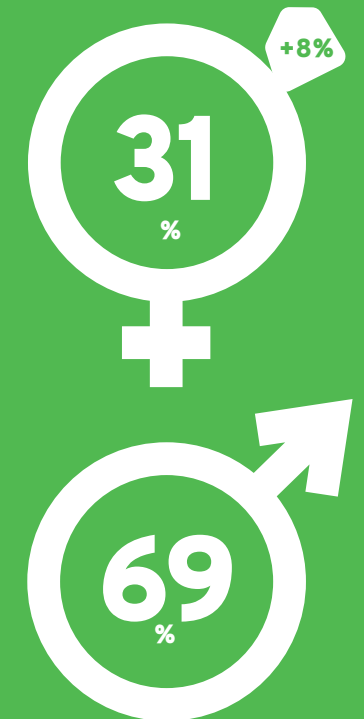
CHF IN CASH PRIZES

SHARE OF UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION



- 10% ETH Zurich
- 9% EPFL
- 3% UniGE
- 2% UZH
- 6% Other Swiss universities
- 3% Foreign universities
- 66% Not stemming directly from academic research

GENDER SPLIT



“There are various statistics on the reasons why start-ups fail, but usually the main reason is the team. The second reason? The product doesn’t sell. I see it as our corporate social responsibility to support innovation in our country and thus strengthen Switzerland as a business location in the long term.”

**Leonie Flückiger
Consultant,
McKinsey & Company**

“Startups make us aware of topics that might not yet show up on our radar.”

**Marco Ziegler
Senior partner,
McKinsey & Company**



“Switzerland comes with a big advantage, particularly from an American point of view.”

Philip Berntsen
Founder and CEO,
Frigg

INTERVIEW

“No other startup competition can offer something like that.”

Frigg won 2023 at >>venture>> and thus coaching sessions with McKinsey. At their first meeting, the expert told them: “There are three fundamental things you should change.” Together with the McKinsey consultant and the responsible McKinsey partner, the founder and CEO of Frigg speaks about >>venture>>, the Swiss fintech scene, and the next big idea.

49

Philip Berntsen, in late June 2023 you stood on stage at the SwissTech Convention Center at the EPFL and were awarded first prize in >>venture>>’s “Finance & Insurance” Vertical to thunderous applause. What happened next?

PHILIP BERNTSEN (PB) June 26 was a milestone in Frigg’s history. Before that we had taken part in a few start-up competitions, but we had never had a response like that. Dozens of people got in touch with us in the days and weeks after the award cere-

mony: potential customers, partners, employees, and investors.

What else did you receive in addition to all the publicity?

PB The CHF 50,000 prize allowed us to finance ourselves for a month. These types of non-dilutive grants [i.e., financing that does not involve the acquisition of an equity stake and has no effect on share ownership] are rare and are very advantageous for a company at our stage of development as they allow you to defer external financing. What’s also important is the

“
*The project
was fun and
inspiring.
I love
working with
startups.*
”

LEONIE FLÜCKIGER



legitimacy that such a prize gives you, of course: over 200 jurors vetted the startups in three rounds. Everyone knows you've made it through >>venture>>, so you must be on to something.

Another award component for the winner is a consulting package by McKinsey: the firm and the startups work together on strategy-related questions over a period of six weeks.

PB That was extremely valuable to us. On the one hand, it caused us to change our strategy—it showed us that we could not depend solely on institutional clients, at least not at present. On the other, we were able to talk things through with very seasoned experts—as a startup, we would otherwise never have been able to meet with people like that.

How do these collaborations typically work?

LEONIE FLÜCKIGER (LF) Upon initial contact, we explain to the startups how our mandate with them works and ask them to prepare themselves and think about what exactly McKinsey can best help them with. They can choose from a variety of activities: business plan

development, expert interviews, problem-solving sessions, etc. And they have to think about the questions they'd like answered as part of these activities.

PB Product/market fit was an area requiring significant improvement for us, so that's why we prioritized this topic.

How close is the communication between McKinsey and the startups?

LF The project begins with a kickoff, then there are catch-up calls nearly once a week, two to three workshops with experts, a closing session, and a final report.

Philip Berntsen, you have been active in the financial sector for decades.

You understand the industry from the bottom up, and you know exactly how startups work. How is it possible for someone like you to learn anything new in such a consulting project?

PB My knowledge is almost too detailed [*laughs*]. In a startup, you tend to lose sight of the big picture, so an external industry expert's view is unbelievably valuable. For example, Christian Zahn leads the Swiss Banking and Insurance practice at McKinsey Switzerland. Previously, he had

worked in senior positions at Deutsche Bank, focusing on strategy and investment banking coverage & advisory. He was just right for us! At one of the first meetings Christian said: "There are three fundamental things you should change. We need to sort that out before we can get started." I was flabbergasted—but he was absolutely right.

Talking about challenges, is there anything about the >>venture>> competition that could be improved?

PB [*thinks*] I can only think of one thing: a complex tech startup like ours has almost no chance of winning first prize. When we took part, the winner was Biosimo, a startup that had developed a new bio-based process for producing acetic acid. Fantastic! But compared to that, a complex blockchain sustainability project like ours is very difficult to communicate.

Your company banks heavily on sustainability, but this is a trend that has come under pressure in recent years. For example, more people are flying than ever before, and BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, has reduced its support

for ecological and social concerns. Is that something you also sense?

PB It's true unfortunately. Sustainability is still quite present in the financial companies' marketing, but when you look under the hood, a lot less is actually happening. Investors—whether institutional or private—are still very performance oriented, and they're not ready to pay a sustainability premium. Even though this would certainly pay off in the long run.

Marco Ziegler, you've represented McKinsey on >>venture>>'s Foundation Board for over ten years, and

>>VENTURE>> WINNER 2023

PHILIP BERNTSEN (34)

is the founder and CEO of Frigg, a Zug-based fintech company he started in 2019, which won first prize in >>venture>>'s Finance & Insurance Vertical in 2023. Frigg is based on a blockchain investment platform that brings institutional investors together with sustainable infrastructure developers. Alongside his work for Frigg, Berntsen is completing a PhD in quantitative finance at the University of Zurich. He grew up in Norway and came to Switzerland to study.



“
*If you've made
it through
>>venture>>,
you must be on
to something.*

”

PHILIP BERNTSEN

LEONIE FLÜCKIGER (29)

is a consultant at McKinsey & Company. She previously founded the startup Adresta, which she ran with two partners; the company registers digital certificates for luxury goods on the blockchain. In 2022, she sold it to Bucherer, Europe's largest watch and jewelry dealer. Flückiger studied micro- and nanosystems at the ETH Zurich and at Imperial College in London.

six years ago you introduced coaching as a prize component.

How did that happen?

MARCO ZIEGLER (MZ) We realized that >>venture>> winners often have good technologies, but on the market side of things, they frequently run into difficulties with the kind of questions that come: How do we find our first customers? How do we design a product that is truly in demand? What customer segment is the most interesting? Should we expand internationally, and if yes, how do we do that? These are questions and areas that we, as an international consultancy firm, are pretty familiar with. We now have over 45,000 people working for McK-

insey in sixty-five countries. That's quite a bit of expertise.

PB It must be said that a McKinsey consulting package is truly unique—no other startup competition in the world can offer something like that.

Leonie Flückiger led the consulting work. How are you involved as a senior partner?

MZ I'm present at all the kickoffs and at every closing session. When it comes to teams active in my sector, then I'm usually more involved in the project phase. I do that because it's fun. I can often learn something new, and I profit from it on a personal level, as the startup energy is simply contagious.

And what does your involvement bring to McKinsey?

MZ The startup consulting project is very popular internally. It motivates our young consultants. The startups also introduce new stimulus, and they make us aware of topics that might not yet show up on our radar.

LF I can only agree with Marco. The project was fun and very inspiring. I love working with startups. Furthermore, I see it as our corporate social

responsibility to support innovation in our country and thus strengthen Switzerland as a business location in the long term.

McKinsey founded >>venture>> in 1997. How did this happen?

MZ Thomas Knecht, the former Swiss office Managing Partner, was worried about the Swiss job situation, as unemployment was relatively high in the mid-1990s. Thomas was surprised to discover that startups received hardly any support in Switzerland, even though they are essential for the future of our economy and long-term prosperity. He founded >>venture>> together with the ETH, and later they were joined by Innosuisse, EPFL, and Knecht Holding.

Do you have the feeling that, due to the shortage of skilled workers, the so-called "Fachkräftemangel" there is a concern that young talent will opt for a career in the startup scene?

MZ No, that's something I've never heard before. Quite the opposite, established companies are interested in startups and want to get in contact with them. In fact, today, after this interview, I have a call with a large

company interested in a Swiss >>venture>> startup.

Leonie and Marco, you've both analyzed and advised a number of startups. What are the mistakes you most often see?

MZ The team aspect is very often neglected. A startup is founded by two or three people who are highly skilled and highly motivated but don't have much leadership experience. Then the startup grows to thirty or forty employees, and that's when the energy starts to dissipate. Ten projects are up and running, but none of them are going the way they should. The mood turns, and the first employees leave. That's a dangerous dynamic, but unfortunately it happens a lot.

LF There are various statistics on the reasons why startups fail, but usually the main reason is the team. The second reason? The product doesn't sell.

MZ We're not an HR or recruiting company, so we can only make sure the founders are aware of the team aspect. But we have quite a bit to say about markets and strategies, as that's something we know really well. Regardless of the level, finding and

“
*On the positive
side, we're
finally done
with zombie
startups.*
”

MARCO ZIEGLER



keeping customers and fulfilling or even exceeding their expectations are among the most difficult things in business.

What is your general impression of the Swiss startup scene? Where are the problems?

PB As a fintech, we enjoy a lot of advantages in Switzerland. The regulatory environment is one of the world's most innovative, we can find well-educated employees, and the Swiss brand in the financial sector is a draw ... but there's a lack of investors. To date we've had over 400 contacts with venture capitalists. And where do they come from? Sixty percent are from the USA, and 20 percent from other countries. Only 20 percent are from Switzerland.

MZ I feel the same way. We have a lack of VCs who are large enough to be proactive and support the startups. And we're a long way behind in fintech especially, which is unfortunate and a pity, when you look at the size of our banking and insurance players. And as a startup competition, we feel it too: we're trying to push fintech, but only relatively few

startups in the field register with >>venture>>.

The added value of Switzerland's financial center amounts to CHF 70 billion annually. How can it be that there isn't sufficient funding out there?

MZ Today, the number of startups in the fintech sector—as well as the industrial or consumer sectors—is too small for specialized VC firms. But I'm convinced that it's not a problem of demand but rather of supply. In other words, if there were more startups, there would be more financing. For example, Israel is the same size as Switzerland, but in 2023 it has spent two and a half times as much venture capital as we did. That's how you create your own ecosystem. We've managed to do it in the biotech sector, where Switzerland now has a top rank globally.

And where should this capital come from?

MZ The Swiss economy has to be prepared to support the startup scene. Among other sources, the pension funds should have incentives to invest the capital they administer in innova-

tions. For the last few years, they've been allowed to invest in startups, but the amount is minuscule.

Philip Berntsen, would it be possible for one of your investors to decide that Frigg has to move abroad?

PB It might be possible from a legal perspective, but it's very unlikely to happen because, in terms of location, Switzerland comes with a big advantage, particularly from an American point of view. The Swiss regulatory framework is much more progressive than the American one. The VCs practice regulatory arbitrage. At present, US investors are placing unbelievable sums in the Swiss and European fintech sector.

What's the problem then with American VC money?

PB The Americans are unbelievably "sharky." They want to grow much more aggressively than we're used to here. That can be good, of course, but everything does happen quickly, and as founder-CEO, you'll find yourself replaced. Or your strategy is turned on its head—whether you like it or not.

In 2023, Swiss VC money fell by nearly 35 percent on the previous

year. Has the funding recovered since the start of 2024?

MZ No, not yet—but that's not just in Switzerland. The capital lenders' refinancing expenses have risen alongside high interest rates, and at the same time other asset classes have become more attractive. But on the positive side, we're finally done with zombie startups: certain business models were financed in the zero-interest-rate environment, even though everyone knew that they would never survive.

Philip Berntsen, you worked for UBS for seven years, then you founded a startup. Why?

MARCO ZIEGLER (52) is a senior partner at McKinsey & Company and led the Operations Practice across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. His current focus is on industrial, chemical, and sustainability projects. He studied chemistry at the University of Fribourg and at Lomonosov Moscow State University and was later awarded a prestigious Miller Fellowship at the University of California in Berkeley. Ziegler has founded a number of companies as a student. He represents McKinsey on the >>venture>> Foundation Board.

PB I come from a family of entrepreneurs, and we always discussed new ideas over dinner. I still call my father twice a day to talk business. Actually, my time at UBS was an anomaly in my career, not Frigg *[laughs]*.

LF This role model function is extremely valuable, and it's something I didn't have. I was also the first person in my family to go to college. After that, I wanted to go straight to work for McKinsey. But a student advisory mandate provided me with the opportunity to found a blockchain startup for the luxuries industry. I just couldn't say no to that. For my brother, the inhibition threshold is already much lower. He's certain that he wants to found a startup—because it went so well for me.

PB I'm very comfortable with risk. Last year, we had CHF 100,000 left in our account, enough for two months—and at exactly that moment we declined a big offer from America. I kept cool and said: "OK, so now we'll just have to go and find another source of outside financing." And that's what we did. It's something you have to be prepared for.

MZ I'm more like Leonie. I'm the first one in the family to attend college. But by nature, I've always liked exploring. During my studies, I went to Moscow, where I founded one company in the travel sector and another in the chemicals sector. Later, I conducted research and taught at Berkeley in California. And sure, I founded a company there, too. And at McKinsey, there are a whole lot of opportunities for bringing in your own ideas, just like in a startup.

Will you ever found another startup during your lives?

LF I've only been with McKinsey since 2022. At present, I appreciate that I'm not responsible for an entire company.

PB I've got a few ideas in mind, but at present I'm fully focused on Frigg. But what I also know is that I'll never return to the corporate world if I can help it.

MZ I've been working for McKinsey for twenty-four years, and with lots of opportunities to develop my own McKinsey ideas. But I also have a few startup ideas in mind that I'd like to realize some day. They have to do with chemical science and sustainability. _____

MENTORS AND JURORS 2023

Young entrepreneurs are full of ideas and zest for action. But few could have formed thriving companies without the guidance of more than 200 mentors and jurors, who spent countless hours supporting >>venture>> participants—for free.

A

Nick Adamus
Founder and CEO at Swiss Dragon Group

Antonia Albert
Principal at Wingman Ventures

Pascal Allot
Principal Service at IBM Switzerland

Jessica Altenburger
Concept & Process Development at WfW

Sharon Ambrosio
Senior Manager Entrepreneurship at Swissnex SF

Martin Angehrn
Co-founder at Brixel

Marc Anken
Co-founder and Managing Partner at advantedge

Ruth Armalé
Head of Open Innovation at HITS – House of Insurtech Switzerland

Manuel Aschwanden
CEO at Optotune Holding

B

Andreas Bachmann
Director of Sales at Bachofen

Oliver Banz
Head of SME Corporate Banking at Credit Suisse

Martin Bartholet
Co-founder and CEO at Celeroton

Michal Bartos
Founder and CEO at ARTO

Brigitte Baumann Gervais
Founder and CEO of Go Beyond

Adrian D. Beer
CEO at topimpact.ch

Esther Belser Gisi
Head of Marketing at Mibelle Group

Mark Berger
Founder at Scalable Solutions

Gian-Luigi Berini
Senior Investment Manager at Geneva Smart Invest

Florian Berner
Innovation Support at

ZHAW

Philippe Bernet
Founding Partner at BackBone Ventures

Thomas Billeter
Partner at Impact51

Kaspar Binz
Founder and CEO at Binz Biotech Consulting

Søren Bjonness
Director and Swiss Representative at EURONEXT

Stefan Blarer
Managing Director at DRIMARCH

Raoul Bloch
Board Member at Axies

Ivonne Blossfeld
Project Manager at World Food System Center

Salvatore Bocchetti
Product Director at Scout24

Romain Boichat
Partner at Corpus Health

Christof Bolliger
Director of Products and Partner at Bachofen

Andreas Bong

Head of Corporate Research & Technology at Hilti

Hanna Brahme
Director of Entrepreneurship at ZHAW

Daniel Brandenburger
Advisor at Deb Value Creator

Aron Braun
CEO at Arpega / Zimballo / BFH

PoI Budmiger
Startup Coach at Viadiversa

Peter Buhler
Distinguished Research Staff Member at IBM Research

Adrian Bühler
Startup Investor and CEO of Panaman Consulting

Fabian Buller
CBO at Neurimmune

C

William Cabrera
Chief Strategy Officer at Pexapark

Oliver Chmiel
Senior Partnership Manager at Nestlé

Björn Christ
SVP for Group Strategy and BD/M&A at Sonova Group

Ulf Claesson
Partner at BLR Partners

D

Gerald Dahlmann
Director of Strategic Marketing at Coherent Inc.

Renato Del Grosso
Co-founder and Chief Strategy Officer at Cube Labs

Romain Dequesne
CEO at Resolve

Bruno Derungs
Senior Investment Manager at Aquila Capital

Daniel Diezi
Vice President Digitalization & New Business Models at Gerresheimer

Lukas Döbelin
President Projects at UBS Switzerland

Nicolas Dorsaz
EPFL Innovation Satellite Manager at Bühler Group

Désirée Dosch
Managing Partner and Owner at Alvicus

Stephanie Dreifuss
Director of Partners and Clients at Swisscontact

Thomas Dübendorfer
President at SICTIC

Zoé Dumont
Senior Impact and Project Manager at SEIF

E

Marcel Egger
Independent Investor and Business Mentor at SICTIC

Thomas Eisele
CEO Food Service at Valora

Rolf Eleveld
Digital Technologist

Alex Enzler
Partner at MME Legal

Bettina Ernst
CEO at PRECLIN Biosystems

Jana Essebier
Partner at Vischer

F

Marcello Fabbroni
Director of Innovation Campus at Bühler

Nicola Fantini
CEO at ScaleTools

Josef Felber
Physicist and European Patent Attorney at Felber & Partners

Aldo Ferrari
Head of UI/UX at Tata Consultancy Services

Thomas Foery
Former Head of HR at Implenia

Ivo Francioni
CFO at Deon Digital

Hans-Peter Frank
Founder of T-S-P Health

Maria Luisa Fuchs
Advisor Startup@HSG at University of St. Gallen

Theresa Fuchs
Senior Project Manager Climate at Stadt Zürich

Jan Fülischer
Owner of janfuelscher.ch

G

Antonio Gambardella
Director at FONGIT

Joëlle Gautier
Project Manager Fintech Regulation

Theresa Gehringer
President at Board for Good Foundation

Stefan Geiger
CTO and Owner at GIANTS Software

Mathias Gempeler
Global Head Science & Promotion Skin Care at DSM Nutritional Products

Luc Gérardin
Head of Data, AI, Analytics at Cognizant

Alex Ginsburg
Head of Products at Visa Card Services

Guy Giuffredi
Investment Director at Serpentine Ventures

Thierry Golliard
Director and VP Open Innovation & Venturing at Swiss Post

Melanie Gonzales
Principal at ConsultiSwiss

Nanci Govinder
Startup Coach, Trainer, Investor, Board Member at Aura Suriya

Helmut Grabner
Professor at ZHAW

Marco Gremaud
Independent Consultant and Expert at Innosuisse

Patrick Griss
Managing Partner at Zühlke Ventures

Bernard Gruhl
Senior Consultant at Migros Industrie

Dominique Gruhl-Bégin
CEO at Serpentine Ventures

Wolfram Grüning
Manager of Entrepreneurship at ETH Zürich

Franziska Gsell
CMO at IWC Schaffhausen and Chair of IWC's Sustainability Committee

Urs Guggenbühl
CEO at novoviam

Ronan Guirey
Managing Director at P&TS

Ruedi Gygax
Chairman of the Board at Oncobit

H

Aino Hacklin
Global Sustainability VP at Credit Suisse

Rhea Hamilton
Managing Director at BeyondNetZero

Daniel Häring
Coach, Investor, Treasurer at Swiss Health Angels

Jann J. Hatz
BU Head at RUAG

Daniel Haudenschild
CEO at ORIGYN

Antonio Hautle
Executive Director at UN Global Compact

THE >>VENTURE>> AWARD CEREMONY 2023



1



3



4



2



5



6

- 1 Crowd awaiting the award ceremony at EPFL's SwissTech Convention Center on July 26, 2023.
- 2 The advisory board is about to decide on the winners. >>venture>> foundation CEO Lea Firmin explains the rules.
- 3 For the first time, >>venture>> is presenting awards to not-for-profit startups. Peter Maurer, the long-standing head of the ICRC (center), is engaged in the discussion.
- 4 Participants in discussion with then Swiss CEO and >>venture>> advisory board member Dieter Vranckx.
- 5 In-depth discussions between Thomas Knecht, >>venture>> founder, Severin Schwan, Roche Chairman of the Board and Thomas Wellauer, Six Chairman of the Board (from left).
- 6 Mathieu Falbriard, co-founder and CEO of Bearmind, makes a successful pitch to the jury. His startup wins the ICT Vertical.



7



8



10



9

7 The moment of truth:
Who will win the Grand Prize?

8 The startups present
themselves to the attendees.

9 At dinner after the award
ceremony, the startups meet
the Advisory Board members—
and take selfies.

10 Great excitement at Biosimo:
they won the Industrials &
Engineering Vertical and the
Grand Prize.

11 >>venture>> foundation
chairman, Ulrich Jakob Looser,
congratulates a winner.



11

THE >>VENTURE>> FOUNDATION

FOUNDATION BOARD

Chairman

Ulrich Jakob Looser, BLR & Partners, partner

Vice chairman

André Hoffmann, Roche, vice chairman

Members

André Kudelski, Innosuisse, president

Doris Leuthard, former member of the Swiss Federal Council

Joël Mesot, ETH Zurich, president

Martin Vetterli, EPFL, president

Marco Ziegler, McKinsey & Company, senior partner

Honorary chairman and founder of >>venture>>

Thomas Knecht, Knecht Holding, chairman

STEERING COMMITTEE

Maria Anselmi, Innosuisse, head of startups and next-generation innovators

Silvio Bonaccio, ETH Zurich, head of ETH transfer

André Catana, EPFL, head of startup unit

Lea Firmin, >>venture>> foundation, CEO

Ulrich Jakob Looser, BLR & Partners, partner

Marco Ziegler, McKinsey & Company, senior partner

OFFICE >>VENTURE>>

Lea Firmin, CEO

Nathalie Geiger, operations manager events & participants

Katja Oswald, operations manager jury & network

Priscilla Sarnau, marketing & communications manager

Martino Corti, startup scout and university relations

Maria Demontis, events & participant relations

Laure Garnier Pinel, marketing

Karolina Jankovska, team assistant

Lisa Rabolini, events & marketing

Giulio Fabi, marketing intern

Johanna Mehl, award ceremony (McKinsey & Company)

Christian Meier, jury (McKinsey & Company)

GENERAL EDITOR

Lea Firmin

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

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Ammann, Brunner & Krobath AG,
abk.ch

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LAYOUT, AND PRODUCTION**

Angélique El Morabit,
angeliqheelmorabit.com

PHOTOGRAPHY

Christian Grund, pp. 6, 12, 14-17,
27, 46-48, 51, 54, 59
Bertrand Rey, p. 11

Tobias Stahel, pp. 30-43, 72-75

**TRANSLATION AND
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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Confederation
Innosuisse – Swiss Innovation Agency

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