



Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne

Bern Economic Development Agency

2020 Annual Report





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Moving ahead through challenging times

I don't need to tell you how unusual this past year has been for the Bernese economy. Instead, I'd like to let you know what Bernese businesses and we at the Bern Economic Development Agency (BEDA) have been doing to get through the year with all the challenges it has presented. Of course, I write this in the knowledge that the crisis is not yet over.

When the crisis first started, I wrote about how important it was for us to keep a clear head and remain calm in these difficult times. And that is exactly what we have done throughout the year. This meant that alongside the federal government's measures, in spring 2020 we were able to put together a tailor-made support program for businesses in the Canton of Bern. This allowed them to avoid forcing crucial key personnel into short-time work and to keep innovation projects alive.

For their part, our partners have also done their utmost to support our beleaguered businesses. For example, be-advanced AG has expanded its coaching services and has launched support programs for the tourism sector.

Despite the all-pervading crisis, in this Annual Report we are fortunately able to report on other topics and projects that have taken place this year, such as the completion of the V-Cableway multi-generation project and the successful transformation of the Hakle paper mill in Niederbipp.

Coronavirus issues permeate this Annual Report just as the virus is doing in our daily lives. So instead of separating them completely, we have decided to flag these issues visually with page borders. After all, the coronavirus has – for all its uniqueness – become part of our everyday lives in 2020. This is less dispiriting than it may sound, as it shows how adaptive, innovative, and resilient our society and economy are.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues and staff at the Ministry, our partners and, of course, all the businesses that are meeting these challenging times head on with innovative ideas, untiring optimism, and remarkable drive.

Bern Economic Development Agency

The Bern Economic Development Agency (BEDA) supports companies and their activities with a wide portfolio of advisory and other services. Our services are tailored to meet the needs of export-oriented and international companies of all sizes, ranging from start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to multinationals. BEDA helps companies to get in touch with the right people in the administration. Our key services are:

- Advice
- Arranging contacts, real estate, cantonal realty, and guarantees
- Initial advice for SMEs and start-ups
- Financial assistance and tax relief

In order to boost economic development, BEDA markets the Canton of Bern as a business location abroad in collaboration with Switzerland Global Enterprise and the Greater Geneva Bern area. Other important partners in the Canton are the innovation promotion agency be-advanced, the Switzerland Innovation Park in Biel/Bienne and sitem-insel.

Another area in which we provide strategic project support is that of innovation promotion and real estate development projects. These activities boost the long-term attractiveness of the Canton as a business location.

One of BEDA's key tasks is to improve the overall regional environment for business and tourism. Our regional policy boosts competitiveness in rural areas, generates added value and creates jobs, benefiting residents, companies, and tourists alike. BEDA supports the tourism sector to enable it to hold its own against the competition and develop. Key areas of our support are market promotion and events.

BEDA's success is measured in terms of the actual investments made by Bernese companies and the number of jobs they create. We therefore continuously monitor the progress of the projects and businesses we support and conduct regular reviews of the effects and benefits of our funding activities. Based on the latest review, it can be assumed that the tools we employ generate net revenues and thus ease the burden on the Canton's financial budget.



Interview: Christoph Ammann, Minister of Economic Affairs, Energy and the Environment

Governing by phone

The crisis turned everything on its head in 2020 – including for Christoph Ammann, Minister of Economic Affairs, Energy and the Environment. From one day to the next, job contents and work processes were turned upside down. In this interview, Mr. Ammann reveals how he tackled these challenges and what changes he has made.

The year 2020 was to a large extent dictated by the crisis. At what point did you realize the magnitude of the pandemic and what impact it would have?

It was on Monday, March 16, 2020, when the Federal Council declared a state of emergency and the government was working to frantically develop solutions to urgent issues overnight: How do we protect our health care system? How do we safeguard businesses' liquidity? How do we handle the flood of applications for short time work compensation as quickly and efficiently as possible? What protective measures need to be put in place to keep industry and commerce operational?

Many of the events and visits you would normally have in your diary were cancelled. How did you manage to stay in touch and maintain a presence with these companies and organizations?

That was indeed tricky. The only face-to-face contacts I had were with businesses and organizations that were helping the government to find solutions for the issues I mentioned above. But I was in touch with businesses by phone almost every day and regularly held special meet-

ings with our social partners, the employers' and employees' organizations.

What issues and concerns did businesses raise most often this year?

To begin with: How will we survive? What measures will we need to put in place to be able to continue to work? And later on: When will you finally be lifting the restrictions? And what protective measures will need to be taken? Then, in the second wave: How will the federal and cantonal governments compensate businesses for loss of income and closures?

Companies moving here from elsewhere in Switzerland and abroad are an important factor for the Bern economic area. But for this to happen, people need to be able to visit from abroad and work with organizations such as the GGBa and SG-E. Was all of this put on ice in 2020, or how did it work?

Foreign business has in fact declined sharply, and we have had to focus on existing projects. But some foreign companies did make investment decisions during the

early months of the crisis. GGBa, the economic development agency for Western Switzerland, was fully operational throughout.

How did you juggle the expectations of the various stakeholders (the public, politicians, associations, and businesses)?

The image I often refer to is one of the government balancing precariously on a high Alpine mountain ridge. Below to the right is the abyss with the health risks, and to the left is the one with the economic risks. The government can only prevent itself from falling off by balancing carefully and being able to rely on everyone in the rope team.

To what extent were you able to influence coronavirus measures on a national level?

That was important and intensive work which was going on behind the scenes, sometimes even involving direct interventions in ongoing Federal Council sessions.

What new demands are you facing now as a member of the cantonal government and Minister of Economic Affairs?

My first and foremost challenge is to come up with measures to support the economy. The state has not had to intervene on such a massive scale since World War II. Another challenge was managing a ministry with so many employees working from home.

« Below to the right is the abyss with the health risks, and to the left is the one with the economic risks. »

You mentioned the fact that the lockdowns have transformed the way we work. How have processes changed, and which tools have proved most successful?

In a crisis, ordinary procedures and processes are too slow. So you have to «govern by phone». A high degree of improvisation and flexibility is required from both the government and the administration. We would not have been able to achieve that without modern means of communication and digital solutions. They have proved their worth many times over and will play a much greater role in our everyday working lives than they did before, even in normal times.

Can you give us some specific examples of how you have had to go digital in your day-to-day working life?

Yes: thanks to digital solutions, the government has been able to act at any time, 24/7. I led government sessions via Skype from my alpine chalet in the Gadmer Valley on Sunday mornings. And some meetings even took place while I was in the car or on the beach in Greece during the fall vacation. Our working methods have become much more flexible and less location-dependent.

What position will Bernese businesses be in after the pandemic?

That is difficult to say from our current standpoint at the end of the second wave. But I have every confidence in their agility and innovative strength. Both of these are distinguishing features of many of the companies in our Canton.





V-Cableway – a pioneering achievement

The Eiger Express tricable aerial cableway (3S-Bahn) and the terminal were fully opened in December 2020, marking the completion of the V-Cableway as a visionary project. The 3S-Bahn whisks visitors from the Grindelwald terminal to the Eiger Glacier station in 15 minutes, and a new 10-seater gondola provides a direct link to the Männlichen. The new terminal is directly accessible by public transport and offers shopping and catering options across several floors.

The cableway and the new stations were not only designed and built using the very latest technology but also taking account of the unique landscape and the fauna living in it.

With its international appeal, the new V-Cableway will ensure the success of tourism in the Jungfrau region as a whole in the medium and long term.

Hakle mill in Niederbipp

Sanitary paper will continue to be made in Niederbipp. The Queck family, who also own other paper mills, announced in December 2020 that it was taking over the mill from the American Kimberly-Clark Corporation. Kimberly-Clark cites a strategic review of the efficiency of manufacturing processes as the reason for this change.

Kimberly-Clark bought the mill in 1999. The Hakle brand will be going with the corporation but the Tela brand will be staying in Bern. The mill in Niederbipp currently employs 265 people and produces around 1.5 million rolls of toilet tissue every day. As panic buying set in earlier in the year, it managed to produce twice its normal output in one month.





be-advanced AG offers Covid-19 crisis management coaching package

To help businesses through the crisis, the Bern-based innovation agency be-advanced has put together a crisis coaching package. This includes a series of special coaching sessions looking at issues such as the support provided by the federal and cantonal governments and how organizations can realign themselves in response to the crisis at short notice.

In another move, be-advanced has expanded its coaching services to include the tourism industry. Alongside the regular services available to them, since September 2020 tourism businesses have had the opportunity to consult a Tourism Key Account Manager to explore new ways of working.

be-advanced guides entrepreneurs through the ecosystem, giving them valuable insights and thus boosting the spirit of innovation, entrepreneurial dynamism, and economic strength throughout the Canton for the long term.

Focus on innovation

In times of crisis innovation budgets are often cut, despite the fact the associated products and services would help us to emerge stronger from them. This is why the Bern Economic Development Agency has developed a tailor-made support program to keep innovation projects alive. In spring 2020, technology-oriented and innovative SMEs and micro-enterprises were able to apply to the Canton of Bern for non-repayable grants which would allow them to continue their innovation projects and retain key personnel.

The grant program for individual businesses ended in May 2020. It has enabled companies to retain more than 1,500 key personnel in their innovation projects. The program will be comprehensively reviewed in 2021.



Legal basis for BEDA funding and support and number of funded projects in 2020

The work of the Bern Economic Development Agency is based on four laws:

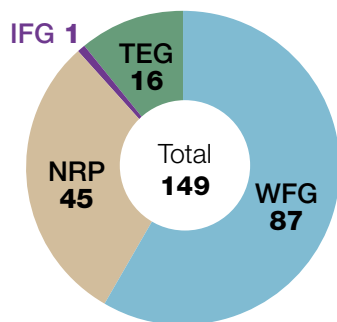
The **Economic Development Act (WFG)** enables us to support innovative projects, start-ups and companies relocating to the Canton.

The **Innovation Promotion Act (IFG)** allows us to provide funding for applied research and development institutions.

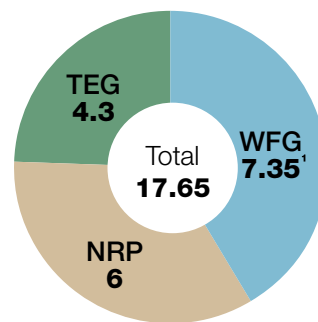
The Cantonal Investment Aid Act is the basis for the support we provide for infrastructure and development projects under the **New Regional Policy (NRP)**.

And finally, the **Tourism Development Act (TEG)** enables us to support events and marketing activities in the tourism sector.

Number of projects



Promised contributions in million CHF



*thereof paid out 5.7 Mio.

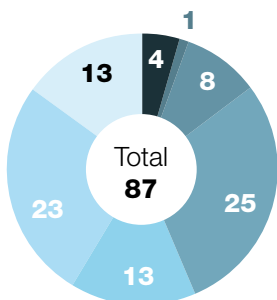
Planned jobs according to information provided by the companies



Planned investments according to information provided by the companies

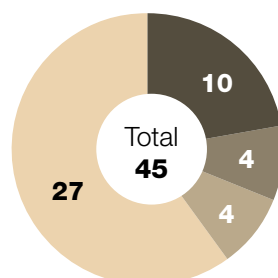


Projects by key area category



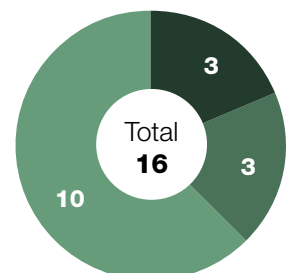
WFG

- 4 Design/luxury goods
- 1 Services (incl. finance/ administration)
- 8 Energy and environment technology
- 25 IT and communication technology
- 13 Medical technology
- 23 Precision industry
- 13 Others



NRP

- 10 Education (and health)
- 4 Energy
- 4 Industry
- 27 Tourism



TEG

- 3 Marketing
- 3 Studies/Strategies
- 10 Events

Emergency measures and number of funded projects

Innovation support

In spring 2020, technology-oriented and innovative SMEs and micro-enterprises were able to apply to the Canton of Bern for non-repayable grants which would allow them to continue their innovation projects and retain key personnel.



23.5 million CHF allocated in total for innovation projects



410 companies benefited



1554 key persons not on short-time work

Start-up guarantees

The federal government's guarantee scheme for start-ups is one of many potential sources of capital. In 2020 the Canton of Bern has decided to participate in the federal program to expand the guarantee system for start-ups. Under this program, start-ups could apply for these guarantees.



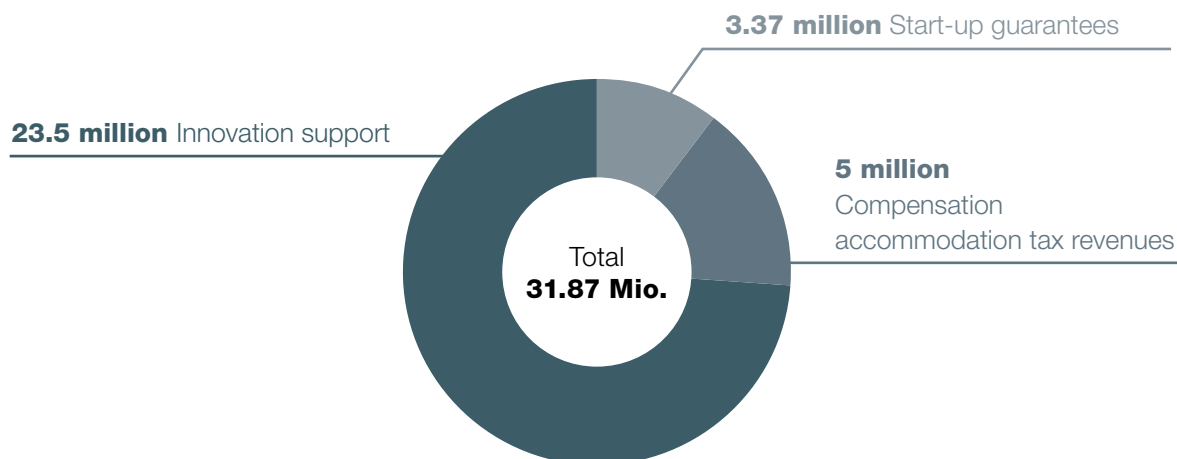
56 start-ups have applied



32 applications accepted



9.64 million CHF guaranteed, 35% by the Canton, 65% by the federal government



Compensation payments

The federal government measures (short-time work, compensation for loss of income) were open to tourism service providers. The loss of cantonal accommodation tax revenues due to the drop in overnight stays severely impacted the marketing activities of the tourist destinations and BE! Tourism AG. To compensate for this, a one-time state grant of CHF 5 million was made available in 2020 to enable their

marketing activities to resume. The destinations' contributions to BE! Tourism Ltd. were partially offset in 2020 by an increase in the cantonal subsidy to the cantonal marketing company, and the expected loss of accommodation tax revenues for the destinations was also partially compensated for.



5 million CHF as compensation for lost accommodation tax revenues

Legal bases

- Ordinance of March 20, 2020 on Emergency Measures to Address the Coronavirus Crisis (CKV)
- Tourism Development Act (TEG) of June 20, 2005 (BSG 935.211)
- Law on the Management of Finances and Services (FLG) of March 26, 2002 (BSG 20.0)
- Ordinance on the Management of Finances and Services (FLV) of December 3, 2003 (BSG 621.1)

VOH SA

As a modern company in perpetual search of innovation, VOH has been producing equipment for professional use and original solutions for the watchmaking and microtechnology industry since 1995.

VOH's working philosophy is based on the analysis and understanding of needs, complemented by appropriate expertise in a climate of partnership. This open-minded approach, reinforced by cutting-edge technical skills and a marked orientation towards smart manufacturing and Industry 4.0, has made VOH a leading partner in facing the challenges of the industry of tomorrow.

The company's products and services focus on quality control through highly innovative production and control equipment. Its target market is the microtechnology industry, of which the watchmaking branch is a major component. Watchmaking is VOH'S main sector, its source of inspiration and the origin of its developments.



” The watchmaking industry supplier VOH is a classic Hidden Champion. Its technical expertise and the owners' entrepreneurial passion are second to none. BEDA provided financial support for part of the software development of a device series.

“

Sebastian Friess, Project Manager

STAGE UP

The STAGE UP Bernese Business Creation Competition promotes start-ups in the early stages and brings them a step closer to their own company.

The previous concept was revised by the University of Bern in 2020, with enhancements to the evaluation process to cope with the increasing number of participants. From 2021 the event will be held annually. In line with this, communication in Switzerland is being expanded and even more founders are being sought for the competition.

BEDA has been one of the main partners of the STAGE UP Bern Business Creation competition ever since its inception. Other partners include Bern University of Applied Sciences and be-advanced AG.



” The STAGE UP Bern Business Creation Competition offers a useful learning and coaching platform for start-ups. Thanks to close collaboration between the University of Bern, Bern University of Applied Sciences, be-advanced AG, and BEDA, this popular event is to be staged annually in Bern in the future.

“

Virve Resta, Project Manager



New Roots AG

The start-up New Roots produces the world's only vegan cheese based on organic cashew nuts. These top quality nuts are grown in Indonesia in fair conditions. Employment conditions and workers' rights are monitored in accordance with strict guidelines on a quarterly basis.

The nuts are then processed by hand: soaking, mixing, filling into molds, coating the fresh products in herbs, storing and caring for them in the ripening chambers, and finally packaging. In February 2021, New Roots moved from Thun to a state-of-the-art, sustainable production facility in Oberdiessbach, from where they supply the Swiss and European markets with their plant-based cheese and yoghurt alternatives.



” BEDA is providing financial support to help this rapidly growing company set up a state-of-the-art production facility in Oberdiessbach and create the associated high-skilled jobs. New Roots was founded in 2016 by former competitive mountain biker Freddy Hunziker.

“

David Kalensky, Project Manager

Azurea

The Azurea group of companies can look back over more than a hundred years of tradition and experience. But this by no means distracts from their ability to innovate. On the contrary: with their expertise and cutting-edge technologies, they can respond to their customers' individual wishes and requirements and offer products with high added value.

In order to diversify in various markets, Azurea specializes in the development of complex machining techniques, from prototype to series delivery. Nevertheless, they are not resting on their laurels but are already focusing today on the technologies of tomorrow.

Azurea has therefore decided to build a new center of excellence specializing in medtech, where it plans to develop and manufacture complex titanium or implantable stainless steel parts for various medical disciplines such as orthopedics, urology, neurology, dental technology, and ophthalmology



” Backed up by its many years of experience in microtechnology, this group of companies is embarking on a vast and highly promising diversification project. BEDA is providing financial support for this innovative project which will safeguard the company's long-term development.

“

Etienne Maillefer, Project Manager



Ski races: Lauberhorn, Adelboden

The ski races on the Lauberhorn in Wengen and in Adelboden are not only a major fixture in the Swiss sporting calendar, they are also among the most important races in the FIS Ski World Cup.

At 4,500 meters, the downhill piste in Wengen is the longest run in the alpine ski racing world. The world's top skiers have been competing there since 1930. In normal times, the downhill attracts around 40,000 visitors every year.

The Ski World Cup Adelboden Chuenis is also a firm fixture in ski fans' diaries. Under normal circumstances, the festival attracts 30,000 spectators for the giant slalom and 10,000 for the slalom to Adelboden.

” The two World Cup events in Adelboden and Wengen are among the best-known regular winter sports events in Switzerland and are of great economic importance for the region. Thanks to the revised Tourism Development Act, BEDA is now able to provide financial support for both events.



Alexandra Fries, Project Manager

8photonics

8photonics wants to change the way laser systems are designed and assembled. The company offers an innovation platform consisting of mechanical and electronic components mounted on a modular frame. The platform can be easily modified, offers portability and is user-friendly.

The 8photonics rapid prototyping platform is designed to meet the needs of photonics professionals in science and industry. The company is a spin-off from the University of Bern.

” The start-up 8photonics GmbH is a spin-off from the University of Bern Institute of Applied Physics. BEDA is providing financial support for the development of the innovation platform for cutting-edge laser systems.



Ralf Müssig, Project Manager



CEMIPLAST

CEMIPLAST specializes in technology transfer and the development and production of injection-molded thermoplastic parts. Its core business areas are injection molding of technical microparts, multi-component injection molding and overmolding of inserts. The areas of application range from medical engineering and micro-electronics to publicity materials with functional and aesthetic features that require custom-made manufacturing.

The company’s interdisciplinary team has extensive experience in the production of medical products and takes the regulatory requirements that need to be met by an ISO 13485 certified critical supplier into consideration right from the start of each project.



” CEMIPLAST began operating at the Incubator at HE-Arc in St-Imier in 2013. It was the first tenant at Technology Park III in St-Imier, where it continues to invest in and develop its innovative micro-injection operations.

Etienne Maillefer, Project Manager

Wyssen Cableway Systems

Wyssen Cableway Systems has been manufacturing high-quality components for material cableways since 1926. The invention of the cable crane in 1939 heralded a new era in the management of mountain forests. Wyssen is still the market leader in the cable crane and material cableway sector today. The company is continually setting new standards in modern cable crane construction with its latest carriage and cable winch models.

Wyssen’s main customers are forestry companies. But their systems are increasingly in demand among cableway companies, who use them to transport their sensitive construction materials for mountain railroads, gas pipelines, bridges, etc in challenging terrain.



” BEDA provided financial support for the Innosuisse project Cableway Systems 4.0. Conventional cable cranes for wood harvesting are currently operated by a machine operator at the winch. The use of new radio technologies can eliminate the need for this labor, making wood harvesting economical again for forestry companies.

David Kalensky, Project Manager



SO REAL Digital Twins AG

SO REAL is a Bern-based start-up specializing in Augmented, Mixed and Virtual Reality (XR), combining the fields of physics, entertainment, business, and AI.

SO REAL mass-produces photorealistic digital 3D & 4D objects (digital twins). These can be used for games, movies, eCommerce, and all XR experiences. Numerous brands and manufacturers are switching to selling their products online and through AR shopping apps. One of the bottlenecks they face is creating the models they need, and this Bern-based start-up is solving this problem.

Using patented scanning and conversion technology, SO REAL automates the entire production process from physical object to fully digital equivalent. These digital twins are smart 3D and 4D assets that contain precise details of the object's internal and external structures as well as its physical properties and metadata, providing interactivity and offering opportunities that go far beyond mere visualization.

” To the delight of customers from a wide range of sectors, a competent, highly motivated team has managed to generate outstanding digital copies of objects (digital twins). Using the tomography-based scanning method, SO REAL also provides an insight into the inner workings of the objects. Simply fascinating!



Manfred Böhnner, Project Manager

SiMPLInext

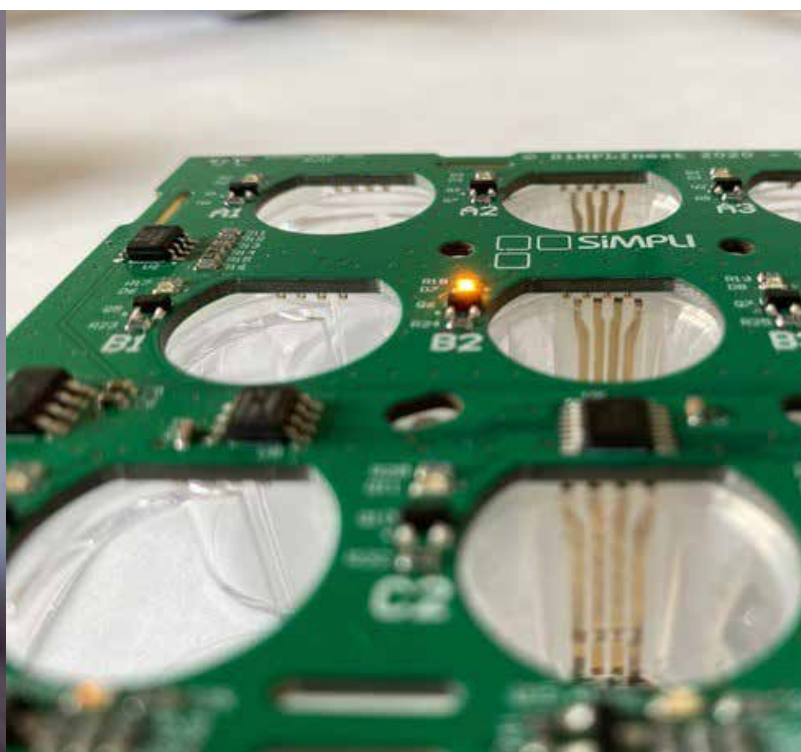
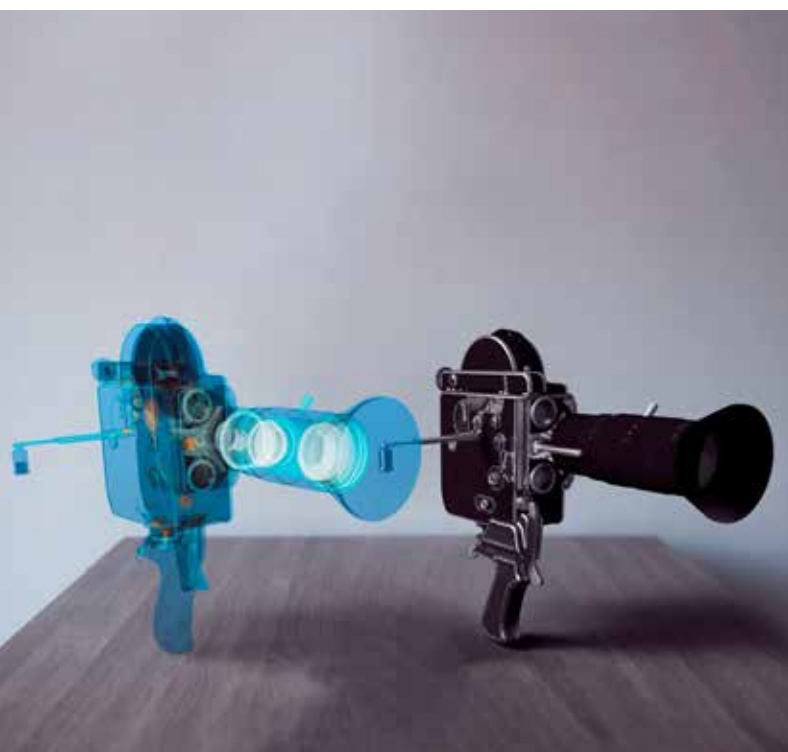
SiMPLInext is developing the next generation of smart tools for introducing in-vitro tissue engineering on an industrial scale. It is currently in the process of developing and commercializing the first digital platform consisting of a high-quality cell culture consumable, a low-cost acquisition module, and digital data exchange software.

This platform will enable drug developers and toxicologists to conduct in-vitro studies on the permeability of the human body to nanomaterials as an economical and ethical alternative to animal testing. The studies can be extended with permeability studies on highly porous, non-cellular membranes such as mucous membranes or biofilms.

” SiMPLInext is currently at the stage of industrializing its product. To this end, it is working closely with numerous industrial partners and the Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne. This project is supported by Innosuisse and BEDA.



Etienne Maillefer, Project Manager



be-advanced AG

Since 2017, be-advanced has been successfully coaching future young entrepreneurs through its three-month be-advanced Start-up Challenge, which gives them an opportunity to validate their customer solutions and their business case in the market.

In 2020, be-advanced responded to market demand by developing a multi-month business training program, Evolve. In this program, start-ups that have already been successfully validated develop their marketing strategy and a concrete milestone plan with key indicators. This helps businesses to make optimum use of their limited resources and gain market access in a controlled, sustainable, and successful manner.

The new Evolve module is the link between the be-advanced Start-up Challenge and the Business Plan Coaching and Highflyer modules, rounding off a comprehensive and unique program for start-ups.



” In Evolve, be-advanced has taken a major step forward in its Start-up Challenge. Before launching their own business, every founder can test and perfect their market fit and improve their chances.

Virve Resta, Project Manager

Neustark AG

Concrete is one of the most widely used building materials. The problem: vast amounts of CO₂ are emitted in manufacturing concrete, and, up to now, in recycling it. This is where the cleantech start-up Neustark comes in, with its novel process for storing CO₂ permanently in concrete.

In this process, concrete aggregate is exposed to CO₂ inside a container. The fragments can absorb and chemically bind around 10 kg of CO₂ per cubic meter over a period of two hours. The material produced is then used in the production process instead of fresh concrete. The company envisages the process being used at concrete recycling plants directly.



” The start-up Neustark AG is a spin-off from ETH Zurich. BEDA is supporting this company, which is developing a brand new process for permanently storing CO₂ in concrete. Neustark AG’s climate-friendly concrete production process won it first prize at the 2020 edition of the Climate Show Catwalk, an international competition for cleantech companies.

Stefan Jans, Project Manager



Spacetek Technology AG

Spacetek Technology AG develops compact time-of-flight mass spectrometers which combine the latest insights in technology, physics, and chemistry. Its instruments perform real-time analyses of gases and liquids at the atomic and molecular level.

This technology was originally developed for scientific space travel. Spacetek Technology AG has industrialized robust and compact high-end mass spectrometry technology, taking the lab directly to on-site applications, guaranteeing seamless analyses, and making time-consuming and costly sample submission a thing of the past.

” The start-up Spacetek Technology AG is a spin-off from the University of Bern. The founding team consists of engineers who have been working on the development of mass spectrometers for a European Space Agency (ESA) space mission for almost ten years.



Stefan Jans, Project Manager

Hyll

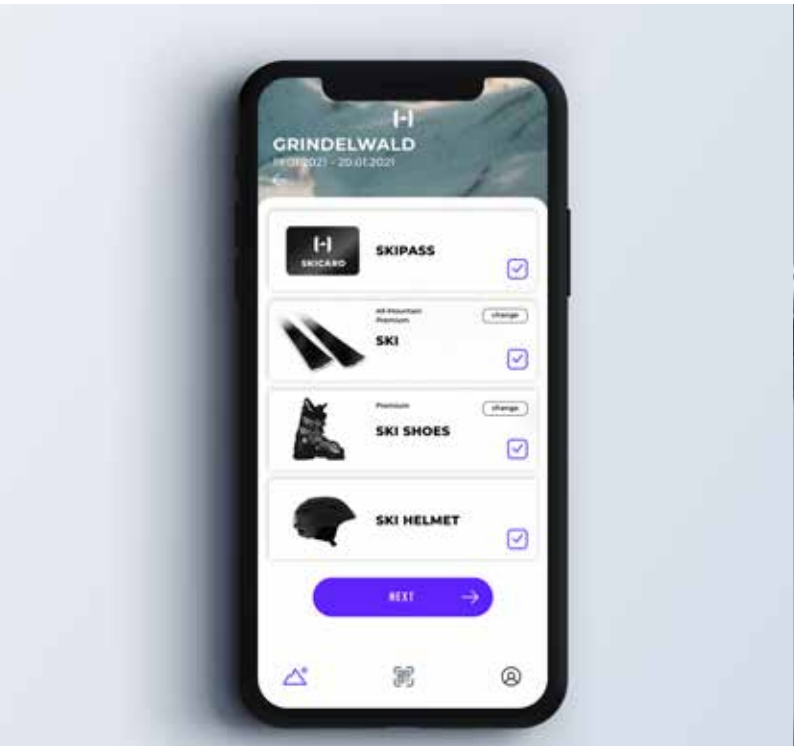
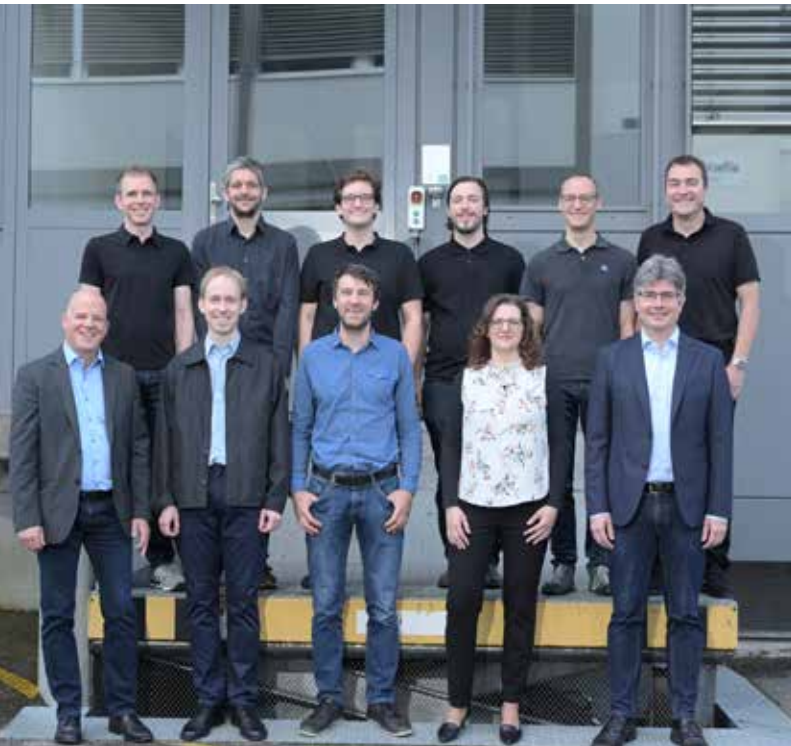
The Hyll app makes renting ski equipment easier than ever. It enables users to select a ski resort, book equipment, and buy a ski pass. Local partners assemble the equipment for collection. Ski rental is contactless and there are no cancellation fees. Hyll currently covers 20 different ski resorts, with additional locations being planned.

The app can also be used to track and analyze information on the user’s individual skiing style, such as maximum speed or distance traveled.

” This project stands out for the way the content is optimally matched to the target audience. The app makes it much easier for newcomers to winter sports to access them without having to spend a lot of money on equipment. In addition, users can save time and effort getting their equipment to the ski resort, as everything they need can be provided on site via the app. Feedback from customers is promising.



Manfred Böhnner, Project Manager



AlveoliX AG

With its innovative technology, the start-up AlveoliX manufactures Organ-on-Chip models which closely mimic the functioning of organs on a minute scale. These chips will be used to develop drugs and therapies that are more efficient, safer, and more personalized than before.

The lungs are the first organ to be recreated on-chip by AlveoliX. The success rate of new drugs for the lungs is particularly low. The micro-environment of the lungs – including the breathing motion – is recreated inside the chip. This allows the cells to retain their properties and react as they would in the human body.

The AlveoliX team is located in the Swiss Institute for Translational and Entrepreneurial Medicine (sitem-insel) building in Bern.



” The start-up AlveoliX AG is a spin-off from the University of Bern ARTORG Center. BEDA is providing financial support for the company’s operational market launch and the further development of the Lung-on-Chip system.

Ralf Müssig, Project Manager

Aspect Structural Engineers

This Canadian company designs projects of all kinds, ranging from large educational and recreational facilities to tall-wood towers, custom residential homes, multi-family and mixed-use developments, and inspiring art installations.

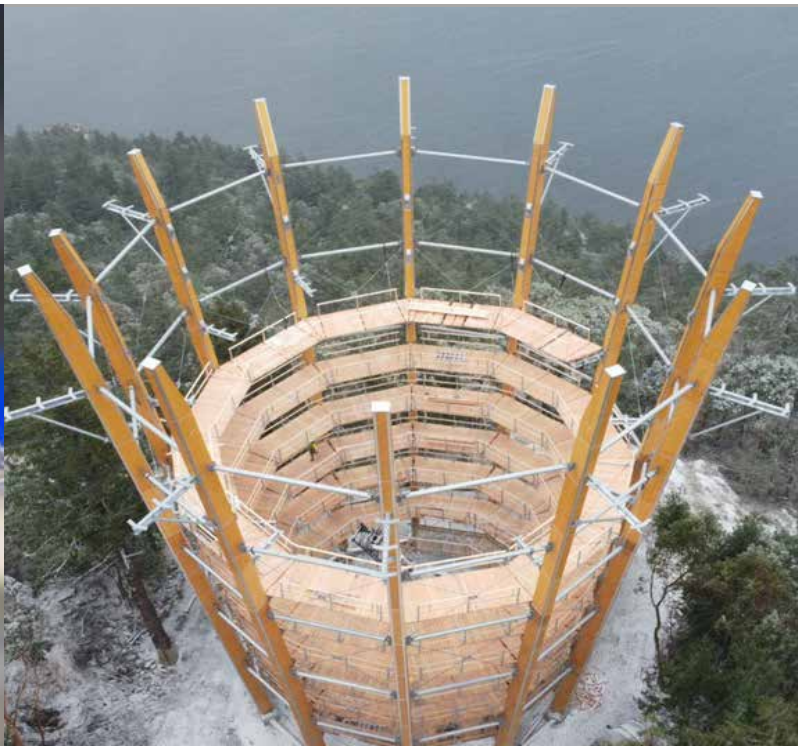
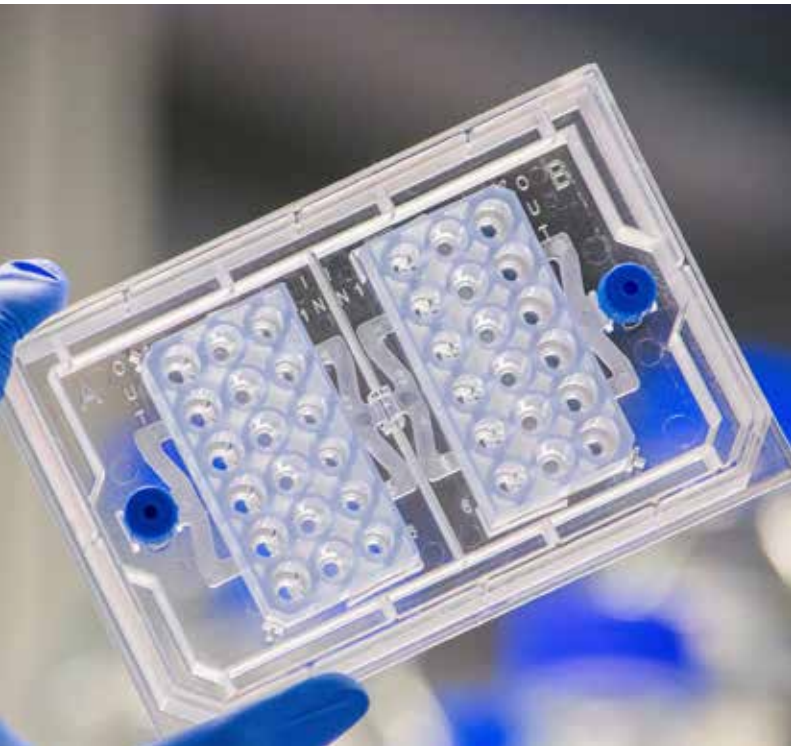
Aspect can be seen as the next generation of structural engineering: it is a blend of innovative strategies, experience, technical expertise, and modern project delivery methods.

With offices in Vancouver, Toronto, and, recently, Interlaken, they have acquired a unique network of international connections, experience and supply chain expertise that benefits their clients all over the world.



” With its innovative timber buildings and techniques, this internationally operating Canadian company is bringing new impetus to the timber industry in the Canton of Bern, giving it a welcome boost. It is also a good example of the transfer of knowledge and expertise between Switzerland and North America.

Isabelle Berthold, Project Manager



STAAR Surgical AG

The American STAAR Surgical Group has specialized in ophthalmic surgery for over 30 years. The company designs, develops, manufactures, and markets implantable lenses for the eye with companion delivery systems. These lenses are intended to provide visual freedom for patients, lessening or eliminating reliance on glasses or contact lenses. All lenses are foldable, which allows the surgeon to insert them through a small incision.

Its Swiss subsidiary STAAR Surgical AG runs sales and international distribution (outside the USA) from its Nidau site. As part of its expansion plans in the Canton of Bern, the STAAR Surgical Group is expanding its Operations department for existing and new products. In Nidau it is expanding production of a specific type of its refractive EVO ICL lenses



” With the creation of a state-of-the-art infrastructure for FDA-certified manufacturing of lens implants, STAAR Surgical is giving medical technology in the Canton of Bern and the world a significant boost.

Jean-Philippe Devaux, Project Manager

Manageld

Manageld is a drones and telecom specialized full service management agency with a team of innovation-led individuals.

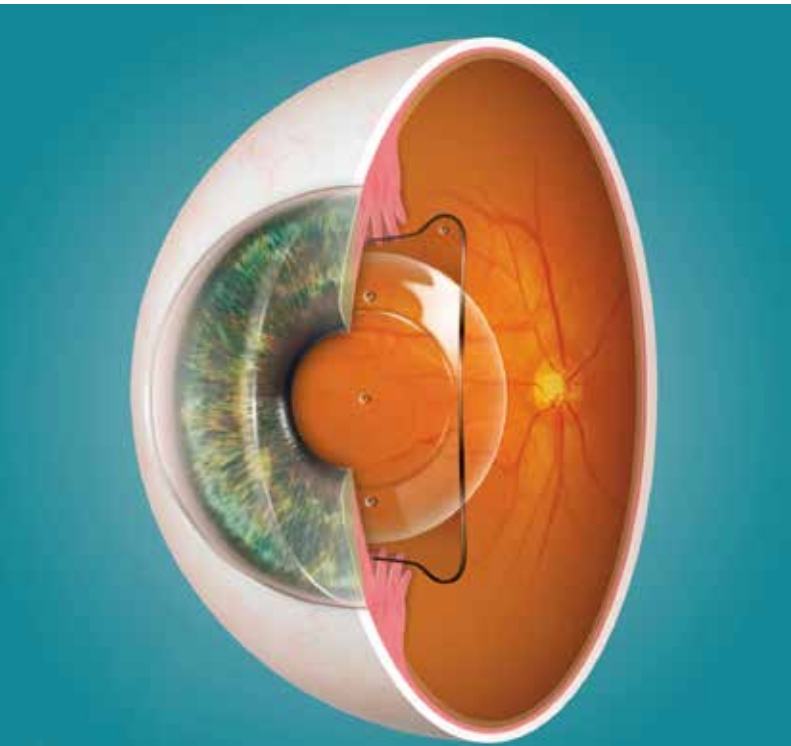
In 2020 Manageld launched DroneTalks, an online platform to spread ideas and to educate in the drone ecosystem. The platform provides virtual interactive learning opportunities and online educational content for people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the drone ecosystem.

Manageld is based in London and has an office in Bern since 2020.

” Thanks to the innovation-friendly and pragmatic approach of Swiss regulators, Switzerland has been leading the way in shaping regulations for Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM). Manageld is a valuable addition to the Drone eco-system emerging in Bern. Being close to the regulators and at mid distance to Switzerland’s leading Federal Institutes of Technology and close to key partners such as Swisspost, makes Bern an ideal location for drone companies to thrive and develop new innovative products.



Peter Kistler, Project Manager



Heiniger AG

Already in its third generation, the name Heiniger stands for high-quality Swiss-made animal shearing and clipping products. Having started out in 1946 trading in fruit and vegetables, Heiniger went on to become a high-quality manufacturer of shearing machines and clippers for sheep, dogs, cows, horses, and llamas, with customers all over the world. It recently took its first steps into the hairdressing and barbering market.

The customer proximity of its Australian and New Zealand subsidiaries, combined with the engineering expertise and precision manufacturing of the Swiss factory, have seen Heiniger become the world leader in professional sheep shearing equipment.



” This traditional family business is currently run by the third generation, Daniel Heiniger. A close-knit team is committed to innovating in the marketplace to secure the company’s future in a highly competitive market.



Manfred Böhnner, Project Manager

Biel/Bienne Chess Festival

The 53rd Biel/Bienne International Chess Festival will occupy a special place in our memories. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, an enjoyable event was put on in strict compliance with applicable safety measures.

In July, a total of 291 players from 21 countries took part in a series of fascinating and exciting matches at the Biel/Bienne Congress Center. The Polish grandmaster Radoslaw Wojtaszek won the tournament in the final round, ahead of his pursuers Pentala Harikrishna (India) and Michael Adams (England).



” The chess festival is as much a part of bilingual Biel/Bienne as the 100 kilometer run, the Congress Center, the Jura mountains, and the lake. Thanks to the professional organization and the sterling efforts of the event managers, the festival was held successfully in 2020 despite the circumstances.



Martin Tritten, Project Manager



Swiss Smart Factory / SIPBB

The Swiss Smart Factory (SSF) lighthouse project is a demonstration factory which maps an entire production ecosystem and shows how Industry 4.0 can already operate effectively today. The expertise for this flagship project comes from the team behind research manager Dominic Gorecky, project manager Michael Wendling, and the SSF network. No less than 50 of the 60 members of the Swiss Smart Factory are involved in this forward-looking project.

By setting up a demonstration factory, SSF is heading in the direction of the «glass factory». Visitors can track an entire product life cycle along the production ecosystem, from product design to packaging. The big challenge in all of this is to demonstrate this networking in production. The project will be launched in the new Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne (SIPBB) building in 2021.

” *The construction of an Industry 4.0 demonstration factory is poised to take the next crucial step: it will be moving into the new SIPBB building in 2021. The factory was designed and prepared in 2020 in a joint collaboration with more than 40 industrial companies. This will be Switzerland's very first Industry 4.0 demonstration factory. This innovative project was supported financially by BEDA.*



Virve Resta, Project Manager

ErgoExpert AG

The name says it all. ErgoExpert is a team of proven work ergonomics specialists and job retention coaches. At their center of excellence, unique in Switzerland, they combine experience from industry and education, offering the latest ergonomic thinking for health-promoting and productivity-enhancing solutions.

Equipped with the latest process automation and Industry 4.0 technologies, the company aims to meet the exacting needs of the watchmaking and medical industries.

With a combination of expertise and an ergonomic approach, the ErgoExperts want to help achieve a healthier working environment and prevent absenteeism and stress. Besides being available for purchase, their tools can also be rented.

” *This high-tech facility specializes in developing ergonomic workplaces to improve employee wellbeing. It is firmly anchored in the industry of the future, meeting the standards of Industry 4.0, automated flows, and human-robot collaboration.*



Etienne Maillefer, Project Manager



Wiriehorn Cableways

The classic winter sports resort of Wiriehorn in Diemtigtal has transformed itself into a year-round destination with a unique strategy. It did so in response to the lack of snow in recent winters and the growing competition from other resorts.

By repositioning itself towards products and offerings that are not dependent on snow, it has secured its economic future. This could only be achieved in close consultation with local tourism service providers, in particular the two other mountain cableway companies in the valley.

The Wiriehorn cableways are approaching the repositioning exercise in the form of a pilot project. The strategy they have developed can be applied by other similar winter sports destinations.

” *The mountain cablecar companies are facing major challenges. In repositioning itself, the company has taken a courageous decision and an important step in a positive direction. Under the New Regional Policy, BEDA is able to provide financial support for conceptual work of this kind.*



Peter Michel, Project Manager

Optimo Medical AG

Optimo Medical AG is a Swiss medical technology and IT cloud company that manufactures and internationally distributes solutions for patient-specific surgery planning in eye care.

Its product line employs biomechanical computations to manufacture digital twins of patients' eyes. These virtual copies are then used to calculate the individually optimal incision parameters for the femtosecond laser, in order to ideally correct the astigmatism.

Optimo Medical AG consists of an interdisciplinary team of experts in ocular tissue biomechanics, computer simulation technology, software development, ophthalmology, physics, mathematics, and optics.

” *Right from the start, Optimo Medical was aware of the stringent demands its forward-looking project would need to meet and worked consistently on further developing this futuristic project idea. The result is impressive: within minutes, the software creates a digital twin of a human organ. This type of innovation could well lead the way in numerous other fields besides.*



Manfred Böhnner, Project Manager



Calciscon AG

Founded by Andreas Pasch in 2013, Calciscon offers a unique new blood test: the T50.

This test is the first and only functional blood test to assess calcification propensity. It identifies patients at high cardiovascular risk and opens up completely new possibilities for therapy optimization.

The underlying principle reflects a generalized phenomenon throughout the body. Designed for patients with kidney disease, it can also potentially be applied to many other diseases besides.

” This company’s new method is revolutionizing heart disease diagnostics. It enhances the toolbox of conventional diagnostic indicators (blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose) with a new, fourth one (T50) that analyses blood plasma. This is a promising project that calls for long-term commitment on the part of all those involved.



Manfred Böbner, Project Manager

Vibotec AG

ViboTec AG is the exclusive rights holder of the system of virtual LED perimeter board advertising developed by the Fraunhofer Institute. This system allows the advertising content of LED perimeter boards to be changed in real time, enabling any number of TV streams to be generated with different virtual advertising.

The Fraunhofer Institute for Intelligent Analysis and Information Systems IAIS, based in Sankt Augustin near Bonn, Germany, is one of the leading scientific institutes in the fields of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Big Data in Germany and Europe.

” Vibotec develops and uses ultra-modern technologies based on artificial intelligence. The start-up works with a well-known German institute and has contracts with internationally renowned sports federations, leagues and clubs. Headquartered in Thierachern near Thun, the company is managed by a highly motivated team of experts and is a shining example of an innovative, future-oriented start-up with good growth prospects



Jean-Philippe Devaux, Project Manager



DOKOKI

The Bern-based start-up DOKOKI has developed an intelligent system for monitoring the general health and relevant vital functions of babies. It includes a bodysuit with integrated sensors, a baby monitor, and a smartphone app. The system is designed to enable serious health issues to be detected early and prevent more severe consequences.

The product is working towards medical certification and is currently almost ready to go into production. Once the measurements are officially certified, signifying that they are of hospital-grade quality, DOKOKI will, for the first time ever, enable fact-based remote diagnosis by a doctor.

” *The company has ambitious goals to monitor the general health and relevant vital functions of babies. With the help of Swiss precision, a high-tech product has been created that raises monitoring quality to an unprecedented level. The financial support provided by the BEDA is helping the company get their product ready for mass production and place it on the market well ahead of schedule.* “



Ralf Müssig, Project Manager

Ballenberg Open-Air Museum

The Ballenberg Open-Air Museum is planning to stage a «Festival of Festivals». The aim of this project is to bring together the pleasures and traditions of Switzerland in one place, and work is currently under way to examine the feasibility of the event.

The «Festival of Festivals» will showcase various autumnal Swiss traditions in the museum grounds, thus developing a platform that will boost the profile, positioning and marketing of Ballenberg.

” *As the only one of its kind in Switzerland, the Open-Air Museum Ballenberg makes the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of agricultural and rural Switzerland accessible to the public. This new offering will enable this heritage to be experienced with all the senses, helping it to reach important new target audiences.* “



Daniel Wüthrich, Project Manager



Agro Food Lab Roggli

In Uetendorf, an old horticultural facility is to be turned into a national pilot and flagship project for sustainable horticulture, agriculture, and food production. In this project, local energy and horticultural businesses will be working with educational institutions and food producers with a view to creating long-term, shared value.

The project aims to unite established and active institutions in the region in a joint business model. In addition, the platform will be a place for sharing information and ideas and will facilitate the identification and implementation of innovation opportunities in the value chain.



” Innovation, value creation, entrepreneurship. The Agro Food Lab project is an asset for the region and a prime example of our New Regional Policy. “

Peter Michel, Project Manager

nanoTRONIC GmbH

NanoTRONIC GmbH is an engineering firm based in Lyss and Mägenwil. It specializes in developing complete embedded systems and VHDL designs in a highly standardized environment.

In addition to its products, nanoTRONIC also provides services including consultancy, testing, reviews and extra personnel to cover staffing shortages.

The company’s products are not only used all over the world but extraterrestrially as well. For example, nanoTRONIC control systems are used to position the solar sails on the Chinese Beidou-3 GPS system. The system has been fully active since mid-2020.



” It is both impressive and gratifying that the Bernese SME nanoTRONIC is at the forefront of space exploration and is facilitating innovations in space travel. The cornerstones of these innovations in the Espace Univers are the powerful technology network in the Espace Mittelland and the close collaboration between implementation and research partners. “

Manfred Böhnner, Project Manager



Funded projects based on the Economic Development Act (WFG)

Number of projects, promised contributions, planned jobs and investments

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of funded projects	39	49	37	47	47	48	44	50	60	87
Promised contributions in million CHF	2.40	3.48	2.24	3.16	2.45	2.30	1.81	2.77	4.18	7.35 ¹
Planned jobs ²	1110	740	350	1500	1030	610	610	670	1130	1450
Planned investments in million CHF ²	208	392	88	1122	390	85	256	191	226	298

¹ thereof paid out 5.7 Mio. CHF

² According to information provided by the companies.

Funded projects by type

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Expansion projects by Bernese companies	24	28	23	30	19	27	19	23	32	40
Start-ups	2	5	6	6	13	11	10	15	13	36
Relocations	13	16	8	11	15	10	15	12	15	11
Including Innosuisse projects ³	8	10	14	4	7	10	6	5	10	9
Evaluation visits for relocation purposes ⁴	69	69	68	61	59	61	50	54	52	34

³ Innosuisse is the Swiss innovation promotion agency. The Canton supports companies that are industrial partners of an Innosuisse project.

⁴ The Economic Development Agency offers evaluation visits for companies interested in relocating to the Canton of Bern in order to help them find a suitable location.

Funded projects by activity/sector

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Design/Luxury goods	5	3	1	0	0	1	1	3	1	4
Services (incl. finance/administration)	3	2	0	4	2	2	2	2	1	1
Energy and environment technology	2	5	7	2	7	4	3	4	3	8
IT and communication technology	6	17	3	6	7	10	5	10	14	25
Medical technology	6	5	13	9	8	10	9	7	8	13
Precision industry	13	14	12	21	18	16	23	19	22	23
Others	4	3	1	5	5	5	1	5	11	13

Regional distribution of projects⁵

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bern-Mittelland	16	21	9	14	10	15	8	13	16	31
Bernese Jura	6	8	5	12	9	8	5	9	12	8
Bernese Oberland	3	4	3	3	2	2	8	7	4	17
Biel-Seeland	7	9	12	12	21	16	16	12	17	16
Emmental-Oberaargau	7	7	8	6	5	7	7	9	11	15

⁵ The Economic Development Agency provides its services throughout the Canton. It is not possible to control regional distribution.

Advisory services⁶ based on the WFG and the NRP

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Advisory services for start-ups	353	307	330	208	324	336	200	151	188	192
Advisory services for SMEs	141	113	108	135	106	94	31	85	106	220

⁶ Conducted by be-advanced AG and CEP Coaching Berner Jura.

Projects funded under the New Regional Policy (NRP)⁷

Number of projects, promised contributions, planned jobs and investments

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of funded projects	28	33	34	28	40	29	47	31	38	45
Promised contributions and loans in million CHF ⁸	3	3	6	3	2	4	15	3	13	6
Jobs ⁹	120	300	390	560	210	140	400	350	415	340
Planned investments in million CHF ⁹	47	35	81	44	62	52	241	26	79	21

⁷ As From 2008 (Investment Aid Act).

⁸ These contributions also include the regional management.

⁹ According to the project sponsor's statements.

Regional distribution of the projects¹⁰

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bern Mittelland	10	2	12	4	5	8	13
Bernese Jura	2	4	2	8	2	5	2
Bernese Oberland	2	19	9	24	16	17	22
Biel-Seeland	7	2	3	6	4	3	2
Emmental-Oberaargau	7	7	3	5	4	5	6

¹⁰ The Economic Development Agency provides its services throughout the Canton. It is not possible to control regional distribution. Due to a change of system in the controlling software at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, it is only possible to show the data as of 2014.

Projects funded under the Tourism Development Act (TEG)

Number of projects and promised contributions

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of funded projects	21	14	13	13	15	17	21	19	17	16
Promised contributions in million CHF ¹¹	5.3	5.6	9.7	10.1	9.4	5.5	4.3	1.2	4.4	4.3

¹¹ Including annual contributions for market development.

Regional distribution of projects¹²

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bern Mittelland	0	7	4	7	7	7	4
Bernese Jura	0	0	2	1	1	0	0
Bernese Oberland	11	5	6	8	6	5	9
Biel-Seeland	2	2	4	5	5	3	3
Emmental-Oberaargau	0	1	1	0	0	2	0

¹² The Economic Development Agency provides its services throughout the Canton. It is not possible to control regional distribution. Due to a change of system in the controlling software at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, it is only possible to show the data as of 2014.

Projects funded under the Innovation Promotion Act (IFG)

Number of projects¹³

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of new projects funded	2	1	1	1	1

¹³ Effective as of 2016.

Immediate measures and number of projects supported

Innovation support

	2020
Number of supported companies	410
Assured contributions in million CHF	23.5
key personnel concerned	1554

Start-up guarantees

	2020
Total applications	56
Applications approved	32
Total amounts guaranteed in million. CHF	9.64
Thereof federal government in million. CHF	6.27
Thereof Canton in million. CHF	3.37

Compensation for lost accommodation tax revenues

	Share of accommodation tax revenue 2016/17 in Percent ¹⁴	Payment canton to destinations	Omission of payment to BE! Tourismus	Compensation effect (additional liquidity)
Jungfrau	25	892'500	546'000	1'438'500
Interlaken	33	1'178'100	756'000	1'934'100
TALK	12	428'400	252'000	680'400
Gstaad	7	249'900	227'000	476'900
Bern	18	642'600	399'000	1'041'600
J3L	5	178'500	0	178'500
Total	100	3'570'000	2'180'000	5'750'000
BE! Tourismus AG ¹⁵		1'430'000		
Total		5'000'000		

¹⁴ Last two years without special transition periods or with full settlement via the canton.

¹⁵ State funding to BE! Tourismus AG as of 2020 total new CHF 3.8 million (incl. previously pledged contributions)

Corona Advisory services¹⁶

	2020
Advisory services for start-ups and SMEs	26

¹⁶ Conducted by be-advanced AG

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