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Twinning agreement signed between the Canton of Bern and Shenzhen

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"Our time measurements decide victory or defeat"

Swiss Timing in Corgémont

Living

"Asia scales new heights on the Jungfrauoch"

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Dear reader,

The Asian market is one of the main topics of this edition of *bernecapitalarea*. At first glance, China and Switzerland may not seem to have very much in common: the population figures and the size of the two countries alone are at completely different ends of the spectrum. And yet China and Switzerland have extremely close economic ties. Over the past ten years the value of imports from China to Switzerland has quadrupled, and exports have more than doubled.

On July 1, 2014, Switzerland and China signed a free-trade agreement regulating access to their respective markets. This agreement forms an appropriate backdrop for the twinning agreement between Shenzhen and the Canton of Bern, which was signed in Shenzhen in February 2015.

The current strength of the Swiss franc is putting pressure on the economy. Exports and tourism are particularly badly affected. This situation is hitting the Canton of Bern hard, in light of the many export-oriented companies in the mechanical engineering, precision, medical technology, and watchmaking industries based here. On the tourism front, destinations are having to make up for the decline in visitors from the EU. The Chinese market with its great potential and large numbers of tourists is becoming ever more important to Bern as an economic center.

In this edition you will read what Bernese companies are doing to tackle the challenges of the Asian market.

Yours truly,

Andreas Rickenbacher
Member of the Government of the Canton of Bern
and Minister of Economic Affairs of the Canton of Bern

“China is attractive both as a production location and as a market”

An interview with Franz Julen, CEO Intersport International

How did Intersport become the largest sports retail brand in the world? Why is the Bernese company's business in China flourishing? And what challenges does the Chinese market involve? CEO Franz Julen reveals the answers.

Who or what was it that aroused your passion for sport?

“It was my father, who was a world-class ski racer. And you’ll still often find me on the slopes in Zermatt in winter. Sport has been a huge part of my life ever since I was very young – and it has been inextricably linked with my professional career for many years. In the early 1980s I followed my brother Max’s skiing career as his administrator and manager, and I later worked as a sports journalist.”

What do you believe are the reasons for your company’s international success?

“We have always been very close to the customer with our franchise model. Most Intersport retailers across the world are independent entrepreneurs who are passionate about what they do, committed to providing a high-quality service and highly experienced in the sports sector. Our international presence with 5,800 retail outlets in 67 countries also contributes to the credibility and reputation of the Intersport brand. As the world’s biggest sports retail brand, we purchase all our products in very large volumes, and this benefits both our retailers and our customers. Intersport is committed to the principle of the cooperative and is not listed on any stock exchange. Everything we do is long-term and sustainable. We have grown organically and we are down-to-earth, realistic and predictable.”

“We have grown organically and we are down-to-earth, realistic and predictable.”

To what extent does your base in the Canton of Bern impact on your success as a business?

“The foundation stone for our group’s international success was laid in the Canton of Bern in 1968. At the time, sports retailers from 10 national purchasing companies met in Ostermundigen with the common goal of revolutionizing sports retailing across the globe. We are still fully committed to our Bernese location, which offers stability, security and a high quality of living, as well as a first-class education system which provides us with an excellent pool of new talent for our business. We particularly appreciate our excellent working relationship with the local authorities, who do all they can to support our business.”

Why did you decide to open a branch in Shenzhen in China back in the 1990s?

“Our private labels account for almost CHF 2 billion worth of retail sales. With this volume you have to employ staff on the ground. Otherwise we would have to work with distributors, which would impact negatively on our prices. China is not only extremely attractive to us as a production location but also as a market.

As elsewhere, sport, exercise and health are gaining in importance in China, and so is sports retailing.”

What is your vision for Intersport in the Asian market?

“We currently have 2,000 people working for us in 238 retail outlets and offices in Asia. And we aim to have 500 stores by 2020. Our main priorities are China and Australia, followed by Indonesia and the Philippines. We already have 13 Intersport branches with between 800 and 1,500 m² of floor space in southern China, and we will soon be opening our first franchise stores in the north of the country.”



Franz Julen can regularly be found jogging along the river Aare or on the tennis court. “Sport is not just a hobby for me, it’s also my job and my vocation.”

About the person

Franz Julen has been CEO of IIC – INTERSPORT International Corporation GmbH since April 2000. After completing commercial college, the father of two from Zermatt attended the Lucerne School of Hotel Management and took on the role of administrator and manager of his brother Max Julen, who won Olympic gold in the giant slalom at Sarajevo in 1984. After that he worked as a sports journalist and in sports marketing and was CEO of Völkl (International) AG. Julen lives in Hünenberg am See in the Canton of Zug but is often based at the Hotel Bellevue in Bern during the week. He is passionate about tennis and golf and also likes skiing and jogging.

What are the greatest challenges for your company in servicing the Chinese market?

“The cultural differences, the level of education of the sales staff, and the sheer size of the country all require special logistical solutions.”

What can you learn from your Chinese partners, employees and customers?

“Persistence, patience, negotiating skills, and speed. For example, watching how quickly a Chinese shopping center is built is incredibly impressive!”

Which of your behavioral traits that you would describe as typically “Swiss” help you in business?

“Reliability, predictability and respect. On top of that, the right balance between self-confidence and a certain humility.”

What drives you in your daily work as CEO of Intersport?

“Creating something and making a difference together with my team. Plus I have been lucky enough to make my hobby my job.”

Information

www.intersport.com

About the company

IIC – INTERSPORT International Corporation GmbH is the world’s largest sports goods retailer and licensor of the Intersport and The Athlete’s Foot brands and Intersport private labels. The group, which was established in Ostermundigen in 1968, employed 67,000 people in 2014 at 5,800 locations in 67 countries on all five continents, and achieved sales of €10.8 billion in 2014.

Two strong business partners join forces

Twinning agreement signed between the Canton of Bern and Shenzhen

The Canton of Bern has entered into a partnership agreement with the Chinese city of Shenzhen since February 2015. The economies of the two regions will benefit from this close collaboration, which will also boost culture, tourism, technology and education in both regions.



Minister of Economic Affairs Andreas Rickenbacher and Xu Qin, Mayor of the City of Shenzhen, signing the twinning agreement between the Canton of Bern and the City of Shenzhen on February 13, 2015.

At an official ceremony on February 13, 2015, Minister of Economic Affairs Andreas Rickenbacher and the Mayor of the City of Shenzhen signed a twinning agreement between the City of Shenzhen and the Canton of Bern. The aim of the agreement is to develop close collaboration in areas such as business, culture, tourism, education, and technology. The Canton of Bern will initially focus on economic aspects of export and location promotion and is hop-

ing that the agreement will spark greater interest in the Canton of Bern as a business location among Shenzhen companies. Two Shenzhen-based companies, the globally active Huawei and ZTE, have already located their Swiss headquarters in Bern, and the hope is that this will attract other companies and impact positively on their expansion plans.

Cooperation brings about positive economic development
Shenzhen, a city with 18 million inhabitants, is located very close to Hong Kong, and as a Special Economic Zone it is one of the most important economic centers in China. The city has grown exponentially in recent years. Under construction at the moment is the Ping An Finance Center which, at 660 meters, will be the world's second tallest building. Shenzhen has

Alongside the work done by many organizations and individuals in this area, the Swiss China Investment Platform Association (SCIPA) is a key player in ensuring close economic cooperation between the Canton of Bern and Shenzhen. Dr. Peter Burkhalter, Yingbo Seiler Zhao, Patrick Linder and Richard Vaucher explain why.



Dr. Peter Burkhalter, attorney. Founding attorney of SCIPA

For what purpose was SCIPA established?

"SCIPA was established at Baselworld on April 2, 2014. It was initiated by representatives of the Chinese watch and clock industry and Swiss SMEs, especially members of the Swiss Trade Association. Its aim is to promote bilateral economic exchange between Switzerland and China, and specifically between Shenzhen and the Canton of Bern. With this in mind, SCIPA provides

members and non-members with first-level support for setting up bilateral business relations. In particular, SCIPA organizes regular forums and economic missions from China to Switzerland and vice versa, including visits to events such as Baselworld."



Patrick Linder, Director CEP (Bernese Jura Chamber of Commerce), Bévillard

What specific steps can CEP take to support the development of companies from the Bernese Jura in China?

"As a representative and think tank of the regional economy, CEP not only has a monitoring function but also aims to raise awareness of the region in relation to future factual issues and play an active role itself. CEP builds bridges between the various players, encourages reflection and tackles individual key topics. It provides a platform on which foreign companies can network with specialist

SMEs and in doing so helps promote the development of companies from our region in China. For example, it can organize specific themed programs for individual company visits, at which it presents the Bernese Jura region and shines the spotlight on its special economic features."



Yingbo Seiler Zhao, Co-Interim President SCIPA, Bern

What services does SCIPA offer companies from the Canton of Bern and China?

"We support companies in China and Switzerland in all matters relevant to their Sino-Swiss business relations or establishing branches in China or Switzerland. This could include assistance with dealing with authorities, looking for commercial premises and recruiting personnel, legal and tax advice, intercultural communication training, and other intercultural seminars, visits and events in China and Switzerland."



Richard Vaucher, CEO VOH SA, Courtelary

What makes China attractive to businesses from the Bernese Jura?

"Like the whole of the Jura arc region, the Bernese Jura is highly industrialized and therefore strongly dependent on exports. Ever since industrialization got under way here, representatives of our watch and clock industry have been actively opening up new sales markets across the globe. China has been one of our key markets right from the start.

Given the strength of industrial development in the Far East and the general economic situation, the Chinese market has massive potential today. Most export-oriented companies from the Bernese Jura have a firm foothold in the Chinese market, with many operating branches or service centers there. This creates the basis for synergies in areas such as technology or manufacturing."



Shenzhen is one of China's fastest growing cities. With a population of 18 million, it is a Special Economic Zone and thus an important Chinese economic hub.



much in common with the Canton of Bern in terms of its economic structures and strengths. It is home to the Chinese watch and clock industry, for example, along with its international supplier industry, the precision sector. The annual China Watch & Clock Fair (CWCF) is held in Shenzhen in late June. From now on there will be a platform at this fair for Swiss and Bernese companies in the Swiss Pavilion, made possible with cooperation from Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) and FITIME AG. Potential synergies exist with branches of Chinese companies opening in the Canton of Bern and with support for exports by Bernese companies.

Swiss China Investment Platform Association (SCIPA) ensures lively exchange

A number of Bernese companies have had close ties with companies in the Shenzhen region for many years. Shenzhen is of particular interest to Bernese companies with its strengths in the precision, electronics, telecommunications and pharmaceuticals industries. During two re-

cent economic missions, representatives of Bernese companies explored the existing potential in the region and found it a fruitful basis for cooperation. The Swiss China Investment Platform Association (SCIPA) was established as a platform for promoting and nurturing business relations. SCIPA forms a link between the Canton of Bern and the city of Shenzhen and is involved in organizing various joint activities. Permanent fixtures in the annual calendar are Baselworld in March, the Free Trade Agreement Forum (FTA Forum) in Bern in August, guided programs at the China Watch & Clock Fair (CWCF) in Shenzhen in June, and the China Hi-Tech Fair in November, also in Shenzhen. Mutual visits by delegations of politicians and representatives of public bodies will also take place on a regular basis.

Information

www.berneinvest.com

“We have a range of excellent professional networks at our fingertips in the Canton of Bern.”

About the Twinning Agreement and the Free Trade Agreement

The Twinning Agreement was entered into by the Canton of Bern and Shenzhen on February 13, 2015, with the aim of bringing the two regions closer together from an economic point of view. China is an important trading partner for Switzerland and therefore also for the Canton of Bern. The **Free Trade Agreement** between Switzerland and China, which came into force in mid-2014, offers easier access to the Chinese market for Swiss goods and services and facilitates mutual trade, as well as reinforcing legal certainty in the economic exchange between the two countries, strengthening bilateral relationships, and promoting sustainable development.

Bernese innovation in every capsule

Rychiger AG in Steffisburg

Rychiger AG CEO Axel Förster explains why the company's after-sales services are as individual as their unique packing systems, and how their base in the Canton of Bern helps them achieve international success.

“In developing the Nespresso capsule, proximity to our partners based exclusively in Switzerland was key,” says Axel Förster, CEO of Rychiger AG. “Generally speaking, the concentration of mechanical engineering companies and suppliers in the Thun region and the resulting know-how and high-skilled workforce potential represent a clear locational advantage for us. What's more, Swissness is still highly regarded in our industry.” The Steffisburg-based company builds machines that are designed modularly, can be cleaned dry or wet, and meet the highest hygienic standards. Every system is configured to the customer's needs and tailored flexibly to the product, packaging material or process requirements concerned. Multinationals like Nestlé and Monde-
lëz have their coffee capsules filled and sealed on Rychiger machines. This highly innovative company handles all aspects of every project, from defining the machine's functions and designing the system through to acquisition and commissioning the machine in situ. “Even after handing over the machine to the customer we continue to support them every step of the way, and our comprehensive range of after-sales services ensure customers get full benefit from the system throughout its entire life cycle,” the CEO says. The Rychiger service team in Steffisburg operates all over Switzerland and abroad. Rychiger also has a local

“Our international customers are our most important innovation partners.”

About the person

Axel Förster, CEO of Rychiger AG, is a qualified toolmaker with a degree in mechanical and industrial engineering. Before taking over as CEO of Rychiger AG in 2001 and becoming a majority shareholder in 2007, he worked as a management consultant in Germany and for Nestlé in Vevey. Born in Pforzheim, Germany, he has two children and lives in Kehrsatz near Bern. The dual German/Swiss national loves good food and traveling, attending cultural events in Bern, and skiing and hiking in the Bernese Oberland, particularly in the Gantersch area.



“In future we want to focus increasingly on packaging systems in the area of health care – diagnostics and medical devices.”
CEO Axel Förster in the production facility at the Steffisburg head office

Innovative packaging machine solutions for companies in a wide range of industries since 1918: Rychiger AG in Steffisburg



service point in the USA – its biggest market, besides Europe and, to a lesser extent, Australia and Brazil. “For example, we provide customers installing several lines in a short space of time with on-site support in the form of an engineer for the duration of one year,” Förster says. “We also provide in-depth training for all our customers, enabling them to operate as independently as possible from us.”

Open, motivating working culture

In March 2015 the Steffisburg-based mechanical engineering company was awarded first prize in the Prix SVC Espace Mittelland by the Swiss Venture Club (SVC). Rychiger AG impressed the judges not only with its successful business model and its strong regional roots, but also with its excellent working climate. “Hierarchies generally play a very low-key role in our day-to-day work,” Förster explains. “Each of our special machines is a unique

challenge. So we actively promote an open working culture in which every single member of staff is encouraged to put forward ideas and demonstrate their commitment.” As part of this corporate culture, 10% of the company’s net profit is distributed to employees in the form of virtual securities. The company’s significant regional contribution was honored at the award ceremony for the Prix SVC Espace Mittelland in the Bern Kursaal, before an audience of around 1,400 representatives of politics, business and culture: Rychiger AG employs 200 people, including 14 apprentices, and sources most of the components for its machines from the wider region.

Global focus boosts innovative strength

But the Steffisburg-based company’s innovative strength is also boosted by its worldwide customer contacts and collaborations. “Exchanging ideas with packaging machine manufacturers in

other countries is vitally important. We gain a lot from our contacts in Packaging Valley in the Stuttgart area of southern Germany in particular,” CEO Axel Förster explains. “Most of our customers like Nestlé or Mars run their own research and development centers, which we work very closely with. As we build all our machines to order, our international customers are also our most important innovation partners. We build bespoke machines for them that are unlike any already in existence.”

Information

www.rychiger.com

About the company

Rychiger AG was established in Steffisburg in 1918. It is one of the world’s leading suppliers of customer-specific solutions for packaging machines in the coffee and tea capsule, long-life food, animal nutrition and medicine sectors. As one of the very first capsule specialists, the company has made its mark on the industry by repeatedly breaking new ground with its developments since the 1970s. It currently exports around 80% of its products. It employs 200 people at its Steffisburg base, generating sales of CHF 55 million in 2014.

Bernese expertise for Chinese universities of applied sciences

Bern University of Applied Sciences assists China in setting up universities of applied sciences

As part of China's education reforms, 600 universities are to be converted into universities of applied sciences. The Bern University of Applied Sciences is among the partners chosen by the People's Republic of China to work on this project.

Last year the Chinese government announced its "Modern Vocational Education Development Strategy 2014–2020," which sets out plans to introduce universities of applied sciences (UAS) in China. The first Sino-Swiss Joint Working Group Meeting between the Chinese Ministry of Education and a delegation led by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SBFI) met in Beijing on November 19, 2014. At this meeting, Prof. Dr. Herbert Binggeli, Rector of the Bern University of Applied Sciences and the swissuniversities Delegate for International Relations, introduced the Swiss education system with a particular focus on Swiss UASs.

Gains for education and business

In April 2015 Prof. Dr. Binggeli headed the Swiss delegation at the International Forum on Industry and Education IFIE in Zhuzhuan in the Chinese province of Hunan. The forum was themed "Embracing Reform and Creating Value – Mission and Challenges of the University of Applied Sciences" and addressed the establishment of UASs with Chinese characteristics. An initial important outcome of this exchange of ideas was the Memorandum of Understanding signed on June 23, 2015, by the Chinese Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (AUAS) and the swissuniversities Chamber of Universities of Applied Sciences in Olten, which

outlines the principles of the partnership at UAS level. BHF's involvement in China is strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries and is therefore a successful practical example of the twinning agreement entered into between the Canton of Bern and Shenzhen in February 2015.

Information

www.bfh.ch



Prof. Dr. Herbert Binggeli with the President of the Hebei University of Science and Technology, Prof. Dr. Hexu Sun.

About the Sino-Bernese UAS partnership

The Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH) maintains institutional ties with the Hefei and Hebei Universities of Science and Technology and is in contact with the City of Shenzhen Education Department, which is planning to convert three of its universities into universities of applied sciences. BFH has already carried out a large number of projects and study trips with partner institutions in China, with the participation of the Departments of Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering, Engineering and Information Technology, Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, and the associated Swiss Federal Institute of Sports in Magglingen, among others.

New centers of excellence for trade policy

A joint project by WTI, SECO and international university partners

The University of Bern World Trade Institute (WTI) is working with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) to establish regional centers of excellence for trade law and policy in Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Peru and Chile.

The project, entitled "Institutional and Capacity Building for Academic Training and Research Centers on Trade Law and Policy in Developing Countries: Peru, South Africa, Vietnam," was launched by SECO in the summer of 2010. Between now and December 2016, the WTI will be supporting partner institutions in training and research on trade policy issues. The main aim of this project is to establish centers of excellence in trade regulation at the international partner universities and to build up a long-term, academically productive cooperation network between the partner institutions.

Joint Masters programs in Vietnam and Indonesia

The first university partners were the Mandela Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in Lima, and the Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam. Led by Pierre Sauvé, Director of External Programs and Academic Partnerships and lecturer at the WTI, assisted by Rodrigo Polanco, the project was extended in 2011 to the Universidad de Chile in Santiago, Chile, and the Universitas Pelita Harapan in Jakarta,

Indonesia. At the heart of the collaboration are Masters programs on International Trade and Economic Law in English in Vietnam and Indonesia, taught by professors from the WTI and the universities themselves.

Information

www.wti.org

www.nccr-trade.org



The collaboration project between SECO, WTI, and their international partner institutes offers Masters programs, scholarships, joint research projects, and conferences as well as research visits in Bern and places at the WTI summer school at the University of Bern.

About the University of Bern World Trade Institute

The World Trade Institute (WTI)

is an interdisciplinary and strategic center at the University of Bern, one of the world's leading academic institutes, which specializes in international trade regulation issues. Led by Professor Joseph Francois and Professor Manfred Elsig, since its establishment in 2000 it has brought together legal, economic and political aspects of international trade regulation in research, teaching, advice and technical cooperation. In its early days the WTI received start-up funding from the Bern Economic Development Agency.

“Our time measurements decide victory or defeat”

Swiss Timing Ltd. in Corgémont

Swiss Timing CEO Alain Zobrist explains how the Bernese Jura-based company is constantly revolutionizing time measurement at sporting events and what products and services it has lined up at the start and seen across the finish.



It was Alain Zobrist's passion for sport that brought him to Swiss Timing, which he has led as CEO since 2014.

“What impressed me right from day one is that Swiss Timing – a member of the Swatch Group – is not only simply a service provider or even a sponsor,” CEO Alain Zobrist says. “As a partner in international sporting events, we have a great deal of responsibility toward the organizers, but in particular toward the athletes – because our time measurements decide victory or defeat!” The Corgémont-based company’s innova-

tions have been creating a stir across the world for many decades. Swiss Timing is constantly launching new time measurement systems for high-caliber sporting events ranging from track and field, swimming, cycling, skiing, bobsleigh, and luge to basketball, gymnastics, figure skating, riding, tennis, fencing, hockey, handball, and beach volleyball. Among other things, Swiss Timing supplies time measurement services for the Olympic Games.

Perfect timing with game-changing technologies

“Last year we and Omega jointly presented our new photo finish camera Myria at the European Track and Field Championships in Zurich. This photo finish camera is the only equipment used to measure official times,” CEO Zobrist reports. “In July this year, Myria clocked its first world record in the women’s 1500 m at the Diamond League meeting in Monaco.” Swiss Timing partner Omega is a pioneer in photo finish technology. Back in the middle of the last century it revolutionized time measurement at sporting events with its first photo finish cameras. More than six decades later this game-changing technology still plays a key role in timing high-caliber track-

and-field competitions. Besides photo finish cameras and electronic false start detection systems, Swiss Timing’s innovative time measurement devices include high-resolution display boards controlled by innovative software, which not only display text, images, and live information but also animations and videos. In early 2015 Swiss Timing and Longines launched a positioning system for horse races which enables data to

be recorded between the starting and finishing posts with incredible accuracy and shared with spectators in the stadium and viewers at home in many different ways. “This data can be used for analyses that

“We have a great deal of responsibility toward event organizers and athletes.”

About the company

Swiss Timing Ltd. is constantly developing new time measurement systems, such as its innovative information systems for TV commentators.

The company, which belongs to the Swatch Group, is one of the world’s leading suppliers of information at international sporting events. Omega became the official timekeeper of the Olympic Games back in 1932. Swiss Timing came into being in 1972 following the merger of the two sports departments at Omega and Longines, and works very closely with other brands in the Swatch Group like Blancpain, Rado, Certina, Tissot and Swatch. The company employs 420 people at its headquarters in Corgémont and its subsidiaries in Germany and the Czech Republic.



Swiss Timing's time measurement systems can be found at renowned international sporting events like the Olympic Games, the Commonwealth Games, the East Asian Games and numerous European and world championships.

can also help improve and develop the sport," says Alain Zobrist. "Positioning systems will form an integral part of our services going forward, and we intend to start using them in other sports as well in the near future."

Traditional know-how as the basis for innovation

The company's decision to locate its headquarters in Corgémont in the Bernese Jura is based on the fact that this region is home to a world-leading and long-standing watch industry. "The historical know-how and our strong partners in the watchmaking region are the reason why we are able to produce world firsts in time measurement right here. Our proximity to our parent company, the

Swatch Group in Biel/Bienne, also plays an important role in our business success," the CEO explains. "We have a subsidiary in Germany which specializes in sports software solutions and products for TV productions, and in the Czech Republic we develop logistics software for event organizers which significantly boosts the efficiency of their events. With these three components and our international focus, we can offer sports organizers an integrated service with time measurement at the core – a business model that is unparalleled anywhere in the world."

Information

www.swisstiming.com

About the product

Myria is an innovative photo finish camera developed by Swiss Timing in collaboration with Omega which saw its sporting event debut at the European Track and Field Championships in Zurich in 2014. The Myria photo finish camera can take up to 10,000 digital images per second and determines the exact order in which competitors reach the finish – regardless of how close together the individual athletes are. This enables places to be allocated within as little as 15 seconds after the race.

“Experiencing and understanding your new home together”

The Berne-Accueil association

Berne-Accueil brings Francophile expats and residents in the Canton of Bern together with a whole range of intercultural activities such as courses, excursions and workshops.

“When I moved from Lausanne in French-speaking Switzerland to German-speaking Bern 18 years ago, I was determined not to lose touch with the French language and culture. I found out about Berne-Accueil through some friends – and after six months I was appointed president. The worldwide network of 90 Accueils (Accueil means ‘welcome’ in French), four of which are in Switzerland, is headquartered in Paris. In Bern alone, 250 members from some 25 nations attend our numerous intercultural activities – excursions, parties, talks, courses and workshops, such as Bernese German or High German conversation classes, literature courses or exercise classes. We publicize our activities in our quarterly members’ magazine and with regular updates on our website.

Meeting place for Francophile expats

“Berne-Accueil was established in 1983 by its first president, Michèle Beuret, to help French expats find their feet and network in the Swiss capital. Today we are the only branch of Accueil in the world to have a majority of non-French members as well as a number of binational members. Families, in particular, benefit from our activities as they are aimed at all age groups and we only charge one membership fee per household. We are open to everyone with an interest in the French language and we have very close connections with all French-speaking embassies in the city. The French ambassador is our patron and both he and his wife play a very active role in our association. Being English by birth I know that one of the greatest challenges of living abroad is the language. If you can start off by communicating with each other in your mother tongue, it makes learning the new language and culture that much easier. The Berne-Accueil community helps you make friends, keep up and improve your language skills and understand your new home country better.”

“We welcome everyone with an interest in the French language.”

Zelda McKillop-Weber, President of Berne-Accueil

Information

www.berneaccueil.ch



“I don’t know of any capital city that is as interesting, as safe and as attractive as Bern!” President Zelda McKillop-Weber has got to know and love her adopted city even better through Berne-Accueil.

“Asia scales new heights on the Jungfrauoch”

The Jungfrau Railways and their Asian visitors

Tourists from Asia have played a key role in the success of Jungfraubahn Holding AG for many decades. CEO Urs Kessler explains how this came about and what highlights and values attract Asian tourists to the Jungfrau Railways today.

“We have had a worldwide presence ever since our early days. We started to build our own agency network in Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, India and Thailand back in the 1990s,” Jungfrau Railways CEO Urs Kessler explains. Kessler travels to Asia himself several times a year to nurture international business relationships. His staff receive in-house Chinese and Japanese language tuition to enable them to look after their guests in their own mother tongues. The commitment shown by Kessler, his team and his partners is bearing fruit: Asian tourist numbers have been increasing steadily every year for the past 10 years. At present more than 70% of all visitors to the Jungfrau Railways come from the Asian region, predominantly from Japan, China, South Korea and India. “In a survey of Asian travel operators, 9 out of 10 companies reported that more than 80% of their customers come to our region mainly to see the Jungfrauoch,” says Kessler. For tourists from Asia, who are increasingly choosing to get married or spend their honeymoon in the Jungfrau region, the key criteria in their choice of holiday destination are the high quality of living and the diversity of nature here.

Ten-month high season and one million visitors

So it is no surprise that the Jungfrau region regularly serves as an impressive setting for Bollywood movies.

CEO of Jungfrau Railways Urs Kessler is aiming for a ten-month high season and one million visitors to the “Top of Europe” by 2020.



Right from the early days, the Jungfrau Railways have worked with Bollywood movie crews wanting to film here. “Yash Chopra was one of the first directors to shoot movies for the Indian market in the Bernese Oberland, introducing the region to countless Indian guests in the process,” Kessler says. “In 2011 Chopra was awarded the title of ‘Ambassador of Interlaken,’ and we have even named a train after him.” To cater to the culinary needs of Indian tourists as well, the Bollywood restaurant high up on the Jungfrauoch has been serving Indian specialties since 2000. The restaurant was completely renovated in 2014, and it now also features a cafe bar with a selection of noodle soups which are extremely popular with Asian visitors. “It is important to us to make sure our local hotels, related businesses, and commerce benefit from our guests. In general, tourists from Europe are currently spending more time in the Jungfrau region, where they can enjoy outdoor activities like walking,” Urs Kessler notes. “We are making every effort to encourage Asian tourists to spend longer here as well, so that they also get an opportunity to visit other attractive destinations in our region.” Kessler’s vision is for a ten-month high season and one million visitors at the “Top of Europe” by 2020. Besides the work being done by the railways’ worldwide distribution and agency network, awareness of the Jungfrauoch – a

“We already had our own agency network in Asia back in the 1990s.”

About the person

Urs Kessler has been CEO of Jungfrau Railways since 2008. Before joining Jungfraubahn Holding AG, the Swiss-certified marketing manager was Operations Manager at the BLS railway company, and has held various managerial positions at Jungfraubahn Holding AG since 1987: Manager Sales Promotion, Head of the Marketing Department and Head of Marketing and Operations. The father of two lives in Interlaken and enjoys sports such as football, fitness and skiing in the Jungfrau region in his free time.



Among Asian tourists’ most popular excursions on the Jungfrau Railways are combined tours on which visitors can explore the Jungfrauoch together with the Harder Kulm or the First summit.

well-known brand in itself – as a destination is being given a major boost by the prominent sporting events being held there.

Spectacular highlights and sweet surprises

August 2015 saw the opening of the spectacular new First Cliff Walk around the First summit. The Alpine Sensation Experience Subway has been drawing the crowds since the railways’ jubilee year in 2012. On top of that, Urs Kessler and his team have been receiving positive feedback from Asian guests in particular on two very special giveaways: the Jungfrau Railways Passport, which was launched in 2012 and is available in several languages, and the bar of Lindt chocolate every passenger receives.

Asia still has a lot of potential to tap into, Kessler believes. But the Jungfrau Railways do not intend to focus exclusively on one Asian country. “We will be continuing to pursue this well-balanced mix and market ourselves intensively in different Asian countries. At the same time we will be keeping an eye open for new European markets with potential for the future,” the CEO adds. “Despite the ever tougher currency situation, we are not sticking rigidly to the usual factors of the weather, the exchange rate and the economy, but instead we are promoting our own values, roots and vision.”

Information

www.jungfrau.ch

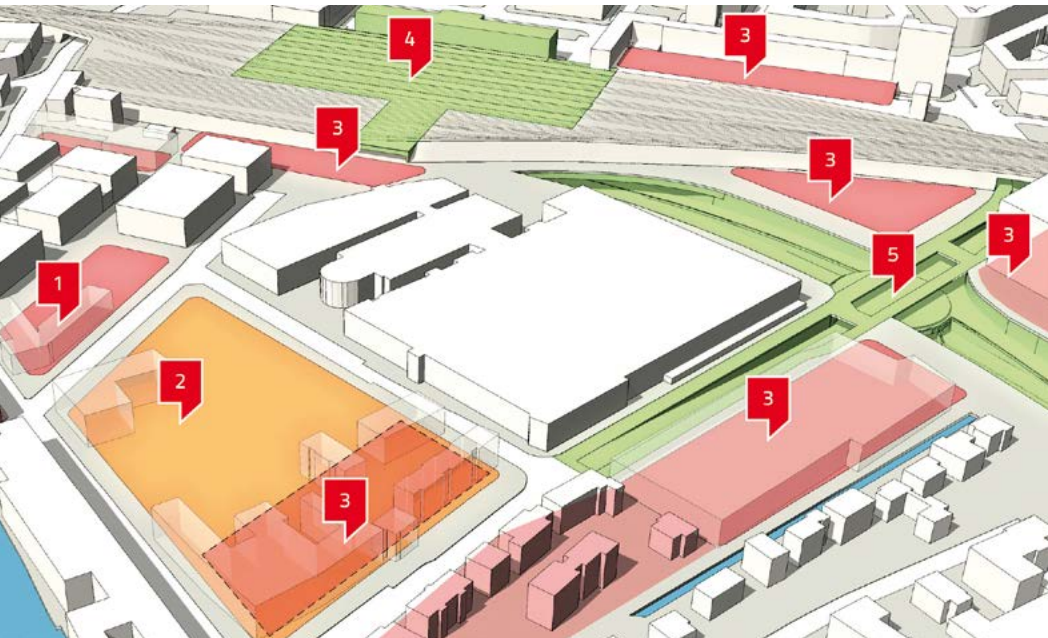
About the company

The Jungfrau Railways commenced continuous operations on the electrified railway from Kleine Scheidegg to the 3,454 m high Jungfrauoch in 1912. With its two rock caverns, Jungfrauoch is the highest-altitude station in Europe. In 2014 a total of 866,000 guests took the Jungfrau Railways to the “Top of Europe”. Jungfraubahn Holding AG is based in Interlaken and has 872 employees and eight subsidiaries worldwide. It is one of the world’s leading tourism companies and the largest mountain railway company in Switzerland.

Canton of Bern on Switzerland’s innovation map

Biel/Bienne to be Swiss Innovation Park network location

January 2016 will see the Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park become a fully-fledged Swiss Innovation Park (SIP) location.



An urban innovation park

- 1 Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park, phase 1
- 2 Bern University of Applied Sciences Technology Campus
- 3 Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park, available reserves of up to 100,000 m² gross floor area
- 4 Biel/Bienne Central Station
- 5 Future highway junction

In its central location near the station in bilingual Biel/Bienne at the heart of industrial Switzerland, the Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park will be a particularly attractive innovation platform for industry.

The Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park will be a hub that brings together companies, researchers and specialists. Its state-of-the-art infrastructure will create an attractive innovation ecosystem that is also meant to form a bridge between the French-speaking and German-speaking parts of Switzerland. Embedded in an application-oriented research environment and at the heart of industrial Switzerland, Biel/Bienne will be a breeding ground for

Innovation platform for the high-tech industry
The Canton of Bern won over both the experts and the Federal Council with its candidacy for its own SIP network location this June. The Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park will significantly boost the attractiveness of the Canton of Bern as a research and business location and will make a substantial contribution to promoting innovation at the national level. The Innovation Park will be able to tap into the existing industrial potential in the Bern region, which boasts a higher density of high-tech companies than anywhere else in Switzerland. The Biel/Bienne SIP network location will help industrial companies from the Canton of Bern to play an even stronger role in the world markets in future.

“The SIP will boost the attractiveness of the Canton of Bern.”

idea to market maturity and a high-quality research infrastructure for developing and producing prototypes and small series. It will also serve as a development testing ground for industrial companies of any size.

Information
www.sip-biel-bienne.ch

About the Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park
Operated by INNOCAMPUS AG, the **Biel/Bienne SIP** is already open for business. In the first expansion phase, a new building with a surface area of more than 14,000 m² will be available there from 2018. There is land with potential floor space of up to 100,000 m² in the immediate vicinity for further expansion phases, relocations and spin-offs. The Bern University of Applied Sciences is planning to open its Technology Campus right next door. This will create an urban innovation park surrounded by attractive employment opportunities, residential areas and leisure and cultural offerings in close proximity to the station and, in future, with a direct link to the highway.

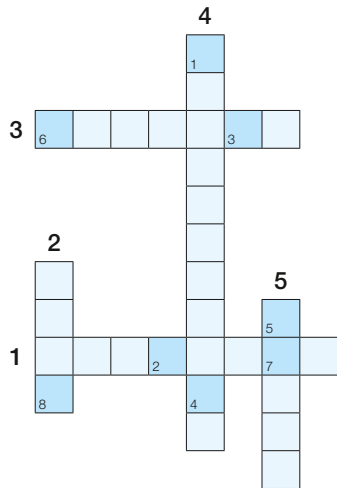
Win a Jungfrau VIP pass for the Jungfrau region

Welcome to the Jungfrau Railways: www.jungfrau.ch

Take part in our prize draw and win some fascinating trips and excursions through the magnificent Jungfrau region on the Jungfrau Railways. With the Jungfrau VIP Pass you and a companion can use the whole of the Jungfrau Railways network on three consecutive days as often as you like, completely free of charge. The pass also includes a spectacular day trip through the Eiger and Mönch to Jungfraujoch – Top of Europe. Stop off at Eismeer (Ice Lake) and Eigerwand (Eiger Wall) to enjoy the fantastic view, discover the Alpine wonderland of ice, snow and rock which you can admire from the viewing platforms on the Aletsch Glacier or in the Ice Palace, and visit Europe’s highest station at 3,454 meters above sea level.



Taking part couldn't be easier. Simply find the answers to the clues and enter them in the appropriate places in the grid to find the mystery word. Send the mystery word along with your completed entry form to the address below by 31st january 2016. You can also enter online at www.berneinvest.com/chance. Tip: every word relates to a subject covered in this issue of *bernecapitalarea*. Good luck!



Answer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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- 1. This company in the Canton of Bern is based in Steffisburg.
- 2. Location of SCIPA (Swiss China Investment Platform Association)
- 3. Skiing, jogging and tennis are among Intersport CEO Franz Julen's favorite
- 4. This Corgémont-based company is known the world over for its innovative time measuring systems
- 5. First name of the president of the Berne-Accueil Association

Extra questions (optional):
Which article in this issue of *bernecapitalarea* did you enjoy most?

How do you obtain your copy of *bernecapitalarea*?

Name: _____ Address: _____

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The winner will be drawn by lots and notified in writing. Employees of the Bern Economic Development Agency are excluded from entering the competition. The judges' decision is final. There is no cash alternative to the prize.

Tear out this page and send it to this address by 31st january 2016.
Bern Economic Development Agency, Münsterplatz 3, CH-3011 Bern, fax +41 31 633 40 88, or by e-mail to www.berneinvest.com/chance.

Many congratulations to **Patrice Rolland of Sion**, the winner of our competition in *bernecapitalarea* 1/2015.

New arrivals in the Canton of Bern

New companies in the region

The Bern Economic Development Agency helps innovative international companies with their decisions to relocate and settle in the Canton of Bern – like Welle Laser Technology SA and Hopman ST SA in Biel/Bienne.



The Brazilian company **Welle Laser Technology SA** has chosen the Canton of Bern as its latest base. The company will be establishing its European headquarters in Biel/Bienne and will be manufacturing complete laser machines and managing its worldwide maintenance and support activities from there. It intends to further optimize its laser technology in Biel/Bienne, so it will also be setting up a research and development department there and working closely with local company INNOCAMPUS AG. The excellent industrial environment in the Biel/Bienne region is also the reason why the company chose to set up its new high-tech branch in the Canton of Bern.

Welle Laser Technology was established in Palhoça, Brazil, in 2008 as a subsidiary of GRB Partners Holding, and currently employs around 60 people. It intends to create at least 25 new jobs over the next four years at its Biel/Bienne site. Welle laser machines are used in industries as diverse as automotive, medical technology, the gift sector and household appliance manufacturing. The company is at the forefront of the Brazilian laser technology market, selling laser marking and engraving machines, and is one of the fastest-growing companies in this field. Welle Laser Technology works closely with the world's leading laser technology centers such as the Fraunhofer Institute in Germany and counts multinationals like Bosch, ABB and General Electric among its customers.

Information

www.wellelaser.com



The French company Hopman SA is setting up **Hopman ST SA** in Biel/Bienne. This subsidiary will handle mass production of acoustic equipment for the Hopman brand and international sales. Its patented Hopman Sound Transfer (HST) technology transforms a range of nearby surfaces – plasterboard, wood, glass and other materials – into loudspeakers.

Hopman ST SA will be responsible for research and development, planning and prototyping in acoustics, vibration, sound and all related applications such as noise protection, as well as therapeutic applications. It plans to create up to 26 new jobs in Biel. The Biel/Bienne site fought off stiff competition from locations in several other Swiss cantons in the company's evaluation process.

Information

www.hopman-st.com

“Innovations are not individual achievements”

Innovation network in the Canton of Bern

The Canton of Bern is expanding its innovation network with the addition of the Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park. It is particularly keen to see innovative SMEs benefiting from its lively knowledge and technology transfer and application-oriented research, says Denis Grisel.

How important is the Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park for Bernese SMEs?

“Innovations are not individual achievements but an interplay of different disciplines and areas of expertise. SMEs often lack the resources they need to produce innovations themselves. From now on, the Biel/Bienne Swiss Innovation Park (SIP Biel/Bienne) will offer them an even more comprehensive network where they can access expertise and establish contact with researchers and entrepreneurs. As a result, SMEs, large enterprises, research institutions and universities of applied sciences will now be able to inspire each other along the entire value chain.”

What does the Bern Economic Development Agency do for innovation in the Canton of Bern?

At BEDA, one of our top priorities is to make our mark on Switzerland's innovation map and be known as a center of innovation. And we have done just that with the Swiss Innovation Park in Biel/Bienne – SIP Biel/Bienne. We commissioned the feasibility study for the SIP Biel/Bienne and worked on its candidacy, and we have a stake in its operating company, INNOCAMPUS AG. The canton's legislative body, the Grand Council, will decide in its March 2016 session whether it will be joining us in financing the SIP Biel/Bienne.”

What makes up the innovative framework in the Canton of Bern?

“In Bern we are committed to achieving an even closer working relationship between our universities of applied sciences and businesses. And it is with this in mind that we define the Bern Economic Development Agency's goals and strategy. Our aim is to develop a shared basic understanding of the services, a clear division of roles, and deeper collaboration between

the organizations. This will be implemented in the form of a service agreement with an innovation agency. The cluster organizations will remain independent but will work within the scope of the joint umbrella strategy.”

How does BEDA support innovative companies?

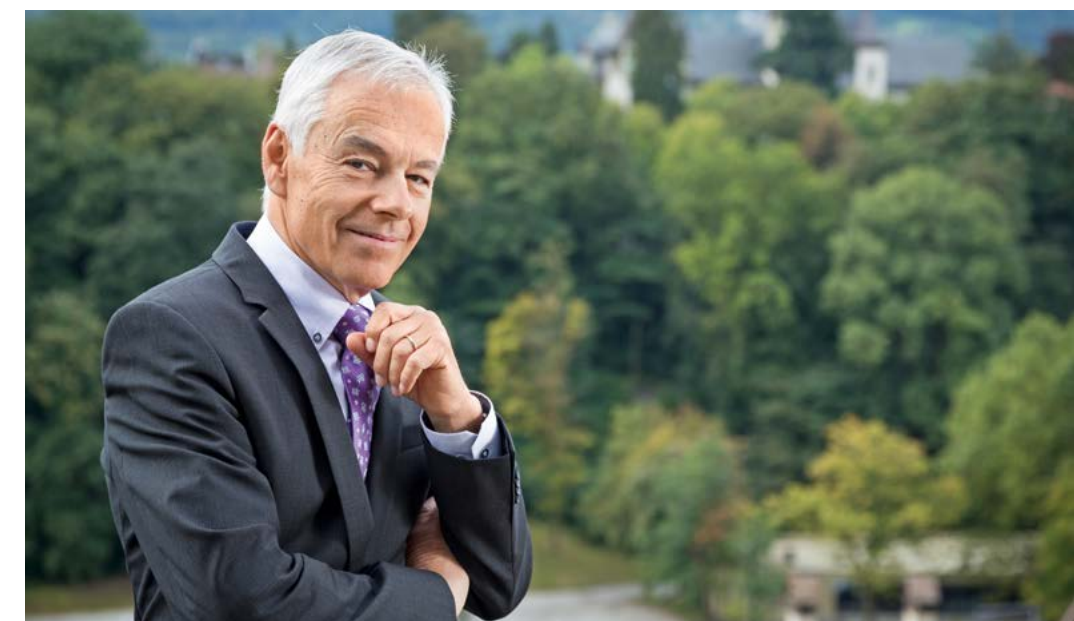
“We don't only promote ideas but also businesses that are seeking to bring their innovations to market in the form of concrete products and services or open up new sales markets, particularly abroad. To achieve this we have created a range of new innovation subsidies with which we can support CTI projects, start-ups, and exports. Our services are therefore more transparent and better geared to the companies' needs.”



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