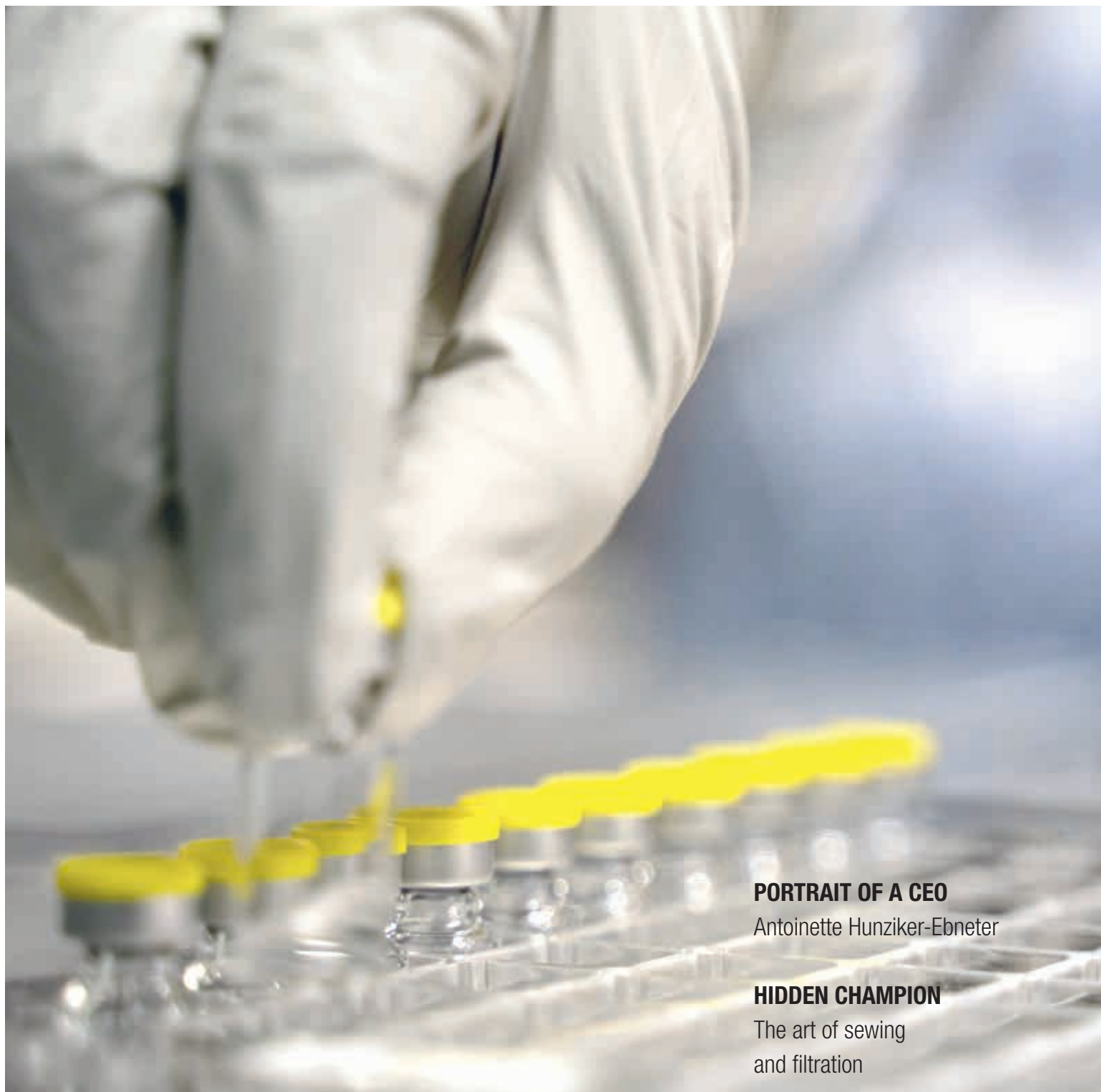




**berncapitalarea** 



**PORTRAIT OF A CEO**

Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter

**HIDDEN CHAMPION**

The art of sewing  
and filtration

**START-UP**

New, ambitious companies  
introduce themselves

**LIVING / CULTURE / TOURISM**

Burgdorf's ancient walls now home  
to new jewel in the crown

# Covid-19 vaccines: a global mission

# Get clarity

The Federal Act on Tax Reform and AHV Financing (TRAF) has transformed the Swiss tax landscape. The changes are relevant not only for companies that previously enjoyed cantonal tax status, but all taxpayers in general.

That's why it's so important to clarify the impact of the reform on an individual basis and examine applicability of the new measures.

Our tax experts are ready to answer your questions. [kpmg.ch](https://www.kpmg.ch)

## Frank Roth

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# Content

**COVER STORY** 4–9  
Covid-19 vaccines: a global mission

**START-UP** 10/11  
Swiss QualiQuest AG  
spectyou  
Menon  
mybuxi

**PORTRAIT OF A CEO** 12/13  
Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter

**HIDDEN CHAMPION** 14/15  
The art of sewing and filtration

**DIGITALIS** 16/17  
Platform boosts market for medical supplies

**LIVING / CULTURE / TOURISM** 18–21  
Burgdorf's ancient walls now home to new jewel in the crown

**COMPETITION** 22  
Stay the night at the Burgdorf Castle Museum

**NEW ARRIVALS** 23  
New arrivals in the Canton of Bern

**ADMINISTRATION FOR CITIZENS** 24/25  
Feel free to ask the Office for Secondary and Vocational Education and Training

**#cantonofbern** 26/27  
Tobogganing fun in the Bernese Oberland

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## Dear reader,

One of the greatest challenges an economic system can be faced with is uncertainty. Not being able to plan for the future, reacting instead of acting, and not being able to offer your staff secure prospects are frustrating. This year has given us a very specific lesson in uncertainty. Without wanting to sound overly dramatic, the only way out of this situation is hope.

Hundreds of different actors across the globe – including several companies in Bern – are currently working on our greatest hope. Their aim is to find a vaccine for Covid-19 that will help us return to normality. In our cover story (p. 4) you will find out who these Bernese actors are, what drives them, and why the search for a vaccine is not a competition.

Other Bernese companies have also become a source of hope during the crisis. We have the privilege of introducing some of them to you in this issue.

BEKB, for example, has provided SME clients with easy-to-access support in the form of interest-free loans. We spoke to Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter, Chairman of the Board of Directors of BEKB and CEO of Forma Futura Invest AG (p. 12).

The technical textile processing company Lanz-Anliker (p. 14) converted its manufacturing facilities at very short notice to meet the demand for face coverings. Other medical products were suddenly also in short supply. hystrix medical, the digital platform for medical supplies (p. 16), made it easier for its customers to find what they were looking for and delivered price transparency.

In our Start-up feature (p. 10) we present some exciting young companies that have reacted to the crisis at lightning speed by adapting their products and services to our changing needs.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the companies that are meeting these difficult times head on with innovative ideas, untiring optimism, and remarkable drive. For our part, we are pulling out all the administrative stops to help you get through this difficult time. It's never been more important to work together. It's never been more important to work together and to remain pragmatic.

Yours truly,  
Dr. Sebastian Friess  
Head Official, Office of Economic Affairs  
President, Bern Economic Development Agency







# Covid-19 vaccines: a global mission

While the media elevate the search for a vaccine to a competition, the people involved prefer to see themselves as comrades-in-arms with a global mission. "We are fighting a common cause," says Dirk Redlich, head of technical vaccine development at Janssen Vaccines, part of the global health concern Johnson & Johnson (J&J). "Never before have I seen researchers, authorities and patient groups interacting with each other so openly and so quickly." For J&J it very soon became clear that they would be joining in the search for a Covid-19 vaccine; according to Redlich: firstly because prevention is a major component of their corporate strategy – "Every illness you don't get doesn't need treating" – and secondly because J&J had already developed a vaccination technology approved by the authorities that could also be suitable for a Covid-19 vaccine.

J&J has been in the vaccine business since 2011. The Vaccine Division specializes in tackling the most urgent unresolved problems and finding vaccines for diseases such as HIV or the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). In 2014 they notched up some notable success with an Ebola vaccine, which received marketing approval in Europe this year. The particular value of this vaccine lies in the fact that J&J has also used it to develop a new technology for constructing a vaccine type: the so-called vector-based vaccine (see diagram, p. 6/7). The vaccine vector or platform uses modified adenoviruses, which are harmless to humans because they do not reproduce in the human body. The virus is loaded with genetic information from the pathogen the vaccine is designed to protect against. The immune system identifies the inserted genetic information from the pathogen and can respond quickly if infection occurs. Based on this principle, they have now developed a Covid-19 vaccine which is currently being tested in clinical phase 3 (see diagram, p. 8/9).

## Swiss army knife

The J&J Vaccine Competence Center in Bern Bümpliz played a key role in the development of the Ebola vaccine. "You could describe the center as the Swiss army knife of our Vaccine Division," Redlich says. It has been part of J&J since 2011, but dates back a long way before that. It was founded on the shores of Lake Geneva as the Institut Vaccinal Suisse more than 100 years ago, then merged with the Bernese company Häfliger and moved to Bern in the 1950s. It made a name for itself there as the Swiss Serum and Vaccine Institute, later known as Berna Biotech AG. The company became part of the J&J Group in 2011. Equipped with special facilities such as biosafety laboratories and biosafety class 2 manufacturing facilities, it is able to work at the cutting edge of new technologies and products. "But all this

It sounds like a dream: one jab and everything is back to normal. Gone are the uncertainty, the Zoom meetings, working from home and social distancing. And hopes are being pinned on a vaccine to make this happen. More than 180 teams across the globe are going all out to find one, including some companies here in Bern.



**DIRK REDLICH**, Head Vaccines Process and analytical development Janssen Vaccines, Johnson&Johnson



**CLAUDIO THOMASIN**, Director R&D Janssen Vaccines Bern, Johnson&Johnson

The healthcare company Johnson & Johnson (J&J) was founded in New Brunswick, USA, in 1886 and soon established a reputation for itself with medical products such as surgical dressings. Today the corporation includes 265 subsidiary companies in over 60 countries and a staff of around 134,000. J&J has had a branch in Switzerland since 1959.

Janssen Vaccines in Bern has been part of J&J since 2011 and is a leading center of competence for the reliable and lean development and manufacture of vaccines and bacteria-based products. To meet the high demands of vaccine development, it invests about CHF 10 million annually in the very latest technologies and infrastructure. Janssen Vaccines employs around 350 people at its Bern site and, indirectly, about 600 more via suppliers.



Johnson & Johnson has been upscaling its manufacturing capacity to meet its goal of providing one billion doses of a vaccine each year.

infrastructure and equipment is useless if you don't have the specialists to operate it," says Claudio Thomasin, director R&D in Bern Bümpliz. Thomasin, who hails from Grisons, has worked for J&J for 25 years. "Thanks to our proximity to research institutes such as the University of Bern, we are in the fortunate position of being able to recruit outstanding personnel." The J&J Bern branch has a staff of around 330 from 22 different nations. This mix has a positive side effect. "It enables us to achieve a broad consensus on strategies and target areas," says Thomasin – a significant factor in the global subject of vaccines.

The center's location is also an essential factor for the parent company in the current pandemic. It is here that the sterile filling of the final vaccine will be

handled. Specific to this filling process is that these vaccines cannot be heat-sterilized but must be manufactured completely aseptically and filled under sterile conditions. The vaccine concentrate is delivered deep-frozen from the company's sister laboratory in Leiden, the Netherlands, then thawed and adjusted to a final concentration using a special buffer system in the biosafety laboratory. A series of different filtration steps is worked through to ensure everything remains germ free. After that, various analyses are carried out to check that the product is correct, it is in the right concentration, and has the prescribed purity and sterility. Once the final formulation is ready, it is sterile filled in vials. This takes place in clean rooms that are certified to an even higher standard than operating theaters in hospitals. The air

is filtered countless times and the operators work covered from head to toe in sterile cleanroom suits. During filling, each container is checked for defects and to ensure it contains the correct dosage.

Under normal circumstances, the process of developing a vaccine involves a whole series of successive steps. But nothing is normal in a pandemic. To ensure the vaccine can be made available in large quantities following approval, large-scale manufacture has already started and many of the development steps are being carried out in parallel. There is, of course, a risk that the whole lot will have to be disposed of if the immune responses in the clinical trial phase are unsatisfactory or if the formulation needs to be changed. Such high-risk investments are only possible thanks to the additional funding provided by the group and various nations and organizations to progress the development and manufacture of the vaccine as smoothly and quickly as possible.

#### No risk on the safety front

J&J does not take risks in other areas, particularly when it comes to the safety of the vaccine. It is not only the safety authorities who are responsible for that. "We wouldn't be doing ourselves any favors if we didn't take safety very seriously," Redlich stresses. "After all, a vaccine is useless if the population doesn't accept it." The German is confident that the J&J vaccine candidate will succeed because of the experience they gained with the Ebola vaccine safety studies: "We have already tested that on more than 90,000 people and we know that it is very well tolerated and effective." In contrast, other vaccine principles, such as the mRNA and DNA vaccines (see diagram, p. 7), have not yet been licensed. According to Redlich, new approaches as these are

Continued on page 8

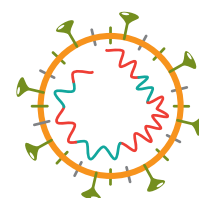
## Who invented the first vaccine, and what types are there?

Vaccines are one of the greatest medical achievements in the history of humankind. The principle is as ingenious as it is simple: injecting a pathogen in a weakened or modified form stimulates the immune system without making us sick. If we then go on to become infected with the pathogen, our immune system can draw the appropriate response from its archives and quickly fight the pathogen, preventing us from becoming seriously ill and passing the disease on.

The first vaccine was developed at the end of the 18th century to protect against smallpox, a worldwide pandemic that had plagued humans for centuries. The English doctor Edward Jenner is widely regarded as the inven-

tor of vaccination. His development was based on the observation that smallpox does not affect all people equally. In particular, he noticed that people who had previously contracted mild cowpox were resistant to smallpox. Jenner took what we would today regard as the ethically questionable decision to test his observation: he infected a boy with mild cowpox and then with smallpox. His hypothesis was confirmed: the boy was immune, and thus the first vaccination was born. The methods used to produce vaccines today vary widely, as is evident from the range of approaches currently being pursued to produce a Covid-19 vaccine. We present a selection of them here.

## Live vaccines



LIVE ATTENUATED VACCINE

Live vaccines contain very small amounts of pathogens capable of replication. These are so weakened that they no longer trigger the disease. But the immune system is activated and builds up protection.

**Advantages:** Highly effective; usually only one injection needed.

**Disadvantages:** Not suitable for people with a compromised immune system due to possible adverse side effects; costly to produce.

**Examples of uses:** Mumps, measles, rubella (German measles), smallpox

# “Viruses want to reproduce.”

## BCA: What is it about viruses that interests you?

Volker Thiel, University of Bern: I am fascinated by how viruses are structured and how they work. They only have a few genes and still manage to take over an entire cell and use it for their own purposes. Based on this, we can work out how to strengthen cell defenses or weaken the viruses.

## What is a virus's main aim?

Viruses want to reproduce. So they always need to seek out a new host.

## How did the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus manage to trigger a pandemic?

It spreads easily and can be transmitted before symptoms appear, which makes it very difficult to control.

## Why is this virus so much more serious than other viruses such as influenza?

What we can observe is that in severe cases, the immune system goes into overdrive. We don't yet understand why this happens.

## Was there an action plan once you became aware of the severity of the SARS-CoV-2 virus?

Scientists like us from all over the world put our heads together very quickly. It was clear to us that the first thing we needed to do was to set up the experimental systems to work on the virus.

## That included creating a clone of the virus.

### How did you do that in such a short space of time?

We were prepared. For the past two years we have been involved in the EU-funded training project HONOURS ([www.honours.eu](http://www.honours.eu)), which trains young researchers in preparedness for infectious disease

outbreaks. This consortium is made up of various universities, research institutions, and businesses, each of which has its own specialty and tasks. Our task is to build a genetic platform on which to create a clone.

### Why do you need a clone?

It gives us a quick and uncomplicated way to work on and examine the virus during the pandemic. We can introduce mutations into the clone and analyze their effects on the virus – for example, whether they make it stronger or weaker. We can see which substances inhibit the virus, and how quickly and where it develops resistance. This is particularly important for the development of treatments. Without a clone, it would be much more complicated to find and isolate the mutations, so the process would be much slower.



**Volker Thiel**, Professor of Virology and head of Virology at the Institute of Virology and Immunology at the University of Bern.

### How has the virus been behaving so far?

It actually changes very slow and doesn't mutate much. Any changes observed tend to be small ones, although we don't yet understand whether and how they influence the virus.

## What is needed more urgently, a vaccine or a treatment?

Both. There will always be people who get infected, either because they can't or don't want to be vaccinated or because they don't receive regular boosters. And no vaccine provides a one hundred percent protection. As people will always get infected, it is very important that we have drugs or treatments to fight the virus, especially for high risk groups.

## How do you interpret the fact that there are already cases of people contracting Covid-19 more than once?

That comes as no surprise to us; it's typical for viral diseases of the respiratory tract. It will be interesting to see whether these cases become more frequent.

## Do you think we will ever get back to normal?

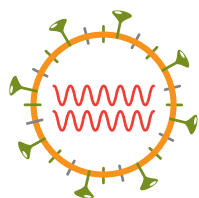
Yes, I think so. We will have to learn to live with the virus. I don't expect us to be wearing masks and keeping to social distancing for years to come.

## What projects are you planning next?

Based on the clone, we are currently investigating how the virus develops and how to weaken it. The holy grail is to develop a vaccine. But that will take much longer.

Status: September 2020

## Inactivated (or killed) vaccines



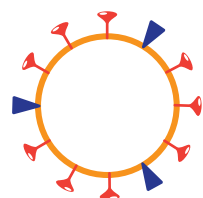
Inactivated vaccines contain killed pathogens. These are recognized by the body as foreign and stimulate the body's own immune system.

**Advantages:** Can be combined with any other vaccinations.

**Disadvantages:** Frequent boosters needed; costly to produce.

**Examples of uses:** Hepatitis A, polio, rabies

## protein-based vaccines / split vaccines



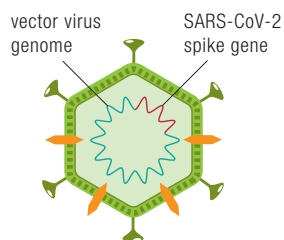
The vaccine consists of a mixture of viral spike proteins which have high immunogenicity but no genetic material.

**Advantages:** Easily tolerated; highly effective.

**Disadvantages:** Costly to produce.

**Examples of uses:** Influenza

## Vector-based vaccines



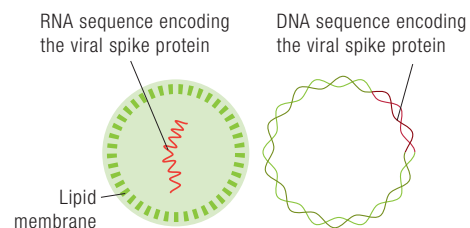
The vector or platform used is a virus that does not trigger a disease in humans, such as the adenovirus or an attenuated (weakened) measles virus. A portion of the pathogen's genetic material is inserted into this virus. These so-called "vectors" carry parts of the pathogen's genetic material into human muscle cells, causing the antigen that stimulates the body's own immune system to be produced.

**Advantages:** Large scale production possible; good safety profile; highly effective.

**Disadvantages:** No long-term experience.

**Examples of uses:** Ebola, dengue fever

## RNA or DNA vaccines



The vaccines contain parts of the pathogen's mRNA or DNA. These are the blueprints of the pathogen. When this vaccine is injected, these blueprints instruct the body's own cells to create parts of the pathogen. The immune system identifies these as foreign and trains itself to mount a response.

**Advantages:** Quick and cheap to produce; can be quickly adapted to mutations of the pathogen.

**Disadvantages:** No certified vaccines based on this method as yet; no long-term experience.

**Examples of uses:** HIV and influenza vaccines candidates are currently being tested.



bringing positive momentum to vaccine research. “This field has been opened up by the pandemic. At the moment the authorities are much more open to these approaches, which are very exciting and are helping us to make progress.”

#### Room for innovation

Stefan Halbherr, CEO and head of Research at InnoMedica, agrees. The seven-year-old Bernese start-up is well known for its innovative approaches. Up to now, InnoMedica has primarily made a name for itself with a novel technique for cancer therapy. But vaccines are also far from being uncharted territory for Halbherr, who has a doctorate in this field. “Unfortunately, research into vaccines has fallen asleep,” he says. And yet this field offers plenty of room for innovation, he believes. That is exactly what he is setting

out to prove with his company, which handles all aspects from research to manufacturing. That also means not allowing yourself to be deterred by setbacks. “Our first attempt at a Covid-19 vaccine, a protein-based vaccine prototype, didn’t work, unfortunately.” Now they are pursuing three other approaches: a protein solution and two genetic solutions. For Halbherr, it is essential to remain pragmatic despite the urgency and to take a step back if problems arise – even if this means accepting a delay. Although his company will certainly not be the first, he believes his vaccine stands a chance. “The best isn’t necessarily the quickest. It’s the one that gives the most protection and is best tolerated.” And anyway, no company will be able to produce enough vaccines to meet the entire global demand, he says. Multiple effective vaccines will therefore be needed.



“Before the pandemic, research into vaccines had fallen asleep.”

Stefan Halbherr, CEO InnoMedica

## The trial phases

From development to approval, every vaccine goes through a series of different trial phases to ensure that it is effective and well tolerated. This process normally takes several years, but to speed it up, many Covid-19 candidate vaccines are going through phases 1 and 2 and phases 2 and 3 in parallel.

### Preclinical stage

In the preclinical studies, the virus is analyzed to establish what immune reactions it causes. Based on these findings, a vaccine design is produced. Its efficacy and tolerability are studied in animal models to minimize the risks to the human subjects taking part in the clinical trials.



# “Vaccination could contain the pandemic in the long term.”

## BCA: Why is it so important to find a vaccine?

Mark Witschi, FOPH: The purpose of a vaccine is two-fold: to protect people who are particularly vulnerable and, where possible, to prevent the new coronavirus from spreading any further. Vaccination has the potential to contain the pandemic in the long term and could therefore play a major part in enabling us to return to normality.

## There are several candidate vaccines. On what basis did the FOPH decide to preorder the Covid-19 vaccine being developed by Moderna?

We can't yet say for certain which companies or vaccines will eventually succeed and will be made available to the Swiss population. The federal government is therefore taking a diversified approach to increase the chances of gaining fast and safe access to a vaccine. In parallel to its contract with Moderna, it is also holding discussions with other companies. It was the promising results of the first clinical trials of the Moderna vaccine that prompted it to sign the contract with Moderna. If the vaccine successfully passes the clinical trial phase and can be approved for the Swiss market, Switzerland will have secured 4.5 million vaccine doses. As it seems likely that two doses will be needed, this will enable 2.25 million people to be vaccinated.

## What requirements do you have for a vaccine in terms of safety?

The safety of a vaccine is assessed by Swissmedic, the Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products. As the regulatory authority for therapeutic products in Switzerland, it is responsible for authorizing and supervising vaccines in our country. This means that it evaluates the quality, safety, efficacy and risk-benefit balance of vaccines submitted for approval by pharmaceutical companies on the basis of the documentation submitted, and approves vaccines that pass the evaluation for use in the domestic market.

## Once a vaccine is approved and made available, what will the federal government's vaccination strategy be?

### Will vaccination be compulsory?

There are no plans to make vaccination compulsory for the whole population. But it will be important to fully and transparently inform everyone about the vaccine so that they can make an informed decision on whether to get vaccinated.

## Who will decide which vaccine we are given if there are several options?

The FOPH will work with the Federal Commission for Vaccination Issues to draw up recommendations on who should be vaccinated with which vaccine. Depending on the characteristics of the vaccines, they will be recommended for different population groups – young adults, highly vulnerable people, pregnant women, and so on. But this won't be decided until we know the precise characteristics of the possible vaccines.



Mark Witschi is head of the Vaccination Recommendations and Control Measures Section of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH).

## Are many people in Switzerland opposed to vaccination?

No, but there are a lot of people who approach the subject of vaccination with a critical eye. So it is important to be transparent and to inform the population properly about when and why people should get vaccinated and who should get which vaccine.

## What lessons can we learn for the future from the current shortage of supplies?

Vaccines are often in short supply, unfortunately, which is why the federal government has instructed companies to build up compulsory stocks. But compulsory stocks of vaccines that are in short supply globally are difficult to build up and may be quickly depleted. The government is also trying to encourage companies on the open market to make enough vaccine available. For example, companies whose vaccines are approved in the EU but not for the Swiss market are being asked to apply for approval in Switzerland as well, so that alternative products are available in case supplies run short. The situation with Covid-19 vaccines is completely different, however, because countries are taking out option contracts or will source the vaccines directly via central procurement.

## In what respect does Switzerland support the initiative to find a global solution for a fair distribution of coronavirus vaccines?

Switzerland supports various multilateral initiatives to contain the Covid-19 pandemic and is taking part in the ongoing global discussions on this subject. The federal government is committed to rapid R&D, manufacture, and fair distribution of a future Covid-19 vaccine. To this end, Switzerland supports various organizations involved in the newly created global collaboration, the ACT Accelerator, an umbrella organization that brings together established global health organizations such as the WHO, the R&D-focused Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation (CEPI), and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Status: September 2020

## Clinical Trials

### Phase 1

**Main question:** Is the vaccine safe and well tolerated?

**Subjects:** (< 100), healthy women and men, mostly aged 18 to 55

### Phase 2

**Main question:** At what dose is the vaccine most effective and what side effects does it have?

**Subjects:** larger group (about 1,000), healthy women and men, mostly aged 18 to 55

### Phase 3

**Main question:** Does the vaccine provide effective protection against infection in normal conditions? Are there any rare side effects?

**Subjects:** large group (> 10,000), healthy women and men, different age groups, from children to older people

Approval can only be applied for once all three phases of the clinical trials have been successfully completed. The health authorities in the respective countries then review the data and grant approval if the requirements are met. The authority with responsibility for this in Switzerland is the Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products, Swissmedic. Each new batch of vaccine must be approved again by the authorities before being sold.

# STARTUP

## BREATH OF FRESH AIR



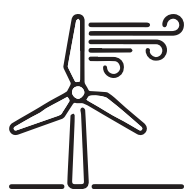
### Swiss QualiQuest AG

Swiss QualiQuest helps companies measure and manage their own reputation. Its modern online tool enables feedback to be obtained in a simple way.

After all, it is the satisfaction of all of a company's main stakeholders that determines whether people buy its products, whether it can recruit and retain the best people, and whether its market value for investors increases.

A good reputation is not just a nice-to-have but a factor that directly impacts on earnings. The special feature of this data-driven online reputation management system is that it enables all collected satisfaction values to be used both as an internal management tool for quality control and for targeted marketing. In other words, it makes satisfaction visible.

In response to the coronavirus crisis, Swiss QualiQuest developed a service that allows companies to keep in touch with their staff and find out how they are.



## FACTS

Ideas, new technologies and inquiring minds constantly inspire new business ideas that give rise to start-ups. We present four examples in our start-up parade.

### Start-up stage:

Growth phase (restructuring)

### The inventors:

The company's eight administration, sales, software and communication staff work together to make satisfaction visible.

ZID Bernapark Stettlen

[www.swissqualiquest.ch](http://www.swissqualiquest.ch)





**spectyou**

Theater for streaming – that’s what you’ll find on spectyou. This platform gives users digital access to the very latest in drama, dance and performing arts, recorded or live and full length. There’s plenty to choose from, ranging from companies touring internationally and active provincial theaters to well-known directors at major metropolitan theaters and quirky experimental performances. spectyou also provides additional background information on every video production. The aim of the founder and her team is to present art in a representative way across Europe without advertising, and to build up a central contemporary archive of the German-language theater landscape.

In response to the coronavirus crisis, spectyou has opened up its beta testing phase to everyone free of charge. The platform’s live stream allows artists to present their current work live and develop new, interactive formats. spectyou also provides a forum for communicating, informing, and sharing ideas.



**Menon**

Remember that nervous anticipation when you got your report card at the end of the school year? If you got top marks you got a reward, if you got average grades you got a raised eyebrow, and anything below meant you had to stay in and swot. Now the entire grading system is facing criticism – at least by the founders of the start-up Menon. They believe it falls short and have therefore developed an assessment tool that complements the official grading system by subject matter. The Menon app presents an overview of pupils’ assessments and overall development in interdisciplinary skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication. According to Menon, these are the values that are important in a digitalized world. Instead of being based on the judgment of one teacher at one point in the semester, Menon reports are based on the continuous collection of a large number of self-, third-party and peer assessments, enabling trends to be mapped over time.

The crisis has shown that it makes sense to discuss additions or alternatives to the conventional grading system, particularly if teaching has to be delivered in a different form.



**mybuxi – rides on demand**

Although Switzerland has a dense public transport network, there are still places where coverage is poor, especially in smaller municipalities and rural areas. Enter the pioneering mybuxi project, funded by Engagement Migros. Passengers book mybuxi seats via an app, and other passengers can get on and off along the way. The app calculates the optimal ridesharing combinations. This makes mybuxi an independent, flexible, and green way to travel and a convenient alternative to using your own car. mybuxi has been operating in Herzogenbuchsee for more than a year now, and since August 2020 it has been connecting the municipalities of Heimiswil, Affoltern i.E., Rüegsau, Hasle b.B. in Emmental and Ostermundigen. Other areas in western and eastern Switzerland and the Alpine region are currently being trialed.

Due to the pandemic, operations in Herzogenbuchsee were suspended and the launch dates for Emmental and Ostermundigen had to be postponed. Instead of leaving the fleet idle, within a week the company had set up a delivery service for local businesses. Branded mybuxi market, it is now being combined with the passenger service in the Emmental valley. “Normal” mybuxi services resumed on May 2020.

<b>Start-up stage:</b> Product in the public test phase
<b>The inventors:</b> Theater maker Elisabeth Caesar and her 10-strong team, who have together become digital house builders for the theater sector.
<b>Bern</b>
<b>www.spectyou.com</b>

<b>Start-up stage:</b> The beta phase has started and is being tested for free by educational institutions.
<b>The inventors:</b> A team of innovative adults who finally get to take revenge on the grading system.
<b>Bern</b>
<b>www.menon.group</b>

<b>Start-up stage:</b> Product in use
<b>The inventors:</b> Andreas Kronawitter, physicist, IT strategist, mobility expert
<b>Bern</b>
<b>www.mybuxi.ch</b>

# Effecting change with respect

Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter has overcome many hurdles in her professional life. As a boss, she worked part-time; as a mother, she set up a day nursery. And as a woman with unconventional ideas, she makes her mark in the world of top managers. It is precisely where she seems at first glance not to fit in that she raises and advocates issues that could change our society for the long term. Today she is Chairman of the Board of Directors of BEKB and co-founder and CEO of Forma Futura Invest AG.

## Respectful/ Respect for nature

When I was young, my mother often read me the book *The Story of the Root Children*. I was fascinated by what happens underground to make such beautiful flowers and huge trees grow. Nature's fertile soil is a resource that I treat with great respect. Respect for my environment has become a guiding principle for me professionally in the world of finance.

## Courageous/ Courage of convictions

I never planned my career. But wherever I have worked, I have put my heart and soul into my job. Whenever I spotted something that needed improving, I brought it to the attention of my bosses and made suggestions. To do that, you also have to constantly examine your own beliefs and work in an environment that values the work you do. My rule of thumb is this: If you feel you aren't getting anywhere in your job, talk to your line manager about it. If things don't improve, you need to have the courage to move on. Courage also means the ability to say no and to be persistent. When my male colleagues didn't listen to me, I repeated myself once, and again if need be.



With her partner Stefan Streiff, Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter enjoys spending time in the great outdoors, often in Ticino hiking in the Onsernone Valley.



The "&" symbol was part of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's campaign for the UN International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013. In 2011 the SDC founded the WaterKiosk Foundation, upholding the principle that clean drinking water is not just a basis for life but, above all, a human right.

“We can achieve a future worth living if we act sustainably today.”

Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter





#### Helping hand in the coronavirus era

As Chairman of the Board of Directors of BEKB, I have made it a priority to ensure we can support our SME clients unbureaucratically, directly and quickly. Even before the Federal Council announced its decision to provide grants, the BEKB Board of Directors earmarked CHF 50 million in interest-free loans for immediate assistance. Lending is one of our core businesses. As a well-capitalized bank, we can effectively guide the flow of money in this area too.

#### CEO and Chairman of the Board Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetzer

cofounded the sustainable financial investment company Forma Futura Invest AG in 2006; and she has been Chairman of the Board of Directors of BEKB since 2015. She lives in Kilchberg and has one son.

## Equal opportunities / Balancing family and work

As a woman and mother, back in the mid-1990s I had to negotiate for a whole six months to be allowed to work a four-day week as head of the Swiss stock exchange. That gave me one day off per week to spend with my son. Back then, there was no day nursery in Kilchberg where we lived. So, because I wanted to combine having a career and a family, I set one up. In the future it will need to be easier for women – and men – to balance family and work. That's why at BEKB we advertise every position with a part-time option. It is important for women to continue to work, particularly when their children are young. Otherwise they could miss out on promotion to management later on and will never make it to board level. There are still far too few women at that level.

## Responsible / Responsibility

For me, it's important that our staff see a purpose in the work they do. That's the best foundation for being happy at work. The way I see it, responsibility means living a culture of constructive criticism. And saying thank you for it. Addressing sticking points helps us progress, both personally and in business. Being able to express yourself at work and contributing unconventional and holistic ideas is good for the corporate culture. In a previous job I sometimes put forward ideas of this kind which my boss termed esoteric. Everyone would snigger and my ideas were dismissed. After that, I asked for the use of the word "esoteric" to be stopped.

## Sustainable / Committed to sustainability

In 2006, I cofounded Forma Futura Invest AG, a sustainable asset management company. At that time, sustainable investment was relatively unknown. I want to show how the quality of living can be improved by investing sustainably. I am convinced that the financial system is a lever of change, because money makes the world go round. If you want to change things, you have to guide the flow of money responsibly. I try to do this by focusing on the values that are most important to me: sustainability; respect for people, animals, and the environment; and integrity. Also, companies committed to sustainability have a better risk management and a lower reputational risk. And surprising though it may sound, in the long term, sustainable investments can achieve the same good returns as conventional ones.

# The art of sewing and filtration

Lanz-Anliker AG is a technical textile processing company whose services are in great demand. Having been founded as a saddlery in 1919, it sewed almost exclusively for the Swiss army up until the 1990s. Today its customers come from the industrial, medical and pharmaceutical sectors and include names such as Nestlé, Hoffmann-La Roche, Stadler Rail, and Pilatus Aircraft. The company has also seized an opportunity during the pandemic. We talk to CEO Peter Hirschi.

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## Mr. Hirschi, how was Lanz-Anliker AG placed when you took over as CEO in 1996?

In 1996, over 95 percent of our orders came from the Swiss army. When it subsequently restructured, we lost a lot of business. So we had to diversify and move into new business areas. It was then that we began to build up the filtration side, which is the backbone of our business today.

## Why is there so much demand for filtration?

In industry, nothing works without filters: whether you make cheese, wash lettuce, dewater sewage sludge, capture grinding dust, and so on. Filters are not single-use items and are usually produced in quantities of between one and ten. Then there are highly complex filters such as those we supply Nestlé with for producing instant coffee. These filters are 19 meters long with 200 square meters of fabric and are used in vacuum chambers. This is the niche of all niches, although today we are well known all over the world.



“Despite the fact that we’re highly diversified, it’s always all about sewing.”

CEO Peter Hirschi

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## What makes Lanz-Anliker AG a Hidden Champion?

A hundred years ago, the textile industry was of huge importance to the Swiss economy. It was still significant as recently as twenty years ago. Today, many believe that textiles are no longer a viable business in Switzerland. But there are many areas in which we are in demand, mainly in the industrial, medical, and pharmaceutical sectors.

## How do you acquire customers?

For us, international trade fairs are an essential forum for demonstrating our expertise. I can talk to users and experts on an equal footing there and I always come away with lots of good ideas for new processes and products. In our home market, people know us because there are only a few companies left in our industry.

## How do you diversify your business?

I try to anticipate what has the potential to succeed in the market. It must always have something to do with sewing, and we must be able to make the investments needed ourselves. That might entail acquiring a company, as we did with Gygax Equestrian, by entering into a strategic partnership, or by investing in infrastructure. Our machines are networked, and with our clean room we can not only develop new processing methods but also open up new areas of business.

Speaking of diversification and the coronavirus, we also manufacture surgical masks, which we intend to offer for resale through drugstores and pharmacies in the future. We have never had to apply for short-time working, and perhaps the secret to that lies in our strategy of diversification.

## How do you make strategic decisions?

I make decisions jointly with our CFO Madeleine Bracher. While I tend to act intuitively, her ability to come up with objective and prudent arguments makes her an extremely effective sparring partner on the Executive Board and the Board of Directors. For example, alongside her many duties, she made a success of the equestrian sports division, which I myself would have hived off.

## Your X-ray apron, which is the first in the world with a sewn-in chip, is a true USP. How did you come up with the idea?

Since 2017, every radiation protection product produced in Switzerland has had to be tested to Federal Office of Public Health specifications. And we noticed that this was a challenge for hospitals and radiology institutions. We responded promptly by fitting our

X-ray aprons with a chip and developed software together with an external company to enable us to offer a practicable, effective system. Our system is highly appreciated by hospitals and radiology institutions.



“Thinking innovatively, acting with foresight, having the courage to try new things – that’s the key to our success.”

CFO Madeleine Bracher

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## Where do you develop and manufacture your products?

All aspects of our products are developed in Rohrbach. On the manufacturing side it varies depending on the quality requirements that have to be met. Fifteen years ago, we found a manufacturing partner in South Korea which manufactures in China. Why this circuitous route, you might ask? Well, it’s quite simple: The South Korean approach to quality is much closer to ours, and at the same time they are also familiar with the Chinese culture. If we worked directly with Chinese suppliers, tracing them in the event of problems could be an issue.

## Where will Lanz-Anliker be in 10 years’ time?

We are gearing up for the next ten years here in Rohrbach and are doubling our manufacturing space. For one thing, we need space to develop our metal mesh division to respond to the future demand for gabions in zero-energy buildings. We also want to open a new equestrian sports shop with manufacturing taking place behind the shop. That will make shopping there a real experience.



- 70 employees
- 65% of output exported
- Agencies in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy
- Partners in South Korea and Moldova

- 1919** Founded as a saddlery
- 1999** Peter Hirschi buys Lanz-Anliker AG
- 2004** Gygax Reitsport (Equestrian) acquired
- 2008** Company expands to 6000 m<sup>2</sup> and builds a clean room
- 2016** X-ray apron manufacturer Wiroma acquired
- 2020** New building with equestrian sports shop and 6000 m<sup>2</sup> more space

[www.lanz-anliker.com](http://www.lanz-anliker.com)



Sewing is a core competence of Lanz-Anliker AG. Customers such as Stadler Rail and Pilatus Flugzeugwerke purchase sewn and cut fabrics – but even champion wrestlers don wrestling trousers from Lanz-Anliker: [www.koenigliches.ch](http://www.koenigliches.ch)



All Lanz-Anliker AG filter media are developed and manufactured in Rohrbach; medical products are ISO 13485 compliant. Having obtained Roche certification, the company is authorized to supply Roche branches worldwide.



Swiss equestrian sports articles from Rohrbach – sold directly via [www.shop-lanzanliker.ch](http://www.shop-lanzanliker.ch) or in the company's own equestrian sports shop. Lanz-Anliker also manufactures many own-label items for Hermès Paris.



Innovation from Rohrbach: Wiroma X-ray aprons with sewn-in chip for easy data management.



# Platform boosts market for medical supplies

The young company hystrix medical AG in Langenthal runs a digital marketplace for everything that doctors' practices, hospitals and retirement homes need, from masks to dressings and from hospital furniture to medical equipment. The start-up passed its first major endurance test with flying colors this spring when the coronavirus pandemic hit.



Left to right: Philippe Hügli, CEO; Roman Eminger, CTO&CIO; Jonathan Campbell, COO&CFO.

When Covid-19 broke out in March, dozens of healthcare providers quickly switched to the hystrix medical platform, all desperately in search of face masks. Thanks to the large dealer network on its digital marketplace and its worldwide contacts, the young company was able to respond quickly. "In March alone, when many other suppliers' shelves were stripped bare, more than two million face masks were sold via our platform," CEO Philippe Hügli says. Besides hospitals, hystrix medical saw a sudden surge in uptake from everyone reporting increased demand for everything from face masks and protective overalls to disinfectants and cleaning products during the pandemic, including cantonal police forces and security and justice departments. "This rush was really the ultimate test for us, and it was our first indication that our platform works perfectly even when there is a massive run on certain items," he adds.

## Amazon for healthcare

With production having been ramped up worldwide, face masks are now available again everywhere. But the pandemic-induced demand gave the start-up a sustained boost. More than 170 healthcare providers and 90 suppliers have now joined the platform, including industry heavyweights such as Olympus and B. Braun. The product range on offer has grown to around 130,000 items. Already an impressive market volume, this is only an intermediate step for the CEO. "Our aim is to become a kind of Amazon for hospitals, doctors' practices, nursing homes and their suppliers," he says.

Hügli, who has an MSc in Biomedical Engineering from ETH and an MBA, had had the business idea for a digital platform in mind for several years. As Interventional Cardiology Division Manager of the medtech group Boston Scientific, he identified huge pent-up demand for digitalization of sales and procurement processes in Swiss healthcare. "In this area, the healthcare sector is lagging way behind industries such as the automotive industry," he says. So there was potential waiting to be tapped – the perfect opportunity for a start-up.

## Ideal location

Hügli left Boston Scientific in 2017 and set up hystrix medical, starting out as a one-man show in a coworking space in Solothurn. He soon bagged himself more than ten suppliers and buyers, so the time was ripe to expand. In Jonathan Campbell (CFO) and Roman Eminger (CTO/CIO), Hügli found two like-minded people who both came with relevant experience from the medtech, pharmaceutical, and financial sectors. He also raised the capital he needed through venture capital investors and took on more people.

hystrix medical now has just under a dozen employees, including two software developers based in Serbia and three freelancers in Switzerland. The young company has long since moved its headquarters from Solothurn to Langenthal – and



not entirely coincidentally: “With the Bern Economic Development Agency’s help we soon found suitable premises right next to the railway station. The location is ideal for recruiting people from all over Switzerland,” Hügli says. He sees good opportunities for implementing his ambitious growth plans in Oberaargau. Having invested CHF 2.7 million to date, the company has successfully completed a second funding round in September. The plan is to then break even in the second half of 2022. hystrix medical earns its money by charging 3 percent commission on transactions on the digital marketplace.

#### Key criteria

Hügli is convinced that the rules that apply to trading in consumer goods will soon apply to the procurement and distribution of health and medical products. The industry will therefore be forced to rethink. The current practice of buyers and sellers negotiating everything individually is definitely on its last legs, he believes: “The pandemic has mercilessly exposed this system’s weaknesses and has shone a spotlight on the strengths of the online marketplace.” Customers are able to quickly form alliances to pool larger order volumes at a lower price, for example.

For the time being, hystrix medical still sees itself as being in the development phase, its main aim being to continue to scale up its business model and fathom out which products lend themselves best to digital marketing. “Although not everyone likes to hear this, we are primarily talking about what we call medtech commodities – relatively simple products that require no further explanation. The key criteria for buyers of this category of hospital supplies are quantity, price and lead time,” Hügli explains.

#### Potential savings: around CHF 1 billion

Because supply and demand meet directly on the platform, buyers can save themselves a lot of time-consuming searching and, therefore, process costs. The central hub gives them immediate access to a large number of suppliers, with the most suitable and best value offers just a few clicks away.

According to a study by Ruhr University Bochum, Swiss hospitals could cut their process costs by around 40 percent by rigorously pursuing digital procurement, saving as much as CHF 365 million per year. That is an average of more than CHF 1 million per hospital. Added to this are the cost benefits of more dynamic market price formation, which, says Professor of Economics Mathias Binswanger, could amount to CHF 600 million for the whole of Switzerland. In short, with its price transparency, the online marketplace finally makes healthy competition a reality.

Another area in which the healthcare system can only benefit from digitalization is quality: the quicker and easier it is for hospitals to source the materials they need, the more smoothly they will run. And last but not least, during the pandemic hystrix medical has proved that an online marketplace increases security of supply in times of crisis.



# Burgdorf's ancient walls now home to new jewel in the crown



## MUSEUM

We take a peek at the cabinets of curiosities.

With great ambition and commitment, Burgdorf has converted its fortified Zähringen castle complex into a welcoming “*Schloss für alle*” (Castle For All). The youth hostel, restaurant and museum opened in the summer of 2020. The result is a unique combination of history, fun and relaxation.

Burgdorf Castle is the best preserved Zähringen castle complex in Switzerland. Dating back 800 years, it was the first castle to be built in brick, a completely new material at the time. The mighty Dukes of Zähringen chose Burgdorf as their seat in around 1200, followed later by the Counts of Kyburg. After the Burgdorf War in 1383 the Kyburgs were forced to sell the County of Burgdorf to Bern and the castle became home to a Bernese *Schultheiss* (sheriff). For centuries the imposing building accommodated various authorities to whom farmers had to hand over tithes to keep the granary well stocked. Even after the cantonal administration moved in 200 years ago, a visit to the castle was rarely a joyful occasion: the complex housed the courtroom, the jury court, and even, from 1885 to 2010, a prison. One of the roads leading up the castle hill is symbolically called *Armsünderweg* (Poor Sinner Road).

This year's inauguration of a Castle For All that is open to the public marks the beginning of a completely new era for Burgdorf Castle, with relaxation, experiences, and fun in an exciting dialogue with history and legends.



**YOUTH HOSTEL**

A good night's sleep wasn't always so easy to come by here.

“The combination of museum and accommodation is the perfect reflection of the ‘Travelling for Education’ creed that the Swiss Youth Hostels have long devoted themselves to.”

Janine Bunte, CEO Swiss Youth Hostels





**RESTAURANT**  
with a castle ambience.

“The castle is a highlight of our region. In Burgdorf you can discover history, celebrate or explore our magnificent Emmental landscape. Welcome!”

Stefan Berger, Mayor of Burgdorf

The public lobby doubles as the hotel reception, the museum shop, and the youth hostel lounge. It can also be used as an events room for small-scale concerts and readings. The floor of the modern room is made of 270-year-old fir taken from the attic. But that's by no means the only connection between the various usage concepts.

#### **The youth hostel**

The very suggestion of converting the prison into a youth hostel was met with great approval in Burgdorf. The idea that the prison would be completely stripped out and that the old walls would be given a new lease of life accommodating families, school classes, and tourists was without doubt the reason why not a single objection to the complex construction plans was received.

The result speaks for itself. The 31 rooms of the new youth hostel – which include double rooms, family rooms, and shared rooms with four or six beds – are packed with charm, some boasting a magnificent view of the Emmental valley. The prison atmosphere has completely disappeared, although guests who look very closely might still see names and tally marks carved into the walls of their rooms. Every

room is unique and is themed around the castle's history with displays or exhibits from the museum. The special overnight accommodation makes Burgdorf Castle a jewel in the crown of the Swiss Youth Hostels.

The youth hostel is open 310 days a year and breakfast is served in the castle restaurant. The room price includes admission to the museum.

#### **The restaurant**

The modern, sustainable restaurant replete with castle ambience is the new place to be for locals, youth hostel guests and castle visitors alike. Having made his name in fine dining and exclusive event catering, head chef Michael Barz also aims to offer great value menus and authentic regional cuisine with traditional fare from the Emmental valley. The restaurant serves brunch on Sundays – perfect for getting an exciting day at the museum off to a great start.

#### **The museum**

Museums have existed in the castle before, although none as big, as diverse, and as unique as this one. Anyone wanting to discover the *Wunderkammern* (cabinets of curiosities), the galleries, the stories,



and the themed areas will need time – lots of it – and may even find they need more than one visit to see them all.

The collections of the *Rittersaalverein* (the Knights' Hall Association), the *Goldkammer* (Gold Chamber) and the ethnological collection have been transformed into one single museum spread out over many of the castle's large and small rooms. The former exhibition space has been doubled and now offers several highlights, such as the historical courtroom with its *Son et Lumière* show in which real-life trials from the past are re-enacted, and display cases with red or blue objects that evoke memories and, with a little imagination, can be associated with different stories. Those keen to dig a little deeper will find themed exhibitions on subjects as varied as the famous Swiss educationalist Pestalozzi, who set up a school here, the cheese trade, or the history of the town and its industries. For English- and French-speaking guests, a book is available in every room with a summary of the themes presented there.

The ancient walls with their historic murals, some of which were rediscovered only when the castle was renovated, and the fact that you can easily lose your bearings in the winding corridors and rooms all add to the castle atmosphere.

#### Unique experiences

If you like things a little more spine-tingling, there's another way to experience the castle: you can stay at the youth hostel and take part in one of the exclusive events for overnight guests such as "A Night In The Museum."

Romantics, on the other hand, can say "I do" at the castle, in a special room for wedding ceremonies at the heart of the museum. The ceremony can be followed by a reception in the banqueting hall, and the newlyweds can stay in the youth hostel's bridal room.

The castle also has rooms, catering and accommodation for meetings and private events.

Burgdorf Castle is the perfect base for discovering the Zähringen town of Burgdorf with its old town, the Gertsch Museum and the beautiful green spaces along the banks of the Emme river.



**JANINE BUNTE**  
CEO Swiss Youth Hostels



**STEFAN BERGER**  
Mayor of Burgdorf



**BURGDORF CASTLE**  
Still impressive after 800 years.

# Competition: Stay the night at the Burgdorf Castle Museum

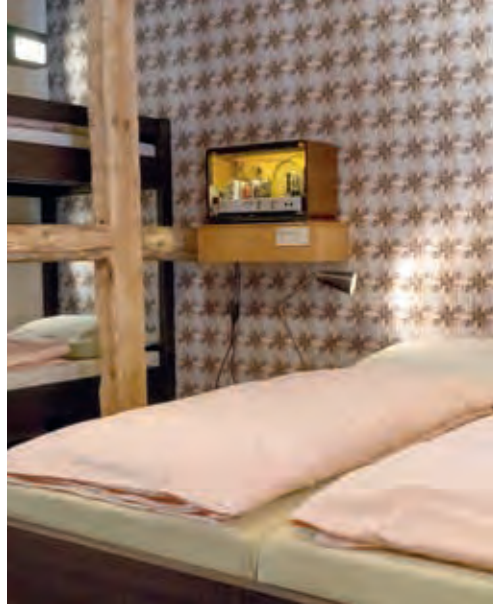
## Win a package deal for two at the new youth hostel in Burgdorf!

Spending the night in the unique ambience of the castle is an experience for all age groups – a perfect treat for solo travelers, couples, and families as well as groups, schools, and companies. Like the rest of the castle, and as is customary for youth hostels, this hostel boasts generous common rooms with plenty of space for meeting and chatting with friends, family and other guests.

The Swiss Youth Hostels Association operates a diverse network of 52 hostels, with double, family and shared rooms. Six of these are franchise operations. The variety of accommodations is exceptional, ranging from a romantic castle to an urban designer hostel right through to a wellness hostel.

For over 90 years, this non-profit organization has been committed to quality-conscious, sustainable and socially responsible youth and family tourism. Its Hostel Card Premium entitles the organization's approximately 73,000 members to discounts and a range of leisure offers. In 2019, a total of 736,511 overnight stays were generated at its hostels.

[www.youthhostel.ch](http://www.youthhostel.ch)



## Competition prize

1 night in a double room with en-suite shower room for 2 persons, including breakfast buffet and admission to the castle museum

1

**Question 1:**  
Who said: "We can achieve a future worth living if we act sustainably today."

Dirk Redlich

Philippe Hügli

Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter

2

**Question 2:**  
What is the name of one of the roads leading to Burgdorf Castle?

Poor Sinner Road

Damsel Road

Duke Road

3

**Question 3:**  
Which of these images shows the medical products manufactured by Lanz-Anliker?

Image A

Image B



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

You can enter the solution at [www.berinvest.be.ch/chance](http://www.berinvest.be.ch/chance) by **February 26, 2021**.

Or send it by postcard to the Bern Economic Development Agency, BCA Competition, Münsterplatz 3a, Postfach, 3000 Bern 8, Switzerland.

**Many congratulations to the winners of our competition in «berncapitalarea» 1/2020:**

**1st prize:** Lukas Rohr, Niesenstrasse 9a, 3600 Thun; **2nd prize:** Thomas Pfyl, Magdalenaweg 36, 3052 Zollikofen



## New arrivals in the Canton of Bern

The Bern Economic Development Agency helps innovative international companies with their decisions to relocate and settle in the Canton of Bern – like Pranarôm and SEB' Automatisme. The Bern Economic Development Agency is supported by partners such as the Greater Geneva Bern area, the investment promotion agency for Western Switzerland.



### Pranarôm

Established in 1991, the Belgian company Pranarôm specializes in manufacturing health and wellness products made from essential oils of an unprecedented quality. The company was founded by Dominique Baudoux, a pharmacist and aromaterapist. Pranarôm manufactures products for health needs of all kinds, which can complement or in certain cases replace treatments with medication.

Today Pranarôm is the international market leader in scientific and medical aromatherapy. Their products are researched and manufactured according to the highest ecological and humanitarian standards. Pranarôm has its headquarters in Belgium and has branches in France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and the USA, and since 2020, also here in the Canton of Bern. With their wide range of essential and plant-based oils and other certified products, they meet the need for natural and alternative therapies.

[www.pranarom.com](http://www.pranarom.com)

### SEB' Automatisme

SEB' Automatisme conceives, designs, manufactures and integrates unique machines that are individually tailored to its customers' needs. The company specializes in robotics as well as mechanical and electrical engineering developments and has customers in the aviation, leisure, food, automotive, medical, weapons and railway industries. To implement the various projects, SEB' Automatisme has an innovative range of plant and equipment at its disposal which they also use to produce personalized protective face visors.

Headquartered in France, the company has been a member of the Swiss Smart Factory since 2019. It opened a division in Biel/Bienne this year. The proximity to institutions such as the Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne and the Swiss Smart Factory and its bilingualism make Biel/Bienne the ideal environment for SEB' Automatisme to maintain and further expand its Swiss customer network.

[www.sebautomatisme.com](http://www.sebautomatisme.com)



# Feel free to ask the Office for Secondary and Vocational Education and Training

The Office for Secondary and Vocational Education and Training (MBA) is the point of contact for questions on basic vocational education and training, secondary school education, higher vocational education and training, professional development, and career guidance. The Office also issues training licenses, approves apprenticeship contracts, advises on and oversees apprenticeship periods and coordinates the qualification process.

**Susanna Oppliger, a lawyer in the In-company Education and Training Department, answers some frequently asked questions on vocational education and training (VET).**

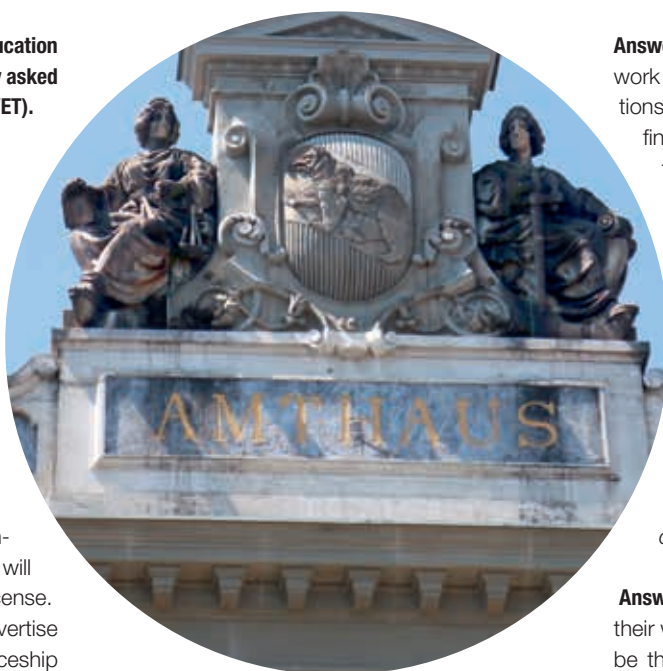
.....  
**Question:** *We are a young, rapidly growing start-up and would like to offer an apprenticeship. What do we need to consider?*

**Answer:** You will need a team that is motivated to train apprentices and you will need to have properly qualified professionals. Then you can apply for a cantonal training license from the MBA ([www.be.ch/mba](http://www.be.ch/mba)). A specialist will then carry out an on-site assessment. For example, they will check whether you have enough qualified professionals and the necessary infrastructure. The MBA will then decide whether to issue you a training license. Once you receive your license you can advertise your apprenticeships on the cantonal apprenticeship portal and start recruiting apprentices.

.....  
**Question:** *I would like to help my son find an apprenticeship. How do we go about this?*

**Answer:** You and your son can use the BIZ App or the cantonal web portal to search for available apprenticeships in a particular field. Also ask around in your own circles for suggestions for companies that offer training or perhaps even to gain a foot in the door with a company. It will be up to your son to make initial contact with a company or to ask for a taster. Importantly, your son will need to have an attractive application dossier. He may need that even for a taster apprenticeship. You and your son's school can help him with this.

.....  
**Question:** *Do you recommend offering a taster apprenticeship before taking on an apprentice on contract? If so, how long should the unpaid try-out last?*



**COAT OF ARMS: THE AMTHAUS**  
on Hodlerstreet 7.

**Answer:** A taster apprenticeship is highly recommended. It gives the young person the opportunity to find out firsthand whether their expectations meet the reality and whether they can see themselves training at the company concerned. You yourselves gain an initial impression of the candidate as a person, how motivated they are and how well you work together. This is a good basis for a sound decision on an apprenticeship. Unpaid taster apprenticeships usually last for up to five days.

.....  
**Question:** *The profession for which we offer apprenticeships involves working nights and on Sundays. Is this something I can ask an apprentice to do?*

**Answer:** In general, apprentices are not permitted to work nights or on Sundays. There are some exceptions for a very small number of professions. You will find a list of these in the Ordinance on Exceptions to the Prohibition on Night-time and Sunday Work During Basic Vocational Education and Training (*Verordnung über Ausnahmen vom Verbot von Nacht- und Sonntagsarbeit während der beruflichen Grundbildung*).

.....  
**Question:** *My apprentice has informed me that she is pregnant. What percentage should or can I reduce her workload by? Can her apprenticeship contract be extended by an equivalent length of time? Are there any other requirements I need to consider?*

**Answer:** If an apprentice has a child to look after, their workload can be reduced to 80 percent. It may be that your apprentice has the potential to complete her apprenticeship during the planned apprenticeship period, in which case there is no need to extend the contract. However, if this does prove necessary, both parties must be in agreement. As a company, it is important that you take cognizance of the fact that the apprentice is pregnant and that, for example, she does not work with hazardous substances.

.....  
**Question:** *Our company has been taken over by another company. We can continue with our current apprenticeship contracts. Is there anything we need to do?*

**Answer:** Yes, you must notify the MBA about the takeover and put on record in a brief agreement with the new company that it will take over your apprentices and that the apprentices are in agreement with this. You will then need to send a copy of this agreement to the MBA.



**VACANT APPRENTICESHIPS** can be advertised free of charge on the cantonal apprenticeship portal (LENA).



**DURING A TASTER APPRENTICESHIP** young people can see whether the reality matches their expectations.

**Question:** *Is short-time work an option for apprentices, and if so, is their pay also reduced?*

**Answer:** In general, apprentices are not subject to short-time work. However, an exception was made in connection with Covid-19: until the end of June 2020, short-time work for apprentices involving a cut in pay was approved.

**Question:** *Are Federal Diplomas of Vocational Education and Training (EFZ) valid and recognized abroad?*

**Answer:** These diplomas are generally recognized in all EU and EFTA member states. However, this may not be the case in countries that do not have a dual VET system. People planning to emigrate will usually need to have their basic VET qualification certified. This can be done via the In-company Education and Training Department at the MBA.

**Question:** *Is it possible to advertise a vacant apprenticeship free of charge?*

**Answer:** Yes, you can advertise any vacant apprenticeships free of charge on the cantonal apprenticeship portal (LENA). You will receive the access details with your training license. Once it is advertised on LENA, the vacant apprenticeship will automatically be posted on the BIZ App and the national portal [berufsbildung.ch](http://berufsbildung.ch).

**Question:** *Are you still finding that companies are willing to take on apprentices? Has Covid-19 changed anything in this regard?*

**Answer:** At the MBA, we are seeing a great deal of willingness and indeed a sense of responsibility for training on the part of companies. A lot of companies are aware that they must invest in training in order to have enough skilled workers in the future. Covid-19 has hardly changed anything in this regard. We are very grateful for that, because our young people need a professional qualification for their future careers and our economy still needs high-skilled workers.

**Question:** *Is the coronavirus crisis impacting on companies who offer apprenticeships and the apprentices themselves?*

**Answer:** There has been little evidence of this so far. In some cases, Covid-19 has put an end to or slowed down apprenticeship recruitment where companies are unable to offer taster apprenticeships or are facing financial constraints. However, apprenticeship contracts are still being signed, and so far very few have been cancelled due to Covid-19. How the situation will develop going forward is unclear, however. We suspect that the demographic increase in the number of school leavers may lead to a shortage of apprenticeships if the country is hit by a recession. For this reason, we recommend that school leavers who have not yet found an apprenticeship try to obtain one for immediate start this year if possible. The deadline for apprenticeship contracts has been extended to October this year by way of exception.

The dual VET system with its combination of basic in-company training, vocational school education and intercompany courses is a success factor for our economy. In 2020, 53 percent of all school leavers in the Canton of Bern went into basic vocational education and training (VET) – Federal Certificate of VET (EBA) or Federal Diploma of VET (EFZ) – after the summer holidays. VET and secondary education establishments (grammar schools, specialized schools) complement each other well and offer suitable training for every young person which connects them to the world of work, universities of applied sciences, or colleges of higher education.

More information on the MBA as well as documents to download: [www.be.ch/mba](http://www.be.ch/mba)



# #cantonofbern

## Tobogganing fun in the Bernese Oberland

No matter whether you pick the longest one, a varied one or the one with bends, fun is guaranteed on all these toboggan runs. Be prepared not to be able to wipe that smile from your face – not least because it will be frozen!



### The 10 tobogganing rules

1. Show consideration for others
2. Adapt your speed and sledding style to your ability
3. Do not impede the route of the runner in front
4. Keep your distance when overtaking
5. Look up before entering and approaching a run
6. Stop at the edge of the run
7. Get on and off the sled at the edge of the run
8. Observe signs and markings
9. Help others
10. In case of an accident: give your details

### Going the distance: Faulhorn to Grindelwald

#### TIP

Treat yourself to a quick break in the relaxed atmosphere of the Bussalp mountain restaurant.

#### DIFFICULTY

medium

#### DISTANCE

15 km

#### DURATION

approx. 1 hour

If you like long toboggan runs, then this one's for you. It's the world's longest downhill run, measuring in at 15 km, and leads from the summit of the Faulhorn (2,680 m) down to Grindelwald in the valley below. The fun starts with a gondola ride from Grindelwald to First. Then there's a winter hike – allow around 2.5 hours – that leads past Lake Bachalpsee to the summit of the Faulhorn. It's worth the effort. It may be a long trek up but the ride down into the valley is unforgettable: the exhilarating run takes about one hour.

#### TIP

Go night tobogganing on the illuminated Sparenmoos to Heimchueweid run.

#### DIFFICULTY

medium

#### DISTANCE

6 km

#### DURATION

approx. 1.5 hours

### Something for everyone: Sparenmoos to Zweisimmen

Take the bus from Zweisimmen train station to Berg-hotel Sparenmoos, where the toboggan run starts. The first part of the route from Sparenmoos to Heimchueweid leads through unspoilt countryside and forests, with a wonderful view of the Simmental valley. The route from the start to Heimchueweid is 3.5 km long and not particularly steep and is ideal for families. At Heimchueweid you can take a bus back up to the start or down to Zweisimmen.

The second part of the run is a 2.5 km long, medium-difficulty, winding route leading down into the valley through the forest. From the Obegg bus stop you can take the bus or walk back to Zweisimmen train station.

## Tips and tricks for a successful day's tobogganing

### The right sled

One feature that marks out a good sled is stability. A wooden sled usually provides the right combination of stability and weight. A steering strap gives you maximum control. The runners on the sled should be steel lined.

### The right gear

Robust, waterproof winter sportswear, snow gloves, a helmet and snow goggles are a must. They not only keep out the cold, wind, and wet but also protect you against injury. Ski goggles help you keep a clear view even in adverse weather conditions.

### The right footwear

Tough boots with good soles are essential for steering and braking safely. We recommend using slip-on spiked soles. They keep you steady on ice and snow and help with braking, particularly if you have to brake suddenly.

### The right tobogganing position

Sit down on the sled, take the strap in one hand and hold onto the side rail with your other hand, slightly behind you. Stretch your legs out in front of you, pressing inwards against the front curves of the runners. Never lie on your stomach as the sled is very difficult to control in that position.

### The right braking technique

To brake, sit up straight and press down firmly into the snow with your feet, keeping your feet flat on the ground. To increase the braking effect, take hold of the sled by the front bars and pull upwards. Always brake before entering a bend, never in it.

### Navigating bends

To take a bend, brake before you enter it. For a right-hand bend, once you have braked, press your right foot into the snow. The harder you press, the more sharply you will turn. Pull the strap at the point you want to steer into. Also shift your bodyweight towards the inside of the bend.

### Taking a break

No matter how much fun you're having, you'll want to have regular breaks and fortify yourself with hot drinks and snacks. Breaks not only help to maintain your strength but also boost your concentration.

### Someone by your side

Always toboggan in the company of someone else if possible. Share the fun – and just a bit of *schadenfreude* – with others.

## Twists and turns: Nessleren to Saxeten

### TIP

Warm up with a glass of hot mulled wine at Balmers Hexenhäuschen.

### DIFFICULTY

easy

### DISTANCE

3.4 km

### DURATION

approx. 1 hour

The tobogganing fun starts with a one-hour ascent on foot to Alp Nessleren from the Skipintli restaurant in Saxeten. The wonderfully winding downhill run leads past waterfalls – usually frozen – and through forests to Balmers Hexenhäuschen (“Witch’s Cottage”). From there you can either go back up to the start or continue down through the snowy winter landscape to the Skipintli restaurant in Saxeten.





LONGINES

# MUSÉE LONGINES

*A la découverte d'un patrimoine horloger, industriel et culturel*  
*Entdeckungsreise in ein Uhrmacher-, Industrie- und Kulturerbe*



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in Deutsch, Französisch,  
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