

Annual Publication 2026

STANLEY THOMAS
JOHNSON
STIFTUNG

Sustainability:
Focusing on the Bigger Picture



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Focusing on the Bigger Picture

You move.

I stand.

We grow roots

and

become entrenched in soil.

Published by: Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation
Edited by: Beate Engel, Andrea Nagel, Myriam Vetsch
Design: Atelier Pol, Bern
April 2026

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“The Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation supports projects in the fields of culture, education, humanitarian aid and medical research. We aim to improve people’s quality of life and promote mutual cultural understanding.”

1 Management

1.1 Organisation 1. January – 31. December 2025

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Education and School Projects

Michelle Beyeler

Commission Education Grants
Michelle Beyeler / Andreas Guggisberg (from 3.11.2025) /
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Commission Education Projects

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T+R AG, Gümliigen

1.2 President's Report

“Those who wish to preserve the world as it is, do not wish to preserve it.”

Erich Fried, Austrian poet, 1921 – 1988

Environmental disasters such as the landslide in the Valais village of Blatten at the end of May 2025 highlight the impacts of climate change, the vulnerability of human systems and the limits of human control. As this foreword is being written, the Swiss Public is preparing to vote on the Climate Fund Initiative on 8 March, which calls for the federal government to double its funds for combating climate change and its consequences. The threat extends beyond the natural world. Geopolitical instability, wars, social inequality, the erosion of democratic institutions and rapid technological change are also contributing to existential uncertainties.

How can we safeguard our ecological, social and economic future? How can we support and shape sustainable development? Our 2025 annual publication focuses on the topic of sustainability and presents projects supported by our foundation that foster critical thinking, encourage realignment, create meaning and inspire hope for renewal.

In the education sector, our foundation places a strong emphasis on sustainable development. As the head of our education sector, trustee Michelle Beyeler, writes in her contribution: “Sustainable development does not arise from directives or simple answers, but where people are empowered to cope with uncertainty and develop solutions together.” In his lead article, Björn Müller, Senior Research Scientist at the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Bern, points out that sustainable thinking and action should go beyond minimising environmental damage and move towards “repairing and reconfiguring social, ecological and economic relationships.” He also diagnoses a backlash and identifies various camps: some criticise current sustainability efforts as insufficient, cumbersome and lacking ambition in the face of the major crises of our time, whilst others feel that it is too demanding and a burden on our political and economic systems.

Müller sees a way out of this divided discourse by offering positive alternatives rather than focusing solely on loss, restriction and scarcity.

In particular, he recognises the potential in the field of art and culture, as an important space for exploring regeneration and coping with loss. The photo series by Monica Ursula Jäger in this publication evokes a tangible visual connection between destruction and regeneration in nature, with captivatingly beautiful images that also convey hope.

The question of whether it is realistic to maintain sustainable objectives even in fragile contexts lies at the heart of the article by Beatrice Winkler, a member of our expert commission for the sector Victims of Conflict and Violence. She explains how due to the conditions in conflict regions – characterized by unstable security situations, violence and displacement – a project's long-term impact often cannot be guaranteed.

Yet there are also small success stories. Even in times of upheaval and crisis, education is a key to professional re-orientation and thus to creating a new future. Karthiga Thiruselvam studied chemistry in her home country of Sri Lanka. Due to the political situation, she fled to Switzerland, where she worked for years delivering newspapers and in the service sector. In 2019, she enrolled in the training programme “2nd Chance for a 1st Education”, which our foundation offers in partnership with the Canton of Bern. She completed her apprenticeship as a certified healthcare assistant and has now embarked on further training to become a fully qualified nurse.

The project “2nd Chance for a 1st Education” was substantially conceived and promoted by Guido Münzel. His extraordinary commitment as Managing Director shaped the foundation's profile for 11 years. In April 2025, he retired

and handed the reins to Andrea Nagel, who brings her extensive management experience in the NGO sector to a new chapter of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation. The board and the management office are grateful for the smooth transition and fresh start.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the members of the foundation board and all staff in the office and commissions for their dedication, and I look forward to working together in the coming year.

Dr. Mirjam Eglin



2 Focus Topic: Sustainability

2.1 Reshaping Sustainability in Turbulent Times

Why we need new narratives and experiences of prosperity, security and the future

1. Sustainability Against the Current

In the year 2026, sustainability is no longer an evident point of reference. The concept faces increasing political, cultural and emotional pressure. What was long regarded as a shared promise for the future is now experienced by many as a constraint – a moral imposition, a loss of freedom, a call to sacrifice. At the same time, ecological and social crises continue to escalate. This tension between growing urgency and dwindling support shapes the current discourse. Calling for sustainability today requires us to navigate a contested space of meaning. It is no longer merely about values, technologies or funding instruments. It concerns questions of prosperity and security, examining what is reasonable to demand and what inspires confidence – and ultimately how we can even imagine a future worth living within planetary boundaries.

2. The Past and Future of an Idea

For many years, sustainability was understood as a balanced interplay of ecological, economic and social goals. Models such as the Triple Bottom Line shaped politics, business and the foundation sector: the assumption was that an equal consideration of the environment, society and the economy would secure prosperity and stability in the long term. This approach enabled significant progress and remains widely established. At the same time, the concept of sustainability has become increasingly blurred and contested. Notably, this criticism also comes from within the discourse itself.

In 2018, John Elkington, the originator of the Triple Bottom Line, publicly called for a fundamental rethinking of the concept in a remarkable but relatively overlooked recall of the idea in the *Harvard Business Review*. His conclusion: the three dimensions cannot be reconciled at will. Taken seriously, they repeatedly come into conflict – and the model has not led to the hoped for societal transformation. In many cases, sustainability remained limited to efficiency gains and declarations of intent, without addressing the deeper systemic causes of ecological and social crises.

In addition, the underlying conditions have shifted fundamentally. Many sustainability concepts implicitly assume a relatively stable environment where balance can be maintained through reduced harm and better management. This assumption is hardly tenable in a world of accelerating climate change, irreversible losses, and global inequalities. In many regions, the focus has shifted from preservation to active regeneration – repairing as much as possible and dealing with profound uncertainty. The concept of “regeneration” is therefore gaining significance internationally. It is not a substitute for sustainability, but an emerging complementary framework. Regenerative approaches shift the focus from merely reducing negative effects towards creating positive impact: resilient ecosystems, healthy social relationships, and local and regional dynamics aligned with long-term viability.

This approach is the subject of intense debate in both practice and academia – not yet as a new consensus, but as a significant development. At the same time, the societal conflict over sustainability is itself part of the current situation. It does not map onto a simple pro-and-contra divide, but does play out between two distinct movements. Some criticise sustainability as inadequate, too slow and not ambitious enough given the urgency of the current crises. Others perceive it as overwhelming, politically burdensome or economically problematic – and seek to relativise or reject its demands. Both perspectives shape the discourse. What is striking, however, is that these debates often revolve around loss, restriction and scarcity, focusing on what must be limited or seems impossible. Here lies the central challenge for the future of the sustainability discourse.

3. The Complex Balance of Hope

If sustainability is primarily framed as a story of loss, it is hardly surprising that it provokes resistance. What matters, therefore, is how meaning is created, and how we talk about progress, failure and possibility. The necessity of sustainable action is now widely acknowledged. Yet the gap between knowledge and action remains wide. This gap

is less a deficit of information than a cultural, social and organisational problem. Sustainability remains abstract as long as it is not translated into experiences, routines and relationships, and organised in tangible terms. It is often perceived as an external requirement rather than a self-empowered practice.

There is a second dynamic: many sustainability narratives – often unintentionally – reproduce stories of scarcity. Things are not moving fast enough. We haven't gotten anywhere yet. Everything is getting worse. There is much truth in this assessment, particularly with regard to global emissions, loss of biodiversity and social inequality. Yet it often overlooks what has been achieved: the rapid expansion of renewable energy, technological breakthroughs, new ways of organising civil society, and adapted patterns of consumption and production. Progress is real, even if it remains inadequate and unevenly distributed.

What we need is balance. Critical thinking without hope tips into cynicism; hope without critical thinking tends to naivety. A productive form of hope acknowledges suffering, destruction and uncertainty – yet recognises scope for action. It draws on memory and experience, based on the knowledge that societies have undergone profound transformations in the past, and that the seemingly impossible has been achieved before. Memory creates continuity, and continuity is what makes the future possible. Transformation therefore requires not blind optimism, but a broader perspective that encompasses complexity, contradictions and opportunities. Hope and grief are not mutually exclusive – the cultural challenge of our time is to navigate their coexistence.

4. The Shift to Social Innovation

Sustainability – and increasingly, regeneration – are not determined solely by strategies or programmes, but in everyday life: how we live, work, share, produce and provide. They emerge where new forms of living and working together are explored, where relationships between people and institutions, and between society and the environment, are being reshaped. Regenerative perspectives make it clear that minimising damage is an insufficient course of action. It is about repairing and reconfiguring social, ecological and

economic relationships. This is where the concept of social innovation comes in. It takes ecological challenges seriously while recognising that at its core this is not purely an environmental problem, but a problem of social relationships. As a transformative approach, social innovation aims to change practices, institutions and infrastructures so that people maintain their agency even under conditions of uncertainty.

The example of security demonstrates the tangible impact of this framework. Traditional security strategies rely on control, protection and isolation, supported by technical systems, formal responsibilities and individual precautions. Social innovation, by contrast, shifts the focus to analysing how security is produced through sustainable relationships – through neighbourhoods, shared responsibility, collective infrastructure and mutual care. Projects in which people generate and distribute energy together, share spaces, build local supply networks or organise care collectively do not merely increase ecological efficiency. They also generate social resilience – an awareness that in times of crisis we are not alone but can count on others.

These approaches do not presume security as a state that can be established and guaranteed, but as an emergent property of living relationships. This is what fuels their regenerative potential. Social innovation therefore deliberately seeks to combine focused design, agency, facilitation and the establishment of empowering frameworks. It makes sustainability tangible by showing that limiting the exploitation of resources, shared responsibility and new models of economic activity need not amount to loss – they can create new forms of prosperity and security.

5. Art and Culture as Relational Spaces and Coping Practices

Social innovation's shifting approach to security – away from control and protection towards relationality, reciprocity and shared responsibility – is scarcely conceivable without art and culture. For when security is no longer founded on external guarantees but on social co-creation, it depends on new modalities of perception, storytelling and experience. Art and culture produce spaces that facilitate

these experiences of connectedness in excess of utilitarian cooperation. They show that security consists not only of infrastructure, but of trust, the ability to endure uncertainty together, and the experience of being part of a larger whole. In this sense, artistic practices function as social infrastructures: they create dialogue, strengthen relationships, and enhance the collective capacity for action.

At the same time, art and culture address a dimension of transformation that is often neglected in political and technical debates: coping with loss. Regeneration is not only about new beginnings, but about letting go. Landscapes, ways of life and past certainties are disappearing or changing irrevocably. When such losses cannot be named and shared, social divisions harden. Art and culture can play a special role here – as spaces for collective mourning and reassurance. Public rituals, performances or artistic interventions – for example, public requiems for retreating glaciers or destroyed ecosystems – create spaces for the open expression of vulnerability. Not to romanticise or delay the irrevocable, but to avoid repressing it. In these moments security is not based on control, but on relationality, anchored in the experience that a community can process change together.

Art and culture thus directly contribute to producing the relational forms of security that social innovations are exploring in many aspects of everyday life – in neighbourhoods, communal infrastructures or local supply networks. Artistic practices deepen these experiences by endowing them with language, images and meaning, thereby ensuring that regeneration is not merely socially organised, but culturally embedded.

6. Prosperity and Security in Transformation

The evolving idea of sustainability as mode of repair, regeneration and collective resilience will only be viable if it also generates new forms of prosperity and security – not as abstract goals, but manifested in everyday life. If people experience that shared responsibility, new economic opportunities and stronger relationships expand their agency, sustainability will no longer be told as a story of loss. However, we are currently experiencing a moment of political escalation. In the face of geopolitical tensions,

economic uncertainty and social polarisation, environmental and climate issues are taking a back seat. Security, freedom, energy supply and social stability appear more urgent. Sustainability is not seen as equally relevant everywhere. In many contexts, Sustainability has lost its political currency.

Yet environmental issues do not correspond to political trends. They are not one option among many, but structural conditions of our coexistence. Historically, environmental debates have often come and gone: waves of intense attention alternated with periods of neglect. As long as the underlying problems remain unresolved, they return – sometimes more virulently. Long-term trends put short-term fluctuations into perspective. The current situation also presents a strategic opportunity. Issues such as security, independent energy, health or resilience are not antithetical to sustainability – they touch upon its very core. If security is conceived holistically, it encompasses stable ecosystems, reliable supply systems, social cohesion and trustworthy institutions. If prosperity is measured not merely by rising levels of consumption but by the quality of social relationships, regeneration and sustainability take centre stage. Not everything that advances sustainability needs to be labelled as such. What matters is the general direction of travel: away from logics of exclusion, exploitation and short-term optimisation, toward finding value in reciprocity, cooperation and long-term viability.

Regeneration provides a framework for this rethinking of ecological, social and economic interconnectedness. It also suggests a new mandate for charitable foundations: in times of shifting political currents, they are in a position to ensure continuity, maintain an openness to social and cultural experimentation and build bridges between different social environments. By supporting projects that approach security, prosperity and sustainability as interdependent, they help to ensure that regeneration is experienced not as a niche idea, but as a viable prospect. Whether we continue to call this path “sustainability” or increasingly describe it as “regeneration” is less important than the overall intention. What matters is that we begin to rethink prosperity and security – not in opposition to change, but by building on it. As a shared task in a changing world from

which new forms of connectedness and resilience can emerge, to shape a future worth living.

Björn Müller

Dr Björn Müller works at the intersection of theory and practice in the field of sustainability transformation – as Senior Research Scientist at the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern and as Program Director of Future Urban Society, a publicly and privately funded initiative promoting climate-friendly innovation.



2.2 Education

Education for a Sustainable Society

Michelle Beyeler heads the education sector as a trustee of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation. In her article, she outlines the importance of educational programmes for a functioning society and explains the focus on sustainability in the education sector.

We are living in a time of profound uncertainties. Environmental crises, geopolitical conflicts, social divisions and rapid technological developments are impacting us simultaneously. As a result, the very foundations of our society – our shared values, rules and institutions – are coming under pressure. Aspects of our society that were long taken for granted and that provided security, trust and a long-term sense of direction must now be renegotiated.

When the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, with the goal of establishing a global framework, it emphasised the central importance of education. Not merely as a development goal in its own right – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is also understood as a key element in implementing the UN Agenda. At a time when the rules-based international order is shifting, simple answers are gaining traction and polarisation is on the rise, it seems to me that the importance of education has only increased. There is a growing need for knowledge and skills that help people cope with change and conflict. Education is a fundamental prerequisite for building a sustainable society. However, we should be careful not to approach education primarily as “training for sustainable behaviour”. Sustainability should not be framed something that “others” dictate. To encourage sustainable action, people must experience forms of agency – in their daily lives, in their surroundings, and in their specific circumstances. Understood as a form of empowerment, education can support societies to contribute and to shape change.

This is the approach fostered by our educational programmes in the Canton of Bern. We fund innovative and participatory ESD projects for children and young adults. Education for Sustainable Development does not mean providing ready-made solutions. Rather, it strengthens the ability to analyse complexity, weigh perspectives and take responsibility.

At the same time, it creates spaces where young people can experience that engaging with the world can make a difference.

We also provide impulses to increase social participation through the tête-à-tête programme, run in collaboration with the Cultural Department of the Canton of Bern. The programme supports long-term, participatory school projects, across all areas of cultural creation. The project *Abécéd'hä*, for example, gave high school pupils in Biel-Bienne the opportunity to creatively interpret contemporary youth slang in both French and Swiss German. The commitment that young participants brought to this challenging project was impressive. Collaboration across language barriers required intensive coordination and mutual openness. This process not only fostered important skills for the future, but also an appreciation for traditional craftsmanship.

Alongside these broader educational projects, the foundation also recognises the importance of enabling individuals to achieve educational qualifications. These are the key to building resources, contributing to stability and better opportunities in the labour market – and thus to creating a more stable future. The long-term programme “2nd Chance for a 1st Education” and individual educational grants facilitate this access to education. Achieving a first qualification as an adult requires a great deal of perseverance and endurance. “It’s like running a marathon”, explained one participant who received his diploma last summer; “At times you want to give up, but when you’ve made it, you feel incredibly proud.” And in some ways, this also seems to apply to the major challenges of our time – it takes perseverance and the belief that, as a society, we can grow by confronting these challenges. Sustainable development does not arise from directives or simple answers, but where people are empowered to cope with uncertainty and develop solutions together. Empowerment is not about control; it involves trusting the learning process and people’s ability to respond to change creatively.

We are aware that we, too, must keep learning. We regularly review our programmes for effectiveness and cost-efficiency and continue to develop them where appropriate. A foundation’s capacity to impact major global challenges

is modest. Yet at a local level, we can shape conditions that cultivate support for sustainable development in society. By fostering future-oriented skills in young people and facilitating access to education for adults, we contribute to a sustainable society – step by step and with an openness to new ideas.

Michelle Beyeler

Dr Michelle Beyeler is a Trustee of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation and heads the education sector. She also lectures in political science at the University of Zurich.



C from *Abécéd'hä?*, Zoé Mühlenstein und Anaé Jegerlehner, courtesy of the project
F from *Abécéd'hä?*, Martina Russo und Benjamin Thibaut, courtesy of the project

2.3 Culture

“Public funding should not interfere with artistic freedom”

Beate Engel in conversation with Katrin Grögel, Head of the Culture Department of the Canton of Basel-Stadt

Katrin Grögel was part of the working group “Ecology in the Cultural Sector” for the National Cultural Dialogue (NKD), a service that helps the federal government, cantons, cities and municipalities to coordinate their cultural activities and facilitate dialogue on cultural policy issues.¹ Their 2024 report published recommendations for incorporating sustainability in cultural policy and funding strategies. Beate Engel spoke to her about the urgency of this issue and how to improve the climate footprint of the cultural sector.

Katrin Grögel, the NKD working group to which you belonged developed proposals to reinforce climate protection in the cultural sector. What does climate have to do with culture? Cultural institutions should address the climate issue, because it impacts every aspect of society. Various Swiss cities have developed climate strategies in recent years, and the culture sector should not stay on the sidelines. One of the working group’s aims was to promote discussion on this topic and provide guidance by developing concrete proposals for municipalities, cities, cantons and the federal government. The younger urban generation in particular values a conscious approach to natural resources. Moreover, the connection between culture and nature is a major factor for tourism in Switzerland. The direct consequences of landslides and similar events are impossible to overlook. Even in the short term, failing to address climate change could have a negative impact on the reputation of cultural institutions.

There are many artistic projects that engage with ecological themes. But now the focus is on measuring the CO₂ emissions of museums and festivals. How can public funding strategies account for this?

An increasing number of cultural institutions are responding to the climate crisis in their programmes. However, public funding should not interfere with artistic freedom. We therefore focus more on operational impact. Here in Basel, large cultural infrastructures, such as important museums, are significantly integrated with urban development. As a result, there is effective leverage when it comes

to optimising energy balances. Theater Basel, for example, set up an internal sustainability commission and has optimised its technical systems with the support of the cantonal department for building management. This has helped offset the general rise in energy prices, which has a positive economic as well as ecological effect. In addition, the theatre has incorporated climate issues into its programme, for example with the play *Little Ice Age* for children and young adults about a past climate crisis, and panel discussions on the topic.²

How are climate recommendations implemented at smaller institutions and festivals?

We focus on proportionality and tend to offer incentives rather than imposing strict obligations on organisers, beyond legal requirements. At festivals, a lot can be achieved with simple measures, particularly in the areas of transport, waste management and food. The Basel Theatre Festival, for example, collaborates with other European festivals to coordinate performances by projects from outside Europe to reduce the carbon imprint of flights and other travel; groups from say Asia or Latin America are now increasingly given the opportunity to perform at multiple venues across Europe.³ Festivals participating in the international CooProg platform thus waive their exclusive rights in the service of ecological sustainability. This is a major and very sensible step. The food sector is also a huge issue; especially younger visitors expect vegetarian and vegan options.

The Impact of Training and Cooperation

How are individuals or institutions motivated to take measures to improve sustainability?

We experience the stakeholders in the cultural scene as very socially and environmentally responsible. They are genuinely committed to their mission of social as well as artistic impact. In Basel, we particularly encourage an exchange of knowledge and support cultural institutions with targeted coaching by experts. We are implementing this pilot project together with the canton’s climate office, as part of its Climate Action Plan. We do not impose explicit, strict requirements but offer consultations and run process workshops. In the area of social sustainability, we applied this approach very successfully in Basel. We invested heavily

in diversity development, for example, with input from experts in HR development. This has been very effective. Our biannual practice meetings on diversity development now regularly attract between 60 and 80 participants. We have succeeded in building a community and actively involving institutions in this discourse. Through our cooperation with the climate office, we hope to generate a similar impact to improve climate protection.

What about cooperation on a national level?

Our working group has issued recommendations intended as open-source tools; every city and every municipality can decide whether they wish to apply them. The resources available in Basel, Zurich or Geneva are often lacking in smaller towns and municipalities. The cultural departments of smaller municipalities and rural cantons are often understaffed. Depending on the context and the current social climate, the cultural sector’s engagement with broader social issues requires considered justification. Specifically, there is currently a federal initiative to provide online training courses for cultural departments and offices across Switzerland, to equip their staff to launch projects in this field and provide competent advice to the recipients of public funding.

Sustainability as a Prerequisite for Private Cultural Funding

How would you evaluate the level of ecological awareness in the Swiss foundation sector among other private cultural sponsors?

The working group “Ecology in the Cultural Sector” has engaged in close dialogue with Pro Helvetia and Migros Kulturprozent. Both organisations have long developed special programmes in the field of sustainability. In parallel with the NKD recommendations they funded the development of the freely available Sustainable Impact Tool.⁴ This enables cultural institutions to assess their own ecological footprint and level of social sustainability. Here in Basel, the Christoph Merian Foundation is also very active to support social cohesion, cultural diversity and the careful treatment of nature – often promoting projects where these aspects are deeply interrelated. In general, I observe that cultural projects have significantly better chances of

receiving support from foundations and corporate sponsors if they engage with sustainability. For the Basel Night of the Museums, for example, our sponsors – the Basler Kantonalbank and Novartis – require sustainability concepts. Ecological commitment is now quite clearly also a factor in corporate image. I welcome the fact that private foundations are rewarding commitment to sustainability. Change starts small; we want to learn together, step by step.

¹ <https://www.bak.admin.ch/bak/de/home/themen/nationaler-kulturdialog.html>

² chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://archiv.theater-basel.ch/sites/default/files/2024-01/Little%20Ice%20Age%202023_24.pdf

³ <https://www.theaterfestival.ch/de/2024/info>

⁴ <https://sustainable-impact-tool.info/en/>

2.3 From Big Pictures to Micro-Practices: On the Art Project *Expanded Fields / Erde/n*

Rachel Mader, member of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation's Culture Commission, reports on the commitment to holistic curatorial approaches in the art project *Expanded Fields – ERDE/N*, which links the principles of art and agriculture in a unique way.¹

Even a cursory overview of current developments in the art field suggests that it is characterised by a high level of awareness and remarkable commitment to issues of sustainability. Numerous exhibitions address the topic from a wide variety of perspectives, such as the connection between climate crisis and species extinction (*More than Human*, Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, 2026), the potential of artificial intelligence to rebalance the ecosystem (*Other Intelligences*, HEK, Basel, 2025), or the productive interplay between art and science (*Experimental Ecology*, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, 2024). Some institutions, such as the renowned TBA21 (Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid), have dedicated their entire 2026 programme to ecology, and even the art market has recognised the urgency of the subject and created formats to address it, such as the series of articles on “Art & Environment” launched by Art Basel. The language used implies that these projects situate themselves as focusing on a bigger picture, to which art brings a unique and independent perspective.

What can Art Contribute?

Visitors to such exhibitions quickly notice a gap between the programmatic theme and the individual artistic contributions. This is both obvious – since artworks always argue in specific terms – and problematic, because it raises expectations that no single artwork can ever fulfil. This question of what artistic practice can meaningfully contribute to these overarching debates is central to the project *ERDE/N*, which the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation supported in 2025. It was the first iteration of a multi-year exhibition cycle entitled *Expanded Fields*, which addresses the “potential of artistic-ecological inquiry and learning” with the aim of contributing to a “more just, resilient future.”² However, these grand ambitions – comparable to the examples mentioned above – underwent a reality check, so to speak, due to their unusual setting, far from the art world “white cube”. The venue was an organic farm in Samstagern

(Canton of Zurich) run by the farmer and artist Martin Blum. His project Froh Ussicht has been hosting exhibition and events every summer since 2008.

With a background in both art and agriculture, it was important to Blum to bring these usually disparate fields together, because – as he firmly believes – agriculture is playing an increasingly key role in global developments. What began with a few scattered works displayed in the meadows around his farm soon developed into larger, thematically curated “sculpture projects”, to which internationally renowned artists were invited in collaboration with institutions such as the Migros Museum in Zurich. The 2019 Plateaux Festival, under the motto “Werte schaffen” (creating values), explored the theme of sustainability from a decidedly consumption-critical perspective, but largely through traditional artistic formats such as performances, films and installations.

The new project *ERDE/N* broke new ground with respect to the artistic and conceptual potential of the site. The project's lead curators, Sabine Rusterholz Petko and Carole Kambli, developed a programme in collaboration with Martin Blum, with the intention of extending beyond the art context – conceptually as well as spatially. The idea was to address a set of interlinked questions holistically and by drawing on various fields of knowledge. The contributors therefore ranged from scientists and researchers to asylum seekers from Richterswil, who were involved in an inclusive garden project. The artistic formats that took place over the course of a month also reflected this diversity. In an oven sculpture by Nino Baumgartner, participants baked bread together. Nora Hauswirth and the Tera Kuna association, which she co-founded to initiate biodiverse forest gardens in the Brazilian Amazon, built an earth sculpture. This was accompanied not only by an introduction to clay construction but also by a conference-style “assembly of earth voices”, which explored encounters with the soil, exploitation, memories and the meanings of earth from multiple perspectives.

What does Photosynthesis Taste Like?

A sorbet workshop explored the playful question – posed by the artist Eva-Fiore Kovacovsky – what photosynthesis might taste like. There were drawing sessions and open-air



Séverin Guelpa, *Standing Rocks*, 2025, sandstone, rammed earth, concrete, iron, © Michel Gilgen

printing workshops, as well as a poetic walk around the farm with writer Judith Keller and an exhibition of artwork – which sounds almost conventional in comparison, but also had a few unexpected features: Michael Günzburger produced a series of prints and drawings using agricultural tools found on Blum's farm, which were arranged in a seemingly random manner on the crossbeam walls of the barn where the machinery is stored. In an empty stable, visitors encountered Caroline von Guntens' reclining cat, fitted with rubber tubes connected to a compressor. The clay-modelled animal gradually revealed its eeriness: not only did its paws resemble human hands, but as the air pumped through the tubes, it also seemed to breathe or even meow. Some of the works surprised the viewer simply due to the matter-of-fact way in which they intervened as sculptures in this rural, usually strictly agricultural, setting.

For example, Séverin Guelpa's stacked stone blocks, fitted with mirrors on some sides, looked like erratic boulders from the future.

Overall, this resulted in a very dense programme, with the challenge of measuring up to the claims staked at the outset. Such a constellation is never without its contradictions: one might reasonably ask, for instance, what knowledge from the Amazon has to do with organic farming in Switzerland; or indeed, what we can learn from these highly divergent takes on the earth, beyond the merely anecdotal. Articulating these connections is not entirely straightforward, especially when the benchmark is an abstract discourse. The three curators were aware of this problem and therefore focused much of the programme on micro-practices relevant to everyday life. While these do



Michael Günzburger, *Nimm es in die Hand, und denke wenig*, 2025, lithograph on MDF, with contributions by Simone Aughterlony, courtesy of the artist



Symposium *Assembly of Earth Voices*, 6.09.2025, Nora Hauswirth/TERA KUNO, courtesy of the artist

not answer the big questions, they address them through tangible actions. These stimulated conversations that sometimes engaged with the wider implications. For example, the sorbet-making workshop included reflections on nutrition and ecological cycles, thereby bringing together an everyday culinary practice with enjoyment and education. In this way, the *ERDE/N* project shares a concern common to many of the current exhibitions on themes of sustainability and ecology: namely, not only to take the looming scenarios seriously and address them proactively, but also to engage with them in a productive and hopeful manner.

Rachel Mader

Dr. Rachel Mader is a member of the Culture Commission of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation. She is an art historian and heads the Centre of Excellence for Art, Design & Public Spheres at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Design & Art.

¹ The Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation supported the project with a contribution of CHF 12 000.–

² Quoted on the project website: <https://frohuussicht.ch/expanded-fields/> <https-frohuussicht.ch-admin-entries-expandedfields-438-est2>

2.3 Sustainability as Fertile Ground for Creatives and Audiences – The Case of far° Festival

Anne-Christine Liske, director of the far° Festival of Performing Arts, talks to Beate Engel, culture programme manager at the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, about integrating sustainability into the festival programme.¹

How did the Extra Time Plus project come about?

The Extra Time platform has existed as part of the far° Festival since 2015. It offered young artists the opportunity to develop new works locally in Nyon. However, there are now several formats focused on supporting young creatives, such as Premio. We therefore decided to create a sustainable development opportunity for emerging artists who have already realised their first projects.

How can participants benefit from the programme?

We select artists from each of the three large Swiss language regions. Experts in the field support them during the development of a new production. To promote the distribution of their work, they perform at several festival: at Südpol Lucerne, here in Nyon and at LAC Lugano. Participants undertake residencies at all participating venues alongside their colleagues from the other language regions. They are exposed to new working methods, encouraged to exchange ideas and provide mutual support. Sometimes this even leads to small-scale collaborations. We have a strong network of programme managers and institutions, enabling us to facilitate further performances or presentations. For example, the Ticino-based artist Bianca Berger was able to present a production at the university festival on the EPFL campus in Lausanne, exploring the connection between dance choreography and mathematics.

You also collaborate with the Centre for Sustainability at the University of Lausanne. What are the results of this collaboration?

Together we developed *Récits du futur*, a residency programme for research, writing and creation. It is designed to support directors and writers to create new ideas and texts related to the issue of sustainability, in collaboration with the University Theatre La Grange and far° Festival Nyon. During the development of their projects, participants are advised by experts in the field of sustainability, and they receive a platform to show their work at the far° Festival.

In 2025, for example, the artist Elise Perrin collaborated with the psychologist and sustainability expert Sarah Koller. In the face of global environmental crises and armed conflicts, the aim of the programme is to renew and activate our ideas about reality and the future.

Can culture really save the world?

No, that is not our claim. Our audience is usually already invested in the ideas we explore and is also familiar with the goals of sustainability. It is more about setting an example, sometimes conveying new approaches, and illuminating synergies and connections.

Has your focus on sustainability also affected the internal processes of the festival team?

As a team, we also engaged intensively with the principles of sustainability as part of our organisational structure. We tried to apply the agricultural principle of permaculture to our work. The idea was to align our working methods and activities with care and ecological and social issues. This process, involving workshops in collaboration with researchers, was supported by the Migros Kulturprozent M2ACT programme.

As a visitor, how can I tell that the far° Festival is committed to sustainable principles?

Our festival programmes always include several events with a focus on sustainability. We promote diversity and remain open to new formats. We invite cultural practitioners of all body types and have also improved access to the festival for people with limited mobility, for example through “relaxation” performances. Sustainability is also evident beyond the artistic programme: for example, we provide access facilities such as wheelchair ramps, which we share with other cultural organisations. We offer vegan and vegetarian food and use recyclable tableware. Mobility is also important: there are combined tickets for the festival and public transport in Nyon.

Has the quality of your festival improved due to the focus on sustainability?

Our goal is to reach as large and diverse an audience as possible. The principles of sustainability provide the fertile ground on which to cultivate this vision.



Workshop as part of the project PERMA-KULTUR © Arya Dil, far° festival des arts vivants 2024

¹ The Foundation supported the project Extra Time Plus during the years 2023, 2024 and 2025 with a total of CHF 17 000.–

2.4 Victims of Conflict and Violence

On the Significance, Evaluation and Limits of Sustainability in Conflict Zones

What is the significance of sustainability in fragile and volatile contexts? How does the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation evaluate the sustainable impact of projects in crisis regions? Beatrice Winkler, member of the Foundation's Victims of Conflict and Violence Commission, explores these questions in her report.

Sustainable Impact as a Funding Priority

As part of its work, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation supports people affected by war and armed conflict. In the funding sector "Victims of Conflict and Violence", the focus is on the protection of civilians, as well as on psychosocial support, rehabilitation and counselling for victims of war and those affected by conflict. It funds projects in conflict zones as well as corresponding initiatives for refugees. The allocation of funds is guided by the principle that the projects alleviate the suffering of those affected and close gaps in existing provision. The funded projects are aimed at especially vulnerable groups, emphasise participation, foster resilience and open new prospects. For children and young adults, these projects significantly improve their long-term educational and developmental opportunities. The commission evaluates applications from selected project partners based on a clear set of criteria and guiding questions. One of these criteria concerns sustainability – that is, whether a project can generate momentum for longer-term developments.

Localisation as a Pathway to Sustainability

The projects funded by the foundation for the protection of the civilian population and psychosocial support in conflict regions are usually very well embedded locally, rely on participatory processes and work closely with local partners. In doing so, they transfer certain decision-making processes, resources and responsibilities to local actors and communities – for example, through community-based child protection committees – and strengthen capacities through targeted training. This is illustrated by a project supported by the foundation in Ndélé, in the Central African Republic over several years. The current project builds on earlier work and offers comprehensive child protection and psychosocial support for children and young people affected

by conflict, for example by providing safe meeting spaces, youth clubs and specific support services for unaccompanied minors.

In view of declining global funding and the associated withdrawal of NGOs, this project relies even more heavily than before on local partnerships and on raising awareness among local authorities, with the goal of embedding its measures sustainably within the community. Together with child protection committees, community representatives and youth groups, local structures are developed to allow them to continue activities independently. For example, local partners formulate action plans in community workshops to ensure the sustainability of existing outcomes and their funding. Decision-making processes are gradually transferred to community-based groups (e.g. parents' associations, youth groups) and local partners. These groups take on the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities, thereby assuming responsibility within their own contexts. This creates momentum for the continued implementation of measures and activities beyond the end of the project. Nevertheless, in a fragile context such as Ndélé, many challenges persist, and it remains to be seen whether sufficient resources to secure sustainability will be available after the project ends.

Challenges and Limitations

Although as this example shows, the localisation of aid can create a framework for longer-term development even under the most difficult conditions, long-term impacts in volatile contexts often remain fragile when security, stability, functioning institutions or financial resources are lacking. For humanitarian projects that primarily aim to alleviate acute emergencies and are implemented in conflict zones with unstable security situations, ongoing violence and displacement, sustainability therefore often reaches its limits. The debate on continuities between humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding – the so-called Triple Nexus approach – has gained further significance and urgency in times of growing and protracted crises and limited resources. At the same time, however, this discussion highlights the structural and strategic challenges faced by organisations.

In practice, coordinating short-term emergency aid, long-term development cooperation and peacebuilding measures proves difficult to implement, as it often fails due to differing objectives, funding models and institutional responsibilities. Well-funded, multi-year programmes remain the exception and project-oriented approaches with limited durations tend to dominate, making sustainable impact more difficult. In addition, there are conceptual and ethical tensions, for example about upholding humanitarian principles. Increasingly, however, questions of environmental sustainability are also coming into focus, whether in relation to the climate-related causes of crises or the environmental impacts of humanitarian interventions themselves. In response to these circumstances, the commission understands sustainability not as a rigid criterion, but rather as a flexible guiding principle that must always be assessed within the specific context of conflict regions.

Beatrice Winkler

Beatrice Winkler is part of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation's Victims of Conflict and Violence Commission and works as an independent expert in the field of humanitarian aid.



A play and dance session in one of War Child's child-friendly spaces, courtesy of War Child

2.5 Medical Research

Protecting and Improving the Health of Displaced and Vulnerable People in Conflict Regions

The field of health and migration highlights just how multifaceted sustainability really is. Health systems, social justice and the experiences of refugees are closely interlinked. Only by recognising these interdependencies can the health and well-being of displaced and vulnerable people be improved in the long term. Michaela Told, a member of the foundation's Medical Research Review Panel, examines the projects supported by the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation from the perspective of sustainability.

Sustainable health approaches systematically incorporate the needs of people seeking refuge into national and local health policy.¹ A comprehensive funding strategy for health initiatives builds on the resources and strengths of displaced persons and takes their social and cultural realities into account. This is the only way to ensure equitable access to healthcare.²

This approach centres on the individual, always embedded within social, societal and economic structures. The World Health Organisation emphasises the importance of the social, political, economic and environmental determinants of health, particularly regarding the sustainability of health interventions.³ Health is both a result of sustainable structures and a key prerequisite for social stability, resilience and long-term development. Conflicts and political violence not only weaken individual agency but also tear apart the social fabric and undermine the foundations of society.⁴

To support these efforts, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation launched the funding programme "Protection and Improvement for the Health of Refugees and Vulnerable People in Conflict Regions" in 2023, as part of the funding sector Medical Research. It funds projects that look beyond short-term interventions and aim to create sustainable impact in fragile contexts. In this context, medical research is framed as applied research: it generates evidence, highlights existing gaps in healthcare provision and develops context-specific solutions.

A first step towards greater sustainability is reducing barriers to accessing healthcare. In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) is improving access to sexual and reproductive health services for displaced people from Rakhine State in Myanmar. This involves strengthening the capacities of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS). Integration into national health plans and coordinating with other stakeholders ensures that the supported health centres remain sustainable beyond the project's duration.

Mental and psychosocial health is also part of sustainability, as it directly affects people's well-being.⁵ Swisspeace works with displaced Syrian women living with "ambiguous loss" (the loss of family members without closure). Participatory action research and qualitative interviews highlight the needs of those affected, their coping strategies and various forms of resilience. Building on this research, interventions are developed to improve access to psychosocial support and create safe spaces for exchange and mutual aid. These are locally embedded with the aim of ensuring long-term continuity.

However, sustainable impact is also achieved when health is approached systemically, to address structural inequalities. FAIRMED tackles the multiple burdens caused by war, displacement, and economic and food crises in Sri Lanka. The project combines access to healthcare, rehabilitation and mental health with gender equality and focuses on particularly vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, internally displaced persons and female-headed households. The integration with existing state structures strengthens public healthcare, which is more likely to extend project's impact beyond its duration. Equally important for sustainability is developing local knowledge and agency. In the Lake Chad region, the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute uses citizen science to develop measures against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in collaboration with affected women. Digital tools support the promotion of health within communities and decision-making by primary healthcare professionals. In this context, health knowledge becomes a resource for empowered action, self-determination and informed decision-making, all of which remain accessible even under conditions such as displacement, resource scarcity and fragile state structures.

Health is best understood as embedded in social, institutional and political contexts. The projects funded by the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation demonstrate that sustainability in the field of medical research requires long-term commitment, flexible research design, and building capacity and trust among the various stakeholders. They underscore the foundation's commitment to sustainably improving healthcare and resilience for refugees and other vulnerable people in conflict regions, thereby contributing to greater social justice. The lived realities of those affected are taken seriously, integrated into the process and improved step by step.

Michaela Told

Dr. Michaela Told is a member of Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation's Medical Research review panel. She is senior lecturer in Global Studies at the University of Geneva and director of HI5 Governance.

¹ WHO (2022) *Refugee and Migrant Health*. Factsheet. Website.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/refugee-and-migrant-health>

² Lebano, A., Hamed, S., Bradby, H. *et al.* (2020) Migrants' and refugees' health status and healthcare in Europe: a scoping literature review. *BMC Public Health*. 20: 1039.

³ WHO (2024) Social Determinants of Health. Factsheet. Website.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/social-determinants-of-health>

⁴ Sousa C.A. (2013) *Political violence, collective functioning and health: a review of the literature*. *Med Confl Surviv*. 29(3): 169 – 97.

⁵ See also the definition of health in the constitution of the World Health Organization, Preamble.

<https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>

2.6 Financial Indicators

Assets in CHF

2025	2024	2023
192 104 419	183 898 793	178 450 330

Investment Categories

Bonds	Shares	Property in Switzerland
18%	43%	37%

Investment Net Performance

2025	2024	2023
7.92%	7.25%	3.55%

Grants Awarded in CHF

2025	2024	2023
4 376 919	3 305 645	3 364 141

Operating Costs, Project Costs and Quality Management in CHF

2025	2024	2023
839 603	926 547	919 807

2.6 Sustainable Investment Strategy

Since 2016, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation's Board of Trustees has aligned the foundation's securities and property investments with the principle of sustainability in general and the foundation's purpose in particular.

1. General principles of investment

The securities and property investments are based on the principles of liquidity, profitability and security within the limits of the foundation's risk capacity. The goal is to maintain the purchasing power of the foundation's assets in the long term and to ensure that the returns generated allow the board to award the highest and most consistent grants possible, in line with the charitable purpose of the foundation. At the same time, securities and property investments should not contradict the purpose of the foundation and indeed promote it wherever possible.

2. Principles of Sustainable Investment

To ensure that investment is sustainable and aligned with the foundation's objectives, the foundation primarily relies on exclusion criteria and a best-in-class approach (i.e. selecting the most sustainable investments within each asset class or sector) for its securities. The foundation works with institutional investment funds that also exercise voting rights and engage in dialogue with the companies in which they invest (engagement). This is usually done via a specialised engagement pool. To ensure cost-efficient implementation, the foundation uses established standard products for its securities that take the defined sustainability criteria into account. Asset management mandates and other mandates are put out to tender in a structured selection process under competitive conditions. Sustainability criteria are contractually defined, and asset managers are required to report on their sustainability practices.

3. Exclusion Criteria

Within the asset management mandate, respectively the assets used therein, the following exclusion criteria currently apply:

Issue	Exclusion Criteria
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraction of fossil fuels (crude oil, coal, natural gas) and coal reserves • Operation of fossil fuel power plants (> 5% turnover) • Manufacture of aeroplanes and cars (conventional production without a comprehensive transition strategy to relying on alternative climate-friendly alternatives) • Airline and cruise companies
Declining biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-sustainable forestry (without FCS certification or similar) • Fishing without MCS label • Non-certified palm oil (RSPO < 50%)
Nuclear Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuclear power plants, nuclear reprocessing plants, and nuclear waste repositories • Development and manufacture of nuclear reactors • Uranium extraction
Genetic Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of genetically modified organisms • Therapeutic cloning
Additional Exclusion Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacture of weapons and munition • Manufacture of tobacco and smoking products • Manufacture of war technology • UN Global Compact violations • Exploitative child labour • Production of pornography • Production of alcohol (> 5% turnover) • Gambling (> 5% turnover) • Factory farming

Additional sustainability criteria apply to the remaining companies not excluded by the above criteria. As a result of the sustainability process, the STJF portfolio does not, for example, contain any shares or bonds of arms manufacturers, nor any US government bonds (due to the death penalty, among other reasons). Instead, it contains publicly listed shares of various companies that particularly promote sustainable development.

4. Properties

The STJF owns several properties, particularly in the Bern area. Some of these properties are older and have been comprehensively renovated. In addition to structural and economic criteria, ecological criteria are also taken into account during the renovation process. The foundation relies on renewable materials and sustainable heating and hot water systems.

2.6 Investing in Property as a Commitment to Sustainability

The Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation's Managing Director Andrea Nagel in conversation with Property Development Representative Michael Högger.

In addition to securities, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation also holds real estate investments. Foundations do this to protect their assets from inflation in the long term, to generate stable returns through rental income, and to minimise portfolio risk through diversification. Real estate is considered a stable asset, offers protection against stock market fluctuations, and provides tax advantages for property management. The Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation holds approximately 40% of its investments in various properties. Michael Högger, long-standing property development representative for the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, discusses how sustainability impacts the foundation's property portfolio.

Dear Michael, you represented the property development interests of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation for almost 15 years. What were your responsibilities in this role? My role was to professionally and neutrally represent the foundation as a client in construction projects, safeguarding its interests vis-à-vis architects, planners and contractors. I advised the foundation's property committee and oversaw most of the renovation projects as client representative. For projects in French-speaking Switzerland as well as a new-build, the foundation commissioned external consultants.

In terms of sustainability, what has changed in the foundation's approach to property development over the last 15 years?

When I joined in 2011, all properties owned by the foundation were in dire need of renovation and at the end of an investment cycle. This was partly because they had been acquired around the same time. The foundation therefore first had to establish and define its sustainability principles. The approach was welcomed from the outset, and the key question then was: Can we develop our properties sustainably? Or are they a better suited to other investors? As a result, the portfolio was consolidated. For example, a small stake in a shopping centre was sold because the foundation saw little scope for sustainable investment there. However, focusing on sustainability 15 years ago was not

exactly pioneering – there were already innovative concepts and implementations. So at the time, the foundation began to align itself with sustainability standards.

Which aspects of sustainability are generally applied in the property sector?

The concept of sustainability encompasses economic, environmental and social aspects. Economic sustainability: an investment cycle lasts approximately 25 years. The foundation focuses on a return over this period and aims to ensure profitability across 25 years. The question was not how to achieve the highest possible profit as quickly as possible, which already distinguishes it from other investors. Social sustainability emphasises long-term rental potential, a mix of tenants, and communal living in a property's shared spaces. Thus, during renovation projects, communal spaces are deliberately planned to be as spacious as possible. The foundation critically scrutinised the practice of maximising returns at the expense of tenants. Before every renovation project, it conducts hardship analyses and a budget was allocated for identified hardship cases. Ecological sustainability was promoted by the foundation across the entire portfolio. But it needs to be approached with care: solar panels on the roof are not suitable everywhere, and district heating is not always possible. I was elected as the foundation's representative because this holistic perspective was to be incorporated into the property portfolio.

Can you give us some more examples where the foundation has made sustainable decisions regarding its properties in recent years?

The renovation projects were always phased in such a way that tenants could remain if they wished. Eviction notices to vacate a property were never issued; at most, temporary internal relocations were required. For a Parkinson's patient, identified as a hardship case, we were able to arrange a stay of several weeks in a guest room at a care home. We have also made sustainable material choices; for example, mineral wool instead of polystyrene insulation, and wood-metal window frames instead of plastic. Always with a view to ensuring long-term durability. Solar panels were installed on the roofs of two properties and designed to promote biodiversity.



A solar panelled roof in Neyruz, Canton of Fribourg. The solar system promotes biodiversity and ecological sustainability.

What were the challenges?

The challenge lay in tackling the large backlog of maintenance work sustainably, in individual, well-planned stages. We succeeded in developing the portfolio over several years without rushing, whilst keeping costs and deadlines under control. This provided both the foundation and the tenants with a sense of security and continuity.

What are you particularly proud of?

I believe that, together with the appointed trustee for investments, Roland Kobel, and property expert Herbert Mössinger, we developed a clear understanding of what the foundation needed and were able to put this into practice. There was strategic clarity on every issue. This made it easy for me, as the foundation's representative, to safeguard its interests.

In your role as representative, you were a non-voting member of the foundation's property commission. How did the collaboration with the foundation's governing bodies work? What changed over the years?

Over the years, I have experienced four different cultures. I joined the foundation when the model involving an executive management team and individual expert mandates was reaching its limits. A property committee was established,

and my role was created as part of that. There was a backlog of necessary renovation work on the properties. For over ten years, we were absorbed with consolidating the portfolio and addressing this backlog. The long-standing managing director, Guido Münzel, who joined the foundation in 2014, ensured the standardisation of processes. Roland Kobel, who joined the board in 2016, helped to consolidate the strategic focus on sustainability. In 2021, an internal division was implemented between the investment and property portfolios. Looking back, I can say that the foundation has continuously grown stronger and improved.

Dear Michael, we wish you every success in your future career and personal life and thank you for your exceptional and unfailing commitment in the service of the foundation's property portfolio.

3 Photo Series

Transient Traveller

Monica Ursina Jäger

The work of artist Monica Ursina Jäger is characterised by a multidisciplinary approach to natural phenomena and ecological themes. Her practice explores the interconnectedness of post-natural landscapes, the agency of organic and inorganic matter, and the complexity of time. Her two-channel video installation *Transient Traveller* was installed in an old hay barn at the Safiental Biennale in 2024. It traces the migratory movements of an ancient alpine spruce forest on the Prugel Pass and zooms in on the life cycles of a single tree, encompassing the transformation processes from wood to earth, charcoal and ink. The work asks how “natural” nature – specifically the so called “untouched primeval forest” – actually is, and what role humans have played in shaping it. The soundscape composed by Michael Bucher accompanies the footage with fictional narratives about the forest. In this publication, the poetic track is reinterpreted as a graphic design.

In the words of the artist: “The ecological crisis has multiple origins and causes. One important, yet often neglected, factor is time. Time flows from every material; if time is unmoored, slow biological and geological processes are suddenly accelerated, and the climate is tipped off balance. It is important to remember that humans are not just invaders and exploiters of forests. Careful management can benefit a forest and increase its biodiversity. It appears, however, that this enrichment only works if the rhythm, the temporality of trees and their life cycles are respected.

In times of increasing uncertainty – times of war, dwindling land and mass extinction – maintaining hope for the planet is not only necessary but vital for survival. The forest habitat must be both protected and managed – a seemingly contradictory task that requires us to transform our understanding of time to include many divergent temporalities. Trees are not only a natural habitat for a multitude of species, but also the foundation of our human civilisations’ quest for shelter. Trees are an indispensable aspect of our natural environment and our survival.”



Monica Ursina Jäger, born 1974, lives in Zurich and London. She researches and teaches at the Institute for Environment and Natural Resources at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), where she seeks new forms of dialogue between artistic practice and scientific research to address questions of ecology, climate change, and planetary regeneration.



ground and time,



known fossil

forest.

My blink of an eye is your morning.

Your time is mine



stretched to aeons.



Ice

Oak, with hazel,

then birch.



Later silver fir,

Finally

spruce.



Alder my faithful companion.

Cracks and lines,

like floating islands



an archipelago

of rind,

peel,

and crust.

Take my skin,

my eyes,

my weather,



underground.

Trees

No place for snow to rest on.

like



columns,

Gnarled, crooked, weathered.

Your feet in the coldest hollows,



Spruce

and

downy birch.

You move.



I stand.

We grow roots and become entrenched in soil.

A strike

of lightning,

everything burnt to the ground.



The forests of the past

haunt

our cities.

The singing spring,



a girl's voice



once silenced,

turned into a source.



Her sorrow

left with the forest spirit

Ancestors and ghosts,

the left behind

and the lost ones

in the song of your branches,

in the sugars of your roots,



In the resin,

sealed

and healed.

The fog fiddler,



a boggart

and a wretch.

A parade of fools swept away by charcoal streams.



The forest becomes quiet, home again.

4 News from the Support Sectors

4.1 Culture

June Johnson Newcomer Prize

Since 2013, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation has awarded the June Johnson Dance Prize every 2 years in partnership with the Federal Office of Culture. The prize is dedicated to the memory of June Johnson, the wife of Stanley Thomas Johnson. Since 2021, the prize of CHF 25 000 has been awarded annually and is now no longer restricted to dance but open to all performing arts. The aim of the June Johnson Newcomer Prize is to promote outstanding achievements by dance and theatre professionals at the beginning of their careers. The financial support contributes to the realisation of planned projects. In addition, public recognition raises the profile of the prize winners and facilitates their professional networking. The laureates benefit from the fact that the Newcomer Prize is awarded in the context of the Federal Office of Culture's Swiss Performance Art Awards.

Laureate 2025

Annina Mosimann, born in Bern in 1991, is a puppeteer, performer and visual artist. She studied visual arts at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts and puppetry at the University of Music and Performing Arts Stuttgart. She works as a freelance artist both on her own productions and as a contributor to theatre productions in Switzerland, Germany and France. She has realised joint projects with the Magdeburg Puppet Theatre, Elise Vigneron, Julika Mayer, Nicole Mossoux and Renaud Herbin. Annina Mosimann's creations focus on themes of the unconscious and interweave performing and visual arts with experimental music. In her first solo piece, *Masa Mater* (2020), she explored images of the maternal body drawn from society, myths and dreams. This theme was further developed in her following piece, *Mycelium* (2021). Her current, third work, *Bestiarium* (2024), is a piece of object-theatre for young audiences and adults, about the space of a house as an organism and a place of coexistence. *Bestiarium* won the PREMIO Young Talent Award in 2024 and was performed at the far° festival of performing arts in Nyon, among other venues. In November 2025, the piece was performed at venues including the Theater Casino Zug. In October 2025, the June Johnson Newcomer Prize was awarded to Annina Mosimann as part of the Swiss Performance Art Awards.

From the laudatory speech by Beate Engel, Programme Manager Culture:

What does it feel like when the body expands, when its boundaries dissolve? Audiences can experience this for themselves when Bernese artist Annina Mosimann takes the stage, seated at a simple wooden table, interacting with her materials. Is it theatre, sound art or puppetry? Whatever we call it, the moments when lumps of dough transform into talking breasts and new beings can only be described as magical. In the piece Bestiarium, a dwelling grows from a transport crate, inhabited by curious objects as well as human and animal inhabitants. Whether children or adults: we all want to move in immediately.



Award ceremony for Annina Mosimann at Theater Equilibre in Fribourg in October 2025, © Adrian Moser

4.1 Partnership Projects

For our Partnership Projects we work closely with institutions and groups from across all fields of culture that demonstrate special potential. We contribute to the artistic and/or operational development of the beneficiaries in areas such as production, booking, management, accounting, public relations or infrastructure.

Dance: TANZHAUS Bern 2026–2028

TANZHAUS is a valuable initiative by professional dance practitioners in Bern and has developed into an important venue for the local dance scene. The three-year partnership offers TANZHAUS the opportunity to further develop its operations and artistic programme and to build up its profile.



TANZHAUS Bern, *Study on 3 (sur)natural bodies* by Blandine Pinon, © Jonas Bühler

4.1 Focus on Projects in the UK

In February 2025, the Culture Commission undertook a research trip to London to identify organisations with a focus on participation eligible for future funding. The foundation selected the following organisations, to be supported largely in the form of multi-year grants:

Arcola Theatre

The theatre is known for its politically engaged programme. It functions not only as a theatre institution, but also as a neighbourhood meeting place for a diverse audience in Hackney. The STJF is supporting the new production *Ifigenia*.

Protein Dance

The dance group runs workshops at the Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants. These include a stage performance and various events. The two-year project *Real Life Real Dance* is holistically conceived and professionally organised.

Iniva

The three-year project *Living Legacies* stands for inclusion, creative exchange and social cohesion. Iniva's existing visual arts archive is based on the legacy of immigrant artists from the Global Majority and their work in the United Kingdom. The archive is brought to life through a programme



Iniva, conversation in the library, 2025, courtesy of Iniva

of exhibitions, publications and digital resources designed to broaden access to multicultural creativity and knowledge. Living Legacies focuses on intergenerational collaboration between young people and older adults.

Peckham Platform

The vision of the arts organisation Peckham Platform is to support disadvantaged communities in Peckham through creative activities. Given the socially precarious situation in the London neighbourhood of Peckham, this local work is very important. In 2027, Peckham Platform will open a new location for its socially engaged, community-focused programme. As part of the project *Relaunch: Creating Futures*, an artwork for the new Peckham venue is being developed in collaboration with local residents and schools.

Warriors Rise

The “Warriors Rise” tours support young British jazz musicians at a crucial stage in their development, as they make their way into the professional music industry. This includes tour support as well as coaching, marketing and PR advice.

Spitalfields

The Spitalfields Music Festival brings classical music to a wide audience at unusual venues across East London. The artistic programme is of a high standard, and complemented by impressive outreach and community engagement.

Good Chance

Good Chance Theatre is a London-based theatre collective that has been prominently active since the 2015 refugee crisis, when it ran participatory theatre projects in the refugee camps in Calais. Their “Hope Shows” bring refugees and asylum seekers together and give a voice to people from diverse backgrounds, offering them a platform for their creative talents and experiences. In safe-space workshops, professional theatre practitioners and community workers develop public performances with the participants. The focus is on mutual empowerment and the expression of hope.

4.2 Medical Research

Launching the new funding programme “Research on Migration and Health”

In December 2025 the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation and the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS) launched the CHF 2.7 million funding programme “Research on Migration and Health”, to strengthen research in migrant medicine and migrant health in Switzerland.

The funding program “Research on Migration and Health” supports projects that explore innovative ways to deliver high-quality healthcare to migrants and migrant communities in Switzerland, particularly to those who are vulnerable and underserved. In the summer of 2026, the foundation board will decide, based on the recommendation of the SAMW, which projects will be funded for a period of up to three years.

4.3 Victims of Conflict and Violence

There is considerable financial uncertainty in the field of international cooperation due to funding cuts by national and international donors, particularly since 2025. At a retreat in June 2025, the Foundation Board reviewed the situation and decided to approve a supplementary grant. The following organisations and projects, with project durations of between six and twelve months, were awarded funding:

War Child, London

Resilience in the Face of Aid Cuts: Expanding Support for Children in the Central African Republic

Project contribution: CHF 99 662.-
www.warchild.org.uk

Street Child, London

Lisanga: Educating and Protecting Children in Conflict in the Maï-Ndombe and Rural Kinshasa Provinces in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Project contribution: CHF 100 000.-
www.street-child.org

Médecins du Monde Switzerland, Neuchâtel

Emergency Health Response for Host Communities, Displaced Persons, and Returnees Affected by Conflict in Markounda Health District, Ouham Region – Central African Republic

Project contribution: CHF 100 000.-
www.medecinsdumonde.ch

Fondation Terre des Hommes, Lausanne

Enhanced community-based child protection mechanisms for earthquake-affected children in Nangarhar and Kunar (Afghanistan)

Project contribution: CHF 100 000.-
www.tdh.org

Under its regular funding programme, the foundation supports organisations in Switzerland and the UK that assist victims of conflict and violence. It actively seeks out partners that align with its funding strategy and approaches them directly to plan and implement suitable projects. Following the funding of national projects in 2024, in 2025 organisations were invited to submit proposals for international projects with beneficiaries from Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and the Central African Republic.

The following projects were selected:

Caritas Switzerland, Lucerne
Project title: Protection for children and women affected by the conflict in Sudan (Sudan)

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan, large numbers of people have been fleeing to South Sudan, including a particularly high number of vulnerable women and children. Many have experienced violence and exploitation. The project provides protection and support services such as counselling centres, psychosocial support, family reunification, child-friendly spaces and in-kind assistance to meet basic needs. The aim is to strengthen the psychosocial well-being of women and children in the Gorom refugee camp and in Juba, and to inform women and girls about their rights and the support available to them.

Project duration: 01/01/2025 – 30/06/2026
 Project contribution: CHF 300 000.–
www.caritas.ch

HEKS, Zurich
Project title: Women, Protection and Rights (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

The project empowers women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence in two refugee camps near Goma. It promotes prevention, risk reduction, protection measures and the rights of those affected, in line with the national strategy and legislation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Based on a gender-sensitive conflict analysis, the project supports local communities and women's networks, improves access to psychosocial care and holistic support for survivors, and promotes coordinated partnerships with local stakeholders.

Project duration: 01/01/2025 – 31/12/2027
 Project contribution: CHF 300 000.–
www.heks.ch



Five-year-old Malik on his way through the refugee camp to the Caritas children's centre, where he meets his friends and can forget his harsh surroundings for a while. © Caritas Schweiz

Médecins du Monde Switzerland, Neuchâtel
Project title: Emergency response to the health needs of the host, displaced and returnee populations affected by the conflicts in the Health Zones of Nyemba, Kalemie, Nyunzu and Kongolo in Tanganyika Province (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Médecins du Monde has been implementing emergency aid projects in Tanganyika, Democratic Republic of Congo, since 2019, where conflicts and militias are causing mass displacement. The project addresses the health needs of displaced persons, returnees and host communities, establishes community-based care centres for common illnesses and provides psychosocial support for malnourished children and survivors of gender-based violence. It strengthens community resilience through capacity building and civil society participation.

Project duration: 01/01/2025 – 30/06/2026
 Project contribution: CHF 300 000.–
www.medecinsdumonde.ch



Fondation Terre des Hommes: girls taking part in school activities in a child-friendly space, January 2026, courtesy of Terre des Hommes

Fondation Terre des Hommes, Lausanne
Project title: Protection of highly vulnerable children in Nangarhar Province from the risks of displacement, with a focus on Afghan returnees from Pakistan (Afghanistan)

For the duration of the project, Terre des Hommes will operate 168 child-friendly spaces in Nangarhar Province, offering protection, psychosocial support and education to children, vulnerable women and young people. Beneficiaries will also have access to health and nutrition services at nearby health centres. The expansion of these spaces particularly benefits Afghan returnees from Pakistan and internally displaced persons living in conflict-affected areas.

Project duration: 02/01/2025 – 31/12/2026
 Project contribution: CHF 200 000.–
www.tdh.org



Fondation Terre des Hommes: outdoor activities a child-friendly space, January 2026, courtesy of Terre des Hommes

4.4 Bildung

TierART – Promoting Species Knowledge through Art and Creativity

In 2025, artist Ralf Assmann launched the project “TierART” for the first few school classes in the Bern region, demonstrating extraordinary initiative and commitment to promoting species knowledge through creative approaches and methods. Thanks to the support of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, the project reached and benefited many children and young people. They learned about 21 native animal species in various natural habitats and landscapes (forest, floodplains, and cultivated land). They created their own animal masks, which they modelled, painted and finally brought to life through play. They were able to empathise with the animal of their choice in a way appropriate to that species.

Such long-term projects encourage intensive, interdisciplinary study, foster class cohesion and specifically promote sustainable learning experiences. The hands-on and craft-based tasks in particular were highly beneficial for the children and encouraged active learning involving all the senses. In addition, a collaborative project was initiated with the Pro Natura Centre in Eichholz. Over a period of ten days, school classes from the city of Bern got to know the animals of the Aare floodplain. Nine classes from the Bern area took part. Furthermore, TierART had a stall at the Bern Education Days in Biel in the spring and at Expo Bern in the autumn to raise awareness of the programme, particularly among teachers. Through creative environmental education, TierART continues to provide strong impetus for a deeper understanding of our native wildlife, thereby promoting awareness of nature conservation among young people.



TierART, Bat, © Helene Wieland, 2025

4.4 Experiencing the Diversity of Water

Bodies of water and their surroundings are among the most diverse and species-rich ecosystems in Switzerland. They are not only habitats for a wide variety of plants and animals, but also provide essential supplies for us humans, such as clean drinking water. Sustainable management of our water resources is therefore one of the key challenges of our time. Fundamental to this is a nuanced understanding of their functions, interconnections and their unique beauty.

This is precisely where Aqua Viva’s work in the field of creating educational experiences comes in. For 20 years, Aqua Viva has enabled direct, experience-based access to water for children and young people through the project “Wasser macht Schule”. During “water experience” days for school classes, holiday club events and excursions, children and young people discover and explore the aquatic world of their local streams. They get to observe the diversity of these water systems and their inhabitants, understand complex interrelationships and find out how they can contribute to their sustainable management. Aqua Viva promotes the citizen science approach, where non-specialists actively participate in academic research projects. During the “water experience” days, children and young adults had the opportunity to collect amphipod samples for the research project amphipod.CH. By doing so, they make a tangible contribution to research, and it encourages their sense of self-efficacy. To sustainably promote outdoor learning at water sites and ensure equal access to professional environmental education across Switzerland, Aqua Viva supports teachers by providing training and free teaching materials.

In 2025, Aqua organised 173 water-based activities across Switzerland, guiding around 3 000 children, young people and adults. In the canton of Bern, six events took place with a total of 118 participants. Pupils from primary school through to high school searched for aquatic organisms such as mayfly larvae and learned about their ways of life. They assessed water quality, identified potential sources of pollution and reflected on how they could protect their local stream. Two classes visited the red springs in the Diemtigtal Nature Park, experiencing these sensitive habitats up close. Another class set sail on Lake Thun a solar-powered boat, to explore the lake and learn about solar energy.



Aqua Viva, 2025, courtesy of the project

4.4 SpielPolitik! – Discovering Democracy Through Play

Young people who don't just study politics in theory, but experience it first-hand at the Federal Parliament? That is exactly what SpielPolitik! makes possible. This national simulation game is aimed at secondary school classes (Years 8 and 9) and offers young people a unique opportunity to learn about legislative processes and to debate their own concerns with peers. Each session brings together four classes from two different language regions. In 2025, 371 pupils from 19 classes took part. Every year, classes from the canton of Bern also take part in SpielPolitik!. In 2025, these were two classes from Oberdiessbach; in spring 2026, one class from Krattigen and one from Saint-Imier. At the heart of SpielPolitik! is the launch of a popular initiative proposed by the class. The pupils take on the roles of members of parliament, work in committees



SpielPolitik!, 2025, courtesy of the project

and parliamentary groups, negotiate, debate and make decisions. The highlight of the project is the final debate of initiatives by several classes in the National Council chamber of the Swiss Parliament – a formative experience that makes politics tangible and emotionally engaging. In the process, skills such as seeing things from different perspectives, critical thinking, helping to shape social processes and reflecting on different values. Democracy is experienced as a collective process of negotiation. Participants learn that political decisions require time, compromise and responsibility – an important insight for a sustainable democratic society.

Review of the National Council debate of SpielPolitik! in May 2025:

Five initiatives were debated, addressing issues in the areas of public transport, gender equality, and limiting plastic consumption. The initiative “Ban on single-use plastic bags” by the secondary school class from Oberdiessbach BE received the most votes. Their proposal was therefore put to a vote in the SpielPolitik! online referendum.

SpielPolitik! is a programme by the association “Schulen nach Bern” and is organised by the FHNW Zentrum Politische Bildung und Geschichtsdidaktik at the Centre for Democracy in Aarau. The project is also supported by partners, including Dachverband Lehrerinnen und Lehrer Schweiz, Syndicat des Enseignants Romands, the Swiss Parliamentary Services and the Polit-Forum Bern.

For more information about SpielPolitik! and the association Schulen nach Bern see:
www.spielpolitik.ch



SpielPolitik! Jahresüberblick 2025



SpielPolitik!, 2025, courtesy of the project

4.4 Competition tête-à-tête – Cultural Projects for Schools

Every two years, the Cultural Department of the Canton of Bern, in collaboration with the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, tenders the tête-à-tête competition for participatory, collaborative projects between schools and culture. The competition promotes long-term school-based projects by practitioners in all fields of art or cultural heritage. The projects should encourage cultural participation in meaningful ways.

The expert jury of the tête-à-tête competition – which was announced for the eighth time in autumn 2024 – has recommended seven projects by cultural practitioners and schools for initial implementation in the 2025/26 school year at various schools in the Canton of Bern. Four of these will be implemented in German, two in French and one bilingually.

Spielart Schulen Kehrsatz

The project promotes the artistic and cultural participation of young people in schools in Bern. Pupils from Year 9 onwards are in a transitional phase between finishing school and entering new stages of life. In this project, they create costumes together with costume designer and are photographed professionally in a studio they set up themselves. The costumes and the resulting portraits explore themes such as gender and identity, drawing on references ranging from pop culture to contemporary art. Before and after the photography workshop they take part in a writing workshop to give the images deeper meaning. Participants reflect on their self-image and how others perceive them, as well as the story they wish to tell about themselves. Through photography and writing, they explore their identity and expand their self-awareness. The aim is to reshape social narratives, overcome stereotypes and make cultural diversity more visible.



Spielart Schulen Kehrsatz, staging a new self, 2025, courtesy of the project



GIRLS CITY, 2025, courtesy of the project

GIRLS CITY – How Teenagers Experience the City

Drumrum Raumschule – Baukultur for children and young adults

GIRLS CITY Bern invites teenagers aged between 10 and 16 to actively explore the built environment of the city of Bern or other locations in the canton. The focus is on photography, construction models, sharing ideas and discussions with experts in architecture and the cultures of built environment. The project is open to all teenagers, particularly girls, who are interested in urban design and architecture. In three creative modules, they gather impressions, develop ideas and make Bern a little better. All contributions will be showcased in a major exhibition at Open House Bern in 2026 – including a panel discussion with experts, participants and the public.

Stories of Migration. From the Past to the Present ArchaeoConcept

Ecole primaire de la Poste, Bienne

Swiss society is a migration society. Yet there are few narratives that offer a long-term perspective on this topic. Children rarely have the opportunity to express their personal viewpoints. The project highlights the significance of past and present migration for Switzerland, both for and with children living in Switzerland. Their personal stories

are linked to an archaeological approach. Participatory workshops in the classroom explore, on the one hand, past population movements that have contributed to the social and cultural development of Switzerland, and on the other hand, the children's own journeys of mobility in various dimensions – stories that are fundamental to modern-day Switzerland. These “(his)stories at children's level” are shared publicly through the joint production of a bilingual podcast (German and French).

Seeing With Your Ears, Listening With Your Eyes Association Fluorescence

Syndicat Scolaire CoViCou

The project takes children on an artistic journey that combines music, visual art and movement. Over the course of a school year, it invites them to explore the relationships between music, painting, movement and emotions in three main stages: discovery, immersion and exchange. The children meet a musician and a dancer during an interactive performance and get creative themselves alongside the artists. During an interactive museum visit, the children interpret the exhibition's artworks musically using their voices and small instruments. In a concluding exhibition, they present their work alongside the music that inspired them and their own musical creations. At the opening, they guide their parents through their exhibition.

Creative Circle Dancing in the Emmental
Regula Mahler, Martin Wanzenried
Schule Wynigen Seeberg

In a very rural setting, children are introduced to the Emmental's dance traditions as well as folk dances and their music from other parts of the world. The project encourages an engagement with local culture while also exploring other traditions. The dance facilitators work with the pupils in a creative process to develop their own dances and choreographies. The participants' parents and grandparents, as well as other members of the local community, also become involved. The project concludes with a performance in which the pupils present their choreographies and perform a specially created dance with their families.

Abécéd'hä?
Irène Schoch, Officina helvetica
Gymnase de Bienne et du Jura Bernois,
Gymnasium Biel-Seeland

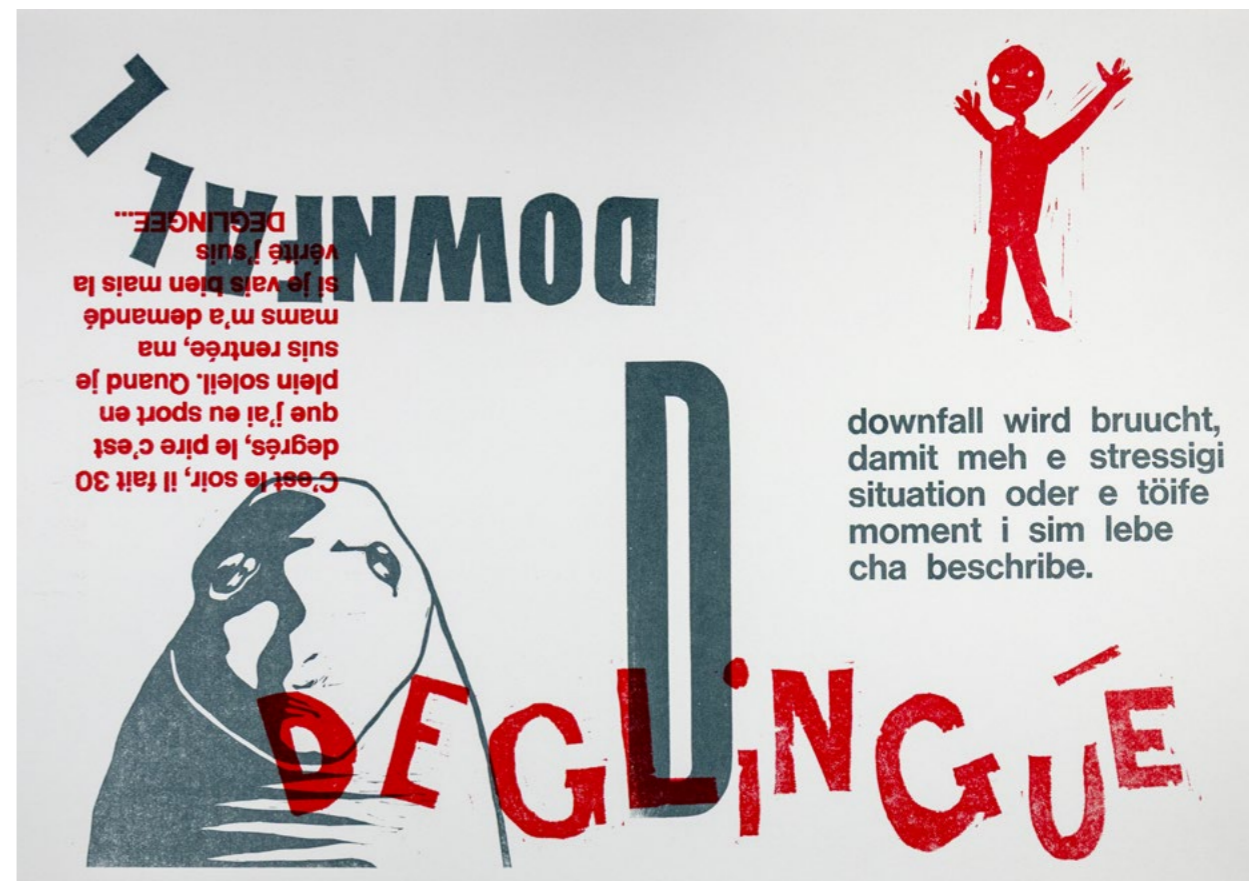
Abécéd'hä? is a bilingual project involving pupils from both secondary schools in Biel – the Gymnase de Bienne et du Jura Bernois and the Gymnasium Biel-Seeland. Working in pairs of French and German speakers, the pupils create a primer featuring words from their own youth slang. For each letter, two words are selected – one in French, the other in German – forming unexpected pairs that reveal shared realities and experiences. These word pairs are then typeset in woodblock and accompanied illustrated to link their meanings visually. Once the layout is complete, it is printed by hand on proofing presses. The workshop at the Officina Helvetica studio combines language, form and gesture to make this everyday language tangible.



Creative circle dancing in Emmental, 2025, courtesy of the project



Abécéd'hä?, print making, 2025, courtesy of the project



D from Abécéd'hä?, 2025, Ruy Kissling and Anaé Jegerlehner, courtesy of the project

PHOTO#TRUB

Anna Katharina Scheidegger

SchulkreisTrubschachen, Schulhaus Trub

Over the course of a school year, artist and photographer Anna Katharina Scheidegger works with the teaching staff and pupils of the Trubschachen School District. Together, they develop and organise the FOTO#TRUB photography exhibition. For a limited period in early summer, they open the art exhibition to the public, lead workshops and organise events on the theme of photography. Project participants are introduced to the techniques and history of photography through age-appropriate modules and are involved in the planning and implementation of the exhibition. The show features work by the project participants, but not exclusively – the aim is to stage a professional exhibition and to raise the pupils' awareness of the exhibited works through their own engagement with the medium of photography.



FOTO#TRUB, 2025, courtesy of the project

Projects available to schools from previous years:

Storytelling

This storytelling project introduces young people to the art of free storytelling and opens the door to the world of fairy tales. Classes listen to fairy tales, legends and stories from different cultures and search for a traditional tale from their country of origin. The young storytellers decide on their target audience and what language they wish to use. Storytelling is practised intensively: What do I do with my hands? How does my voice sound? Where do I look? How does the story become *my* story? What does my story mean? The project concludes with a public performance, although the main thing is the journey to get there. Participants learn new things about their own culture or even discover more about their own family. Through storytelling, they get to know themselves, becoming more aware of their body, expression and voice. Like a fairytale, the project builds bridges between cultures, languages, generations and people – between inner and outer worlds, past and present.

GLOBULO

Petra Hofmann

GLOBULO is a project for pupils and their teachers. It allows them to express their wishes for the future on this planet and discover how they themselves can contribute to it. GLOBULO motivates and inspires them through experience and creative participation in shaping the world. It supports the skills outlined in the Swiss Curriculum 21 through interactivity, fun and experiential learning. Through phases of exploration, transfer, and implementation, students develop their individual strengths and interests. GLOBULO is based on the concept of cultural education for sustainable development. The project can take many forms – a play, a musical, performance, a circus, a film or something entirely different, depending on the needs and possibilities. GLOBULO can also be implemented as a comprehensive school development project, involving teachers and other school stakeholders, with additional support from [éducation21](https://www.education21.ch).



More information on art education
in schools in the Canton of Bern:
[be.ch/kulturvermittlung](https://www.be.ch/kulturvermittlung)

4.5 Project “2nd Chance for a 1st Education” The 5th Round of the Project

A total of 54 people were supported at various career counselling centres (BIZ) across the Canton of Bern. A total of 143 consultations took place, averaging three appointments per person. Some candidates also underwent assessment tests. The BIZ centres contributed a total of 365 working hours to this fifth round of the programme.

In June 2025, 26 people were selected for the fifth cohort, of whom 16 are funded by the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation and 10 by a regional social services agency.

The project is sponsored by the Department of Health, Social Affairs and Integration (GSI) and the Department of Education and Culture (BKD) of the Canton of Bern.

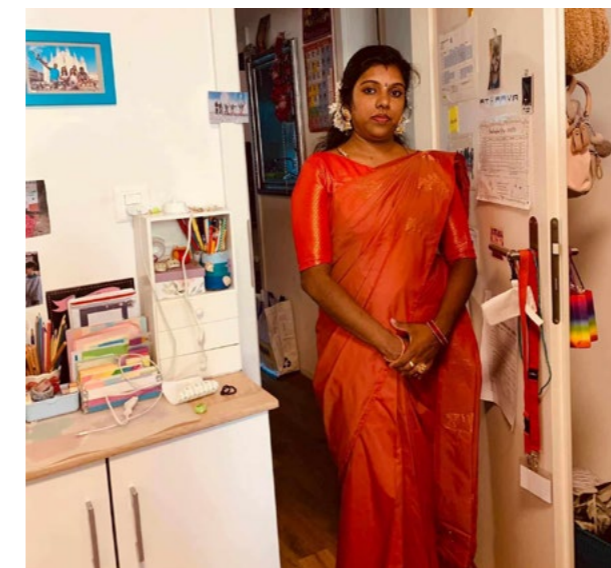
4.5 Project “2nd Chance for a 1st Education” My Big Goal

Blogpost by participant Karthiga Thiruselvam

In the summer of 2023, I completed my first qualification as a certified healthcare assistant as part of the project “2nd Chance for a 1st Education”. Yes, it was tough, but my average mark was always above a 5. As this meant I could go on to obtain a Higher Federal Diploma (HF) in nursing without taking entrance exams, I chose to continue my training on this path. I am now studying for a further two years with the support of the Canton of Bern and my whole family.

Because of my good grades, my husband kept pointing out that I could qualify as a registered nurse after completing my first qualification. To be honest, I would have preferred to take a short break and take some time for myself and my family after the rigorous training course.

But because my husband motivated me so much and offered to support me, I decided to go ahead and continue my education. At the nursing college, I also found out about the *Pflegeförderpreis*, a public grant for nursing students. Each year, the Canton of Bern supports ten people who live locally, are over 27 years old and require financial support during their nursing training. Being awarded this grant greatly relieved the burden on my family.



Karthiga Thiruselvam, courtesy of the project



Karthiga Thiruselvam, courtesy of the project

Training Without a Work Placement

I completed my training as a healthcare assistant at Schlossgarten Riggisberg, an institution for people with mental health conditions. However, when I started my higher qualification, there was no longer a vocational trainer there and I couldn't stay. That's why I'm now enrolled in a school-based programme rather than employed on a work placement, and I earn a slightly lower salary. My living expenses during this period are covered by the support grant from the Canton of Bern.

Working Towards My Dream Job

One of the main reasons I decided to pursue further training was because I initially wanted to become a laboratory technician. I studied chemistry in my home country, Sri Lanka. However, because most laboratories are in Zurich and Basel, I couldn't find an apprenticeship in Bern, and commuting was not an option because of my three children. My job coach, Urs Gretener, helped me find an alternative path. Deep down, however, I always wanted to return to a laboratory or a hospital as a surgical technician. Obtaining a Higher Federal Diploma (HF) makes this path possible for me here in Switzerland. And, of course, it also improves my overall prospects on the job market.

The Whole Family in School at the Same Time

For me, the HF training is significantly more challenging than the training to become a healthcare assistant. There is a lot of research and course material for independent study. That’s why I always summarise everything and have drawn up a study plan. Overall, things are going well; I just need to be very disciplined to balance my studies with family life. My three children are between 11 and 15 years old, but they still need their mother. They find it funny that we’re all in school at the same time. Sometimes they help me study and I explain to them what my big goal is. This helps them to understand why I need to manage my time carefully. My husband is also currently on the fast-track training programme for adults to become a healthcare assistant and is supported by the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation. We are very grateful to the foundation for all their support.

Karthiga Thiruselvam originally studied chemistry in her home country of Sri Lanka, but fled to Switzerland due to the political situation. Before signing up for the “Second Chance at a First Qualification” project in 2019, she had worked for years delivering newspapers and in the service industry. At the age of 38, she completed her apprenticeship as a healthcare assistant (EFZ) and decided to continue with the two-year further training programme to become a registered nurse (HF).

5 Application Statistics 2025

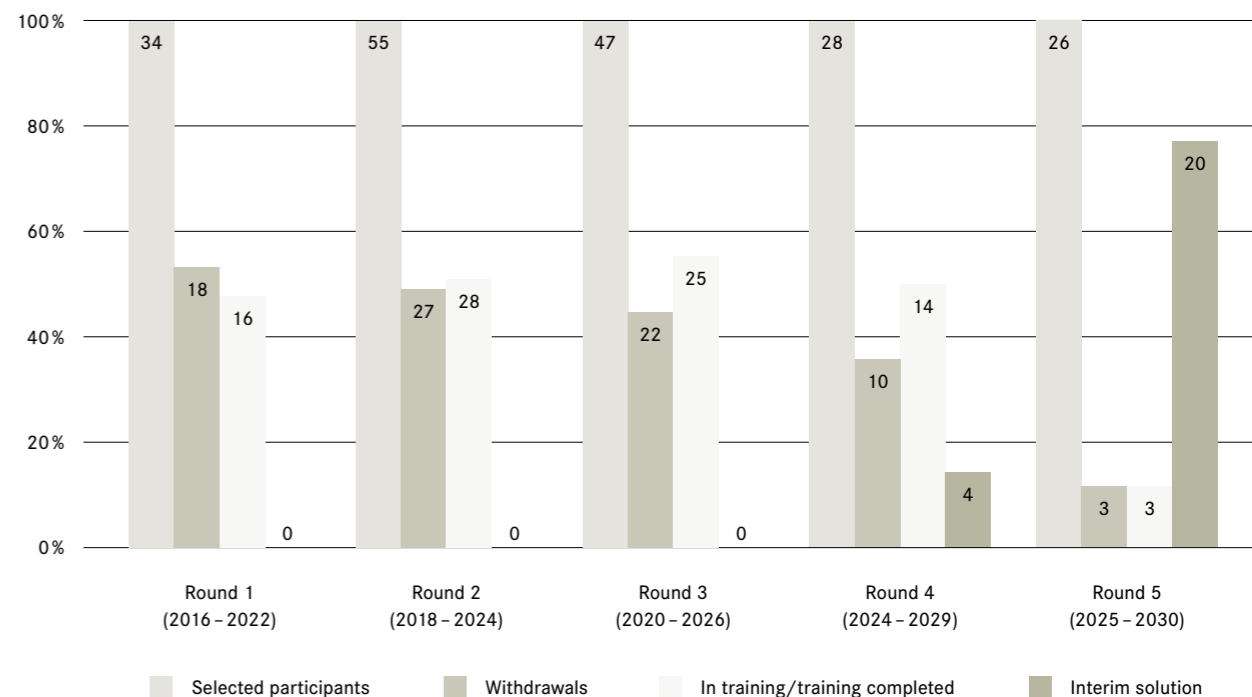
5.1 Project “2nd Chance for a 1st education”, rounds 1 – 5

Status: 31.12.2025
190 participants in total

The 1. and 2. rounds of the project have been completed. Of the 89 selected participants 44 (49%) completed their qualifications successfully.

In the current rounds 3 – 5 a total of 101 participants were admitted, of these 66 (65%) remain in the project. 18 (18%) of participants successfully completed their qualification; 24 (24%) are still in training while 24 (24%) are searching for a training placement for summer 2025.

Overview of Project Rounds



5.2 Number of applications processed according to sectors

Sectors	Field	Approvals	Rejections	Total
Medical Research ¹⁾	Medical Research	4	0	4
Victims of Conflict and Violence	Conflict and Violence	8	3	11
Education	Educational Grants	18	18	36
	Education projects	12	15	27
Culture	Classical Music	27	124	151
	Jazz	13	35	48
	Visual Art	32	104	136
	Theatre	15	144	159
	Dance	21	87	108
Total		150	530	680

¹⁾ In 2023, the Foundation Board launched a new funding programme to support projects for the protection and improvement of the health of refugees and vulnerable people in conflict regions. Twenty-five applications were submitted in response to the call. In November 2023, the foundation board approved funding for four projects for the three-year period from 2023 to 2025, totalling CHF 2.6 million. Outside of these collaborations, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation does not evaluate projects in the field of medical research.



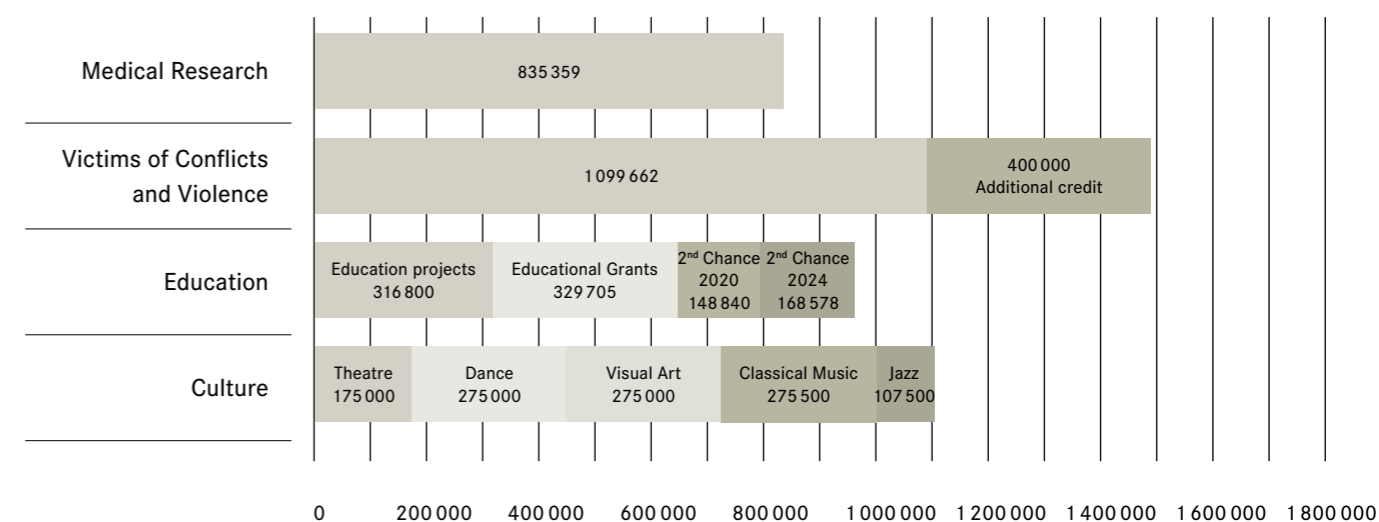
The list of project grants is no longer included in the print version of the annual publication. It is published on our website instead.

5.3 Approved applications according to project host countries 2025

Land	Medical Research	Victims of Conflict and Violence	Education	2 nd Chance for a 1 st education 2020 ²⁾	2 nd Chance for a 1 st education 2024 ²⁾	Culture	Total in CHF
Switzerland			646 505	148 840	168 578	887 000	1 850 923
UK						221 000	221 000
Afghanistan		300 000					300 000
Democratic Republic of Congo		700 000					700 000
Myanmar	165 360						165 360
Sri Lanka	100 000						100 000
Sudan		300 000					300 000
Syria	339 999						339 999
Chad	230 000						230 000
Central African Republic		199 662					199 662
Total	835 359	1 499 662	646 505	148 840	168 578	1 108 000	4 406 944

²⁾ Share of direct participant contributions only

5.4 Approved applications according to sectors in Swiss francs



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A strike

of lightning,

everything burnt to the ground.

The forests of the past

haunt

our cities.