

2021 Annual Report



This report is a performance report in accordance with Swiss GAAP FER 21.

Title page

Thomas Berger, professor of clinical psychology and psychotherapy at the University of Bern, received the 2021 Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist. He was presented with the award by President Guy Parmelin, Chairman of the Marcel Benoist Foundation, on 4 November 2021.

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Ladies and Gentlemen



I am pleased to look back on a successful 2021, a year when the Swiss Science Prizes Marcel Benoist and Latsis were awarded for the first time at a joint award ceremony. The four topclass researchers, Thomas Berger (Marcel Benoist winner 2021, University of Bern), Rudolf Aebersold (Marcel Benoist winner 2020, ETH Zurich and University of Zurich), Nicola Aceto (Latsis winner 2021, ETH Zurich) and Maryna Viazovska (Latsis winner 2020, EPF Lausanne) were honoured on 4 November.

Over the last two years, we have also learned that celebrating such an occasion together cannot be taken for granted. Now more than ever before we realise just how important a commodity health is. Physical and mental well-being is central to human life.

It is therefore no surprise that the Marcel Benoist prizes in 2020 and 2021 were awarded to two scientists who have made a contribution to health, each in their own way. Rudolf Aebersold, a systems biologist, has laid an important foundation stone for the personalised medicine of the future, while Thomas Berger is committed to mental health. The Latsis prize winners of the last two years have made important contributions to solving basic mathematical problems and to understanding metastasis formation.

The four researchers exemplify the ongoing search for new knowledge and possibilities for its application. The two Swiss science prizes are intended to honour and support precisely this.

Both foundations are also keen to involve young researchers in their activities. For the first time, they had an opportunity to discuss various topics with the laureates in a workshop and to participate in the award ceremony afterwards. Both events were very enriching for all involved.

That we are able to offer an excellent platform for research through the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist is down to the generous support of our donors. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped to put the foundation back on a solid footing. The successful joint awards ceremony is testimony to this great commitment to science.

Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin Chairman of the Foundation Board 2021 prizewinner: Professor Thomas Berger

Pioneer of online psychotherapy

In 2021, Thomas Berger, professor of clinical psychology and psychotherapy at the University of Bern, was awarded the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist for his innovative contribution to developing internet-based psychotherapy treatments. The web-based programmes facilitate access to psychological interventions for various groups of patients. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, online psychotherapy treatments have become more important for society as a whole.



Professor Thomas Berger, Marcel Benoist prizewinner in 2021, is working on new forms of psychotherapy.

As one of the leading international experts in psychotherapy research, Thomas Berger has pioneered the development, testing and implementation of online services for the treatment of psychological problems and disorders. Professor Berger laid the foundation for the digital self-help programmes available today almost 20 years ago. Since then, he has continually developed the web-based applications through various projects.

The programmes developed by Professor Berger and his team use digital tools such as apps and websites. This enables patients to work on their mental health issues independently or in addition to traditional methods of treatment, regardless of time or place. The online tools offer help, for example, with depression and anxiety disorders, the two most common mental illnesses in Switzerland. Other areas of application include sleeping disorders or mental health problems following illness or separation. Digital tools are also used in so-called blended treat-ments, a method that combines online treatments with offline therapy sessions.

Certain groups of patients, particularly those who find going to a therapist an insurmountable hurdle, can benefit greatly from these easily-accessible digital services. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, web-based forms of therapy are becoming increasingly important for society as a whole, and demand is growing.

At present, Thomas Berger and his team are working on further improving the effectiveness of self-help and blended approaches for depression and anxiety disorders. They are also working in cooperation with partners on a project to prevent suicide after inpatient care and on web-based treatments for vulnerable groups in society, such as refugees, who are difficult to reach through conventional methods.

Thomas Berger (*1971) grew up in Konolfingen and studied psychology at the University of Bern. He earned his PhD at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau and worked at the same time as a psychotherapist at the Kilchberg Psychiatric Clinic, among other places. After working as a senior research assistant at both the University of Geneva and the University of Bern, he was selected for an SNSF scholarship to conduct research at Linköping University in Sweden. He then returned to the University of Bern to write his postdoctoral habilitation thesis under an SNSF Ambizione grant. In 2013, he joined the University of Bern to teach and conduct research as part of an SNSF-funded professorship. In 2018, he was given full tenure at the University of Bern's Institute of Psychology and appointed head of the Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy. Thomas Berger has been involved in two major European research programmes and has received several awards for his research, including the Outstanding Early Research Award from the Society for Psychotherapy Research.

An interview with Professor Thomas Berger



Thomas Berger, 2021 Marcel Benoist prizewinner

"I am incredibly honoured to receive the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist. It is a tremendous endorsement of the work and research undertaken with the support of my amazing research team and collaborative partners. At the same time, it is an acknowledgement of our joint efforts to make effective psychological interventions accessible to a broader audience. It is very gratifying to know that our work is considered to be 'beneficial to human life'."

How did you come up with the idea of digitalising psychotherapy?

During my training as a behavioural therapist in Freiburg im Breisgau almost 20 years ago, I thought it would be a good idea to use the time between therapy sessions for the standardised components of behavioural therapy in order to make use of the valuable one-to-one sessions with patients to go into individual topics in more detail. Since I enjoyed programming at upper secondary school and the internet was becoming increasingly widespread, it seemed an obvious next step to develop web-based self-help programmes in which I provided detailed knowledge and therapeutic exercises on a given mental disorder.

Do we still need therapists?

Our research has shown that contact with a therapist plays a key role in web-based therapies. The effect of supervised self-help programmes, i.e. those with contact to a professional, is comparable with conventional psychotherapy involving face-to-face sessions. Unsupervised self-help programmes, on the other hand, are less effective. In the field of blended therapies, our findings so far indicate that psychotherapy can be more effective by using additional, digital tools.

What has changed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?

Throughout the pandemic, and particularly during the lockdown, many psychotherapists had to switch to video, chat or email therapies virtually overnight. Some online self-help programmes already existed, others were made publicly available during the lockdown. From March 2020, the number of users exploded as a result of the coronavirus restrictions. This demand dropped again at exactly the same time the garden centres and hairdressers reopened.

The good thing about the situation was that therapists who had been very critical of online therapies before the lockdown now experienced for themselves that distance therapy can work quite well and even have advantages for certain patients. The coronavirus pandemic has become what is known in psychotherapy as a 'black swan event', i.e. a seldom and unpredictable event that changes long-term perceptions.

Where do you see the biggest challenges in your field in the future?

Now that the effectiveness of online services has been confirmed in principle, our research is turning to more specific questions: how, with whom and under what conditions does online therapy work? Even in conventional psychotherapy we still do not know exactly which therapeutic approaches work with whom and how. Studies on online therapy, which mostly use large samples, can help us to understand the effect and individual nature of psychotherapy.

From a societal perspective, we must continue to address the challenge that in every second or third family at least one member suffers from a mental illness. Mental illnesses are com-mon, cause great suffering and are expensive to our national economy. It is encouraging that the last 50 years have given rise to effective therapies. So, regardless of online therapies, we should continue to look at how we can provide better access to specialist support for those in need.

On the occasion of the award ceremony, you spoke to young researchers. What do you remember in particular about these discussions?

I was immensely pleased by the genuine interest and curiosity of these extremely talented young researchers. Their natural enthusiasm and passion for reflection and discussion was very inspiring and is one of my particularly fond memories of the Marcel Benoist award ceremony.

Note: The interview was conducted in writing by the foundation secretary.

Contact

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Further information

www.psy.unibe.ch/ueber_uns/personen/berger (available in German only)

Foundation activities in 2021

The foundation's activities focused on awarding the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist. The 2021 award ceremony, at which the 2020 and 2021 prizewinners were honoured, took place for the first time jointly with the Latsis Foundation. Prior to the ceremony, a workshop offered young researchers the opportunity to discuss various research topics with the four laureates.

Selection of the prizewinner and award ceremony

The selection of the prizewinner was organised for the fourth time by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) on behalf of the Board of Trustees. The research community in Switzerland was invited to submit nominations in an open procedure held at the beginning of 2021. In a process committed to scientific excellence and involving an international panel of experts, the SNSF proposed Professor Thomas Berger as the 2021 prizewinner from a total of 24 valid nominations. The prizewinner was confirmed by the Board of Trustees at its plenary meeting on 30 August 2021.

The selection of the prizewinner was again based on the principle of rotation, which ensures that all scientific disciplines are taken into account. Last year, nominations were accepted from the fields of the humanities and social sciences.

Guy Parmelin, President of the Swiss Confederation and Chairman of the Marcel Benoist Foundation Board, announced the prizewinner on 13 September 2021. As in the previous year, the winner of the 2021 Latsis Prize, Professor Nicola Aceto, was announced at the ceremony in the Bernerhof at the same time. The lunch that followed provided an opportunity for an indepth discussion among representatives from both foundations, donors of the Marcel Benoist Foundation and the two laureates on their respective fields of research – online psychotherapy and cancer research. The occasion was reported by 130 different media outlets and included wide coverage in the digital media.

The award ceremony took place on 4 November 2021 at the Town Hall of Bern. Since the first joint ceremony of the Marcel Benoist and Latsis Foundations, scheduled to take place in 2020, had to be cancelled, the 2020 and 2021 winners of Swiss Science Prizes were honoured together in a festive ceremony. Around 160 people from science, civil society, business and politics attended the occasion. The opening speech and laudations were followed by discussions with young researchers, which were moderated by Matthias Egger, President of the SNSF Research Council. Following the signing of the Marcel Benoist Foundation Golden Book, President Parmelin awarded the prizewinner certificates. The occasion finished with a standup dinner.

For the first time, the event brought together three generations of researchers: the established scientists who were awarded the Marcel Benoist Prize, the younger researchers who won the Latsis Prize, and a new generation of young scientists who already participated in a workshop with the prizewinners in the afternoon.

Wokshop for young researchers

The aim of the workshop, organised by the Marcel Benoist Foundation along with 'Schweizer Jugend forscht', 'Wissenschafts-Olympiade' and 'foraus', was to enable a dialogue between young researchers and the four prizewinners on the current and future significance of their research for society. An intensive discussion took place under the moderation of 'foraus', which all participants found very enriching.

Members of the Board of Trustees

At the end of 2021, Professor Martine Rahier, representative of the University of Neuchâtel, reached the maximum 12-year term of office on the Board of Trustees. In addition, Professor Martin Brown is leaving the University of St Gallen at the end of March 2022. The Federal Council appointed Professor Kilian Stoffel, rector of the University of Neuchâtel, and Professor Beatrix Eugster, director of the Swiss Institute for Empirical Economic Research at the University of St Gallen, to the Board of Trustees at the beginning of 2022 and in April 2022 respectively.

The Board would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Rahier and Professor Brown for their great commitment over many years.

Since Professor Rahier also held the office of observer on the Foundation Committee, the Board of Trustees at its plenary meeting on 30 August 2021 appointed Professor Brigitte Calliot, vice-rector of the University of Geneva, to the Foundation Committee as of 1 January 2022.

Impressions from the 2021 award ceremony



President Guy Parmelin, Chairman of the Marcel Benoist Foundation, holding the opening speech.

"It was an amazing opportunity to have been given the time to ask so many questions to all the laureates. I was also greatly honoured to have been chosen to interview Thomas and Nicola, the 2021 laureates, during the ceremony. I will never forget this day!"

Ophélie Rivière, workshop participant



Professor Thomas Berger, 2021 Marcel Benoist award winner, Professor Nicola Aceto, 2021 Latsis award winner, and Ophélie Rivière (from left to right).



Professor Paola Picotti (ETH Zurich) holding the laudatory speech for the 2021 Latsis Prize winner, Professor Nicola Aceto.

"When we learned even more about the laureates during the laudatory speeches in the Town Hall – particularly what they have contributed to science in the course of their careers – I could hardly believe that we had been allowed to talk to them for so long before the ceremo-ny. I was impressed by how seriously they took us and our questions, and surprised that they were even interested in us. It was a unique experience!" Christopher Golling, workshop participant



Professor Rudolf Aebersold, winner of the 2020 Marcel Benoist Prize, Professor Maryna Viazovska, winner of the 2020 Latsis Prize, Philipp Burkhardt and Professor Matthias Egger, President of the SNSF Research Council and moderator of the 2021 award ceremony (from left to right).



Professor Rudolf Aebersold, winner of the 2020 Marcel Benoist Prize, signing the Marcel Benoist Foundation's Golden Book in the presence of President Guy Parmelin.



President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin congratulating the winner of the 2021 Marcel Benoist Prize, Professor Thomas Berger.

Many thanks!

More than 100 years ago, Marcel Benoist laid the cornerstone of the Marcel Benoist Foundation. Since 2017, new donations have helped to secure the future of the Swiss science prize and significantly increase the Foundation's assets.

The donors of the Marcel Benoist Foundation are united in the Patronage Committee and Friends of the Foundation.

The members of the Patronage Committee act as ambassadors for the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist, helping to increase its visibility and raise public awareness about the importance of top-level research for Switzerland. They also encourage further partners to commit to supporting the prize.

The solid basis upon which the Foundation now rests is thanks not only to its donors but also to the valuable support of former federal councillor, Johann N. Schneider-Ammann. The Foundation is delighted that Mr Schneider-Amman will continue to promote the objectives of the Marcel Benoist Foundation as honorary chairman of the Foundation.

The Friends of the Foundation include further sponsors of the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist, reflecting the broader support for the award, which is of such importance to research in Switzerland.

Patronage Committee and Friends: Donors

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Ulrich Andreas Ammann

Daniel Gutenberg

Martin Haefner

Prof. Ruurd Heerema

Babette Herbert

André Hoffmann

Walter Inäbnit

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Dr Stephan Schmidheiny

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Perspectives Foundation (SwissLife)

QIAGEN N.V., Peer Schatz, in memoriam Gottfried Schatz,

1992 Benoist prizewinner

Schindler Group

Vontobel Foundation

We would like to thank all our donors for their valuable support. Our thanks also go to those who do not wish to be named here.

Further information on the Patronage Committee and Friends can be found at: www.marcel-benoist.ch.

The Marcel Benoist Foundation

Foundation purpose

The Marcel Benoist Foundation was established on 19 November 1920. By accepting Marcel Benoist's legacy, the Confederation undertook to respect the founder's wish – to promote scientific research by awarding an annual prize to the Swiss or Switzerland-based scholar who has made the most useful scientific invention, discovery or study, and one that is of par-ticular relevance to human life. The prize is awarded in different disciplines on a rotating basis.

Board of Trustees (by end of 2021)

President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Prof. Christian Leumann Representative of the University of Bern, first vice chair

Prof. Joël Mesot Representative of the Confederation, second vice chair

Prof. Martine Rahier Representative of the University of Neuchâtel, assessor

Prof. Dominique Arlettaz Representative of the University of Lausanne

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The trustees are appointed by the Federal Council. Any interests of individual members are publicly listed (federal extra-parliamentary commissions).

Foundation Committee

President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin, Chair

Prof. Christian Leumann

Prof. Joël Mesot

Prof. Martine Rahier

Investment Committee

Prof. Martin Brown, Chair

Prof. Joël Mesot

Prof. Dominique Arlettaz

Foundation Secretariat

The Foundation Secretariat is part of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI. The Foundation Secretary is a SERI employee. Dr Aurélia Robert-Tissot, Foundation Secretary

Finance Secretariat

Since November 2017, the Marcel Benoist Foundation has outsourced the management of its finances and its annual financial statement, which is drawn up in accordance with Swiss GAAP FER 21.

Von Graffenried AG Treuhand, Bern

Patrick Rüttimann, Swiss certified accountant, member of the management Team

Auditors

Following the reorganisation of the Marcel Benoist Foundation, the Board of Trustees appointed Unico Thun AG in Thun as its new auditors. The company audited the financial accounts for the first time in 2017.

Oversight

Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations, Bern

Bank details

Donations in Swiss francs:
PostFinance account
89-32730-0
IBAN CH73 0900 0000 8903 2730 0

Annual financial statement

BALANCE SHEET as of 31 DEZEMBER	2021	2020
ASSETS	CHF	CHF
PostFinance AG, current account	76'341.84	1'207'187.46
Zürcher Kantonalbank, current account	0.00	22'678.74
Zürcher Kantonalbank, asset management		
account	35'516.91	50'437.46
Cash and cash equivalents	111'858.75	1'280'303.66
Federal Tax Administration, witholding tax	18'024.85	30'640.83
Other short-term receivables	18'024.85	30'640.83
Prepaid expenses	0.00	6'101.20
Prepaid expenses	0.00	6'101.20
CURRENT ASSETS	129'883.60	1'317'045.69
Securities	22'843'226.26	19'491'669.41
Financial investments	22'843'226.26	19'491'669.41
FIXED ASSETS	22'843'226.26	19'491'669.41
TOTAL ASSETS	22'973'109.86	20'808'715.10

LIABILITIES	CHF	CHF
Deferred income	29'789.00	105'565.35
SHORT-TERM LIABILITIES	29'789.00	105'565.35
Restricted funds	518'000.00	651'000.00
FUND EQUITY	518'000.00	651'000.00
Unrestricted funds	22'425'320.86	20'052'149.75
ORGANISATION EQUITY	22'425'320.86	20'052'149.75
TOTAL LIABILITIES		20'808'715.10

OPERATING STATEMENT	2021	2020
	CHF	CHF
	CIII	Cili
Unrestricted donations	250'000.00	4'050'000.00
Restricted donations	10'000.00	10'000.00
Total donations	260'000.00	4'060'000.00
Prize money	-250'000.00	-250'000.00
Award ceremony	-46'063.40	-55'816.65
Youth workshop	-5'000.00	0.00
Centenary publication	0.00	-13'500.00
Project-related expenses	-301'063.40	-319'316.65
Fundraising	0.00	-193.50
Fundraising/general marketing expenses	0.00	-193.50
Board of Trustees expenses	0.00	-2'394.70
Finance secretariat	-23'090.90	-22'746.25
Auditors	-2'692.50	-2'692.50
Oversight	-1'950.00	-7'700.00
Other administrative expenses	-6'456.95	-5'564.60
Administrative expenses	-34'190.35	-41'098.05
Operating result	-75'253.75	3'699'391.80
Price gain on securities	2'385'449.66	1'513'346.62
Other income	0.00	26'449.00
Asset management fees	-52'371.80	-28'801.25
Other portfolio-related costs	-6'730.58	-10'933.30
Investment controlling/consulting costs	-10'755.00	-14'647.20
Bank interest and fees	-167.42	-167.32
Financial result	2'315'424.86	1'485'246.55
Result before change in fund equity	2'240'171.11	5'184'638.35

OPERATING STATEMENT	2021	2020
	CHF	CHF
Result before change in fund equity	2'240'171.11	5'184'638.35
(carried over)		
Allocations to restricted funds	-10'000.00	-10'000.00
Withdrawals from restricted funds	143'000.00	143'000.00
Change in fund equity	133'000.00	133'000.00
Annual result (before allocations to e.g.		
withdrawals from organisation capital)	2'373'171.11	5'317'638.35

The consolidated statement of accounts was drawn up in accordance with the Swiss GAAP FER 21 accounting standards and audited by Unico Thun AG.

Governance and working methods

The Marcel Benoist Foundation for the promotion of scientific research, based in Bern, is exempt from federal and cantonal taxes due to its non-profit status.

The Board of Trustees selects the award winners, defines the Foundation's strategy and priorities, and ensures its mission is implemented. It establishes the Foundation's statutes for submission to the Federal Council.

The members of the Board of Trustees are appointed by the Federal Council and work on an honorary basis.

Asset management is governed by the Foundation's investment regulations. The financial assets are invested in the medium to long term by an investment committee with a view to achieving security and a sustainable return.

The accounting records and financial statements are audited by Unico Thun AG. The Foundation is supervised by the Swiss Federal Supervisory Authority for Foundations.

Further information on governance and working methods can be found at: www.marcel-benoist.ch > Pledge Excellence > Tax-related and legal issues.

Contact

Marcel Benoist Foundation Foundation Secretariat c/o State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI

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We look forward to hearing from you.