

SOCIAL IMPACT ACCELERATOR

Social innovations for a positive social and environmental impact

An offering by Made possible through









ZEBRAS: TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

Social entrepreneurship is growing in Switzerland and throughout Europe. Social challenges are increasingly being addressed with an entrepreneurial approach. The startup world and the innovative solutions that they generate are driven by the urgency to develop solutions that meet the needs of the current global challenges.

In contrast to unicorns that strive for exponential growth, fast return on investment, exit strategies and the disruption of markets, the zebras belong to a different category of ventures.

Indeed, zebras are black and white: they combine purpose with profit. They are characterized by concrete businesses whose profits are focused on sustainable and responsible growth. Instead of a quantity approach, they focus on the quality of their solution to improve societies and communities. Zebras aim to share power and resources with their peers and their structures are based on democratic principles.

This alternative model challenges the unicorn model, by setting creation above consumption, sustainable growth above

rapid exit, and shared prosperity above shareholder profit. In addition, zebras cooperate with other zebras, hence resulting in a strong collective output.

In terms of funding, opportunities for zebras are less accessible and less known than those for unicorns, which creates additional challenges for the development of zebra startups. Furthermore, social entrepreneurship still suffers from a lack of promotion and is not considered mainstream.

Yet support programs for impact-first startups are in their development phase. There are already incubator programs to receive initial support, but still, a low level of support accompanies the growth phase. Given this lack of support in the development phase of the impact-first startups, the 12-week Social Impact Accelerator aims at bridging the gap through workshops, coaching and mentoring sessions designed to support them in all aspects of the entrepreneurial journey.

"THE SIA PROGRAM PROVIDES AN INVALUABLE
PLATFORM TO SUPPORT, PROMOTE AND SCALE
LEADING SOCIAL INNOVATORS FOCUSED ON
ADDRESSING THE MANY SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CHALLENGES OUR SOCIETY IS FACING."

Ellen Bakke Mawdsley

Impact Investing Advisor & Board Member



1 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Social Impact Accelerator (SIA) focuses exclusively on maximizing social (and/or environmental) impact. SIA supports startups with a social innovation approach and the goal of developing a self-sustaining business model. The goals of the SIA are to professionalize the impact and the development of the participating startups.

The program offers the following:

- Half-day thematic modules, where the specific aspects of the entrepreneurial journey and business growth are presented and directly applied to the startup's challenges. They mostly consist of a theoretical part, complemented by a more interactive part in order to benefit from the expert's input and have the capacity to apply it to their own case.

- Mentoring sessions, where the startups' specific needs are discussed in relation to the thematic modules and the challenges they expressed while applying for the program. It allows them to voice any issue that they need support with.
- Coaching with individual experts, in addition to the overall mentoring, we reach out to our pool of experts for any questions that would better be addressed by them, for any questions that are not being addressed in the modules themselves.
- Community and networking events that give the startups the opportunity to connect with each other, hence facilitating peer learning. These events also support access to financial resources and opportunities.

WEEK 1 Pitch Days

> WEEK 2 Kick-off

WEEK 3 Organizational Structures

> WEEK 4 Impact Strategy

WEEK 5 Financial Planning

WEEK 6 Storytelling & Branding

> WEEK 7 Peer Learning

WEEK 8 Impact Scaling

> WEEK 9 Break

WEEK 10 Financing Strategy

WEEK 11 Pitch Training

WEEK 12 Closing Night



Take up a social challenge and thus contribute with innovative solutions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals



Align their business model to scale, replicate or translate a social or societal innovation



Want to keep the responsibility autonomously with the company and offer the stakeholders opportunities for participation and involvement



Put the impact at the center of their activities and can demonstrate this with a theory of change



Have a convincing proof of concept



Are geared to the best possible business model with appropriate financing (financially self-sustaining), and do not pursue an exit strategy or focus on profit



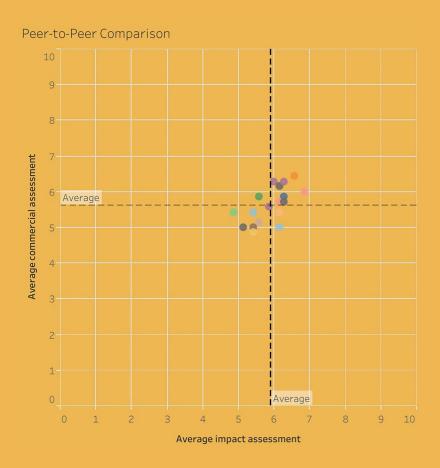
2 FACTS & FIGURES

Assessment Process

The impact is at the core of the SIA participants' solution. The impact is also at the core of the program itself, through the various workshops, but first and foremost through the application and selection criteria.

SEIF has developed various impact assessment tools: a self-impact assessment tool, Get Your Impact, that allows startups to assess their impact as precisely and objectively as possible. In addition, all the applicants are screened by SEIF experts during the first selection round. Both their commercial and impact dimensions are assessed, in a standardized and structured way. This allows the selection to be based on objective criteria such as scale, market, customer and beneficiary analysis, but also duration and depth of impact, to name only a few.

Both impact assessments highlight the various dimensions of impact (based on renowned impact management frameworks) - including the need for a thorough evaluation of the potential unintended outcomes.



Graph 1: Overview of the participants' average commercial and impact scores

2 FACTS & FIGURES

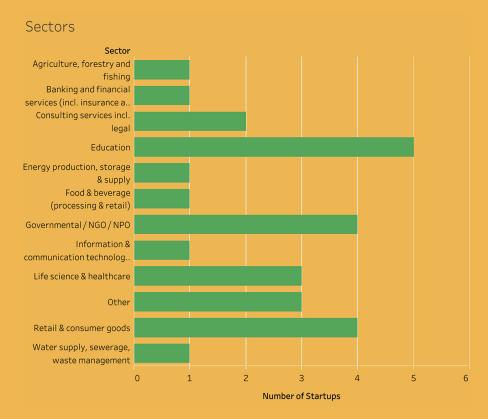
Top 15 to 10

Once selected, the 15 nominated startups were invited to pitch live in Zürich to a highly dedicated jury consisting of experts from the entrepreneurship, academia, financing and foundation worlds - gathering their knowledge to challenge and evaluate the various presented projects in a most professional and constructive way.

Impact focus and sector overview

The topic of social entrepreneurship is not new, but it is becoming more and more accepted and valued in the face of our current local and global challenges. We are pleased to witness such a positive response from entrepreneurs with the launch of the program, as it is a sign that the SIA is filling an important gap in the Swiss social impact ecosystem. We aim to provide quality support for social entrepreneurs to professionalize their businesses and scale their impact.

Both Education, as well as Retail and Consumer Goods, were the most prominent sectors among the applicants to the SIA. Other popular sectors included Life Science and Healthcare, and Governmental/NPO/NGO.

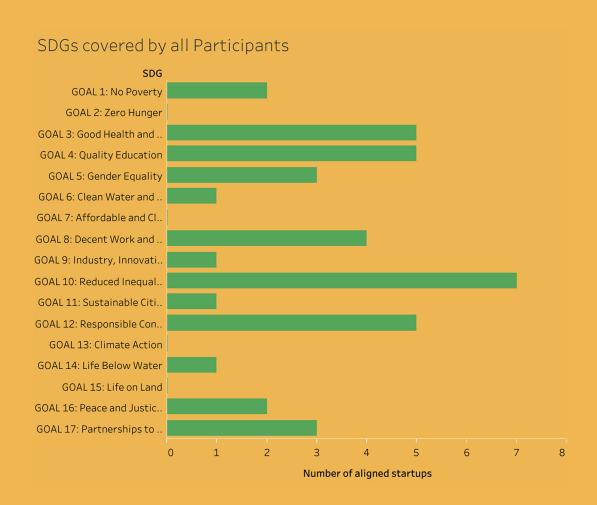


Graph 2: sectors covered by all SIA applicants



2 FACTS & FIGURES

Given the applicants and the sectors that they comprise, it is no surprise that the most represented Sustainable Development Goal is SDG 10 – Reducing Inequalities. Other most prominent SDGs covered are: SDG 3 – Good Health & Well-being, SDG 4 – Quality Education, and SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production.



Graph 3: SDG covered by all applicants





Rhiana, the executive director and founder of Spring ACT has experienced that people who need help do not turn to the right organization for their urgent problems. Often one person is missing, who knows the right organization and can redirect people in need. Here, the idea was born to develop a technology that solves this problem. Given the drastic increase in domestic violence against women during COVID-19, Rhiana decided to focus on these victims. Together with volunteers, the world's first chatbot "Sophia" was developed.

The global North-South thinking and the private-public sector divide are outdated and urgently need to be changed. We envision cross-sectoral and cross-cultural partnerships where each stakeholder contributes their expertise and resources to efficiently and effectively develop practical tools for the community at a minimal cost. We seek collective effort and want to play a central role in amplifying people's potential and creating a ripple effect of change.

The challenge is to meet the explosive demand for "Sophia". We want to increase our impact in a lean and efficient way and ensure that we can provide the best help all over the world. The biggest challenge holding us back from achieving this goal is securing sustainable funding.



The original motivation for Kaleio Magazine was to give pre-adolescent girls an extra "booster" so they don't lose their confidence when they grow up. Equally, they should not be restricted by gender expectations and not be discouraged from pursuing their dreams. It is our approach to fighting gender inequality in society. We see the empowerment of girls as the empowerment of women.

In our utopian society, everyone, regardless of gender, age, appearance, social status and nationality would indeed have equal opportunities and possibilities. Society would value the diversity of its members and toxic stereotypes would not restrict anyone in their personal development. Our startup would still be needed to empower all children: to build their self-confidence, to help them maintain self-esteem and to better understand themselves and others.

Currently, we do not have enough resources to grow and develop. Our next goal is to double our income by increasing the number of subscribers, creating more jobs and thus expanding to Germany. Furthermore, we want to offer more workshops and reach out to girls and boys from less privileged social backgrounds.





Our experience has taught us that finding an apprenticeship is a difficult process. On the one hand, it was frustrating to see that not enough students applied for great apprenticeships. On the other hand, choosing the right profession is a big challenge. This is not surprising given that there are around 240 apprenticeships on offer. Jofi tackles precisely these two problems. As an interest-based matching platform that enables companies to quickly and specifically find suitable students for their apprenticeships.

In our utopian society, everyone gets the right education according to their skills and finds their dream job. Thus, only the skills of the employee should play a role in the hiring process and no longer socio-economic criteria. Equality of opportunity is no longer desirable, but the new reality.

Currently, we are testing our MVP (minimal viable product) in a pilot project and are looking for companies and students. This should help us get even better customer feedback and improve the matching algorithm. As the development of the platform is an expensive venture, we are also looking for financial support, as well as for new co-founders, to develop Jofi with joint forces.



Urbanization in Southern Africa is advancing rapidly and cities are growing fast. However, many poor urban residents cannot afford adequate housing and end up in informal settlements and slums. To change this situation, we initiated a social enterprise in 2017 that develops and sells residential plots at a price that is affordable for the urban poor. This enables poorer residents to incrementally invest in their property, build houses according to their means and pass on wealth to the next generation. The initiative has grown rapidly and is now an integral part of the Namibian government's housing policy and programs. With a new office in Zambia, we have also initiated our expansion in the region.

Our vision is that a majority of urban residents in southern Africa have access to affordable residential land and housing. We believe that this is fundamental to reducing poverty and creating more equal societies. Our enterprise can make a meaningful contribution by providing land and contributing to effective housing policies and programs.

The most constraining factor we currently face is the availability of funds to sustain our growth in the region. The income generated from the sales of land covers an increasing part of our daily operating costs, but further expansion requires investment.





The online legal advice service AsyLex was founded in 2017 by the lawyer Lea Hungerbühler. She wanted to provide access to justice for those new to the country, most in need of legal advice. This is particularly the case against the background that Switzerland often does not adequately recognise human rights violations and wrongly rejects cases. The only option is to take it to an international level. However, asylum seekers are not aware of this and do not have the financial resources. This problem has motivated AsyLex to set up a special team to provide access to justice at the international level and to challenge those Swiss decisions that ignore human rights violations.

In an ideal world, every refugee and asylum seeker would have access to justice. Although access to justice is a fundamental principle of the rule of law and can be considered a human right, in practice, it looks different. AsyLex has this vision of creating such access to justice, first in Switzerland at the national and international level and then intending to expand to other countries. At the moment, however, we have the problem of raising sufficient funds. We rely on external funding and apply for it from various organizations.



In 2013, I was shocked by the news of the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh. 1135 Textile workers died and twice as many were injured due to Western fashion brands maximizing profit and making consumption as cheap and fast as possible. This truly formative experience motivated me to build a social business that takes responsibility for its supply chain and puts people and the planet first.

A utopian society is one, where consumers understand and respect how many people and resources are involved in the manufacturing of their clothes. I dream of a fully circular textile industry that does not poison our oceans and soils with microplastics and various other pollutants. We aim to be a company that paves the way to this utopian state in our lifetime.

We are currently looking at how we can raise funds to hire a team member who will focus on creating content to raise awareness about conscious consumption, social responsibility and circular economy in textiles. These fields are catalysts for change and are arguments for our apparel solutions as a company. We believe it is critical to integrate these issues into our communication activities from the very beginning.





We have found ourselves in the desire to reduce social alienation in society. Although humanity is becoming more and more digitally connected, the interpersonal divide is widening. With the Helferherz association, we want to change this by creating digital solutions whose main goal is to form and maintain sustainable, social connections.

We are not looking for utopia but feel the imperative. Although the need for social and health care is growing significantly and only continues in the future, the traditional and centralized approach is not able to cope with this societal change. Thus, the involvement of society as a whole is inevitable. Helferherz is the key enabler and makes it possible to provide local, flexible social support for humans, organizations and projects for a greater overall social benefit.

As a social startup, we too have costs. We do not focus on maximizing our profit but on our social impact. Nevertheless, we try to implement a sustainable business model, which for us means being self-financed and agile. However, we need financial support, currently our biggest hurdle. In addition, we are looking for individuals and organizations who share our vision. We hope that we can convince with a clear impact strategy, our team and concept.



Our founders met while studying popular music in London, where they found their common ground: using music to drive social change and have a positive impact on the environment. Shortly after forming their band "Citrus Hues", the two realized that without a big marketing budget, there was little chance of reaching a large enough audience to really make a difference.

For us, a utopian society is one in which everyone, regardless of budget, ethnicity or place of living, can participate in the change toward a healthier planet. Sustainability is not just about technology and resources. It's about coming together as a global community, and what better way to include everyone than culture and music in particular?

One pressing matter for a non-profit organization is the inflow of donations and in our case to realize the vision of changing the environment through music. Starting a new non-profit organization is always accompanied by trust issues from stakeholders, as the track record is still relatively short. We are eager to overcome the main challenges and continue to work relentlessly to realize our dream.





As a professional musician, I didn't have the opportunity to perform during Covid-19. So, I had to look for other opportunities and started to organize a concert series in Basel. One day, in December 2020, when I received a donation from a private Spitex organization, I wanted to show my appreciation and asked myself, what can I give back? A CD would not reach the clients of this organization, so I suggested to the manager to play for them on my viola. Thus, I started playing concerts at home and at the same time perceived the loneliness, sadness and cultural exclusion of elderly people who depend on home care. This was the initial motivation and drive to continue with Musik-Spitex.

My utopian society reflects the basic values of respect and dignity. This would be mirrored in a health care system accessible to all, just as cultural goods would no longer be luxury goods, but available to the whole society. Accordingly, my startup provides music in any cultural context to lonely elderly or sick people around the globe who want to listen to music in their last decade or their last minutes. However, at the moment various topics are challenging, for example, data management and security, as well as the need for more resources such as time and employees, to drive musik-spitex forward.



Coming from research, we had taken many exciting approaches to fall prevention for granted. It was only when we talked to people affected by falls that we realized that the state of knowledge in research does not correspond to that of the general population. We would like to close this gap. SturzZentrum Schweiz is committed to the transfer of knowledge through expert lectures and access to new, promising offers for fall prevention for the aging society.

Our utopian world is full of sure-footed people who don't even need to think about their balance in old age. In our vision, every elderly person has access to the fall prevention strategy that is right for them. SturzZentrum Schweiz is dedicated to increasing knowledge and awareness, connecting stakeholders, and providing the population with a wider range of fall prevention options.

SturzZentrum is on the edge of making the step from just disseminating knowledge to offering individual research solutions as services that people can benefit from in their environment. The social impact accelerator helps us to get fundraising for this scalable project and to scale the impact on society towards our vision – a world without fall injuries in older age.



4 PORTRAIT STIFTUNG MERCATOR SCHWEIZ



Stiftung Mercator Schweiz is a philanthropic foundation that addresses some of the major challenges facing our society. The foundation is active in Climate and Biodiversity, Democracy, Education, Diversity, and Digital Transformation + Society. In its search for ideas and solutions, Mercator Schweiz focuses on impact and is guided by a theory of change. The foundation has been in existence for 25 years and facilitates a wide range of projects and social innovations every year, including now for the second time the Social Impact Accelerator.

The following interview was conducted with Dr. David Hesse, Foresight and Innovation, Stiftung Mercator Schweiz.

What is the foundation's aim?

Climate crisis, inequality of opportunity, democracy under pressure: our world faces some serious challenges. Stiftung Mercator Schweiz supports a broad range of organizations in developing solutions to the most urgent ecological and social problems of our time – and providing impetus for social change. Change requires courage, creativity, and joint action. This is why we usually collaborate with partners: We forge broad alliances, bring together different funders, research institutions, and civil society organizations. We always keep our vision in mind – a democratic, open, and ecologically sustainable society.

Why does Mercator support the Social Impact Accelerator?

A good idea is usually not enough to drive social change. How do you achieve a lasting impact? The Social Impact Accelerator has a strong focus on positive impact, it explicitly selects initiatives with impact potential. Participants are then coached in an impact-oriented way. We very much value this approach. We also believe that motivated impact entrepreneurs really can make a difference and that their energy and drive are crucial for the advancements of the SDGs. At the Social Impact Accelerator, selected startups receive valuable training and access to relevant networks. We are happy to support this program.

You are a Jury member in this year's program, what impression do you have of the participants?

From legal advice to fall prevention: The diversity of topics and approaches was really impressive. We are curious to learn whether these very different entrepreneurs were able to find common ground and support each other. We hope that some of them will form relationships that outlast the SIA program.

Many thanks, David Hesse, for the Interview!





fairpicture

YOUR EASY SOLUTION
FOR ETHICAL AND
LOCALLY-SOURCED
VISUAL CONTENT



Ethical + locally sourced content



Photographs, video, short documentaries, visual consulting



Since 2020 31'200 produced fair pictures



Decent working conditions

The following interview was conducted with Jörg Arnold, the Co-Founder of Fairpicture.

Why is Fairpicture committed to the perception of the global south?

I worked for a long time as the fundraising manager of a large international aid organization. On project trips, I was able to produce stories for fundraising together with great Swiss photographers. The question of whom these stories belong to and whether they reflect the reality of the life of the people on the ground became more and more urgent to me over time.

This and the recognition that images create "reality" in our heads and that these images have never been decolonized and thus perpetuate our perception of the global south, has been the driver of Fairpicture from the beginning. Even if it sometimes looks hopelessly different in times of populist scurrility: The challenges of our time require everyone to cooperate on an equal footing. This means that we have to look very closely at how people are portrayed in images and whether they are disadvantaged in terms of discrimination, devaluation or stereotyping. Together with local image makers, Fairpicture wants to contribute to a different, fairer view of the Global South and marginalized groups. This is our mission and this is where we want to make a difference.



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INTERVIEW WITH SIA ALUMNI FAIRPICTURE

How did you come up with your business idea and how did Fairpicture subsequently develop?

The first concepts of Fairpicture were initiated by a foundation in 2019. At that time, we defined ourselves as an NPO that would finance itself with its activities in the medium term but would finance the development with grants. But the fundraising did not work. For some foundations we were too little development cooperation, for others we were too business-driven. With a good idea that made sense to everyone, we got caught between the chair and the bank in terms of funding. Thanks to the support of our first business angel and startup coaching from be-advanced (funded by the Foundation for Technological Innovation STI), we were able to make the transition to a "normal" startup in the first half of 2021. In July 2021, we then founded Fairpicture AG in Bern.

"GET INVOLVED IN ADVENTURES AND RIDE THROUGH THE PRAIRIE WITH JOY AND WITHOUT FEAR."

Jörg Arnold

Co-Founder Fairpicture

How would you describe the development you have experienced with your social enterprise?

I would speak less of a "social enterprise" and more of an "impact enterprise". I think that is the more appropriate term. Fairpicture is not a "social project with a business model", but a company that wants nothing less than to change the communication industry with a clear idea of impact. The transformation from an NGO to a "company" meant a change of perspective for us that was not easy to cope with. It is a completely different mindset whether one works with foundations as a project financier or whether they are "exceptional" investors who want to achieve both a financial return and a social impact return with their money. The fact that there are foundations that are breaking new ground in this area, such as the Leopold Bachmann Foundation, which has made a significant contribution to Fairpicture's transformation from a project to a company, should not only be mentioned here only in passing.



5

INTERVIEW WITH SIA ALUMNI FAIRPICTURE

So, finding the balance between for-profit and non-profit was challenging in the beginning. Where and how did you get the necessary resources to establish your startup?

Yes, positioning ourselves as an impact company was and is a challenge. Oscillating between business and impact is a skill that needs to be developed and nurtured. It can be compared to a bridge that needs self-confidence and steadfastness on both sides of the river to create the tension of sustainable construction. The Social Impact Accelerator has given us essential inputs in this respect. Our funding mix of equal parts equity (i.e. shares and participation certificates), grants and loans have helped us think from different perspectives and drive a business development that considers multiple interests. In the first round of financing, we were able to attract great angel investors, we have a whole range of stakeholders that support our mission, foundations that are committed out of conviction, and the Canton of Bern, which is exceptionally strong for startups. We also relied on this breadth in the second round of financing.

When you look back on the SIA, what from the program has helped you the most and what did you miss?

What catapulted us was the input on the Theory of Change, which loosened the button on impact. Also important for us was the discussion on the topic of high workload and how to deal with stress. And finally: the still good exchange with colleagues from other startups.

Would you have done something differently when looking back?

For us, direct contact with impact investors would have been important at the time; in our opinion, that came up a bit short.

What is your recommendation for this year's participants in the SIA?

Get involved in adventures and ride through the prairie with joy and without fear.

If you had one wish, where would Fairpicture be in ten years?

Fairpicture will shape the standards in fair communication in ten years. That is what we are working on.

And what does your utopian society look like?

Given the global challenges, we do not have time to design utopias. We are challenged to work on the implementation of concrete solutions. These are based on values such as equality, justice and peace. A society built on these values is no longer a utopian design, at the latest since the Enlightenment, but a question of decency and survival on the only planet we have.

Many thanks, Jörg Arnold, for the interview and the insights into the development of Fairpicture.



6 THE SIA TEAM

Silvan Scherer

Combining positive social and environmental impact with a self-sustaining business model is a big challenge. These so-called zebra startups are, in my opinion, the supreme discipline of entrepreneurship and I am very happy to be able to support them during the SIA.



Zoé Dumont de Chassart

It is very encouraging to see such passion and commitment from social entrepreneurs in tackling the challenges in our society. It is all the more important to challenge and guide them in their decisions, and give them a chance to benefit from expert advice and tools to accompany them throughout their project. Personally, this is a very concrete way for me to contribute to a more resilient society.

Lea Fuchs

The Social Impact Accelerator is a specific and so far unique offer for social entrepreneurs in Switzerland. We are in an innovative environment, driven by maximum passion and sense of purpose. As a team member of this program, I am even more pleased to be able to support people who have great visions and thus want to change our way of living together.





6 THE SIA TEAM



Alban Muret

We need to change the way we do business and social entrepreneurs already show how the shift from shareholder value to societal value is possible. But within our profit-oriented system, the scaling of impactful business is still difficult. Therefore it is essential to support them with programs like SIA and show how an impact-orientated business can work and grow.

Yeshe Zarotsang

It's been an insightful experience to meet local SIA innovators and change makers and to get a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face in the space of social impact. As part of the team, our mission is to connect them with experts in our network, act as a sounding board and mentor for business topics and identify channels through which they can accelerate their offering to reach more beneficiaries.



Christoph Inauen

The SIA is a great program for social entrepreneurs - who are becoming an increasingly powerful force in defining the world of tomorrow. Learning from the young social entrepreneurs with their inspiring ideas and at the same time sharing my experience with them means a lot to me.



Nicolò Schlueb

It has been an inspiration to work with the passionate and impact-driven entrepreneurs of the Social Impact Accelerator. Putting sustainability and social impact before profits is a bold and urgently needed decision. Against this background, the Social Impact Accelerator is a novel and increasingly relevant program that accelerates innovative ideas, while specifically focusing on maximizing the positive impact on society.







The realization of such a project is not possible without support. Therefore, we would like to thank everyone involved, first and foremost Stiftung Mercator Schweiz, for making the Social Impact Accelerator program possible.

The Closing Night is the final event of the program and should be a fitting conclusion and prepare the ground for fruitful contacts. We would like to thank the location hosts FREITAG for offering us the unique production hall and for the entire support on site.

We are equally grateful for the support of LIIP and Foodward, who also contributed to the realization of the event. Only through all of them we were able to offer the startups and the community an appropriate finale.









8 THE INITIATORS



"Since social businesses focus on positive social impact, impact grows simultaneously with the enterprise itself. SENS sees great potential here for the economy to make a significant and necessary contribution to sustainable development. We are therefore pleased to be able to accompany and support further social startups with the Accelerator program."

Rahel Pfister Managing Director SENS

As a national Platform, SENS represents and promotes impact-oriented companies in Switzerland, connecting them across sectors and with the European environment.

www.sens-suisse.ch





"The Social impact accelerator is a great program for social impact businesses, not only to support and boost them but also to inspire others and show them that there are different models to solve pressing societal challenges. We at SEIF have realized that impact-first business solutions have not been supported so far in Switzerland and I think it is very important for the whole ecosystem to close this gap in collaboration with SENS."

Prof. Mariana Christen JakobManaging Director SEIF

SEIF is running impact acceleration programs as the Impact Academy and other services and is a leading player in the impact investing sector with its impact measurement tools.

www.seif.org





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