

↙ Portrait 2025

Activity Report of the Vontobel Foundation

About the foundation – Our Commitment – Insights into our funding activities



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▾ About the foundation

Introducing ourselves

As a grant-making foundation, the Vontobel Foundation provides financial support to projects undertaken by charitable Swiss institutions in the areas of social welfare, culture and society, nature and science. Funding is also provided to disadvantaged individuals, families, and students. Additionally, the Foundation publishes a series of in-depth monographs that address current and fundamental issues, contributing to political, social, economic, and cultural discussions. The Foundation was established in 1993 by private banker Dr. Hans Vontobel (1916–2016). He contributed a package of Vontobel shares, which, together with subsequent donations made by his son Dr. Hans-Dieter Vontobel, forms the core of the Foundation's capital. The Vontobel Foundation is subject to the supervision of the Office for Occupational Pensions and Foundations of the Canton of Zurich.

About the Founder of the Vontobel Foundation

Our founder, Dr. Hans Vontobel, was convinced that a society worthy of the name is reliant on solidarity and mutual recognition.



Dr. Hans Vontobel was born in Zurich on December 4, 1916, completing his studies in law and political science in this city in 1942. The following year, he joined what was then Bank J. Vontobel & Co., and under his leadership the bank developed into one of the world's leading internationally active asset managers. In 1981, Dr. Vontobel assumed the chairmanship of the bank's Board of Directors, and in 1991 he moved into the role of Chairman Emeritus. He not only founded the Vontobel Foundation, but also the Creative Aging Foundation, and the Lyra Foundation to support young musical talents. For many years, he served as Chairman of the Zurich Stock Exchange, and was a member of the board of the Swiss Bankers Association and of the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, as well as Chairman of the German-Swiss Chamber of Commerce. As the father of two daughters and a son, he was not only a banker through and through, but also an author and publicist, a citizen sensitive to many key issues, and a keen observer of his time. He passed away on January 3, 2016, in his 100th year.

Foundation Board

The Foundation Board is the highest body of the Vontobel Foundation. Based on the Foundation's charter, the Board defines the focus of our funding activities and decides on the allocation of funding contributions.

	<p>Dr. iur. Hans-Dieter Vontobel Chairman of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Dr. Hans-Dieter Vontobel represents the third founding generation of the Vontobel family. He was CEO and subsequently chaired the Board of Directors of Vontobel Holding AG until 2002. Since the Vontobel Foundation's establishment in 1993 by his father, Dr. Hans Vontobel, Hans-Dieter Vontobel has been a member of the Foundation Board and its Chairman since 2005.</p>
<p>Dr. iur. et. lic. oec. HSG Urs Landolf Vice Chairman of the Foundation Board and Chairman of the Investment Committee</p> <p>Dr. Urs Landolf has been a legal advisor at Wenger & Vieli Attorneys-at-Law in Zurich since 2015. Previously, he was a long-time partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers in tax and legal consulting. Dr. Landolf is active as a foundation and board member, including as a trustee of the HSG Foundation. He also chaired the HSG Alumni Association for many years and is now an Honorary Senator of the University of St. Gallen.</p>	
	<p>Bruno Basler Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Bruno Basler is Chairman of the Board of Directors and a member of the Executive Board of EBP, a family-owned Swiss consulting and engineering firm. Until 2025, he served as Vice Chairman of the Board of Vontobel Holding. Bruno Basler holds a degree in civil engineering from ETH Zurich and a Master of Business Administration from INSEAD. He is active on several corporate and foundation boards, including serving as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Ernst Basler Family Foundation.</p>
<p>Dr. iur. Maja Baumann Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Dr. iur. Maja Baumann represents the fourth generation of the Vontobel family. Since 2020, she has been a partner at the law firm Swiss Legal, specializing in real estate, commercial, and corporate law, as well as banking supervisory issues. She is also a member of the Expert Commission for Construction and Real Estate Law at the Swiss Bar Association. Dr. Baumann is active as a foundation and board member, among others serving as Chairman of the Zurich Zoo Foundation's board and as a member of the Vontobel Holding AG board.</p>	

	<p>Ines Brunner Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Ines Brunner holds a Master's degree in business economics from the University of Zurich and a Bachelor's degree in physiotherapy from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences. After working in internal auditing at a bank, she turned to physiotherapy and worked in various roles in both hospitals and private practices. At the Vontobel Foundation, Ms. Brunner is responsible for small grants in the area of education.</p>
<p>Nicole von Däniken-Wettergren Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Nicole von Däniken-Wettergren represents the fourth founding generation of the Vontobel family. She holds a Master's degree in economics and has held various positions at Vontobel Holding AG. She is a board member of Barry's Switzerland and, as a board member of the Vontobel Foundation, is responsible for small grants in the area of social welfare.</p>	
	<p>Dr. phil. Katja Gentinetta Member of the Foundation Board and the Investment Committee</p> <p>Katja Gentinetta is a political philosopher and author. She is a regular publisher and speaker on security, social and economic policy issues. She moderated "Sternstunde Philosophie" and "NZZ Standpunkte" on the Swiss television broadcaster SRF, and today she leads the talks at the Swiss Institute of International Studies. From 2006 to 2011, she was Deputy Director of the think tank Avenir Suisse. She teaches at the universities of Zurich and Lucerne and holds various board and foundation memberships, including at ICRC and as Chairperson of the Geneva Graduate Institute.</p>
<p>Dr. Isabelle Herter-Aeberli Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Dr. Isabelle Herter-Aeberli is a Senior Scientist in the Laboratory of Nutrition and Metabolic Epigenetics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. Her research focuses on micronutrient deficiencies and their connections to obesity. At the same time, she is also a lecturer at the institution and supervises Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD theses in her role as Director of Studies for the continuing education programs in Nutrition and Health at ETH.</p>	

	<p>Dr. phil. Peter Maurer Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Dr. Peter Maurer led the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN from 2004 to 2010 and then served as Secretary of State at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. From 2012 to 2022, he shaped humanitarian aid as Chairman of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Today, he is involved in various boards of trustees and serves as Chairman of the Basel Institute on Governance, Senior Fellow at the Geneva Graduate Institute, and a board member of Zurich Insurance.</p>
<p>Dr. med. vet. Alex Rübel Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Dr. Alex Rübel was the Director of the Zurich Zoo for nearly 30 years. Under his leadership, the zoo developed into a conservation center and one of the most modern zoos in the world. Dr. Rübel serves as President of the University of Zurich Alumni Association and contributes his expertise to various boards of trustees.</p>	
	<p>Dr. oec. Martin Sieg Castagnola Member of the Foundation Board and the Investment Committee</p> <p>Dr. Martin Sieg was Chief Financial Officer and a member of the Executive Board of Vontobel Holding AG from 2008 to 2020. Before that, he served on the senior management team of Zürcher Kantonalbank. Today, he is an independent consultant and a member of various boards of trustees and administrative boards.</p>
<p>Prof. Dr. med. em. Giatgen Spinas Member of the Foundation Board</p> <p>Prof. Dr. med. em. Giatgen Spinas is the former Director of the Clinic for Endocrinology, Diabetology, and Clinical Nutrition at the University Hospital Zurich. He is a member of the University Council of the University of Lucerne and an honorary member of Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMW). Prof. Spinas also serves as Co-Director of The LOOP Zurich, a center for translational research with a focus on precision medicine. In addition, he is a member of the Zurich Ethics Commission, a consulting physician at the Oberengadin Hospital, and is active in various foundations.</p>	

Our Commitment

The Vontobel Foundation is a grant-making foundation. As an independent shareholder of Vontobel Holding AG, the significant package of shares it holds constitutes its foundation capital. With the income generated by this shareholding, it provides support for Swiss charitable organizations, contributing to their projects financially and helping members of the upcoming generation take their place as the scientists and leaders of tomorrow. It assists economically disadvantaged individuals and families in Switzerland with grants to cover their living costs and allow them to become active members of society. And it provides scholarships to financially needy students.

We support initiatives with the following goals:

- Promoting an autonomous life for individuals and communities
- Promoting equal opportunities in education and the workplace
- Establishing the basis for physical and mental health
- Sustainably protecting the living conditions of humans and animals
- Promoting cohesion and understanding in society
- Supporting economically disadvantaged individuals and families

Support for Individuals

The Vontobel Foundation supports economically disadvantaged individuals and families in Switzerland with grants to cover their living costs and allow them to become active members of society. And it provides scholarships to financially needy students and apprentices.

Social Assistance

The Vontobel Foundation stands by individuals or families who find themselves in financial distress.

Switzerland has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Yet many people feel the pressure of the country's high cost of living and can fall into financial hardship. Families, people with physical and mental disabilities, or individuals living on a modest pension are particularly at risk. The Vontobel Foundation supports people living in Switzerland who are urgently in need of financial assistance, whether to cover everyday costs or to participate as members of society. A grant is made if it will sustainably improve the individual's personal and financial situation or bridge a temporarily difficult situation.



Scholarships

The Vontobel Foundation supports university students and apprentices who find themselves in financial distress.

Anyone who wants to pursue an educational path should not be hindered by doing so because of financial barriers. The Vontobel Foundation awards individual scholarships to economically disadvantaged students and apprentices in all disciplines to ensure they have access to education, provided that they live in Switzerland and are enrolled in their initial education at a Swiss educational institution. Our scholarships are intended to supplement family or state support.



Support for Organizations

The Vontobel Foundation promotes projects led by Swiss charitable institutions in the areas of social welfare, culture and society, as well as nature and science.

Social Initiatives in Switzerland

The Vontobel Foundation is committed to equal opportunity through integration and to projects that promote mental health.

We support projects that contribute to equal opportunities in education and in the workplace. Well-targeted integration projects enable people to live independently and contribute to society. In this way, poverty is reduced, and sought-after professionals receive training. Such projects make a positive impact throughout Switzerland or more specifically in the Zurich region. We also support projects dedicated to promoting mental health. We are convinced that psychological stability is the basic prerequisite for independent and responsible action.

Social initiatives abroad

The Vontobel Foundation helps individuals and communities worldwide earn a sustainable income through education and entrepreneurial approaches, thus preventing poverty and exclusion.

Our funded projects improve the income of disadvantaged demographic groups. The support should not create dependencies but rather empower people to shape their own lives. This corresponds to our understanding of sustainable poverty reduction. Our funding activities focus on:

- Projects concerning education and vocational training
- Initiatives with an entrepreneurial approach
- Projects promoting health
- Initiatives reinforcing nature conservation efforts, together with local communities

We expect our project partners to achieve a transformative impact and pursue an innovative approach that can be scaled up after an initial phase.

Nature and Science

The Vontobel Foundation is committed to initiatives and projects that contribute to sustainable living conditions for both humans and animals.

Intact ecosystems are essential for life. We support projects that strengthen animal welfare, protect nature, and sustainably shape land use. In the area of Nature, we support projects addressing the following issues:

- The dilemma between animal welfare, nature, and nutrition
- Nature and species protection in Switzerland and abroad
- Landscape protection in Switzerland and abroad
- Small education-oriented nature conservation projects
- Education and awareness in dealing with nature
- Zoos, wildlife parks, and nature museums in the greater Zurich area
- Applied animal protection
- Beratungsprojekte zum Wohle der Natur

We support young researchers at established research institutes focusing on the following issues:

- Ecologically regenerative land use
- Animal husbandry and nutrition
- "One Health" topics such as zoonoses or antibiotic resistance
- Scientific bases for animal-assisted mental health therapies

Medical research

The Vontobel Foundation promotes high-quality medical research conducted by young researchers.

Medical research enables the development of new treatments, medications, and therapies. We contribute to this progress by supporting young researchers working on a relevant project at an established research institute. Through this support, we are also increasing the competitiveness of Switzerland as a research hub.

In general, we support salaries for early-career researchers (PhD candidates, doctoral candidates, and others with protected research time) but do not provide support covering costs of materials and laboratory.

Culture and Society

The Vontobel Foundation supports various initiatives that promote social cohesion and understanding.

In the field of Culture and Society, we back initiatives by recognized and respected organizations that foster unity and build bridges between different demographic groups and generations. The projects we support are transformative in nature and have a wide-ranging impact, focusing on initiatives grounded in the values of freedom, security, and responsibility. Together, we contribute to a strong democracy.

↳ Insights into our funding activities

Thanks to our project partners, we are able to engage ourselves and achieve positive impacts for society. Learn about some of the projects we have supported in 2025. We present more projects on our website at: vontobel-stiftung.ch/projects.

Social Initiatives in Switzerland

Multimondo: Entering working life, step by step

The Vontobel Foundation is supporting MULTIMONDO's mentoring program from 2025 to 2026. The program aims to accompany socially disadvantaged people with migration backgrounds as they integrate into the Swiss labor market.

MULTIMONDO is a competence center in Biel/Bienne dedicated to supporting the integration of people who have come to Switzerland as migrants and have neither access to social services nor any entitlement to unemployment benefits. For these people, a job search is made even more difficult thanks to language barriers, a lack of social networks, and diplomas they may have earned but are not formally recognized here. MULTIMONDO addresses these challenges through individualized support.

Its mentoring program is divided into three modules: The first module focuses on assessment and goal setting. Certified adult educators conduct an initial assessment with participants. They evaluate their language proficiency, clarify competencies, and identify professional interests. Based on this, a short- and medium-term action plan is developed.

In the second module 2, participants gain a practical tool kit for an effective job search. It consists of ten course units that provide participants with the tools needed for a successful job search. Here, they learn how the Swiss labor market functions, compile a comprehensive job application dossier for themselves, and build self-confidence through a simulated job interview.

Module 3 concerns mentoring support. In this module, participants are paired with professionally experienced volunteer mentors for at least six months. These mentors help them apply what they have learned and open doors to both professional and personal networks.

In addition to this structured program, MULTIMONDO also complements the mentoring program with additional offerings. In collaboration with several companies in the region, for example, the organization provides introductory courses in facility management, culinary skills, and watch production.



Sporteegration: Sport and community as a means of integrating refugees

The Vontobel Foundation is supporting the SPORTEGRATION Association from 2024 to 2026 with basic funding promoting the integration of refugees through a varied and cost-free program of sports.



The SPORTEGRATION Association's weekly plan boasts a huge variety of courses, from swimming, yoga, running, fitness boxing, and dancing to football, basketball, volleyball, Pilates, and Aikido. But also on the program are computer and language courses. These training courses take place in seven different cities and sometimes online as well.

SPORTEGRATION brings refugees, expats, and locals together; through participation in all these different sporting activities, they make friends and give each other support. Refugees can train cost-free, while locals pay a nominal donation.

Complementing the extensive sports program is a mentorship program for companies, allowing individual mentors to accompany refugees on a personal basis, supporting them if they have questions about life in Switzerland, for example, or challenges at school, or are searching for an apprenticeship. They also help them learn the German language.

SPORTEGRATION is not just about physical fitness, but also about putting some structure into one's everyday life, finding meaningful employment, and gaining a sense of belonging. All these goals have a positive effect on psychological well-being and are essential for successful integration. SPORTEGRATION's approach is based on a combination of four focal points: developing one's potential, creating equal opportunities, promoting holistic health, and providing space for intercultural exchange.

With the support of the Vontobel Foundation, SPORTEGRATION is investing in the expansion of its offering and locations between 2024 and 2026, as well further professionalizing the organization.

family-help Association: Living a healthy, secure, and effective life

The Vontobel Foundation is supporting Zurich-based family-help Association by providing basic funding from 2024 to 2026. The most important goal of the family-help Association's services for refugee children, adolescents, expectant mothers, and families is to reinforce the attributes that can make them more resilient and to lessen the chances that they will pass their own emotional trauma on to subsequent generations.

Since 2017, the family-help Association has been offering individual and group psychotherapeutic therapies for refugee children, adolescents, expectant mothers, and families following an experience in which they have had to flee their own country. Four years after its establishment, the association also began supporting refugees by providing daily structure to those with severe psychological stress and trauma-related disorders.

If required, family-help also offers support in the form of social work to anyone who is receiving psychotherapeutic care, facilitating the networking efforts of the various actors working in the asylum sector, such as community officials, schools, and other training centers.



Thanks to the therapy provided and by promoting practical, culture-specific skills and German language skills, the aim is for refugees to gradually be able to settle in Switzerland. Healthy processes are initiated allowing them to develop, reduce the consequences of trauma, and take steps towards social and financial independence. At the same time as their mental health is strengthened, learning and performance are improved and self-esteem and self-confidence are also increased.

The concepts applied by family-help are based on the latest findings from developmental psychology, attachment theory, and trauma therapy. Its projects are scientifically evaluated and continuously refined.

In order to counteract the shortage of skilled workers in the areas of child and adolescent psychotherapy and trauma therapy, as well as in the treatment and support of refugees, family-help also offers training positions for prospective specialists and further education for an interdisciplinary audience.

Social initiatives abroad

SANNI Foundation: Strengthening healthcare and young people

The SANNI Foundation is engaged in providing vocational training to healthcare professionals in hospitals, community health workers in remote villages, and marginalized young people in Myanmar. Vontobel is providing support for the project from 2025 to 2027.

The Zurich-based SANNI Foundation promotes education and medical care for children and women. In Myanmar, it has been working since 2014 in partnership with Medical Action Myanmar (MAM), a non-profit organization that not only operates a network of hospitals providing free treatment to people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds but also trains medical personnel.

Since the military coup there in 2021, the humanitarian situation in Myanmar has deteriorated, with serious consequences for the healthcare system. Many doctors have left the country. This project helps fill the resulting skills gap by training more than



150 nurses, counselors, and patient managers each year. The training program consists of a four-week course combining theory and practical instruction.

Healthcare provision is particularly precarious in remote regions. There, part of the funding provided is invested in training “community health workers” – village residents trained as first-line medical responders. Some 750 villagers receive this training each year. Equipped with basic medical know-how and an array of health apps, they are able to spot diseases, in some cases providing initial treatment, while referring severe cases to professional medical facilities.

A large proportion of Myanmar’s population lives below the poverty line. As a result, many young people have no choice but to drop out of school in order to work and contribute to family in-

come. This project also enables young people from the poorest neighborhoods to access practical vocational training, for example in skilled trades or commerce, which can create income opportunities for them – and future prospects.

Mudiro Association: Health from North Namibia to Zambia

The Vontobel Foundation is providing support for the project “Mudiro Multiplier 2025 and 2026: Education” led by the Bern-based Mudiro Association, whose goal is to unite health, education, and awareness to establish long-term, stable, and well-functioning healthcare systems in Namibia and Zambia.

The Mudiro Association pursues a vision of assisting people living in remote regions of Africa in meeting their fundamental needs for healthcare and education. The Kavango region in northern Namibia and selected areas in Zambia are among the most neglected regions in Africa when it comes to these two basic human needs. The health situation of the population is precarious; women and children are particularly at risk.

Mudiro, together with the University of Namibia, the Ministry of Health, and local health facilities, organizes training programs for local doctors and caregivers. The focal points of this training are sexual and reproductive health and the rights of young people. Gynecology and obstetrics are also part of the program, delivered by women for women.



Each year, approximately 20 doctors and other healthcare professionals from Switzerland and Germany travel as volunteers on assignment to Namibia and Zambia, sharing their expertise with local colleagues.

The primary goal of the project is to sustainably improve the quality of healthcare and education in North Namibia and Zambia through targeted activities. Mudioo pursues a multiplicative approach, whereby the training of local professionals, the deployment of mobile clinics, and public awareness work together to establish long-term, stable, and functioning healthcare systems.

Thanks to this continuous training of medical professionals, the population is assured access to qualified health services even after the project itself has concluded.

In addition to training local professionals, Mudioo also operates what is called the "Mobile Clinic." Using a truck that has been converted into a doctor's office, medical personnel are able to reach people in the poorest, remote areas who cannot afford transportation to a hospital.



Nature und Science

PanEco Foundation: Reconstruction of the Orangutan Sanctuary on Sumatra

PanEco has been working on Sumatra since 1996 to preserve orangutans, protect their tropical rainforest habitat, and establish a sustainable livelihood for the local population. The Vontobel Foundation has supported this project for many years.

The PanEco Foundation has been committed to nature and species conservation and environmental education in both Switzerland and Indonesia since 1996. It operates three programs: in Sumatra, the Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Program in Indonesia, and in Switzerland, the Thuraun Nature Center and the Berg am Irchel Bird of Prey Sanctuary.

The Orangutan Conservation Program aims to achieve stable, well-networked orangutan populations as well as intact rainforest ecosystems over the long term on Sumatra. The PanEco Foundation is active in the following areas: Rehabilitation and reintroduction of orangutans, Behavioral research and monitoring of orangutans, Combating illegal wildlife trade, Rainforest conservation in various ecosystems, Environmental education in Indonesia and Switzerland.



Due to the steady loss of their natural habitat, orangutans are finding their way into plantations and gardens, where they come into conflict with humans. They are also kept illegally as pets and can end up being traded in illicit wildlife trafficking.

Since 1998, PanEco has operated a rescue and care center for orangutans that the local authorities have handed over to it. At the center, they are nursed back to health and later resettled in protected areas.

At the end of 2024, prolonged rains on Sumatra led to several landslides that severely affected PanEco's rescue and care center, covering large parts of the site in mud and debris. Many of the enclosures and the veterinary clinic were destroyed by the mud. The team remained unharmed, but two of the 41 orangutans did not survive the mudslide.

The first step was to ensure basic daily care and rehabilitation for the animals while clearing the debris. Although the immediate measures did stabilize the situation, the restoration process will still take considerable time and effort. The clinic, enclosures, and other damaged facilities must all be rebuilt; however, any reconstruction must begin with an evaluation whether the site is still viable at all, given the natural hazards it is subject to.

The Vontobel Foundation is contributing to the funding of the evaluation and subsequent reconstruction to ensure the long-term viability of the rescue and care center.

University of Bern, Institute of Ecology & Evolution: Protecting alpine birds

From 2026 to 2028, the Vontobel Foundation is providing support for the University of Bern's project "Ensuring the Survival of Alpine Birds in a Rapidly Warming World." The project aims to investigate the physiological limits of alpine bird species under heat stress and to identify microclimatic refuges that can ensure their survival.

In the Swiss Alps, average temperatures have risen by two degrees Celsius over the past one hundred years – and are projected to continue increasing. Alpine bird species living above the tree line are particularly affected: for example, the rock ptarmigan and the rock partridge. While the ptarmigan's range has declined, the rock partridge, originally native to southern Europe, may actually benefit from higher temperatures.

Dr. Ian Ausprey of the University of Bern is using cutting-edge technology to investigate how these two species are adapting their behavior to local microclimates. This innovative research project combines three approaches. First, the research team is developing physiological models that determine the temperatures at which alpine birds suffer heat stress. In addition to their metabolic rate, it is expected that other factors such as the density and reflectivity of the birds' plumage also play a key role.

Second, individual rock ptarmigans and rock partridges are to be fitted with state-of-the-art GPS transmitters that will record not only their movements but also the ambient temperature where they are. Third, thermal-imaging drones will transmit data from the birds' surroundings to creating thermal maps of the specific alpine landscapes in which these species live, identifying the relatively cooler microhabitat structures that provide them with refuge from the heat – for example, rock outcroppings or shaded scree fields.

The project illustrates how scientific research can generate concrete recommendations for managing microhabitat structures in alpine landscapes and thus contribute directly to biodiversity conservation.



StadtNatur Association: Free rein for hedgehogs & their friends

During 2025, the Vontobel Foundation supported the project "Free rein for hedgehogs & their friends," led by the association StadtNatur, with the goal of protecting hedgehogs and other small animals in Zurich and improving their habitats.

Hedgehogs live predominantly in residential areas — but they are under pressure there. In Zurich, space that could be considered potential hedgehog habitat declined by 40 percent between 1991 and 2016.

With a team of more than 60 volunteers, the Zurich-based association StadtNatur conducted an investigation in 2025 of the current distribution of hedgehogs in the city by identifying traces left by the animals in specially built tunnels. The results provided some reassurance: compared with 2016/2017, the hedgehog population in Zurich has slightly recovered.



To help make sure that this positive trend continues, the association launched the project "Free rein for hedgehogs & their friends." For hedgehogs, the city — with all its walls and fences — is virtually a labyrinth of obstacles and dead ends, making access to food and safe places difficult. These small pedestrians need to be able to move freely, but any barrier they encounter that is more than 20 centimeters high is one they will probably not be able to climb over.

Once again, the association quickly assembled a team of volunteers who, in coordination with property owners, created small openings in dozens of fences and walls, marking these passageways with small metal plaques. Where needed, they also installed such aids as small wooden boards to help hedgehogs avoid hazards like garden ponds and even shafts of light – a real blessing for these vulnerable creatures. Cameras mounted to record the impact of these changes documented that these new passages started to be used by hedgehogs and other small wild animals within just a few days.

In addition to this project, StadtNatur also raises public awareness of the needs of small wild animals by means of brochures, excursions, school projects, and information provided on its online reporting platform.

Culture and Society

Nova Fundaziun Origen: Cultural Project in the Swiss High Alps

Nova Fundaziun Origen is a cultural institution located in the mountains of Graubünden. Origen creates spaces for encounters, social exchange, and critical reflection on the world. The Vontobel Foundation supports its work through basic funding from 2025 to 2027.



If you drive over the Julier Pass in the Engadin, you cannot miss it: the White Tower of Mulegns. This unique structure serves as a performative space and commemorates the history of the confectioners who once emigrated from the region. Built in close collaboration with the ETH in Zurich, it is considered the tallest 3D-printed structure in the world and represents an important milestone in resource-efficient construction for the future.

The White Tower is one of several current projects of the culturally oriented foundation Nova Fundaziun Origen, which has been active in the canton of Graubünden since 2005. Its Romansh name “Origen” corresponds to the English word “origin,” fittingly, as exploring the roots of local cultural history and reinterpreting traditions characterize all of Origen’s work.

The foundation’s engagement is helping to revitalize some of the small villages in the region that are at risk of dying out, strengthen social structures, and foster a pioneering spirit, with the aim of quietly enabling sustainable development in the Alpine region. The initiative began with theatrical productions, but over the years, various larger projects have been added in areas such as hospitality, heritage conservation, historical research, village development, and new construction technologies.

Origen’s cultural activities promote new forms of performing arts, an innovative architectural culture, and high-quality craftsmanship. The jobs created through these projects support social cohesion in the villages and are even attracting new residents to the valley. Its collaborations with renowned universities reinforce the pioneering spirit of the entire region and help fortify Switzerland’s innovative capacity. In the village of Riom, a campus is planned to serve as the organization’s creative engine and make new collaborative projects possible. The campus will reflect the rich history of the site, which dates back to Roman times, while encouraging an exciting future to take shape.



Public and Society Research Center, University of Zurich: “Everything’s Fake – Or Is It?”

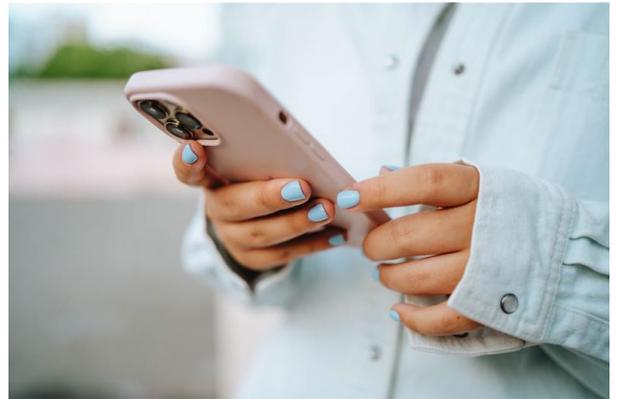
The Public and Society Research Center of the University of Zurich (“fög”) is launching an educational project called “Everything’s Fake – Or Is It? Promoting Confidence in Dealing with Media and AI” for schools. It encourages young people to engage with media and Artificial Intelligence and to their own media consumption. The Vontobel Foundation is supporting this project from 2025 to 2028.

Founded in 1997, fög – the Public and Society Research Center at the University of Zurich – specializes in media and public communication research. The center focuses on the digital transformation of the public sphere, particularly the evolution of the media and its consequences for society. With the publication of its yearbook “Quality of the Media,” fög systematically and empirically examines the development of the media’s ecosystem and the habits of its users. In addition, fög has long been active in continuing education and media literacy promotion; its offerings are currently used by approximately 1,300 schools in Switzerland via the “CheckNews” platform.

The use of Artificial Intelligence in public communication increasingly makes it difficult for social media users to distinguish genuine content from fake news and deepfakes, and to assess the truthfulness of media messages. This is especially challenging for young people, who frequently use social media; a high level of media literacy is called for.

For this reason, it is particularly important for young people to acquire the skills needed to access and critically evaluate information. This will enable them, in the future, to actively engage and contribute within the evolving environment of a digital society and public sphere.

With the project “Everything’s Fake – Or Is It?”, fög is developing an attractive and contemporary curriculum for schools. Both students and teachers are encouraged to engage with the topics of media and Artificial Intelligence. The project aims to empower young people to critically assess the media content they consume and to evaluate its credibility.



∟ Monograph series 2025

The Vontobel Foundation publishes a series of in-depth monographs addressing current and fundamental issues that contribute to political, social, economic, and cultural discussions.

The publications are published quarterly **in German** and are available in print form as well as free e-books. They can be downloaded or ordered from the website vontobel-stiftung.ch. The printed edition has a print run of 8,000 copies, and the series is downloaded to an electronic device approximately 10,000 times per year.

The following publications were published in 2025:



Jerusalem – Ohne Zorn und Zweifel März 2025

Autor: Michael Wolffsohn

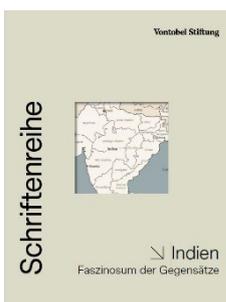
Karten: Anja Lemcke



Ein bisschen Lust am Untergang Juli 2025

Autor: Rainer Hank

Illustrationen: Martial Leiter



Indien – Faszinosum der Gegensätze September 2025

Autor: Urs Schoettli

Karten: Anja Lemcke



Schlangen Dezember 2025

Autorin: Franziska Witschi

Illustrationen: Monica Biondo

Supported projects 2025

Complete list of all projects approved in 2025, listed in random order:

Social Welfare

Solidarity with the World Foundation, Wädenswil

Life Choices Academy: programming training for young people in Cape Town, South Africa

www.sdw-sam.ch

Civic Association Corazones para Perú, Urubamba

Suyana Warmi: empowerment of women in the province of Urubamba, Cusco region, Peru

www.corazonesparaperu.com

Friedheim School Bubikon, Bubikon

Center of Excellence for Equine Assisted Interventions (EAI) for young people with mental health disorders

www.friedheim.ch

Avanzar Foundation, Zumikon

Funding support for the program "Entrepreneurship for Women in Precarious Situations"

www.fundacion-avanzar.org

Multimondo, Biel/Bienne

Mentoring program: workplace integration of people with migration experience

www.multimondo.ch

Addis Guzo Association, Bern

iRiplus: "Integration, Rehabilitation, Inclusion Plus Education"

www.addisguzo.com

Brücke Le Pont Association, Zurich

"Karité - More Income Thanks to Shea Butter"

www.bruecke-lepont.ch

Fondation des Apprentis d'Auteuil International, Vernier

High-impact training and professional integration project for young people in Morocco

www.faai.ch

Solidar Suisse, Zurich

"New Perspectives for Young People"

www.solidar.ch

Aiducation International, Zurich

Sponsorship of the "1000 Young Entrepreneurs Start-up Award Program"

www.aiducation.org

Salvation Army Foundation Switzerland, Zurich

Christmas celebration for people affected by poverty

www.regionalbuero-zuerich.heilsarmee.ch

HelloWelcome, Lucerne

"HelloWelcome: Creating Connections"

www.hellowelcome.ch

UNICEF Switzerland & Liechtenstein, Zurich

GIGA: connecting schools to the Internet

www.unicef.ch

Hear the World Foundation, Steinhausen

OUVIR (Portuguese for "hearing"): practical training in pediatric audiology in Brazil

<https://www.hear-the-world.com>

SANNI Foundation, Zurich

Vocational training for medical personnel and vulnerable children in Myanmar

www.sanni-foundation.ch

Association François-Xavier Bagnoud - FXB Switzerland, Geneva

Strengthening employability and personal capacities of vulnerable youth and women in Myanmar

www.fxb.org

Smiling Gecko Association, Dübendorf

Vocational training center "Skills Hub"

www.smilinggecko.ch

Swiss Red Cross Canton Zurich, Zurich

Support for the mentoring project "Perspective Work" of the SRC Canton Zurich

www.srk-zuerich.ch

House of Encouragement Foundation, Bubikon

Sponsorships for unemployed orphans and young people for vocational training

www.houseofencouragement.org

Läbesruum ("Space for Living"), Winterthur

Covering costs of an educational program for individuals lacking funding

www.laebesruum.ch

Suyana Foundation, Zug

Practical training in mechanized agricultural practices for young people in eastern Rwanda

www.suyana.ch

ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), Geneva

Establishment of a Center of Excellence for physical rehabilitation in Africa

www.icrc.org

SOS Ticino, Lugano

Socio-professional integration of young people

www.sos-ti.ch

Nature and Science – Nature**Association Region Thal/Natur Park Thal, Balsthal**

Funding of the public viewing area dedicated to bats

www.naturparkthal.ch

PanEco Foundation, Berg am Irchel

Covering costs for the reconstruction of an orangutan rescue and rehabilitation center near Medan, Sumatra

www.paneco.ch

Association for Agroecology, Aarau

Further development of the value chain network for Swiss organic pasture-raised beef

www.agroecologyworks.ch

ISME (Swiss Institute for Equine Medicine), Vetsuisse Faculty, University of Bern, Bern

Funding for a doctoral thesis on "The Role of Beta-Endorphins in Horses with PPID"

www.isme.unibe.ch

StadtNatur, Zurich

Citizen-science project: "Free Rein for Hedgehogs & Their Friends"

www.abenteuer-stadtnatur.ch

Association for Farm and Pasture Slaughter, Bubikon

Support for a mobile slaughter unit and digital pre-mortem animal inspection

Eselmüller Foundation, Seeberg (BE) Grasswil

Coverage of the foundation's operating costs

www.eselmueллерstiftung.ch

Walter Zoo AG Gossau, Gossau

Support for the "Lighthouse Project for Species Conservation"

www.walterzoo.ch

Association Alpine Tetrao Tetrix, Gstaad

Restoration of black grouse habitat through goat grazing and mechanical scrub clearance

www.projetfaune.com

University of Bern, Institute of Ecology & Evolution, Division of Conservation Biology, Bern

Support for the project "Persistence of Alpine Birds in a Rapidly Warming World"

www.cb.iee.unibe.ch

Anesthesiology Department, Zurich Animal Hospital, Zurich

"Evaluation of Analgesia after Perioperative Electroacupuncture in Dogs Suffering from Herniated Disc"

www.tierspital.uzh.ch

OPPAL, Vevey

Improving cohabitation with large carnivores

www.oppal.ch

Fundaziun Pro Terra Engiadina, Zernez

Funding of information stations about peatlands and biodiversity

www.proterrae.ch

Anna Zemp Foundation, Männedorf

Contributions to the maintenance and renewal of the foundation's infrastructure

www.annazempstiftung.ch

Association Network Switzerland - Transcarpathia/Ukraine NeSTU, Stans

Organic high-stem fruit growing and sheep farming in Transcarpathia, Ukraine

www.nestu.org

Agroscope, Zurich

Synergies between flood protection, irrigation, and biodiversity promotion

www.agroscope.admin.ch

Clinic for Zoo, Companion, and Wild Animals, Vetsuisse Faculty, University of Zurich, Zurich

Doctoral stipend for 1.5 years for the project "Use of Salt Licks on the Lewa Savannah at Zurich Zoo"

www.zooklinik.uzh.ch

Bird and Wildlife Care Schaffhausen, Guntmadingen

Equipment required for the bird and wildlife care station

www.vogelpflege-sh.ch

University of Zurich, Institute of Plant and Microbiology, Zurich

"Bi-Functional Rhizobial Inoculants Used for Sustainable Agriculture (BRIUSA)"

www.botinst.uzh.ch/en/research/pessi.html

Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL, Frick

Application for co-funding of a research project to support legume-rich crop rotation

www.fibl.org

Swiss Institute of Equine Medicine (ISME), Vetsuisse Faculty, University of Bern, Avenches
 “Sleep Deprivation and Hormonal Dysregulation in Horses”

www.isme.unibe.ch

BirdLife Switzerland, Zurich

“Natural Gems Plus for the Web of Life”

www.birdlife.ch

Nature and Science – Medical Research

ETH Zurich, Institute of Microbiology and Immunology, Zurich, M. Künzler

Funding for a PhD research project in the field of medicine (immunology)

Faculty of Medicine, University of Geneva, Geneva, Ch. Dibner

“Therapeutic Applications of the α - and β -Cellular Clock Function for Type 2 Diabetes (CIRCA-DIAB)”

University of Bern, Bern, E. Baumgartner

Funding for a technical assistant and some lab materials

University Hospital Basel, Clinic for Endocrinology, Diabetes & Metabolism, Basel, S. Urwyler

Clinical study to improve the diagnosis of cortisol deficiency/adrenal insufficiency

University of Zurich, Zurich, F. Vallelian

“Hemorrhage-Transformed Macrophages and NRF2 Signaling in Tumor Evolution and Treatment Resistance”

Cantonal Hospital of St. Gallen, St. Gallen, E. Daetwyler

Research funding / Junior researcher / Clinical research

Institute for Research in Biomedicine, Bellinzona, G. Guarda

“The Transcription Factor RFX7 in Autoreactive B Cells”

ETH Zurich, Institute of Microbiology, Zurich, A. Vagstad

“Illuminating the Role of a Post-Translationally Modified Domain of Unknown Function in Melioidosis”

Dermatology Department, University Hospital Zurich / University of Zurich, M. Mellett

“Investigating Immunometabolism in Psoriasis Pathogenesis”

University Hospital of Zurich, Department of Dermatology, Schlieren, H.D. Beer

“The Functions of Gasdermin A in Human Skin and in Skin Diseases”

University of Zurich, Institute of Chemistry, Zurich, O. Zerbe

“New Antibiotics Against Gram-Negative Bacteria with Slowed Resistance Development”

Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Prevention Institute (EBPI) of the University of Zurich, M. Puhan

“Mental Health Assessment of the Ukrainian and Swiss Population: the MAP Studies”

Institute for Infectious Diseases, University of Bern, Bern, M. L. Balmer

“FaibaGum - Reduce Overweight, One Bite at a Time”

Empa, Dübendorf, M. Gubser

Funding of a PhD research salary

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute TPH, Allschwil, M. Mayr

“Epidemiology and Risk Signature of Chronic Kidney Disease in Sub-Saharan Africa”

The LOOP Zurich, Zurich, M. Rudin

LOOP Translational Research Project

Urogynecology - Women's Clinic Bern, Bern, D. Höhn

Protected research time for early-career researchers - Project on urethral vascularization

Department of Rheumatology, University Hospital Zurich, Schlieren, C. Ospelt

"Site-Specific Fibroblast Activation in Chronic Inflammation"

University Children's Hospital Zurich, Zurich, R. Heule

"New Non-Invasive MR Biomarkers for Assessing Lung Function in Pediatric Patients"

University of Zurich, Zurich, L. K. Schnider

Funding of project on the effects of social isolation

Department of Rheumatology, University Hospital Zurich, Zurich, M. Elhai

"Deciphering Arthritis in Systemic Sclerosis"

Department of BioMedical Research, University of Bern, Bern, F. M. Conedera

"Stage-Specific Epigenetic Signatures in AMD: Novel Insights and Therapeutic Targets"

Department of Psychosomatic Medicine, University Hospital Basel, Basel, S. Dietsche

Project-related research time for the care of psychosomatically distressed patients in hospitals

ETH Zurich, Zurich, A. Hausmann

"Dissecting Molecular Determinants of M Cell-Mediated Antigen Sampling to Enhance Oral Vaccines"

University of Applied Sciences of Italian Switzerland (SUPSI), Lugano, L. Abo-Khayal

"AI-Based Multi-Omics Modeling for Early Detection and Microbiota-Targeted Neurotherapies"

Children's Hospital Zurich/Balgrist University Hospital, Zurich, M. Wachtel

Funding of a doctoral student salary for one year

University Hospital Zurich/University of Zurich, Zurich, S. Stolz

"CAR T-Therapy in Multiple Myeloma: Deciphering Resistance Mechanisms and Therapy Failure"

University of Zurich, Zurich, Ch. Schneider

Doctoral student salary for the further development of a research project

University of Basel, Department of Infectiology, Basel, M. Müller

Participation in the costs of conducting a study

ETH Zurich, Zurich, F. Chipper

Joint doctoral student scholarship at ETH Zurich in translational regenerative medicine

University of Bern - Department of BioMedical Research, Bern, S. Dori

Support for medical research

University Hospital Basel and ETH Zurich, Basel, L. Füchtbauer

"Brown Adipose Tissue as a Nutrient Buffer Through Diet-Induced Thermogenesis"

Department of Rheumatology, University Hospital Zurich, G. Kania

"Targeting Dysferlin as a Novel Therapeutic Target for Dilated Cardiomyopathy"

Balgrist University Hospital, Zurich, T. Götschi

"SPINALYSIS – AI-Supported Biomechanical Optimization of Spinal Fusions"

University of Zurich, Zurich, S. Tugues Solsona

"Decoding T-Cell Niches Shaping Response to Neoadjuvant Therapy in Colorectal Liver Metastasis"

Center for Gerontology at the University of Zurich Healthy Longevity Center, Zurich, Ch. Röcke

Vontobel Prize for Aging Research

Culture and Society

Année Politique Suisse (“Switzerland: The Year in Politics”), Bern

Redesign of the APS online research portal

www.anneepolitique.swiss

Fotomuseum Foundation Winterthur, Winterthur

Support for the exhibition “Poulomi Basu – Phantasmagorie”

www.fotomuseum.ch

Liberethica, Fribourg

“Christian Peace Ethics Under Scrutiny”

www.liberethica.ch

Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG), Zurich

Likrat prevention and dialogue program

www.swissjews.ch

Lucerne University of Teacher Education, Lucerne

Hybrid learning workshop for future-oriented and game-based Holocaust education

www.phlu.ch

Swiss Federation of Youth Parliaments, Bern

Youth+Engagement educational program

www.dsj.ch

Liberal Institute, Zurich

General donation

www.libinst.ch

Rietberg Museum - City of Zurich

Partial funding of the exhibition “Mongolia - A Journey Through Time”

www.rietberg.ch

Nova Fundaziun Origen, Riom

Support for the Origen cultural organization

www.origen.ch

University of Lucerne, Lucerne

Support for the Bern Security Dialogue

www.unilu.ch

Tonhalle-Gesellschaft Zürich AG, Zurich

“Chamber Music for Children” and Beethoven Membership - 2025/26 Season

www.tonhalle-orchester.ch

LAC Lugano Arte e Cultura, Ticino

“Jazz & Cross-Cultural Music Series” – planned concert series for the 2025/26 season

www.luganolac.ch

Swiss Science Center Technorama, Winterthur

“TECHNORAMA 2050 - Shaping the Future Together”

www.technorama.ch

Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, Lucerne

“Beethoven&Brahms – Monumental Masterpieces in a Minor Key”

www.sinfonieorchester.ch

Beyeler Museum AG / Fondation Beyeler, Riehen

Paul Cézanne's watercolor studio as a place for exchange and participation
www.fondationbeyeler.ch

Politools, Bern

Acquisition and further development of newstest.ch
www.politools.net

Zurich Art Society, Zurich

Mediating art at the Kunsthaus Zurich 2026–2028
www.kunsthhaus.ch

Lyra Foundation, Zurich

Support for exceptionally talented young musicians
www.lyra.ch

List of ongoing long-term projects in 2025, (medical research projects not included):**Eselmüller Foundation, Grasswil**

Operating cost support
www.eselmüller-stiftung.ch

Research Institute for Organic Agriculture FiBL, Frick

“Microbiome-Mediated Resistance for Root Rot Control in Peas – Development of a Microbial Biocontrol Prototype to Promote Sustainable Protein Production in Switzerland”
www.fibl.org

Foundation for the ICRC, Geneva

Red Cross and Red Crescent's “Missing Persons and Separated Families Centre”
www.icrc.org

THE LOOP Zurich

“StimuLOOP: Sensorimotor Precision Neurorehabilitation through Personalized Stimulation Loops”
www.theloopzurich.ch

University of Zurich and UZH Foundation

Chair in Sustainable Economics
www.uzhfoundation.ch

Zurich Art Society, Zurich

Mediating art at the Kunsthaus Zurich
www.kunsthhaus.ch

AO Alliance Foundation, Davos

Sub-Saharan traditional bonesetter training program
www.ao-alliance.org

Pestalozzi Overseas Children's Foundation, Zurich

“SkillsHub: Empowering Youth for Sustainable Futures”
www.pestalozziworld.com

NewTree, Bern

Program for sustainable food and income security in Burkina Faso
www.newtree.org

TearFund Switzerland (Ena), Zurich

"Education Instead of Poverty": vocational training for young people and young adults in Malawi
www.tearfund.ch

Elea Foundation, Zurich

Commitment as an "elea Philanthropic Investor"
www.elea.org

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Basel

"Climate Change and Health: Opportunities to Build Resilience in Switzerland and the Global South"
www.swisstph.ch

AlgorithmWatch CH, Zurich

AlgorithmWatch CH Funding Consortium
www.algorithmwatch.ch

Swiss Foundation Pro Mente Sana

Psychosocial and legal counseling for those affected, their families, and professionals in this field
www.promentesana.ch

Association Equilibre, Altdorf

Educational measures and job integration / JLT Company AG / KoKoTé
www.association-equilibre.com

SPORTEGRATION, Zurich

Professionalization and expansion of the organization
www.sportegration.ch

ROCK YOUR LIFE! Switzerland, Bern

Support for the development of a mentoring program for young people with a refugee background in Zurich
www.rockyourlife.org

Netz4, Zurich

"Coffee&Coaching": coaching program with a space for leisure activities and community
www.netz4.ch

The Offered Hand, Zurich

Young people and young adults receive support in individual chats
www.143.ch

family-help Association, Zurich

Further development and professionalization of the association
www.family-help.ch

Stapferhaus Foundation, Lenzburg

Partnership for dialogue and against polarization on pressing issues
www.stapferhaus.ch

Rigiblick Theater Association, Zurich

Support with operating grant
www.theater-rigiblick.ch

Research Center for the Public Sphere and Society at the University of Zurich (fög)

"All Fake - or What? Dealing with Media Sovereignty"
www.foeg.uzh.ch

Project Rescue Association, Zurich

Rescue, return, and reintegration for victims of human trafficking and prostitution
www.projectrescue.ch

The LOOP Zurich

LOOP translational research project

www.theloopzurich.ch

ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), Geneva

Establishment of a Center of Excellence for physical rehabilitation in Africa

www.icrc.org

MuKa Specialist Center, Association for the Promotion of Mother-Calf Husbandry, Birmensdorf

Conversion project for mother-calf husbandry in dairy production

www.mu-ka.ch

Linthebene Habitat Foundation, Tuggen

“Preserve – Enhance – Network”

www.lebensraum-linthebene.ch

Pro Riet Rheintal Association, Altstätten

“More Nature for Landscape and Settlement”

www.pro-riet.ch

Clinic for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy of the Psychiatric University Hospital Zurich

Animal-assisted therapies at the Psychiatric University Hospital Zurich

www.pukzh.ch, www.kjpd.uzh.ch

Walter Zoo, Gossau

“Lighthouse Project for Species Conservation”

www.walterzoo.ch, www.das-leuchtturmprojekt.ch

University of Bern, Institute of Ecology & Evolution, Division of Conservation Biology

“Persistence of Alpine Birds in a Rapidly Warming World”

www.cb.iee.unibe.ch

Agroscope, Zurich

Research project to promote farmland biodiversity and ecosystem services

www.agroscope.admin.ch

University of Zurich, Institute of Plant and Microbiology

“Bi-Functional Rhizobial Inoculants Used for Sustainable Agriculture (BRIUSA)”

www.botinst.uzh.ch

Clinic for Zoo, Companion and Wild Animals, Vetsuisse Faculty, University of Zurich

Use of salt licks in the Lewa Savannah at Zurich Zoo

www.zooklinik.uzh.ch

Swiss Institute of Equine Medicine (ISME), Vetsuisse Faculty, University of Bern

“Sleep Deprivation and Hormonal Dysregulation in Horses”

www.isme.unibe.ch

↳ Contacts

We would be happy to assist you with any questions or concerns.

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p. 12: Mudio Association (1) and Team Paneco (2)

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