

# **2022 Annual Report**



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

#### Title page

Ursula Keller, Professor of Experimental Physics at ETH Zurich, receives the 2022 Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist. She was presented with the award by Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Chair of the Marcel Benoist Foundation, on 3 November 2022.

### **Publication details**

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Ladies and Gentlemen

The presentation of the 2022 Swiss Science Prizes Marcel Benoist and Latsis once again met with great interest. For the first time, both prizes went to female researchers. Ursula Keller, Professor of Experimental Physics at ETH Zurich, was awarded the Marcel Benoist Prize for her ground-breaking work in short-time laser physics. The Latsis Prize went to Professor Kerstin Noëlle Vokinger of the University of Zurich for her interdisciplinary research in the fields of medicine, law and technology. The two researchers gave us a variety of insights into professional and personal aspects of their careers during the award ceremony.

Young researchers were also able to benefit from the knowledge and experience of the prizewinners: as part of a workshop they were given the opportunity to learn about the prizewinners' research fields and their importance to society, as well as to experience first-hand what a career in science entails.

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 them for their great commitment to science.

At the beginning of 2023, Nobel Prize winner Didier Queloz assumed the Chair of the Foundation. Since the beginning of the year, Martine Clozel, a representative of the business community, has also been on the Board of Trustees, thus reflecting the public-private partnership on which the Foundation is based. I am confident that the Marcel Benoist Prize will continue to gain momentum and visibility with these new appointments. The Federal Council will maintain its close ties with the Foundation: under the Foundation's statutes, the prize will continue to be presented by the head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER), and the Federal Council will still elect the members of the Foundation's Board.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Didier Queloz as the new Chair much joy and success in his work, and I look forward to the next award ceremony.

Guy Parmelin Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin Foundation Chair 2022

### 2022 prizewinner: Professor Ursula Keller

## **Pioneer in laser physics**

In 2022 Ursula Keller, Professor of Experimental Physics at ETH Zurich, was awarded the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist for her pioneering work in short-time laser physics. This enables the use of high-precision lasers not just in research but also in practical applications.



Prof. Ursula Keller, 2022 Marcel Benoist prizewinner, working with ultrafast laser pulses.

Ursula Keller has pushed the boundaries of ultrafast laser physics many times with both theoretical models and experimental results. Her invention of the Semiconductor Saturable Absorber Mirror (SESAM) has enabled the use of short-pulsed lasers in a variety of applications.

Ever since the laser was invented, researchers have sought to use it to transform materials. However, this was not possible with continuous laser beams because they were too inaccurate and heated up the materials too much. The solution was finally found in the use of pulsed laser light; however, this involved a complicated technique.

In 1991, Professor Keller solved the problem by using special SESAM semiconductors with solid-state lasers, enabling them to produce the required pulsed light. These light pulses last around a femtosecond – a millionth part of a billionth of a second. In this short time span the movements of atoms or the mechanisms of chemical reactions can be studied.

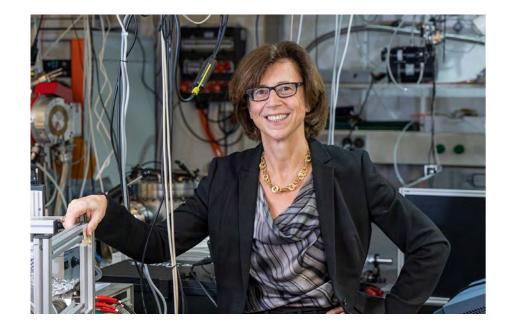
Today, the SESAM principle is used in many practical applications, including material cutting, optical communication, and computer and smartphone manufacture. It is also used in medical technology, where, for example, precise laser beams are used as scalpels in eye operations to correct the lens of the eye without damaging it. In addition, the ultrafast laser technology can be used to develop high-precision measuring instruments.

Ursula Keller also invented the world's most precise clock, the attoclock, which can measure attoseconds, i.e., the billionth parts of a billionth of a second. The attoclock is so accurate that it can be used to measure the fundamental processes of quantum mechanics.

The potential of short-pulsed lasers is great. One vision for the future is, for example, to find out whether the constants of nature are constant at all. It might even be possible to discover new planets based on accurate frequency measurements!

Ursula Keller was born in Zug in 1959 and graduated in physics at ETH Zurich in 1984. She obtained a Master's degree and PhD in applied physics at Stanford University. In 1989 she began independent research at AT&T Bell Labs in New Jersey. In 1993 she was appointed associate professor and in 1997 full professor of experimental physics at ETH Zurich, making her the institution's first female physics professor. From 2010 to 2022 Ursula Keller was director of the NCCR MUST (Molecular Ultrafast Science and Technology) research programme initiated by the SNSF. In 2012 she also founded the ETH Women Professors Forum (WPF), which she chaired until 2016. Ursula Keller has been awarded numerous prizes for her research achievements and was the first woman to receive the prestigious European Inventor Award from the European Patent Office for her life's work. In 2021 she was admitted to the US Academy of Sciences.

### An interview with Professor Ursula Keller



«It is a great honour to receive the Marcel Benoist prize. It is recognition for almost 30 years of basic and applied research at ETH Zurich and at the same time my first science award in Switzerland. I would like to thank my amazing research team, all postdocs, PhD students and external partners who have made this work possible.»

Prof. Ursula Keller, 2022 Marcel Benoist prizewinner

### What led you to become involved with lasers?

I have been fascinated by lasers since my first visit to ETH Zurich at an open day, where I was allowed to watch an experiment in optical communication with a modulated laser beam. In principle, I am interested in a great many topics in physics and in the natural sciences in general. However, the decisive factor was that I was able to plan and carry out the experiments in laser physics on my own. During my doctorate, I then continued my education in photonics and electronics, which are key technologies today and help solve many interdisciplinary problems.

# You have conducted research both in Switzerland and the USA. How do the two countries differ in this respect?

At top universities in the US there is a strong 'can do it' mentality. That was incredibly motivating. Also, the US is more than 20 years ahead of Switzerland in terms of women in science. I am grateful that I was able to start my research career in such an environment.

In contrast, ETH Zurich provides its professorships with much more basic funding, which means that researchers can work over a longer period of time on individual research areas. This has helped me a lot and has allowed me to come up with new innovations time and again. For example, in order to produce ever shorter laser pulses, we encountered new problems whose solutions opened up further, entirely new areas of research and resulted in inventions such as frequency combs, optical clocks and the attoclock.

Through my experience in industry in the US, we have created numerous spin-off companies from my group. In addition, most of my now almost 100 PhD students have been welcomed and recruited into the growing laser industry. Finally, our research results have a large industrial application and have generated more revenue than I have received in government research funding.

### In 1993 you were appointed as the first female physics professor at ETH Zurich. Since then you have campaigned for women in science. What progress has been made and where do you still see a need for action?

I was appointed to an associate professorship at ETH Zurich as a result of political measures to support the promotion of women. However, I was not really welcome in the physics department. That is why I wanted to prove that I could successfully lead a research group, first as a woman and later as a mother of two children. When I became director of the NCCR MUST (Molecular Ultrafast Science and Technology)<sup>1</sup> in 2010, I received a mandate directly from the Swiss National Science Foundation to do something for the promotion of women. Motivated by the MIT Report of 1999,<sup>2</sup> I succeeded in better networking the female professors at the two federal institutes of technology with the Women Professors Forum (WPF).<sup>3</sup> Right from the beginning we were committed to improving work culture, so that women are integrated and empowered at all levels. The current culture of informal, mostly male-dominated networks has a negative impact on women and discourages the next generation from rising to leadership positions. My goal is to change this through better governance. It is encouraging that more and more excellent women are breaking through the traditional glass ceiling, for example through more female assistant professors at ETH Zurich. The focus now is increasingly on validating progress at all levels with measurable performance criteria. However, there is still strong resistance to this in Switzerland. We should follow the example of the best university in the world, 4 MIT in the USA, which took the critical feedback of its female professors very seriously more than 20 years ago. The magazine Nature<sup>5</sup> recently published a fitting article on this topic with the following conclusion: "Good intentions are not enough to bring about change; nor are simple tallies, training programmes or unwarranted rosy views. Change requires sustained investment, appropriate incentives and evidence-based interventions. That is what I currently miss in the implementation of sustainable inclusive excellence.

<sup>1</sup> www.nccr-must.ch

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT (https://web.mit.edu/fnl/women/women.html).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://eth-wpf.ch

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See QS World University Ranking 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ryan, Michelle (2022): To advance equality for women, use the evidence. These are three mistakes universities make when they attempt to improve gender equity. Nature 604, 403 (https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-022-01045-y).

# Before the award ceremony you talked to young researchers. What do you recommend to these young people?

Switzerland provides a very good education. Although it is beautiful here, I definitely recommend spending time abroad learning and travelling. My time at Stanford University in California during my PhD and my first independent research at the famous AT&T Bell Laboratory in New Jersey were key to my further success at ETH Zurich. There I met a large number of top international people and learned a lot from them. I was also able to build an international network, which is very useful for further professional development.

People often ask what particular field of research they should choose. In principle, that is not really important. What is more important is that research is fun, that you have a talent for it, that you want to work for it and that the future job opportunities are interesting. To me, life means having fun, learning, and ultimately leaving a place in a better position than how I found it.

Something that has a really big impact on life is the decision to start a family. I did this relatively late and had my children at almost 38 and 40 years old respectively. I never gave up on my career dreams and was happy to leave my children at times in the care of my husband and other caregivers. This was enriching for my children, who are now also studying at ETH. The crucial factor is that your partner fully supports you.

In addition, I always made time for hobbies and good friends. Life is unique and I have taken advantage of that, although the expectations of women were very different in my time than they are today. I wish everyone the courage to seize new opportunities and the strength to get back up and move forward after a setback. Certain setbacks have enriched my life; from that point of view, a little flexibility in life never goes amiss.

Note: The interview was conducted in writing by the Foundation Secretary.

### Contact

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### **Further information**

https://ulp.ethz.ch/

### Foundation activities in 2022

The Foundation's activities focused on awarding the Swiss Science Prize Marcel Benoist. The 2022 award ceremony took place for the second time jointly with the Latsis Foundation and also offered young researchers the opportunity to participate. In addition, the Foundation updated its statutes. Its new structure will be implemented in 2023.

#### Selection of the prizewinner and award ceremony

The selection of the prizewinner was organised 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 the fields of mathematics, natural sciences and engineering in an open procedure held at the beginning of 2022. In a process committed to scientific excellence and involving an international panel of experts, the SNSF proposed Professor Ursula Keller of ETH Zurich as the 2022 prizewinner from a total of 13 eligible candidates. The prizewinner was confirmed by the Board of Trustees at its plenary meeting on 25 August 2022.

Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Chair of the Marcel Benoist Board of Trustees, announced the prizewinner on 12 September 2022. Professor Keller was chosen for her ground-breaking work in the field of short-time laser physics. The winner of the 2022 Latsis Swiss Science Prize, Professor Kerstin Noëlle Vokinger, was announced at the ceremony in the Bernerhof at the same time. The lunch that followed provided an opportunity for an in-depth discussion among representatives from both Foundations, sponsors of the Marcel Benoist Foundation and the two laureates on their respective fields of research. Professor Keller explained that she had been fascinated by laser physics right from the beginning, while Professor Vokinger highlighted the potential of her interdisciplinary research, which combines medicine, law and information technology. Both researchers expressed their deep gratitude for the awards. The occasion was reported by around 80 different media outlets, slightly fewer than in previous years on account of other major political occurrences at the same time.

The award ceremony took place on 3 November 2022 at the Town Hall of Bern. Around 175 people from science, civil society, business and politics attended the occasion. The opening speech was followed by a short video on the Marcel Benoist prizewinner and a laudation in her honour. After the signing of the Marcel Benoist Foundation Golden Book, Professor Keller received her award from Federal Councillor Parmelin. Following a pleasant musical interlude, the Latsis prizewinner was introduced and honoured, and there was a short contribution by young researchers. The moderator of the evening, Anja Wyden Guelpa, elicited one or two anecdotes from the laureates' careers as researchers before the guests continued their conversation over an aperitif.

### Three generations of researchers

The event once again brought together three generations of researchers: the established scientist who was awarded the Marcel Benoist Prize, the younger researcher who won the Latsis Prize, and the young researchers who participated in an afternoon workshop with the prizewinners, which was organised by the 'Schweizer Jugend forscht' and 'Wissenschafts-Olympiade' foundations as well as the think tank 'foraus'. The workshop enabled the young researchers to ask questions about the prizewinners' areas of research and its significance for society, and to hear about what a scientific career entails. All the participants found the experience very enriching.

#### **Revision of the statutes**

In 2022 the Marcel Benoist Foundation revised its statutes. Under the new statutes, the field of science is to have greater weight on the Board of Trustees through the appointment of a new Chair, and the business community will also now have a seat on the Board, reflecting the public-private partnership on which the Foundation is based.

The Foundation is now to be chaired by a person of high repute from the field of scientific research. In addition, the Board can include a representative of the business community with a connection to scientific research, instead of a senior member of the Federal Administration. The head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER), who previously held the chair, will perform a representative function and continue to present the award. The Federal Council will also continue to elect the members of the Foundation Board, with the exception of the representation of the French Embassy. As before, the EAER will also appoint the Foundation Secretariat and mandate the Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF to select the prizewinners.

The statutes were adopted by the Foundation Board on 23 June 2022 and approved by the Foundation's supervisory authority on 30 June 2022.

### **Members of the Board of Trustees**

The representative of the French Ambassador to Switzerland, Mr Renaud Lallement, left his position in Bern at the end of October 2022. Dr Catherine Robert was appointed to represent the French Embassy on the Foundation Board from 1 September 2022.

In accordance with the new statutes, Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin resigned as Chair at the end of 2022. The representative of the Confederation and Second Vice Chair, Prof. Joël Mesot, also announced his resignation at the end of 2022.

The Board would like to take this opportunity to thank those leaving for their great commitment over many years. It would also like to express its appreciation to Federal Councillor Parmelin for his great dedication to the Foundation and welcomes his continuing support in the future.

On 7 September 2022, the Federal Council elected Prof. Didier Queloz, Nobel Laureate, as the new Chair and Dr Martine Clozel as new Vice Chair from 1 January 2023 to succeed the two retiring members.

As the new Vice Chair, Dr Clozel will replace Prof. Joël Mesot ex officio on the Foundation Board. As Prof. Mesot was also a member of the Investment Committee, the Board elected at its plenary meeting on 25 August 2022 Prof. Katharina Fromm from the University of Fribourg to the Investment Committee as of 1 January 2023.

## Impressions from the 2022 award ceremony



«Switzerland is still waiting for its first female Nobel Laureate – given the high-calibre female researchers in the room, perhaps not for much longer!»

Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Board of Trustees Chair, holding the opening speech.





Musical interlude by the Amar Quartet

# Impressions from the 2022 award ceremony



«The competition with Ursula Keller was very challenging at times.»

Prof. Andreas Tünnermann, director of the Fraunhofer Institute of Applied Optics and Precision Engineering (IOF), holding the laudatory speech for the 2022 Marcel Benoist prizewinner, Prof. Ursula Keller.



Prof. Ursula Keller, 2022 Marcel Benoist prizewinner, signing the Marcel Benoist Foundation's Golden Book





«We think about research even in the shower or while hiking – just because it's fun!»

Moderator of the 2022 award ceremony Anja Wyden Guelpa talking to the 2022 Marcel Benoist prizewinner Prof. Ursula Keller.



Dr John Latsis, member of the Latsis Foundation Board of Trustees, Prof. Kerstin Noëlle Vokinger, 2022 Latsis prizewinner, Prof. Ursula Keller, 2022 Marcel Benoist prizewinner, Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Chair of the Marcel Benoist Foundation Board of Trustees, Anja Wyden Guelpa, moderator (from left to right).

## 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 the 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**

Christoph Ammann
Ulrich Andreas Ammann
Daniel Gutenberg
Martin Haefner
Prof. Ruurd Heerema
Babette Herbert
André Hoffmann
Walter Inäbnit
Dr Max Rössler
Dr Stephan Schmidheiny
Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, former federal councillor
Katharina Schneider-Ammann
Dr Ernst Thomke
Dr Hansjörg Wyss

Accenture Foundation
Zurich Airport AG
KIBAG Holding AG
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 particular relevance to human life. The prize is awarded in different disciplines on a rotating basis.

### Board of Trustees (to the end of 2022)

Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin

Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Prof. Christian Leumann

Representative of the University of Bern, Vice Chair

Prof. Joël Mesot

Representative of the Confederation, Vice Chair

Prof. Brigitte Galliot

Representative of the University of Geneva, assessor

Prof. Dominique Arlettaz

Representative of the University of Lausanne

Prof. Martin Baumann

Representative of the University of Lucerne

Prof. Christa Dürscheid

Representative of the University of Zurich

Prof. Beatrix Eugster

Representative of the University of St Gallen

Prof. Katharina Fromm

Representative of the University of Fribourg

Prof. Michael N. Hall

Representative of the University of Basel

Dr Catherine Robert

Representative of the French Ambassador to Switzerland

Prof. Federica Sallusto

Representative of the Università della Svizzera italiana

Prof. Kilian Stoffel

Representative of the University of Neuchâtel

Prof. Michaël Unser

Representative of EPF Lausanne

Prof. Wendelin Werner Representative of ETH Zurich

With the exception of the Representative of the French Ambassador to Switzerland, the trustees are appointed by the Federal Council. Any interests of individual members are publicly listed (federal extra-parliamentary commissions).

### **Foundation Committee**

Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Chair Prof. Christian Leumann

Prof. Joël Mesot Prof. Brigitte Galliot

### **Investment Committee**

Prof. Beatrix Eugster, 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

### **Auditor**

unico thun ag, Thun

### Oversight

Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations, Bern

### **Bank details**

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

# **Annual financial statement**

BALANCE SHEET as of 31 DEZEMBER	2022	2021
ASSETS	CHF	CHF
PostFinance AG, current account	121'170.78	76'341.84
Zürcher Kantonalbank,		
asset management account	83′391.96	35′516.91
Cash and cash equivalents	204'562.74	111'858.75
Federal Tax Administration, witholding tax	23′750.88	18'024.85
Other short-term receivables	23'750.88	18'024.85
CURRENT ASSETS	228'313.62	129'883.60
Securities	18'875'913.95	22'843'226.26
Financial investments	18'875'913.95	22'843'226.26
FIXED ASSETS	18'875'913.95	22'843'226.26
TOTAL ASSETS	19'104'227.57	22'973'109.86

LIABILITIES	CHF	CHF
Deferred income	60'884.55	29'789.00
SHORT-TERM LIABILITIES	60'884.55	29'789.00
Restricted funds	385'000.00	518'000.00
FUND EQUITY	385'000.00	518'000.00
Unrestricted funds	18'658'343.02	22'425'320.86
ORGANISATION EQUITY	18'658'343.02	22'425'320.86
TOTAL LIABILITIES	19'104'227.57	22'973'109.86

OPERATING STATEMENT	2022	2021
	CHF	CHF
Unrestricted donations	250'000.00	250'000.00
Restricted donations	10'000.00	10'000.00
Total donations	260'000.00	260'000.00
Prize money	-250'000.00	-250'000.00
Award ceremony	-49'019.29	-46'063.40
Youth workshop	-5'415.20	-5'000.00
Project-related expenses	-304'434.49	-301'063.40
Finance secretariat	-22'800.00	-23'090.90
Auditors	-7'292.50	-2'692.50
Oversight	-5'200.00	-1'950.00
Other administrative expenses	-20'632.70	-6'456.95
Administrative expenses	-55'925.20	-34'190.35
Operating result	-100'359.69	-75'253.75
Price gain on securities	-3'731'269.13	2'385'449.66
Asset management fees	-51'357.05	-52'371.80
Other portfolio-related costs	-6'085.05	-6'730.58
Investment controlling/consulting costs	-10'770.00	-10'755.00
Bank fees	-136.92	-167.42
Financial result	-3'799'618.15	2'315'424.86
Result before change in fund equity	-3'899'977.84	2'240'171.11

OPERATING STATEMENT	2022	2021
	CHF	CHF
Result before change in fund equity	-3'899'977.84	2'240'171.11
(carried over)	-5 039 917.04	2 240 17 1.11
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)	-3'766'977.84	2'373'171.11

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. The members of the Board of Trustees work on an honorary basis.

The members of the Board of Trustees, with the exception of the Representative of the French Ambassador to Switzerland, are appointed by the Federal Council.

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: <a href="https://www.marcel-benoist.ch">www.marcel-benoist.ch</a> > 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.