

# Asia

Society®



Switzerland

## A YEAR OF HOPING AND COPING

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

# Message from Our Chairman



A year of hoping and coping, a year of challenges and opportunities, but also a year of strengthening existing ties and expanding our reach.

2020 was a very different year for Asia Society Switzerland with a dramatic change in the operating environment once Covid-19 hit. A year of hoping and coping, a year of challenges and opportunities, but also a year of strengthening existing ties and expanding our reach. Gratefully we look back to a year where Asia Society Switzerland continued to build, albeit in different ways, its partnerships with corporate and individual members, colleagues in Asia and the United States, as well as local and international organizations. The team has created an impressive range of digital programs for our members and the global community.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, from March on all programs had to move into the digital space. Within the global Asia Society organization, Switzerland took a leadership role in developing new innovative formats that were shared throughout the entire organization. Examples were: the “Oxford debate” format, which received a very positive reception, and the “The Aging Effect” series, which was co-hosted with Swiss Re Institute as sponsor. Most of these programs are on record and can be accessed through our website.

We are proud of the inaugural class of Gen A (Generation Asia) graduates. Twenty master students and young professionals participated in a year-long set of round tables

to increase their Asia Competence. The content-driven program was designed to deepen the next generations’ understanding of Asia and prepare them for a sustained engagement in and with this ever more important part of the world.

Our thanks go to our sponsors and supporters, many of whom already have strong ties to Asia to build on. With bespoke programs and our Asia experts, we are contributing to deepen that knowledge. Their continued support in these uncertain times also allows us to pursue our mission to build Asia Competence in Switzerland. We are deeply grateful for their commitment and encouragement.

Finally, I wish to thank our members for their active engagement and the Asia Society Switzerland team for their flexibility, dedication and hard work. They have certainly made the best out of a difficult set of circumstances. We value your relationship immensely and look forward to many encounters in the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adrian T. Keller". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

**Adrian T. Keller**  
*Chairman*

# 2020 by Numbers

Throughout this challenging year, we remained committed to our mission – increasing Asia Competence in Switzerland, and to our founding principles of promoting mutual understanding in preparation for a deeper and sustained engagement with Asia.



Through **110** webcasts and in-person events our audience learned about Asia's most pressing issues.



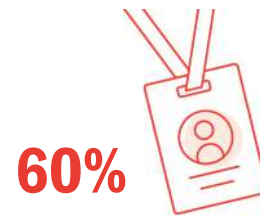
**140** experts shared their knowledge and thought leadership with our audience.



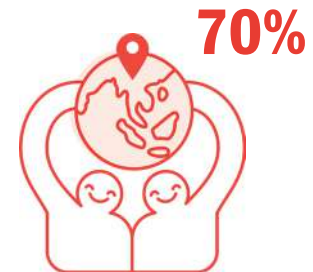
We have more than doubled our reach from 2000 participants in 2019 to **5000** participants in 2020.



**Over 50%** of people in our audience say that our webcasts and events definitely deepened their knowledge of Asia.



**60%** of our audience rate our programs as excellent.



**70%** of our audience say that they are very likely to recommend Asia Society to a friend.

# 2020 in Pictures

Thank you to those members who submitted their photos in response to our request for images that embody the theme of hope.



- 1.** There is hope in every step a child takes – *Anne Semadeni George* **2.** Nature came back in abundance – *Suzanne Perrin* **3.** Hope on canvas, painted by Franziska Fennert. Speaking with Nature, Yogyakarta, 2020 – *Ildegarda Scheidegger* **4.** An enduring symbol of the friendship between China and Switzerland – *Eugen Schmid* **5.** Helping friends with homeschooling – *Valerie Remoquillo-Jenni* **6.** Rediscovering the beauty on our doorstep – *Ulrich E. Gut*

# Messages from Our Co-Executive Directors



2020 has been a year of hoping and coping. Despite the fact that the pandemic forced us to our home offices and made personal encounters more difficult, we look back with great gratitude on a successful year of collaboration. Asia Society Switzerland thrives thanks to the support of our donors, corporate partners, members and colleagues from the Asia Society centers in Asia and the United States. Their contributions, trust and generosity towards Asia Society Switzerland allows us to fulfill our mission and prepare Switzerland for a deeper and sustained engagement with Asia.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to our staff and our trustees for their dedication and hard work, and to our members for sharing their passion for Asia with us.

With gratitude,

**Nico Luchsinger**

*Co-Executive Director  
Programming*

**Katharina Viana-Bachmann**

*Co-Executive Director  
Development*

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# A Window of Opportunity: Our Live Events of 2020



Live events with an audience and speakers who did not appear on a screen were few and far between in 2020. We were lucky to host two high-profile gatherings this year, both discussing the relationship between Switzerland and China.

In March, the German Embassy in Berne and Asia Society Switzerland convened an all-stars panel to discuss how relations between Europe and China are changing, and what that means for Switzerland. With the threat of coronavirus already looming, former

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard, former German Vice-Chancellor Philipp Rösler, and China expert Sebastian Heilmann debated with a hand-selected audience of leaders from politics, business and society. Should Switzerland become more





## Should Switzerland become more vocal in the chorus of critical voices on China in Europe?

vocal in the chorus of critical voices on China in Europe? Or should it continue a path of engagement? Could it perhaps do both? The conversations went on well into the night.

A few months later – it felt much longer, after the first wave of the pandemic had abated in Switzerland, we were joined by two generations of journalists: legendary correspondent Peter Achten, who reported from China for Swiss Radio and Television in the 1980s and 1990s, discussed his work with Martina Fuchs, who previously worked for Chinese state broadcaster CGTN in Beijing, and now



serves as one of its correspondents in Europe. Peter's anecdotes about living with a farmer's family in rural China contrasted with Martina's tales of work in CGTN's futuristic Beijing headquarters, and offered yet another reminder of how fast the country has changed in the last decades. Then the conversation became more serious.

Are the media in both countries doing a good job covering the other country? There was at least some reason to be skeptical. Peter's surprising recommendation to the audience: "Read more Indian newspapers!" – because they offer a view on the world not normally found in European media.

# New Norms, New Ideas, New World Order

During the past year, we hosted and tuned into many stimulating conversations about the world's economies, societies, systems and institutions. Both questions and hopes were raised.

## ASIA'S FUTURE IS NOW

This insightful webinar was presented by Jeongmin Seong,

a partner and researcher in the McKinsey Global Institute, and moderated by Ira Kasoff, Asia Society Southern California Advisory Board member. Jeongmin offered fascinating insights into the new shifts in manufacturing and trade that are resulting in shortened supply chains, an increase in intra-regional trade, and stronger flows of connectivity between Asian countries. For businesses looking to enter the vast and complex China market, Jeongmin highlighted the need to invest in a strong local team with deep insiders' knowledge.



**There is no China strategy. We can divide China into 50 or 20 different clusters, and each cluster is different.**

*Jeongmin Seong*

Clearly, this is Asia's century.

Catch the full [webinar](#)

## THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE – What Is Asia Doing to Avoid a Potential Food Crisis?

This mini-conference gathered together three experts from around the globe – Dr. Jaleh Daie, Chairman and Founder of AgFoodTech, Partner at Aurora Equity, and Asia Society Northern California's Board Director; Sridhar Dharmapuri, Group Leader of the Agriculture and Food systems team at the FAO Regional Office for the Asia-Pacific in Bangkok; and Rob Hulme, Director Asia at Beanstalk Agtech. By weeding out inefficient practices, harnessing the power of biology, and applying advanced new technologies in agtech and foodtech, the experts agreed that future challenges can and will be overcome.



**As a scientist, as an investor, as an individual, I am confident that we will find our way out of this crisis.**

*Dr. Jaleh Daie*



Our thirst for knowledge was quenched, our hunger for hope was fed, and our appetite to know more was whet.

**Watch the [opening presentation](#)**

## THE FUTURE OF RETAIL IS HERE (IT'S JUST UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED)

Asia Society Switzerland co-hosted a webcast with Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute (GDI), moderated by our Co-Executive Director Nico Luchslinger, about what the world can learn from China's e-commerce trends. The two distinguished speakers were Duncan Clark, chairman and founder of investment consultancy BDA China and author of the book *Ali Baba – The House That Jack Ma Built*, and David Bosshart, CEO of GDI. Both speakers agreed that China's innovative e-commerce market is far more interactive and entertaining than its western counterpart.





## Alibaba is Amazon plus Disney.

*Duncan Clark*

Could it be, as Duncan suggested, that the next phase in the evolution of e-commerce is “h-commerce” – human commerce?

**Watch the full discussion**



## The world is looking at these two major powers and saying – what about the rest of us?

*Suhasini Haidar*

While questions abound, one thing is certain. Change is imminent, and it can only be for the better.

**Catch the complete webcast**

We hope that forward-thinking business leaders will continue to make the right choices.

**Join the symposium**

**EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE CLASSROOM: Conversation with Khan Academy’s Founder Sal Khan**

Texas Center  
October

## THE END OF THE UNITED NATIONS?

Asia Society Switzerland  
August

The fourth of a series of webcasts entitled *The End & The Beginning*, Nico Luchsinger hosted an insightful conversation with Suhasini Haidar, the national and diplomatic affairs editor of *The Hindu*, New Delhi. Suhasini put forth a compelling argument that the United Nations is in urgent need of fundamental reform.

Referencing the impact of rising China-U.S. tensions, which has resulted in the “retrenchment” of the world’s largest democracy, the U.S., and the “rise” of a non-democracy, China, she voiced the frustration of the rest of the world.

## THE FUTURE OF WORK AND HOW TO ADAPT

New York Center  
June

As part of the 2020 Global Talent, Diversity & Inclusion Virtual Symposium, Michael Chui, Partner at McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) and Stephanie Mehta, Editor-in-Chief of *Fast Company*, discussed the “new normal” of COVID-19 and beyond with regard to working life. Both speakers agreed that the situation is a complicated one, which has given rise to both accelerations and reversals. In summary, with the rise of working from home and video conferencing, both employers and employees now have more choices.

**We have expanded our portfolio of options.**

*Michael Chui*

Sal Khan, the founder and CEO of nonprofit organization Khan Academy, spoke with moderator Laura E. Arnold about the shortcomings of the current education system and the impact of COVID-19 on students. Interestingly, he sees technology as a supplement to and not a replacement for classroom learning.

**If I had to pick between an incredible teacher and incredible technology, I’d pick the incredible teacher every time.**

*Sal Khan*

Today, we have incredible technology to support incredible teachers. That alone fills us with hope.

**Catch the whole conversation**

# The Oxford Debates: Tackling the Big Questions

In 2020, we hosted a series of three Oxford debates that tackled ‘big’ questions with no single conclusive answers. In each debate, moderated by our Co-Executive Director Nico Luchsinger, two teams each comprising two renowned experts argued ‘for’ and ‘against’ the motion at hand. The team that convinced the highest percentage of voters to switch sides won the debate.

## IS THE MODI GOVERNMENT DELIVERING ON ITS PROMISES?



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's approval ratings are at an all-time high, yet outside of India his policies are widely criticized for being non-secular and Hindu-focused. Throw the Kashmir situation and the COVID-19 situation into the mix, and we had the makings of a very lively debate.

### THE MOTION:

One year after being re-elected, the Modi government is delivering on its promises.

### FOR:

**Ruth Kattumuri** – Founder and Co-Director of the India Observatory  
**Dr. Rajiv Kumar** – Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog, and Chancellor of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune

I strongly believe that people are wise. They vote for somebody whom they believe is benefitting their household directly.

*Ruth Kattumuri*

### AGAINST:

**James Crabtree** – author, journalist and Associate Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore

**Rupa Subramanya** – economist, independent scholar and commentator who lives between India and Canada



Ten years ago India had a fantastic opportunity to leapfrog towards middle-income status and what you've seen instead is a lost decade.

*James Crabtree*

## DO NORTH KOREA AND SOUTH KOREA WANT REUNIFICATION?



North Korea, South Korea – the question of whether these two very different countries desire a single national identity was hotly debated by a panel of eminent academics and thought leaders who came together from across four different time zones.

### THE MOTION:

North Korea and South Korea want reunification.

**FOR:**

**Dr. Ji-Young Lee** – Associate Professor at the School of International Service and C.W. Lim and Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Studies at American University, Washington

**Dr. John Delury** – Professor of Chinese Studies and Chair of International Cooperation Program at Yonsei University, Seoul



The Koreans want reunification because they want to end the constant threat of war.

*Dr. Ji-Young Lee*

**AGAINST:**

**Dr. Sandra Fahy** – Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and the Graduate Program in Global Studies at Sophia University, Tokyo

**Dr. Steven Denney** – postdoctoral research fellow in the Innovation Policy Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto

Who can reunify with a dictator? Nobody – unless you play by a dictator's rules.

*Dr. Sandra Fahy*

**WILL EUROPE CHOOSE THE U.S. OVER CHINA?**

All of Europe is currently torn between its slowly retreating traditional ally in the west and the rising new economic powerhouse in the east. Which side will it choose?

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**THE MOTION:**

Europe will choose the U.S. over China.

**FOR:**

**Ivana Karásková** – Founder and Coordinator of ChinfluenCE and China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE)

**Andrew Small** – senior transatlantic fellow with the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States

China has not offered Europe anything that could prompt it to even begin considering the option of strategic realignment.

*Ivana Karásková*

**AGAINST:**

**Alicja Bachulska** – China Analyst at Asia Research Centre, War Studies University, Warsaw

**Plamen Tonchev** – Head of Asia Unit at the Athens-based Institute of International Economic Relations (IIER)

Picking sides might lead us to a self-fulfilling prophecy of this inevitable clash between the two superpowers.

*Alicja Bachulska*

Watch all three [Oxford debates](#)

# The Aging Effect

In a fascinating four-part series, Asia Society Switzerland and Swiss Re Institute explored the effects of aging on Asia and the world, and what we can do to address them.

## WHO PAYS FOR AGING?

Baroness Ros Altmann, a Member of the House of Lords, and CSRC's Dr. Hu Yuwei, joined us from London and Beijing to discuss the challenges posed by aging populations to the pension systems of the U.K. and China respectively.



The conclusion was that both systems are outdated, and need to align themselves with the 21st century reality of shorter and less physically strenuous working lives and longer life expectancies.



With the kind of developments that we've seen demographically, the pay-as-you-go system is a bit more like 'pray-as-you-go'.

*Baroness Ros Altmann*

While two distinctly different concepts of 'pension' coexist in the U.K., the situation is even more complex in China.

In China we have 35 provinces and each province has their standalone pension arrangements. Some provinces have pension surpluses, and many other provinces have pension deficits.

*Dr. Hu Yuwei*

What you will see is some industries will have even more jobs created than jobs displaced, like manufacturing.

*Naveen Menon*

Next, Thomas Birwe, Head HR Switzerland, Swiss Re Institute, shared key findings of a study undertaken by his organization that reinforced the pressing need for upskilling in not only older workers but those of all ages.

The length of career is increasing, and the shelf time of skills declines simultaneously, which confirms the necessity of lifelong learning.

*Thomas Birwe*

The message was clear. To replace obsolescence with relevance, keep learning!



## THE RESKILLING CHALLENGE

Naveen Menon, President (ASEAN) at Cisco Systems, succinctly explained how five key technologies are shaping the fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) – the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3D printing, advanced robotics, and wearables (AR & VR). The results of a study spanning multiple industries were both surprising and reassuring.



## HOW LONG CAN WE LIVE?

In a compelling episode moderated by Richard Francis, an independent advisor on international business development, we heard the expert opinions of Professor Nir Barzilai, Director, Institute for Aging Research, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Dr. John Schoonbee, Global Chief Medical Officer at Global Swiss Re Institute, on the factors affecting lifespan and more importantly, healthspan. The key premise was overwhelmingly positive.

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How can we turn that hope-filled premise into the promise of a longer, better life? Time, and science, will tell.



After confirming that Europe is inevitably heading for Japanification, Jeffrey pointed out some key differences between Japan and Europe, including Japan's strict immigration policies versus Europe's relatively lenient ones, the average long healthspan of the Japanese people compared to Europeans, and the willingness of the Japanese to embrace technology compared to older Europeans' relative reluctance.

Older Japanese are not that worried about a robot bathing them. I can tell you, I'm worried about that.

*Jeffrey Bohn*

Aging is flexible, aging can be targeted, aging can be delayed, aging can be stopped and reversed in certain instances.

*Professor Nir Barzilai*

This premise gave rise to an eye-opening discussion of the various factors that determine longevity, from genetics to lifestyle and medication. Life-extending new drugs, not yet approved for that purpose, are a new source of hope.

The question really is – how much should we push lifestyle and how much should we push new medications?

*Dr. John Schoonbee*

## THE JAPANIFICATION OF THE WORLD?

Physical and virtual events converged in the final episode of the series, when moderator Nico Luchsinger was physically present with Jeffrey Bohn, Chief Research and Innovation Officer of Swiss Re Institute, and Yumiko Murakami, Head of OECD, Tokyo Center, participated remotely. Yumiko began by pointing out that while the phenomenon of Japanification, or super-aging, was first observed in Japan, it will become a widespread global phenomenon over the next 20 to 25 years.

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It was an immersive conversation that got us all thinking about our own places in a Japanified future.

Catch all four episodes of [The Aging Effect](#)

The demographic tsunami is crashing in Japan today, but it will come to your country tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow.

*Yumiko Murakami*



# Preparing the Next Generation for the Asian Century

In January 2020 we launched Gen A (short for: Generation Asia), a 1-year program aimed at young professionals and advanced students in Switzerland with an interest in deepening their knowledge of Asia-related issues. We spoke to three members of the class of 2020.



**Myrta Brunner**

is working on her thesis for an interdisciplinary Master of Arts, majoring in Religion – Politics –

Economies, at the University of Basel. Her personal network and studies have taken her to South Korea, China, Hong Kong and Macau.



**Martin Mosteiro Romero**

recently defended his PhD on urban energy systems at ETH Zurich and is relocating to

Singapore for his postdoctoral research. He was first drawn to Asia by its art and languages, and has since traveled extensively throughout the region.



**Francis Müller**

is studying law at the University of Zurich while working for a law firm with a predominantly

Japanese clientele. He has a bachelor's degree in Japanese studies, and lived in Tokyo for a year as a high school exchange student.

**Q: Why did you want to participate in the Gen A program, and what do you hope to gain from it?**

**Myrta:** During my studies I did not have as many opportunities to learn about Asia as I would have liked. I was already a member of Asia Society Switzerland when I read about the Gen A program, and saw an opportunity to deepen my knowledge about Asia, particularly Korea and China, and the relationship and influences between Asia and Switzerland. In addition, I was looking forward to connecting with other people interested in Asia-related issues.

**Francis:** I was also a member of Asia Society Switzerland and really enjoyed the events. However, I felt that my interaction with the organization and its members was rather formal and impersonal. Therefore, I was hoping for a more personal experience on joining the Gen A program, with members getting to know each other in a less formal setting. Though the coronavirus situation limited the possibilities for interaction, I think that the program still succeeded to the fullest extent possible.

**Martin:** It sounded like an excellent opportunity to keep learning about a broad range of topics – some of which I am already interested in, and others in which I am not so interested but feel I should learn more about. Since I was planning to pursue work in Asia after completing my PhD, I also thought it would be an excellent opportunity to learn more about other people's experiences moving there, and expand my network by meeting other Switzerland-based Asia enthusiasts.



An increasing pool of Asia experts would most definitely be desirable for Switzerland.

*Martin Mosteiro Romero, Gen A participant*

**Q: What did you learn from the Gen A program?**

**Martin:** Some of the talks made me think of perspectives I might never have considered before, but most of them were centered on topics in which I already had an interest.

**Francis:** The program has helped me to think more about the relations between Asia and the western world and the conditions required to improve international relations.

**Myrta:** I learnt about the importance of China's domestic interests that govern China's foreign policy. One needs to understand the domestic matters to understand China's moves and drive for technological progress.

**Q: What do you think are the benefits of preparing the next generation for the Asian century?**

**Francis:** On a personal level, learning about Asia and engaging in Asia is an extraordinarily rewarding experience. By exposing you to thoughts and views completely different to your own, you gain a clearer understanding about how your own society and world view function. I think that, especially in a direct democracy like Switzerland, this kind of understanding has the potential to improve the public discourse, improve collective intelligence and to work against populist rhetoric, which is always based on a simplistic world view.

**Myrta:** I think it's important to have a 'Generation Asia' that can connect Asian and Swiss players. Furthermore, there are people with an Asian background living in Switzerland.

A cultural knowledge of Asia helps in facilitating communication, in preventing and resolving misunderstandings, and thus fostering a harmonious multicultural community.

**Martin:** I certainly think the entire world needs well-educated young people with a deep appreciation and knowledge about the rest of the world, not just Asia. However, due to the central role Asia is taking in the 21st century, being well-informed about the continent is an asset for our professionals, and an increasing pool of Asia experts would most definitely be desirable for Switzerland.

**Hear Myrta, Martin and Francis talk about the roles they foresee that Asia will play in their professional lives**

# We Do Not Dream Alone

## The Inaugural Asia Society Triennial

October 27, 2020 to June 27, 2021

Just as the pandemic has validated our common humanity, art connects us to our fellow humans by creating bridges of empathy. It can transcend time and place, and it can powerfully define a time and a place. The inaugural Asia Society Triennial will go down in history for doing both.

### FROM NEW YORK CITY TO THE WORLD

The ongoing 8-month program comprises multi-venue virtual and live exhibitions, discussions, forums and performances that examine the meaning of art from Asia in an increasingly global context. It brings together around 40 artists with scientists, historians, policy analysts and thought leaders from countries spanning Asia, Australia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas.

The works chosen for the Triennial demonstrate the power of art to unite us despite the forces that divide us.

*Boon Hui Tan, Artistic Director*

Here is a sampler of some of the works presented at the Triennial.

### Learn more about the artists



1. Wide Awake and Unafraid, 2019 – Anne Samat
2. July Coming Soon, 2019 – Sun Xun
3. To Breathe – The Flags, 2012 – Kimsooja
4. I Am Waiting For You, 2018 – Jordan Nassar
5. 33 Beads (Unworried) #2, 2018 – Nasim Nasr

# A Number of Reasons to Become a Member

There are many compelling reasons to become a member of Asia Society Switzerland. Here are five.

## 1 GAIN UNPARALLELED EXPOSURE

Gain access to international artists, performers and policymakers hosted by 13 Asia Society Centers around the globe, from our headquarters in New York to centers in Asia's most vibrant cities, and of course our active Swiss center right here in Zurich.

## 2 JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Our discussions, debates, webcasts and forums explore current issues of global importance.

## 3 HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE

Your contribution and participation help advance our mission of increasing Asia Competence in Switzerland and strengthening ties with Asia. We promote cross-cultural understanding in a fast-changing world, through groundbreaking exhibitions, unique events and meaningful policy and education programs.

## 4 ENJOY THE BENEFITS

Members of Asia Society Switzerland receive invitations to exclusive events, special discounts, access to our global network, and much more.

## 5 FIND YOUR FIT

We offer a variety of membership levels that are tailored to the varying needs of students, individuals and corporations. Choose from:

- General Membership
- Student Membership
- Institutional Membership
- Passport Membership
- Corporate Membership

Join us and [register](#) today



# Meet the Team

## MANAGEMENT TEAM



**Nico Luchsinger**  
Co-Executive Director  
Programming



**Katharina Viana-Bachmann**  
Co-Executive Director  
Development

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**Christelle Magnaye-Tailens**  
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**Denise Staubli**  
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**Désirée Meili**  
Program Manager  
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**Rebecca Farner**  
Project Manager  
(until August 2020)



**Andreas Ratchev**  
Project Manager

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# Thank You

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IN APPRECIATION OF THIS  
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