

## ANNUAL REPORT 2022 OF THE SJCC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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### Executive Summary

- Since its establishment in 1988 our Scholarship Fund has granted scholarships to 238 qualified candidates amounting to approx. CHF 3'000'000.
- In 2018, a new partnership agreement for the Scholarship Fund was concluded with the Swiss Chamber Commerce & Industry in Japan (SCCIJ). The partnership with SCCIJ over the last few years has been very good and beneficial for the Scholarship Fund and its recipients, enabling this big milestone. From now on the Fund will be referred to as “Swiss-Japan Scholarship Fund - powered by SCCIJ and SJCC.”
- In 2022, 22 individuals submitted the extensive formal documents required to apply for a scholarship. 5 were finally chosen to receive scholarships. The actual number of interested individuals is always much higher. However, many individuals refrain from applying after familiarizing themselves with the requirements.
- The Scholarship Fund had an accumulated surplus of CHF 241,173 at year end.
- The surplus (and the contingent liabilities) are higher than usual due to the fact the several recipients have not (yet) started their Year in Japan due to Covid.

## **1. Introduction**

In 2022, the scholarship fund had a record number of applicants with 22 formal applications. Eight of these applicants applied from Japan for the “Year in Switzerland”. This is a good sign that the efforts of our sister chamber in Tokyo are paying off and the program gets more established in Japan. Despite the high number of applicants, the number of awarded scholarships was at a normal level: We awarded four scholarships for the “Year in Japan” and one scholarship for the “Year in Switzerland”. The rather low success rate of applicants shows that the interview process remains thorough and confirms an unfortunate trend observed by the scholarship committee that the overall quality of candidates is declining.

Unfortunately, we registered a record high of five recipients deciding not starting their exchange year in 2022. There are two reasons for that:

- Three Swiss recipients who got awarded the scholarship in 2020, were not able to Japan during Covid and finally decided to go on with their careers without the Year in Japan. This is a temporary effect and should not repeat itself in the coming years.
- Two Japanese recipients got overwhelmed by the complexity of obtaining a visa and an internship in Switzerland and decided to renounce their Year in Switzerland. To avoid these falloffs going forward, we made adjustments to the application process for Japanese applicants. This explains that only one of eight applicants received the scholarship in 2022.

On the positive side, we see many recipients thrive in Japan and Switzerland: Upon completion of the language school which is often the easy part of the year, they use their network built during the first part of their stay to find an internship or long-term position. They build their careers in a foreign country and create a lot of value for their employer - often a member of SJCC or SCCIJ: They act as the bridge between the local subsidiary and the home office in Switzerland or Japan.

We wish to thank our sponsors who are making all this possible and remain strong supporters of the program. A special thank goes to our partner school JSL and the two chambers and all its members! It is their continuous support that has laid the financial foundation to realize this important investment into future Swiss-Japan business relations!

## 2. Scholarship Applications

### Summary 2022

22 formal applications

5 scholarships granted

The actual number of interested individuals is always much higher. However, many individuals refrain from applying after familiarizing themselves with the requirements and all the documents that need to be prepared for this purpose.

## 3. Profiles of Scholarship Candidates / Recipients in 2021

### Pro Memoria: Typical profile of a scholarship candidate

- Female or male graduate from university or qualified professional with apprenticeship
- Age less than 32 years, resident of Switzerland or Japan
- Has already acquired good basic knowledge of spoken and written Japanese preparing for his/her Japan training. Candidates from Japan have acquired a good level of an official Swiss language.
- Highly motivated and committed to a year abroad in Japan or Switzerland consisting of 3-6 m intensive language study and 6-9 months internship in a l company
- Well balanced and positive personality with clear goals and willingness to adapt to different customs and culture
- Displays an entrepreneurial spirit and risk tolerance

Five individuals were newly chosen for the scholarship program in 2021.

Their personalities, educational qualifications and, notably, motivation have been verified in two personal interviews. The respective conclusions and recommendations were then discussed in the Scholarship Committee which ultimately decided on scholarships. This procedure has over the years ensured a minimal failure rate, i.e. only 8 scholarship recipients (out of 238) have not completed their "SJCC Japan Year". This figure does not include the three recipients who abandoned the scholarship due to the Covid travel restrictions in 2020 and 2021.

## 4. Finances

Our Balance Sheet remained very healthy with an accumulated surplus (cash at banks) of CHF 241,173 CHF at year-end. The surplus of 31,299 CHF is due to the fact that we awarded less scholarships during Covid and that 5 recipients from the years 2020 and 2021 have not started the program. Contingent Liabilities, i.e. outstanding but committed scholarship

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payments amounted to the following amounts (split between Year in Japan and Year in Switzerland):

- Year in Japan: JPY 8'000'000 to be carried forward to 2023
- Year in Switzerland: CHF 10'000 to be carried forward to 2022

The total contingent liabilities in CHF are 65'000.

We are very glad and encouraged by the continued support of our sponsors and the strong partnership with the SCCIJ.

### **5. SJCC Young Professionals (formerly SJCC Alumni Association)**

Our alumni association, founded in April 2002 with activities in Switzerland and Japan primarily serves scholarship recipients as a platform for further developing their knowledge and experience of Japan. On December 5th 2016, the SJCC Alumni Organisation association has been renamed to "SJCC Young Professionals". Foremost to welcome and include young people who may not (yet) be scholarship recipients but have professional interest in Japan or simply would like to network with like-minded people.

In Japan it is also a "home away from home" supporting new arrivals in various administrative procedures, recommending internship opportunities, contacts with the Embassy of Switzerland, the Swiss Business Hub Japan, the Swiss Chamber of Commerce & Industry in Japan etc.

Upon return to Switzerland all registered alumni are offered a free initial membership in the Chamber. Thus, both institutions can share and benefit from each other's experience, knowledge and competence. I may also mention here that the President of the Alumni Association serves on the Executive Committee of the Chamber.

### **6. Strong partnership with SCCIJ**

Due to the excellent cooperation between the SCCIJ and SJCC, it was decided in 2017 to create a joint working committee to come up with a working proposal to establish a joint fund. This work was successfully concluded in 2018 and a new partnership agreement has come into effect. The partnership with SCCIJ over the last few years has been very good and beneficial for the Scholarship Fund and its recipients, enabling this big milestone. From now on the Fund will be referred to as "Swiss-Japan Scholarship Fund - powered by SCCIJ and SJCC."

The SCCIJ provides excellent personal support to the new arriving scholarship recipients and even offers a free membership as well. Two Board Members represent the SCCIJ in the Scholarship Committee and actively participate in the work and discussions.

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## **7. Acknowledgements**

On behalf of the SJCC, the Scholarship Fund and myself I wish to extend our gratitude to

- the Japanese Embassy in Bern, H.E. Ambassador Yoshinori Fujiyama
- the Swiss Embassy in Tokyo, H.E. Ambassador Dr. Andreas Baum
- the Swiss Business Hub, Fabian Stiefvater
- our sponsor, JSL Academy, Tokyo & Okinawa
- our strong, joint partner the Swiss Chamber of Commerce & Industry in Japan (SCCIJ) in Tokyo, its BOD and its former President Michael Mroczek and its new President André Zimmermann. Dieter Sommerhalder and Luca Orduna from the SCCIJ have made outstanding contributions to the successful partnership through participation in the joint working committee, interview process, and implementing a very professional support program for recipients once they arrive in Japan
- and all former donors
- the BOD of the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce (SJCC) in Zurich, its President, Martin Herb and its former Managing Director Dominique Ursprung
- the SJCC Young Professionals in Switzerland and their President, Kevin Frey
- Martin Stricker, who brought the scholarship fund during his tenure as a chairman to a new level and did an excellent job in handing over his activities in 2019

for their continued interest in our activities, their support and guidance. As previously mentioned, the SJCC Scholarship Fund is solely dependent on its sponsors for financing its scholarships. All donations without deductions are exclusively being used for funding scholarships, thus, helping to develop a growing pool of well-educated young professionals with an international mindset, a strong rooting in the Japanese business environment and, likewise, a familiarity with Japan's culture, social and business practices. They serve the needs of our industry (Japan being the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest export market for Switzerland), educational institutions and government administration with their professional qualifications and enthusiasm.

**SWISS-JAPANESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (SJCC)**  
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