



Welcome!

Welcome!



**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2023**





Access Fast Track Participants, 2023

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# The year 2023

Capacity had another notable year in 2023. Our organisation experienced significant growth and transformation, which began in 2022 with the launch of our second stream of services focused on labour market integration, running alongside our Entrepreneurship Programme. Nevertheless, we also faced challenges.

## Recognition of our Labour Market Integration Programme as project of national relevance

We successfully ran four cycles of ACCESS FAST TRACK (AFT), serving over 100 job seekers from 19 cantons and simultaneously engaging the same numbers of corporate volunteers. Through ACCESS FAST TRACK, we harness the valuable skills and talents of the refugee and migrant population, improving their circumstances, reducing the economic burden on the state, and alleviating the acute talent shortage in the private sector. The participants were able to present their talent during our two public networking events. Our evaluations show that nearly half of the participants secured employment within six months after ending the programme, matching their qualifications. A highlight of the year was that AFT was recognised as a project of national relevance by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and awarded significant seed funding for the first two years.



Carolin Würthner, Caterina Meier-Pfister, Francesca Malvatani, Andrea Ostinelli (Volunteer), Marisa König Beatty, Isabel Brücher, Julieta Novoa, Jianan Huang, Cathlene Bell, Blenda Schmutz and Adrienn Györy



## Entrepreneurship Programme on hold

Simultaneously, we delivered our 8th Entrepreneurship Programme (CEP), providing support to refugee and migrant entrepreneurs on their journey from ideation to prototyping and supporting them to launch their businesses and socio-cultural initiatives. We concluded the year with our annual community event, featuring food and music from our alumni and celebrating our participants' achievements. This year's celebration, however, was tempered by the necessity to put the CEP programme on hold. The long-term sustainability of the CEP has been at risk in the last few years. Recognising the evolving needs and interests of our community, partners, and the public sector, we decided to reassess our strategy. To build a sustainable programme, we are reforming the CEP to offer more flexibility and ensure it continues to meet the demands of those we serve. As a result, we had to bid farewell to the CEP team and embark on this new path forward.

While it is disappointing that we cannot offer the CEP as we have in previous years, we are excited about the opportunity to redesign the programme and create a short, impactful pilot for refugees and migrants aspiring to become self-employed. This challenging situation has provided us with the opportunity to reflect, validate our assumptions, and apply the learnings of the last eight years. The need for this initiative is a fact, and we are committed to providing a meaningful solution for the community we serve.



Community Party, November, 2023



## Long term funding remains challenging

As one of our top organisational goals is the long-term sustainability of our programmes, our fundraising efforts remained a key focus throughout the year. In 2023, for the first time, we were able to allocate resources specifically for fundraising, thanks to a grant dedicated to the sustainability of the organisation. This allowed us to hire - for the first time in our history - a professional fundraiser who successfully secured a significant portion of our target budget for the AFT programme. We were able to establish partnerships with several new organisations, particularly in the philanthropic sector.

Despite our progress in terms of funding, we continue to operate on limited resources. Our team members work on salaries below market value, but in 2023 we were able to cover more paid full-time equivalents (FTEs), resulting in fewer volunteering hours for the team. We continue to leverage our partnerships and operate without a physical office to achieve substantial savings, further optimising the funding we receive. We strive to maximise the impact of the funding available, allocating it as efficiently as possible, and ensuring that every donation and resource is fully utilised to advance our mission.



Julieta Novoa and Blenda Schmutz  
Capacity Team





Piera Marongiu, Adrienn Györy, Ulrike Drager  
Capacity Team

## **Organisational development: Board renewal and digitalisation process in progress**

Our board underwent significant changes this year, prompting us to make concerted efforts to strengthen the collaboration between our team and the board. While we have made progress in fostering better communication and alignment, we recognise that there is still work to be done to reach the level of synergy we aspire to achieve.

We continued with the digitalisation of various processes, including our first exploration of digital programme delivery and community management. While digital tools are increasingly important, we are convinced that human contact remains essential for building a business or finding a job in Switzerland. Throughout the year, our events facilitated hundreds of these crucial interactions, complemented by the many hours our pool of corporate volunteers dedicated to our participants – connections that would not have otherwise occurred. They open doors and are the threads that weave together the fabric of the inclusive society we seek to build.

## **Swiss Diversity Award 2023**

Another highlight of the year was Capacity winning the Swiss Diversity Award in the category “Education and Social Background” for our efforts in making the Swiss labour market more inclusive for professionals with a refugee or migrant background. This award, along with SEM’s recognition, provides a strong boost to our efforts, fuelling our momentum to continue our work.



# Cross-sector collaboration remains at the core of our approach

With the continued support of our partners, corporate volunteers, and many more community members who champion our efforts, we are confident in our ability to expand our services for the communities we serve throughout Switzerland. We eagerly anticipate growing our network of supporters, as cross-sector collaboration is essential to achieving our goals. We look forward to working together to build the inclusive society we envision.

We are committed to the SDGs:



Access Fast Track participants





TIME COMMITMENT  
BY THE TEAM

**14'258** hours of work by the team / **7.1 FTE**  
**11'697** hours paid / **5.8 FTE**  
**2'562** hours volunteered / **1.3 FTE**

AFT NETWORKING EVENT



JANUARY 2023

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

CYCLE FOUR

CYCLE FIVE

AFT  
NETWORKING  
EVENT

ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
PROGRAMME

LAUNCH PHASE

CYCLE SEVEN

CYCLE SIX

ACCESS FAST TRACK

ELEVATE PHASE

BOOST PHASE

ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
PROGRAMME

OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER

AUGUST

JULY

CYCLE SEVEN

ACCESS FAST TRACK

AFT NETWORKING EVENT  
"CONNECT"

CEP COMMUNITY  
CELEBRATION  
PARTY

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY 2024

**Our Activities  
in 2023**



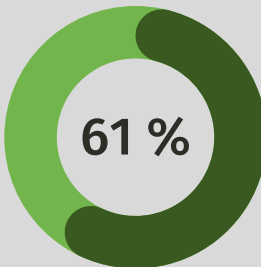
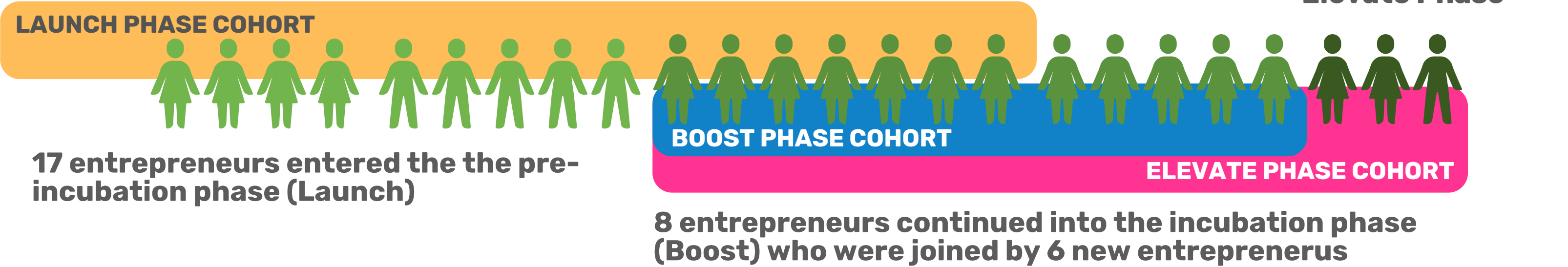
# Entrepreneurship programme 2023

Entrepreneurship Programme participants  
at the Community Party, November 2023

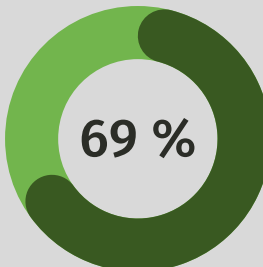


# Entrepreneurship Programme 2023

## Our cohort 42 applications in 2023



61% refugee  
39% migrant  
experience



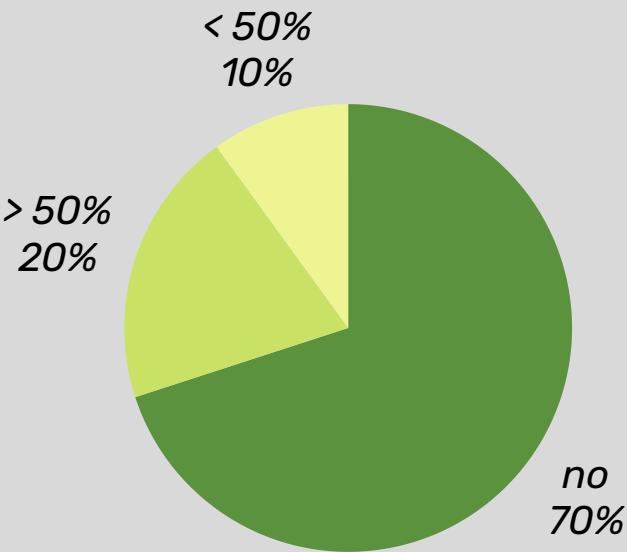
69% Frauen  
21% Männer



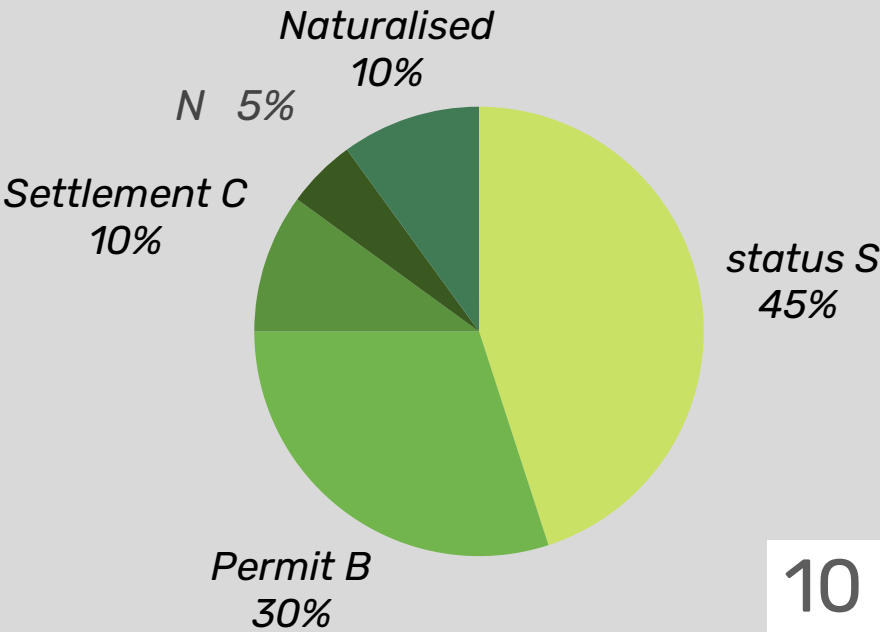
15 countries of origin

38 median age of participants

### CURRENTLY WORKING



### PERMIT STATUS





**45 corporate  
volunteers**

joined as mentors and coaches  
to Capacity entrepreneurs



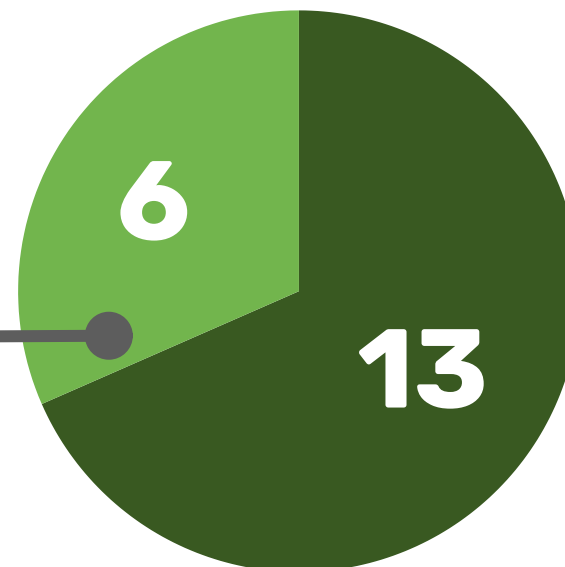
**30 PALs (mentors)**

**15 coaches**

**19 Projects\***

that started the programme  
*\*4 pre-existing*

**13 for profit businesses  
6 socio-cultural initiatives**



## 2023 programme offerings:

- 4** orientation sessions
- 86** hours of professional training
- 28** expert-led workshops
- 8** self-guided videos

- 348** hours of 1:1 mentoring
- 111** hours of personalized coaching

- 5** community gatherings
- 1** public networking event



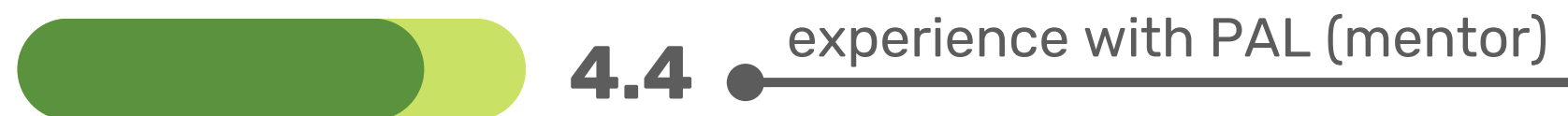
## Results on participants

*Based on 23 responses received*



## Satisfaction from participants

*average score from all responses on a scale of 1-5*



## Satisfaction from Corporate Volunteers

*average score from all responses on a scale of 1-5, n=21*



## Direct Impact on participants

*Based on 23 responses received*

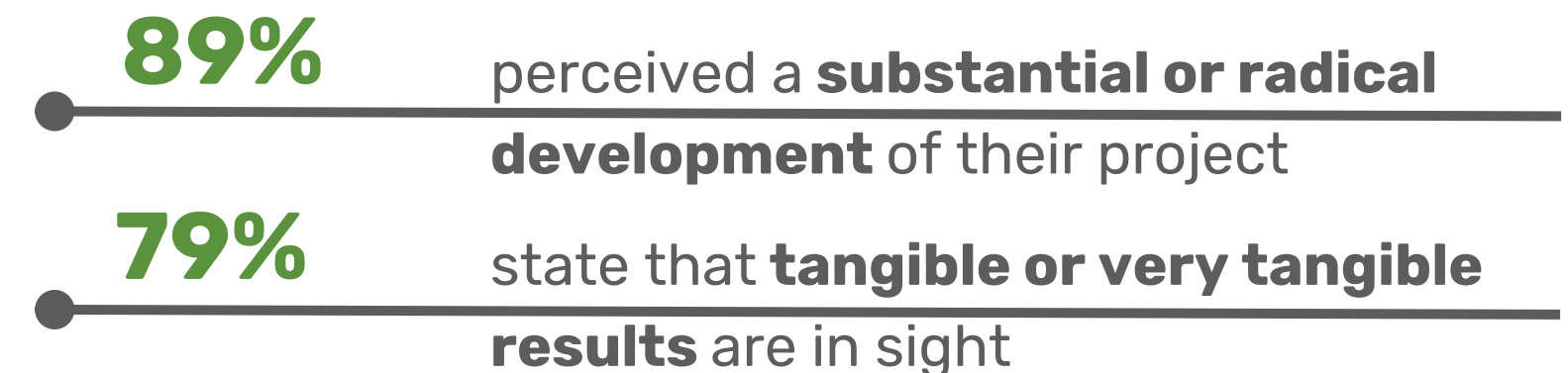
### Skills developed (top three):

- creativity
- adaptability
- awareness/realistic expectations

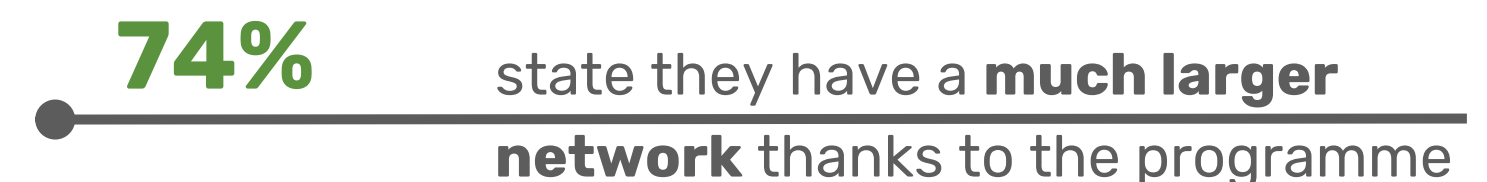
### Knowledge developed (top five):

- pitching effectively
- start-up deck
- Business Model Canvas applied
- MVP concept applied
- sustainable business strategy

### Development of the project:



### Network growth:





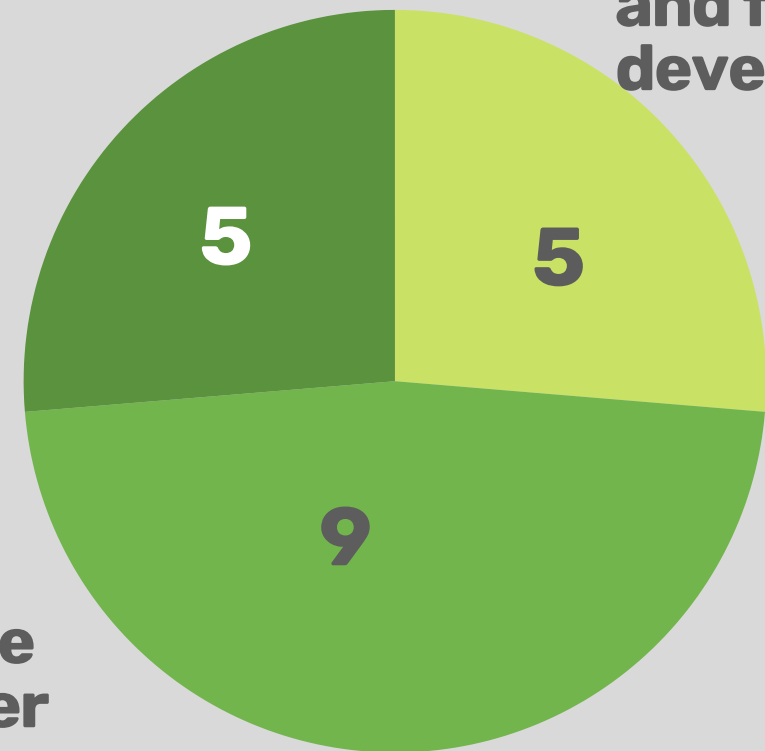
# What happened next...

## 19 Projects\*

at the end of the programme

on hold

plan to found their business or initiative within 6 months after the programme



registered  
(4 pre-existing)  
and further  
developed

## \*The stories behind the numbers

*Our participants are tasked with learning how to turn their ideas into viable project while also evaluating their readiness to be a business owner. For some, success takes a different path.*

*This year we had a total of 7 drop-outs. The decision to put a project on hold may be based on many factors.*

**14 projects are still active.**

*"I really loved to share my knowledge for a meaningful purpose. I wish that the program will survive in the future."*

*Filippo Viel - Coach CEP 2023*

## On Corporate Volunteers (PALs/mentors & coaches)

*Based on 16 responses received*

- **14 out of 16** respondents cited **increased awareness** of the challenges refugees/migrant entrepreneurs face.
- **12 out of 16** respondents state that volunteering with the Capacity Entrepreneurship Programme has **influenced their perceptions** of people with a migrant/refugee background.
- **13 out of 16** respondents feel more motivated to **raise the visibility** of refugees and migrants due to their volunteering with Capacity
- **11 out of 16** respondents feel encouraged to advocate for change in supporting refugees and migrants





## Crafting Success with Georgian Wine

### **Slava Vyacheslav Manvelyan Wines**

Slava came to our programme with abundant passion for his product and the story behind it, but needed support with articulating its value effectively. After applying himself rigorously in our online learning platform, as well as leveraging the skills of our many corporate volunteer coaches, Slava now has the language necessary to warmly invite the local market to try his imported Georgian wine, has a top-quality website, and is tapped into a network of other entrepreneurs where he can regularly ask for and receive support to expand his operations and client base.

*"It just appeared to be different! Capacity introduced me to a new world of networking, connections, supporting people, business mindset. And I also loved the migration circle evening!"*





## From Job Seeker to Award-Winning Innovator

### Maha Khalil Our Hub

Maha first joined the Capacity learning community via our labour market integration programme, during which time it became clear that her true passion and interests were in creating her own initiative. Capacity believes strongly that labour market integration and entrepreneurship are two complementary facets of the same solution for socioeconomic inclusion, and in cases like Maha's, we were able to adapt and offer an alternative for her changing needs. Although Maha struggled at first with decision-making, she diligently applied the principles taught in the classroom, notably the Golden Circle and the iterative prototyping process inherent in design thinking, and gained the confidence to experiment with, refine, and build up her offering. Her non-profit initiative, Our Hub, is a community intent on empowering women to contribute their skills and experiences locally, which was awarded the Jury Prize during our final event, along with 2'500 CHF seed funding to launch her initiative.

*"In this phase I have learned to enjoy surfing the wave."*



# Access Fast Track Programme 2023



**Access Fast Track Participants  
at the Final Networking Event, January 2024**

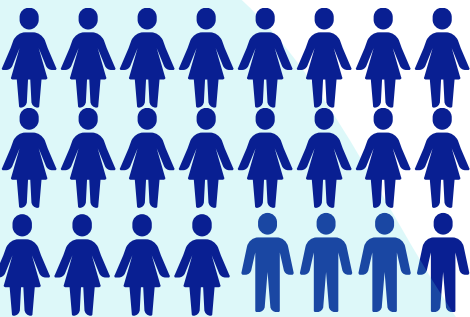


# Access Fast Track Programme 2023

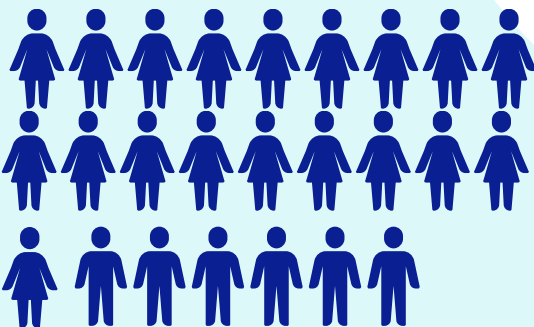
104

PARTICIPANTS WITH REFUGEE  
AND MIGRANT BACKGROUND

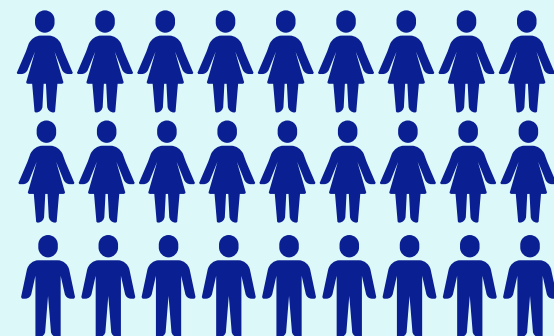
**Cycle FOUR**  
24 participants  
20 female/4 male



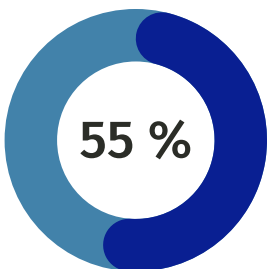
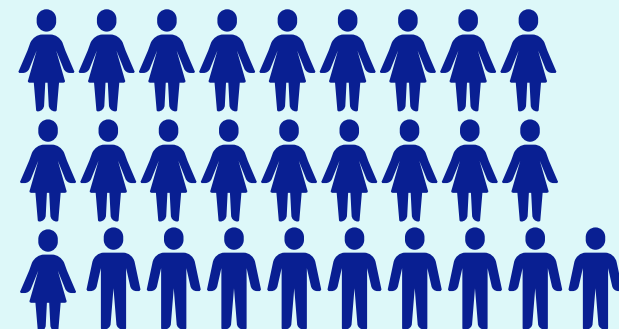
**Cycle FIVE**  
25 participants  
19 female/6 male



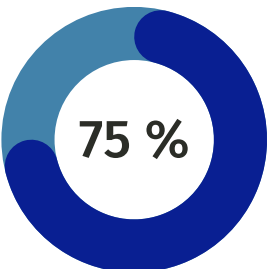
**Cycle SIX**  
27 participants  
18 female/9 male



**Cycle SEVEN**  
28 participants  
19 female/9 male



55% refugee /  
45% migrant experience

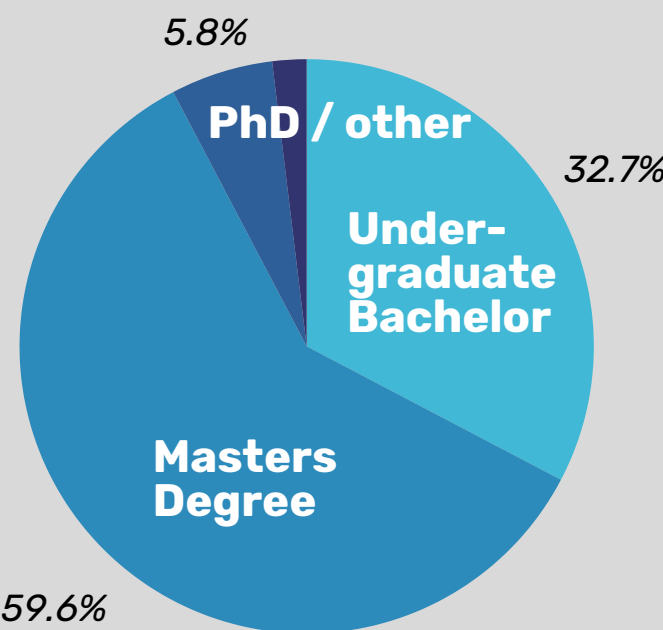


75% female  
representation

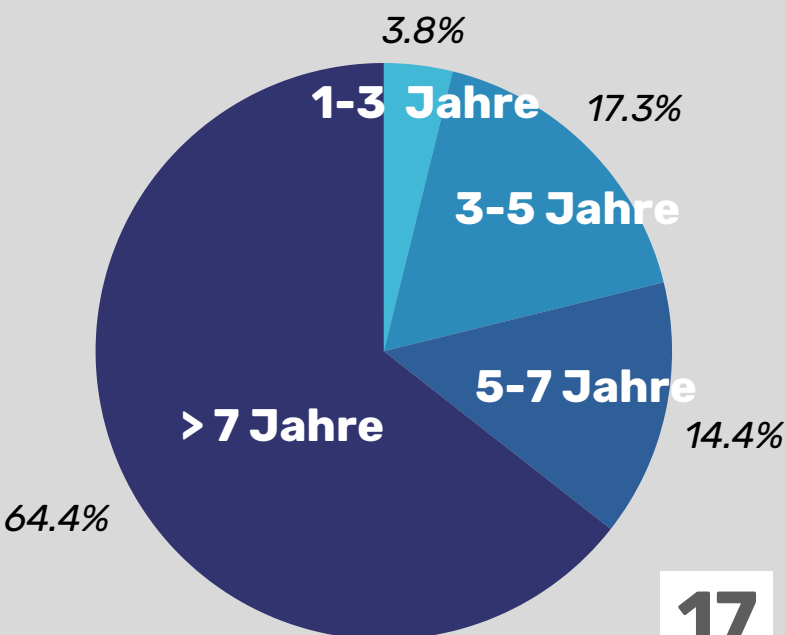


19 out of 26 cantons  
represented

## Education



## Work Experience







## Corporate Volunteers

joined as programme  
advisors, talent coaches  
and network allies

**205 engagements  
by 101 active  
volunteers**

*"This programme was a big  
takeaway both for the  
participant and for me as a  
Talent Coach. I was astonished  
at how motivated and talented  
my coachee was and what she  
could bring to the Swiss  
market. I wish to continue  
helping others and encourage  
my colleagues to also  
participate in the Talent Coach  
role."*

*Talent Coach, Access Fast Track 2023*

## Activities

**8**

information /  
orientation sessions

**12**

expert-led workshops

**15**

support sessions

**63**

hours of tuition

**205**

engagements

**1'746**

hours of 1:1 coaching

**4**

community  
events

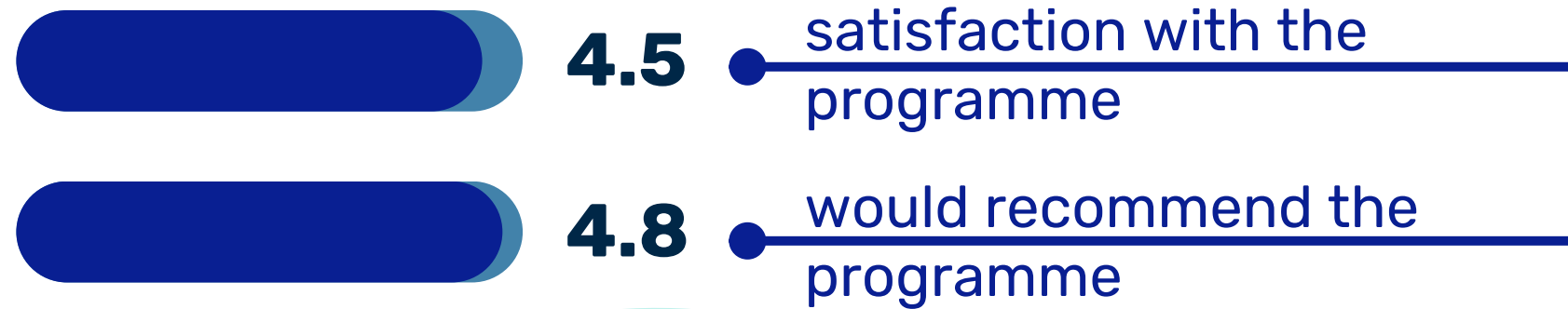
**2**

networking events



## Participants

average score from all responses received (50) on scale of 1 to 5

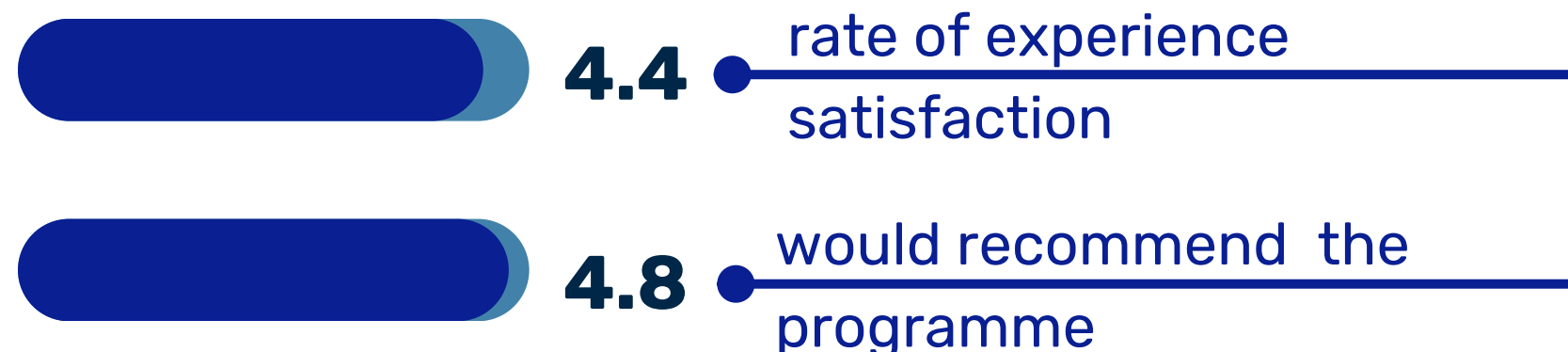


*"Being part of this programme helped me understand how the Swiss labor market operates and the importance of networking. It also gave me confidence in the sense that I could make new contacts and realize that I am not alone in this situation."*

**Access Fast Track Participant 2023**

## Corporate Volunteers

average score from all responses (55) received on a scale of 1 to 5



## What happened next

**After the programme participants report about their progress**

### **35% employment after the end of the programme**

of 199 participants (from surveys and other feedback) who have completed the programme by April 2024 (pilot, C1-C8)

### **53% employment 6 months after the end of the programme**

of 76 responses (out of 122 / response rate 62%) who have completed the programme by June 2023 (pilot, C1 - C5)

***In conclusion, the results indicate that the Access Fast Track programme substantially contributes to reducing Swiss labour market uncertainties.***

— Dr Alexandra David & Dr Judith Terstriep  
AFT Programme Evaluators)



# Direct Impact on participants

average score from all responses (62) on a scale of 1-5

## The programme was most helpful for (top 3):

- confidence in finding employment within 6 m (4.8)
- job search strategy improvement (4.6)
- understanding the Swiss labour market (4.4)

## Skills improved (top 3):

- CV writing / editing (4.5)
- networking (4.4)
- creating a professional brand statement (4.4)

## Coping with challenges (top 3):

- addressing gap years in career (4.4)
- communicating career changes (4.3)
- overcoming a limited local network (4.1)

## Network growth:

- before: more than 70% of the respondents had **less than 10** professional contacts
- after: more than 70% have between 10 to 50 contacts or more (increase of 43.6%)

*"This role helps me as well, to network, meet different people, see their points of view and be "fresh" with the recruitment process. I am learning from the participants as well, as they are highly motivated, smart and talented.."*

**Talent Coach, 2023**

## On corporate volunteers (talent coaches & network allies)

average score from all responses received (55) on a scale of 1-5

## Awareness and understanding of the situation of migrants and refugees:

- participation **raised their awareness** about the challenges refugee and migrant jobseekers face in Switzerland (4.4)
- It encouraged them to reflect on ways to **make this talent group more visible** to the employers (4.3)
- It influenced their **perceptions / opinions** of candidates with a migrant/refugee background (3.9)

## Taking action:

- the experience encouraged them to become an **advocate for change** in **supporting diverse talent** in their organisation (4.2)



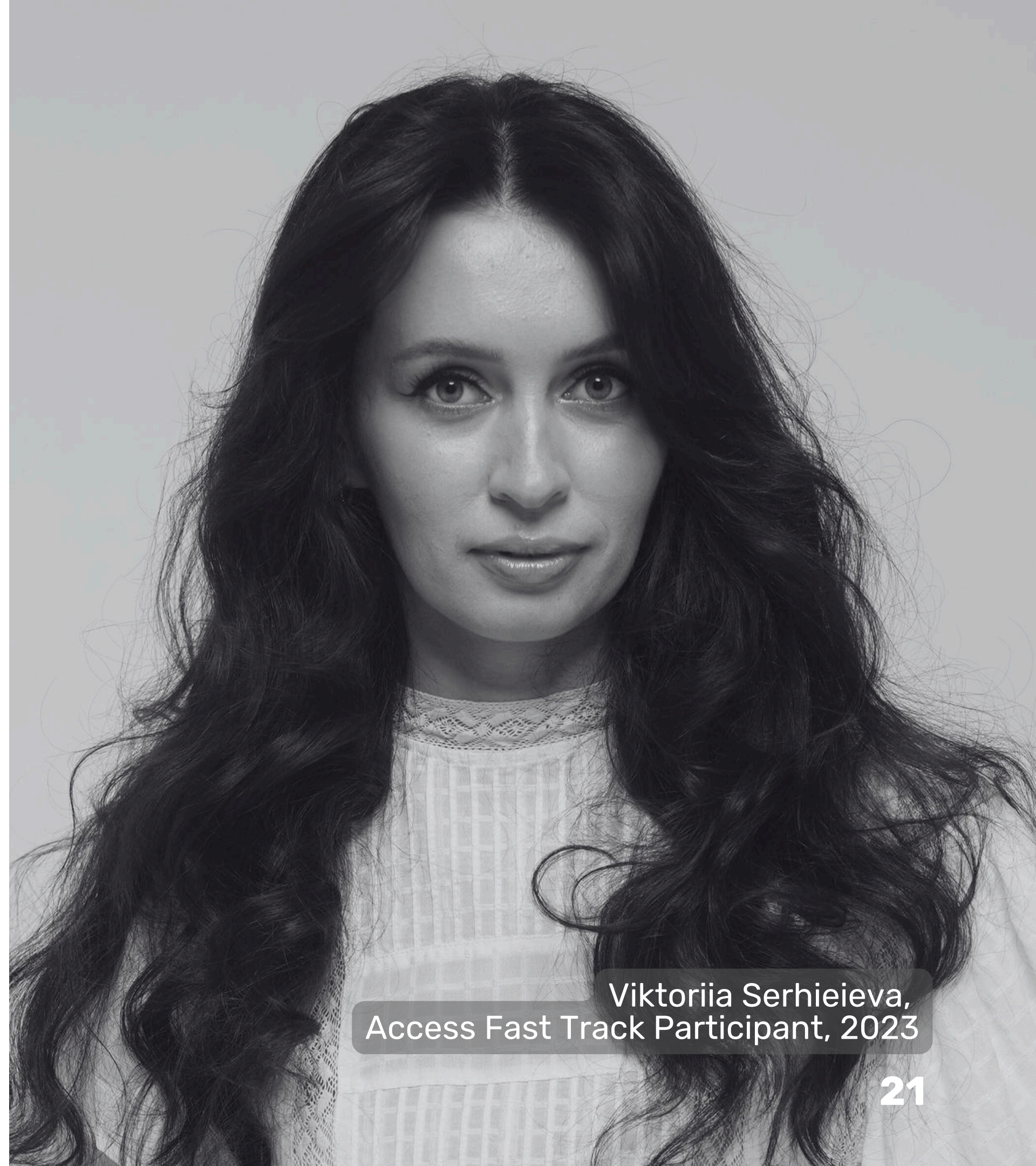
# The importance of asking for feedback

## **Viktoriia Serhieieva** **Access Fast Track, Cycle 4, 2023**

Viktoriia is a seasoned Executive Assistant with over four years of experience supporting professionals in high leadership roles. In recent years, she has also developed a niche in Social Media Marketing. Despite her extensive international work experience, high level of language proficiency, and proactive and resilient attitude, she faced continuous rejections when applying for jobs in Switzerland.

She joined the programme at a time when she was starting to question her skills. Consequently, she was considering lowering her expectations and broadening her job search to include opportunities below her level of expertise. Viktoriia took the programme very seriously and applied for jobs intensively. After several rounds of interviews with a company, she received another rejection letter. However, she decided to ask for more specific feedback per advice of the program coach. Beyond the overall positive evaluation of her application, the employer offered to refer her for a similar role at a partner company.

As a result, Viktoriia secured a job in less than two weeks at a Zurich-based tech start-up as an Executive Assistant, where she also supports the company's social media presence.



**Viktoriia Serhieieva,**  
**Access Fast Track Participant, 2023**



## Changing Career Direction

### **Turgay Sarigül** **Access Fast Track, Cycle 4, 2023**

In Access Fast Track we meet professionals with very rare and outstanding profiles. One of such participants was Turgay Sarigül, who served in the Naval Forces in his home country for 14 years. As his whole career was built around this field, it was clear that in Switzerland he needed to change direction. Considering his engineering background and the growing needs in the IT sector, Turgay promptly started training in cloud development, learning different programming languages and looked for opportunities in this new field. Turgay faced challenges as he was looking for not only the first job in Switzerland, but also for his first formal employment in IT. In Access Fast Track he collaborated with a Talent Coach with an IT background. Therefore, they could work together to develop a more focused job search strategy and practise how to best navigate the interview process to prove his skills. He certainly succeeded and found his place at a company specialised in system engineering and security systems, where he started an internship as Platform Engineer and where he attained a permanent job by now. His commitment to the programme has not changed since then as he presented the Access Fast Track Programme to his company and launched a donation campaign to support Capacity.



**Turgay Sarigül**  
Access Fast Track participant 2023





Access Fast Track Participant

## Outlook to 2024

Looking ahead to 2024, Capacity continues to focus on its established goals and strategy, ready to build upon the experiences of the previous year. We have a passionate and professional team that is committed to continuing our mission in 2024 to support refugees and migrants in their journey towards self-sufficiency and integration in Switzerland.

### **Refining Access Fast Track services**

Our primary focus has been on solidifying our ACCESS FAST TRACK programme and strengthening the organisation's foundation. In 2024, we continue assessing and verifying the needs of our community, with the aim of refining the AFT services. As before, our overarching goal is to address the talent shortage in Switzerland while promoting the integration of refugees and migrants into Swiss society. By enhancing the AFT programme, we intend to offer a service that not only helps individuals find employment but also ensure that their skills and talents are fully utilised and valued. We recognize the high effectiveness of our programme in enhancing the employability of our participants. Nevertheless, a part still struggles to secure employment despite their best efforts. Systemic barriers play a significant role in this challenge, and addressing them requires time and a coordinated effort from both the public and private sectors.





Olga Opanasenko, Entrepreneurship Programme 2023

## **Self-employment: An important path for a part of the community we serve**

Consequently, we reflected on eight years of the Entrepreneurship Programme and two years of ACCESS FAST TRACK, evaluating our learnings to design a short pilot on self-employment. This pilot will be launched in the second half of 2024, aiming to continue supporting the entrepreneurial aspirations of refugees and migrants, as this remains a pressing need in our community. Not only do migrants and refugees continue to have strong entrepreneurial ambitions, but self-employment also offers a path to self-sufficiency for those who prefer offering specific services based on their skillset or struggle to secure traditional employment in Switzerland.

## **Expanding partnerships for an inclusive society**

We are optimistic that, following the pilot, we will be able to inspire new funders to support this important stream of work. Entrepreneurship and self-employment have a transformative power and a huge potential to strengthen individuals and communities.

In 2024, we pursue new collaborations and partnerships, with the awareness that cross-sector collaboration - private, public and philanthropic sectors - is necessary for achieving long-term impact. As our recognition grows across cantons, we aim to strengthen our cooperation with the public sector, aspiring to make our programmes available even more broadly in Switzerland.

Together with a growing network of partners, and a devoted pool of corporate volunteers, we are confident that we will continue making an impact in the lives of those we serve and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.



# THANK YOU!

Thank you to all our partners, collaborators and friends for your full support over the last year.

Thank you to all the generous donors - we would not have been able to run the programmes without your support.

Also, thank you to our loyal crowd of volunteers, who assisted us with their valuable expertise. You strengthen our organisation and help us widen our impact in the communities we serve.

Thank you, to our community, for your dedication, power, and vital engagement, as we together are building a more inclusive society.



Johnson & Johnson

CREDIT SUISSE



temperatio  
Stiftung für Umwelt | Soziales | Kultur

VOLKART  
STIFTUNG

ERNST GÖHNER  
STIFTUNG



Stiftung "Perspektiven"  
von Swiss Life

UBS Stiftung für  
Soziales & Ausbildung

Hilfsgesellschaft  
Zürich



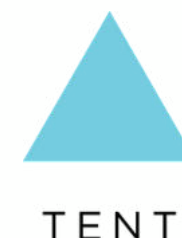
Unterstützt vom  
Kanton Zug

KPMG  
Foundation

Stiftung für Erforschung  
der Frauenarbeit

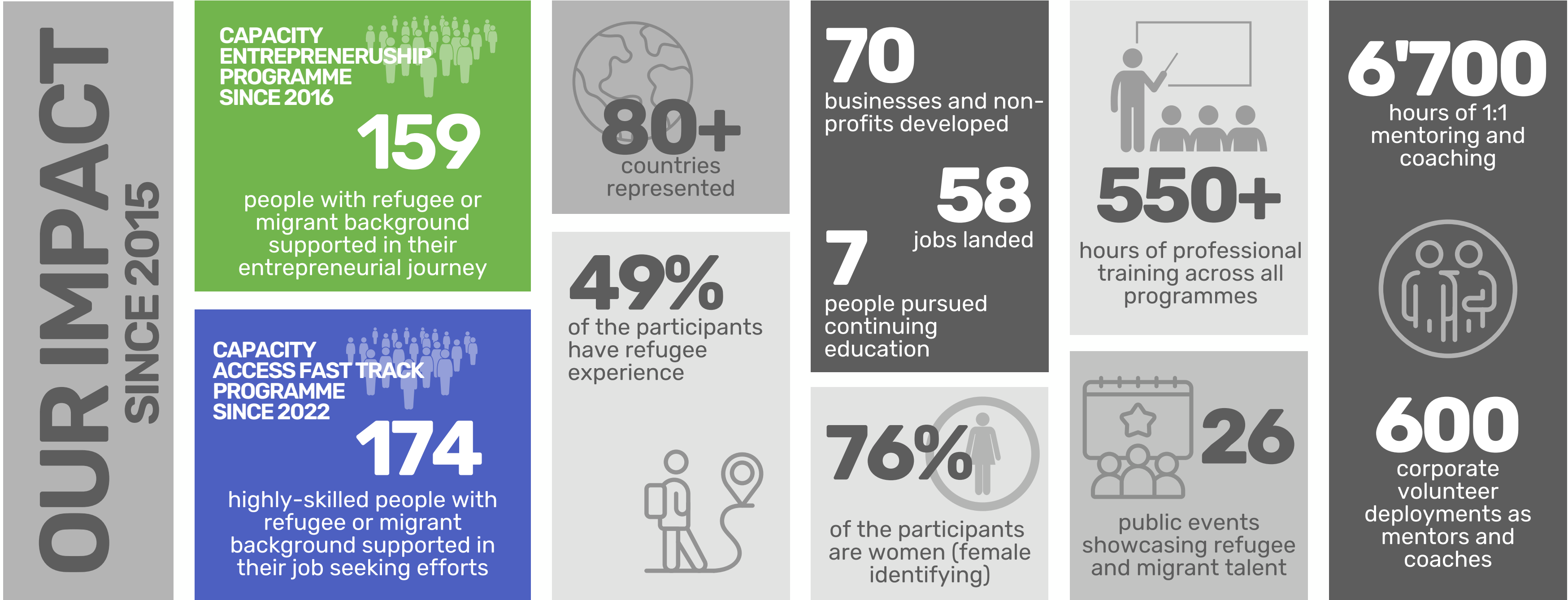


Deloitte.





Appendix 2:





# Capacity Team in 2023



ADRIENN GYÖRY, PhD.  
Programm Management



EVGENIYA VODOLAZOVA  
Programme Development



CATERINA MEIER PFISTER  
Partnerships



PIERA MARONGIU  
Talent Placement



FRANCESCA MALVATANI  
Talent Management



JULIANE OPPENHEIM  
Talent Management



ISABEL BRÜCHER  
General Management



CAROLIN WÜRTHNER  
Fundraising



JIANAN HUANG  
Evaluation



JULIETA NOVOA  
CEP Co-Lead



BLEND A SCHMUTZ  
Events



MARISA KÖNIG BEATTY  
CEP Co-Lead and Organisational  
Facilitation



CATHELENE BELL  
Volunteer Partnerships  
Manager, Communications



# Volunteers

Our work would not be possible without the invaluable support of:

- Andrea Ostinelli
- Anna Politanska
- Astrid Boos
- Charlène Guillaume
- Fanny Gasser
- Jana Neumann
- Jillian Boyd
- Julie Jaeger
- Kassandra Jégou
- Maha Raafat
- Marinella Bucciarelli
- Ulrike Draeger

All team members worked part time for a total of **7.0 FTEs**. Capacity paid **5.8 FTEs** and **1.3 FTE** was volunteered.



# Capacity Board in 2023



**Chris Gopsill**  
Chief Mentoring Officer and  
Chair of the Board



**Katerina Klezlova**  
Corporate Partnerships and  
Fundraising



**Magdalena J. Schneider**  
Multi-Stakeholder Alliances  
and Fundraising



**Medhanie Gebrekidan**  
Finance



**Katka Letzing**  
Start up expertise &  
innovation



**Dora Aibester**  
Organisational and talent  
development



**Christian Nat**  
IT & Dataprotection Officer

## TIME COMMITMENT BY THE BOARD

**9** board meetings  
**~480** hours volunteered





You can also  
become a  
changemaker!



**Support  
Capacity**





# Contact us

*"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style"*

*Capacity Entrepreneur, 2019*

Capacity  
c/o Impact Hub Zurich  
Sihlquai 131  
8005 Zürich  
[info@capacityzurich.ch](mailto:info@capacityzurich.ch)  
[www.capacityzurich.ch](http://www.capacityzurich.ch)