

**ANNUAL REPORT 2024
OF THE SWISS-JAPAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND – POWERED BY SJCC AND SCCIJ**

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Executive Summary

- Since its establishment in 1988 our Scholarship Fund has granted scholarships to 248 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 2024, 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. This especially applies for the Japanese side.
- The Scholarship Fund had an accumulated surplus of CHF 180,816 at year end.
- The surplus has been elevated compared to the norm because several recipients hadn't commenced their year in Japan due to Covid. As these recipients have now withdrawn, it has resulted in a reduced contingent liability.
- Due to the surplus the SJCC and the SCCIJ took the decision to stop donations from the chambers for 2023 and 2024.

1. Introduction

In 2024, the scholarship fund received 22 formal applications, marking an increase from the previous year. Notably, nine applicants applied from Japan for the "Year in Switzerland". This is a big increase to the previous year. This increase is also evident in the number of scholarships awarded: three scholarships were granted for the "Year in Japan," and two for the "Year in Switzerland". Although the interview process remains thorough this increase on the Japanese side is very encouraging and can be attributed to the strong promotion by the SCCIJ and their partners, as well as a more detailed preparation of the applicants.

We registered two recipients from Switzerland who aborted the program mid-term:

- One recipient, who started with the internship, decided to further pursue is professional career and not to engage in the intensive language training as it is foreseen by the program.
- One recipient was not able to establish herself in the Japanese society and was unsuccessful in finding a suitable internship. The situation took a toll on her mental health and she decided to abort the program after finishing her language training.

On the positive side, we are happy to see that many recipients thrive both in Japan and Switzerland. Although finding an internship opportunity proves to be challenging in the beginning, most of them eventually find a position and start building up their career and network in a foreign country, even pro-longing their stay after the program.

We extend our gratitude to our sponsors for their unwavering support in making this program possible. Special thanks go to Mr. Erich Stuhlraeger, a dedicated SCCIJ member, and his spouse for their generous donation to the scholarship fund upon his passing. The ongoing commitment of individuals and organizations has provided the financial foundation for this vital investment in the future of Swiss-Japan business relations.

2. Scholarship Applications

Summary 2024

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 2023 - CONFIDENTIAL

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 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

The subsequent table provides background information on the 5 scholarship recipients in 2024.

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 ten scholarship recipients (out of 248) have not completed their "SJCC Japan Year". This figure does not include the five 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 180,816 CHF at year-end. Contingent Liabilities, i.e. outstanding but committed scholarship payments amounted to the following amounts (split between Year in Japan and Year in Switzerland):

- Year in Japan: JPY 4'500'000 to be carried forward to 2024
- Year in Switzerland: CHF 20'000 to be carried forward to 2024

The total contingent liabilities in CHF are 46'100.

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 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.

The SCCIJ has introduced the Young Professionals Chapter even earlier and it is 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 of the SJCC Scholarship Fund are automatically a member of the SJCC Young Professionals and as such of the SJCC. The President of the SJCC Young Professionals 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.

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. Roger Dubach
- the Swiss Business Hub Japan, Fabian Stiefvater
- our strong, joint partner the Swiss Chamber of Commerce & Industry in Japan (SCCIJ) in Tokyo, its BOD and its former Presidents Michael Mroczek, André Zimmermann and its President Thomas Brodbeck. Ayako Nakano 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.
- all current and 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, Fabian Antonatos
- Philipp Saurer, who elevated the scholarship fund to new heights during his tenure as chairman, notably enhancing the interview process, and executed an excellent transition of his responsibilities in 2023.

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, educational institutions and government administration with their professional qualifications and enthusiasm.

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