



# The startups that They do not expect



20% is the proportion  
of women

Founder of  
Start in  
Switzerland in 2018

Source: swissinfo.ch, Startupmonitor EU 2018

Begin your journey in the marketplace and sell to a multinational company.  
And get rich? No, startups are about research and planning.  
Long-term. The example of four entrepreneurs from Ticino.

TEXT BY PAOLO D'ANGELO PHOTOS BY PINO COVINO, ALAIN INTRAINA

Sustainability, social responsibility, research and innovation, long-term vision. A startup. Starting a business is one thing. serious. "We don't sell dreams, but we all have a mission that is not

"It's not about enriching ourselves, but about working hard to create added value that benefits society as a whole." They have it This was announced by the four up-and-coming Ticino natives. entrepreneurs repeatedly stated that



Sabrina Balestra with a  
planted food product  
100% vegan.

## Planted Foods AG

**Founded** in 2019

**Operational Headquarters:** Kempththal (ZH)  
**Employees:** 170

**Purpose:** Production and  
Sale of food substitutes

100% vegan meat.

**Marketing Director:**

Sabrina Balestra, 37 years old, comes from  
originally from Lugano and Malcantone.

**Motto:** We are hungry for  
change.

**Website:** www.eatplanted.com

We met for this church service.  
They opened the doors of their companies,  
They help us understand their world.

### Arrival at Planted

The first stop is in Kempththal (ZH), in  
the industrial area "The Valley". There, in

Maggi existed in 2000. In 2022 there will be...

Planted Foods AG, the 100% vegan

Produces and distributes meat substitute products. In

The company bistro welcomes us.

young marketing manager, Sabrina

Balestra, an entrepreneur with roots in Lugano and Malcantone:  
"Our vegetable meat contains

only natural ingredients

Without additives. We were born in  
July 2019 and today in seven

European markets, in the gastronomic sector  
and distribution and online sales.

Our startup is the one that is growing the fastest.

### fast in the protein range

Alternatives in Europe." The Ticino manager  
explains how a vegan diet fits into everyday life  
established

Food products from consumers of all age groups.

"The phase in which it was used is long over."

as a fashion trend. In Germany

One in eight buys alternative products to

Meat. "We believe that a diet with

reduced consumption

The logical and obligatory step is to remove meat.

in the way we eat. In the year 2030

Will there be 10 billion people on Earth?

live. If we want to avoid the negative consequences

which result from the overexploitation of livestock farming,

We need to take new, sustainable paths."

Balestra emphasizes the reduced strain

Environmental impact of vegan products compared to  
such as those of animal origin: «The planted™

Chicken meat produces 74% less CO2 and

uses 46% less water than

to a chicken of animal origin and save

the lives of many animals." Among the 170

The company has a team of 20 employees.

Scientists who are inspired daily by nature in

Let yourself be inspired by protein structures.

Through biotechnology, they improve day by day.

new

Products".

### Clean water for all

"Clear water, healthy life": This is the  
Motto of Jaime Agramont, Industrial Engineer  
and a European specialist in this field  
water purification. "Since

As a child, I was fascinated by this element.

My father told me,

Improvement of water quality and its  
Accessibility, life would have improved.

of people. And the vision I had of

"My child has become a reality." Today his

emerging company from

Giubiasco, a Swiss company (DAX-listed), produces and distributes

Devices for eliminating and preventing the

Formation of limescale, rust, algae,

Bacteria (Legionella,

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Half of the

300 new startups  
annually

in Zurich  
and Geneva

Source: swissinfo.ch



3.059 billion  
of Franconia  
invested in 2021  
in Switzerland

Source: Swiss Venture Capital Report,  
swissinfo.chd



"The technology  
This device is patented,  
the devices are  
certified at

international and  
Products in Ticino".

## Daxtro Swiss Sagl

### Founded in

2016. **Company headquarters:**  
Giubiasco.

### Employees: 5. Purpose:

Manufacturing of water purification equipment.

**Founder:** Jaime Agramont,  
41 years old

**Motto:** Clear water, healthy life.

**Website:** www.daxtroswiss.ch



The  
Switzerland is the  
first in global  
innovation

Index (2021)

Source: wipo.int

→ Pseudomonas) and other pollutants.

"These are certified devices that are in  
They can be used in various types of facilities, from private  
homes to public buildings.

buildings, from hospitals to  
Sports facilities, from coffee machines to  
Car washes." One of Agramont's goals is to "eliminate  
Legionella electronically without affecting the hydraulic  
system"

It must be heated to 60°C. In this way  
People's health is protected and significant energy savings are  
achieved."

Agramont thanks the cantonal authorities,  
especially the regional agency for the  
Development of Bellinzona and the valleys.

"We produce everything in Giubiasco and source from  
manufacturers."

local Ticino producers. This confirms

that in Ticino one can give shape to one's ideas, develop them  
further and create added value.

In this context, Agire has informed us

The foundation provides important support in this regard.

"We have made it possible to take advantage of  
the economic innovation law."

The engineer is an idea generator and is aware of his own role.  
sure that he will still be a

"Starter" will be: "I like to give shape to my 'visions'  
and see them become reality. I have two more

New startups were founded, both in the field  
Water and its cleaning without the use of water  
of chemicals. Water is life and the

"The greatest joy is seeing a child drink a glass of water and  
smile."

### A native of Locarno on Lake Geneva

It was my doctorate in robotics in Lausanne. to start the entrepreneurial adventure by Nicola Tomatis. The Locarno native with a passion for technology, he is the head of BlueBotics SA since its founding in 2001 from a spin-off of the Polytechnic from Lausanne (EPFL). This focuses on automation. companies specializing in logistics vehicles is based in St. Sulpice and has Fifty employees. Nicola Tomatis defines herself even as an "entrepreneur for

**Case:** "At some point I realized, that the research I conducted It did not have the hoped-for effect on the world. EPFL already organized this in the early 2000s. Coaching and courses for start-ups. Therefore, we founded the company with four partners. "Our company". "Cutting-edge research" operate , intergenerational exchange. tangible benefits for society would be a failure." The purpose of a startup

For Tomatis, job creation in Switzerland, in an entrepreneurial vision long-term. "The Silicon Valley model envisions the Winner as the one who has the idea Right to earn a lot and quickly and Then sell it to Google or Meta. Personally I feel very far removed from that. Entrepreneurial culture. In Europe there is risk-averse and tend to find a compromise between speed American and European characteristics. Also because the concept of "sustainability" It is not very compatible with the claim, " "To earn everything immediately." My vision is rather, to create the foundations for a horizon entrepreneurial, by working on it day after day to work, to improve, and to imagine that our travel companions, our Colleagues, they will still be with Us in ten years. Of course, if they want it. However, no results can be achieved through which is of fundamental importance for the transmission of knowledge and corporate culture".

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Hundred  
the startups managed  
from the foundation  
act

Source: Agire Foundation



### BlueBotics SA

**Founded in 2001**

**Headquarters:** St. Sulpice (VD)

**Employees:** 50

**Purpose:** Technology development

Pearl autonomous navigation from Vehicles in the logistics sector.

**Co-founder:** Nicola Tomatis, 49 years old, managing director, originally from Locarno.

**Motto:** communicate, design and have fun.

**Website:** www.bluebotics.com

For Nicola Tomatis  
It is important to  
long-term planning  
runtime of  
a business.

# Co-op and startups



Youssefi Merhan,  
Director of M&A  
from Coop

Coop works with several hubs together, including digitalswitzerland, Impact Hub and, since 2021, BaselHack, a technology park in Basel. Furthermore, Coop is a global partner of the **Kickstart Accelerator**, a Zurich-based platform that supports...

## Meeting of promising

It promotes the development of innovative technologies with a positive impact on society, supporting startups, large companies, cities, universities and foundations.

Coop is part of Kickstarter.

jury responsible for evaluating approximately

500 startups. Of these, around 50 will... They are thoroughly reviewed, and efforts are made to launch projects with them. **Coop conducts projects with eight startups annually and is building long-term partnerships with three of them.**

**Partnerships.** Coop is focusing **50% on food and retail.**

**Technology, 25% on Smart City Mobility and 25% on New Work & EdTech** (educational technology). Two-thirds

All of the startups in which Coop is involved come from the sustainability sector.

Contact: For further information:

[hello@kickstart-innovation.com](mailto:hello@kickstart-innovation.com)  
[www.kickstart-innovation.com](http://www.kickstart-innovation.com)

Kickstart Innovation AG

P.O. Box 1661, 8021 Zurich



Connie's Chipotle Vayo, 200g, the vegan alternative to Mayonnaise, CHF 4.95, in selected Coop stores.

Marinated vegan Fillets

Planted

Chicken, 175g, 5.95.

Retail outlets selected

Cooperatives.



Microspot.ch is aimed at Quickpac, a company that focuses exclusively on ...up to electric cars for the Package delivery.



Blue Alpine Fresh Universal Washing strips, CHF 13.95, in selected Coop stores.



## FenX AG

Founded in 2019

Headquarters: Turgi (AG)

Employees: 10

**Purpose:** Production and distribution of Sustainable insulating foams for the Construction from waste materials.

**Co-founder:** Michele Zanini, 34 years old.

Balerna-Ligornetto **motto:** "The insulating material that rises from the ashes."

**Website:** [www.fenx.ch](http://www.fenx.ch)

## In the former spinning mill

From the shores of Lake Geneva to Turgi (AG), to the former spinning mill. We are greeted by Michele.

Zanini, graduate of materials science at ETH Zurich Zurich and eco-founder of FenX AG, a 2019

a startup founded that produces insulation panels for construction made of produces excavated and waste materials.

For Zanini and his colleagues, the goal is to find sustainable solutions for the construction industry.

in the second half of 2021 in Switzerland, a turnover

of 6.4 billion Swiss francs and 91,500 employees

recorded. "Our mission is to achieve collective sustainability through climatic, ecological and social sustainability."

To contribute to well-being, with a focus on quality stands."



Michele Zanini's research and his employees are focused

on sustainable materials for Insulation panels for buildings.

of people's lives. That's how one imagines it, also through a new type of house construction, with Methods that facilitate dismantling and the

Reuse of real estate in accordance with the own needs.

The development and promotion of climate-friendly Insulation materials are

our goal, considering that the

Buildings are responsible for 40% of energy consumption and 36% of greenhouse gas emissions.

To

insulating, fire-resistant and inorganic panels

It starts with inferior material, from Waste that "rises from the ashes like

"The Phoenix." This is where FenX was born. Zanini finally explains that another factor

What makes the difference is that we also had access to financing.

lost, which came from private and institutional sources Associations originate from the federal government.

"This allows us to work with the right

"Hurry and plan our future with balanced frenzy."

•

## The people of Ticino like it lifestyle



**Lorenzo**

**Ambrosini,**  
director

Foundation

Act, for  
innovation  
and development  
technological.

Attention to the

"Customer experience" or the emotional part of the Interface to customers. Furthermore, it is

excellent development of Lifestyle technology, not just in fashion but also travel, food and everything daily product and service that has an impact on lifestyle to be.

### Who is the startup entrepreneur?

He is a determined, visionary, sometimes even a stubborn person who knows how to take risks. But alone That's not feasible. It requires...

Investors and an interdisciplinary team.

This brings with it skills ranging from finance to production, but also external support, such as from the Agire Foundation.

### How strong is the appetite for startups? in Ticino?

Ticino is on its way

both on an innovative level and for that purpose as regards the "risk culture", whereby the latter is more deeply rooted in

Realities such as Israel or Anglo-Saxon Countries. In the last ten years

Progress is being made in a fabric produced by 30,000 SMEs.

**Investors have**

**began investing again after**

**The pandemic?**

Yes, in 2021 over 3 billion Swiss francs were invested in Switzerland.

**Startups, that's almost a billion**

more than in the two previous years.

**How much Ticino soul is in**

**today's startups?**

The overview of startups reflects the diversified economic structure of the

Ticino's, which is opposed by

Life Sciences at ICT. There's a lot.

### What is the profile of a up-and-coming entrepreneur?

It is the student, the researcher, or the Entrepreneur who believes in his idea and is willing to invest time and Money so that it works. Then

They are the "serial entrepreneurs" who have already had successful experiences behind them. We notice an interesting female presence among the

**Startup founders. It seems that There is an innate nature in women. Curiosity, willingness to take risks. And also**

The business approach is different, more creative qualities.

### How many startups are being supported? from the Agire Foundation?

On average, we encounter about 200

projects per year, while we manage around one hundred in our portfolio.

### Which profiles does Tecnopolo target?

**Young people are coming from Rest of Switzerland?**

The Ticino Technology Park is a reality specifically for startups in the growth phase and internationalization. We find a growing interest from people and companies from abroad. We have excellent maps, for playing. •



For anyone with an idea or a project

Innovative, here are the following web addresses:

[www.agire.ch](http://www.agire.ch)  
[www.boldbrain.ch](http://www.boldbrain.ch)