

Stilian Shishkov, CEO Sportal Group: «With Ringier the chemistry is right.»

# DOMO

Ringier

In-house journal  
April 2021

«Let's be honest.»  
The Blick Group's chief  
sports editor Steffi Buchli  
answers Max Frisch's  
legendary questionnaire.

# A good sport



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# «Words and images shape our perception and structure our thinking»

Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl is the head of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in New York. For decades, this top diplomat has been campaigning for equal opportunities. And she is a member of Ringier's EqualVoice initiative advisory board. «I have always been an alpha dog,» she says.

Interview Nina Huber

**You live in New York City. The city is still semi-paralyzed by the pandemic. What does your everyday life look like?**

New York suffered greatly in the past year - and not only because of the pandemic, during which almost 30,000 people died. I have a roof over my head, food and healthcare are guaranteed. The UN meets in strict compliance with hygiene measures, and in our office, we work in shifts. So, we are doing well. It's much harder for all those who have lost their homes or don't have enough to eat because of the crisis. But solidarity and resilience are strong in this city.

**As State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, you were constantly on the road. Do you miss traveling?**

For quite some time now, I have been traveling not just for pleasure, but because it is my job. Part of my passion for this job is in intercultural exchange, and I have that here with the 192 other UN member states, every day. Basically, I like the mix between local roots in the neighborhood and an international network. I find it harder to deal with the fact that I see much less of my family because of the pandemic.

**How do you stay in touch?**

My children are digital natives and even my mother is very agile when it comes to using new technologies: So, we're always in touch, and on weekends, we often meet on Skype. But that is no substitute for meeting in person, neither privately nor professionally.

**Your children are 25 and 22. What are the concerns of Generation Z?**

Climate change is their biggest concern. And like many young people, they have been badly impacted by the consequences of the pandemic: Our son has been working from home in London for a year, and our daughter, who is finishing her studies in London, is currently doing so from Switzerland.

**Would your son and daughter describe themselves as feminists?**

That's something you'd have to ask them, of course. But yes, I suppose they do, even though they care less about such terms than they do about real equality of opportunity. But their attitude results at least as much from the role model that their father exemplified. In addition to his part-time work as a computer scientist, he did a lot of housework and childcare on all the continents where we lived. ▶

A diplomat with an impressive career and a tireless fighter for equal opportunity: Pascale Baeriswyl, 53.

Photo: KEISTONIC/Alessandri della Valle



**You have always advocated gender equality and you are on the Advisory Board of EqualVoice. What do the media contribute to role models?**  
The media have a crucial role. Words and images shape our perception and structure our thinking. Everything that is depicted influences how we perceive gender relations. That's why I find this initiative - in the way it combines leadership from the Group's management, scientific study and commitment in everyday life - very exciting and outstanding.

**Women are decoration, men are experts. What bothers you most about inequality in the media?**  
I used to be particularly outraged by stereotyped portrayals of women. In the meantime, however, readers are quite capable of recognizing such banal clichés, and those frequently reap a shitstorm on social media. That is why the subtle inequalities your question implies now bother me much more. Their consequences are more fatal to equality of opportunity: Who embodies experience, for example? During the first stage of the pandemic, it was quite striking. Men were obviously much more confident in making statements about an uncertain future. But that doesn't mean they should speak out more often, and this is also in the hands of the media. EqualVoice has done valuable work in this area, too, by compiling lists of female experts - e.g. virologists and epidemiologists.

**The UN's 2030 Agenda describes 17 goals for sustainable development. Point five is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. How far along are we?**  
We have made great progress, especially in terms of access to healthcare, education and the labor market. However, the pandemic has massively set the achievement of these goals back, because it is precisely in these three important areas that women have been marginalized.

**Where do you see the greatest degree of gender inequality?**  
In the distribution of power. Everything else ultimately is derived from this. When power is fairly distributed between the sexes, access to all important areas is also more likely to be ensured.

Similarly, the risks of abuse of power and violence decrease.

**Early in your career, you were an advocate for victims of violence, and in the nineties, you did research on «Violence in Everyday Life» for the Swiss National Science Foundation. What has improved today compared to the past?**  
A lot of progress has been made in responding to this violence, for example with a right of exclusion if a man uses violence within the family. However, more needs to be done to combat the causes. Here, too, it's about the distribution of power and the images that people have in their heads. And there again, the media have an important responsibility.

**Later, as a part-time judge at a civil court, you had to deal with a lot of marital difficulties. So many that you didn't want anything to do with marriage?**  
I was a civil court judge in the Grand Chamber. Cases that get as far as the Chamber are really serious, even cases of divorce law. That was often depressing. However, my historical and jurisprudential involvement with the institution of marriage goes back to my student days: from Roman law, where marriage was a sales transaction between the father and his future son-in-law, to Swiss

## Personal background

Pascale Baeriswyl (born 1968) has been Head of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations in New York since June 2020. A diplomat with an international network, she has a comprehensive multilateral and bilateral track record. The former FDFA State Secretary has given significant impetus in the areas of peace and security, for example for establishing new protection of power mandates and in peace initiatives in Colombia, Mozambique, the Middle East and Nepal. This Swiss national has been committed to equal opportunities for more than three decades. She holds two degrees, in law and humanities (history), and speaks six languages.

marriage law, where women were not allowed to work outside the home without their husband's consent until 1988 and only had the so-called «power of the keys» (power conferred upon the spouse in the interest of the household).

**And yet, in the end, you got married.**  
As long as we weren't married, my life partner and father of our children had no status in the FDFA (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs). I was formally considered a single parent with two children, which became difficult when we were first transferred to Vietnam. My partner was not eligible for a passport or housing and would not have had social security. Even though he had to give up his job for my profession's sake. That's why marriage was the obvious solution. Especially since my rebellion against marriage never had anything to do with the wonderful man I have been with for almost 30 years. And today, the FDFA is a modern employer even for unmarried couples.

**So, as a girl, you didn't dream of a white wedding. But you did dream of a career?**  
Career is an abstract concept. Prestige or money were never my goals. I've always been an alpha dog who likes to shape things and is full of ideas. Creative power is the main motivation for my career. As a child, I also took a great interest in music and dance. I might have pursued this professionally, had I not come from a family where no one had previously enjoyed the privilege of higher education. This background motivated me to complete two degrees.

**You are a role model for many people. Who is your role model?**  
My grandmother. She was a strong, proactive personality. She was an excellent student and would have liked to go on to higher education. As a girl from a humble background, she was denied this, and she had to work in a factory - while raising four children. She never complained, however, and always believed in solidarity. During the war, she hid refugee children, and after the war, she took in undernourished children, especially from Austria. So, she was a hero of everyday life. Like so many others.

**Do you have any pointers for young women: How to succeed in a career?**  
Networking is the be-all and end-all. Having the courage to take risks and maybe fail. We women are too hard on ourselves.

**Do women run the risk of overdoing it because they think they have to do everything perfectly?**  
It is indeed a vicious circle. Women still have to put in more effort to gain the same recognition and, typically, they are then criticized more harshly for this. So, it's impossible to please everyone. That's why I advocate authenticity: staying true to yourself and also forgiving yourself when you haven't done something so well.

**One often hears the argument that women don't have enough confidence to reach the top. Do you also suffer from insecurity and doubt some-times?**  
Yes, of course. It reassures me to know that even Chancellor Merkel or European Central Bank President Lagarde know this feeling. It's worthwhile to deal with it honestly. Men have their doubts, too, and to question yourself is a virtue. Then there's the other approach: strengthening your mental power. I do that with yoga.

**Formerly ballet, now yoga?**  
My passions have always remained the same: music and motion. I hope that one day we'll be able to dance salsa and tango again. Dance and yoga are ways to balance. Our workload at the UN is so high that these personal spaces in-between are simply a matter of staying healthy.

**What do you consider your greatest achievements?**  
I always say it's the little things - and that's half true. I'm also proud of the fact that my qualifications enabled me to become the first female State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs at the age of 48. However, everything that has directly improved the lives of other people matters more. Be it the actual release of political prisoners, our influence on legislation concerning domestic violence, for example in Vietnam, or on the peace processes in Nepal or Mozambique. Things like these are never achieved by one person, but by a team. I'm proud of

Pascale Baeriswyl in Geneva in 2019, when she was State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, meeting with Ernesto Ottone Ramirez from Chile, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture.



the teams with whom we have been able to make a difference.

**The world seems to be in a period of upheaval: Democratic models are increasingly being questioned, we've had Brexit and the Trumpism movement. People seem to be increasingly losing confidence. Do you see that too?**  
Yes, the crisis of confidence at all levels - between states, in institutions and within societies - is one of our greatest challenges right now. This has partly to do with the blending of facts and untruths on social media. Here, too, media accountability plays an important role. And internationally, the UN can contribute to the struggle against fake news and hate speech.

**How?**  
In 2019, the UN developed a strategy against hate speech on the Internet. It has also proactively come up with an action plan to refute fake news. Here in the USA, we can see what happens when disinformation causes a society to become so deeply divided that it turns into parallel worlds.

**The UN is the conscience of the world, as former Secretary General Kofi Annan once said. The member states often have trouble finding agreement amongst themselves.**  
The climate between the world powers is not good, that's true. The loss of confidence is also apparent here. That is why it is precisely our role to help build trust between countries, so the world doesn't go

completely off the rails. Or, to paraphrase Churchill, and of course in a very abbreviated way, «The UN was not founded to bring us Heaven, but to save us from Hell.»

**Are you more of an optimist or an idealist?**  
Both. I wouldn't be in my profession if I didn't consider the glass half full most of the time. Nor would I do this job if I didn't have a strong commitment to the values and ideals that are enshrined in our constitution. However, there is a tendency today to find people who uphold naive ideals. But I'm definitely too old for naivety. In everyday work, we have to bring ideals and realpolitik together.

**You've lived in Hanoi, Brussels, Basel and New York. Where do you feel at home?**  
In my profession, we deal a lot with the question of what home is. For me, Switzerland is a big part of that, from the political system to the street where I grew up. But there's also a lot that you acquire along the way. In Vietnam, for example, we were welcomed with incredible warmth. So, you carry more than one country and one label inside you. It's important to cultivate this inner homeland and never lose your real roots.

**What do you consider to be the greatest achievement of mankind?**  
The acknowledgment that every human being is of equal value, and so, the acknowledgment of human dignity. 🌍



# Three women as boss, supporter, role model

They shape their companies, their countries, and the generations to come.

The three ROAM executives Hilda Kabushenga Kragha, Resian Leteipan and Rolake Rosiji talk about their journey, their challenges and their goals.

Texts: Nina Huber



## Resian Leteipan, CEO Cheki Kenya

She spent her childhood in the wilderness. Together with five siblings and a father who was a senior game warden. Resian Leteipan's parents followed the maxim that education does not only take place in the classroom, but in every moment of life. The Leteipan family is of Maasai descent, and she also has roots among the Nilotic Samburu people. Her career began unglamorously in a call center. There, Resian Leteipan called customers in Europe and the States and sold them things when she didn't even know what they were for. That's when she realized that everything is ultimately based on a customer need, and she enjoined herself to offer only high-quality products or services.

That's how she eventually ended up at Cheki. This Internet platform is a household name in Kenya when it comes to cars because it allows sellers and buyers to come together safely and easily. «The brand has become synonymous with innovation and trust,» says

Leteipan. Her professed goal is to transform Africa through technology - and to make Cheki Kenya's one-stop store for everything related to cars. She conceives her role as CEO as that of a co-creator. «I'm a staunch supporter of my employees and want to give them tasks that help them understand how their individual roles come together to serve the company's goals.» What does being a role model mean to her? «I am aware that I have a multi-layered mantle to wear and I put it on with grace every day. It means being a positive example to others. Knowing that people have high expectations of me and that I will sometimes fail, but I want to keep learning to do better. It means looking forward and backward at the same time to see how our own footsteps can make it a little easier for those who come after us.»

Resian Leteipan lives in Nairobi. As a pastime providing a change from her work, this mother of three children has discovered photography.

## Hilda Kabushenga Kragha, Managing Director Jobs

KPMG, McKinsey, brief maternity leave, CEO at Jobberman Nigeria. Hilda Kabushenga Kragha's professional career reads like a textbook case. Today, the native Ugandan is Managing Director of ROAM's digital job marketplaces (Jobberman in Kenya and Ghana as well as Brighter Monday in Kenya and Uganda) and lives in Lagos. In her job, she aims to provide advisory support to all CEOs without infringing on their autonomy. What appeals to her about the position as Managing Director? «I feel that now is the right time for Africa to push digitalization forward. Even if the focus in the next few years won't just be on technology, because anyone can build that, but on the fight for the biggest and best talent. Connecting the right people with the right jobs - especially in such a

difficult environment - is appealing to me right now.» Although she has a head for numbers, she listens to her gut when the going gets tough - which has always worked out well so far, she says. As a boss, she always wants to have her team's back. «That's the best way to build trust,» she says. She is her employees' biggest fan and supporter, she says, so it's clear that she stands by them even when they disagree. She also feels that part of her job as role model is to speak out for gender equality. «The next generation of female executives should have it easier.» There is still a lot to fight for, she says: for equal pay, more parental leave, against discrimination in the workplace. And she is no less committed when it comes to the issue of racism.

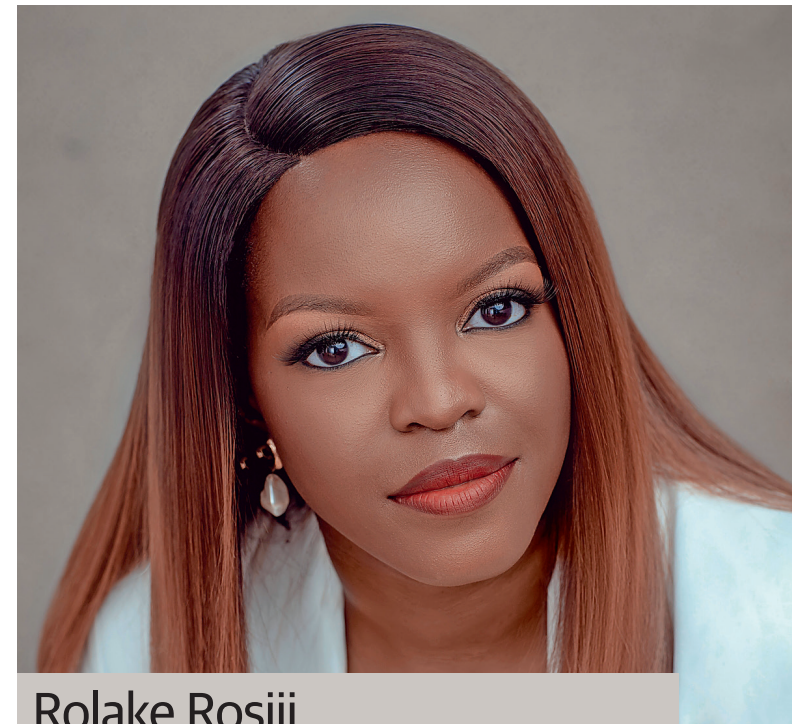


## Rolake Rosiji, CEO Jobberman Nigeria

Rolake Rosiji's career path has been anything but straightforward. From consulting to sales to start-up and finally CEO of Africa's largest job portal, she has done it all. When Rolake Rosiji was ten years old, she was sent to school in the UK. Following her studies in London, she started working for PA Consulting, a management consulting firm, took a course in agriculture in Copenhagen - only to found the start-up Elle Bosse (French for «she works») shortly afterwards. The idea behind this start-up was for women to network and provide support amongst themselves. Eventually, she returned to Lagos as a trade advisor to the Danish Embassy. After working for the global dairy cooperative Arla Foods and two years with a financing platform for technological products, Rolake Rosiji became CEO of Jobberman. Why did she decide to take this step? «Because Jobberman is using technology to solve the massive problem of

unemployment in Nigeria and revolutionize the way Nigerian businesses search for new employees. One in three working-age people in Nigeria are jobless. Nigeria could become a center for exporting talent the way India has.» Rolake admits she dreams big. «I'm crazy enough to think I can change the whole world,» she says. She wants to make Jobberman the number one job platform in Nigeria, ahead of LinkedIn in terms of functionality and the number of ads. As a leader, she cares a lot about creating a safe zone where problems can be voiced. «Problems are a good thing because problems have solutions.» What constitutes a role model for her? «Someone who brings their humanity to the office. And shows that leading can be done with style and class. You can be strong, difficult and nice,» Rolake feels.

Describing herself as a free spirit who likes nothing better than to travel, she began painting during the pandemic.



### Women in management positions at Ringier

At Ringier One Africa Media (ROAM), the proportion of women in senior positions is 62 percent. This is the result of an active strategy at ROAM, whose professed goal it is to elevate women to key positions such as CEO, Managing Director or Financial Controller. The portraits of Hilda Kabushenga Kragha, Managing Director Jobs in Nigeria, Resian Leteipan, CEO Cheki Kenya, and Rolake Rosiji, CEO Jobberman Nigeria, highlight different career paths. What all three women have in common is how they conceive their role as bosses, namely as a supporter of their team.



# Only workday: Monday!

In vino veritas – and other places you can find the truth about Blick TV senior anchor Reto Scherrer. It all began in 1762 for this native of the canton of Thurgau. But the man who caused it all came from Zurich!



## Monday is the only day of the week I really work.

For almost eight years, I have spent every Monday at home. On Mondays and Thursdays, my wife leaves the house at 7:30 a.m. to work at Raiffeisenbank, where she has been working in the mortgage business for 23 years. In the evenings, she goes straight from work to her gym club. So, for one day a week I'm alone with our three children Emma (7), Lisa (5) and David (3). My greatest respect to all the women who do this seven days a week!



## TUESDAY

### Today is my first «official» workday of the week.

From Tuesdays to Fridays, I get up at 2:45 a.m. and, after a hearty breakfast, make my way from Weinfelden to Zurich. From 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. I am always on the air live on Blick TV with a female fellow anchor. Getting up in the middle of the night and the long days are a challenge. But four days on the TV early shift and three days in a row at home strikes a good balance.



## WEDNESDAY

**After my early shift, I find time for my passion.** I'm the ninth generation of the oldest winegrowing family in Weinfelden. In 1762, a certain David Scherrer (a Zurich native from Wädenswil) bought the vineyard and a property, what is now our inn, the «Gasthaus zur Rebe». About 300 years later, another David Scherrer – the tenth generation, was born in this very place. At the time, my wife and I had no idea of this David from the year 1762. It was pure coincidence that we gave our son the same name. Our website with its online wine shop can be found at [www.1762.ch](http://www.1762.ch)



## THURSDAY

**Swiss TV SRF showmaster Röbi Koller pays me a visit.** He does not bring the suitcase with a million francs from his TV show «Happy Day», but he is happy to get a drink. We do an in-depth interview about my job as senior anchor for Blick TV, about my former life at Swiss TV SRF and the days I spend in the vineyard. It's a fun and exciting afternoon, which ends with a side-trip to my



parents' inn «Gasthaus zur Rebe», in Weinfelden, where we get a nightcap. You can read the entire interview in the current March issue of the magazine «active live» or listen to the audio file at: <https://active-live.ch/startseite-1/roebi-koller-unterwegs-auf-einen-schwatz-mit-reto-scherrer/>



## FRIDAY

**Meeting my pals from military training school in Schaffhausen!** I have three wonderful friends from my time in basic military training. We meet irregularly on a regular basis. We never have anything to prove to each other. The minute we meet, we feel like we're back in the barracks at Bronschhofen, 27 years ago. I always look forward to these evenings. I love enduring traditions and values.

## WEEKEND

### Last day of the 2020/21 ski season for our family.

One last time, we drive 50 minutes from Weinfelden to Wolzenalp, the small ski resort in the Toggenburg valley. Funnily enough, my parents first met right here at the ski lodge dormitory, more than 50 years ago. Teaching all of our three children to ski these past years hasn't been easy. But my wife did a perfect job. THANK YOU, Melanie!





## FOCUS ON RINGIER

### RINGIER'S BEST PHOTOS OF THE LAST QUARTER



**SCHWEIZER LANDLIEBE** Photography: Sylvan Müller, Editor: Denise Oechsli.

Originally, a pair of knitted mittens were supposed to play the leading role in this photo shoot on Mount Pilatus. But to an alpine chough, this fluffy item looked like a suitable landing pad. And so, the cheeky bird took center stage. Alfred Hitchcock would have been thrilled.



**BLIC** Photography: Oliver Buncic, Editor: Mladen Surjanac

Serbian soldiers transform the Belgrade Exhibition Center's largest hall into a temporary hospital for Corona patients. Photographer Oliver Buncic: «I could just as well have photographed some details. But the wide shot of this huge hall seemed much more impressive to me.»



#### L'ILLUSTRÉ

Photography: Thierry Dana,

Photo Editor: Julie Body.

Touching, sweet – and also kind of sad. Photographer Thierry Dana photographed objects that elderly people bring along to retirement and nursing homes. From a self-embroidered pillowcase to a bugle and a 70-year-old cardigan. Renée, 72, brought the teddy bear her mother had given her way back when she was little. How come? «Poussy doesn't make any noise, is quiet and always stays in my room.»



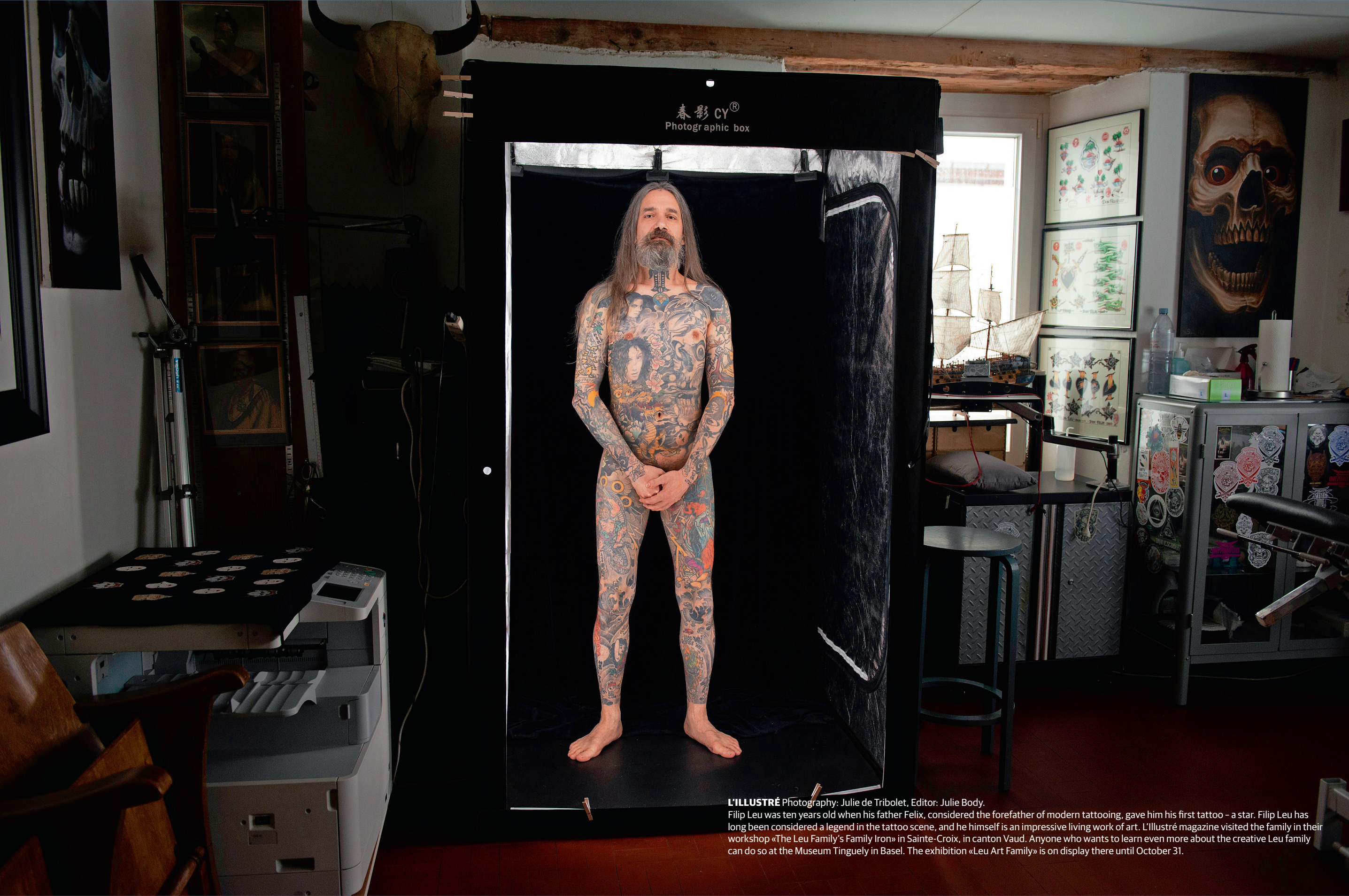
FOCUS ON RINGIER



**LIBERTATEA** Photographer and Editor: Vlad Chirea.  
Ataur, 18, lives and sleeps in this derelict building. In the Romanian city of Timisoara, many young Afghan men live like him. He and other refugees call their attempt to cross the border into Hungary illegally «the game». Those who lose in this game must hold out in misery. Just like Ataur.



**SCHWEIZER ILLUSTRIRTE** Photography: Remo Nägeli, Editor: Nicole Spiess.  
Upholstered chairs, a fluffy carpet and full-moon lighting: This is what high diplomacy looks like in times of Corona. Swiss Federal Councilor Ignazio Cassis (center left) in Abu Dhabi meets with Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayid Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates.



**L'ILLUSTRÉ** Photography: Julie de Tribolet, Editor: Julie Body.  
Filip Leu was ten years old when his father Felix, considered the forefather of modern tattooing, gave him his first tattoo – a star. Filip Leu has long been considered a legend in the tattoo scene, and he himself is an impressive living work of art. L'illustré magazine visited the family in their workshop «The Leu Family's Family Iron» in Sainte-Croix, in canton Vaud. Anyone who wants to learn even more about the creative Leu family can do so at the Museum Tinguely in Basel. The exhibition «Leu Art Family» is on display there until October 31.

In this feature, DOMO regularly presents the best photographs published by Ringier titles in the past quarter.



**BEOBACHTER** Photography: Paul Seewer, Photo Editor: Andrea Klaiber  
«Can I afford a house?» That is the question on the cover of Beobachter Extra magazine. The idea for the design of this cover was conceived by infographics artist and illustrator Andrea Klaiber. She made little cardboard houses about four inches tall and decorated them with play money – even on the inside!



# «Reaching 90 would be nice»

The media have been her home for 20 years. Steffi Buchli, the Blick Group's first female chief sports editor, likes to sing out loud, she is best at drawing dogs, and she is never at a loss for an answer. Here's proof: The woman with Switzerland's most debated hairstyle answers Max Frisch's questionnaire No. 1.

recorded by Bettina Bono Photo: Thomas Meier

**1 Are you sure you truly care about the preservation of mankind once you and everyone you know are gone?**  
No.

**2 Why?**  
If I had to watch the decline of mankind from beyond (or wherever I will be then), I would continue to care. Anything else would be unbearable to me.

**3 How many of your children do not owe their existence to your deliberate intention?**  
One thing in particular comes to mind: Last summer, I wrote a book that was never printed. It doesn't have a title yet. That's one of the reasons it hasn't been published yet. The subtitle is already clear: «This is not a self-help book».

**4 Whom do you wish you had never met?**  
The person who recently tried to coerce me, in a nearly full underground parking lot, into yielding him a parking space I was entitled to. His reasoning: «My car is too

high for the lower level, yours is not.» When I told him I didn't have time to drive down to the lower level, the man showered me with curses. I can't get this incident out of my mind. I keep thinking time and again whether I acted unfairly.

**5 Are you conscious of being in the wrong with respect to some other person - who need not be aware of it? If so, does this make you hate yourself more - or that person?**  
Yes. That brings us back to the man in question four. Of course, I would have had time to drive down to the lower level. I just didn't feel like it. His manner, on the other hand, was so rude and impertinent that I don't hate myself for this fib. But the memory of this encounter is unpleasant.

**6 Would you like to have total recall?**  
I'd rather not. Being able to forget is a blessing, especially when it comes to emotional things. In terms of knowledge, however, total recall would be quite helpful. In my domain, sports, there are people

who can remember all the results of the last three decades. They're walking encyclopedias. Being able to keep up with them for a day would be pretty cool.

**7 Name a politician whose death by illness, accident, etc. would fill you with hope. Or do you consider none of them irreplaceable?**  
Answering the first question would not be good for my karma. I'll pull a lifeline and answer the second question: No one is irreplaceable. Life goes on, things will get better, ideally. But the end of a human life does not guarantee there will be improvement.

**8 Which dead person would you like to see again?**  
I would like to spend more time chatting with my step-grandmother. I had great respect for her when I was little. Unfortunately, she passed away early. She was an elegant, strong, unconventional woman. In my memory I see her thin long fingers holding a Vogue cigarette. ▶





Personal background

Steffi Buchli, 42, grew up in Dübendorf near Zurich. Between 2006 and 2017, she hosted various programs on Swiss TV SRF, hosted various broadcasts on the Olympic games, roamed the world of sports as a roving reporter, moderated talk shows and cut a fine figure on the gala stage of the Swiss Sports Awards. For three years, she was head of programming and presenter of the commercial sports TV channel MySports. In January 2021, she took over as head of the Blick Sports Group. Steffi Buchli is married, with one daughter, and lives near Zurich.



**9 Whom would you rather not see again?**  
There are people who are only well spoken of once they are dead. Let's be honest: They're not worth talking about. But of course, my manners forbid me to name names.

**10 Would you rather have belonged to a different nationality or culture? And if so, which one?**  
Sometimes I wish I'd been born into an extensive Latin American clan. Where every family dinner is the stuff of telenovelas.

**11 What age would you like to live to?**  
Ninety would be nice. But I'm selfish enough to wish for this only if I were still reasonably mobile at that age, with my brain running smoothly.

**12 If you had the power to make things happen that you consider right today, would you do so against the wishes of the majority? Yes or no.**  
Yes.

**13 Why would you not do so, if you think you are right?**  
If there were signs that my orders would cause a greater evil, a revolt, for example, that would get out of control.

**14 Which do you find it easier to hate, a group or an individual? And do you prefer to hate individually or as part of a group?**  
I find it easier to hate a group. With an individual person I have too much empathy to hate unreservedly. I always reflexively try to explain

Photo: Thomas Meier

a person's actions by way of their history. To hate individually or as part of a group - which is better? This is a difficult question. Experiencing joy as part of a group multiplies the joy. Hate, however, is a feeling I don't want multiplied. On the contrary, I try hard to prevent it from budding in the first place.

**15 When did you stop believing you would grow wiser, or do you still think so?**  
Maybe I'm naive. I'm 42, and yes, I still hope I'm growing wiser.





# «I always want to be the best!»

In March, Ringier acquired a majority stake in Bulgaria's Sportal Media Group and Digital Ventures OOD. Both companies were founded and formed by Stilian Shishkov. Blick Group's Head of Sports, Steffi Buchli, met Shishkov in Sofia for an interview.

Interview: Steffi Buchli Photo: Philippe Rossier

A smart office building in an upscale residential neighborhood in the Bulgarian capital Sofia. The sliding doors open and there he is: with a striking face, dressed all in black, surrounded by a small entourage of companions. Stilian Shishkov welcomes the Ringier delegation with a friendly smile on his face and takes us on a tour of his offices. One thing quickly becomes clear: He is not showing us a company, but his life's work.

Over the past decade, Stilian Shishkov has pushed the news platforms of Sportal Media and the associated company Digital Ventures OOD to the top of the Bulgarian market. Sportal Media Group brings Bulgaria's leading online media together under a single umbrella. Digital Ventures OOD is the owner of Sportal365, the leading international content management system for sports news. Shishkov runs these companies with the drive and ambition of a former professional soccer player. In the USA, he spent five years playing for Virginia Beach and Atlanta.

## About Sportal Media Group, Bulgaria

Sportal Media Group operates Sportal.bg, Bulgaria's unrivaled and most successful sports platform, launched in March 2006. It employs more than 60 journalists delivering over 300 daily news items from around the world. The site currently receives more than 85 million page views monthly. It is also the first Bulgarian website to operate its own web TV service. Beside Sportal.bg, the Sportal Media Group also operates Novini.bg, Bulgaria's most visited news platform, as well as the leading platforms Woman.bg and Profit.bg and several successful social media channels. The group is the leading specialist in platform development and management of sports-specific products and services.

He had already been acquainted with the Ringier family for eight years. Following an extremely successful two-and-a-half-year collaboration in the joint venture Ringier Sportal S.R.L. in Romania, Ringier AG is now closing ranks with the Bulgarian Sportal Media Group at the corporate level, too. Stilian Shishkov puts his signature to the contract drawn up in recent months, sealing the takeover.

**Steffi Buchli: Stilian Shishkov, I tried to read your expression when you were signing the contract. What emotions were at the forefront when you were about to sign?**

It was a great moment for me! I always knew that it would come at some point. Some people can't let go of their baby. With me, it was different. I had been contacted several times by companies with an interest in Sportal. It never felt right. With Ringier, it was different. From day one, I sensed that things were going to work out well for us. So, the instant of signing was a good moment.

**What was different about Ringier?**

It's important to feel that this is not the end of the road. Any sale - that was always clear to me - must be able to take Sportal to the next level. The prospect of international growth was an important factor. And of course, the chemistry always has to be right. That was the case with Ringier. We'd already worked closely together over the past few years, so we got to know each other.

**We got to know the people around you during our visit to Sofia. I get the impression that they're not just employees. You have built a network of close allies, with whom you have built your company.**

That's right. When we started out fifteen years ago, we had no choice. We couldn't hire ready-made experts; there weren't any back then, in the early days of digitalization. So, we had to find talent and train them to become cracks. That's why many people have been with us since day one. That's what unites us, we're friends: Sometimes we'll argue, we'll yell at each other - that's part of the deal. That's part of the process. Every-

A die-hard entrepreneur with an athlete's heart: Stilian Shishkov, 48. Ringier AG has acquired a majority stake in his company, the Bulgarian Sportal Media Group and Digital Ventures OOD. «With Ringier, the chemistry is right,» he says.

one knows it's always about getting better. That's where our focus lies.

**What I also noticed is that there are many former soccer pros on your team.**

Yes, that's a huge coincidence! I myself, our editor-in-chief, our head of video and a whole number of journalists all have a past in sports. We discovered this when we entered a team in the journalists' championship. Our team is always really strong on the pitch. And in everyday life, we share this common passion for sports, for soccer.

**Do you yourself still have the mindset of a top athlete?**

Always. I've internalized the winner mentality and have also implanted it in my team. I'm very competitive myself, and that's our approach on the market when we negotiate. That's something you only learn in sports, and it's what sets us apart from the competition.

**You lived in the USA for many years. Looking back, was that a formative time?**

Oh yes! My view of the business world totally changed in America. I learned a lot. That's also where I found my passion for digital, or, in simple terms, «the Internet». I was in college, playing soccer and working part-time. I was working for two companies: One dealt in hardware, the other in software, so that's how I got into that world. And somehow, it came quite naturally to me: I connected the sports world I knew with the digital world that was new to me. That's how our company was born.

**Did you have a clear vision right off the bat?**

Not at all! In 2005, we just went ahead and started. A friend called me at the time, I was in Bulgaria, it was the day before I was due to fly back to the States. He said he needed to introduce me to someone. This person said to me: Let's set up a sports website. That was it. We had coffee and talked, there was no business plan. But the idea made sense to me. I was supposed to invest \$10,000 and thought to myself: «Why not?» ►





**That's how it all began. And then, your company grew rapidly.**

The beginning was chaotic. We were about 17 people. The website wouldn't work for what felt like 23 hours a day. We had huge problems with the technology. I was in the USA, almost going crazy because I saw my investment going down the drain. Then, bit by bit, we improved. Still, three months after the launch of the website, I was on the verge of pulling out of the company. The sales weren't at all what they should have been. There was a huge gap between expenditure and income.

**And then, you wrote that one email that changed everything. Please tell us about that.**

There were two betting companies in Bulgaria that were placing ads everywhere. I was sitting in Atlanta watching this and thought I ought to contact them. One company didn't even reply. The other one did. Their response, in a nutshell, was: «You guys are young, you don't have enough traffic for us yet. Get back to us when you're bigger.» This response totally wiped me out, but one little sentence caught my eye: «And remember, when you come back: we only do exclusive deals.» That

sentence was the game changer for me. It clicked. I hadn't realized until then that these two big betting companies were splitting the entire pie. I knew there were other betting companies that also had budgets. Their money was our opportunity.

**Due to the exclusive contracts of the big competitors, many small outfits had no possibility to buy advertising space at all. Did this theory prove correct?**

I very quickly found three smaller betting companies who booked space on our website from then on. And suddenly, the whole thing took off. We always reinvested all the revenue at once and further developed our business that way. Within twelve months, we were the number one sports platform in Bulgaria. That was the moment I came back home. I knew that flying back and forth between Atlanta and home no longer made sense. I wanted to be able to have more influence.

**Your approach has always been very user-centric, evolving on the basis of customer feedback.**

I was always involved in all these development steps, that's right. We've always been guided by our

Stilian Shishkov, CEO of Sportal Media Group and Digital Ventures OOD, interviewed by Blick Group's chief sports editor, Steffi Buchli. «We want to take our technology and our know-how out into the world with Ringier.»

customers and by international role models, we've developed new features, and we've gotten better.

**With Ringier, Sportal now comes under the umbrella of a classic media company with a great tradition. Tradition means printed media content. Sportal also briefly ventured into this area.**

We started out digitally and then, with the advent of free newspapers, we launched an experiment and published a weekly magazine. It was distributed in cafés and restaurants. We kept that up for about a year and then concluded that this wasn't our thing: distribution, printing and all that. That was our only experience with print. Looking back, it was a good experiment. It also helped us a lot in terms of brand awareness.

**And you no doubt learned a lot from this experiment, too. Do you ever experience fear of failure?**

No, not fear. I just hate losing. But of course, as an athlete, I've had to learn how to deal with defeat.

**Where are you better at losing – at the negotiating table or on the soccer pitch?**

Good question. In both situations, the emotions are huge. Losing is awful. Whether it's in soccer or in business. One thing's important: You should never spend too much time crying over a defeat. You have to deal with it and move on.

**What motivates you in everyday life?**

One thing is clear: I always set myself ambitious goals. I always want to be the best. That will never stop. The good thing is that my team gets me, they're exactly the same. We always want to jump higher. Now, we want to take our technology and our know-how out into the world with Ringier.

**Are there moments when you can switch off, when you are not making business plans?**

Yes, sure, there are moments like that. But they are very short! Ideas keep coming to me, sometimes they may lead to the creation of our e-commerce business, sometimes we end up founding an agency, there's always something. We are constantly building our future. 🌐

# S/he, the publisher



Michael Ringier, Verleger

To Fräulein Ottilie Roederstein, Maler (i.e. painter, not paintress)» was the address on the postcard the well-known artist received at Christmas 1935 from her former student and lifelong friend, Sigismund Righini. That, at least, is what is documented in a display case of the Roederstein exhibition at Zurich's Kunsthaus museum which brings this long-forgotten artist back to our attention.

The mere fact that she managed to persevere in such an utterly male-dominated field in the early 20th century, when most European countries denied women access to academies, is testimony to her amazing abilities. And she was equally skilled as an artist, as evidenced by this exhibition. Which is why the occupational term «Maler» was certainly used in earnest and intended as a compliment.

Those days are over, however, as far as the new online version of the German dictionary Duden is concerned. It claims that a «Maler» is a «Künstler» (artist) who paints pictures, all in the masculine form. So, a painter's shop would be the workplace of a self-employed painter. And if, however, it were to be run by a self-employed woman, it would remain a painter's shop. Because the search for a paintress's shop does not yield any results. How logical is that?

But that is probably the wrong question. This is neither about logic nor about grammatical correctness. Because gender-neutral language also demands that our newspapers and magazines no longer have «Leser» (the generic term for readers) but «Lesende» («reading persons»). Which is grammatical nonsense, because they remain our male and female readers even when they have put down our publication. Replacing the generic masculine term by a present participle generates linguistic absurdities at best.

An even worse proposal, however, is the inclusive «gender star», an asterisk inserted before the female suffix (i.e. Leser\*innen), which can be rendered by a glottal stop in speech, making it radio- and YouTube-compatible. Another option is the similarly inserted underscore recommended by several German universities. The unwieldy gender-neutral term for the dean would be «die\_der Dekan\_in». Still, if we're worrying whether the term «waiter» also includes the female version, we can always tell our troubles to the barkeep.

The struggle for linguistic sovereignty is taking its toll. The British consumer goods company Unilever, for example, has just decided «to say no to «normal» with respect to its beauty products. As my hair is neither greasy nor scaly, I will probably need a consultation the next time I go to buy shampoo.

The notion that language may be the wrong arena for overcoming sexism is now shared by many women. As early as 1982, the American artist Isabel Bishop said: «I didn't want to be a woman artist, I just wanted to be an artist.» And in a recent interview with Neue Zürcher Zeitung, German writer Sibylle Lewitscharoff spoke out against the bureaucratization of language: «That is not going to help women.»

The worst thing about this type of gender war is the total lack of humor of the participants. Driven by activist grimness, they fight for every single word. They would do better to take me as their example, a constant victim of discrimination. Ever since my wife started publishing «Fritz & Fränzi», Switzerland's most successful parents' magazine, we keep receiving invitations worded as follows: «Dr. Ellen Ringier, publisher, plus one». Meaning me, a proud fifth-generation publisher. And all I do is simply go along and try to have a really good time.

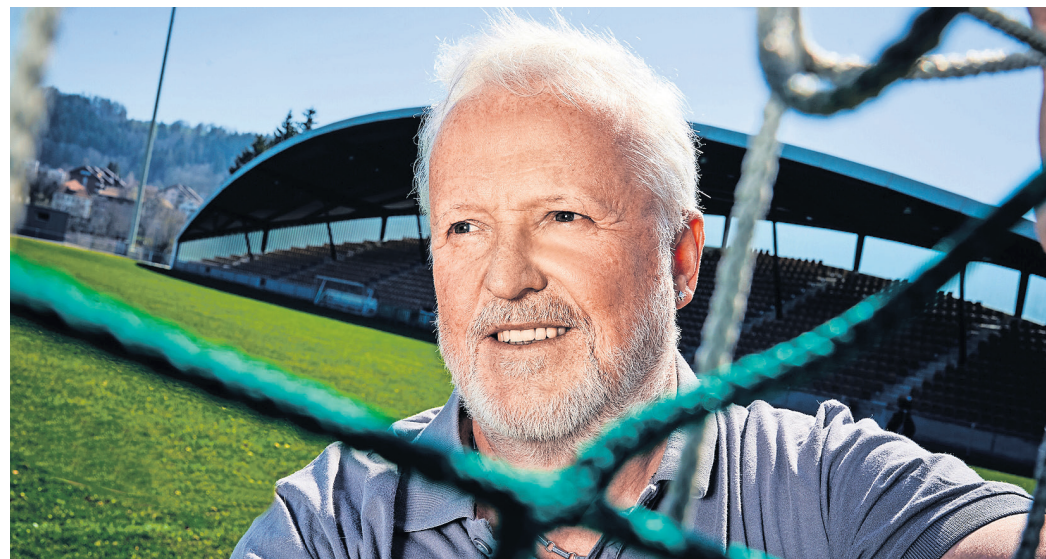
*Michael Ringier*



# The perpetual school dropout

As a primary school teacher, he used to quiz little kids, as a sports journalist he wants answers from big shots for the magazines of Schweizer Illustrierte. Originally, Iso Niedermann only wanted a taste of the reporter's life. But he passionately loves writing, and he also really likes to hit things – with a tennis racket or a golf club.

Photos: Geri Born, private



SI sports editor Iso Niedermann at St.Gallen's Espenmoos stadium, where he began to watch soccer games as a small boy (top), at his favorite hobby (golf handicap 20) and together with the VIPs of his favorite soccer club, FC Bayern Munich (right). From left: Uli Hoeness, Iso Niedermann, Ottmar Hitzfeld and Oli Kahn.

Nothing much can ruffle this man. But during a one-on-one interview with supermodel and Omega ambassador Cindy Crawford at a golf tournament in Crans Montana VS, Iso Niedermann, 59, did feel his pulse quicken. As a young boy, this St. Gallen native spent every minute of his spare time pressed up against the fence of the legendary Espenmoos stadium trying to catch a glimpse of the soccer players. He personally plays handball (all the way up to the first league), squash and tennis. One day, he set off on a golfing holiday with friends, «for the hell of it», and was the only one to return with a golf license – to this day, he plays with enthusiasm (and a current handicap of 20).

Even while he was training to be a primary school teacher, he wrote sports reports «for pocket money». For five years, he taught first to third graders. Then, at the age of 26, he took a jaunt into journalism, did an internship at the daily «Thurgauer Zeitung», reporting on «this, that and the other» goings on in and around Frauenfeld. He switched to the

sports section of the daily «St. Galler Tagblatt», wrote about lifestyle topics and established a golf magazine.

When he remembered that he'd only wanted to interrupt, not abort his teaching career, he underwent further training to become a school principal and started looking at job offers. But when Ringier came knocking in 2006, Niedermann buried his «back to school» project once again. Instead, he helped establish sports magazines such as «Goal», «Golf», «Ski» and «Sport» at «Schweizer Illustrierte». «A dream job», he enthuses. He has sipped beer with Dustin Johnson, the world's number-one-ranked golfer, shuffled through English soccer legend Sir Stanley Matthews' home and swapped jokes with superstar Robbie Williams in his dressing room.

Iso still hasn't quite buried his school career, though. «I just postponed it until I've retired.» As an old-age pensioner, he plans to help the children of migrants learn German. But who knows, maybe he'll end up practicing sports with them ... RH



**Editor's Choice**  
by Marc Walder

Ringier CEO Marc Walder tells you which books he is reading and why they fascinate him.

Hans Rosling with Anna Rosling Rönnlund and Ola Rosling

## FACTFULNESS

**FACTFULNESS** Everything is getting worse and worse. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. There are more and more wars, violent crimes, natural disasters. Right? No, all wrong.

Unfortunately, our brains tend to indulge a dramatizing view of reality. For instance: In Europe, people believe that 60 percent of the world's population are illiterate. The truth is that 80 percent can read and write.

So, what can we do about fake news, superficial knowledge and misperception? The brilliant Swedish statistician, physician and professor of international health Hans Rosling spent decades wrestling with this question. His 13 question test about such issues as infant mortality, vaccination rates or population development is legendary. Most people perform miserably on the questionnaire. Even the global leaders at the WEF in Davos, where Rosling also conducted his tests, saw the world in far too negative terms.

Recognize exaggerations in stories. See the world as it is. Make better decisions based on solid facts. That's what Rosling, who died in 2017, teaches us in his best-selling book, Factfulness, which he co-authored with his son and daughter-in-law.

Hans Rosling was a tireless educator and optimist – and a man of action. During the 2014 Ebola fever epidemic, for example, he canceled all his commitments and traveled to Liberia to help and lend his expertise. «The world is getting better. And it's much better than its reputation,» Rosling used to say. Words we ought to remember, especially during the Corona pandemic.

# Action?

# Crime?

# Doku?

# Drama?



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