My journey as an expat

Felix Salazar, PhD
CERN, EP-DT-FS
Spouse follow career

- Originally from Venezuela
  - Mechanical Eng., Fluid dynamics
- Moved to Montréal, for PhDs
  - Wife finished her PhD about 1 ½ year earlier than me
- Her job search led us to the USA
  - Food industry
- 4 years later, we moved to Switzerland
• Wife started her job in early 2015. I finished my PhD in early 2016
• In 2015, the employment perspectives in USA were good
  ▪ Got several interviews
• Dramatic change in 2016
  ▪ Long process to obtain work permit
  ▪ Decrease of frequency of interviews
  ▪ Passport issue
• We decided to start a family
  ▪ Stay-at-home dad
  ▪ Health issues
CV gap

- Growing
  - Keeping myself busy with stuff that does not fit on a CV
- Not getting replies from applications
- Risking on becoming unemployable
  - Anxiety
Swiss journey

• Post Career Break Fellowship program at CERN
  ▪ Application submitted just a few hours before the deadline
  ▪ Felt like playing a lottery ticket

• Wife dream job was in Switzerland
  ▪ Nestlé Research Center, in Lausanne

• Wife got contacted by Nestlé the same week I received the email from CERN-HR with the selection to the PCB
  ▪ Felt like winning the lottery
Post Career Break Fellowship at CERN

• Offer a pathway back into research
  ▪ Personal reasons
  ▪ Unemployment is not considered a career-break
  ▪ Nationals of non-member states

• Unique figure
  ▪ Employs people that market is avoiding
  ▪ Gives chance

• 3-year contract
  ▪ Optional last year outside CERN
... at CERN

• Working within EP-DT-FS
  ▪ Cooling of the electronics
  ▪ CO₂ as coolant

• Special requirements
  ▪ Radiation
  ▪ Low temperature
  ▪ Environmental impact
  ▪ Cost

• Affect ATLAS, CMS and LHCb
  ▪ HL-LHC (2026)
My two cents...

- Life happens
- Always check work authorization
- Communicate
- Fill the CV gap
  - Volunteer, online classes, etc.
- Networking
- Know that you are not alone
- Shoot for the stars
  - ... the moon
Thanks

my Wife, CERN, HR team, IDCN, and you