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### Cover:

The Swiss education system is directed towards life-long learning and is based on several pillars.  
(Photo: Prisma)

## I M P R E S S U M

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Since the beginning of the industrial era Switzerland has built its wealth and its prosperity on know-how. This has attracted admiration and envy, but it is not programmed in our genetic code. It is the result of costly and patient education and training in our schools and vocational training establishments, in our workshops and in our universities. It is also in a state of constant adjustment to the development of society.

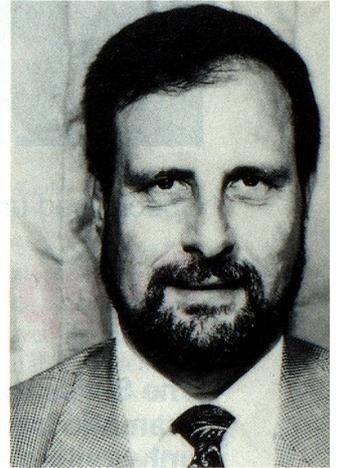
Today Switzerland is in the process of reforming its education and training approach. As in the past, the purpose of this is to adapt to the new needs created by our transition into the so-called post-industrial era as well as by globalisation and European integration. As we shall see in Forum, the ideas which are being put into practice point in the direction of Euro-compatibility; it is a matter of promoting the principle of equivalence in training and diplomas in order to widen the geographical horizon of future Swiss professional people and to open the doors of the Swiss labour market to those foreign professionals whom we need.

This is a recasting which is also of substantial importance to many Swiss Abroad, since it will help to lessen the difficulties encountered by young Swiss wishing to return to their country after training in other lands.

At the moment, the disparities are such as to create a situation

which is no longer tolerable. In France nearly seven out of every ten young people pass the exam leading to higher education, and the government is aiming to bring the figure to 80%. The figure in Germany is 36% – but in Switzerland it is only 17%. These differences have nothing to do with intelligence or talent. They are entirely due to differences in systems, and they are powerful obstacles in the way of exchange.

In Switzerland, reforming education and training raises questions, anxiety and sometimes even resistance. It is seldom a subject of enthusiasm. This is quite understandable in the present climate of demoralisation, where young people find it difficult to get into an apprenticeship when they leave school and to find a job when they have finished their training. And in any case why should the Swiss abandon with a light heart the distinctive features to which they owe so much? But in spite of everything, most people feel that this reform is indispensable if we are to have any hope of restoring the brilliance and the cutting edge of our know-how, which is the driving force of our wealth and our prosperity.



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