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A ranking of university institutions could be beneficial for rationalisation purposes. The proposal is controversial, but Swissup, an association financed by economiesuisse, is in the process of breaking this taboo by drawing up a university ranking list in conjunction with the "Centre for University Development" in Germany, and with the blessings of the CSUR. If the latter succeeds in encouraging the Swiss to adopt a more transparent form of cooperation, from 2005 students would be able to choose their course of study by consulting a list of German, Austrian and Swiss university rankings on each subject.

Who foots the bill?

In 2003, parliament voted to increase federal contributions to universities by 4.75 percent to CHF 17 billion for the 2004–2007 period. But the number of students has doubled to 125,000 since 1980. This trend looks set to continue, although with a tertiary education ratio of only 19 percent, Switzerland is well below the OECD average of 41 percent. Once the impact of the Bologna Process on the length and structure

of courses becomes clear, the question of funding will once more raise its ugly head.

According to Raymond Werlen, assistant general secretary of the CSUR, a total of CHF 30 million has been set aside to cover the initial costs of the Bologna Process in Switzerland's ten cantonal universities. After that, it is difficult to say. "We are only at the start, so the extra operating costs are difficult to quantify. But there is talk of annual costs of CHF 200 million, for which no funding yet exists," adds Werlen. The University of St. Gallen has introduced the Bologna system without waiting for directives, and its budget has grown by 10 percent. Elsewhere there is talk of 15 percent. And that's just for starters.

For their part, business and economic groups have long been pushing for higher fees. After all, they argue, students have better chances on the job market and can expect to earn a good wage. Charles Kleiber believes that, while education is a public service, it is "not necessarily a free one." In principle, the State Secretary is not against increasing study fees, particularly for a master's, but – as he has repeatedly emphasised

– "only on condition that a system of grants and loans is first set up". Ideally he would like to see an across-the-board increase in university fees in 2008, when the government's new grant system is scheduled to replace the cantonal system which has proved deficient.

Raymond Werlen of the CSUR does not hide his concern: "By 2010, all courses of academic study will be 'Bologna-compatible' – if the financing is in place. If the situation is exacerbated by factors such as the current budget cutbacks and the catastrophic finances of some cantons, the entire process could once again be open to question." Jean-Marc Rapp concurs: "It's very important that the support is financial as well as verbal. Switzerland must have the opportunity to become a first-class academic centre. Let's not forget: in our resource-deficient country, this is one of the very few areas with the potential for growth and prosperity." Everyone agrees on one thing: the grants system must be improved. 

Translated from German.

Equality at risk?

The Bologna Process promises higher quality of study for students, more mobility and greater equality. Caroline Gisiger, Vice President of the Association of Swiss Students, remains unconvinced.

CAROLINE GISIGER is angry. "Our opinion was asked when the Directives were drawn up, but lots of our proposals have not been taken into account. We feel we have been misused. We're asked to make recommendations, and then they don't listen!"

Her worries concern the additional requirements which universities could impose for students switching from a bachelor's to a

specialised master's course. The Vice President of the Association of Swiss Student Unions believes this is akin to a selection process. "As far as the quality of study is concerned, course structures will be more rigid, thereby restricting the options for interdisciplinary combinations. Mainly, however, we are hoping for as large as possible a number of criteria for admission to a master's course, in order to guarantee the promised level of mobility. Specialised master's courses should remain the exception and not be an opportunity to introduce a quota (numerus clausus) and a two-tier educational society."

Ultimately, however, the success of Bologna depends on cash, which is why students are campaigning strongly for an improved grants system. Otherwise, Caroline Gisiger believes that equality will no longer be guaranteed. "The reform is predicated on a full-time course of study, yet 75 percent of



Caroline Gisiger campaigns for student rights.

students have a part-time job while studying, and one third of this number need a job to finance their living costs." 

Translated from German.