

# Evaluation of the UN-Resolution „ World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond“ Contribution of the Swiss National Youth Council

This evaluation is written by the UN Youth Representative of the Swiss National Youth Council ([www.csaj.ch](http://www.csaj.ch)). They were elected in March 05 and their jump-in task was to elaborate this evaluation based on the questions of the UN toolkit. They realized that they would never be able to fully cover all the areas and also noticed that not all the questions in the Tool Kit are relevant for Switzerland, such as equal access to school for boys and girls. Their evaluation is based on published statements and statements of NGOs, as well as personal experiences.

## **Area 1: Education**

Switzerland is internationally known to have quite a good school system. Everyone has access to nine obligatory school years which are totally free. Having received this basic education, students either take up an apprenticeship or attend a higher school. A rather special feature of the Swiss school system is the fact that there is nothing such as a national curriculum. This results from the different cantons – Switzerland exist of 26 federal cantons - being able to make their own decisions. However, there is a conference called EDK hold several times a year which is attended by all the educational ministers of the different areas. During the last few years, this conference concentrated on figuring out concepts about what the students should be capable of at certain stages during their education. These concepts should be implemented somehow (!) in the next few years and they aim to convey sustainable development for different fields in the curriculum.

A major change is taking place at the very moment at the universities. Universities are changing from a national system to the internationally accepted Bachelor/Master system. This change brings a number of advantages for the students because of its international acceptance and transparency.

The basic education in Switzerland remains on quite a high level, but haven't been adapted neither to the cultural and demographical changes in Switzerland, nor to the reality of the employment market. The Pisa Study, which was published in the year 2000 didn't label Switzerland as a very good example. In comparison to the other OECD countries, the performance of the pupils is "over-averagely" correlated to their social and economical background. The discussion about improving the Swiss education system is going on and hopefully bringing a few more changes in the following years.

Switzerland has 4 national languages, among them 3 are official languages (Italian, French, German). The cohesion of our national state (and federalist system!) is a challenge. Understand each other is a condition. Learning a language has also a political impact in Switzerland, so has the sensitive discussion on which should be the first foreign language taught at school. The public debate is going on: is the priority the early adaptability to the globalized English language or the national cohesion in a way.

## **Area 2: Employment**

In Switzerland – as in most parts of Europe – the number of unemployed youth from the age of 20 to 24 rose considerably, from around 2% in the nineties to 6.8% in 2004. From 1999 to date, the unemployment quota among young people has even tripled! This development is parallel to the global quota of unemployed people in Switzerland. Though, the rate of unemployment of youth is normally higher than the global number of unemployed, which is mainly due to a strong sensibility on cyclical variations.

Another problem gaining importance is the penury of apprenticeship training positions due to the economical situation. Efforts are made by the Swiss government to encourage enterprises to provide apprenticeships or traineeships for young unemployed people. In addition to this, projects are developed with interim solutions like an additional school year.

## **Area 3: Hunger and Poverty**

We'd like to point out some evolutions in the last 10 years concerning poverty in Switzerland that in our opinion are worth mentioning. Similar to other industrialized countries, the number of working poor in Switzerland is rising considerably. Working poor are defined as people, whose income is – despite a full gainful employment - not sufficient to meet the basic needs for themselves and their families. In 1995, 4.9% of the Swiss population were regarded as working poor. The number of working poor in Switzerland has risen since then, 7.4% of the Swiss people were

considered being among the working poor in 2003. The population group that is mostly affected by this phenomenon - around 50% of the working poor - are families with more than two children and single parents. Thus, this phenomenon especially concerns a rising number of children and young people who are growing up in these disadvantageous social conditions. Problems getting along with living as a working poor have considerable impacts on social life and on chances in terms of formation.

#### **Area 4: Health**

##### **4.1 Ensuring Access to basic health services**

The access of young people to basic health services and medication is granted, but not all costs are covered by the insurance/care system. The trend is growing to exclude some services.

##### **4.2 Promoting health education**

The **education + health network Switzerland** is responsible for the development, consulting, follow-through, coordination, quality assurance and financial support for prevention and health promotion projects in schools, in the curriculum and syllabus work. Teachers find teaching materials, project documentation and training units for basic, advanced and ongoing training.

*Project head* is the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education

*Options:* Financial assistance for competence centres, focusing on these key subjects:

- food, Swiss Nutrition Association
- sexual health, Swiss AIDS Campaign and PLANeS
- stress and resource management, Aargau Technical College
- training key individuals, educational colleges, technical colleges, health services...
- parental participation, Department of Parental Participation with the School + Parental
- Home Patronate, Swiss Federation for Parental Education and Swiss Association of Parents' Organisations
- promoting safety, bfu
- health-promoting schools, ENGS-CH, Member of the European Network
- Psychoactive substances, Swiss Centre for Alcohol and Other Drug Problems (SFA)

*Target groups:* The entire education sector, from pre-school up to and including the tertiary level; institutions and training centres involved in education.

#### **4.3 Promoting health services**

An example for a NGO program discussing sexual and reproductive health is the “AchtungLiebe Program” of the International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations Switzerland. Further information are available on [www.achtungliebe.ch](http://www.achtungliebe.ch).

Switzerland is known to have one of the higher suicide rate in the world. It is a very important point to repeat concerning the mental/psychological health of young people.

**Area 5: Environment**

As Switzerland doesn't have a national curriculum it is difficult to provide information about how much environmental education is taught at schools. It does not have the status of an own subject. Until recently, NGOs – WWF, Pro Natura and Greenpeace have played the most important roles besides the “Stiftung Umweltbildung” – have provided teaching aids, but nowadays, national publishers have overtaken this role. The “Stiftung Umweltbildung” is the most important organisation concerning environmental and educational inquiries.

NGOs play the most important role. About ten years ago, they started to establish action programs in which youngsters can directly participate. This, for instance, includes making the schools rain-forest-friendly or planting trees in developing countries. These NGOs are convinced that participation of the youngsters is the key to future sustainable development. NGOs can get support by the state. The state itself doesn't play a very active role in the field “youth and environment”.

Unfortunately, the topic environment is not as omnipresent in the public media as it used to be in the 80s or 90s. Youngsters do not have a direct influence on the government, but can engage themselves in NGOs and lobby for it.

## **Area 6: Drug abuse**

### **6.1 Responding to the needs of young people**

Around 450 000 children and young people between 7 and 25 regularly spend part of their leisure time in one of the 100 youth associations in Switzerland. These associations are therefore predestined to be active in prevention and health promotion. In 1992 the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health work (SFOPH) commissioned the SAJV to implement a nation-wide program of addiction prevention and health promotion. Since 1998 the «voilà» program has also received major support from the Swiss Health Promotion.

#### *Options*

- Between 1000 and 1500 counsellors are trained every year in aspects of addiction prevention and health promotion
- Funding for camps which focus on health-related topics in some way
- Promotion and networking of “voilà” throughout Switzerland
- Financial support for small projects runs by individual youth associations (project fund).

*Target groups:* 80 youth associations with over 450 000 members.

*Internet* [www.voila.ch](http://www.voila.ch)

### **6.2 Providing appropriate training**

The proper handling of drugs and the diagnosis of substance abuse are part of the curriculum of medical and paramedical students.

### **6.3 Providing appropriate treatment and rehabilitation services**

An example of a drug abuse prevention program for children and youth is **Fil rouge** – **6.4Addiction Prevention in Juvenile Homes**

*Contractor:* Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit Lucerne HSA, Association «le fil rouge»

*Background:* Children's and juvenile homes are often particularly affected by drug problems. They take in children and young people whose difficult family situation or personal development has put them at particular risk.

The SFOPH introduced the national «fil rouge» program in 1994 to bring prevention to the everyday settings of young people.

*Internet [www.infoset.ch/pub-www/filrouge](http://www.infoset.ch/pub-www/filrouge)*

### Area 8:Leisure-time activities

The situation concerning facilities for the youth to spend their free time is on a high level in Switzerland, in 1995 as well as in 2005. Young people have access to an offer of countless possibilities of leisure-time activities. There is a strong tradition in sports clubs organized on a local level. Communities provide courses in learning how to play instruments and most of the young people have access to public libraries. But leisure time and participation are also linked to the social and financial level. Several NGOs work on local and national level in offering free time activities to young people. Furthermore, in most cities of Switzerland, there are facilities for young people to get together in specially organized spaces to do



workshops or be creative in any way. Concerning this topic, the situation in Switzerland has not changed much during the last ten years, but we noticed clearly the trend that the engagement of Young people in Youth organisations is going down. It is a big concern regarding youth participation in the decision making process and shaping of the society and empowerment of young people.

#### **Area 9: Girls and young women**

Equality for girls and boys is basically quite good in Switzerland, especially when you compare it with the situation in the third world. Women and men share the same rights according to the law since 1981. Despite this, the reality is still a little bit different. There are still some areas which remain negative for women.

First of all, both girls and boys have to go to school for at least nine years. Higher schools are as well equally open to young boys and girls; although in reality less young women attend a further school. The rate of young women is especially low in scientific fields at university and in the field of skilled-trade apprenticeship.

However, at university there has been a remarkable improvement. Whereas in 1995 only five per cent made a university degree, in 2003 the percentage was ten per cent, compared to twelve per cent of men. Different universities in Switzerland have started to offer an interdisciplinary subject called "gender studies" and generally a lot of subjects at university pay more attention to the gender aspect. Theoretically, the girls have the same access to male-dominated sectors, but in reality girls often meet difficulties

when they want to enter a male-dominated sector. The people sticking to the old traditions are often the problem.

A second negative point is that the women still earn less than the man for the same job. Women earn around 20 per cent less than the man. This number hasn't diminished a lot since 1995, only by about 3 per cent.

The most worrying problem concerning girls and young women is domestic violence. In Europe – including Switzerland – domestic violence is the most important cause for deaths of women between 16 and 44 years. Switzerland has changed its law in January 04. Domestic violence can now be prosecuted by the police. This change of the law has already enhanced the situation.

**Area 10: Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making**

**10.1 Promoting young people's participation**

Young people have not really access to decision-making bodies in Switzerland. Co-management is not implemented like in the Council of Europe. But some NGO and Youth organisations promote youth participation in the society.

Organisations involved in youth participation:

- The Swiss national Youth Council (CSAJ/SAJV [www.sajv.ch](http://www.sajv.ch))
- Exchange organisations, young parties, youth parliaments, traditional youth organisations (scouts,

Christian youth organisations), NGO in environment, Human Rights, Peace involving young people and sector led by them

Young people learn (should!) about their rights and responsibilities in secondary schools.

#### Area 11: Globalisation

In general, the effect of globalisation on the youth in Switzerland can be judged as positive, as they have access to all sort of information, can exchange with many people in the world, etc.

In terms of development aid, Switzerland is still far from reaching the official United Nations' target in development aid, which is to spend 0.7% of the gross national income (GNI) for this aim. The Swiss goal is to reach the mark of 0.4% of the GNI by the year of 2010. Nonetheless, the percentage of the GNI spent on official development aid is slightly rising in Switzerland, from 0.33% in 1995 up to 0.38% of the GDP in 2003.

#### **Area 13: HIV/AIDS**

##### **13.1 HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support for young people**

For HIV/AIDS prevention there is the STOP AIDS campaign in Switzerland.

**Project management Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH)**

Background Efforts to control HIV and AIDS in Switzerland have been successful so far and have met with worldwide approbation. The number of positive HIV test results has decreased by about 60% since 1993. Low-risk behaviour is well established in many target groups.

The STOP AIDS campaign is well known and is perceived by the population as still being necessary. The behaviour-modifying messages of «safe sex» and «safe drug use» still remain as relevant as ever, and evaluations have shown that awareness of these messages in the Swiss population is high.

*Goals:*

- To promote the use of condoms (prevent new HIV infections)
- Solidarity is reinforced.

*Target groups:* Entire Swiss population. Depending on the phase of the campaign, also specific target groups, e.g. young people, heterosexual men.

*Approach:* Posters, TV spots, print advertisements, cinema and radio advertising, items and PR activities such as media releases and events. A creative team (experts in prevention and communication) advises the SFOPH on developing the campaign.

#### **Area 15: Intergenerational Relations Switzerland**

The Swiss government has several programs to improve intergenerational relations. For example the „National Research Program“ (NRP), focused on the living conditions and the needs of children and young people and attention to intergenerational and

legal issues as in Switzerland, there are gaps in the research in this regard. The results should provide practical bases and innovative suggestions to strengthen the family and extra familial infrastructures – municipal, cantonal and federal – required for children and adolescents to thrive, and for the implementation of legal provisions.

Another Project in different municipalities in Switzerland, senior citizens provide voluntary classroom assistance helping primary school teachers with lessons. They explain writing mistakes to the children, listen to them while they read aloud, play counting games with small groups or test their vocabulary.

An effective instrument is the new Federal Constitution which came into force on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2000. Article 8, Para 2 states “No person should suffer discrimination, because of background, race, gender, age, language, social position, lifestyle, religious belief, denomination or political conviction, or because of a physical, mental or psychological handicap”. This constitutional provision should be observed in all areas of society.

The demographical evolution (more older people, live longer, less children/ young people) is a concern for the stability of the financial support system for older people. This system (AVS) has a big deficit and its sustainability is not granted. This is a tension more between the generations.

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