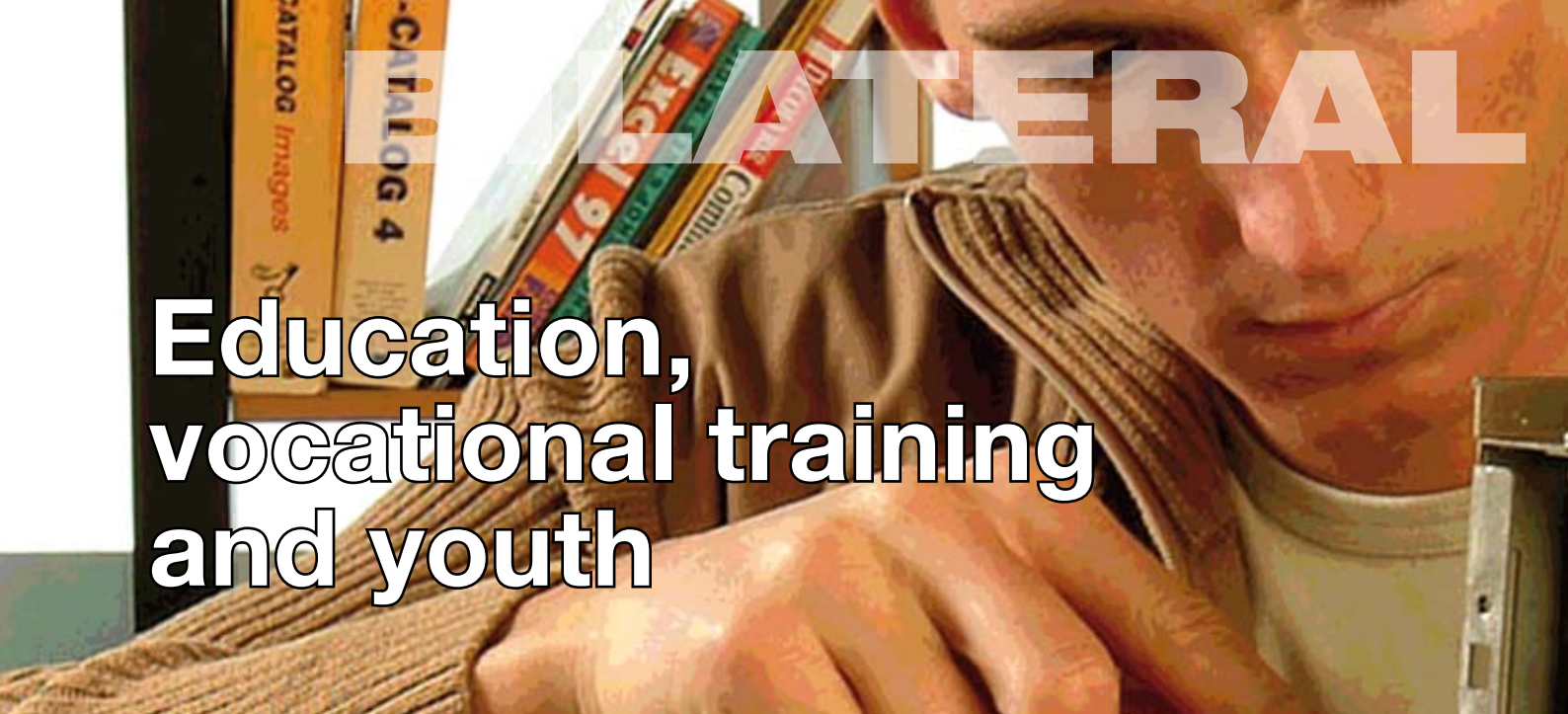




Education, vocational training and youth

Switzerland's most important resource is brain power. Education and vocational training are therefore important prerequisites for Switzerland's prosperity. Participation in the EU education, vocational training and youth programmes aims to extend and improve training opportunities.

Since the 1990s, Switzerland has participated in various EU education, vocational training and youth programmes. In 2004, Switzerland and the EU agreed that this cooperation should receive legal backing through a bilateral agreement.

The aim of the EU education programmes is to improve opportunities, quality and mobility in the field of education, vocational training and youth initiatives. Among other things, this involves student and youth exchanges offering initial work experience abroad, the networking of educational institutions,

the further training of teaching personnel, as well as the encouragement of cross-border youth activities. Schoolchildren, apprentices, students as well as adults can gain experience and establish contacts abroad. They gain access to a wider range of learning opportunities. This increases their chances on the labour market. Additionally, the Swiss economy benefits from well-trained experts.

The best known programme is the "Erasmus" university programme, part of the EU "Lifelong Learning Programme": Students can spend one to two semesters at a university in another country. This period is credited to their studies. In the 2006/2007 academic year, 2118 students from Switzerland spent one or two semesters at a foreign university. In 2007, Switzerland spent a total of around 14 million francs, among other things on financing time abroad for some 5400 young people for studies, apprenticeships or professional internships.

Internships, adult education and youth programmes

The programmes include further interesting offers in addition to the known student exchanges. Examples are:

Internships: Young Swiss people who have completed an apprenticeship, graduates or students can do internships in an EU country. In return, young EU citizens can come to Switzerland. In 2007, 240 young Swiss benefited from this opportunity; 160 young EU citizens came to Switzerland. Most internships are offered in the service sector.

Adult education: Various projects promote adult further education, including one for adult educators, with the aim of enabling adults from so-called less-well-educated groups to gain access to further education.

"Youth in Action" supports cross-border projects based on self-initiative. As an example, groups from five countries came together for the European Footbag Camp, which offered cultural workshops in addition to numerous sporting activities.

AGREEMENTS



Key data

Official participation in two EU education programmes up until 1995:
since then, indirect participation in programmes on a project basis.
Negotiations concerning official participation since 9 April 2008

“ I spent seven months at Bologna University. As a law student, I attended lectures on Italian Constitutional Law. This opened up my understanding of Swiss Constitutional Law. An important aspect, however, was no doubt going to a completely new place as a young person and having to organise everything – absolutely everything – myself. And all that in a foreign language! I received financial support of 250 francs per month from Switzerland. I am now writing my master's thesis on reporting requirements under the Stock Exchange Act, and am starting an internship with a law firm – they saw the fact that I have spent time abroad as a positive factor.

”

Simona Liechti, law student

