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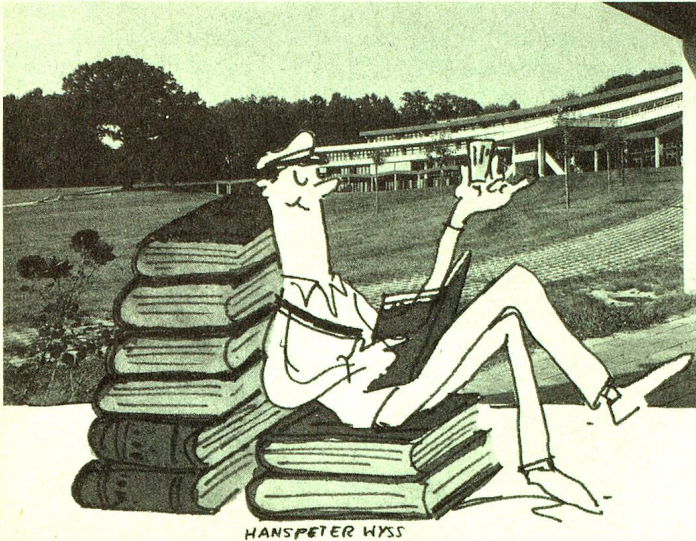
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Dream picture: studies in the greenery (picture: the University at Dorigny, Lausanne).

Training in Switzerland (4)

University Studies

For Swiss from abroad the path to a Swiss university may be strewn with obstacles and a certain spirit of initiative may be needed to surmount them. Furthermore, because of the decentralized structure of our university system, it is impossible to give a generally valid answer to the question of which foreign school-leaving certificates will be recognized.

The education system in Switzerland is primarily a matter for the cantons. The resulting diversity also has repercussions in the university sphere. In practical terms, this means that entry conditions, length of studies, subjects offered, syllabuses and cost of courses, but also time-limits for applications, vary from university to university, which makes it extremely difficult, indeed impossible, to provide general information. The only uniform features are that studies start in October and that final examination certificates are recognized nationwide.

Requirements

The minimum requirements for admission to the Swiss universities* are as follows:

1. Minimum age of 18 years
2. Adequate knowledge of the language of instruction (German or French; there are no universities in Italian-speaking

Switzerland). Applicants of foreign mother-tongue usually have to pass an examination in the language of instruction before being admitted.

3. Possession of a matriculation certificate which is classified as sufficient by the university in



Nightmare picture: language problems. Well prepared - not to worry.

question or passing of an entrance examination.

Admission to more advanced semesters of students who have begun or completed studies at a foreign university is considered

case by case. The question of crediting semesters is normally decided by the faculties. In these cases, too, an entrance examination is often unavoidable.

Is a foreign matriculation certificate sufficient?

In most instances foreign school-leaving and training certificates cannot be equated to Swiss ones. In practically every case they are examined for their content equivalence to Swiss matriculation certificates. As a rule they do not help to secure direct entry to studies at Swiss universities without an additional examination.

Entry conditions differ from university to university, indeed even from faculty to faculty: the universities have autonomy in deciding on the admission or rejection of applicants. Therefore, only the universities themselves can give binding information about enrolment conditions and any supplementary examinations. Thus it is possible that, for example, a Swiss from abroad with a foreign matriculation certificate will have to pass a comprehensive supplementary examination at one university and only a language examination at another. In plain words: there is nothing to stop someone who has been unlucky with one university from trying his luck with another.

Special preparatory courses

Candidates for the university entrance examinations can prepare for them at special courses in Fribourg. These last from mid-October to mid-July. The

Transfer to Middle Schools («Mittelschulen»)

It is not possible to transfer automatically to a Swiss middle school, either, after a previous education abroad. The individual schools (cantonal and private) or the cantonal education directorates decide each case on its merits. (Addresses obtainable from AJAS).

courses, in German and French, are open only to candidates with a good knowledge of the language concerned who have an assurance from a university that they will be admitted if they pass the entrance examination. Applications must be submitted to the universities in question. Private schools also prepare students for the entrance examinations.

Special case: medical studies

Unlike the other study courses, the study of medicine is federally regulated. Entry conditions and application procedures are therefore essentially the same for all the universities.

Swiss abroad should inquire of the university of their choice, or of the Swiss Universities' Conference (Schweizerische Hochschulkonferenz, Wildhainweg 21, 3012 Berne), about the exact regulations at least eight months before they wish to begin their studies.

In general it can be said that applicants for admission must obtain a so-called certificate of equivalence (to the Swiss matri-

* Universities of Basle, Berne, Zurich (German), Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel (French) and Fribourg (German and French); Federal Institutes of Technology, Zurich (German) and Lausanne (French), Graduate School of Economics, Business and Public Administration, St. Gallen (German), Theological Faculty, Lucerne, Theological University, Chur (German).



ulation certificate). Supplementary examinations must also be passed (in any case in Swiss history and geography, and, depending on previous education, in other subjects as well). A good knowledge of two of the national languages is required too.

How to proceed

Even those who have read carefully the whole of our series about training will still have a number of unanswered questions. Swiss abroad who intend to study at a Swiss university should therefore proceed as follows:

1. Anyone wanting general vocational guidance with clarification on the subject of aptitudes, abilities and career prospects should apply to the academic vocational guidance services (addresses obtainable from the association for the Training of Young Swiss Abroad [AJAS], Seefeldstr. 8, CH-8022 Zurich).
2. General information about study courses provided is sup-

Almost 77,000 university students

The surge to the Swiss universities has slowly abated over the last two years. While, in the record year 1984/85, over 14,300 students registered for the first time, barely 13,900 enrolled in 1986/87. Even so, the total number of students at the twelve universities of Switzerland again increased, by two per cent, to 76,664. This is attributed to the fact that the high-birthrate age-groups are now in the middle of their studies.

It is mainly the economic and technical sciences that report a strong inflow. Higher studies and specialization studies, subsequent to the passing of a first university examination, are becoming increasingly popular. The number of postgraduate students and doctoral candidates has risen by eight per cent, to more than 12,000, within a period of one year.

plied by the Central Office of the Swiss Universities (Zentralstelle für Hochschulwesen, Sophienstr. 2, CH-8032 Zurich) or by AJAS.

3. It is important to find out, before embarking on studies in Switzerland, whether a Swiss final examination certificate (especially in medicine and law) would also be recognized in your country of residence.

4. Anyone who already knows what he wishes to study, and at which university, should get into touch with the university of his choice *at least eight months* before he plans to begin his studies, indicating the subjects desired and enclosing a detailed curriculum vitae and copies of his matriculation certificate and of any university certificates. The university will either grant or refuse admission or require a supplementary examination.

5. After acceptance the candidate should prepare for his stay in Switzerland (language, finances, lodgings etc.).

The question of financing studies and other general topics will be dealt with in the next instalment of this series.

MZ, FDFA

return to Switzerland permanently, and there will be no reservations concerning pre-existing illnesses. Moreover, they will only have to pay the premiums corresponding to their age when they joined the collective insurance. In other words, anyone who joins the collective insurance at the age of 30 - paying the corresponding premiums - and returns to Switzerland at 67, only pays the same sickness insurance premiums as a Swiss at home of the same age who had joined the sickness scheme at 30.

During holidays, too

This so-called age-group privilege will also apply to people who only want to be insured with a sickness fund during a temporary stay in Switzerland. In such cases, of course, they will have to make a health declaration. The new system is expected to come into force on 1st January 1988. More details will follow in the December issue.

Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad, Gutenbergstrasse 6, CH-3011 Berne.

Sickness Insurance

Long-awaited plugging of a gap soon?

Complaints from Swiss abroad about the high costs of sickness or accidents in Switzerland, be it after returning permanently or only during a holiday stay,

are not new. Elderly compatriots, in particular, who go back to Switzerland are obliged to pay very high premiums on joining a Swiss sickness in-

surance scheme because these are graduated according to age at entry. Furthermore, reservations of up to five years are normally made in the case of existing illnesses, which means that the insured persons concerned must themselves pay for medical treatment and periods in hospital arising from these.

Solution: Join the collective insurance scheme

From 1st January 1988 a new solution will be available to the Swiss abroad which will allow them to transfer to a Swiss sickness insurance scheme on much more favourable terms than hitherto. That is to say, members of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad will be able to join a collective insurance from that date. This will enable them and their families to enter the Grütli sickness fund when they

Announcement to the Members of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad

The 1987 General Meeting will be held on 21st August in the framework of the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Weinfelden.

The most important subjects on the agenda concern changes to the statutes:

- Art. 2 Introduction of a special sickness insurance (see above)
- Art. 13 New arrangements for voting representation
- Art. 42 General limitation of the waiting period to two years
- Art. 30 Abolition of contributions to the administrative costs for yearly savings depositors



A stay in hospital in Switzerland can be expensive (photo: Keystone).

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