



Submission to the Universal
Periodic Review of the United
Nations Human Rights Council

4th Cycle – 42nd Session

Country Review: Switzerland

June 2022
by Faical Al Azib

Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 and focused on raising awareness and minimizing human rights violations in the educational field.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support the following activities/projects: removing obstacles in education; contributing to the achievement of peace and tranquillity in society through adaptation studies in an environment of intercultural tolerance; preventing radicalism and polarization, and eliminating the opportunity gap in education for all. Our goal is to work with global partners to remove barriers to access to education and take concrete steps to ensure universal access to education.



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0. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is a non-profit organization that focuses on developing each country's educational system to improve the level of human rights on the global level. Therefore, this report will focus on education. By drafting this report, Broken Chalk intends to assist with Switzerland's fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR). First, the report will analyze Switzerland's most critical issues regarding the Right to Education. Then, it will shed light on some problems that should be solved through the Swiss Cantons. And finally, Broken Chalk will provide a few recommendations to Switzerland to further facilitate the field of education.
2. In the last review of Switzerland in 2017, the Swiss Confederation received 49 recommendations and observations from 7 different human rights mechanisms focused on education and other issues such as the gender gap, discrimination, and human trafficking, which affect education's access, outputs, and outcomes.
3. Switzerland is a federal and multilingual country with a decentralized education system. The 26 Cantons (states) are responsible for the development of education within their respective territories. While the Cantons are responsible for compulsory education, the Federal Government also takes the lead in support of the Cantons for post-compulsory education (public education schools, vocational and professional education and training, universities). The principle of decentralization is since the cantons, and their municipalities finance 90% of public expenditure on education.
4. The Confederation and the Cantons have a joint obligation to ensure high quality and accessibility within the education system. Therefore, the entire education system in Switzerland is systematically monitored, key challenges are identified, and the achievement of policy goals is evaluated regularly. The Swiss Education Report, published every four years, is one result of this monitoring process.

I. Analysis of Educational Issues to be Resolved

The Quality, Access, and Outcomes of the Swiss Educational System

5. In compulsory education, 95% of all pupils attend public schools in their local municipality. There is no free choice of school in mandatory education. Public schools are essential for integration. Indeed, children with different social,

linguistic and cultural backgrounds attend the same school. Public schools in compulsory education are free of charge. Each Canton manages its curriculum, including the weekly teaching periods per subject and class. There is no national curriculum. However, the Federal Constitution obliges the Cantons to coordinate and harmonize their educational systems concerning structure and objectives. The Cantons have, for instance, developed language-region curricula for compulsory education, which are currently being introduced.

6. Traditionally, language learning is essential in Switzerland. The language of instruction is German, French, Italian or Romansh, depending on the region. Students learn a second official language of Switzerland and English during their compulsory school years.
7. Switzerland has a robust vocational and professional education system (VET). It offers primarily dual-track VET programmes at the upper secondary level (combining an apprenticeship in a training company with 1-2 days of classroom instruction at a vocational school) and comprehensive tertiary-level professional education programmes.
8. Most young people coming out of compulsory education enrol in VET, which provides them with a solid foundation in a given occupation (there are about 230 professions to choose from). Around one-third opt for continuing education at an upper secondary specialized or baccalaureate school, preparing them for a university's tertiary education.
9. Open access to various types of education and a high degree of permeability between programmes play an essential role: Anyone with the necessary qualifications can generally attend the courses of their choice. With a few exceptions (numerous classes in specific programmes), a baccalaureate diploma allows for the university's free will and the study programme. VET is subject to some restrictions due to ceilings on apprenticeship positions. There are many ways to enter or transfer to a training programme or school or to attend a catch-up training programme. A federal VET diploma combined with a national vocational baccalaureate, for instance, opens the way to universities of applied sciences. By bypassing an additional aptitude test, students can enrol in a university or a federal technology institute.
10. More than 90% of all young people acquire a certificate or diploma at the upper secondary level, which facilitates direct entry into the job market or enables them to continue education at the tertiary level.

II. Discrimination & Exclusion

11. In Switzerland, the percentage of children from the bottom quartile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) achieving at least PISA level

2 in reading in 2018 was 32% lower than that of children from the top ESCS quartile, a larger share than the OECD average of 29%.

- 12.** Significant differences in educational achievement may lead to starker earnings inequality in many countries. In Switzerland, 30% of 25-64-year-old adults with below upper secondary attainment earned at or below half the median earnings in 2019, above the OECD average of 27%.
- 13.** In nearly all OECD countries and at all levels of educational attainment, 25-64-year-old women earn less than their male peers: their earnings correspond to 76%-78% of men's earnings on average across OECD countries. This proportion varies more across educational attainment levels than on average across OECD countries. Compared to other education levels, women with below upper secondary education in Switzerland have the lowest earnings relative to men with a similar education level, earning 77% as much. In comparison, those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education make 84% as much.
- 14.** On average, across OECD countries, 57% of native-born adults are employed among adults without upper secondary attainment compared to 61% of foreign-born adults. In Switzerland, the employment rate of foreign-born adults without upper secondary attainment was 71% in 2020, higher than that of their native-born peers (65%).
- 15.** Among tertiary-educated adults, 92% of native-born adults and 84% of foreign-born adults are employed. Foreign-born adults who arrived in the country early have spent some years in their host country's education system and gained nationally recognized credentials. As a result, their labour-market outcomes are generally better than that of those who arrived at a later age with foreign qualifications. In Switzerland, among foreign-born adults with tertiary attainment, 90% of those who came by the age of 15 are employed, compared to 83% of those who arrived in the country at age 16 or later.

III. Recommendations & Conclusions

- 16.** Broken Chalk recommends that the government of Switzerland address the experiencing problems in gaining access to secondary education for asylum seekers and undocumented children.
- 17.** Strengthen public policies to ensure that children of foreign origin enjoyed the best possible level of teaching and that child asylum seekers and undocumented children were given access to education, particularly at the secondary level.
- 18.** Strengthen programmes and awareness-raising activities against violence, abuse and bullying in schools;

19. Strengthen its efforts to address the high rates of repetition and school dropout, in particular in secondary education, including by rolling out its second opportunity education programme at the Federal and Cantonal levels in collaboration with both public and private partners;
20. Switzerland should encourage further diversification of the educational choices of girls and boys, take steps to revise educational materials at the cantonal level and ensure that gender-sensitive teaching materials are available across all cantons and communities.
21. And finally, Switzerland should strengthen strategies to address discriminatory stereotypes and structural barriers that might deter girls from progressing beyond secondary education and enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study.

IV. References

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