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## **Vocational education and training, career orientation and professional insertion in Switzerland (CH): The example of the canton of Valais**

**Key words:** Vocational Education and Training – Educational and Professional Career Orientation – transition from school / work – professional insertion

**Słowa kluczowe:** Szkolnictwo i praktyki zawodowe – orientacja szkolna i zawodowa – okres przejściowy pomiędzy szkołą a pracą – aktywizacja zawodowa

### **1. Vocational education and training**

(By Claude Pottier, Head of Vocational Education and Training Services of the Canton of Valais)

#### **Introduction**

In Switzerland, every year more than 80'000 young people, having finished their 11 years of mandatory education, begin with vocational education and training, in the form of an apprenticeship.

The Swiss VET/PET system enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough specialists and managers in the future. The VET and PET sectors are closely correlated with the labour market and are an integral part of the education system.

#### **1.1. The most popular form of upper-secondary level education**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) provides two-thirds of young people in Switzerland with a solid foundation in a given occupation. It also forms the basis for lifelong learning and opens up a wealth of job prospects.

#### **Dual-track approach to learning**

Most VET programmes consist of part-time classroom instruction at a VET school combined with a part-time apprenticeship at a host company. Such VET

programmes are referred to as dual-track VET programmes. There are around 230 occupations to choose from. The less common variety is called a full-time VET programme and is based entirely on classroom instruction (i.e. no apprenticeship). Full-time VET programmes are generally offered by trade schools or commercial schools.

### **Close correlation with the labour market**

VET programmes closely match the needs of the labour market, both in terms of occupational skills and the number of available jobs. The close correlation with the labour market explains why Switzerland has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates among European countries.

### **Permeability**

The VET and PET sectors are an integral part of the education system. Education and training begins at upper-secondary level with learners having the option of continuing through tertiary level. VET and PET are based on clearly defined curricula and national qualification procedures. Typically, VET and PET are very flexible: learners may pursue education and training opportunities and later change the course of their professional lives with relative ease. Continuing education and training (CET) options are also available at all levels.

### **Areer prospects**

Professional education and training (PET) takes place at tertiary B level and is the next step after vocational education and training (VET). PET provides learners with specific qualifications and prepares them for managerial and specialised positions. There are around 410 PET programmes leading to federal PET examinations and 52 PET college degree programmes in eight different professional fields. The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) provides direct access to Swiss universities of applied sciences (UAS).

**Cf.** [www.admin.bbt.ch/es](http://www.admin.bbt.ch/es)

### **Joint mission**

VET/PET is a partnership, a joint mission pursued by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations. The Swiss VET/PET system enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough specialists and managers in the future. The VET and PET sectors are closely correlated with the labour market and are an integral part of the education system.

2011	Valais	CH
New learners enrolling in VET	3'076	81'200
Total number of learners enrolled in VET programmes	8'572	232'100
Number of Federal VET Certificates or Federal VET Diplomas issued	2'500	68'500
Number of Federal Vocational Baccalaureates issued	350	12'200

## **1.2. Swiss VET/PET System**

### **Vocational education and training (VET)**

VET programmes lead to recognised qualifications and pave the way for life-long learning.

#### **Three- or four-year VET programmes leading to a Federal VET Diploma**

This provides learners with the skills needed to carry out a specific occupation and gain access to tertiary-level B professional education and training (PET).

#### **Two-year VET programmes leading to a Federal VET Certificate**

This option allows more practically minded learners to obtain a federally recognised certificate that matches the needs of a specific occupational profile. Graduates of the two-year VET programme may enrol directly in a three- or four-year VET programme leading to the Federal VET Diploma.

#### **Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB)**

The optional FVB is available to learners who attend the FVB preparatory course, which consists of general education subjects. FVB holders are entitled to enrol in any of Switzerland's universities of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance examination. FVB holders may also take the University Aptitude Test (UAT) to obtain the additional qualification needed to enrol in a cantonal university or either of Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (ETH in Zurich or EPF in Lausanne).

### **Professional education and training (PET)**

PET programmes combine solid practical skills with established theoretical expertise. They also prepare learners for managerial and/or specialised positions.

#### **Federal PET examinations**

There are two federal PET examinations: the Federal PET Diploma Examination is intended for people with several years of professional experience who would like to specialise in a given field; the Advanced Federal PET Diploma Examination is generally for learners who have acquired a great deal of professional expertise and/or who intend to hold a managerial position in an SME. Depending on which federal PET examination is taken, candidates will be awarded either the Federal PET Diploma or the Advanced Federal PET Diploma.

#### **PET college degree programmes**

PET college degree programmes are based on a core curriculum. Generally speaking, programmes last for two years (full-time) or three years (part-time) and lead to a federally recognised PET college degree.

Vocational education and training (VET) is provided at upper-secondary level. Professional education and training (PET) is provided at tertiary B level. Both

VET and PET use clearly defined curriculums and national qualification procedures. They are also characterised by a high degree of permeability: it is possible for learners to pursue additional education and training opportunities and change the course of their professional lives with relative ease. A wealth of continuing education and training (CET) courses can also be found at all levels. The Swiss VET/PET system offers a broad selection of available training options. Courses cater to different abilities and are geared to the needs of different age groups.

### **Preparation for vocational education and training**

**www.bbt.admin.ch**    **www.bbt.admin.ch/film** (New image film Vocational Education and Training in Switzerland)

### **Organisation of vocational education and training**

- Courses at vocational school (1 or 2 days per week)
- Practical training at a host company (3 or 4 days per week)
- Industry courses (CIE) (5 to 20 days per year)

VETS<sup>1</sup> internet site: **www.vs.ch/sfop**

## **2. Educational and professional career orientation**

(By Christian Bonvin, Psychologist, Deputy Director of the Office of Educational and Professional Career Orientation of the Canton of Valais)

### **Introduction**

In Switzerland, career orientation is often referred to as educational and professional<sup>2</sup> orientation (EPO) and is essentially a public service for young people (<18 years), including different partners from the private and public sectors, and for the adult population with its recent employment issues (first crisis in 1990), despite having low unemployment rates in comparison to other European countries (2 to 6%).

Switzerland is a federal state consisting of 26 cantons in turn divided into a large number of communes which has produced a complex structure with three levels. While the federal government enacts legislation on the basic shared values and resources, the cantons are entities with wide political and financial autonomy. So, for example, the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (FVPET)<sup>3</sup> highlight important cantonal differences and diversity in its application:

<sup>1</sup> Or **SFOP**: service de la formation professionnelle du canton du Valais.

<sup>2</sup> This of course, includes and implies vocational career orientation.

<sup>3</sup> Loi Fédérale sur la Formation Professionnelle (LFPR).

This operation, more commonly referred to as “executive federalism” integrates three principles:

- the superimposition of hierarchical bodies of state, cantons and communes;
- autonomy, allowing local communities to have their own competencies;
- participation, which enables individuals and communities to influence decisions and practices.

These three principles can lead to very different forms of approaches and practices, and even though this system has created a certain complexity and slowness (...), it also has important advantages, as it facilitates experimentation and innovation which is very positive for a canton like the Valais which does not have a university and has reduced financial resources, but has revealed a pioneering spirit, which is both precursory and pragmatic.

## 2.1. Information in context

**Socio-economic situation:** Switzerland has very positive results overall, including the following three indicators:

- 87% of young people obtain an upper secondary second level diploma at the end of their education and training;
- The unemployment rate varies annually between 2 and 6%, depending on the region and time of year, and is elevated in cities in the Latin regions;
- Youth unemployment is between 4 and 8% and is highly dependent on the situation. The problem of young people without education and training and falling under social welfare emerges as a priority concern in some regions. The Valais is a canton with 310 000 inhabitants, a countryside of mountains and tourism, and with a diversified economy, including chemistry, energy, construction, etc. It has experienced sustained development, has sound finances, its education and training infrastructure is generally very good, and in terms of tertiary education the canton has Higher Education Colleges (referred to as universities of applied sciences) but has no actual university structures except for certain partnerships.

**Basic organisational information:** The approach to EPO is clearly from the perspective of Long Life Learning (LLL); its mission concerning youth and adults in the continuity of necessary adaption to changing and diverse life and work contexts.

The Office of Educational and Professional Orientation depends on the Vocational Education and Training Services (VETS)<sup>4</sup>, which falls under the authority of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS). The canton is bilin-

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<sup>4</sup> Service de la formation professionnelle (SFOP).

gual French-German with an office per region, which responds to the needs of both young people and adults.

Young people undergoing education and training in a secondary establishment on either a primary or secondary level (career orientation cycle, pre-VET school, general education school, or business school) are the recipients of services provided by counselling psychologists from the education sector. Adults, however, may directly approach the counselling psychologists at the Information and Career Orientation Centres (IOC), or are sent on a voluntary basis by partner institutions with the aim of re-insertion into the workplace. The Cantonal Office has also created a specialised department for acquired validation procedures (Val-Form) for experienced adults. Finally, the Career Orientation Office also has a documentation department, which is in charge of the drafting, publication and distribution of a wide range of information relating to the areas of education and training, employment and insertion into the workplace on the cantonal and federal levels.

### **Basic legal texts**

The Career Orientation Office is affected by various laws, the principle ones being the following:

- The federal law on VET and the applicable cantonal law are the basic texts completed by specific ordinances concerning EPO. These very modern texts open up a broad domain of perspectives.
- Among the laws on mandatory education, the new cantonal law concerning the career orientation cycle should be emphasised, which specifies the guidelines for working with young people aged 12 to 15 years. It focuses on the involvement of teachers and the school, and on the active participation of parents and effective synergies between the different partners.
- With respect to the institutional partners there is, for example, the Federal Unemployment Law (AVIG)<sup>5</sup> and the Cantonal Law on Employment and Measures in favour of the Unemployed (LEMC)<sup>6</sup> which have opened up broad perspectives and have allowed very innovative achievements in the area of career reinsertion.
- Cantonal law governs continuing education and training. A major national debate is currently in progress concerning a federal law, which should emerge in 2013.

### **Current approaches and trends in the fields of educational and professional career orientation in Valais**

- Career orientation takes place from an **educative and continuous perspective**. These two criteria are established in law (LIP 1962) and guide all of

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<sup>5</sup> Loi fédérale sur la chômage (LACI).

<sup>6</sup> Loi cantonale sur l'Emploi et les Mesures en faveur des Chômeurs (LEMC).

our services. With respect to young people at school, it is the systematic guidance-oriented approach, and the proximity with the young person and the family which are the strengths; and for work with adults in the IOC, networking should be added: a client centred andragogy approach.

- **Quality approach and quality certification** principles have also strongly influenced the recent years. The Office has a specific quality system and official quality certification for the IOC: Services are regularly evaluated by clients and partners directly through satisfaction questionnaires. Data from these questionnaires is distributed and provides better visibility and clearer perception of our missions and services for partners and the public. This data also nourishes the quality improvement system and it should be noted that employees regularly receive evaluation data concerning their performances.
- **The search for efficiency** in terms of staff and financial planning is also a strong trend in recent years. Most of the IOC operating costs are self-financed by delivering services to mandated institutions. We have therefore seen the development of collective responsibility towards the costs and revenues which has increased staff involvement without prejudice, and, in our opinion, the quality of services provided.
- **Inter-institutional collaboration (IIC)** is a federal initiative that defines, in the field of social security in connection with employment and education and training, models of formal and informal cooperation regarding strategy, coordination of offers and managing concrete situations. This combination of measures concerns working with young people and adults; is centred on the individual in his or her community and by interaction with different systems, with the aim of integrating the individual quickly and permanently into the professional world or into education and training. It involves improving interior collaboration as well as that between the ordinary structures of partner institutions, without any new structures.
- **Electronic data management (EDM)** and information technology and communication techniques (ICT): The computerized management of data is at the heart of the management and dissemination of educational and vocational information, and is coordinated on national and cantonal levels; ICTs are constantly integrated into everyday practice, and the routine use among young people for information procedures and registration for information events, is a very good prototype for the steps to be accomplished with the adult population.
- **The Application of services** in a mixed format for adults, in the form of group lessons and individual interviews, has shown a significant change in

the practices of counselling psychologists who have been trained in the facilitation and management of groups.

### **Training and professional development of staff**

All counselling psychologists have a university degree in career orientation and career management. Continuing education is ensured both externally by a specific Swiss centre, and internally by the establishment of training and education days specific to the needs identified by an ad hoc competence management system, in which each employee participates.

The recent significant priority axes of training are:

- coaching methods;
- networking and inter-institutional collaboration;
- skill assessment and recognition and accreditation of prior learning;
- approach to quality, client satisfaction.

At the same time, an ongoing concern is the improvement of knowledge of the working world in all its complexity and its sphere of influence.

Finally, very particular care is placed on information literacy, which should reflect a world of education and training with its recent fundamental changes and which continues to rapidly evolve.

## **2.2. Career orientation programme**

A unique feature of the IOC is that it contains three sectors, and each sector has a broad, and in fact very comprehensive range of services. This diversity involves a complex organisation in relation to population groups, multiple partners and different types of funding.

### **School sector**

- **Mission:** The purpose of career orientation is to provide services facilitating the preparation, selection and management of a professional career. It consists of an information service and collective and individual advice, and provides these services in collaboration with the families, school, teachers and professional associations. The aim of career orientation is to work with partners to solve problems concerning transition, and academic and professional rupture. The orientation ensures the gathering and dissemination of information concerning trades and professions, basic and continual training courses, as well as available apprenticeship places and companies that provide training. The career orientation program advises organisations on its areas of expertise.
- **Organisation:** It is decentralised and counselling psychologists are continuously on duty, the duration of which varies depending on the size of the school establishment.

- **Counselling psychologist services focused on young people:** The first type of service covers information which is very diverse: self-information, supplementary information and collective information events. A second type of services is that of individualised advice, which offers personalised support specific to each situation, with the goal of helping to build and implement a professional or school project that takes into account all the parameters involved. A third, more recent type of service, is the formal evaluation of individual situations and projects of young people in mid-scolarity, in collaboration with the teacher.
- **Services of teachers specialised in education of choice:** This refers to a teacher who has been trained by the career orientation program and who gives, in addition to his or her usual lessons, teaching focused on the career orientation procedure. This teacher is responsible, in collaboration with the counselling psychologist, for monitoring each student.
- **Funding:** This sector of activity is entirely financed by cantonal and federal state resources.

#### **The «Adult» sector and the Information and Career Orientation Centres (IOC)**

- **Mission:** The purpose of career orientation offered by these IOCs is to offer services to various categories of adults in order to meet their needs for information, the construction of projects, employment search, management of skills and the capacity to cope with (attitude – motivation) the phase of insertion or of reinsertion in the workplace. Career orientation is integrated into cantonal operations aiming to coordinate partners and their procedures. The role of career orientation is both a role of primary and secondary prevention of unemployment. Career orientation links contractual collaborations with unemployment partners, disability and social security, while providing specific services within a constant system of quality. Career orientation implements specific information services to different kinds of adult audiences.
- **Organisation:** Four IOCs have been established over the last 20 years, in the four regional socioeconomic centres of the canton. Each regional team has 3 to 4 Educational and Vocational Orientation Counsellors (EVOC) under the responsibility of a coordinator who manages the collaborations and the administrative aspects. Each EVOC can be asked to deliver very diverse services for different audiences. Each IOC has its secretariat and its self-resource room, which offers much support regarding training, employment and career management. Computers are available for self-service.
- **Services:** Before presenting the content of the services, it should be noted that the service modalities are very diverse, from the phone calls to the re-

sponses by e-mail, information centres to collective courses, from interviewing to collective «testing». This diversity is related to the need for financial self-management. The content of the services can be summarised as follows:

- self-information and accompanied information;
- professional and strategic job search projects;
- skills (competence) assessment and skills coaching;
- recognition and validation of acquired official qualifications;
- evaluation of transversal key competences at work;
- evaluation of employability.
- The funding system is very complex and currently under review. Without entering into details, the principles are the following:
  - state funding with the *pro rata* salary participation of the adult;
  - full funding by the state for all measures of information;
  - funding by social services which the person receives.

### Val-Form

- **Mission:** In 2002 a small structure (Val-Form) was created with the goal of making Federal VET diplomas (diploma at the end of apprenticeship) available to experienced adults, by validating experiences and by other means of qualification. Currently, only about fifteen professions are accessible by the method of validation of experience, which is a procedure practiced in Switzerland since 2002, in a pioneering manner, by the cantons of Geneva and Valais.
- **Organisation:** A small team of three people collaborates with partners involved from education and training, expertise and professional associations;
- **Services:** The small team delivers the services of information and instruction, skills assessment and monitoring. Other partners deliver the training expertise and engineering.
- **Funding:** all costs are borne by the state, only a very small financial entry fee (CHF 200.-) is charged to the participant.

### 2.3. Conclusion

The involvement of the public sector and professional associations, the quality of collaborations between the different partners of employment and insertion into the workplace, employee employment and partners from teaching and basic and continuing education and training, are all elements which have enabled the Valais career orientation programme to offer very wide and comprehensive services to people aged 12 to 65 years, with very diverse qualification levels and origins.

This is not the time for complacency, but for continuing the effort to cope with the future challenges that would guarantee access to services for less-favoured audiences, and maintaining resources for research and development to constantly improve the services and skills of employees who remain our most important resource and our constant concern.

We conclude this presentation by expressing the hope of closer collaboration between the career orientation offices and universities in Switzerland and in Europe!

### **3. Particular professional insertion measures**

(By Jorge Pinho, Professor at the University of Applied Sciences Valais Wallis, Social Work Department)

#### **Introduction**

Several common issues emerge from the preceding presentation and discussion, firstly concerning vocational education and training (VET) and, secondly, on educational and professional career orientation (EPO) in Switzerland. The issue of professional re-insertion<sup>7</sup> is clearly an essential key to understanding not only recent developments and basic career orientation, but also strategies and specific measures in terms of career orientation and VET, particularly for a public rendered fragile.

In this chapter we will examine one of these transitional measures, namely the “Semester of Motivation” (SEMO), a measure aimed at young people aged between 15-24 years and financed by unemployment insurance (AVIG)<sup>8</sup>. However, it is advantageous to preliminarily briefly outline the current main Swiss social policies. Given this context, it will be possible to propose a definition, or more precisely definitions, of the concept of insertion and one of its “derivatives” heavily engaged in the fields of career orientation and VET, that of “transition”. We can then finally, before arriving at a conclusion, outline the main concepts of the SEMO for the purposes of illustration.

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<sup>7</sup> In general, the term “re-insertion” applies to persons who return to the job market after a career break. “Insertion” refers to those people approaching the job market for the first time. It particularly includes young people who are vying for a position for the first time, commonly called “first-time applicants” for employment. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, we will only use the concept of “insertion”.

<sup>8</sup> “L’assurance chômage” (LACI) in French.

### 3.1. Elements of context: the advent of active social policies

In Switzerland, as in other Western European countries, since the 80s, in the context of a crisis of the welfare state<sup>9</sup>, we have witnessed the development of an active and incentivizing welfare state. Indeed, the welfare state “is looking for a new mode of governance around what might be called an “active welfare state” which is the requirement for the public to meet the challenges of the current situation”<sup>10</sup>, marked by “the declining salaried society”<sup>11</sup> which was based on the organisation of social protection.

In general, the implementation of this referential active welfare state, inspired by the dynamics of *workfare*, focuses not only on the involvement and activation of the individual<sup>12</sup>, which should provide a number of efforts, but also on individualisation, territorialisation and contractualisation of its interventions<sup>13</sup>.

With the mechanism of individualisation, standardised benefits of conventional social policies, based on identified and pre-defined social risks, tend to be replaced by “tailor-made approaches”<sup>14</sup>. Territorialisation ensues from activation and individualisation mechanisms. It is a question of participating in public action regarding social policies, in local territory, or in its proximity<sup>15</sup>. Finally, contractualisation operates not only in the relationship between the State and the bodies which apply social security benefits – SEMO, for example, but also concerns the aid granted to the beneficiaries. As shown by Supiot<sup>16</sup>, since the early 90’s, we have assisted in what he calls a “reféodalisation” of society where the practice of contract tends to outpace the law, as if over time, “the contractual link [has become] the most complete form of the social bond”<sup>17</sup>.

These characteristics, briefly presented, must be considered in order to better understand the general context of the issue under discussion.

<sup>9</sup> P. Rosanvallon, *La crise de l'Etat-providence*, Paris 1981.

<sup>10</sup> Quote translated from original French. R. Castel, *La montée des incertitudes. Travail, protections, statut de l'individu*, Paris 2009, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Soulet in: R. Castel & C. Martin (dir.), *Changements et pensées du changement. Echanges avec Robert Castel*, Paris 2012; M.H. Soulet, *Les paradoxes des politiques de réinsertion*, <http://www.reiso.org/revue>. Revue d'information sociale indépendante (consulté en septembre 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Ph. Badan, J.M. Bonvin & E. Moachon, *Les politiques actives de l'emploi au service de la réduction des inégalités?* [in:] Philippe et al. Batifoulier (éds), *Approches institutionnalistes des inégalités en économie sociale*, Paris 2007, pp. 335-348.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 382.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> A. Supiot, *La contractualisation de la société*, [in:] *La société et les relations sociales / Université de tous les savoirs*, sous la dir. d'Yves Michaud, Paris 2002, pp. 57-71.

<sup>17</sup> Quote translated from original French. Ibidem, p. 155.

## Insertion or how to manage the transitions

It may be presumed that the “active” welfare state has the question of socio-professional insertion at the centre of its objectives and concerns: enabling for insertion!

The concept of insertion is a “highly polysemic word used to describe the access to the labour market and social integration of specific populations, including young people leaving school”<sup>18</sup>. Thus, insertion and related policies will first be seen as a necessary response to changes and deregulation of the labour market, where they refer to targeted and individualised strategies implemented by public policies to apply to the greatest number of people. The SEMO serves as an example. Insertion also describes, not only a dynamic process, a passage from one situation to another involving several steps, but also sometimes a steady state in which the individual is fully and definitively inserted, a participant “in the life of the city, and particularly in terms of economic roles (production and consumption) and social or medico-social matters (housing, health, citizenship)”<sup>19</sup>. In this context, several “levels” of insertion are possible, more or less closer / further from the first labour market<sup>20</sup>, depending on the particular profiles of those individuals considered (needs, resources, etc.).

The issue of insertion raises the question of transitions, regarded as “any deviation from the traditional norm of stable, full-time salaried employment. There are five principal areas of “transition”: within employment, between employment and education and training, between employment and unemployment, between employment and domestic or voluntary activities, and finally between employment and inactivity (retirement or disability)”<sup>21</sup>. The issue under discussion fits precisely into one of these areas, that of “between employment and education and training”. More precisely, two transitional moments are to be considered here: firstly, the transition occurring between the end of (mandatory) schooling and the entry into education and training (including vocational)<sup>22</sup>. This transition, called “transition 1” or T1, may be supported by several mechanisms, among which are centres

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<sup>18</sup> Quote translated from original French. J. Guichard & M. Huteau (dir.), *Orientation et insertion professionnelle. 75 concepts clés*, Paris 2007, p. 257.

<sup>19</sup> Quote translated from original French. D. Castra, *L’insertion professionnelle des publics précaires*, Paris 2003, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Soulet in: R. Castel & C. Martin (dir.), op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> Quote translated from original French. Gazier in: ibidem, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> To further understand the problem of transitions, especially that of the young public, see amongst others:

– Behrens, Matthis (dir.), *La transition de l’école à la vie active ou le constat d’une problématique majeure*. Neuchâtel: Institute for Research and Educational Documentation (IRD) (*Institut de recherche et de documentation pédagogique (IRD) 2007*).

of information and career orientation (IOC), mentioned above, and the SEMO, presented hereafter. Secondly, “transition 2” (T2)<sup>23</sup> denotes the transition to be made between the end of education and training, and entry into the world of work.

We can therefore see that the fields of counselling and VET in Switzerland are strongly impregnated with insertion and transition strategies. These strategies then take form of concrete steps in which the project takes a central role<sup>24</sup>. This makes it possible to put into practice the principles of activation, individualisation, territorialisation and contractualisation described above. SEMO, which will be briefly presented in the next chapter, fits precisely into the rational underpinning the action.

### 3.2. The “semester of motivation” (SEMO), as an example<sup>25</sup>

The SEMO made its appearance in the Swiss insertion strategies in the early 1990s, in the midst of economic crisis and rising unemployment levels hitherto little known or even unknown in our country. More precisely, the measure was born in Monthey, in the canton of Valais, in 1994, in a private initiative, but was supported by the government. After this initial pilot experience, the Federal Office concerned (SECO), has validated, recognised and encouraged the creation of other SEMOs since 1995. In 1996, the SEMO became one of the active labour market measures (ALMM)<sup>26</sup> drafted into law. Currently, a little over 65 programs exist throughout Switzerland, with a highly variable workforce (<http://ch-semb.ch>).

Two remarks should be made at this stage: firstly, it is clear that the creation of the SEMO fits exactly into the context of an active welfare state described above, with its characteristics already presented. As such, the 2nd revision of the 1996 AVIG represented a significant strengthening of these mechanisms. For example, it was on this occasion that public service employment was profoundly re-shaped and professionalised, including the establishment of Regional Placement

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– Bertschy, Kathrin et al., *Les jeunes en transition de la formation au monde du travail*, (Overview of the results of TREE longitudinal research, updated 2007, Berne. Transition de l'école à l'emploi (TREE), 2007

<sup>23</sup> For an example, see the project “coaching transition 2” (CT2) at: <http://www.ct2.ch>

<sup>24</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello cited by I. Astier, *Les nouvelles règles du social*, Paris 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Since SEMO forms part of the active labor market (LMM) measures provided by unemployment insurance, this chapter is mainly based on the following two legal texts: the law on unemployment insurance and compensation in case of insolvency (OACI, RS 837.0, 25 June 1982. as on 16 July 2012) on the one hand, and its implementing ordinance (OACI, RS 8347.02, August 31, 1983. as on 1 April 2012) on the other. The information can also be complemented by consulting the following websites (as consulted in the writing of this article): <http://www.espace-emploi.ch> et <http://ch-semb.ch>.

<sup>26</sup> “Mesures actives du marché du travail (MAMT)”, in French.

Offices (RPO<sup>27</sup>) for employment, playing a pivotal role in the system. Secondly, we also notice that the SEMO is connected with unemployment insurance law, even though its action is (also) clearly focused on career orientation support and VET (see below). This once again illustrates the links and interdependencies between educational and vocational orientation, VET, insertion and transition. It also illustrates the more or less recurrent discussions and a part of the current issues related to this measure, particularly in terms of its legal “affiliations” (unemployment insurance, VET, co-financing, etc.?).

The SEMO is therefore aimed at young people (15-24) who, upon reaching the end of their mandatory schooling, are confronted with a rupture in the transition process, referred to as transition 1 (T1: school – education and training). This rupture may occur directly at the end of mandatory schooling, when the young person has not resolved his or her career path, especially in terms of his or her education and training (vocational, academic, etc.) It can also occur during a training process which, for various reasons (failure, academic difficulties, career orientation errors, etc.) must be interrupted. On average, this stage lasts six months, hence the name “semester of motivation”. Without entering into the details thereof, in accordance with a number of criteria (existence or absence of periods of contribution, duration of residence in Switzerland, etc.), young people can receive an allowance of an average of CHF. 450.-.

The SEMO has multiple objectives that we propose classifying in accordance with the logic defined above, being that of insertion and transition:

- The logic behind insertion follows directly from the legal obligation of the AVIG, whose primary mission is the rapid and sustainable insertion of those insured into the labour market. From this perspective, the SEMO interventions seek to strengthen professional skills and abilities of young people, to increase their experience and knowledge of the world of work, to acquaint them with the demands of the private sector (punctuality, teamwork, working schedules, relationship with the hierarchy, etc.). Ultimately, it is to increase “the placement aptitude” of the young person, or his or her chances of being inserted professionally.
- The logic behind transition, in addition to the foregoing, is more evident in the work of career orientation and support, particularly with respect to education and psychosocial issues. This includes, for example, working on remedial education for the major subjects, such as French, German and mathematics. It also entails supporting the concrete discovery of several envisaged careers, and participating in work concerning career orientation

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<sup>27</sup> Offices Régionaux de Placement pour l’emploi (ORP), in French.

and career choice. It furthermore includes, in connection herewith, concluding an apprenticeship contract for the implementation of the choice made. Beyond this tutoring, if necessary, the SEMO also offers wider psychosocial support, equipping the young person to face a number of challenges he may encounter (health, addictions, family problems, violence, unhappiness, etc.)<sup>28</sup>.

These axes of intervention then require the mobilisation of various resources, such as:

- the concrete implementation of a structure offering multiple activities (workshops, classrooms, computer rooms, interview rooms, etc.);
- jobs to facilitate the training of young people;
- academic support, workshops detailing the techniques of job searching;
- personal monitoring;
- the organisation of internships at companies;
- inter-institutional collaboration (IIC) on different axes:
  - career orientation and education and training (IOC, SFOP, vocational centre, etc.),
  - the world of work (network of employers and apprenticeship supervisors, RPOs, etc.),
  - social and healthcare sphere (Non-Institutional Educational Action (NIEA)<sup>29</sup>, Disability Insurance – DI, Child Protection, Social Services, etc.).
- collaboration with families;
- etc.

Each situation is specific, and resources are mobilised in a targeted manner – the principle of individualised activation in accordance with the needs and resources of the young people considered. There are still “obligatory” steps to be taken, such as the reception, the evaluation of personal, academic and career aptitude, the implementation of an intervention project, or even active research and internships, interim assessments, etc. Here we also find the dynamics of the contractualised and multi-levelled project of intervention, notably involving young people, the SEMO via one (or more) professional references, the RPO counsellor who ultimately makes decisions concerning the presence or absence of measures to be taken, parents.

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<sup>28</sup> SEMO has evolved considerably since its creation in order to more adequately meet possible problems encountered. For example, we recently saw the emergence of Semester Social (SemoSoc) whose priority is psychosocial support, before being able to eventually evoke possible future education and training. This also applies to the Semester of Evaluation (Seval,) an intermediate step between SEMO and SemoSoc.

<sup>29</sup> Action Educative en Milieu Ouvert (AEMO).

Among professionals active in the SEMO, we particularly and logically find people from education (the school axis) and social work: social educators, social work assistants, socio-cultural coordinators and socio-professional supervisors. In addition, it is not uncommon to find profiles from adult education and training, psychology and social sciences in the broad sense (sociology, for example).

### **3.3. Concluding remarks**

It should be noted that, compared to other active measures in the labour market, the SEMO has obtained very positive results in an increasingly complex context (increased demands of the labour market, young people with multiple problems, reduced allocated resources, etc.). Despite the results obtained, the SEMO still faces a number of challenges. In conclusion, we can identify the following three:

- The management of multiple and sometimes conflicting interests: there are potential tensions arising from the legal requirements for rapid and sustainable insertion of the insured person, and at the same time the work of orientation and career choice which, by definition, takes time. This is a feature doubtlessly linked to the “ambiguous” positioning of the SEMO, legally bound to unemployment insurance while pursuing a mission in direct contact with VET.
- The ability to act on several fronts and to conduct increasingly complex interventions, while collaborating with multiple networks: this challenge clearly raises the question of skills required by professionals involved in the SEMO, including social workers who are on the frontline: are they sufficiently / effectively trained to “implement the workplace insertion” in all its complexity? The continuing education that is currently in place in the field of workplace insertion in Suisse Romande (Western Switzerland), provides a partial solution to this question. It is, in addition to the social background, educational and teaching skills specific to social work, a question of the development of company oriented skills, a key in any process of workplace insertion.
- A competitive context of action, marked by a context of rationalisation of public expenditure, even fewer resources allocated (for example the reduction of allowances allocated for the management of a young person): in other words, it is expected to do as much, or even more, but with increasingly diminishing resources, also to be shared by a larger number of players. Of course this reality is not exclusive to the SEMO, or even the field of insertion. It is, however, still a very present current problem!

These are only three of the challenges amongst others that SEMO certainly faces, while having to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones, for example in the educational and professional career orientation and VET sectors.

### Internet Sites

<http://www.admin.ch>: official site of the Swiss Confederation (consulted on 3 September 2012).

<http://www.ct2.ch>: site du programme Coaching Transition 2 (consulté le 3 septembre 2012).

<http://www.espace-emploi.ch>: site rattaché à l'administration fédérale (SECO, Direction du Travail) (consulté le 3 septembre 2012).

<http://ch-semb.ch>: site des semestres de motivation en Suisse (consulté le 3 septembre 2012).

### Legal Texts

Federal Law on Mandatory Unemployment Insurance and Insolvency Compensation (AVIG) / *Loi sur l'assurance-chômage obligatoire et l'indemnité en cas d'insolvabilité* (LACI, RS 837.0, 25 June 1982. As on 16 July 2012).

Ordinance on the Application of the Mandatory Unemployment Insurance and Insolvency Compensation Law / *Ordonnance d'application sur l'assurance-chômage obligatoire et l'indemnité en cas d'insolvabilité* (OACI, RS 8347.02, 31 August 1983. As on 1<sup>er</sup> April 2012).

### List of abbreviations

<b>AVIG</b>	Federal Unemployment Law
<b>CT2</b>	coaching transition 2
<b>DI</b>	Disability Insurance
<b>EPO</b>	Educational and Professional Career Orientation
<b>IIC</b>	Inter-institutional Collaboration
<b>IOC</b>	Information and Career Orientation Centre
<b>NIEA</b>	Non-Institutional Educational Action
<b>OAUI</b>	Ordinance on the Application of the Mandatory Unemployment Insurance and Insolvency Compensation Law
<b>RPO</b>	Regional Placement Office
<b>SEMO</b>	Semester of Motivation
<b>SemoSoc</b>	Semester Social
<b>SEval</b>	Semester of Evaluation
<b>T1</b>	transition 1
<b>T2</b>	transition 2
<b>UI</b>	Unemployment Insurance

<b>VET</b>	Vocational education and Training
<b>VETS</b>	Vocational Education and Training Services of the Canton of Valais

### **Summary**

The article is divided into three sections which are intended to complement each other. The first presents the design and organisation of vocational education and training in Switzerland with the canton of Valais as an example. It forms part of the general education system and relies mainly on a dual track approach to learning (business – school) while being attentive to the labour market (qualifications – employability). The second part, after referring to important contextual elements (socio-economic, legislative aspects, trends in educational and professional career orientation, ...), develops the career orientation programme within two sectors: firstly, that of schools (13-16 years) and secondly that of adults. The third and last part expounds the particular problems concerning the insertion of young people: the delicate transition between school and work. A specific measure is presented, that of the “Semester of Motivation” (SEMO) for young people between 15 and 24 years of age and facing a rupture in their school – work transition.

### **Szkolnictwo i praktyki zawodowe, zarządzanie karierą oraz aktywizacja zawodowa w Szwajcarii (CH) na przykładzie kantonu Valais**

#### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł składa się z trzech sekcji, które wzajemnie się uzupełniają. W części pierwszej przedstawiono strukturę i organizację szkolnictwa zawodowego oraz praktyk zawodowych w Szwajcarii na przykładzie kantonu Valais. Jest to część składowa ogólnego systemu edukacji, która jest uzależniona od dwutorowego podejścia do nauczania (biznes – szkoła), przy jednoczesnym poświęceniu odpowiedniej uwagi specyfice rynku pracy (kwalifikacje – zdolność do zatrudnienia). Druga sekcja, w odniesieniu do ważnych elementów kontekstualnych (aspektów socjoekonomicznych i prawnych, trendów edukacyjnych i orientacji zawodowej), dotyczy programu orientacji zawodowej realizowanego w dwóch grupach wiekowych: w szkołach (dzieci 13-16 lat) oraz wśród dorosłych. Trzecia, ostatnia część przedstawia określone problemy dotyczące aktywizacji zawodowej młodych ludzi – cienkiej linii, która oddziela świat szkoły od świata pracy. Zaprezentowano specyficzne rozwiązanie, tzw. SEMO (semestr motywacji), skierowane do osób w wieku 15 do 24 lat przeżywających trudności związane z okresem przejściowym pomiędzy szkołą a pracą.