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Cover

The country needs dynamism: the future of Switzerland, a country low in natural resources, depends on the systematic promotion of the country's high-tech capabilities, to ensure a prosperous transition to the 21st century. (Illustration: Paul Degen)

I M P R E S S U M

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« Society around the world is experiencing an era of profound change. The industrial age is a thing of the past, and traditional values are losing their intrinsic significance. Knowledge has become the most important production factor, and technology is developing at a dizzying pace. Over the past thirty years alone, new information technologies have led to the generation of more knowledge than ever before in the entire history of mankind. Nor is there any sign of a slowdown.

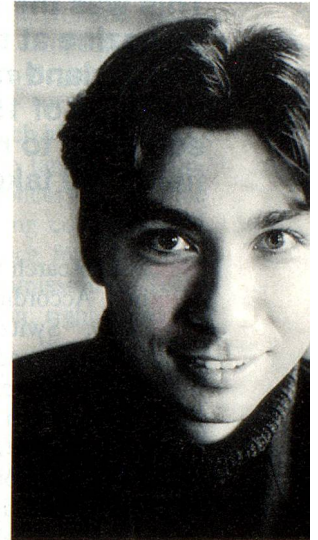
According to sociologists in the English-speaking world, the economy of the 21st century will be a "knowledge-based economy", forcing the working population to adopt an even greater degree of flexibility. Professional and spatial mobility, coupled with the willingness to accept lifelong learning, will be a fact of life.

While Switzerland is poor in natural resources, its high standard of education provides a good platform on which to play a leading role in the knowledge society of the future. But it must not lose sight of the global challenges. It is therefore essential to prepare for such challenges well in advance. Increasing the attractiveness of Switzerland as a centre of research is undoubtedly one of the most important ways of investing for the future. The USA, for example, has recognised the sign of the times and is systematically investing in public research. The land of unlimited opportunities is currently focusing closely on

the active promotion of innovation.

By international standards, Switzerland still remains one of the most research-intensive nations. Microtechnology, for instance, which boasts a long tradition in our country, is a growth industry that has the potential to significantly boost our gross domestic product. In the wake of budgetary cost-cutting measures, it would be unwise from an economic standpoint to put a stop to spending in the very area in which our future chances lie. Our capital is human capital. And to remain competitive, educational reforms are a must.

Initial steps have already been made. The amendments to the cantonal university laws, the blueprint for a reformed university subsidies law and the increased networking of educational institutions in the interests of improving efficiency are steps in the right direction. Switzerland's well-being in the next century will largely depend on its achievements in the realm of high technology. We must therefore never relax our efforts to create the optimum conditions for the establishment of new leading-edge technologies. »



Lukas M. Schneider