

# The European Dimension in Swiss Geography Education

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*A critically important issue in Swiss society and politics is Switzerland's relationship to a dynamic and unifying Europe. However, this study finds that Swiss upper secondary students in the German-speaking part of the country do not feel much attached to Europe as a geographical and political entity. Europe is not subject matter in formal upper secondary geography education and is absent from the geography curricula and geography textbooks for this level. This paper concludes that Swiss students' attachment to Europe can be enhanced by shifting to motivating subject content and direct communication and cooperation with people in Europe.*

**Key Words:** *geography education, European awareness, spatial cognition, upper secondary schools, Switzerland.*

## INTRODUCTION

Europe is moving gradually away from the nation-state ideal towards a concept of true internationalism. A new Europe in the shape of a united political, economic, and cultural construction is emerging and moves on with a momentum that now seems impossible to reverse. But Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, although the country is strongly dependent politically and economically on the organization. At a time of political and economic unification of the continent and unprecedented cross-border migration, students in Swiss upper secondary schools (grades 9-12)<sup>1</sup> in the German-speaking part of Switzerland do not feel much attachments to the rest of Europe and the emerging European political entity. It is imperative that Swiss students receive information about European peoples, cultures, and environments to understand why a peaceful and prosperous future Europe requires European citizens who do not just respond to political and economic conditions favorable to their particular interest, but stand for long term solidarity, a sound environment, freedom, security and justice for all Europeans. It is also necessary to integrate the political, cultural, environmental, and geographical dimensions of Europe in the Swiss curricula to arrive at a new paradigm of active citizenship education to create a collective European identity among the Swiss people.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role that Swiss geography education plays in ensuring student recognition of a united Europe as a politi-

cal, economic and cultural construction that will continue to consolidate and expand in the future. The fundamental goal of the study is to compare student attitudes about this emerging Europe with course curricula found in formal geography education in Switzerland. The method employed to accomplish this goal is an examination of the results obtained from a student questionnaire and a comparison of those results with various measures of school curricula (e.g. teaching practice, course content, textbook content).

## CONTEXT

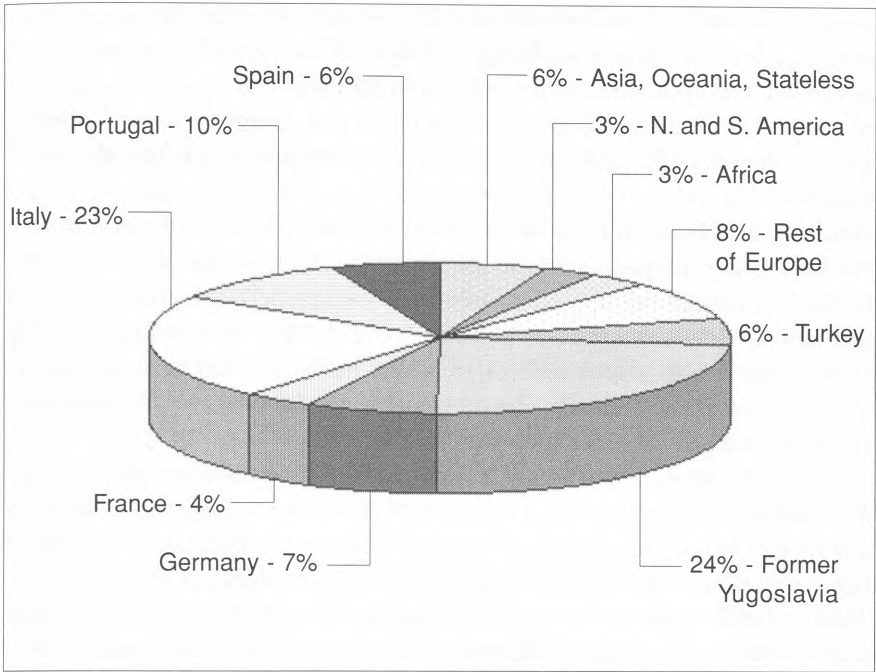
Today, when Europe looms large on the Swiss political agenda, young Swiss ought to possess sufficient basic knowledge to decide on various matters relating to Europe by the time they reach the voting age of 18. Evidence of this need includes the four Swiss votes on issues concerning Europe that took place on four occasions within the last 10 years:

- In 1992 the electorate voted against joining the European Economic Area (EEA).
- In 1997 the electorate rejected a referendum which wanted to prohibit negotiations by the Federal Council, the highest executive authority of the country, with the European Union (EU) concerning Swiss integration into the union.
- In 2000 the electorate voted in favor of the ratification of the bilateral treaties between Switzerland and the EU.
- In 2001 the electorate rejected a proposal which wanted to force the Federal Council to start negotiations for membership with the EU.

The nationwide interest in Europe generated by these votes contrasts with the cursory treatment Europe receives in formal school education. An analysis of the curricula for geography education used in Swiss upper level secondary schools (Reinfried 2001a) revealed that European topics are compulsory in only 27% of school curricula.

The fact that Switzerland is a multicultural nation is another important political topic in this country. Today, 21% of the population is non-Swiss (Bundesamt für Statistik 1999), and 88% of the immigrants come from European countries (including Turkey). The largest proportion of 24% is made up by people from the former Yugoslavia including Kosovo, followed by the Italians with 23%, then the Portuguese, Germans, Turks, Spaniards, French, Austrians and people from other European countries (Fig. 1).

The low reproductive rate in Switzerland – 1.48 children per woman of child-bearing age (Bundesamt fuer Statistik 1999) – necessitates a continuous inflow of immigrants from other European countries and, in the future, an increasing number from non-European regions in order to ensure economic growth. Peaceful coexistence among the increasingly different ethnic groups in



**Figure 1.** Percentage of foreign population in Switzerland on 12-31-98. Source: DEZA (2001).

a multicultural Switzerland, as well as in all multicultural countries in the world, will only be possible on the basis of mutual respect and appreciation of the various cultures (EDA 1996). Therefore, determined efforts have to be undertaken to guarantee the peaceful understanding and productive coexistence of the different nationalities and cultures. Geography education, in collaboration with other social sciences in upper secondary education, such as history, economics and law, can and indeed must make a considerable contribution to this endeavor.

Considering the countries of origin of the immigrant population in Switzerland, the teaching of geography in Switzerland should not only impart national and global perspectives, but a European perspective as well. The ongoing immigration into Switzerland calls for citizenship to take on a more international dimension (i.e. to take account of the mosaics of European relations and the aspirations of ethnic and national minorities on this continent). Geography has an immediate bearing on the understanding of current events and affairs in Europe and the world. The process results in building a geographical perspective on different spatial levels – the national, international and global dimension – and one's own role in them. According to Stoltman (1990), two broad elements of geography education – environmental and sociocultural systems – are important in the development of a geographic perspective of the

world. It is vital that students develop knowledge about the natural environment as a holistic, interconnected global system, in which human beings are embedded and upon which they depend in terms of the limited resources it provides (e.g. clean air, potable water, mineral and energy resources). Seeing how one depends upon the limited supply of natural products helps one understand how and why people affect the environment. The spatial aspects of sociocultural systems deal with the locations and distributions of activities of people and their inter-linkages across the earth's surface. Sociocultural systems link the world's population through a vast spatial web on national, continental and international levels that include political (development of settlements, traffic policies, geopolitics), economic (agriculture, industries, mining and mineral processing, tourism, exchange and transportation of goods) and social (health, education, religion, cultures) interactions and issues.

It is only when students fully realize that both environmental and sociocultural systems are connected in a spatial web that they will begin to understand how human beings, landscapes, places, and regions are intertwined. An event happening in one place inevitably has repercussions in other places and regions, or sometimes throughout the world. For instance, although the war in the Balkans in the 1990s had its origins in historical and cultural roots, it ultimately had a devastating impact not only on local villages and cities but the whole region because it triggered streams of refugees across the whole of the European continent. Moreover, it finally assumed an international dimension as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops had to be called in to resolve the conflict.

Geography as a core subject in Swiss upper secondary education possesses manifold possibilities to impart the necessary knowledge and skills required to collect and evaluate further essential sources of information. Acquired knowledge and skills should, in the final analysis, enable students to realize that environmental and sociocultural systems are interdependent and serve to generally broaden their perspectives of the world. This is also an aim of the International Charter on Geographical Education (CGE 1992) agreed upon by geography educators around the world. The perspective of an intertwined people-environment- space system is therefore a necessary prerequisite for all citizens to become aware of their responsibilities and to perceive Switzerland as an important part in this network – that is, as an important part of Europe and the world. On the other hand, the increasingly frequent public displays of hostility by Swiss people towards Europe and foreigners in general beg the question of how strongly Swiss youth actually feel attached to Europe and the world. This question was the departure point of this study.

## STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD EUROPE: SPATIAL IDENTITY AND TERRITORIAL ORDER OF SWISS STUDENTS

### Research on European awareness in the 1980s and 1990s

Haubrich et al. (1990) defined the term *spatial identity* as the relational structure of attitudes towards and knowledge about different spaces, objects or people. A person attaches individual as well as collective meaning and value to different spaces in accordance with her or his individual perception and experience. According to Haubrich et al. (1990), spatial identity develops as a result of the interaction between the individual's perception of society and politics and the actual reality. The resulting hierarchical relational structure characterizes a person's spatial identity. The term *territorial order* is used for a person's priority list of geographic space based on the person's individual relational weighting.

Haubrich and his team began this research in 1987 with a project to investigate the spatial identity of 15-year-old German, French and Swiss students living in the cross-border region of the upper Rhine valley. The study's initial question was 'What kinds of mental maps and images do students in this area have?' and it covers the relational weighting of geographical space by the students and their emotional attachment to their place of residence, to their region (the upper Rhine valley), to their nation and to Europe. The Swiss sample consisted of 1,118 15-year-old students from the northwestern part of the country (Cantons of Basel-Stadt, Basel-Land, and Aargau); students marked their personal positions in a questionnaire which asked about their attachment to the four different spaces – place of residence, region, nation, and Europe – using a scale from 0 (not attached) to 4 (very strongly attached). The result was a priority list from national to European to regional and finally to place of residence (Table 1), with the national orientation being the strongest value (Haubrich et al. 1990).

In 1993 Haubrich & Schiller conducted a second project, the European Awareness Research Project, that sought to determine the scale of spatial identity of approximately 5,000 university students, from 21 European countries, in the age group of 18 to 26 years. The scales used were local (village, town, city), regional (the landscape unit in which the village, town, city is situated), national, European and global (described in Haubrich & Schiller 1997). The survey included 70 students from the cantons of Bern and Basel, and was neither a random nor a representative sample (Haubrich 1995, 96). The authors had also modified the questionnaire used in 1987 so that the results of the two surveys can only be compared on a very general level. One of the main findings of the survey started in 1993 was the low appreciation of Europe in every

Students' Rankings of their Spatial References		
Study of 1987 (N = 1,118, 15 year-olds) (Haubrich et al. 1990)	Study of 1993 (N = 70, subset of 5,000, 18-26 year-olds) (Haubrich & Schiller 1997)	Present Pilot Study of 2001 (N = 227, 15-21 year-olds)
<i>I feel as</i>	<i>I feel attached to</i>	<i>I feel attached to</i>
1. a Swiss Citizen	1. my place of residence	1. humankind
2. a European Citizen	2. humankind	2. my place of residence
3. a resident of my can ton (= my region)	3. my nation	3. my nation
4. an inhabitant of my place of residence	4. Europe (as geographical construct)	4. my region
	5. Europe (as political construct)	5. Europe (as geographical construct)
		6. the USA
		7. the European Union
		8. Africa
		9. South America
		10. Asia
		11. Russia

**Table 1.** Results of three independent studies about Swiss students' rankings of their spatial references.

country. In contrast to the trinational study of 1987, Swiss students' local attachment came on top, followed by global, national, and European (Table 1). While local orientation had become most important and humanity had been included as a focus for identity, political Europe was named to a far lesser extent as home for those who were involved in the study.

If one tries to interpret the changes in regional identity, the question arises as to what political changes occurred in Europe between the two research projects:

- In 1989 the Single European Act (SEA; socioeconomic and cultural integration of the European Community into the EU) entered into force. Portugal and Spain became members (EU of the Twelve).
- In 1989, collapse of the Berlin wall, German reunion, end of the Cold War.
- In 1990 the first stage of the European Economic and Monetary Union came into effect.
- In 1992, ratification of the Maastricht treaties.
- In 1992, ratification of the agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA).
- In 1993 the European Single Market entered into force, along with introduction of the Four Freedoms.

This list suggests that since 1987 Europe has undergone tremendous political change and European integration has advanced dramatically. Within only a few years the EU had become a reality. These changes and the question of how the new realities should be handled caused a controversy in Switzerland which eventually culminated in the rejection of the referendum to join the European Economic Area (EEA). The results of this vote illustrate the controversy in an impressive way: while both the German and Italian speaking parts of the country rejected the proposal, the francophone part accepted it.

### **Pilot study 2001: Identity and attachment analysis of Swiss upper secondary students from the cantons of Zurich and Aargau**

In order to find out whether political events have in any way changed the hierarchy of identification since the most recent 1993 survey (Haubrich & Schiller 1997), Swiss students were questioned again in spring of 2001 in a standardized pilot study. In this survey, 227 students from the cantons of Aargau and Zurich were asked to fill in a questionnaire in a standardized procedure. Both cantons belong to the German speaking part of the country. These two cantons were chosen because they represent to a certain extent two main types of cantons in the German speaking part of the Swiss Central Plateau. The canton of Zurich has large urban areas and is dominated economically and socially by the business capital of Zurich, while the canton of Aargau has a rural character and is strongly characterized by smaller provincial business towns, small commercial enterprises and family farms. Besides these differences, it was considered to be an advantage for the study that the two cantons

are neighboring cantons and that their educational systems at the upper secondary level are similar. It was expected that the differences between the cantons also have an influence on the respondents' regional awareness. The respondents, 93 males (41%) and 134 females (59%) were all upper secondary students belonging to classes from different schools. Five classes belonged to schools in the canton of Zurich ( $n = 90$ ), seven to schools in the canton of Aargau ( $n = 137$ ). The schools selected were comparable in terms of their students' academic background (grades 9-12 and students' areas of concentration). In terms of their place of residence they were different. Students from the canton of Aargau mostly came from suburban areas that still have a rural character, while those students from the canton of Zurich came mostly from urban areas. The whole sample consisted of equal proportions of students coming from urban and suburban areas. The age of the respondents ranged from 15 to 21 years, the mean age being 17.3 years. In terms of gender and areas of concentration, the sample was representative in respect to the summarized upper secondary student population in the cantons of Zurich and Aargau.

The author used the English version of the questionnaire (Figure 2) designed by Haubrich and Schiller for their 1993 survey (Haubrich 1996, 227; Haubrich & Schiller 1997, 176). It was slightly changed by not only asking students about their local (here: village, town, city), regional (here: students' canton of residence), national and global identities, but also asking about their attachment to several countries and continents. The continents of Africa, Asia and South America are compulsory subject matter in geography education until the end of grade 9, and the USA and Russia are taught at upper secondary level. Australia was not mentioned because it is only optional subject matter. The theoretical usefulness of this kind of questionnaire has been tested by Haubrich et al. (1990) for their trinational research project in 1987 and again in the 1993 survey. The results of the pilot study are listed in Table 1. The hierarchy of the territorial identity suggests an order from global–local–national–regional–European. No statistically significant difference between the students' answers from the canton of Aargau and those from the canton of Zurich could be found. It appears that Swiss students, independently of their place of origin, now feel more attached to the world and humankind, while the nation seems to be less important. The EU ranks seventh, one position lower than the US. Far from being enthusiastic about Europe, Swiss students seem to be even intentionally ignoring the fact that the European integration is progressing at a rapid pace. This may be due to the fact that the whole process of integration in Europe appears to the majority of Swiss to be too complex and fraught with too many problems (Haltiner et al. 2001). Some of these problems are the Union's bureaucracy, the complicated structure of the EU institutions, the EU's common foreign and security policy that stands against Swiss neutrality, free competition and other negatively viewed political and economic implications.



## Questionnaire

### How I feel attached to regions, countries and people

**Sex:** m \_\_\_\_\_ f \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ years

People have different feelings of attachment towards their own nation, to Europe or a part of Europe, to their region or their place of residence, to humankind or other parts of the world.

Please indicate your personal position according to the following system of points:

- 1 = not
- 2 = a little
- 3 = more or less
- 4 = strong
- 5 = very strong

*I feel attached to:*

my nation	_____
my region	_____
my place of residence	_____
Europe	
(as geographical construct)	_____
the European Union	_____
Humankind	_____
Africa	_____
Asia	_____
South-America	_____
Russia	_____
USA	_____

**Figure 2.** Questionnaire used to ask students about their spatial awareness. Source: Haubrich (1996, 227), Haubrich & Schiller (1997, 176).

The sample of this pilot study is different from the samples used in the two studies by Haubrich and his colleagues. The students in the pilot study came from different cantons of the German-speaking part of Switzerland and they belonged to a different age group. Therefore, the rankings in the three surveys are not directly comparable, but each hierarchy may safely be taken to show trends. Nevertheless, the hierarchical order resulting from the pilot study in 2001 is also supported by the frequencies of the students' ratings shown in Table 2.

Table 2 also shows mean scores aggregated into two groups. Group one includes the ranks 1 to 4 consisting of mean scores higher than 3 (moderate to very strong attachment). Group two includes the ranks of 5 to 11 consisting of means lower than three (little or no attachment). Interestingly, the mean for Europe scores less than 3, although more than one third of the students feel more or less attached to Europe as a geographical construct. The first group represents to a certain extent a hierarchical model of spatial identity which spans from a global perspective (world citizenship) to an identity on micro-, meso- and macro-levels (e.g. local, regional or national). This result may be due to individuals creating a relationship to a certain space, regardless of whether it is their real or a potential place of living, by perpetually reflecting on it. In doing so, people intellectually and emotionally experience this space and it becomes part of their individual spatial perception (Bartels 1981). The second group of mean scores shows that students do not feel much attached to these spaces, which can be interpreted as a lack of emotional ties, although the students learned about them in school.

In two classes which had participated in the study (one class in grade 10, 16 students; one class in grade 11, 20 students), students discussed with the researcher the reasons for the hierarchy resulting from the questionnaires. Students' explanations are paraphrased here. They seem to confirm the interpretation above:

- Students feel more attached to humankind, especially because all humans are sharing this world and its resources. They are concerned about the ecological problems we are facing today and in the future. Therefore, global problems appear more threatening than national problems.
- Their home is still their castle.
- After the end of the Cold War there are no more political enemies in Europe. This is why nationalism has lost much of its former appeal.
- Whatever they learned about the European Union and its implications for Switzerland, be it formal or informal learning, has negative undertones.
- Knowledge about the U.S. is derived from Hollywood movies and the media, which mostly report about the country in a positive fashion. Therefore, most students feel moderately (some even strongly) attached to the U.S.
- Although they learn about Africa in school, they do not feel attached to the continent because it has a negative image (AIDS, wars, streams of refu-

Rank	Item	Frequency values (%)					Mean	Std. dev.
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Humankind	<b>32.60*</b>	31.72	22.03	9.25	4.41	3.79	1.13
2	Place of residence	22.03	<b>31.72*</b>	26.43	14.98	4.85	3.51	1.13
3	Nation	11.45	33.92	<b>40.09*</b>	12.33	2.20	3.40	0.92
4	Region	10.13	33.04	<b>34.36*</b>	18.06	4.41	3.26	1.01
5	Europe (geog. construct)	2.64	15.86	<b>37.89*</b>	31.72	11.89	2.66	0.97
6	USA	1.76	11.45	22.03	25.11	<b>39.65*</b>	2.11	1.11
7	European Union	1.76	5.73	19.82	25.55	<b>47.14*</b>	1.89	1.03
8	Africa	0.88	5.29	14.10	29.52	<b>50.22*</b>	1.77	0.94
9	South America	1.32	5.73	13.66	24.67	<b>54.63*</b>	1.74	0.98
10	Asia	0.88	4.85	9.25	27.31	<b>57.71*</b>	1.64	0.90
11	Russia	0.00	2.20	8.81	22.91	<b>66.08*</b>	1.47	0.75

Legend:

*I feel attached*


1 = not


2 = a little

3 = more or less

4 = strong

5 = very strong

 – Moderate to high attachment

 – Little or no attachment

**Table 2.** Frequency values, mean scores and standard deviation of students' responses (n = 227). **Bold\*** indicates highest frequency value.

gees, hunger, female suppression, violation of human rights, etc.).

- Although they learn about Asia and South America in geography classes, because they don't know anybody there and have never traveled there, they do not feel emotionally connected to these parts of the world.
- The image of Russia is strongly negative and powerfully influenced by the media that report mostly about crimes, corruption, poverty and the economic and environmental crisis in that country.

## **How is Europe being taught in geography education?**

### **Teaching practice and subject matter**

To get information as to how Europe is being taught in class, seventeen teachers were asked to fill in a questionnaire in a standardized procedure. The sample consisted of the five teachers whose classes were involved in the pilot study, as well as an additional twelve supervising teachers involved in student teacher training at the department of Upper Secondary Education at the University of Zurich. Eight of the teachers came from the canton of Zurich, five from the canton of Aargau, two from the canton of Solothurn, one from the canton of Schaffhausen and one from the canton of Appenzell. This selection represented a fair cross-section through the German speaking part of the country, although not all the German speaking cantons were represented in the sample.

All of the teachers in the sample teach about Europe in their classes. At the lower secondary level the continent is subject matter in grade 7 or 8. Important topics are the physical geography of Europe (14 responses), the economic geography of the continent (11 responses), and the European geography of transportation (11 responses). Cultural geography, population geography and geography of settlements are taught only by one third of the respondents. Only four teachers teach about Europe at the upper secondary level. Their topics are political change in Middle and Eastern Europe, 'borderless' Europe and social disparities on the continent, and "Switzerland and the EU", especially the bilateral treaties and transportation politics. These topics are taught in grades 10 or 12. Europe, therefore, is nearly exclusively an issue of lower secondary education focusing on the physical geography of the continent. Europe as a political and economic entity is for the most part conspicuous for its absence in secondary schools on both levels, except for a few exceptions. What are the reasons for this result? Is it possible that teachers do not have access to appropriate teaching materials or textbooks that help and inspire them to teach the topic?

## Analysis of textbooks

The teachers also named the teaching materials, such as textbooks and atlases, that they use in classes. To identify topics of interest to the study, the textbooks and atlases were checked and their content concerning Europe was recorded according to the following categories: geology, geomorphology, climate, vegetation, natural landscapes, natural hazards, resources, environmental issues, population, peoples and cultures, urban geography, economics, transportation, regional planning, borders of Europe, the European Union, Switzerland and the European Union, and political and economic changes in Eastern Europe. Table 3 lists the textbooks and atlases indicated by the teachers, and shows that some teachers use more than one textbook or atlas in their classes. It also shows the extent to which topics related to Europe as a political and economic entity appear in the textbooks. The textbooks are written in German, and are in accordance with the official curricula of the German speaking cantons of Switzerland. As Table 3 shows, topics related to Europe as a political and economic entity appear only at the lower secondary level. Most of these textbooks present Europe by focusing on selected countries, regions or themes using the approach of teaching and learning by examples. Subtopics in physical geography cover the climate and vegetation, geomorphology, geology, natural disasters and natural landscapes. Subtopics in human geography cover indigenous people such as the indigenous people in Lapland (Sweden and Finland), cities such as Paris, Berlin and London, regional planning, population and migration, oil drilling and fishery in the North Sea, tourism around the Mediterranean, agriculture and a few environmental topics. Political Europe is only present from different points of views in the book by Reichenbach & Rutz. In the books *Europa* by O. Bär and *Schweiz* by K. Burri, which were used by most of the responding teachers, political Europe is missing. These two books are published by the official publishing house of the canton of Zurich, which is controlled by cantonal officials. Since these books are heavily subsidized, they are reasonably priced and are therefore widely distributed in the German speaking cantons.<sup>2</sup>

## Europe in the curricula

As outlined above, the perspective of Europe presented to students through the geography curricula at the lower secondary level in the German speaking cantons does not include the emerging and united political, economic, and cultural construction of Europe. In geography education on the upper secondary level, Europe is mostly missing because the German version<sup>3</sup> of the national curriculum (EDK 1994, 117ff) for upper secondary education does not stipulate which regional examples should be used to obtain the required levels

of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

In addition to the national curriculum, geography teachers use other criteria to plan their regional geography classes. Although not necessarily required by the national or cantonal curriculum, geography education still functions in many cantons according to the concept 'vicinity first, distant countries later' which has traditionally been followed in Switzerland. In grade 5 (elementary level), students learn about their home canton; in grade 6 (elementary level), they are taught about Switzerland; in grade 7 (lower secondary level), they focus on the European neighboring countries; and in grades 8 and 9 (lower secondary level), they move further to the neighboring continents Africa and Asia and, if time permitting, to South America and Australia. The concept behind this "expanding environmental curriculum" (Stoltman 1976) dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries. Both Rousseau (1762) and Pestalozzi (1801) recommended structuring geographical education according to this principle (Haubrich et al. 1997, 114). The "expanding environmental curriculum" also conforms to Piaget's theory of developmental spatial stages which might explain its persistence to the present day. Piaget observed that children develop their territorial concept in a *decentration process*, which means that a child's center of territorial interest broadens from home and family to the town, to the state and finally to the larger regional area (Piaget 1928, Piaget & Weil 1951).

This concept is also upheld in guidelines and school-based curricula for geography education on the upper secondary level (grades 9-12), where Switzerland and the continents of the world (except for Europe) are subject matter again. This structure reflects the idea of the spiral curriculum (Dewey 1938) which, for the sake of vertical integration (deepening of knowledge) and horizontal integration (widening of knowledge), requires topics to be raised anew in the curriculum on different levels (Tanner & Tanner 1995). Subject matter is mostly structured in a thematic or thematic-regional approach, and the regions to be studied can be chosen by the teachers depending on their suitability to illustrate a topic (Reinfried 2001a).

The survey of what teachers teach, along with the textbook analysis, suggests that Europe as a political entity is taught either marginally or not at all in geography education at the upper secondary level. If not taught in geography classes, might Europe be subject matter in history, civics or economics? An analysis of the objectives for history and civics in the national curriculum for the German speaking part of Switzerland reveals that neither the European Community nor the relations between Switzerland and the EU are compulsory subject matter. The designers of the curriculum model for upper secondary education created subject areas such as "Human and Social Sciences" (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 1995), in which were placed the subjects of geography, history and introduction to economics and law in order to teach these topics in an interdisciplinary way. This concept was strongly opposed by geog-

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Title of Textbooks / Atlases</b> <i>Textbooks and atlases printed in italics are Swiss products or produced for Switzerland.</i>	<b>Numbers of Teachers Responses (n=17)</b>	<b>Topics Dealing with “Political Geography of Europe” / “Switzerland and Europe /the EU”</b>
<b>Textbooks :</b>	<i>Europa (O. Bär 1987, revised in 1991, LKZ)</i>	10	Austria and Switzerland – A comparison (1 page)
Used on lower secondary level	<i>Schweiz (K. Burri 1995, LKZ)</i>	14	Missing
	<i>Wirtschaftsgeographie (Reichenbach &amp; Rutz 1995, SKV)</i>	2	Migration in Europe (2 pages); the EU (2 pages); Switzerland and the EU (2 pages)
<b>Textbooks :</b>	<i>Schweiz (K. Burri 1995, LKZ)</i>	14	Missing
Used on upper secondary level	<i>Fundamente (Bender et al. 1994, Klett)</i>	1	Missing
	<i>GEOS: Landschaft und Ressourcen. Sek II (Friese et al. 1996, Volk &amp; Wissen).</i>	1	Missing
	<i>Terra Erdkunde SII, Landschaftszonen und Stadtökologie (Bender et al. 1996, Klett-Perthes)</i>	2	Missing
<b>Atlases :</b>	<i>Schweizer Weltatlas (Spiess 1997, LKZ)</i>	14	Various thematic maps
Used on both levels	<i>Diercke Weltatlas Schweiz (Saabe-Westermann 1998)</i>	9	
	<i>Alexander Weltatlas (Schulze 1989, Klett)</i>	2	

Table 3. Textbook and atlas analysis.

graphy teachers in the German speaking part of the country, who wanted geography to be placed in the subject area of "Natural Sciences". And since no precise objectives have been listed in the national curriculum, it depends on the teachers' preferences whether they make use of the new opportunities.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY**

According to Haubrich et al. (1997), it is not necessary for students to possess enthusiasm for the emerging and united political, economic, and cultural construction of Europe; but an informed awareness about recent political events and an understanding of the cultural differences of the Union is indispensable. Furthermore, young people should feel encouraged to participate actively, optimistically and in an imaginative way in European activities. This also makes sense in regard to the fact that Swiss society is becoming more and more multicultural, a trend which calls for openness and respect for other cultures. However, the data presented in this study indicate that subject content related to these issues is almost completely absent from formal education in Switzerland. Several implications arise from this contradiction.

The first implication for the near-absence of political Europe from the secondary curriculum can be explained by the influence of Swiss universities. The teaching of geography in Switzerland is expected to follow the subject content of the scientific discipline as conducted at university level. In addition, no Swiss geography department has a chair for political geography so the issues of political geography are mostly subsumed in other areas of human geography, such as the geography of settlements or urban planning. As a result of university education being mostly focused on physical geography and the stated aspects of human geography, the teaching of geography at schools follows in a similar manner when textbooks are written and curricula are designed.

A second implication involves the area of subject content. The topics of "Political Europe" and "Switzerland and Europe" must above all become part of the curriculum and be taught in school. However, mere inclusion in the subject matter in geography classes is not sufficient by itself, as illustrated by the students' rankings of Africa or Asia, which are low in spite of inclusion in the curriculum. Students' interest in Europe can be advanced by teaching topics that appear especially motivating to them. As Hemmer & Hemmer (1996) have shown in their empirical research project, such topics include, 1) peoples' everyday lives in different cultures, their standards of living, the ways they live, how they spend leisure time, their school experiences, and various problems they encounter, 2) indigenous people, 3) people in foreign countries, and 4) natural disasters and environmental problems. Teachers also need appropriate teaching material that on the one hand covers these concepts but on the other hand links them to their political and territorial implications. In 2001 a new



geography book for the lower secondary level was printed (Bachofner et al. 2001). It includes information about the EU, Switzerland and the EU, and the changes in Eastern Europe. At the time this research was conducted, the book was not yet available in schools. A project is also underway to revise the book *Europa* (Bär 1987) to include more about the political geography of Europe.

A third implication is the area of direct communication and cooperation with people. Secondary students are especially open to first hand information (Hemmer 2000) that can be received in various ways: 1) student and teacher exchange programs between the different parts and cultures of Switzerland and between Switzerland and European countries, 2) person-to-person contact of students (twin schools), 3) contact and communication via the Internet, and 4) cross-border projects between Swiss schools and the neighboring countries, an approach for which Switzerland is ideally suited since it shares borders with five European countries.

A fourth implication lies in the area of teaching methodology. A great variety of methods and classroom activities are possible because geography education has so much to offer in terms of teaching materials, teaching strategies, and teaching approaches (Reinfried 2001b). Empirical research demonstrates that students wish to be taught geography in a vivid manner, using recent and first-hand information. The teaching should allow independent learning, hands-on activities and project work. The topics should make students curious and amazed, and should be connected to students' daily lives and experience (Hemmer 2000). Haubrich (1996, 1998) suggests using the analysis of cognitive representations that influence our spatial perception as a key to stimulating international understanding, cooperation, and solidarity. Cognitive representations such as mental maps or images of (foreign) countries and people can be analyzed in geography classes in order to enhance students' awareness and diminish prejudices and clichés.

A fifth implication is that the new national curriculum (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 1995) has prepared the ground for Swiss teachers to teach about Europe in a comprehensive way. The subject area "Human and Social Sciences" in the curriculum model was created to enhance the teaching of the subjects geography, history, and introduction into economics and law by using an interdisciplinary approach (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 1995). According to the new curriculum model, the issue "Switzerland and Europe / the EU" is predestined to be studied in a comprehensive way.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study investigates Swiss upper secondary students' attachment to Europe viewed as a geographical, political, economical and cultural construct. The results of the inquiry into students' attitudes towards Europe were com-

pared with content matter relating to Europe in Swiss geography curricula, textbooks and atlases used in geography classes and with the teaching practices of Swiss geography teachers. Data about students' awareness and about teaching practices were obtained from a student and a teacher questionnaire. Seven textbooks and three atlases indicated by teachers as their preferred teaching material in the classroom were analyzed to identify their content relating to Europe. The results obtained indicate that Swiss upper secondary students in the German-speaking part of Switzerland do not feel much attached to Europe. Objectives concerning Europe are not included in the curricula, and geography textbooks for upper secondary level that deal with the political geography of Europe are not available. On this level, Europe is not subject matter in formal geography education.

In a time when there is much evidence that young Swiss have little attachment toward Europe and know little about the role Switzerland could play in a united Europe, there is a serious need to energize citizenship education in the schools. Geography teachers can be encouraged that learning about Europe, European people and their culture, if it is well-planned and well integrated into the geography curriculum, adds a much needed dimension to their teaching, connects formal learning with students' prevailing interests, and builds attitudes of civic responsibility and engagement. A well-focused learning program about "Switzerland and Europe" will require considerable input by textbook authors and preparation by geography teachers. But the efforts would be worthwhile because Switzerland needs a generation of young people who are more informed about Europe and who relate to their European neighbors.

If one compares the results of this study to the findings of Haubrich and Schiller's survey in 1993, Swiss students' low awareness of political Europe is not surprising; it is in accordance with the low awareness of many European young people. It also mirrors a trend of a decreasing consensus in the Union at a time when the European Union is gaining more political and economic power. This trend is a polarization between people who embrace the concept of a united Europe and those who are against it. The love for European ideals is not questioned, but national interests seem to come first (The Economist 2002, 45f).

The EU has appeared to be a model of democracy and economic stability to be pursued by the democratic countries of Europe. Even if Switzerland will not join the EU, it is part of this new socioeconomic construct emerging on the continent of Europe. Swiss people, as well as other Europeans, need to achieve a sense of belonging to Europe and European citizenship. Therefore further research is necessary to define a concept of European citizenship that can be accepted by Swiss authorities. In addition to this, it is necessary to develop a concept of "citizenship education" that improves Swiss peoples' post-national collective European identity related to the notion of a common cultural European heritage.

## NOTES

1. The terms lower and upper secondary level used in this article refer to the different levels in the Swiss "Gymnasium". Lower secondary level is equivalent in this paper to grade 7-8 (age 12-14), upper secondary level to grade 9-12 (age 15-18).
2. At the same time, the author inquired which textbooks were used in the francophone and Italian-speaking part of the country and how the topic of political Europe was represented there. In the cantons of Geneva, Vaud, Neuchatel, Jura and the francophone part of the canton of Berne it is *Europe, des Europes* (Gegoire Collet & Ph. Hertig 1996: lower secondary level). On fourteen pages the book gives information about *Borders of Europe*. The canton Ticino does not produce textbooks for geography education because the canton is too small. Teachers here are using two Italian textbooks which give information about the political Europe on five to fourteen pages and even deal with topics such as genocide and deportation in former Yugoslavia, the formation of European states, or the cold war: 1) *Planet 2000* (Ardemagni et al. 2000; lower secondary level): Genocidi e deportazione - La fine della Jugoslavia (4 pages). Le associazioni internazionali - L'unione Europea (1 page). 2) "Gli europei" (Monaci & Mantovani 2000; lower secondary level): L'Organizzazione Politica - La formatione degli stati europei. Dalla guerra fredda agli avvenimenti del 1989. L'Unione europea. L'unione europea de l'euro (14 pages). The textbooks used in the French and Italian speaking parts of Switzerland clearly reflect the fact that geography is viewed as a social science in the Romance culture. Here geography as a school subject is also strongly interconnected with history. The books deal with human and social sciences in an interdisciplinary way, but they are again only designed for the lower secondary level.
3. Three versions of the Swiss national curriculum were approved by the ministry of education – a German, a French and an Italian version, representing the cultural differences in the three parts of Switzerland.

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