

## **SWISS HOTEL SCHOOLS HAVE BECOME THE NEW WORLD STARS**

**EDUCATION - With their excellent level, Sommet Education, Swiss Education Group and École hôtelière de Lausanne reign in a rapidly expanding market.**

On the campus of the Glion School of Hotel Management (VD), activity is intense at the end of August. The end of the summer break marks the return of the students and the beginning of their training in the first days of September. Soon, some of them will be at the service of Bellevue, the school's gourmet restaurant where the view of Montreux and Lake Geneva is idyllic. Opened in February 2018, the school allows students to practice under the supervision of the greatest professionals, following the example of its director Chantal Wittmann, one of the few women to hold the prestigious title of Meilleur Ouvrier de France.

"If you also include Fresh and the Club, two brands that were also opened last year, we have made significant investments in infrastructure and the hiring of renowned trainers. They Reflect our desire to be very well positioned in the culinary arts," explains Benoît-Étienne Domenget, head of Sommet Education, the group that owns the Glion et des Roches sites (itself owned by the Eurazeo investment fund since 2016).

### **A particular ecosystem**

This strategic orientation was even reinforced at the beginning of the summer with the acquisition of a majority stake in Ducasse Education for an undisclosed amount. Since its creation in 1999 in France, Chef Alain Ducasse's group has built a worldwide reputation in culinary and pastry arts training. The director of Sommet Education is by no means the only one who wants to take full advantage of the very promising trend in gastronomy. For Swiss Education Group, its main competitor on the Riviera, the trend is quite similar. It has even accelerated over the last eighteen months. "Active for ten years in gastronomic training, it is true that we have just put a lot of resources into meeting the current demand for chefs who need to not only manage their team in the kitchen but the entire restaurant," says its CEO, Florent Rondez.

*"Once back in their home countries, our alumni become our best ambassadors"*  
Florent Rondez, CEO Swiss Education Group.

Alongside the École hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), the third key player in this unique ecosystem, the two companies have been contributing to Switzerland's excellence in hotel management for decades. While everything began in 1893, when the EHL welcomed its first batch of 27 students to the Hôtel d'Angleterre in Ouchy (a world first),

the reputation of this field of study has increased continuously since, especially on the international stage from the 1970s onwards.

Florent Rondez attributes this influence to the progressive shaping of a vast network of former students. "Coming from all over the world, once they have returned to their countries of origin, they become our best ambassadors and contribute greatly to the influence of our campuses," says the CEO of Swiss Education Group.

Despite their relative proximity and the high cost of the education provided, the three entities are operating at full capacity. "In this fast-growing industry, the demand for extremely well-trained workers has never been so strong," confirms EHL's General Manager Michel Rochat. "In recent years, positions that required expertise in customer experience have accounted for one-fifth of all new jobs worldwide," says Benoît-Étienne Domenget. This trend is therefore favourable to Switzerland, described by Michel Rochat as "a great hotel school" and where the three main players say they are more complementary than competitors.

### **Presence outside Switzerland**

Internationally, however, faced with the emergence of local institutions, the situation is slightly different for these schools, whose "the world is the playground", says Benoît-Étienne Domenget. To adapt to this new competition, it requires direct investment on the spot.

In mid-June, EHL received the green light from Singapore for its project to open a campus within the city-state. "As the markets of tomorrow will be located in Asia and Africa, it is important that students are directly confronted with them," explains Michel Rochat, also mentioning the longer-term project to open an African campus.

With sites in Spain, Great Britain, France and a presence in China, Sommet Education has largely anticipated the movement. "Students are now much more mobile and are demanding to be able to study a semester on our international campuses," says his director.

Only Swiss Education Group remains very focused on Switzerland, contenting itself with a few specific partnerships such as the one signed with Saudi Arabia. "But we do intend to expand internationally and some projects are already well on the way to being implemented," says Florent Rondez, pointing to Asia in his turn.

Whether the future is in Switzerland or elsewhere, Swiss schools have high ambitions for the coming years and are investing heavily to achieve their goals. In Lausanne, EHL has just begun major work to create an even more attractive campus and accommodate a larger number of students. In all, between 2011 and 2021, the foundation will have spent 250 million francs to welcome some 3200 students. "We are satisfied with this size and do not currently plan to double in size like others. The importance for us is to remain efficient," explains its director.

A few tens of kilometres away, on the contrary, the will is to take advantage of the needs of booming talent to attract even more young people. At Sommet Education, the goal is to increase from 6,000 to 10,000 students over the next five years.

## **SCHOOLS IN NUMBERS**

### **LAUSANNE HOTEL SCHOOL EHL**

Date of foundation: 1893

Number of students: 3200 on 2 campuses

Number of employees: 460

Number of nationalities: 123 (including 30% Swiss)

Annual revenues: FRF 116 million

School fees (bachelor, without accommodation): 162,000 francs for foreigners;  
22,550 francs for a preparatory year for the Swiss and then 1000 francs per year

### **SWISS EDUCATION GROUP**

Owner of the Hotel Institute Montreux

Date of foundation: 1984

Number of students: 6000 on 6 campuses

Number of employees: 650

Number of nationalities: 84

Annual revenues: CHF 150 million

School fees (bachelor, all inclusive): between 120,000 and 150,000 francs

### **SOMMET EDUCATION**

Owner of Glion, the Rocks and Ducasse in France

Date of foundation: 2016 (Glion was created in 1962, Les Roches in 1954 and the school Ducasse in 2009)

Number of students: 6000 spread over 9 campuses

Number of employees: 850

Number of nationalities: 96

Annual income: not communicated

School fees (bachelor, without accommodation): Glion, 148,000 francs; Les Roches, 130,050 francs; Ducasse School, 39,300 euros