



**European University Association (EUA), 2018 Annual Conference,  
Friday, 6 April  
Address by Dr Silvia Steiner, Head of Canton Zurich Department  
of Education**

Ladies and gentlemen  
conference organisers and participants

I'm delighted to be able to address you at this year's EUA conference. I hope you've had a successful stay here in Zurich. As Zurich's director of education and president of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, I'm very glad Switzerland is also part of the EUA. It helps us play our role in the European university system.

It's a matter of give and take:

- we contribute our know-how and resources to the network,
- and in return we benefit from resources and networks within the EUA.

We also take part competitively in international research projects. That's very important for Switzerland with its twelve tier-one universities, nine universities of applied sciences, and seventeen universities of teacher education. It gives us additional motivation to engage in research and education at the very highest level.

I'm very proud that Zurich was chosen to host this year's European University Association conference. There are many reasons that make this a good choice.

- Switzerland's largest city is ideally located in the heart of Europe.
- Zurich has global significance as an international economic and financial hub,
- and as a centre of scholarship, technology and cutting-edge medicine.

The University of Zurich, which now has more than 26,000 students, is Switzerland's largest tier-one university. It's also the oldest, founded in 1833 by the democratic will of

the people. But its roots go back even further to the school of theology established by the reformer Huldrych Zwingli in the sixteenth century. In 1946, Winston Churchill gave his famous «let Europe arise» speech in this very building. It resonates to this day, with European relations still a hot topic of debate, particularly after the UK's vote on Brexit.

But I'd like to get back to the conference. Its motto is «Engaged and responsible universities shaping Europe». This got me thinking about how Zurich universities are helping shape the region's role as one of the most innovative and flourishing economic areas in Europe. Three main points came to mind.

The first is Zurich's global standing as a centre of higher education and research. It has not just one, but two top-ranked international universities: the University of Zurich, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. In the latest Academic Ranking of World Universities (what used to be the Shanghai Ranking), the University of Zurich once again placed among the top 100 in the world. We're very proud that it has such a good reputation abroad. Zurich's universities of applied sciences also help make Zurich an attractive centre of knowledge and research, as do many private companies with successful international operations that also promote research and lively exchange. It's worth noting that we're not dependent on any single sector of the economy. We can rely on a first-rate educational system that enjoys broad public acceptance and repeatedly delivers top performances in diverse areas.

The second point that came to mind was Zurich's excellent track record as a life science cluster. This is thanks to the great collaboration between our universities and hospitals, especially UniversityHospital Zurich. The high-quality research done here greatly benefits people all over the world.

The third reason why Zurich was such a good choice, but a very important one, has to do with digitalisation, the word on everybody's lips. Schools in Canton Zurich are well positioned for digital transformation. For many years, our schools have encouraged science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. To survive and flourish in a competitive global marketplace, and to assure our social cohesion, we're largely dependent on

experts in these and other disciplines. Industry, medicine, banking and insurance – not to mention our cultural and social institutions – all rely on dedicated students with a hunger for knowledge. Society needs smart people with the capacity to innovate.

In closing I'd like to thank you all for coming. I hope you enjoy what remains of the conference, and also that you'll have the chance to get to know our beautiful city and the surrounding canton. See you in Zurich again soon! Many thanks for taking part!