

Culture, sport and education

According to the study “Leisure activities in Switzerland” released by the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics in 2005, there is one section of the population that is particularly keen on leisure activities. This group mainly includes people that live in a wealthy household, have a higher education and are under 40. The freedom of movement pact with the EU has led an above-average number of foreigners to emigrate to Switzerland during the economic expansion – many of whom meet the criteria for active participation in leisure activities. It is therefore not surprising that companies in the culture, sport and education sectors are much more optimistic about the future than they were last year.

Adult education is popular

Companies active in adult education are very satisfied with 2007 and confident for the year ahead. According to the Swiss workforce census, 77% of the population completed at least one form of further education in 2006. Little is likely to change in 2007. While some people attend courses for personal reasons, such as to improve their career opportunities or, in the case of women, to re-enter the workforce after maternity leave, more and more companies actively promote adult education. As specialists are in increasingly short supply because of the good economy, companies are going over to training their own specialists. Rather than building their own infrastructure, they are making use of existing education providers.

Fitness sector slimming down

73% of the population go for a walk at least once a week, 62% do sport weekly, yet the number of overweight people has risen steadily. 38.7% of people were considered overweight in 2002, while only 31.4% a decade before that. This trend is a challenge for the fitness industry, but there is a structural change taking place. This may be the reason why the companies surveyed are very cautious and expect very little growth in revenues and earnings. While there used to be a lot of very small providers active in this sector, a number of large companies have now appeared on the market. The competition is cut-throat. Those companies with central locations, customer-friendly offers and competitive prices will emerge as the winners. It seems likely that small companies will lose out.

Cultural organizations have hopes for 2008

Cultural organizations were cautious in their assessments of 2007 in our survey, but they seem somewhat more optimistic about 2008. They appear to be going on previous experience that consumers only slowly increase their spending for “culture products” during an economic upswing – and they hope to be able to profit from this trend in 2008. However, pressure to cut costs remains high, as public agencies reduce their subsidies and push for higher cost coverage. In addition, traditional cultural organizations (theatres, opera houses, concert halls) face competition from major events with international stars. But innovative providers are able to secure a loyal following by offering attractive programming. ■

