

**Biannual Conference of the Sociology of Education Research Network
of the Swiss Sociological Association (SSA)**

Date: 3rd to 4th June 2027

Venue: University of Lausanne, Building Géopolis

Call for Papers

Educational transitions: navigating change

Transitions profoundly shape educational and student trajectories. They punctuate career paths, such as transitions from one level to another, choice of specialization or branching paths. Transitions also reconfigure affiliations and expose individuals to different institutional expectations. Contemporary educational pathways are far from being linear; they are increasingly marked by these structural bifurcations that turn out to be critical turning points redefining learners' identities and status (Jacques, 2026; Stauber, 2022).

Although transition regimes vary between countries, transitions represent important passages of educational experience in all contemporary societies (Tarabini & Ingram, 2018). Research on the relationship between students' characteristics (gender, socio-economic or migration background) and their educational outcomes at the various levels of schooling shows that these transitions are experienced and managed differently. However, from a sociological perspective, these transitions cannot be reduced to individual decisions: they are embedded in institutionalized frameworks (education systems, labor markets, welfare states) (Dubet & al., 2020), shaped by social categories (class, gender, ethnicity/migration), and biographical timelines (Tarabini, 2022, Buchmann, et al. 2017).

This conference proposes to analyze transitions as processes that articulate macro-social structures, institutional gatekeeping, and lived micro-experiences (Elder, 1998; Zarifa, 2026). It aims to bring together contributions from three areas of research on educational transitions often treated separately:

1. Theoretical contributions and contributions from a macro-perspective **characterizing and contextualizing the institutional frameworks in which educational transitions** take place (Eccles et al., 1993; Lucas, 2001, DiPrete et al. 2017, DiStasio et al. 2017).
2. Contributions analyzing **students' educational and transition pathways** and focusing on their lived experiences, engagement and related well-being issues in a broad sense (e.g. mental health, living and learning conditions, relationship to time, feelings of belonging, and sense of legitimacy) (Hammond & Lemon 2026; Jindal-Snape et al., 2021, Eugster et al, Chuard et al).
3. **Contributions analyzing the specific transition from education to employment**, particularly in times of increasingly unpredictable labor market needs, growing employers demands in terms of performance, engagement and flexibility, and prolonged periods of economic uncertainty at the start of careers (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Pham, 2021).

The aim is to gather theoretical, empirical (quantitative, qualitative, mixed, comparative) and methodological contributions to shed light on the social mechanisms that produce ‘successful’, ‘prevented’ or ‘costly’ transitions. The contributions may address one of the following axes, or bridge several of them.

Axis 1 — Characterizing transitions: sociological frameworks and macro levels of analysis

This axis welcomes presentations putting special emphasis on theoretical and macro approaches and their contributions to conceptualizing transitions. We encourage structural approaches analyzing how public policies and institutional designs shape life courses. Contributions may focus on:

- **Life courses and bifurcations:** Analyzing sequential trajectories, structural constraints, turning points and the role of institutionalized frameworks (Elder, 1009 Stauber, 2022).
- **International comparisons and ‘regime effects’:** Cross-national variations in transition regimes across school systems, vocational education and training (VET) systems, social welfare frameworks, and labor market regulations (Haas & Hadjar, 2024; Zafira et al., 2026).
- **Evolution over time:** contributions focusing on institutional developments over time and their effect on youth’ transitions across different levels of schooling (Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993).

Axis 2 — School and student transitions: passages, orientations, (mis)adjustments, experiences and resources

This axis focuses on documenting and analyzing concrete transitions from multiple angles in order to understand them in their multi-dimensional complexity. Potential topics may include:

- **Institutional Passages:** Micro- and meso-level analyzes of the transition from primary school to secondary school, the assignment into general, technological or vocational streams, post-obligatory educational choice, access to higher education, and institutional reorientations (Eccles et al., 1993; Jindal-Snape et al., 2021).
- **Socialization, allocation mechanisms and stratification:** the sorting and differentiation of streams, and how academic gatekeeping generates inequalities in access, retention and graduation under the lens of effectively maintained inequalities (Lucas, 2001; Pfeffer & Goldrick-Rab, 2011)
- **Peer effects, support networks and social capital:** the active role of families, peers, teachers, counsellors and local communities in mitigating or exacerbating transitional friction (Chu et al., 2010; Hughes et al., 2018)
- **Subjective experiences, agency and well-being:** Student engagement and resistance, institutional alignment or misadjustment, educational perseverance versus dropout, and the psychological impact of transitions such as school anxiety or a sense of legitimacy (Hammond & Lemon, 2026; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Axis 3 — Education-to-employment transition: integration pathways and precariousness

This axis is dedicated to the critical analysis of the transition from education to the labor market, particularly under the pressure of credential inflation and changing labor demands. Contributions may explore:

- **Labor market entry and integration:** social mobility, overeducation/downgrading, labor market segmentation, atypical employment, youth unemployment, and the expansion of hybrid statuses (e.g. prolonged internships, work-study programmes, precarious student jobs) (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Hearn, 1992, Buchmann, 2024).
- **The credential-employment nexus:** The evolving returns on academic degrees and vocational qualifications in securing stable employment (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Pham, 2021, Araki, 2020)
- **Vocational education and training (VET) dynamics:** working and learning conditions within VET systems, dropouts, institutional characteristics of dual systems and pathways to higher professional education (Sander & Kriesi, 2021)
- **Inequalities and exclusion:** Discrimination in hiring processes, the crystallization of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) trajectories, leaving school without qualifications, and the socio-political evaluation of activation policies (Furlong, 2006; Walther, 2026).

Axis 4 — Methods, data and surveys on transitions

This axis invites critical discussions on research methodologies, data, and their respective contributions or limitations when analysing educational transitions. Contributions may address:

- **Quantitative and longitudinal research designs:** the use of cohort panels, administrative registries, sequential analysis, optimal matching and the development of statistical typologies for career paths (Abbott & Tsay, 2000; Adelman 2006).
- **Qualitative and immersive Methodologies:** System ethnographies (e.g. focusing on guidance, remediation, and support structures), life stories, repeated longitudinal interviews, and biographical research (Walther et al., 2026)
- **Mixed-Methods and Triangulation:** the articulation of quantitative trends and qualitative narratives, as well as the challenges of measuring, indicators, and qualifying student well-being during institutional shifts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The conference language is English, except for Keynotes.

Please provide a structured abstract of 600 words maximum (excl. references) covering background (context of the study), purpose and theory (main research aims/questions, theoretical framework), design and methods (study design and methods, including dates of data collection, sampling method, methods of data collection and analysis), results (main findings or expected findings in relation to the research aims/questions), and conclusions (arising from the research).

Deadline for submitting abstracts: 15 November 2026

Please send your abstracts to: SSA2027education@unil.ch

After a peer review procedure, authors will be notified by 15 January 2027 whether their abstract is accepted.

Registration deadline: 01 May 2027.

Registration Fee: 70 CHF

Participant numbers are limited (max. 60)

Organising committee

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Keynote conferences by:

- Marlis Buchmann (Professor of Sociology emerita, University of Zurich, Switzerland)
- Francois Dubet (Professor of Sociology emerita, University of Bordeaux, France)

Références

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