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PREMIER CONGRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES EN MATIÈRE DE  
PRÉVENTION DU CRIME ET DE TRAITEMENT DES DÉLINQUANTS  
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## ETABLISSEMENTS OUVERTS

LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS OUVERTS EN SUISSE

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NATIONS UNIES

### Summary

Historically, the first experiments made in Switzerland with the placement of offenders in open conditions have been due to practical considerations. The difficulties of having special institutions for certain categories of offenders in a country where the responsibility for the carrying out of penalties rests separately within each Canton of the Federation led a long time ago to the accommodation of certain young offenders and of alcoholics and feeble-minded offenders in institutions which were not of a penal character. It was realized, moreover, that the setting up of open institutions would be much less costly than the building of a closed prison to accommodate normal offenders and would offer a great variety in the degree of custody of the inmates as well. The semi-open institution of Witzwil was created for this purpose.

A new impetus was given to the open system by the new Swiss Penal Code which entered into force in 1942. The Code provides for the separation of offenders according to the type of their sentence: rigorous imprisonment, simple imprisonment, detention, preventive detention of habitual offenders, corrective training through work, and detention of alcoholics. Such legislation called for a variety of institutions, or separate sections of institutions, and thus the open system where adequate has often been retained.

Several institutions or sections of institutions are at present of the open type, especially for corrective training through work and the detention of alcoholic offenders, and for offenders sentenced to imprisonment. Placement in an open institution or section is used, alternatively or cumulatively, according to the Canton, as a privilege, as a preliminary test before the granting of conditional release, or as a regular stage of a progressive system.

Witzwil, the main part of which is to be considered as a semi-open institution within the meaning of the resolution adopted at The Hague Congress in 1950, accommodates, outside of the institution itself, offenders which have been assigned to a position of trust as a privilege for good behaviour. Moreover, the institution provides a completely open setting at the cattle farm of Kiley where 35 offenders sentenced to rigorous or simple imprisonment work in complete freedom in the mountains. The sleeping quarters of the inmates are not locked and no guards remain in the house at night.

Utikon-am-Albis is an institution for corrective training through work accommodating 80 young adults from 18 to 30 years of age. Emphasis is put on vocational training which is given in carpentry, locksmith's work, agriculture and gardening. The main feature of the institution, however, is its system which is based entirely on the development of the initiative of the inmates themselves, aiming at creating a feeling of responsibility and belonging to the community. The inmates are grouped into four categories, according to a progressive system and the promotion to the third and the fourth of these categories takes place through elections held among the inmates. The inmates also take a direct part in the setting up of the schedule of leave and of the Sunday assignments; they elect a president from among themselves, as well as heads of the dining room and its

sections. They also decide on outings and on the recreational programmes, etc. In many respects, the inmates play in the institution the rôle assigned to the citizens in the Swiss political community (*commune*). All marks for work, behaviour, discipline, as well as all reports sent to courts and other authorities, are shown to the inmates, who are given a chance to discuss them with the staff. It should be pointed out that the functioning of such an amazing method of confidence is made possible only by the fact that most inmates are first offenders, whose rehabilitation is considered probable, and by the strong personality of the director of the institution.

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