

Artificial intelligence in legal advice

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The legal profession, whose members advise Basel's banks, insurers, pharmaceutical groups and private clients, has been affected by generative models more directly than most professions. Legal work consists largely of reading, analysing and writing text, which are the tasks at which these models excel. Law firms and legal departments use them to review contracts, to search case law and literature, to summarise files, to prepare first drafts and to compare versions. Legal publishers in Switzerland and Germany have integrated AI assistants into their databases, which allows lawyers to ask questions in natural language and receive answers with references to sources.¹

The risks are well known. Models can produce answers that sound authoritative but cite non-existent decisions or misstate the law, a phenomenon that courts in the United States and elsewhere have sanctioned since 2023 when lawyers filed submissions containing invented citations. Swiss law offers fewer reported cases of this kind, but the professional duties of care and diligence under Article 12 of the Federal Act on the Free Movement of Lawyers apply in full.² A lawyer remains responsible for every statement made in the client's name, whatever tool was used to prepare it. Professional organisations have published guidance that stresses verification, confidentiality and transparency towards clients.³

For cross-border advice of the kind that Basel generates, the technology offers particular benefits. A practitioner who must compare Swiss, German, French and English law, as Part J, Chapter IV described, can use models to obtain a first overview of a foreign rule, to translate documents and to check whether a structure raises questions in another jurisdiction. The author, whose practice combines cross-border tax, anti-money laundering and the regulation of crypto-assets and digital assets, regards these tools as useful for preparation and as unreliable for conclusions. The

value of the adviser lies increasingly in judgement, in the verification of sources and in the responsibility that a model cannot assume.

1 Notes

1. On the integration of AI into legal databases in Switzerland and Germany, see the product announcements of the main legal publishers and the professional literature since 2023. Status to be verified. ↩
2. Art. 12(a) BGFA on the duty to exercise the profession carefully and diligently; on sanctions for filings containing fabricated citations, see for example the decision of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York in *Mata v. Avianca, Inc.* (June 2023). To be verified. ↩
3. Guidance of the Swiss Bar Association (SAV/FSA), of the German Federal Bar (BRAK) and of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) on the use of generative AI by lawyers, published from 2023 onwards. Status to be verified. ↩

For general information only. This article does not constitute legal or tax advice, does not replace advice on an individual case and creates no lawyer-client relationship. It reflects the legal position as of September 2026.

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