

French speakers in Basel's economy

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

The pharmaceutical and life sciences groups of Basel employ large numbers of French speakers. Some come from the *Romandie*, many from France, and a considerable number commute daily from Alsace. Part G described the international workforce of Novartis and Roche, in which more than a hundred nationalities are represented and English serves as the corporate language.¹ Within that English-speaking environment, French survives as a second working language in laboratories, production sites and service functions, especially in departments with a high share of frontier workers. French nationals also form one of the largest groups of foreign residents in Basel-Stadt, after Germans and Italians. Their number has grown with the expansion of the life sciences sector.²

Part H examined the structure of cross-border commuting, the G permit and the tax rules for frontier workers, subjects that need not be repeated here.³ From the linguistic perspective, the important point is that the large international employers of Basel have lowered the language barrier for French speakers. A young Alsatian engineer with good English and modest German can work in a research department of a pharmaceutical group in Basel. The same person would find it harder to obtain a position with a medium-sized engineering firm in Freiburg, where German is the language of the shop floor and of customers.

1 Notes

1. See Part G of this book on the workforce of the Basel life sciences groups. On English as their working language, see Part J, chapter III. ↩
2. On the composition of the foreign resident population of Basel-Stadt by nationality, see the statistical yearbook of the Statistical Office of the Canton of Basel-Stadt. Ranking and figures to be verified. ↩

3. See Part H, chapter II of this book on frontier workers, the G permit, social security and the taxation of commuters from France under the agreement of 1983. ↩

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