

International schools and expatriate communities

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The families of the international staff of the BIS, the pharmaceutical groups and the research institutes need schools for their children. Many of these families stay in Basel for a limited number of years before moving on to another posting and want their children to follow a curriculum that allows them to continue their education anywhere. International schools that teach in English and offer the International Baccalaureate have met this demand since the late 1970s. The International School Basel, founded in 1979 according to its own account, grew from a small primary school into a large institution with campuses in Reinach and Aesch in Basel-Landschaft. Today it offers the International Baccalaureate programmes from early years to the diploma.¹

Other schools have joined the market. The Swiss International School offers bilingual education in German and English at several locations in Switzerland, including Basel, and allows pupils to take both the Swiss Matura and international qualifications. Several private schools in Basel-Stadt and Basel-Landschaft offer bilingual programmes, and some cantonal public schools have introduced bilingual streams at upper secondary level, in which a part of the subjects is taught in English or French and which lead to a bilingual Matura. In the French and German parts of the Dreiland, schools with international sections serve families who live across the border and work in Basel.²

The term "expat bubble" describes a pattern of life in which international employees and their families live largely among other expatriates, send their children to international schools, shop in neighbourhoods where English is understood and spend their leisure time in English-speaking clubs and associations. The cantonal integration policy of Basel-Stadt has tried to bridge this divide with welcome services in English, with information material for newcomers and with German courses for employees and their partners. The pharmaceutical groups support the

integration of their staff with relocation services and language courses. The bubble nonetheless exists. Surveys of expatriates in Switzerland regularly report that making local friends is one of the most difficult aspects of life in the country.³

The expatriate population has changed the cultural life of the city in ways that go beyond schools. English-language theatre groups, choirs, sports clubs and churches have existed in Basel for decades. Bookshops stock large English sections, cinemas show films in the original version with subtitles, and many restaurants and bars print their menus in English. These developments have made Basel more accessible to international residents. They have also produced occasional unease among Basel residents who feel that their own language is being displaced in public life, a concern that the first chapter of this Part discussed in connection with Baseldytisch.⁴

1 Notes

1. On the International School Basel, see the history page on its website, which gives 1979 as the founding year. On the International Baccalaureate Organization, founded in Geneva in 1968, see its website. To be verified. ↩
2. On bilingual Matura programmes, see the regulations on the recognition of Matura certificates (MAR) and the information of the education departments of Basel-Stadt and Basel-Landschaft. On the Swiss International School, see its website. Status to be verified. ↩
3. On the integration services of Basel-Stadt for newcomers, see the website of the Fachstelle Diversität und Integration of the canton and the welcome events for new residents. On surveys of expatriate life, see for example the annual Expat Insider survey published by InterNations, which has ranked Switzerland low on ease of settling in. Status to be verified. ↩
4. See chapter I of this Part. On English-speaking congregations in Basel, see for example the history of the Anglican church in the city. To be verified. ↩

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