

Labour markets in the back office

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

Because the effect of artificial intelligence on employment is uncertain, estimates vary widely. Studies by the International Monetary Fund and others suggest that a large share of jobs in advanced economies are exposed to the technology. Exposure may lead to substitution in some tasks and to complementarity in others, with the balance depending on the occupation and on the way firms adopt the technology.¹ Financial services are among the most exposed sectors, because they employ many people in tasks that consist of processing information according to rules.

In Basel, the most exposed functions are those in the back and middle offices of banks and insurers, in the shared service centres of the pharmaceutical groups and in compliance. Transaction monitoring, client onboarding, claims processing, accounting and reporting all involve tasks that models can perform faster and more cheaply. A part of this work had already moved to lower-cost locations in Switzerland or abroad before generative models appeared. Artificial intelligence may now replace some of it entirely, while creating demand for staff who can supervise models, interpret their results and handle exceptions.² Frontier workers from Germany and France, who make up a significant share of these workforces as Part H, Chapter II showed, would be affected alongside residents.

The compliance function illustrates the ambivalence. Banks expanded their compliance departments substantially after the financial crisis and the end of banking secrecy for foreign clients, as Part E described. Automation could reduce the number of analysts needed for routine reviews. Yet the regulatory demands on governance, model validation and documentation create new tasks, while the responsibility for decisions remains with people. The likely result is a smaller but more qualified compliance workforce, whose members need both legal knowledge and an understanding of data and models.³ The University of Basel, the FHNW

and the training institutions of the financial sector will play a part in preparing staff for these roles.

1 Notes

1. International Monetary Fund, Gen-AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work, Staff Discussion Note SDN/2024/001, January 2024. To be verified. ↩
2. On employment in financial services and shared services in the Basel region, see the statistics of the Statistical Office of Basel-Stadt and the location studies of BAK Economics. Figures to be verified. ↩
3. On the evolution of compliance functions and the skills required, see the reports of the Swiss Bankers Association and the training programmes of Swiss universities of applied sciences in compliance and regtech. 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.

Online version: helveticaregister.com/basel-labour-markets-in-the-back-office