

Language and the professions of the financial centre: drafting, advice, training, communication — overview and summary

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The three preceding chapters have described French as the language of the law, as a market and as one of the three terms of a linguistic balance. The present chapter moves down to the level of the professions. A financial centre is made up of people who draft, advise, control, teach and communicate, and each of these activities has a language, or several. The chapter examines in turn the professions of drafting, advice, compliance, training, communication and translation, showing in each case what the French language brings to Geneva and what it demands of it. It ends with a proposal, namely to treat language as an asset of the financial centre, one that is maintained, measured and passed on, and with the conclusion of Part J.

1 In five sentences

1. Legal drafting in Geneva, carried out by notaries, lawyers and in-house counsel, draws from legal French a precision and concision that constitute capital for the financial centre, provided that it does not shrink into the translation of Anglo-Saxon templates.
2. Advice is given in the client's language, in wealth management as in commodity trading. The multilingual documentation it requires represents a substantial cost, but also legal protection for the institution.
3. Compliance in Geneva must read sources in German, French, English and the languages of the clientele. Poorly organised multilingualism becomes a risk there, as the cases in Part H have shown.
4. Training in French, provided by the University, the ISFB founded in 1987 by the Geneva banks, the Haute école de gestion and the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, heir to the École d'interprètes of 1941,

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produces professionals who are operational with the French-speaking clientele and familiar with Swiss law.

5. French is an asset of the financial centre that depreciates if it is not maintained. That maintenance depends on concrete decisions by institutions, umbrella organisations, cantonal authorities and training institutions.

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