

Law: contracts, compliance, arbitration

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Geneva's law firms are an essential component of the cluster. They draft the sale, financing, chartering and storage contracts. They advise on sanctions, anti-money laundering, corruption and corporate criminal liability, fields that Part H will describe. They accompany traders in their dealings with the Swiss and foreign authorities. They plead in arbitrations and before the courts, and several Geneva practitioners sit as arbitrators in trading disputes.

Part F described Geneva's position as a seat of arbitration, founded on Chapter 12 of the Federal Act on Private International Law and on the Swiss Arbitration Centre.¹ Trading disputes — over quality, quantity, delays, force majeure and sanctions — account for a significant share of this activity. The proximity between the traders, their banks, the inspectors and the lawyers makes it possible to handle disputes with a concrete knowledge of the transactions.

The law of commodity trading has become considerably more complex over the past decade. Sanctions, due diligence obligations in the fields of human rights and the environment, transparency requirements for payments to governments, the minimum taxation of large groups and criminal proceedings have created a demand for specialist legal advice, to which the Geneva firms have responded by building dedicated teams. This expertise is an asset of the cluster that competing centres cannot easily reproduce.

1 Notes

1. Chambre de commerce bernoise, “Arbitrage”, bern-cci.ch (accessed September 2026). ↩

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Online version: helveticaregister.com/geneva-law-contracts-compliance-arbitration