

The institutions: the Swiss Arbitration Centre and the others

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

Arbitration in Switzerland relies on institutions that administer the proceedings. The Swiss Arbitration Centre SA was founded in 2021 by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Basel, Berne, Geneva, Neuchâtel, Ticino, Vaud, Central Switzerland and Zurich, together with the Swiss Arbitration Association. As the direct legal successor to the Swiss Chambers' Arbitration Institution, it administers international and domestic arbitrations under the Swiss Rules of International Arbitration, known as the Swiss Rules, as well as mediations under the Swiss Rules of Mediation.¹ The Swiss Arbitration Centre is moreover recognised by the Federal Department of Finance as an ombudsman body for disputes between clients and financial service providers, in accordance with the Financial Services Act.²

The Swiss Rules of International Arbitration are based on the globally recognised arbitration rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, adapted for institutional arbitration.³ They are presented as significantly reducing the duration and cost of proceedings.⁴ The parties may choose the number of arbitrators, the seat, in Switzerland or elsewhere, and the language of the proceedings.

Geneva also hosts many arbitrations administered by other institutions, in particular the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, which has its seat in Paris but administers numerous proceedings seated in Geneva.⁵ Ad hoc arbitrations, without an institution, are also held in the city. The Court of Arbitration for Sport, created in 1983 on the initiative of the International Olympic Committee and established in Lausanne, has become the world's principal institution for the resolution of sports disputes.⁶ Its presence in the Lake Geneva region reinforces the region's image as a centre of arbitration.

The institutions

Geneva's arbitration community brings together specialist lawyers, arbitrators of international renown, experts, academic institutions and associations. The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the University of Geneva and specialised programmes train arbitration practitioners. This community constitutes an economic sector in its own right, generating fees, visits and skilled employment.

Element	Content
Applicable law	Chapter 12 of the Private International Law Act
Recourse	single action for annulment before the Federal Supreme Court, limited grounds
International enforcement	1958 New York Convention
Swiss institution	Swiss Arbitration Centre, founded in 2021, Swiss Rules based on the UNCITRAL rules
Other institutions active in Geneva	ICC International Court of Arbitration, ad hoc arbitrations
Sports disputes	Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, created in 1983

Worked example. A dispute over an oil cargo worth USD 80 million arises between a Geneva trader and an Asian buyer. The contract provides for arbitration in Geneva, with three arbitrators, in English. The proceedings last eighteen months and cost the parties, in arbitration fees and lawyers' fees, around USD 3 million. The award, rendered in Geneva, can be enforced in the buyer's country under the New York Convention. An application to the Federal Supreme Court, if one is brought, is decided within a few months. The figures are fictitious, but they illustrate the economics of a commercial arbitration.

1 Notes

1. Berne Chamber of Commerce, "Arbitrage", bern-cci.ch (accessed September 2026). ↩
2. Berne Chamber of Commerce, cited above. ↩
3. CCIIG, brochure cited above. ↩
4. CCIIG, brochure cited above. ↩
5. International Chamber of Commerce, 2024 statistics (summarised by Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, June 2025): 831 new cases registered under the Arbitration Rules in 2024, 1,789 cases administered in total, parties from 136 countries or territories; most frequent seats: London

(96), Paris (90), Singapore (28), Dubai (23), Doha (19). 2025 statistics (iccwbo.org): 881 new cases, 2,531 parties from 147 jurisdictions, arbitrations seated in 123 cities in 70 countries. ↩

6. Global Arbitration Review, “Commercial Arbitration: Switzerland” (accessed September 2026). ↩

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.

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