

Criminal proceedings and interpreters

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Criminal proceedings are conducted in the official language of the canton. The Swiss Criminal Procedure Code guarantees a person who does not understand the language of the proceedings the right to an interpreter, free of charge, and the translation of the essential documents.¹ In white-collar cases involving international companies, which the Zug public prosecutor's office and the Office of the Attorney General investigate, the documents are often in English. The prosecutors and courts must work with large volumes of English material, from e-mails and contracts to bank records and trading data.

The prosecutors have adapted to this situation. Many of them read English well. The authorities also accept English documents as evidence without full translation where the parties agree. The formal acts of the proceedings, such as the indictment and the judgment, remain in German. Defendants and their lawyers must deal with the proceedings in German, which requires defence lawyers who master both languages. Advisers who practise economic criminal law in Zug therefore need a command of English as well as of German, a combination that is in high demand and short supply.

1 Notes

1. Swiss Criminal Procedure Code (StPO, SR 312.0), Art. 68 paras 1 and 2, text on [droit-bilingue.ch](https://www.droit-bilingue.ch) (the director of proceedings appoints a translator for a participant who does not understand the language of the proceedings; the accused is informed, orally or in writing, of at least the essential content of the most important procedural acts in a language he or she understands); Art. 426 para. 3 lit. b StPO, text on [swissrights.ch](https://www.swissrights.ch): the accused does not bear the costs of translations that became necessary because the accused speaks a foreign language. ↩

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