

From 88 to 4,828 holding companies

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The effect of the post-war policy was slow at first and then dramatic. In 1949, the canton counted 88 holding companies. By 1975, the number had risen to 4,828, a fifty-five-fold increase in a quarter of a century.¹ Whereas 217 companies limited by shares and limited liability companies were registered in the canton in 1950, there were 7,508 in 1979.²

The turning point came in the second half of the 1950s. Between 1956 and 1962, the total number of registered entities in the canton rose by 75 per cent, from 1,460 to 2,552. The number of new registrations per year rose from 208 to 1,272 and the number of companies limited by shares from 267 to 1,152.³ In 1959, the cantonal government noted in its annual report "numerous registrations, especially of companies limited by shares, some with high capital". That year alone saw the addition of some fifty new wholesale trading enterprises.⁴ The year 1957 is generally regarded as the beginning of the dramatic increase in the number of companies.⁵

Three developments explain the timing. The first was the recovery of the European economy and the return of international capital flows after the reconstruction of the post-war years. The second was the creation of the European Economic Community by the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which accelerated the establishment of German companies in Zug: companies that operated in the new common market looked for a holding location outside it, with favourable taxation and a stable currency.⁶ Early German-connected arrivals included Porsche System Engineering, Supramar and Suna between 1954 and 1956.⁷ The third, and in the long run the most important, was a change in the practice of the cantonal tax administration, described in the following section.

1 Notes

1. Zug in der Welt, "Zug mit Steuern steuern": 88 holding companies in 1949; 4,828 holding companies in 1975. The article "Zug und der globale Kapitalismus" gives 88 holding companies for 1959. ↩
2. Zug in der Welt, "Zug mit Steuern steuern": 217 AG/GmbH companies registered in 1950; 7,508 in 1979. ↩
3. Zug in der Welt, "Der wichtigste Wirtschaftskcluster im Kanton Zug: der internationale Grosshandel", zuginderwelt.ch, accessed September 2026: between 1956 and 1962 the total number of registered entities rose by 75 per cent (from 1,460 to 2,552), new registrations by 511 per cent (from 208 to 1,272) and companies limited by shares by 331 per cent (from 267 to 1,152). ↩
4. Zug in der Welt, "Der wichtigste Wirtschaftskcluster im Kanton Zug": in 1959 the Regierungsrat noted numerous registrations, especially of joint-stock companies, partly with high capital; approximately 50 new wholesale enterprises were added that year. ↩
5. Zug in der Welt, "Zug mit Steuern steuern": 1957 marked the beginning of the dramatic increase in firms. ↩
6. Source as cited in the printed edition. ↩
7. Zug in der Welt, "Der wichtigste Wirtschaftskcluster im Kanton Zug": early German-connected entries between 1954 and 1956 included Porsche System Engineering, Supramar and Suna A.G. ↩

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