

Zug or Geneva for African project and trading vehicles

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For a Swiss company in the African business, the choice of canton depends on its type. A trading desk with its own traders needs trade finance, a deep pool of staff and ties to the francophone commodity corridors, which point to Geneva. A project, holding, licence or finance vehicle needs low running costs, fast authorities, a moderate tax burden and access to board members resident in Switzerland, which point to Zug.

1 The criteria for a trading desk

For a trading company, what counts is proximity to trade finance, the depth of the labour market and the language link to the largely francophone commodity corridors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. Of the Swiss value added in commodity trading of CHF 19.2 billion in 2024, 58.4 per cent was generated in Geneva and 27.0 per cent in Zug. For this type of company Geneva remains the right choice.

2 The criteria for a project vehicle

For a project vehicle other factors decide: the cost of running the company, the speed of the authorities, the tax burden, the availability of board members resident in Switzerland and the proximity to the service providers who keep the books and prepare the accounts and tax returns. Zug leads on each of these.

3 The comparison

Criterion	Weight for a project vehicle	Geneva	Zug
Running administration costs per company	high	higher	lower
Availability of fiduciary and board capacity	high	available	available and concentrated
Effective profit tax 2026	high	14.70 per cent	11.71 per cent
Time to commercial register entry	medium	20 days	12 days, tax ruling answer in 3 days
Location support under the minimum tax	medium	none	since 1 January 2026, CHF 200 million a year
Crypto assets, digital assets and tokenisation	medium	limited	strong, about 715 companies
Proximity to trade finance	high for a trading desk	strong	medium
Link to the francophone corridors	high for a trading desk	strong	weak
Metals and mining cluster	medium	medium	strong
Acceptance as a seat of arbitration for both sides	low	equal	equal

4 The tax calculation

In 2026 the effective profit tax burden is 11.71 per cent in Zug and 14.70 per cent in Geneva, against a Swiss average of 14.43 per cent. On a profit of CHF 3 million, the difference of 2.99 percentage points amounts to about CHF 90,000 a year.

For groups with consolidated revenue of EUR 750 million or more, the Swiss supplementary tax under the global minimum tax brings both cantons to 15 per cent. Because of their narrow margins, trading groups reach this threshold early. For project vehicles with moderate profits, the advantage of Zug remains fully effective.

5 Recommendation

Project, holding, supply, licence and finance vehicles are best based in Zug, where the lower tax burden, the faster administration and the concentration of fiduciary and board capacity come together. An operating trading desk with its own traders belongs in Geneva once its annual volume justifies the cost, which on a model calculation is the case from about USD 250 million.

The general comparison of the three main business locations is explained in the short video [Zurich, Geneva or Zug: which canton fits your business?](#), and the types of vehicle in the article on [the Swiss vehicles behind an African project](#).

6 How Ressos Legal helps

I advise on the choice of canton for each vehicle in a group, obtain the tax rulings and form the companies in Zug, Geneva or Zurich. [Contact me](#) for a first conversation.

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