

Practitioner's note: working in English with Swiss counterparties

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

Advisers who work with international clients in Zug should be aware of the practical limits of English in the canton. Contracts, board minutes and correspondence can be drafted in English, which most counterparties in the international economy will accept. Filings with the commercial register, tax returns, court submissions and dealings with most authorities, however, still require German or at least a German translation, subject to the exceptions described in Chapter II. An adviser who prepares a transaction in English must therefore plan for the translation of documents that will be filed or used in proceedings, and must check whether the German version or the English version will prevail in case of discrepancy.

The adviser should also be aware of the linguistic nuances of Swiss legal terminology. Many Swiss legal concepts have no exact equivalent in English. The unofficial English translations of Swiss legislation published by the Confederation use terms that do not always correspond to their meaning in English or American law. The Swiss "Stiftung" is not the same as an English charitable trust, the Swiss "Aktiengesellschaft" differs in important respects from an English public limited company, and the Swiss "Verwaltungsrat" is not identical to a board of directors under common law. Documents drafted in English under Swiss law should use Swiss concepts consistently and, where necessary, give the German term in brackets to avoid misunderstanding.

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.

Online version: helveticaregister.com/zug-practitioner-s-note-working-in-english-with-swiss-counterparties