

The children of the international community

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Children who grow up in Zug in international families often speak several languages. They may speak their parents' languages at home, English at the international school and Swiss German with their friends in the neighbourhood. Sociologists call them third-culture kids, children who grow up in a culture different from that of their parents and who form an identity that combines elements of several cultures.¹ Some of them stay in Switzerland as adults and become part of its society. Others move on to study and work elsewhere.

The children who attend local public schools learn Swiss German quickly and integrate into local society more easily than their parents. They often act as interpreters and guides for their families. Their experience shows that the separation between the international and local communities is not permanent. A generation that grows up in the canton, whatever its origin, becomes part of it through the schools, the sports clubs and the friendships of childhood.

1 Notes

1. Wikipedia (English), "Third culture kid", en.wikipedia.org: term coined by the sociologist Ruth Useem (Michigan State University) for children who accompany their parents into another society; David C. Pollock and Ruth Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds* (1999): a person who has spent a significant part of the developmental years outside the parents' culture and builds relationships to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any. Application to Switzerland not covered. ↩

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