

The international schools

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The international schools are a central part of the English-speaking infrastructure of Zug. The International School of Zug and Luzern, founded in 1961, is the largest. It teaches in English from kindergarten to the International Baccalaureate and has campuses in Baar and Hünenberg.¹ Other schools offer bilingual education in English and German, or programmes based on the British or other national curricula. Together they educate several thousand children, most of them the children of employees of international companies.

The schools are an essential factor in the location decisions of international companies. A manager who is transferred to Zug for a few years with a family will want the children to continue their education in English and to obtain a qualification recognised internationally. Without international schools, many companies could not persuade their staff to move to the canton. The schools therefore have an economic function beyond their educational one. The canton's economic promotion office lists them among the advantages it presents to international companies.² Their high fees are usually paid by the employers as part of the expatriate package.

The existence of a parallel school system raises questions of integration. Children who attend international schools often grow up with little contact with local children and with limited knowledge of German. Their families may live in the canton for years without becoming part of the local community. The schools have responded by teaching German as a subject and by organising contacts with local schools and associations. The public schools, for their part, receive a growing number of children who speak neither German nor the family's language of origin as their main language, but English. They have introduced programmes of German as a second language to integrate them.

1 Notes

1. Wikipedia, "International School of Zug and Luzern", en.wikipedia.org (no primary source consulted): founded in 1961 as the Zug Anglo-American School, today's ISZL formed by merger in 2008; Zug Campus in Baar (Early Years to Grade 8) and Riverside Campus in Hünenberg (Grades 9– 12); International Baccalaureate programmes; about 1,200 students from more than 50 nationalities. The claim that ISZL is the largest such school in the canton is not covered by this source. ↩
2. Canton of Zug, Department of Economic Affairs, Economic Promotion, brochure "Welcome Zug: small world – big business" (Business Location Zug), in English, cdn.zg.ch: five international schools in the region, including the International School of Zug and Luzern with 1,250 students, presented among the qualities of the location. Cantonal land allocation or planning support for the schools is not covered by this source. ↩

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