

The legal profession and English

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The legal profession in Zug has adapted to the English-speaking economy. The larger law firms of the canton and the Zug offices of Zurich firms work mainly in English for their international clients. Many Swiss lawyers have studied in the United States or the United Kingdom and hold a Master of Laws from an English-speaking university. Some are also admitted in New York or in England and Wales. Foreign lawyers work in Zug as in-house counsel or as advisers in international law firms, and lawyers from member states of the European Union and the European Free Trade Association can register in a Swiss cantonal register under the Federal Act on the Free Movement of Lawyers.¹

The Swiss bar examinations are conducted in the official languages of the cantons, and admission to the cantonal register requires a thorough knowledge of Swiss law. The legal profession is therefore bilingual in a specific sense: its members work in English with international clients and in German with the courts and authorities. This combination is one of the professional resources that make Zug attractive to international companies. It is also a bottleneck, since the number of lawyers who master both languages at a high level and understand both Swiss and common law is limited.

1 Notes

1. Federal Act of 23 June 2000 on the Free Movement of Lawyers (BGFA, SR 935.61), text on droit-bilingue.ch: Art. 27 para. 1 (EU/EFTA nationals entitled to practise under a home title listed in the annex may permanently represent parties before the courts if registered with a cantonal supervisory authority), Art. 28 (registration in the public list) and Art. 30 (entry in the cantonal register after an aptitude test under Art. 31 or after at least three years on the list with effective and regular activity in Swiss law or a shorter activity plus an interview under Art. 32, with the same rights and duties as Swiss lawyers). ↩

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