

The limits of a second language

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

The experience of Zug shows both the strengths and the limits of English as a second working language. Its strengths are clear: English allows the canton to host international companies, attract talent from around the world and connect its economy to global markets. Without it, the canton's economic model would not work. Its limits are equally clear. English does not reach the democratic institutions, the courts, the administration or the local society in the way that an official language does. It allows people to work in Zug without belonging to it.

These limits have consequences for the canton's future. A business location whose international community remains separate from its political community is vulnerable to political shifts. If the citizens of the canton or of Switzerland decide to restrict immigration, raise taxes or tighten regulation, the international community has little influence on the decision. The companies can respond only by moving, which they will do if the conditions deteriorate sufficiently. The stability of the model therefore depends on the continued support of the citizens, which in turn depends on their perception that the international economy benefits them. The language question is part of this perception, since the visibility of English is one of the ways in which citizens experience the international economy.

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-the-limits-of-a-second-language