

The Steuerfuss: canton, city and communes

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

The tax multiplier is the instrument through which the canton and its communes adjust their revenue each year without touching the statutory tariff. Under § 2 para. 2 StG the cantonal parliament, the Kantonsrat, sets the cantonal multiplier for two calendar years at a time, on the basis of a proposal by the government, the Regierungsrat.¹ For the years 2024 and 2025 the Kantonsrat had reduced the cantonal multiplier from 99 to 98 per cent. In August 2025 the government proposed to keep it at 98 per cent for 2026 and 2027. It argued that each percentage point costs the canton between 82 and 87 million francs a year, that its self-financing ratio was low and that its investment needs were considerable.²

The Kantonsrat decided otherwise. In the budget debate of 15 December 2025 it reduced the cantonal multiplier by three points, from 98 to 95 per cent, by 116 votes to 57. The centre-right parties, the Mitte, the FDP, the SVP and the EDU, supported the reduction proposed by the finance committee, while the Greens, the Social Democrats and the EVP wanted to keep the rate at 98 per cent. The reduction added 246 million francs to the deficit that the government had budgeted, so that the canton entered 2026 with a planned deficit of 314 million francs after parliamentary savings of about 57 million.³ The Cantonal Tax Office confirms that the state tax for 2026 amounts to 95 per cent of the simple state tax and that this multiplier applies uniformly in all communes.⁴ The press described the cut as the largest reduction of the cantonal tax in twenty years.

The decision of December 2025 must be read against the vote of May 2025, discussed below, in which the electorate refused a reduction of the corporate profit tax. A reduction of the multiplier benefits individuals and companies alike, because the multiplier applies to the simple state tax on income and wealth as well as on profit and capital. The majority of the Kantonsrat thus used the instrument within its own competence to give tax relief after the electorate had rejected the targeted relief for companies.

The communal multipliers vary widely. The city of Zurich kept its multiplier at 119 per cent for 2026. In December 2025 the centre-right parties in the city parliament, the Gemeinderat, proposed a reduction of seven points, but the left-wing majority rejected it in a close vote.⁵ Winterthur, the second city of the canton, levies 125 per cent. Among the 160 communes of the canton, Zumikon has the lowest multiplier in 2026 at 71 per cent, having overtaken Kilchberg, which with 72 per cent had held the first place since 2017. At the other end of the scale, the small rural communes of Maschwanden and Bachs levy 128 per cent. For 2026, 33 communes reduced their multipliers and ten increased them.⁶

These figures define the internal geography of wealth in the canton. The communes on the shores of Lake Zurich, the so-called gold coast on the right bank from Küsnacht to Meilen and the communes of Kilchberg and Rüschlikon on the left bank, combine low multipliers with proximity to the city. This makes them attractive to high-income households, while the city relies on a higher multiplier and on its large base of corporate taxpayers. For legal entities the communal multipliers differ from those for individuals. In 2023 the multipliers applied to companies ranged from about 80 to about 143 per cent, compared with 72 to 130 per cent for individuals.⁷

For an adviser the multiplier is the first figure to check when comparing locations within the canton. A family with a taxable income of several hundred thousand francs saves a substantial amount each year by moving from the city to a lakeside commune, with a proportionally identical saving on the wealth tax. The comparison between Zurich and neighbouring cantons, however, depends on the tariffs as well as on the multipliers. Section X takes up that comparison.

1 Notes

1. Regierungsrat des Kantons Zürich, Antrag vom 27. August 2025 (Vorlage 6044), “Festsetzung des Steuerfusses für die Jahre 2026 und 2027”,
https://www.zh.ch/bin/zhweb/publish/regierungsratsbeschluss-unterlagen./2025/874/6044_Festsetzung_Steuerfuss_2026_2027.pdf.
The proposal refers to § 2 para. 2 StG and to Art. 56 para. 1 lit. b of the cantonal constitution (LS 101) as the legal basis. ↩
2. Regierungsrat, Antrag vom 27. August 2025 (Vorlage 6044), cited above. ↩

3. SRF, “Kanton Zürich senkt Steuern um 3 Prozent”, 15 December 2025, <https://www.srf.ch/news/wirtschaft/beschluss-vom-kantonsrat-im-kanton-zuerich-sinken-die-steuern>. ↩
4. Kanton Zürich, “Aktuelle Gemeindesteuerfüsse”, <https://www.zh.ch/de/steuern-finanzen/steuern/steuerstatistiken/aktuelle-gemeinde-steuerfuesse.html>. ↩
5. Tele Z, “Stadt Zürich: Gemeinderat lässt Steuerfuss bei 119 Prozent”, 12 December 2025, https://www.telez.ch/tele-z-aktuell-beitrag-12-12-2025-b1-2_62991/. ↩
6. watson.ch, “Massive Unterschiede: In diesen Zürcher Gemeinden zahlst du 2026 mehr oder weniger Steuern”, <https://www.watson.ch/wirtschaft/schweiz/990791774-das-sind-die-steuerfuesse-aller-160-zuercher-gemeinden-fuer-2026>. The report also notes that only twelve communes remain below 80 per cent. ↩
7. Kanton Zürich, Steuern im Kanton Zürich (30 November 2023), cited above, which gives the range of communal multipliers in 2023 as 72 to 130 per cent for natural persons and 79.59 to 142.72 per cent for legal entities. ↩

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/zurich-the-steuerfuss-canton-city-and-communes