

Copyright

Contributing editors

Andrew H Bart, Steven R Englund, Susan J Kohlmann
and Andrew J Thomas



2017

GETTING THE
DEAL THROUGH 

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Copyright 2017

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and Andrew J Thomas
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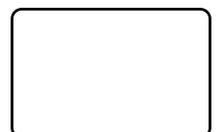


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Switzerland

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Legislation and enforcement

1 What is the relevant legislation?

Swiss copyright legislation essentially consists of the Federal Act on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights of 9 October 1992 (FACN). Furthermore, Swiss legislation provides a Regulation on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights of 26 April 1993 (RCN). The RCN provides more details on matters not governed specifically by the FACN. The FACN is currently subject to a comprehensive revision. The Swiss Federal Council has expressed a need to modernise Swiss copyright law, making it more suitable for the digital age. The Swiss Federal Office of Justice has drafted a revised version of the FACN (NFACN), which is still subject to legislative debate.

2 Who enforces it?

Copyright is enforceable by the respective author of a copyrightable work or by his or her successors or assignees (ie, the right holders of the respective copyrights) by way of a civil law action. Certain copyright claims are only enforceable through 'collective societies'. Collective societies are instructed by law to administer and enforce claims on behalf of the authors, in particular remuneration claims for particular types of use of copyrighted works (usually mass uses of works).

FACN also provides for criminal sanctions such as imprisonment and/or the payment of fines in cases of intentional infringement of copyright. These remedies are enforced by a locally competent criminal authority (usually a state attorney) either upon a prosecution request of an injured party or, in the case of an infringement with commercial intent, in the own motion of the authority (ex officio).

3 Are there any specific provisions of your copyright laws that address the digital exploitation of works? Are there separate statutory provisions that do so?

The FACN follows a technology-neutral approach. Any forms of reproductions of copyrighted works (physical copies or digital copies as electronic files) and any forms of public performance or 'making available' of copyrighted works (be it physically or by digital means) require the prior permission of the author (article 10, FACN).

The FACN provides for a few explicit provisions on digital technologies: it contains specific provisions on technical measures to protect copyrighted content from unlawful use 'digital rights management' (DRM). The circumvention of DRM-tools as well as the possession, production, importation, advertising and introduction of goods or services with the purpose of circumventing DRM are prohibited. Circumventions of DRM-tools are permitted solely for the use of copyrighted works if permitted by law (for example, to use an acquired work in the private sphere (see article 39a, FACN)). The FACN also provides for provisions allowing temporary reproduction of copyrighted works as a necessary and integral part of an information technology procedure (article 24a, FACN). It also features a provision allowing the temporary reproduction of certain musical works for broadcasting purposes, provided that the right to permit such reproductions can only be claimed and enforced by the respective collective societies (article 24b, FACN).

Finally, the NFACN addresses various new topics related to copyright enforcement in the digital world. The NFACN is not yet in force and additional details on it will be provided later.

4 Do your copyright laws have extraterritorial application to deal with foreign-owned or foreign-operated websites that infringe copyright?

Swiss copyright law is applicable to foreign-owned or foreign-operated websites if their offerings are considered to infringe authors or right holders in Switzerland. This is usually the case if the site addresses customers in Switzerland. In this regard, the NFACN provides for new provisions, under which Swiss access providers can be instructed to block access to infringing content stored by hosting providers outside of Switzerland. The mechanics and modalities of this new provision are not yet determined. The legislator has expressed concerns to avoid excessive 'overblocking' and the provision should only apply to websites with 'obviously infringing content'. Refinements of the statutory wording are still expected.

Agency

5 Is there a centralised copyright agency? What does this agency do?

Switzerland currently has five established copyright collective societies, namely Suisa, ProLitteris, Suisseimage, Société Suisse des Auteurs and Swissperform. These collective societies are established and act under governmental permission and supervision. Collective societies enforce specific copyright claims governed under statutory provisions in the FACN and thereby collect royalties on behalf of the authors. For certain types of copyright claims, the enforcement is exclusively reserved to the collective societies. For other types of copyright claims, an author may entrust the collective society with such activities on a voluntary basis ('rights administration agreement'). Each of the collective societies is in charge of different categories of copyrighted works:

- Suisa acts for non-theatrical musical works;
- ProLitteris acts for works of literature, photography and fine art;
- Suisseimage acts for visual and audiovisual works;
- The Swiss Society of authors acts for theatrical and musical theatrical works; and
- Swissperform acts for neighbouring rights (rights of performing artists, broadcasters and producers of sound and video recordings).

All Swiss collective societies have undertaken reciprocal agreements with foreign collective societies so as to ensure that members will receive their royalties for the use of their works abroad.

Subject matter and scope of copyright

6 What types of works are copyrightable?

The FACN provides for protection of literary, artistic intellectual creations with an individual character, irrespective of their value or purpose (article 2, FACN). These include, in particular, literary, scientific and other works that make use of language, musical works, fine art, in particular paintings, sculptures and graphic works, works with scientific or technical content, works of architecture, applied art (eg, furniture or jewellery), photographic, cinematographic and other visual/audiovisual works as well as choreographic works and works of mime. The FACN also explicitly provides for protection of computer programs (software) as a recognised work category (article 2, paragraph 3, FACN).

7 What types of rights are covered by copyright?

The author or respective right holder has an exclusive right to use a copyrighted work and to authorise such use by others, in particular the right to publish, reproduce, perform or make available his or her work (article 10, FACN). Further, an author has the exclusive right to allow modifications of his or her work, such as adaptations or derivative works (for example, a film version of a copyrighted novel (article 3, FACN)). Since computer programs enjoy copyright protection under the FACN as well (see question 6), the latter also applies to adaptations made to a particular software code created by a software-developing author. An author of a computer program also has an exclusive right to rent such a program to third parties (article 10, paragraph 3, FACN).

8 What may not be protected by copyright?

Anything that does not meet the general requirements of a copyrighted work under article 2 of the FACN, that is, anything not qualifying as an intellectual creation or not bearing an individual character (see question 6). For instance, products of coincidence or created by nature do not qualify as creations. Or, according to Swiss case law, a telephone book-CD or compendium of medicines does not bear an individual character. The FACN explicitly provides that official documents of the type of statutes, regulations, treaties and other administrative statutes, means of payment, judicial decisions, protocols and reports of governmental authorities as well as patent specifications and published patent applications are not protected under copyright (article 5, FACN).

9 Do the doctrines of 'fair use' or 'fair dealing' exist?

No. There is no fair use doctrine or similar (equity-like) limitation under Swiss law. In contrast to the Anglo-American copyright system, Swiss copyright provides for a limited amount of copyright restrictions precisely enumerated in the FACN. Restrictions may apply to the use of published works in the private/domestic sphere, within enterprises or for educational purposes (see article 19, FACN). These restrictions do not abolish copyright protection. The FACN permits a statutory right of use in these areas, but such use might still be subject to the payment of statutory royalties that are collected and distributed by collective societies (see question 5). The FACN also provides for other restrictions, for example, concerning citations (short excerpt references) or news reportings on current events.

A further aspect to be considered a restriction of copyright under Swiss law is the principle of exhaustion (first sale doctrine). It provides that if an author or right holder has consented to the sale of a copy of his or her work, this copy may be re-sold or re-distributed without the author's or right holder's consent. Computer programs may only be re-sold 'as is' since an author has an exclusive right to rent computer programs (see question 6). Based on a relatively recent court decision in Switzerland, the principle of exhaustion is also applicable to computer programs distributed online (via download) provided that the acquirer is granted a permanent right to use such file against the payment of a singular one-time fee and in the event of a further re-sale, the original file on the acquirer's computer is irreversibly deleted (see preliminary injunction decision of the court of the canton of Zug, 4 May 2011, Az ES 2010 822).

In the context of computer programs, copyright also allows the decompiling of computer programs (ie, the back-tracking of machine-code into the original source-code) if such procedure is necessary to establish interoperability with independent third party software or systems (article 21, FACN).

Finally, copyrighted works may generally be used for the creation of parodies or similar adaptations of a work (article 11, paragraph 3, FACN).

10 What are the standards used in determining whether a particular use is fair?

There is no fair use doctrine in Swiss copyright law. Thus, there is no case law with standards for fair use (see question 9).

11 Are architectural works protected by copyright? How?

Yes, works of architecture are a recognised work category protected by copyright provided that they have an individual character (see question 6). An author (or architect) has a right to object to any distortion or modification of the work if this would be harmful to his or her reputation or personality (article 11, FACN).

12 Are performance rights covered by copyright? How?

Performance rights as such are protected as 'neighbouring rights' for performing artists under the FACN (see question 13).

13 Are other 'neighbouring rights' recognised? How?

The FACN provides for separate protection of 'neighbouring rights'. Neighbouring rights consist of (i) rights of performing artists, (ii) producers of sound recordings and films, as well as (iii) broadcasting organisations (article 33 et seq, FACN). The protective scope of 'neighbouring rights' is smaller than the claims conferred under copyrights. For example, performing artists only have an exclusive right to make available their performance to the public outside of the location in which it originally took place (including to broadcast and transmit and/or to make recordings and copies and sell them). The producer of a sound recording or audiovisual recording only has an exclusive right to copy and sell the physical carriers (article 35, FACN). Furthermore, broadcasting organisations only have the exclusive right to retransmit their broadcasting programme, make it available to the public, or to produce recordings and copies thereof and to sell it (article 37, FACN). The duration of 'neighbouring rights' is 50 years from 31 December of the year in which the performance, the production of the sound recording, audiovisual recording or the dissemination of the original broadcasting programme took place (article 39, FACN).

Integrated circuits are not specifically protected under copyright, but under a separate statute, namely the Swiss Federal Act on the Protection of Semiconductors (FAPS).

'Hot news' - in the sense of current topicalities - is not protected under copyright law, unless the concrete form of presentation (in terms of language or audiovisual arrangement) amounts to a copyrighted work. The Swiss Federal Act on Radio and Broadcasting (FARB) provides for certain provisions on exclusive reporting. If broadcasters hold exclusive agreements with third parties on the reporting on certain public events, other broadcasters are entitled to short reports on the same topics as well (article 72, FARB).

14 Are moral rights recognised?

Moral rights are recognised under Swiss copyright law. An author may prohibit any distortion, mutilation or modification of his or her work that is prejudicial or harmful to his or her reputation or personality (article 11, FACN). A further moral right to be considered is the author's rights to be identified as an author and to decide on the manner and date of the first publication of his or her work (article 9, paragraphs 1 and 2, FACN). Moral rights are non-assignable by nature. They are considered inextricably connected to an author's personality. Nonetheless, it is frequently seen that authors waive the exercise of their moral rights on a contractual basis. This is permitted under Swiss law as long as such waiver does not appear inequitable, ie, an excessive restriction with regard to the author's own personality (article 27, paragraph 2, Swiss Civil Code).

Copyright formalities

15 Is there a requirement of copyright notice?

There is no requirement of a copyright notice under Swiss law. A copyright notice has no legally binding effect under Swiss law. However, it may sometimes create the assumption of a copyrighted work and its ownership as well as destroy a copyright infringer's good faith.

Switzerland is a member state of the Universal Copyright Convention (UCC) and therefore recognises the marking requirements under article III, paragraph 1 of the UCC. Under this provision, any contracting state which, under its domestic law, requires as a condition of copyright, compliance with formalities (such as deposit, registration, notice, notarial certificates, payment of fees and so on) in that contracting state, shall regard these requirements as satisfied with respect to all works protected in accordance with the UCC and first published outside its territory and the author of which is not one of its nationals, if from the time of the first publication all the copies of the work published with the authority of the author or other copyright proprietor bear the symbol © accompanied by the name of the copyright proprietor and the year of first publication.

16 What are the consequences for failure to display a copyright notice?

There are no legal consequences for failure to display a copyright notice in Switzerland.

17 Is there a requirement of copyright deposit?

No. There is neither a requirement nor an institution in charge of accepting copyright deposits in Switzerland. A deposit of a copyrighted work may, theoretically, be sought with a public notary providing a certain degree of proof with regard to the seniority of a copyrighted work.

18 What are the consequences for failure to make a copyright deposit?

Since there is no requirement for copyright deposits, there is no consequence for failure to make such deposit.

19 Is there a system for copyright registration?

There is no system for copyright registration under Swiss law. Copyrights come into existence automatically upon the creation of a copyrighted work (article 6, FACN).

20 Is copyright registration mandatory?

No. there is no copyright registration system under Swiss copyright law.

21 How do you apply for a copyright registration?

Not applicable (see questions 19 and 20).

22 What are the fees to apply for a copyright registration?

Not applicable (see questions 19 to 21).

23 What are the consequences for failure to register a copyrighted work?

Not applicable (see questions 19 to 22).

Ownership and transfer**24 Who is the owner of a copyrighted work?**

Copyright initially vests with the author who created a copyrighted work. An author is always considered to be the natural person who created an individual work (not, for example, a legal entity hiring such authors to work for them; article 6, FACN). If multiple authors have contributed to the creation of the work, the copyright is owned jointly by them. In the latter case, ownership may only be exercised with the consent of all other co-authors, unless they have agreed otherwise. However, if the individual contributions can be separated and the authors have not agreed otherwise, each co-author may use his or her contribution independently (article 7, FACN).

25 May an employer own a copyrighted work made by an employee?

In Switzerland, there is no 'work for hire' doctrine. Nor does an automatic transfer of copyrights occur within an employment relationship provided under statutory law. Copyrights are only transferred from an employee to the employer by virtue of contractual assignment. A substantial majority of Swiss scholars hold the view that monetary exploitation rights of copyright can sometimes be transferred implicitly to the employer if this is required by the purpose of the employment relationship (purpose assignment theory). However, the theory is controversial. Thus, it is recommended to use explicit assignment language to transfer copyrights to the employer.

With regard to computer programs created by employees in the course of their employment and as a part of their contractual duties, article 17, FACN provides that the employer alone is entitled to exercise monetary exploitation rights and the exclusive right of use of any copyrights in such computer programs.

26 May a hiring party own a copyrighted work made by an independent contractor?

Copyrights are always vested in the author who created the work (see question 24). Therefore, a hiring party will not automatically acquire ownership of copyrights in a work made by an independent contractor.

The copyright must be assigned to the hiring party with respective provisions in the hiring contract. To achieve effectiveness, the hiring contract and assignment need not be in writing. However, a written contract will always provide more certainty and conclusive proof. To the extent that the hiring relationship qualifies as a publishing contract, article 381 of the Swiss Code of Obligations provides that copyrights are assigned by law from the author to the publisher to the extent and for the duration necessary to carry out the publishing contract, unless otherwise agreed between the parties.

27 May a copyrighted work be co-owned?

Yes, a copyrighted work can be owned by more than one person if multiple authors (natural persons or legal entities) have jointly contributed to one creation (see question 24). Alternatively, this may also come about if copyrights have been assigned to multiple persons or in the event of a legal succession (eg, inheritance of copyrights to multiple heirs).

28 May rights be transferred?

Yes, copyrights are transferable by assignment and by legal succession. Copyrights can also only be transferred partially. However, there is a 'core fragment' of moral rights, which always remains with the author. Moral rights are inextricably connected to an author's personality (ie, the right to be named as an author; the right to prohibit any distortion of his or her work prejudicial or harmful to his or her personality; and the right to decide on the manner and date of the first publication of his or her work (see question 14)).

29 May rights be licensed?

Yes, copyrights can be licensed. There are no specific rules or provisions on licensing in FACN or in the Swiss Code of Obligations generally applicable to contracts. Copyright licence agreements are considered 'innominate contracts' (ie, contracts not governed under a specific statute). Therefore, provisions on various statutory contract types under the Swiss Code of Obligations will apply in a fragmented manner or by analogy. Copyright licences can be exclusive, sole, non-exclusive, complete or partial. The parties to a copyright licence are free to determine the scope they wish to license. Copyright licences are not subject to any prescribed form. However, a written agreement will provide conclusive proof for the existence of a copyright licence.

30 Are there compulsory licences? What are they?

Yes, there is one compulsory licence for the manufacturing of phonograms (audio-recordings; article 23, FACN). The compulsory licence grants phonogram producers with a place of business in Switzerland the right to claim a licence for recorded musical works that have been offered for sale, transferred or otherwise distributed with the consent of an author in Switzerland or abroad. Unlike the statutory licences (see questions 5 and 9), the compulsory licence does not permit the use of a copyrighted work against the payment of a statutory royalty under a tariff established by a collective society. Instead, the authors or right holders are required to enter into individual licence agreements with the respective user.

A limited number of restrictions to copyright apply in the form of a right to make specific uses of a copyrighted work under specific circumstances free of charge or against the payment of royalties under a statutory licence (see question 9). Technically, these restrictions are not compulsory licences. Yet factually, their effect can amount to the same.

31 Are licences administered by performing rights societies? How?

The collective society for performing rights Swissperform administers licences for performing artists. It enforces the mentioned neighbouring rights of performing artists (see question 13) and collects the payment of royalties for the grant of such rights. The enforcement of these rights may be reserved to the collective society by law or may be entrusted to it on a voluntary basis by the performing artists by means of a contract (so-called 'rights administration agreement').

32 Is there any provision for the termination of transfers of rights?

No. There are no provisions on the termination of transfers of rights (in the sense that transfers are terminated by law and copyrights are thereby re-assigned to the author).

33 Can documents evidencing transfers and other transactions be recorded with a government agency?

No, there is no government agency in charge of recording copyright transfers in Switzerland. As copyrights are not registrable in Switzerland, transfers or similar transactions related to copyrights are not registered publicly either.

Duration of copyright

34 When does copyright protection begin?

Copyright protection begins when a work is created by an author (article 6, FACN). Even parts of a copyrighted work may already enjoy copyright protection if they bear the basic requirements such as a creative act with individuality (article 2, paragraph 4, FACN). Thus, copyright protection may even begin before a work is fully completed by an author. Fixation of a work in a tangible medium is not a necessary formal requirement, but the work must somehow be perceivable to human senses.

35 How long does copyright protection last?

Computer programs are protected until the end of the 50th year following the death of the author. All other types of works are protected until the end of the 70th year following the death of the author (article 29, FACN). For co-authored works where an individual contribution cannot be separated, copyright protection lasts until the end of the 70th year (and, for computer programs, the 50th year) following the death of the last surviving joint author. If the individual contributions are separable, copyright protection of each singular contribution lasts until the end of the 70th or 50th year following the death of the respective author. As for audiovisual works, copyright protection lasts until the end of the 70th year following the death of the sole director or the death of the last joint co-director (article 30, FACN). If an author of a copyrighted work remains unknown, copyright protection lasts until the 70th year following the year of publication or, if the work was published in portions, at the end of the 70th year following the year of the final portion of the work (article 31, FACN). Please note that it is controversial whether this last term also applies to computer programs or whether the appropriate term should rather be 50 years.

36 Does copyright duration depend on when a particular work was created or published?

If an author remains unknown, copyright duration depends on when a particular work was published (see question 35). Aside from this particular case, copyright duration is calculated from the date of death of the author, not when a particular work was created or published (for a detailed analysis, see question 35).

37 Do terms of copyright have to be renewed? How?

Duration of copyright need not and cannot be renewed.

38 Has your jurisdiction extended the term of copyright protection?

The current duration of copyright was established with the entering into force of the FACN on 9 October 1992. It has remained unchanged ever since.

Copyright infringement and remedies

39 What constitutes copyright infringement?

The use of a copyrighted work covered by the exclusive rights of the copyright owner provided under FACN (see questions 6 to 11) not authorised by the author or right holder, provided that the copyright is still under a valid duration term (see questions 34 and 35), constitutes a copyright infringement. However, an infringement does not exist if such action is covered by the exhaustion principle (first sales doctrine) (see question 9) or if a restriction of copyright applies (see questions 9

Update and trends

The Swiss Federal government has proposed new legislation by amending the FACN in various aspects. The new proposed legislative draft (NFACN) aims to establish further obligations for internet hosting providers and internet access providers to take measures against copyright infringements conducted over the internet. This should primarily occur in the form of notice and takedown procedures and access blocking. Also, the legislative draft provides for a system of 'access provider warning letters' to users committing copyright infringements over the internet. If the user ignores the warning letter and continues to infringe, the author or right holder would be entitled to obtain a disclosure of the user's identity. The new draft does not suggest changing the legality of downloading copyrighted content from the internet for private use. In addition, new rules on the collective exploitation of copyright should be introduced in order to facilitate the exchange of copyrighted digital content. The Swiss government has also proposed ratification of the Peking Treaty and the Marrakesh Treaty, both of which are already implemented under the current Swiss legal system. The NFACN must still be adopted by Parliament. As the legislative draft is still controversial, the final form of the NFACN remains uncertain at present.

and 10). An author's or right holder's copyright does not only extend to identical works of an infringer. Imitations that make use of the essential creative features of a copyrighted work can also constitute an infringement.

40 Does secondary liability exist for indirect copyright infringement? What actions incur such liability?

Yes, the notion of secondary or contributory infringement exists under Swiss copyright law. The FACN provides a claim for injunctive relief against any copyright-infringing acts. In principle, this claim is applicable against anyone who engages in the same infringing activity, including secondary aiders and abettors (article 62, FACN). With regard to monetary compensation claims, the FACN and Swiss liability law principles under the Swiss Code of Obligations provide for damage claims only under specific circumstances. According to article 50 of the Swiss Code of Obligations and Federal Supreme Court practice, the cooperation of multiple parties directly or indirectly causing copyright infringements, each participant subjectively acting with thought (ie, wilfully or negligently), may lead to joint liability of these parties for the damages caused. There are, however, no clear guidelines as to how far the scope of involved persons can reach. Case law provides for various (and also inconsistent) decisions. In a relatively recent decision, the Swiss Federal Supreme Court held that a hosting provider of a blog platform can be ordered to take down infringing user-generated content and may be ordered to pay procedural court fees irrespective of his or her knowledge on the infringing content (decision of the Swiss Federal Supreme Court 5A_792/2011 of 14 January 2013; please note, however, that this case is based on the infringement of personality rights and not copyrights).

41 What remedies are available against a copyright infringer?

Swiss copyright law provides for various remedies against copyright infringement.

First, an author or right holder may seek injunctive relief before the civil courts against an infringer prohibiting an imminent infringement, a judgment ordering the removal of ongoing infringements as well as, in particular cases, a declaratory judgment holding that a particular action infringes the author's or the right holder's copyright (articles 61 and 62, paragraph 1, letters a and b, FACN). Injunctive relief claims may also be obtained in the form of a preliminary injunction which provides for an accelerated, simplified procedure (article 65, FACN).

Second, an author or right holder may seek a civil court action for disclosure of the origin of infringing items against any person who is in possession of such items and for the confiscation and destruction of such items (article 62, paragraph 1, letter c, FACN).

Finally, an author or right holder may claim damages against any infringer before a civil court (article 62, paragraph 2, FACN). Monetary compensation claims may be based on different notions of the law (ie, specific market reputation damages and reasonable attorneys' costs,

restitution of (lost) profits, restitution of unjust enrichment or the payment of an adequate licence fee (by analogy)). In addition, a court may always order the publication of the judgment upon request of the claiming author or right holder (article 66, FACN). Such publication may help to mitigate ongoing effects of a copyright infringement. Please note that Swiss law also provides for criminal law remedies against copyright infringement (article 67, FACN; see also questions 2 and 45).

42 Is there a time limit for seeking remedies?

There is no statutory time limit for seeking injunctive relief or declarative judgments against copyright infringements. An author's or right holder's claim may, however, be considered forfeited if he or she has, during an extensive time period, tolerated ongoing infringements (which were known to him or her or which he or she should have known). As for monetary compensation claims linked to copyright infringements, such claims are based on the notion of tort, agency of necessity or unjust enrichment and are therefore subject to a relatively short statute of limitation of one year from the knowledge of the infringing act (articles 60 and 67 of the Swiss Code of Obligations). As for criminal law remedies, time limits for taking action are considerably longer (ie, usually seven years from the occurrence of an infringement (article 97 of the Swiss Federal Criminal Code; see also questions 2 and 45)).

43 Are monetary damages available for copyright infringement?

Yes, monetary compensation claims are available for copyright infringement (see question 41). In Switzerland, the term 'monetary compensation claims' is used more frequently as it is broader than 'damages'. It comprises all forms of monetary compensation triggered by copyright infringements. The legal basis of such compensation claims can vary from genuine damage claims to restitution of profits or unjust enrichment claims as well as the payment of an adequate licence fee (by analogy).

44 Can attorneys' fees and costs be claimed in an action for copyright infringement?

Yes, according to Swiss case law, reasonable attorneys' fees can under particular circumstances be enforced as damage claims to the extent proven that they were necessary for the prevention of an infringement. In addition, court fees and a fragment of the attorneys' fees are awarded to the party who wins on the merits of the infringement action (based on court tariffs).

45 Are there criminal copyright provisions? What are they?

FACN provides for criminal penalties imposed on copyright infringements. The wilful infringement of copyright is punished with imprisonment of up to five years or a fine, or both. Fines may range from one Swiss franc up to a maximum of approximately 1 million Swiss francs, depending on the degree of fault and the personal and economic circumstances of the infringer (article 67, FACN). In regular practice, the sentences typically imposed are significantly lower.

46 Are there any specific liabilities, remedies or defences for online copyright infringement?

There is no specific statute or act addressing liabilities or defences against online copyright infringements. The current Swiss copyright act does not have a provider-specific legislation in place as for example the US (with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act) or the European Union (with the European E-Commerce-Directive 2000/31/EC) providing liability shields for hosting providers. Instead, the general rules and principles of Swiss copyright and liability law apply including the notions on secondary and contributory infringement (see question 40).

All civil law and criminal law remedies listed under questions 41, 43 and 45 are also available against online copyright infringements. However, the strategic enforcement of such claims is more challenging as it requires interaction with internet service providers or similar intermediaries supportive to online copyright infringement. Some internet service providers provide for voluntary, standardised takedown procedures (eg, 'piracy cops') while others do only act on a case-by-case basis. It is noteworthy that large providers (such as Google or Facebook) have a tendency to unify their anti-piracy policies on a regional level. Thus, practices required under EU law for such providers are often also applied in Switzerland as it is easier to administrate them on a broad geographic level even though Switzerland is not a member of the EU.

Since the internet can serve as a suitable tool for anonymity, criminal law remedies gain considerable relevance as they are frequently the only way to enforce the procurement of evidence and reveal an online-infringer's identity. New legislation on copyright is expected in Switzerland. The NFACN provides for additional obligations of internet hosting providers and internet access providers to take measures against copyright infringements conducted over the internet (see 'Update and trends').

47 How may copyright infringement be prevented?

The use of the copyright notice is not required under Swiss law, but it may be helpful for preventing infringements. Mandating a collective society with the enforcement and collection of copyright fees can also help to prevent infringements as these societies monitor and enforce monetary compensation claims (see question 5). Technical measures (DRM) to administer and control copyrighted digital content may also contribute to prevent infringement (see question 3). In addition, it is also possible to file a request with the Swiss custom authorities to temporarily retain suspected items entering the border which could infringe an author's or right holder's copyright in Switzerland (article 75, FACN).

Relationship to foreign rights

48 Which international copyright conventions does your country belong to?

Switzerland is a member of most multilateral international conventions on copyright and neighbouring rights law:

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- the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS, within the establishment of the WTO, 1994);
- the revised Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (Paris version of 1971);
- the Universal Copyright Convention (Paris version of 1971);
- the International Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations (Rome 1961);
- the Convention for the Protection of Producers of Phonograms Against Unauthorized Duplication of their Phonograms (Geneva 1971);
- the Convention establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (Stockholm 1967);
- the WIPO Copyright Treaty (Geneva 1996); and
- the WIPO Performance and Phonograms Treaty (Geneva 1996).

49 What obligations are imposed by your country's membership of international copyright conventions?

Based on the majority of Swiss scholarly opinions, all obligations brought forward in the above-mentioned international treaties are implemented into Swiss national law. There are no obligations pending.

Getting the Deal Through

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Advertising & Marketing
Agribusiness
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Anti-Money Laundering
Arbitration
Asset Recovery
Automotive
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Banking Regulation
Cartel Regulation
Class Actions
Commercial Contracts
Construction
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Corporate Governance
Corporate Immigration
Cybersecurity
Data Protection & Privacy
Debt Capital Markets
Dispute Resolution
Distribution & Agency
Domains & Domain Names
Dominance
e-Commerce
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Environment & Climate Regulation

Equity Derivatives
Executive Compensation & Employee Benefits
Financial Services Litigation
Fintech
Foreign Investment Review
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High-Yield Debt
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Insurance Litigation
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