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What is document legalisation?

Legalisation makes documents suitable for use in another country. The process often involves several different steps. Documents that can be legalised include civil status documents, court orders and diplomas or certificates.

Legalisation shows that:

- the document was issued by an official authority
- the signature, seal and/or stamp on the document are genuine
- the document's format is correct.

Legalisation does not confirm that a document's content is correct. It is down to the authority asking for the document to check this.

What steps are involved?

The steps you must take to have a document legalised vary by country. It depends on the agreements made between the country where you want to use the document and the country that issued it.

Attention:

If your document is not in any of our Belgian national languages (Dutch, French, German) or English, you must also have your document translated by a sworn translator and have the translation legalized.

Legalisation with an apostille.

In many countries, you can have your document legalised with an apostille. This is a simplified form of legalisation. An authority in country A legalises the document with a type of stamp or sticker, known as an 'apostille'. After this, no more steps are necessary. You can use the document in [all the countries that are party to the Apostille Convention](#).

Legalisation without an apostille.

If one or both of the countries involved in your legalisation is not a party to the Apostille Convention, then legalisation often involves two steps:

Step 1

An authority in Country A checks that the document has been signed by the relevant official authority in Country A. It is usually the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Country A that does this. After approval, a stamp or sticker is placed on the document. This shows Country B that the document has been issued by a competent authority in Country A.

Step 2

Country B checks and legalises the document with a stamp or sticker. Usually, this is done by an embassy, consulate-general or honorary consul of Country B in Country A. After legalisation you can use the document in Country B.

Sometimes legalisation is not necessary.

Legalisation is not necessary if Country A has an agreement with Country B exempting your type of document. If so, you can use your document in Country B without having it legalised. Several countries also have reciprocal agreements. Under the [EU Regulation on Public Documents](#), for instance, public documents issued in one EU member state do not need to be legalised for use in another.

